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1 INTRODUCTION

> I wanted to write a book which allowed readers to enter the world of the average Muslim teenage girl and see past the headlines and stereotypes; to realize that she was experiencing the same dramas and challenges of adolescence as her non-Muslim peers [...]. (Abdel-Fattah qtd. in Abdel-Fattah, *Head* first page after the book cover)

Even though "[a]pproximately one quarter of the world's population is Muslim" (Robinson referred to in Baer and Glasgow 23), with Muslim Australians being "one of the fastest growing minority groups in the country" (Ho, *Islamophobia* 291), there is still a lack of representation of the lives of Muslim diasporans from the inside. A fact which Randa Abdel-Fattah, being an Australian of Muslim background, wanted to change as she believes that there is "an overwhelming thirst for alternative narratives" (Abdel-Fattah qtd. in Ameri 57) and that readers want "an insight into the Muslim community" (ibid.).

Using her novels *Does My Head Look Big in This?* and *Ten Things I Hate About Me* as the basis for an analysis of the representation of Muslims girls in contemporary Australian young adult literature, this thesis aims to focus on the aspects of identity and diaspora, trying to shed light on what it means to be a young girl of Muslim background in a secular country like Australia. What kind of challenges and struggles they encounter while trying to find their place in modern-day Australian society, how they respond to and deal with negative discourse on Muslims. This analysis will also focus on the question of how these teenage girls negotiate their identity/ identities and whether they embrace their diversity or not, whether a hybrid identity is actually possible for them and if so, how it can be best accommodated. While assessing the author's solution to this 'dilemma', an examination of the diversity of the Muslim diaspora will also be given, illustrating that struggles concerning identity do not know any boundaries regarding ethnic background, age or gender and that doubts about belonging are dealt with in manifold ways.

2 A Short History Of Australia

2.1 Introduction

Mackay, in his analysis of the Australian *zeitgeist* in the 1990s, paints a picture of a nation ridden by "The Big Angst" (15); the 1990s represent the "The Age of Anxiety" (ibid.), a decade which is defined by worries and insecurities about the state of the nation. He argues that "the present era seems fraught with the peculiar stresses created by a confused and diffused sense of identity, the lack of a consistent or coherent sense of purpose, and a growing feeling of isolation and even alienation among Australians – especially young Australians" (19). One particular reason that accounts for Australians' confused sense of identity is multiculturalism and Australia's consequent large number of immigrants; Mackay believes that Australians are worried about their Australian identity as there is widespread "anxiety in the Australian community about changes in the racial composition of the Australian population, about appropriate levels of migration, about the long-term consequences of multiculturalism and about Australia's relationship with the rest of the world – especially Asia" (154). Multiculturalism and Australia's large number of immigrants therefore seem to be the greatest challenges for its present-day society – as Mackay rightly points out: "[o]ne of the things we know about human beings is that, in general, they are resistant to change" (16).

However, most Australians who worry about the changing racial make-up of their country seem to have forgotten that at the core of Australia's history lies immigration; it is the steady influx of immigrants from all over the world that has turned their country into one of the wealthiest and most thriving nations. To demonstrate the importance of immigration to Australia, it has to be noted that "between 1800 and 1985, a third of the total increase in the population from 5,200 to 15.6 million came from immigration" (Docherty 81). Simply put, Australia always was – and still is – "an immigrant society" (Moran 10). Docherty validates this statement by claiming that "[i]mmigration is one of the central themes in Australian history" (18).

2.2 THE ORIGINS: ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, a large number of people already inhabited this vast continent for centuries. While white Australians considered their country "underpopulated and empty" (Docherty 12) for a long time, this is actually far from the truth. Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders are believed to have migrated from South East Asia to the northern parts of Australia about 60,000 to 80,000 years ago (Docherty 16), which truly makes them the first inhabitants of Australia. By 21,000 BC, as Docherty claims, they had made it to Tasmania, the most southern point of Australia (17) – this certainly highlights their centuries-old existence all over the continent.

As for their population numbers, there is widespread uncertainty and much speculation; while some historians claim that around 1788 (which marks the arrival of the First Fleet) the figures were around 300,000, others believe that the Aboriginal community counted as many as 750,000 (Docherty 17). What is certain though is that the number of Aborigines severely declined with the arrival of the first settlers and convicts; according to Docherty, diseases such as smallpox "had a devastating impact on the native population of Australia" (17). Morgan claims that smallpox killed approximately fifty percent of the population in the Sydney Cove region in the late 18th century (20). However, it is generally agreed upon that not only did various diseases reduce the number of Australia's Indigenous population, but that also "violence by settlers and the general destruction of the original environment by the process of settlement took away the Aborigines' traditional way of life in the best lands and forced a drastic decline in their numbers" (Docherty 17). On a more positive note, it has to be remarked that since the 1930s their population number has increased consistently (Docherty 17).

While this aims to demonstrate that Aboriginal people have been part of Australia for millennia and that Europeans were certainly not the first ones to arrive, "the modern story of Australia began with James Cook claiming New South Wales for Britain in 1770 and the British convict settlement at Sydney Cove in 1778. Aborigines were [simply] omitted from the story" (Morgan 1). Therefore, "when people talk about 'the history of Australia' they mean the history of the white people who have lived in Australia" (Murdoch qtd. in Morgan 1) as Aborigines, apparently, do not deserve to be included in the accounts of its history –

they represent the 'invisible' part of Australia's history, they were simply "not important in the early history of white settlement" (Crowley qtd. in Morgan 1).

2.3 WHITE SETTLEMENT

As already mentioned, for many people Australia's 'real' history began in 1770, with the arrival of White people, when Captain James Cook discovered and claimed the eastern part of Australia that is now known as New South Wales – the epicentre of modern-day Australia. Before Cook's arrival though, many sailors and captains from other European countries set eyes on this vast continent.

According to Docherty, the first Europeans to reach Terra Australis were the Portuguese; after reaching Timor, an island belonging to Indonesia, in 1514, they sailed to Australia several times, especially to the northern and western coast (9). However, they never showed any particular interest in populating the continent.

After the Portuguese's sighting of Australia, the Dutch as well as the French followed; the first time that the Dutch arrived in Australia was in 1606, which marks the first time Europeans actually set foot on this continent (Morgan 8). Slowly, "fascination [started to] spread in Europe about the location of the great southern land" (Morgan 9) and the French began to arrive there as well. However, "the turmoil of the French revolution and the European preoccupations of Napoleon allowed the British a free hand to incorporate all of Australia into their empire" (Docherty 10), meaning that 1770 marked a historical moment when James Cook's expedition arrived in Botany Bay, which lies just south of modern Sydney (Morgan 10). It took Cook only two months to chart parts of the east coast and to call that area New South Wales (Morgan 10). Australia was then claimed by the British and modern-day Australia was born on 26 January 1788, when the first 11 vessels carrying British convicts arrived in Sydney Harbour (Morgan 13). Docherty rightly states that "Australia was founded not as the land of the free, but as the land of the controlled" (10). Previously, the British government had sent convicts to North America (Docherty 10), but as that was not possible any longer, the British needed another far-away place where they could send their criminals to (Morgan 13). Australia seemed to be the perfect place for that and "[b]etween 1788 and 1868, over 160,000 convicts reached Australian shores, the peak period being the

quarter-century after 1815" (Morgan 14), thus starting the white European settlement of Australia.

The majority of the British convicts sent to Australia served seven-year terms for minor offences such as theft and other forms of petty crime, only a small number of convicts had committed heinous crimes such as rape or murder (Morgan 15). Most of them were male and "provided much-needed labour for building colonial settlements in Australia" (Morgan 15). Especially skilled convicts were of high value to this new nation as they were contributing to the economy and its development (see Morgan 15). Due to the stigma attached to it, Australians were highly ashamed of their convict history up until the 1960s and 1970s (Morgan 17), however, it is often overlooked that felons were actually able to make use of social mobility; according to Morgan, "[m]any convicts raised themselves up from an unpromising start in Australia to become respectable members of society. They were able to effect, in the main, a seamless transition into civilian life" (16).

After the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, white settlement was relatively low for the first thirty years (Morgan 17). It was only over the following seven decades that a remarkable population growth occurred; according to Morgan, "migration surged in the 1850s and 1880s" (18). Most of the immigrants arriving during that period were of British or Irish background, which made nineteenth-century Australia "multicultural but within an Anglo-Celtic context" (Morgan 18). The social landscape of Australia gradually began to change further; the 1850s were the era of the gold rush (see Morgan 37; Docherty 12-13) and that period "saw people from all walks of life and many occupations flock to the gold fields in search of their fortunes. [...] [T]hey came from Britain, Continental Europe, China, and the United States. Nationalities jostled together in gold-mining areas" (Morgan 37). Docherty notes that "[g]old transformed Australia. It attracted thousands of immigrants" (13). Australia experienced mostly a surge in Chinese migrants; apparently, "[t]he Chinese were the largest non-European immigrant group in 19th-century Australia" (Docherty 45) and "[a]lthough some Chinese arrived in Australia before 1850, it was the gold rushes of the next ten years that attracted large numbers" (ibid.).

Unsurprisingly, this sudden increase in immigrants from all over the world, especially the influx of the Chinese, resulted in racial tensions (Docherty 45). According to Docherty, "Australians saw Asia as a threat to their national interests. They saw their land as

underpopulated and empty, a tempting target for Asia's crowded millions. [...] [T]he Asian invader was at the door" (12). Up until then, the Australian population was mostly made up of British and Irish immigrants, as mentioned before. Therefore, for the majority of Australians, "Australian national identity was almost inseparable from British national identity" (Moran 82). Docherty agrees with this sentiment by stating that "until the late 19th century, [Australia was] a transplanted British society" (18). Australians were deeply proud of their Anglo-Celtic background and "[e]ven by 1914 a large part of Australia's elite in politics, law and education were British-born or had a British outlook on the world" (Docherty 18). Docherty stresses that

> [t]hese [...] facts are vital to an understanding of Australian history. They have done much to shape its social, political, cultural and economic framework. Here was an immigrant society cut off from its parent society by a long journey. [...] Distance from Britain fostered popular nostalgia for Britain among most immigrants [...]. Continued immigration from Britain reinforced these sentiments. Until the 1960s it was common in Australia for Britain to be referred to as 'home'. (18)

Up until the gold rush in the 1850s, "Australia settlement was 'insular'" (Moran 3), the sudden increase in immigration created in 'real' Australians "the need to preserve Australia's white Anglo-Celtic heritage and to exclude Asians from the nation" (Morgan 21) as "[t]he doctrine of the equality of man was never intended to apply to the equality of the Englishman and the Chinaman" (Barton qtd. in Morgan 21). This notion of exclusion became extremely important from 1901 onwards, the year which saw the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia (Morgan 21). Politicians such as Alfred Deakin, "Australia's first attorney-general and thrice prime minister" (Morgan 21), proclaimed that "Australia proposes to tolerate nothing within its dominion that is not British in character and constitution or capable of becoming Anglicized without delay" (Morgan 21-22). Consequently, those wishing to immigrate to Australia, but not meeting the criteria demanded by the Australian government, found that Australia's "policy is that of the closed door" (Morgan 22). The first two acts passed by the Commonwealth Parliament were the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1901 and the *Pacific Island Labourers' Act* in 1902, which aimed to regulate, i.e. throttle, the influx of foreigners (Morgan 22). While the first one, unofficially known as the 'White Australia Policy', excluded all non-Europeans from moving to Australia, the latter one decreed that islander groups such as Polynesians and Melanesians should be sent back to their home countries and furthermore should be banned from migrating to Australia after 1904 (Morgan 22). The idea behind this was that only the British, or generally people from an Anglo-Celtic background, were favoured as immigrants (Docherty 147). The 'White Australia Policy' was

active from 1901 until the late 1960s and according to Docherty, this "policy was based on a number of premises: the superiority of the white races; the expectation that the Aborigines [...] would eventually die out; and the need to protect Australian workers' living standards from low-cost Asian workers. It was also hoped to create a society free from racial divisions" (147). Moran has a similar understanding of this policy: "[t]hrough the White Australia Policy [...] the state sought to design the ethnic composition of the emerging nation, and so, as the argument went, ensure national unity and freedom from racial conflict. In addition, the White Australia Policy was meant to maintain the worker's paradise by preventing capital from importing cheap nonwhite labour" (24). The core principle of this policy was assimilation; newly-arrived immigrants were expected to adopt Australia's Anglo-Celtic values and beliefs and had to leave their own belief system and culture behind (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282). Unsurprisingly, policies like this resulted in critics referring to Australia as "Fortress Australia" (Allon 67, 72; Khoo 585).

To guarantee the success of the White Australia Policy and its attempts at excluding non-British people, the Australian government decided to use the "Dictation Test [...] from 1902 to 1958 as a way of excluding groups or individuals from immigrating to Australia. [...] [I]mmigrants could be given a dictation test in any European language, preferably one which they did not know" (Docherty 58). Morgan points out the sheer impossibility of passing that 50-word dictation test: "[a] language could be selected for Asian and other non-English-speaking immigrants in such a way that it was virtually impossible for the person to pass the test" (22). Due to this type of harassment Australia was quite successful at attracting mostly immigrants of British and Irish backgrounds until the 1940s (Moran 105). Asians represented too much of a "racial and cultural threat" (Morgan 22) and thus had to be kept at a distance. For a long time, Australia successfully managed "to produce and reproduce itself as a 'white nation', primarily through the exercise of racially discriminatory immigration policies" (Moran 10), making it obvious that people of a different background were simply not welcome.

2.4 A NEW ERA: MULTICULTURALISM

The immigration situation started to change after World War II; in 1958, the dictation test was finally abolished, thereby easing immigration restrictions, however, the 'White Australia Policy' continued to exist for almost another two decades (Morgan 23). Nevertheless, by 1958 Australia had certainly become more open and accepting towards immigrants from all backgrounds (Morgan 23). Soon after that, in 1966, the government undertook the necessary steps to finally make non-European immigration to Australia easier and in 1973 the 'White Australia Policy' was once and for all abolished: "race was removed as a factor in Australia's immigration policies and immigrants could obtain citizenship after three years' residence" (Morgan 23).

As a result, huge changes became visible in Australia's social landscape between 1947 and 1971; approximately 2.87 million immigrants arrived during that period, with 39% stemming from Britain, while 23% came from South Europe and 26% from the rest of Europe, most of them moving to major cities such as Sydney and Melbourne (Docherty 82). Australian society became more and "more dynamic and worldly" (Moran 4) and "cultural diversity" (Moran 4) thus became the national motto.

Australia, after World War II, was certainly turning into a proper "multicultural society" (Morgan 25). By abolishing the 'White Australia Policy' in 1973, Australia introduced the policy of multiculturalism which "aimed to impart equal opportunities to all Australians irrespective of their race, colour, ethnic origin or religion, and discrimination on these bases became unacceptable" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282). Basically, according to Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe, "Australia's multicultural policy has sought to [...] [build] a society that is both cohesive and supportive of the country's cultural diversity" (318).

Having just witnessed the devastating effects of World War II, which resulted in a lack of workers, Australia started a "mass immigration programme in 1947" (Moran 106) as invasion fears and worries about Australia being underpopulated became prevalent (ibid.). The Australian government soon realised though, to its own disadvantage, that they could not attract enough British immigrants to reach their goals, which caused them to look for willing

immigrants in other countries (Moran 106), as they had "to meet the employment needs of the strongly growing post-war economy" (Bouma 437).

Attempts to lure immigrants to Australia quickly became quite successful as "between 1947 and 1972, Australia's population almost doubled, from seven-and-a-half to thirteen million" (Moran 107). According to Moran, especially the number of immigrants from Asian countries increased considerably from the 1970s onwards (107), meaning that "[b]y the middle of the 1980s, immigrants from Asia made up 40 to 50 percent of the annual intake" (Castles and Miller qtd. in Moran 107). Especially "[s]ignificant numbers of Lebanese arrived in the 1960s and 1970s, and since then people from many different cultures and backgrounds have been migrating to Australia" (Moran 107). Morgan confirms these statements by claiming that the majority of recent immigrants have predominantly come from Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, Malaysia, India and Indonesia (26).

Naturally, "[t]his multicultural influx has altered the composition of the Australian population" (Morgan 26) and as of 2006 "almost one-quarter of people living in Australia had been born elsewhere" (ibid.).While multiculturalism has a positive ring to it, it is definitively "not a painless process" (Morgan 27) as some people certainly perceive it as a "threat of the outside world" (Moran 31). In former times, before the era of multiculturalism, immigrants were expected to assimilate, whereas these days the government is embracing "policies of integration, self-determination, self-management, and reconciliation in place of assimilation" (Moran 47). Before that, "[i]t was assumed that Australia was producing a unified culture and that all immigrants would, and should, desire to adapt to that mainstream culture, leaving much of their own culture and tradition, and their languages, behind" (Moran 108). Multiculturalism consequently upset many Australians in their understanding of how their society should operate as it meant a completely new approach to immigration. Naturally, this new relationship with multiculturalism has been "uneasy" (Moran 110); its concept certainly has not been met favourably by many Australians (ibid.). Multiculturalism has even caused a "period of anxiety" (Mackay 154) in Australian society as it stands in complete opposition to assimilation, which many people see as "the key to a successful immigration program" (Mackay 156). Worried Australians fear that a culturally diverse society "[creates] a divided, multicultural society with an increasingly fragmenting [sic] sense of identity" (Moran 114). Fozdar echoes a similar sentiment: multiculturalism, it is feared, may result in "social

fragmentation" (168). Especially the "Asianization" (Moran 116) of Australia is feared as Australians have always perceived their country as fundamentally British; "Australia saw itself [...] as a British society following British values, and in some respects, outdoing Britain in its Britishness" (Moran 117). Being British meant a lot to the critics of multiculturalism; by staying a British society

> the belief was that Australia could achieve and maintain an egalitarian society where everyone lived a decent life and would head in the one progressive direction. There would be no room for exploitation by race, color, or caste. Because everyone would expect the same out of life, there would be no room for undercutting working men's wages and conditions. The country would be free of the racial conflicts that marred other countries, and the 'crimson thread of kinship,' in other words shared British blood, would unite and keep all together, despite differences of opinion, belief, and station. One could look into the eyes of other citizens on the street, wherever one went in Australia, and understand them. That, at least, was the powerful and prevailing fantasy. (Moran 117-118)

Considering this idea of how Australian society should work, it must have been very upsetting for these opponents of multiculturalism to see the make-up of their society change so rapidly as especially "Asian immigration [...] has been contentious since the 1980s" (Morgan 27).

A point that these opponents miss though, is the fact that Australia has "always been multicultural" (Moran 120); while often 'forgotten', Aboriginal Australians had been living in the country long before the arrival of Anglo-Celtic people such as the British, the Irish and the Scottish, meaning that after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, people from quite dissimilar cultures and backgrounds had to learn how to share the same land. Also, it did not take very long for other ethnicities, such as the Chinese or the Germans, to arrive – the gold rush certainly guaranteed a diverse and varied social landscape. Hirst argues that exactly because of this – ethnic diversity from the earliest beginnings –

> Australian political culture had already developed the capacity to handle diversity, long before the mass migrations after the Second World War. Australians had found ways to accommodate and defuse ethnic and religious differences at the public culture level by separating church from state, ensuring public recognition of religious equality, and by providing nonreligious public education. It is these capacities, especially for tolerance, it has been argued, that Australians drew upon to maintain a cohesive society as the population became more ethnically diverse in the late twentieth century. (qtd. in Moran 120-121)

Apart from already being well-equipped for multiculturalism, this diversity also offers immigrants, especially those from a non-Anglo-Celtic background, a "point of identification with the nation" (Moran 127); immigrants who are new to Australia do not always have the feeling that it is an inclusive and open-minded country – multiculturalism, however, could change that. A multicultural policy, in the eyes of immigrants, therefore does not "[promote] separatism, but rather social inclusion and a new unity responding to the ethnic transformation of the Australian polity" (Moran 127). Multiculturalism therefore means being part of the larger Australian society; it can draw away the attention from differences by celebrating its citizens' diversity. Also, multiculturalism is a way of adapting to Australia's *zeitgeist* – ethnic diversity is happening and therefore has to be acknowledged as it is most certainly not going to cease anytime soon. Furthermore, diversity does not have to mean the end of Australian nationhood, but can rather function as its extension; Moran rightly claims that multiculturalism "does not mean the death of national identity, but [...] its realignment" (126), thereby supporting the idea that diversity is the natural development of a globalised country such as Australia and thus provides social inclusion for a large number of new immigrants.

Inclusion of immigrants aside, Moran, at the same time, maintains that in an increasingly culturally diverse Australia many of its citizens find themselves facing new fears and worries once they realize that the core structure of their society is changing (124). He argues that

> [m]any people live with the feeling, or the suspicion, that they no longer inhabit a place of complete familiarity. They must live with the fact that there are small pockets of ethnic 'strangeness' to which they have little or no real or imaginative access. Leaders and commentators may feel less sure that they can speak for all Australians, rather than merely for some sections of Australian society, in a public voice that assumes that the types of communication and general understanding are shared. (124)

Obviously, multiculturalism can fundamentally change the shape and form of a society and many people cannot come to terms with that - it certainly has the power to divide a society. Cultural and ethnic diversity pose somewhat of a 'threat' as they can change a nation's sense of identity; "Australian national identity [...] has become more complicated, even multifaceted" (Moran 125). With so many different ethnic groups embedded in Australian society a sense of unity can get lost. While for a long time Australia used to be considered British to its core, this is no longer accurate. As Australia has become one of the most ethnically diverse countries on this planet, the lines of Australian identity have blurred as a

result – in a country where more than 200 languages are spoken (NSW Government, Education & Communities para. 3), it has become impossible to define a 'typical' Australian.

Another possible explanation for Australians' aversion to multiculturalism is that "feelings of belonging to national community might become more intense when one experiences personal adversity" (Moran 56), which suggests that people feverishly try to hold on to their 'old' identity in times of changes or crises. Feelings of nationalism and patriotism become stronger when they are actually in danger of being lost. Especially globalisation, and the consequent mobility of people, has sparked this fear in many people;

> [f]or many people, the nation operates as a key form of enclosure, through which they are able to view and negotiate with the rest of the world. Globalization has thrown this key function of the nation as an imagined community into doubt. When globalization is perceived as a threat, as anything goes, as loss of control over one's place, the border becomes a crucial zone of defense. (Moran 194)

Globalisation and multiculturalism simply evoke fears of invasion in many Australian, which, considering Australia's colonial past, is not that surprising and maybe even justified. From the earliest colonial times onwards, Australians have been plagued by "invasion fears" (Moran 200), worrying that their country will easily be occupied by dangerous foreign nations. According to Moran,

> [t]his is one of Australia's oldest cultural habits: viewing the outside world as a threat and a danger, measured against the promise of paradise within. The sense of paradise and plenty has also given rise to the fear of envy, especially from the Asian world, which is Australia's closest neighbor, and has been expressed in the periodic outburst of invasion fears. [...] [T]his is coupled with the fantasy that all that is dangerous is *out there*, and that if Australians stay where they are, and can continue to keep the rest of the world at a distance, then they are safe from the world. (198)

Fears like these, mostly directed at Asians, have apparently haunted Australian society for a long time; especially after the gold rush in the 1850s – and the large number of Chinese flocking to Australia – Australians became "more aware of Asia and other parts of the world" (Morgan 80). This fear quickly developed into panic; the phrase "yellow peril" (Morgan 81) became very popular, highlighting Australians' fears about the power of their Asian neighbours and "that a nation founded on invasion could possibly be lost by invasion" (Ross 90). As a result, "Australia entered the 20th century with fears about its strategic isolation on the edge of Asia" (Morgan 81).

Allon supports the idea that this paranoia has existed for most of Australia's history and that – usually – every fear about immigration is linked to Asian immigration (71). The reason for this is simple; Allon explains that

> [b]oth Australia's sense of itself and its place in the world have, in other words, been shaped by this fundamental tension between its white, European identity and its Asian, non-European geographic location. The effect of this *psycho-geography*, [...] especially the sense of vulnerability accompanied by the fear or threat of invasion by non-European neighbours, is a long-standing 'invasion anxiety'. (71-72, emphasis in original)

Apparently, Australia's location is at the root of this fear; having considered itself a British nation for most of its history, Australia found itself isolated by its 'mother country', with no allies, such as the United States, close by. Aly and Walker support the idea of this fear being based on geographical isolation: "[a]s British settlers in a vast, often-perplexing and under-populated continent, they were increasingly aware that they lived in a crowded and predominantly Asian neighbourhood. Their supposedly empty spaces seemed to invite the unwanted attention of hostile outsiders, fertile soil for speculation about vulnerable borders, invasion and violation" (203).

This invasion anxiety is still very much observable in contemporary society and therefore was not a matter of concern in former colonial times only. One aspect of this anxiety certainly has not changed much; it is still mostly Asians that bear the brunt of this paranoia - Muslims after 9/11 in particular (Moran 191). Muslims have become the public enemy number one; according to Moran, "the Muslim had become fused into the one symbolic threat to the nation. If you let too many Muslims into the country, they would try to change the best things about it, such as its love of freedom" (191). Acts of terrorism performed by Muslims such as 9/11 or the Bali bombings – with the latter resulting in the deaths of many Australians – have "[changed] everything" (Allon 76) – especially the attitude of Australians towards Muslims. Australian Prime Minister John Howard proclaimed that "the Bali atrocity has left its mark on the consciousness of our nation – we understand that this was an attack on our values, our way of life" (qtd. in Allon 76). Threats to national security like this have certainly not helped the large number of Muslims living in modern-day Australia; these atrocities only confirmed some Australians' pre-existing concerns about Muslims. By declaring themselves multicultural, they feared that they would open their doors to people extremely dissimilar to

themselves, who are prone to violence and fanaticism and who are generally eager to harm Australian society.

To sum up, multiculturalism has obviously sparked "a fear of otherness and of 'outside' influences" (Allon 67) as foreigners are believed to pose a threat to the cohesion and stability of Australia's society. While some might get the impression that Australians are quite xenophobic, this is actually not the case according to Moran; he argues that Australians are not racists per se, but that concerns over immigration are 'normal' and the natural consequence of a globalised world. He claims that Australians' fears

> are not necessarily racist either, in any obvious sense. They are far more specifically situated fears and anxieties about the nature of a globalized world and perceived threats to national sovereignty, national borders, and, in the end, national identity that are shared by many people in countries throughout the world. They are fears about the loss of the things people value about Australia – the openness, friendliness, and civil peace. (200)

Wariness of immigrants is therefore not just an Australian problem – it is globalisation that has sparked this fear of other people, especially those whose culture, background and beliefs are quite unlike the ones one grew up with. World War II brought many new changes to Australian society – changes with which some parts of society still cannot cope. Unfortunately for Muslims, they are the ones who have to bear the brunt of this.

2.5 MUSLIM ARRIVAL

A fact that might come as a surprise to many people is that Muslims have been part of Australia's social landscape for much longer than anticipated; in fact, "Muslim contact with Australia predates European settlement" (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182). Stephenson confirms this statement: "Islam predates the arrival of Christianity in Australia" (94), which certainly "challenge[s] the accepted version of Australian historiography that takes the British presence as its cornerstone" (Ganter qtd. in Stephenson 94). Evidence for this can be found in the maps of 9th- and 10th-century Muslim cartographers and their inclusion of the northern parts of Australia (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182), suggesting that their familiarity with this continent dates back centuries. According to Woodlock, the first time Muslims definitely travelled to

Australia, and set foot on it, was around the mid-18th century, probably even earlier, when Muslim Macassan fishermen from Indonesia arrived on the northern shores of this vast continent, hunting for sea cucumbers as part of their annual travels (*Wellbeing* 182). Stephenson, however, claims that the Macassan fishermen started travelling to Australia as early as the 1600s (84-85), thereby demonstrating that Muslims have been part of Australia for much longer than is usually known by the general public.

As for the convict period – which started in 1788 – names of Muslims sailors and settlers can be found in numerous records, however, proof of their permanent settling is lacking, which is "most likely due to the need to assimilate as a survival tactic, or to their leaving the colonies after earning their passage home" (Cleland; Ganter qtd. in Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182). The next century, i.e. the 19th century, saw the arrival of Afghan cameleers who were the first Muslims to settle permanently (Stephenson 87). They "helped open up Australia's vast interior" (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182) as "[b]etween the 1860s and 1920s, the 'Afghans' with their strings of camels provided the most reliable means of cartage and transport in the arid interior" (Stephenson 87-88). Afghans aside, 19th-century Australia also experienced the arrival of Muslim Malays who worked in the pearling industry in Western Australia, as well as small numbers of Muslims from all over the world (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182). Additionally, Muslim Indians, who worked together with the Afghans, as well as Javanese cane-cutters, settled in Australia in the late 1800s (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1279). Kabir notes that "[w]hilst the Malays and Javanese practised the Islamic religion, they did not leave a landmark, as the Afghans had done as early as the late-nineteenth century: the camel-drivers constructed the first mosque at Marree, South Australia in 1882" (*Double Edge* 1279). Regarding the integration of Muslims into Australian mainstream society, it appears that Afghan immigrants, in particular, were not overly included as they were denied a very basic right: unlike other immigrant groups, i.e. white ones, they were forbidden bringing their own wives along (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1280). Clearly, Australia seemed more "willing to absorb the Irish [and the British] into its British community" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1280) than the Muslim immigrants, which is probably unsurprising considering that "[a]s early as 1912 the so called 'Moslem menace' was presented as cause for concern and a looming threat to Australia's cultural values" (Aly 29), thereby sparking fears in the Australian population that "an Islamic presence in Australia was incompatible with the values of a dynamic and

progressive Western civilisation" (Aly and Walker 206) – *Islamophobia* certainly appears to have quite a long history in Australia.

This first wave of Muslim immigration was followed by the period of the 'White Australia policy', starting in 1901, which resulted in the decline of "coloured immigrants" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1279), among them Muslims, of course. While this policy allowed Muslims to practice their religion freely, they had to "[face] a degree of discrimination in building mosques" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1279) – a problem which the Anglican and Catholic communities certainly did not encounter (ibid.). Soon after the turn of the century, during World War I, further restrictions were enforced on Muslims as "they were the 'enemy of the time'" (*Double Edge* 1281). Some Muslims immigrants, for instance, had to "register at the nearest police station" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1281) as part of *The War Precautions (Aliens Registration) Regulations 1916* (ibid.), revealing Australia's deep distrust of Muslims. Shortly after World War I, in the 1920s, European Muslims, Albanians in particular, started to arrive. While they did not face any difficulties in practising their religion, some Albanians were interned during World War II as they were assumed to pose a fascist threat to Australia (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1281). On top of that, some states, among them Queensland, forced Albanians to take on jobs that were assigned to them by the Allied Work Council, thereby strongly restricting this group of immigrants in their freedom (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1281).

The next influx of Muslim immigrants occurred after World War II, namely in the 1970s, once the strict immigration regulations were eased (see Kabir, *Double Edge* 1278; Ho, *Islamophobia* 291). After 1969 and 1970, it was mostly the Turkish and the Lebanese that started to arrive in large numbers (see Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282; Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182; Ho, *Islamophobia* 291). Muslims from countries such as Indonesia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iran, Sudan, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan and India also began to settle in Australia during that period (Saeed and Akbarzadeh qtd. in Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182). In addition, the number of Muslim women started to increase as well; while their number was quite low at first, it gradually began to rise after the two world wars (Yasmeen 44), with "[t]he process [accelerating] after the early 1970s" (ibid.).

Generally, the Muslim population in Australia saw an explosion in the 1980s (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282) – it "increased from 2,704 in 1947 to 76,785 in 1981 (Wafia and Kristy qtd. in

Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282). Expanding in number, Muslims slowly started to leave traces in the Australian culture; more and more mosques were built, as well as Muslim schools for their children – hence, "Muslims began developing an Islam with an Australian 'flavour'" (Bouma qtd. in Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182).

However, problems arose soon; "with the arrival of Muslims, whose values and culture were so different from the mainstream population, Australians gradually began to learn about the Muslim world, particularly through the media" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282). What Australians learned about Muslims was far from pleasant as the 1970s and 1980s saw a lot of turmoil in Muslim countries. Whether the Iranian Revolution in 1979 or the Gulf War in 1991 (see Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282; Saniotis 51), it was then that "Australia's detached interest in the Middle East developed into a concern over the emergence of Arab terrorism" (Aly and Walker 207) and that "[b]y the late 1970s the image of the Arab terrorist emerged as the dominant representation of the Middle East in Australia" (Brasted qtd. in Aly and Walker 207). Muslims in Australia certainly had to face some repercussions after these political events; "[t]he international news of 1979-91 gradually began to impact on Muslims in Australia, and manifested itself in resistance to Muslim attempts to build mosques" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1283) – which Muslims tended to interpret as racism (ibid.).

Despite various obstacles and their low initial numbers, Muslims have now become "one of the fastest growing minority groups in the country. Their numbers almost doubled in the decade to 2001, to more than a quarter of a million (281,578)" (Ho, *Islamophobia* 291). According to the 2006 census, there are now 340,393 Muslims living in Australia, which means that they account for 1.7% of the total population (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 243). Approximately 40% of them were already born in Australia (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182); they mostly live in capital cities such as Sydney (48%) and Melbourne (31%) and are "relatively economically disadvantaged" (Ho, *Islamophobia* 291). Australian Muslims are certainly quite diverse in their backgrounds; as of 2006, most of them were already born in Australia (128,904 out of 340,393), while the second largest group of Muslims comes from Lebanon (30,289), with the rest of them being born in Turkey (23,126), Afghanistan (15,958), Pakistan (13,821), Bangladesh (13,358), Iraq (10,039), Indonesia (8,656) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (7,542) (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 243). In addition, Australia also saw the arrival of Muslims

from African countries such as Sudan and Somalia "under refugee or humanitarian programs" (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 243) in the last thirty years.

With such an impressive number of Muslims living in Australia, it is obvious that "the Muslim community is in transition: from being characterized largely by immigration, to becoming an established and indigenized part of the Australian religious landscape" (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182). Nevertheless, Muslims still encounter many obstacles and have to "face scrutiny and questions about their ability to navigate inclusion in Australian society" (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 182). Australians continue to be distrustful of Muslims and their growing numbers and are worried about them being unable to adapt and integrate into mainstream society; Mackay states that "many Australians believe that the growing Muslim community represents a threat to the harmony of Australian society because its values and customs are so different from those of the host community" (161). The main point of difference is religion; according to Woodlock, "Muslim religiosity is seen as especially problematic" (*Wellbeing* 183) – Islam is basically at the root of all problems.

Fear of Islam and the consequent stereotypes have most definitely impacted Muslims and their everyday lives; discrimination is wide-spread and common, with Ho even talking about "racial vilification" (*Islamophobia* 291), as Muslims have been "positioned [...] as the 'Other'" (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 243) in contemporary Australian society. For some, Muslims simply represent the epitome of evil as they are believed to have a strong affinity for terrorism, violence and misogyny. Certain Australians view Islam "as culturally incompatible" (Humphrey 10) and "as standing in opposition to secular modernity" (ibid.). Despite the ethnic diversity of Muslim Australians, the majority of Australians are unable to acknowledge this; instead, they prefer to see all Muslims as one big group or, as Aly puts it, as a "religious monolith" (28). For Hughes, this is certainly a sign of "an increasing pattern of *Islamophobia* in Australia" (qtd. in Saniotis 56, emphasis added), which can be defined as the fear and unjust treatment of Muslims (and will be elaborated on in the next chapter).

3 MUSLIMS IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

> The key to the success of Australian multiculturalism is inclusiveness. Every Australian benefits from our diversity and all Australians have the right to be active and equal participants in Australian society, free to live their lives and maintain their cultural traditions. (Commonwealth of Australia qtd. in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 400).

The Australian government obviously likes to pride itself on its multicultural society and does not tire of maintaining the claim that all of its citizens are equal. After all, "it is considered chic for a nation to declare itself multicultural" (Mishra qtd. in Ameri 54). While, in theory, this policy of multiculturalism aims to offer a great life to every Australian citizen, reality looks quite different – particularly for Muslim Australians.

When it comes to this particular minority, many Australians have a strong opinion; whether in Facebook groups or newspaper articles, slogans and sentiments such as "F--- Off We're Full" (Woodlock, *Misplaced Fears* para. 2), "don't come here if you don't like our way of life" (Woodlock, *Misplaced Fears* para. 3) and "the problem is them" (Bolt para. 2) are wide-spread and common – inclusion is certainly not favoured by every Australian. One of the many reasons for Australians' dislike of Muslims is their fear of "uncontrolled Muslim immigration" (Sheridan para. 12) and the consequent 'explosion' of their numbers. Another concern Australians have about Muslims is their alleged lack of job or language skills as well as their culture which is believed to be fundamentally different from the Australian one (Sheridan para. 13) – Muslims are, simply put, unlike 'us'. Fear of Muslim immigration is in some cases that deeply rooted that Liberal politician Dana Vale, referring to non-Muslim women's use of abortion, exclaimed that "[w]e are aborting ourselves almost out of existence" (qtd. in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 395), thereby reinforcing the idea that Australia is currently experiencing a "clash of civilisations" (Huntington qtd. Aly and Walker 206), even "culture wars" (McKnight; Marr; Maddox referenced in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 395), and that Australian national identity is therefore in much danger.

As mentioned before, Australians' fears about Muslim immigration are based on cultural differences and their alleged lack of professional and language skills. According to Kabir, there are four additional factors that reinforce the idea that Muslims are an undesirable immigrant group: firstly, there is the economic aspect coupled with racism. Too many Muslims mean a lack of jobs for Australians – either by Muslims working cheaply or by dominating a certain field. The "second factor impacting on attitudes towards Muslims is the involvement of Australia as an ally (British or American) in conflicts with Muslim-majority countries overseas" (Kabir referred to in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 392). The concern here is national security; Australia's high levels of stability could be endangered by people coming from politically unstable countries. Thirdly, Australians are wary of Muslims because of their history of terrorism and violence against non-Muslims worldwide. Numerous terrorist attacks such as 9/11, the Madrid train bombings in 2004, the Bali bombings in 2002 and the London bombings in 2005 have made Australians highly suspicious of Islam and its followers. The last factor affecting attitudes towards Muslim is the negative discourse spread by the media and politicians; they often portray Muslims as a community unwilling to assimilate to the Australian way of life (see Kabir referred to in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 392-393).

All these factors certainly make Muslim Australians stand out as a minority group, which is in conflict with what Australian society expects from immigrants: immediate assimilation (Mackay 155). Generally speaking, Australians' attitudes towards their new fellow citizens can be summed up in the following way:

> Migrants are welcome, as long as they are prepared to embrace the Australian way of life and its values;
>
> Migrants are welcome as long as they make the learning of the English language a top priority;
>
> Migrants are welcome as long as they are not robbing Australians of jobs and other opportunities (including educational opportunities);
>
> Migrants are welcome as long as they leave their own racial and cultural tensions behind, and do not import prejudices and conflict into the Australian culture;
>
> Migrants are welcome as long as they are largely assimilated (with some tolerance for the preservation of 'quaint' ethnic customs and behaviour);
>
> Migrants are welcome as long as the culture they import (especially their food) enriches our culture and is accessible to us;

> Migrants are welcome as long as they do not lower the Australian standard of living (by imposing too much strain on our urban infrastructure, or on our welfare system). (Mackay 155-156)

Clearly, assimilation is expected from every single immigrant – they simply have to "become as invisible as possible" (Mackay 157) and leave their own cultures and traditions behind by acculturating to their new host society. This, however, is certainly not easy for many Muslims Australians as markers of their religion, such as the veil, make them quite a visible group. Consequently, many Australians believe the inclusion of Muslims impossible as they "consider [them] to be the most difficult of all foreigners to integrate" (Sartori referred to in Ameri 54) since "they prioritise religion in every aspect of their lives" (Ameri 54).

In defence of Muslims, it has to be noted that "[i]n an ideological climate of suppression, the ethnic groups concerned may seek to reinforce their cultural identity by clinging steadfastly to their heritage and discouraging interaction with other groups, in a way that strengthens the cultural borders that separate them from others" (Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe 319), meaning that when newly-arrived immigrants are expected to assimilate, they are worried about erasing their 'old' identities and therefore desperately try to hold on to it. Immigrants are therefore not always willing to eradicate all traces of their former life, which then, naturally, causes problems with the new host society. This certainly poses a challenge to both sides of Australian society and has definitely led to Muslims encountering numerous obstacles – obstacles which are believed to be the consequences of *Islamophobia*.

3.2 ISLAMOPHOBIA

According to numerous sources, Muslim Australians these days have to face a lot of discrimination as well as racism in their everyday lives, challenges which they believe are due to the rising "presence of *Islamophobia*" (Ameri 53, emphasis added) in Australian society. Before elaborating on the various reasons behind *Islamophobia*, a definition of this term, which was "coined in the late 1980s" (Runnymede Trust 1), has to be given. G. D. Bouma, for instance, defines *Islamophobia* as the "aim [...] to discredit Muslims and, in Australia, to instil fear in Australians about their neighbours, fellow Australians who in fact are well known not

to promote or engage in violence. In this case, the term '*Islamophobia*' refers to the outcome of a 'negative othering' discourse, aimed at eliminating the other from the society" (438, emphasis added). For Bouma, *Islamophobia* is about differentiating the Muslim part of society from the Anglo-Celtic one, its goal is to reinforce the notion of 'us' versus 'them', with white Australians being the embodiment of good, law-abiding citizens while Muslims are seen as the havoc-wreaking counterpart.

Most importantly, *Islamophobia* is to be defined as the "dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, [the] fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (Runnymede Trust 1). Furthermore, it "refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam. It refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs" (Runnymede Trust 4). This dislike of Muslims has become so common in Western societies that a term like *Islamophobia* had to be coined; "anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed so that it can be identified and acted against" (Runnymede Trust 4).

According to a report conducted by the Runnymede Trust, a think-tank based in England, the consequences and repercussions of *Islamophobia* are various and multifaceted and include:

- **Injustice**: because of the widespread fear and dislike of Muslims they usually do not have the same rights as non-Muslim citizens, thus barring them from social inclusion.

- **Effects on the young**: as the media continue to spread a negative image of Islam and its followers, young Muslims develop a sense of inferiority and thus might fall prey to extremist groups.

- **Dangers of disorder:** social disorder is another consequence of *Islamophobia* and can result in high costs for the government.

- **Muting of mainstream voices**: mainstream voices, as well as voices within Muslim communities, are muted because of *Islamophobia*, which can result in Muslims adopting extremist groups' views due to a lack of alternate influences.

- **Waste in the economy**: discrimination against Muslims means that a lot of talent is wasted. This can have negative consequences for the economy as well as for international trade.

- **Obstructing cooperation and interchange**: tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims can cause a lack of cooperation between these groups and therefore prevent them from jointly developing solutions for problems that they share (e.g. urban poverty).

- **Harming international relations**: while multiculturalism strengthens a nation in various aspects, *Islamophobia* has the opposite effect and can therefore result in weaker economic, political and cultural ties with other countries. (see Runnymede Trust 12, bold in original, emphasis added)

As evident, the consequences of *Islamophobia* are various and can have a negative impact on all aspects of a society. Westerners' aversion to Muslims is so widespread these days – especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks – that Muslims' everyday lives have become laden with numerous struggles and challenges, most of which will be explored in the next sections of this chapter. However, before enumerating the various consequences of *Islamophobia*, the concept of *Orientalism* needs to be addressed and explored.

3.3 ORIENTALISM

While *Islamophobia* is a relatively recent term, a similar concept has been known for much longer: *Orientalism*. *Islamophobia* came into existence as a result of recent terrorist attacks, which have, without a doubt, intensely damaged the image of Muslims worldwide and positioned them as the scapegoats of Western societies. Muslims, however, have actually been demonised for much longer; this 'negative othering' of Muslims dates back to former colonial times, i.e. centuries. Western nations have been preoccupied with the 'wrongdoings' of this religious community for such a long time that scholars began to take great interest in this matter and that *Orientalism*, the "western representation of the East" (Bryce 100), was born.

The main scholar and driving force behind this "study of the Orient" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 104) is Edward W. Said, who claimed that the West's interest and preoccupation with Muslims is not just general interest, but rather a matter of power relations and dominance; *Orientalism* is not just a way of "coming to terms with the Orient" (ibid.), and thus with Muslims, but it is essentially all about "power structures [...] [that turn into] forms of colonialism and imperialism" (ibid.).

According to Said, the relationship between the East and the West, i.e. Muslims and non-Muslims, has been one "of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5), by which he implies that the alleged viciousness of Muslims is not based on the truth (and never was), but that this type of representation is to be blamed on the West's craving for dominance and superiority. By demonising Muslims and the East, Europe had hoped to achieve a system of hierarchy and submission. To guarantee the success of this system, Muslims became the Other, the antonym of Westerners ('us'). While the West (the Occident) represents the Self, the 'normal', the East (the Orient) stands for 'otherness'; they deviate from the norm, the Self, and are therefore the Other. *Orientalism* simply highlights this "binary opposition between Europe's [sic] and its other" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 104). Consequently, the Other is "naturally different from, and properly subordinate to, a dominant category of normal self" (Ramazanoğlu qtd. in Zannettino 108). By developing these binary oppositions, a hierarchical system is formed in which the Self is privileged, while the Other is not (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 103). The Self is therefore a positive term, whereas the Other – "be it female, black, non-European – is constructed as its negative reflections" (Childs and Fowler referred to in Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 105). Consequently, "the self is the colonialist and the Other is the colonized" (Loomba referred to in Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 105). The West therefore glorifies itself as the one in power, whereas the East is portrayed as weak and ineffective as the Self "has [the] upper hand to define [and to] reconstruct the passive, silent and weak Other" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 103).

The opposition between these two categories can further "be translated to the Occident/Orient, us/them, The West/the rest, center/margin, metropolitan/colonial subjects, vocal/silent" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 105), which demonstrates that "Western metaphysics is based on binary oppositions, a hierarchy in which one is privileged and the other is unprivileged" (ibid.). Clearly, Europeans have thus constructed their sense of identity, the Self, in relation to the Other; "Said argues that *Orientalism* has helped Westerners to define a European self-image" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 105, emphasis added). Zannettino confirms Said's idea by stating that "the Arab 'other' is given meaning through its relationship to the normative 'one'" (108) – and vice versa, meaning that identity is formed when comparing and contrasting oneself to others who are believed to be different. Unfortunately though, these contrasts are always tied to power relations – just like in the case

of Muslims, who were (and still are) believed to be not only different, but also malicious and inferior, thereby allowing the West to position itself as their superior counterpart.

Due to this process of 'negative othering', "the colonizers treat the colonized as 'not fully human', and as a result, it dehumanizes natives" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 105) – Muslims are consequently labelled as "savages" (ibid.). By vilifying Muslims, the West gained a lot; depicting them as evil certainly helped them to gain power. It provided them with an excuse to colonize the East; this way they could easily "justify colonialism and the 'civilising mission' of the West" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 54). Hence, *Orientalism* is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3) as "[t]he former [i.e. the Westerners] dominate; the latter [i.e. the Orientals] must be dominated" (Said 36).

Certainly, if one is to believe the "recurring images and clichés" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 103) propagated by Europe, then the Orient definitely needed to be saved from itself; one popular belief was, and still is, that "Muslims were prone to violence, incapable of rational thought, untrustworthy, devious and unclean" (Rotter 1205). Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian describe similar stereotypes; according to them, the "Orient is [...] everything that the West is not, exotic, alien, dangerous, unreliable, to be tamed, exhibited, a threat to the West" (105). Other misconceptions spread by Europeans included the idea that "Islam is a violent religion, promotes coercive forms of conversion, grew by the sword, is associated with heightened sexuality and perverted practices, and is irrational, incapable of democracy, essentially untrustworthy, antiscientific" (Daniel; Lyons referred to in Bouma 433). Christina Ho, a university lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney, agrees with the previous statements; referencing Said, she notes that "the Orient has long been seen as a site of despotism, irrationality, backwardness and the mistreatment of women" (*Cronulla* para. 52).

Considering these statements, it appears that Westerners believed (and probably still do) that Muslims lack a sense of intelligence and rationality, that they are simple-minded and therefore need to be 'rescued'. Muslims' topmost priority, according to the West, has always been religion; their belief blinds them, they are fanatics and therefore prone to violence and irrationality. This alleged obsession with Islam also entails misogyny, the belief that women are inferior and subordinate. Apparently, women of the Orient are regarded as second-class

citizens by fellow Muslims – these women, according to Orientalist writings, are therefore "infantilised and oppressed" (Abdel-Fattah and Carland para. 1). The Oriental woman is basically mute; "she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for her and represented her" (Said 6, emphasis in original). Oriental women are thus passive, weak victims of an unjust male system, part of a society that does not have any respect left for them; these women therefore need to be saved so that "the thoughtful white man/Australia [can come] to the rescue of the powerless female Other" (Pearce 59), which would certainly place Europeans in the superior position.

Said, in his critical work *Orientalism,* criticises the previously mentioned accusations against Muslims and makes clear that these Western ideas about the Orient are merely an artificial construct, "a European invention" (1), and therefore do not correspond to the truth. Europeans, in his opinion, "have misrepresented the Orient" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian 104), the consequent clichés and stereotypes have been "institutionalized since at least the eighteenth century as a feature of [Europe's] cultural dominance" (ibid.). For Said, *Orientalism* is certainly far from a truthful representation of Muslims and the Orient, but instead reveals more about those spreading these stereotypes; they are the ones who own all the power and therefore have the means to create and spread these false images – all of this only to meet their needs, i.e. their thirst for power and dominance. As a result of this, *Orientalism*, "while ostensibly 'about' the Orient, really tells us more about the machinery that produced this discourse" (Pearce 58) as Said believes that *Orientalism* "has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (12). The 'real' Orient and its inhabitants do not correspond to the images spread in Orientalist writings; *Orientalism* is only a construct, an invention to serve the needs of the more powerful West.

In conclusion, Said repeatedly emphasises that *Orientalism* is not a truthful representation of Muslims at all – he doubts that something like that can even exist by arguing that

> the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many things besides the 'truth', which is itself a representation. (272, emphasis in original)

Clearly, *Orientalism* simply cannot be a truthful representation of all Muslims; trying to represent a group objectively is more or less impossible as those who present this alleged 'truth' are usually the ones possessing all the power and are quite likely pursuing their own interests. A representation can therefore never be neutral, it is subject to too many influences and interests − be they of economic, political or religious nature. In order to avoid these discrepancies in representation, Muslims should be given a voice, they should not be represented by others only, but should rather be enabled to speak for themselves − which is why the literary works of authors such as Abdel-Fattah, even if 'only' fictional, are so significant, especially to non-Muslims who are yearning for an insight into the 'real' Muslim world.

3.4 MUSLIMS AND THEIR EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

As mentioned before, public discourse on Muslims is − and has been for a long time (see chapter 3.3 on *Orientalism*) − extremely dominated by negative attitudes, causing many scholars to use the term *Islamophobia* to denote the severity of the backlash that Muslims have to face these days, even in a country such as Australia, which officially employs a policy of multiculturalism.

According to Ho, an Australian university lecturer focusing on the situation of Muslims in Australia, the "top billing for racial vilification [since the early 2000s] has passed to Muslim Australians" (*Islamophobia* 291). This is mostly to be blamed on various terrorist attacks committed by radical Muslims; there is no doubt that these atrocities have "contributed to the stigmatising of Muslims residing in the West, and this has resulted in repercussions against Muslim Australians" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1284). Unfortunately, many law-abiding and innocent Muslim citizens around Australia still have to face the repercussions of this, even though most of them cannot stress enough that they do not want to be associated with radical Islam in the slightest (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1294).

Regardless of their repeated assertions, many Muslim Australians find themselves subjected to "exclusion and hostility" (Celermajer, Yasmeen and Saeed 4) in Australian society. A

sentiment which is echoed by Woodlock, who claims that the obstacles this minority has to endure range from "feeling excluded by others" (*Aussie Mossie* 401) to pure "ignorance, racism and prejudice" (ibid.). Fozdar refers to such instances as "everyday racism" (179); experiences which include, but are not limited to, "people calling out from cars, harassing women on trains and so on" (ibid.). In a country where Muslims are being vilified as "Satan's strongholds" (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 247) by a handful of Christians, it is not surprising to hear about Muslim Australians "[experiencing] various forms of harassment, ranging from physical assaults, damage to property [...], racial vilification in public, 'hate' mail, death threats and unwarranted police attention" (Saniotis 53). Muslim Australians also encounter many obstacles when trying to obtain approvals for building mosques, schools and other institutions (Bouma 438).

According to Kabir, it is particularly Muslims who are 'visible' in their religiosity that are met with hostility;

> [t]here had been reports of physical and verbal abuse towards traditionally dressed Muslim women – particularly in Sydney and Melbourne – during the 1990-91 Gulf Crises, but such abuse increased three- to four-fold after 9/11. Incidents such as bus drivers not stopping at the bus stop to pick up veiled women, people pulling off the *abaya*, and yelling 'wogs', 'go home', 'towel heads', or 'ninja' at Muslim women, were not uncommon during the 1990s. After 9/11, however, reports of more serious vilification were heard: people turning their dogs loose on veiled women, throwing a carton or bottle of milk at them, intimidating them in shopping malls or public places, firing them from their jobs, severing ties with their neighbours when they learnt they were Muslims, punching a girl in the eye (with subsequent loss of vision), calling them 'terrorists' and yelling 'go back to Al-Qaeda'. (*Double Edge* 1285, emphasis in original)

Kabir is certainly supported in his claim that visibility makes Muslims more vulnerable to harassment; according to the Runnymede Trust, Muslims are more likely to become victims of attacks when they are "wearing [distinctive] Islamic dress or symbols" (41). Hence, it is particularly Muslim women and girls who are targeted and subjected to verbal assaults. Enduring verbal abuse is not the only challenge these women have to put up with; Kabir reports that a large number of them have been unable to find employment opportunities, even at the local supermarket, because of them wearing the veil (*Muslim Youth* 248; 255). Randa Abdel-Fattah, a Palestinian-Egyptian-Australian-born Muslim author and lawyer who is frustrated by these obstacles, laments that "[i]t doesn't matter how long the lists of academic qualifications and credentials run in their résumés, they simply cannot obtain employment

because we all know that a piece of material covering the hair strips a woman of the ability to communicate intelligently, pursue a career, work a remote control" (*Material World* para. 17). Abdel-Fattah's sentiments are certainly backed up by statistics; Kabir notes that there is a significant discrepancy between the unemployment rates of Muslims and British/Irish-born Australians as in 1996, for instance, 25.2% of Muslims were unemployed nation-wide, whereas only 7.7% of Australians from a British background found themselves in the same position – regardless of them having a roughly similar set of qualifications and skills (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1290). While these statistics are slightly outdated, the numbers have probably not changed for the better lately (especially not after 9/11), which only supports the idea that Muslims, particularly women wearing the *hijab*, have to "face discrimination in the workplace" (Ali 519).

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that "visibility can be a barrier to social inclusion" (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 256). Kabir nevertheless tries to avoid putting the blame on white Australians only by acknowledging the various reasons why Muslims are facing obstacles at the job market; possible explanations range from a lack of English language skills to economic recessions and to Muslims' "shorter period[s] of stay" in Australia (*Double Edge* 1292). Whatever the ultimate reasons might be, there is no doubt about the gravity of Muslim unemployment and its consequences for the community; unemployment equals financial troubles, which in turn can lead to child poverty and which already is, according to Hassan, twice the national average among Muslims (referred to in Fozdar 171). Jobless youths – of which there are quite many among Muslim Australians – pose a further problem to society; if young Muslims cannot find employment, there is the risk of them being "drawn to anti-social behaviour and even to terrorism" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1293). Furthermore, if problems like these persist, the "integration process will slow down" (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 255) and prevent Muslims from integrating into mainstream Australian society. Fozdar believes that "segregation [...] [is] the root of the problem" (168) and therefore "recommends the promotion of social cohesion through greater knowledge of, contact between and respect for, different communities, as well as a stronger sense of citizenship" (ibid.).

3.4.1 THE VEIL AND MISOGYNY

> So what connects women's rights and an anti-Muslim agenda? According to this logic, Islam is a misogynistic religion that oppresses women. In Australia and around the world, Muslim women are oppressed by being 'forced' to wear the hijab and supposedly being confined to the home; in the West, *non-Muslim* women are oppressed by Muslim men who are seen to be predisposed to perpetrating sexual violence, raping and harassing women at the beach, on the streets, and in public generally. (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 11, emphasis in original)

Most critics seem to agree on one crucial aspect: Islam is an inherently misogynistic religion. Whether the women concerned are Muslim or non-Muslim does not really matter; followers of Islam disrespect any and every female on the basis of their alleged inferiority – that, at least, is the popular belief. It is this supposed misogynistic attitude that is responsible for the fact that many Muslims experience *Islamophobia* in Western countries these days. Misogyny has actually become one of the main arguments against Muslim immigration in countries like Australia as it is feared that Muslims will only "[import] misogyny" (Walker qtd. in Ho, *Islamophobia* 292) and thus change Australia's society for the worse.

Muslims, out of all immigrant groups, are believed to have the worst attitudes towards women and therefore do not fit into Australian society (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 16). Because of this alleged misogyny, "Muslim women are represented as [...] passive victims of an oppressive culture" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 70). Not only are they passive, Muslim women simply do not have a voice; "they are unable to speak for themselves" (Aly and Walker 208) as they are governed by a patriarchal system that mutes them.

Ho criticises that many Australians these days perceive misogyny as completely un-Australian; whenever somebody commits a crime against women, the blame is immediately put on immigrants and their "anti-female attitudes" (McMahon qtd. in *Cronulla* para. 28). So, if Muslim men, for instance, rape Australian women then these atrocities are not just seen as crimes against those women, but they rather become "crimes against Australia" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 30) – "therefore making them *a particularly un-Australian crime*" (ibid., emphasis in original). Ho then points out that it is certainly not just Muslims who are misogynistic, but that sexual crimes against women get much more attention when committed by Muslims (*Cronulla* para. 36). She also argues that ethnicity does not influence people's proneness to

violence at all as there is absolutely no link between one's ethnicity and one's likelihood to commit a crime – a fact that has been confirmed by numerous criminologists (*Cronulla* para. 40). Consequently, "bad attitudes to women are not confined to any particular cultural group. Therefore having a Lebanese or Muslim upbringing does not predispose you to committing sexual violence" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 45).

However, for many, the proof of Islam's misogyny can be found in the veil, also known as *hijab*, as "there [is] no greater symbol of the oppression of Muslim women than the veil" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 54) and has therefore become *the* image of Islam (Aly and Walker 207-208, emphasis added). While the Oxford English Dictionary defines the veil as "[a]n article of attire consisting of a piece of thin cloth, silk, or other light fabric, worn, especially by women, over the head or face either as a part of the ordinary head-dress, or in order to conceal or protect the face; now usually a piece of net or thin gauzy material tied to the hat and completely covering the face in order to protect it from the sun or wind" (Oxford University Press def. 2a), it has now turned into a symbol of women's oppression by Muslim men – it is a "a signifier of female imprisonment and difference" (Pearce 59). Unsurprisingly, the veil is "one of the most essentialised and overburdened cultural symbols of our time" (Dreher and Ho vii) as it represents the oppressiveness of Islam which forces the *hijab* on women "regardless of their wishes" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 75). Due to this oppression the veil has the power to mute women, to take their voices away as "the veil is the shroud through which the muffled voices of Muslim women struggle to be heard" (Aly and Walker 208). Consequently, the *hijab* is a symbol of "'Third-World looking' backwardness" (Hage qtd. in Poynting 380) and therefore demonstrates Muslims' alleged reluctance towards integration (Poynting 384).

Another problematic aspect regarding the veil is that it is also "associated with the fear of the Other" (Yegenoglu referred to in Pearce 59) as women wearing the *hijab* are "the embodiments of this dangerous otherness" (Khoo 584). By wearing the veil they make themselves visible and consequently position themselves as different from non-Muslim women, who represent the majority of Australian society. Muslim women therefore become the symbol of this much-feared 'otherness'.

Besides overt misogyny, many Australians also fear for the secularity of their country that they see threatened by women wearing the veil; for most Australians religion is an entirely

private matter and therefore should not be made public (Dreher and Ho v). If Islamic symbols such as the veil become more and more common and wide-spread, then the "Islamification of Australia" (Aly and Walker 210) is certainly not far way.

However, many scholars note that the situation for women wearing the veil is quite complex; Muslim women are not just the "'victims' (of the Taliban regime, silenced and oppressed)" (Khoo 584), they are also the "'perpetrators' (upholders of fundamental precepts, which quickly came to be perceived as sources of terrorist motives)" (ibid.). Considering this "paradoxical position" (Zannettino 96) that Muslim women find themselves in, Aly and Walker argue "that the veil represents both oppression and dissention [sic]" (210). The Muslim woman is therefore "simultaneously the victim of Islamic tradition and a powerful signifier of its existence and perpetuation" (Zannettino 97). Apparently, Muslim women only have two roles to choose from; they can either be oppressed and naive, or they are vicious followers of Islam who, by wearing the veil and everything it stands for, only confirm what is 'wrong' with this religion – neither of which is particularly flattering.

Lama Abu-Odeh, a professor of law at Georgetown University, consequently tries to argue against this duality by claiming that "a veiled woman is not necessarily either this or that. She could shift from one position to the other. At times colourful, other times bland, seductive and prudish, public and private. A veiled woman's subjectivity appears to be much more complicated than the simple word of the veil can possibly convey" (qtd. in Zannettino 105). According to this, Muslim women should not be pinned down to a single aspect – even if wearing a visible marker of their religion, they can be – and are – just as diverse as any other group of women. Just because a piece of cloth is covering their head, does not automatically mean they are oppressed and lack intelligence. While it is certainly easy to fall prey to the current negative discourse on Islam and its followers, the veil should not "[prevent] us from seeing that there are strong, savvy, and independent Muslim women who live all around us" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 76) and that they are far from being "passive, muted, oppressed dimwit[s]" (Abdel-Fattah, *Material World* para. 1).

While the advantage of wearing the veil is that women can feel closer to their religious community, it can also, more negatively, separate them from the rest of Australian society and therefore "disconnect [them] from the dominant culture and from the more Westernised

aspects of [their] identity" (Zannettino 105). Considering the 'Islamophobic' discourse that is widespread in modern Western societies, it is not surprising that many Muslim women wearing the veil are subjected to discrimination and harassment (see section 3.4, page 30). Apparently, "putting a scarf over your head [...] can undermine your physical safety" (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 63) these days.

Another frequent occurrence is that many of these women get asked whether they were forced by their husbands to wear the *hijab* (Abdel-Fattah, *Material World* para. 13), which proves just how many misconceptions are circulating in Western societies, having consequently resulted in calls for the ban on it (Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 394; Aly and Walker 212).

Interestingly though, increasing numbers of girls and women, especially from the second-generation, are deciding to wear the veil (Ali 515). Ali claims that while most Muslim women in the United States still do not wear the veil (this can quite probably be applied to Muslims in Australia as well), it has become more and more common since the early 1990s (517). Both Ho and Ali state that many Muslim females decide to wear it even against the wishes of their parents and families who fear the negative consequences that might arise from this decision (*Cronulla* para. 74; 519).

While Muslim women wearing the veil are believed to be oppressed, they claim that the opposite is actually the case. For them, the veil is about liberation and agency, wearing it allows them to develop their own identities without having men invading their space (Pearce 60). Therefore,

> wearing a *hijab* is an act of empowerment. Wearing a *hijab* gives them the freedom from being objectified by men – the freedom to be respected for their intellect and capacities as a person, rather than for their appearance. Wearing a *hijab* is also about expressing who you are, expressing your identity. This is one of the reasons why so many young women are wearing the *hijab* now – and research suggests this is happening in many Western countries. As a response to racism from society, young women want to wear the *hijab* as a statement of pride in their community and beliefs. (Ho, *Cronulla* para. 72-73, emphasis added)

The veil simply provides these girls and women with a safe place where they can develop and establish a sense of identity without being disturbed by others – particularly men – in this process. It represents a safe haven to these women, a place where they are not judged for their

appearances, but for their intelligence. Wearing the veil is therefore seen as a sign of "independence and assertiveness" (Poynting 384) as it certainly "takes courage [...] to wear it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Material World* para. 63) and "is not an easy decision to make" (Ali 518). Another common reason for wearing the veil is that women feel that it will bring them closer to their religion and Allah – it simply "fulfills a religious commitment" (Ali 517).

These reasons aside, according to Ali there are four more explanations for the growing number of women wearing the *hijab*:

> [f]irst, the rise of multiculturalism has given space to, and legitimated, the *public* expression of ethnicity. Second, as the Muslim population has grown and become more politically involved, Muslim attitudes have changed. Third, the first Persian Gulf War, the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, and the 1993 bombing and 2001 destruction of the World Trade Center served as catalysts for a reevaluation among Muslims of what it means to be Muslim. Finally, there has been a shift in how Islam is being taught to, and read by, young Muslims. (521, emphasis in original)

Especially reason number one can be applied to the Australian context; while there is still a lot of prejudice against foreigners in general, multiculturalism is now something to be proud of – Australia loves to boast about its multiculturalism, the diversity of its people and languages. Multiculturalism these days is not only an official government policy, but it has become a "chic" (Ali 522) topic. This attitude has consequently influenced the mindset of Muslims growing up in present Australia; being ethnic is now something to be proud of as they no longer have to hide their ethnicity.

Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe, however, offer another explanation for the rise of the *hijab*; they argue that in a "climate of suppression" (319) members of an ethnic minority group tend to cling on to their cultural identity; the more resistance they encounter, the more they are afraid of losing their heritage and therefore resolutely try to keep it alive. Branscombe and Ellemers argue in a similar way; they believe that "[w]hen disadvantaged group members perceive themselves as being rejected in a variety of situations because of discrimination on the part of the dominant group, they feel both more hostility toward that outgroup, and they increasingly identify with their minority group" (qtd. in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 399). They confirm that in a climate of hostility ethnic members of society fear for their heritage and cultural identity – particularly when they are met with resistance. Wearing the veil, for instance, is certainly one way of attempting to preserve one's cultural background.

To conclude, it has to be pointed out that wearing the veil cannot be equalled with Muslim women's rejection of an Australian identity; it only means that they do not want to abandon their heritage altogether, that part of their identity that they inherited from their parents and grandparents. Wearing the *hijab* does not exclude the possibility of a hybrid, multi-faceted and versatile identity – on the contrary. According to Woodlock, many Muslim Australians do not see a conflict between their Australian and Muslim identities; in fact, they "work greatly together" (*Aussie Mossie* 401). Abdel-Fattah also urges people to realize that Muslim women wearing the veil do not represent a threat to the cohesion of Australian society at all, and that this garment has absolutely "no bearing on the competence, skills and intelligence of a person" (*Material World* para. 27). The problem is that the *hijab* has become an extremely loaded cultural symbol that prevents people from seeing Muslim women for who they really are. After all, "Muslim identity is too complex to be reduced to a matter of clothing" (Ameri 60).

3.4.2 TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE

Besides the veil, another frequent argument against Muslim immigration is their link to violence and terrorism. Considering the current public discourse on Muslims, Abdel-Fattah's claim that Muslims have become "a prefix to terrorism, extremism, radicalism, any ism" (*Material World* para. 83) is certainly valid. One look at the news seems to confirm this allegation; not only is the public constantly bombarded with images of terroristic acts committed by radical Muslims, but conflicts happening in Middle Eastern countries are omnipresent as well – all these incidents have certainly negatively affected the image of Muslims worldwide. However, negative depictions like that have existed for a long time; as criticised by Said, especially Muslims – out of all religious groups – have been subject to prejudice for centuries, with them being depicted as barbaric, violent and backwards.

As for the modern times, the Australian media started to take an interest in Muslims and the Middle East in the late 1970s. Sparked by the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and continued by other events such as the 1991 Gulf War or the occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the media gradually began to focus on the Islamic threat posed by these Arab countries and their citizens (see Aly and Walker 207; Ali 524; Kabir, *Double Edge* 1282-1283). As a result of this

negative news coverage, "Australians became more interested in and more fearful of the Muslim world" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1283), which was increasingly thought of as a threat to a modern and progressive country such as Australia. Muslims were increasingly linked to terrorism and fundamentalism as "[t]he media repeatedly invoked images of fanatical Muslims poised not only to cleanse their own societies but ultimately to Islamise the world, instil religious law and annihilate Western liberal democracy" (Aly and Walker 207). As a natural consequence of this, suspiciousness became extremely frequent and wide-spread.

However, while "[t]he Islamic threat to Australia was a recurring theme in the popular media [...] [it] did not emerge as a serious threat until the 1990s" (Brasted referred to in Aly and Walker 207). Terrorist attacks such as 9/11, which saw the destruction of the World Trade Center and resulted in the deaths of about three-thousand people, made Muslims the centre of constant media attention again. Other events committed by radicals such as the London (2005) and Bali bombings (2002) certainly did not counteract Australians' already negative perception of Muslims (Ameri 53). On the contrary; "Islam is daily conflated with terrorism in the Western media, and this conflation has very badly affected average Muslims who are going about their lives in Western societies" (Ameri 53). This is hardly surprising as it was particularly the Bali bombing – resulting in the deaths of dozens of Australians – that left a deep wound in Australian society; John Howard, Australia's Prime Minister at that time, fiercely condemned this Islamic attack and expressed his agony over that event in the following way:

> the Bali atrocity has left its mark on the consciousness of our nation – we understand that this was an attack on our values, our way of life. The threat posed by global terrorists may have changed the world we live in, but it will never change who we are. Australians will always hold fast to those values which unite us – freedom, tolerance, openness to the world and a sense of hope and adventure. (qtd. in Allon 76)

Harming Australians, as Howard made clear, is more than 'just' plain violence, it is an act of crime against everything that Australians stand for – Muslims thus represent a threat to Australia's values and social cohesion.

Unsurprisingly, after these terrorist attacks, the general sentiment was that "everything had changed" (Allon 76). Australians had become more aware of radical Muslims and their wrongdoings and as a consequence several bills, reflecting the suspicions held against

Muslims, were introduced. In 2002, for instance, the Australian government passed *The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill*, which granted officials the right to arrest any person purely on the grounds of suspicion (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 244). Unfairly though, as Civil Rights activists lament, "[t]here is little doubt that the Muslim community bears the brunt of the legislation: indeed, evidence of this is already apparent... all people arrested under the legislation have been Muslim, and all of the 17 proscribed terrorist organisations are linked to Muslim organisations" (Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 244).

The early 2000s saw another setback for law-abiding Muslims in Australia; in December 2005 the Cronulla riots resulted in the further deterioration of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. Sparked by a dispute between Australian lifesavers and Lebanese young men on Sydney's Cronulla beach – with the lifesavers mocking the Lebanese for their alleged lack of swimming skills – these racial tensions culminated in a massive gathering of approximately 5,000 Anglo-Celtic Australians who attacked anybody of "Middle Eastern appearance" (Ho, *Islamophobia* 292; see also Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 245-246; Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 394). As a reaction to this, Lebanese Australians not only damaged property in the neighbouring areas but also started to attack white people (Ho, *Islamophobia* 292). The main source of conflict in the Cronulla case apparently was "the treatment of women by 'Lebanese' men" (Ho, *Islamophobia* 293), which involved men pinching Australian girls and women in their bikinis. One Cronulla resident justified the wrath of white Australians in the following way: "[t]hey look down on our women. They don't really assimilate to our way of life. I've been at war with them for ten years" (Donohoe qtd. in Ho, *Islamophobia* 293). Australian media certainly did not contest these claims – on the contrary; according to Kabir, they entirely blamed Lebanese Muslims for these riots (*Muslim Youth* 246).

Increasingly tense relations are also to be blamed on the 'Sydney gang rapes' which took place from August to September 2000 and saw a gang of young Lebanese Australians rape teenage girls on seven occasions, with several further attempts registered (Saniotis 56). Due to the victims' accounts it transpired that these acts were racially motivated as the girls were, amongst others, called "Aussie pig[s]" (Saniotis 57). Naturally, these rapes caused a massive uproar in Australia. Again, Australians did not see these rapes as acts of violence per se, but rather as attacks against their country and everything they stand for. According to Aly and

Walker, "[t]he popular media called the rapes an 'act of war' against Anglo-Australia" (205), they were seen as "Muslim attacks on the Australian community, rather than assaults on individual women" (Dreher and Ho viii). For Australians, this was the ultimate evidence of Muslims' inability to assimilate and to integrate, proof of their incompatibility with the Australian way of life. The Sydney gang rapes were simply "the first signs of an Islamic hatred towards the community that welcomed them here years ago" (Jones qtd. in Saniotis 57). Australians felt themselves confirmed in their opinion that Muslims pose a threat to the stability of their society, particularly because Muslim men cannot control themselves and do not regard women – whether Muslim or not does not matter – as their equals, but rather as their subordinates. Apparently, if one is to believe the public discourse, "Muslim men in Australia [are seen] as a 'cultural time bomb' whose upbringing conditioned them towards sexual violence" (Sheehan referred to in Ho, *Islamophobia* 293). Incidents such as the Sydney gang rapes did not only highlight the alleged cultural differences between Muslims and white Australians, they also demonstrated that these rapes were "an attempt to disempower and humiliate masculine Australia" (Aly and Walker 206), which, for many Australians, 'proved' Muslims' proneness to violent behaviour that could endanger Australia's hitherto peaceful society.

Many Muslims though – not just in Australia – believe that the major turning point occurred after the September 11 attacks in New York and that the atrocities committed on that day changed everything for the worse; "September 11 was the worst day [...] for Muslims around the world. [...] [I]t wasn't just an attack on America, but an attack on every Muslim living in a western country. Even people living in their own Islamic countries. It was such an attack on us. The perpetrators were said to be Muslim [.] [...] [T]hey defamed a whole community" (Karen qtd. in Poynting 383). After 9/11 Muslims became the epitome of evil and therefore now have to live in a "climate of hate and ignorance" (Ameri 53), affecting their everyday lives badly.

Despite Australia's official attempts at multiculturalism, there still is "a big gap between the theory and the practice" (Ameri 55). This view is also shared by Abdel-Fattah, who stresses the difficulty of being a Muslim in modern Australia as it entails trying "to live against the perception that one represents a synonym for terrorism and extremism. It is to realise that whenever Muslims appear on the world stage, challenging an existing situation, they will be

defined as fundamentalists, terrorists" (*Material World* para. 86). It is hardly surprising then that Muslims perceive Australia's policy of multiculturalism as insufficient and that they are consequently discontent with their current circumstances, feeling that they cannot integrate properly. There are probably many Muslim Australians who agree with Abdel-Fattah's following statement: "[s]o what it means to be an Australian Muslim today is that you will often sit alone, in the silence of your hurt and fury, and wonder why it is so difficult for Islam, a religion followed by 1.3 billion people, all of whom cannot be uncivilised, unintelligent, immoral, unthinking dupes, to be treated with the same respect" (*Material World* para. 88). Abdel-Fattah is rightly pointing out that Muslims are just as diverse and multifaceted a group as any other religious community; with approximately a quarter of the world's population being Muslim, it is inappropriate to denounce them all as terrorists. Unfortunately though, Muslims are usually not given a voice in the public discourse, their image is not constructed by them, but by the media and politicians who are pursuing their own interests.

3.5 THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICIANS AND THE MEDIA

Among various scholars the opinion is widespread that it is the media that are to be blamed for Australian Muslims' precarious situation; their negative coverage of this religious community has lead to a whole group's defamation and exclusion. One of these scholars, Cesari, complains about this by stating that the public's knowledge of Muslims "is limited to six o'clock news and the media [which usually present] a one-sided view of Islam that exploits the ambiguities of images and terminology, encouraging the stereotypical connections between Islam, violence and fanaticism" (qtd. in Ameri 53), thereby arguing that the media do not represent Muslims truthfully and do not acknowledge their diversity. Ameri calls this "media rage" (55) and supports Poynting's and Kabir's claim that Muslims are covered in the media more than any other religious group (both referred to in Ameri 55).

The media's negativity towards Muslims was also noticed by Somerville, who states that "many journalists are predisposed to negative views of religion in general and of Islam in particular" (qtd. in Bouma 433). However, it is not only scholars who have registered the media's 'crusade' against Muslims; many Muslims in Australia also blame the media for their

precarious position in society. One of Kabir's interviewees, a young male Lebanese, said the following: "I don't blame the Australians at all, I blame number one the media. The media heat the situation up against the Muslims. The littlest thing that they can find on the issue of terrorism for example or Islam, they'll make it a big thing and they'll set it up and show it in a bad way" (qtd. in Kabir, *Muslim Youth* 252). Clearly, many of Australia's Muslims are highly wary of the media, arguing that as soon as a crime has been committed by a Muslim, the media pick that up and artificially blow it up. They believe that a similar crime committed by a non-Muslim would not get that much coverage, Muslims as perpetrators simply make more headlines. It is not surprising then that "many of Australia's Muslims believe that as a result of media bias, they are vilified in society as 'terrorists' and discriminated in the workplace" (Kabir qtd. in Ameri 55).

However, it is not only the media that spread negative images of Muslims; politicians are also to be blamed for "[reinforcing] perceptions that Muslims (including women) are the 'current enemy'" (Kabir, *Double Edge* 1286). Ameri agrees with this claim and argues that politicians tend to "make opportunistic comments about minorities" (55) – whether these are positive or negative remarks depends on the current political climate and the needs of the electoral campaign (ibid.). Currently, it certainly seems to be en vogue in Australia to vilify and exclude Muslims from the mainstream. According to Woodlock, this holds many advantages for politicians; vilifying Muslims generates benefits such as

- shifting attention away from public relations problems for the governments of the day;
- boosting patriotic nationalism (at least, for non-Muslims);
- providing a tool for undermining multiculturalism;
- providing an argument for changing immigration policies;
- providing an opposition wedge to tap into and benefit from racism where it exists in marginal seats;
- and acting as a source of stories to sell newspapers. (Woodlock, *Wellbeing* 197, bullet points added)

Clearly, resorting to an anti-Islamic rhetoric is beneficial to many politicians and as the media are often influenced by or take sides with certain political groups, the consequent spread of 'Islamophobic' discourse seems quite logical.

Apart from the media and politicians, there is another group that profits from positioning themselves against Muslims; Evangelical Christians. Christians benefit from this negative

discourse as it "provides leverage for their arguments in support of maintaining the advantages accorded to Christian churches and organizations in the now past time of Christian dominance" (Bouma referred to in Bouma 438). Lyons argues that "at each point in [...] history, a particular group in a society benefited from employing [the anti-Islam discourse]" (referred to in Bouma 438). Besides, this "anti-Islam campaign waged by Evangelical Christian groups" (Bouma 439) is "much easier to maintain [...] in a country that is predominantly Christian" (Bouma 434) anyway.

Obviously, according to these scholars, Muslims are not as radical and violent as they are made out to be, it is rather the current discourse propagated by groups and institutions such as politicians, Christians and the media that generates unfavourable images of them. Whenever negative news of Muslims is spread, one should not forget that this type of representation holds great, politically motivated benefits for certain parties.

3.6 EXCLUSION OR INCLUSION

Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe rightly observe that "the acceptance of 'minority ethnics' as 'real Australians' [...], has not yet have [sic] been fully accomplished" (322). This is hardly surprising given that some Muslims, as already pointed out in the previous sections, have committed some of the most atrocious terrorist attacks of the last decades. While their role in these deadly events certainly cannot be denied, a homogenization of Muslims nevertheless is unfair and unnecessary. Being a Muslim should not automatically be equated with an affinity for terrorism; obviously, "law-abiding Muslims should not be held responsible for the criminal acts of those who call themselves Muslim" (Saeed para. 6). While it is certainly true that the Muslim community has a "radical fringe" (Barton para. 3), most Muslim Australians are law-abiding and respectable citizens (Sheridan para. 2). In fact, "all of the counterterrorism investigations about Islamist extremists in Australia have begun with the assistance of Islamic leaders and Muslim community figures, and have relied upon their ongoing support" (Barton para. 13).

Furthermore, while contrary to popular belief, Muslims and 'real' Australians actually have a lot in common; Saeed claims that "[i]n essence, Australian values and Islamic teachings on the question of freedom are not so vastly different. Both are based on ideas such as human dignity, justice, equity and egalitarianism" (para. 15). Besides them sharing many similarities, it has to be noted that Muslims are certainly not any less 'real' Australians than their white, non-Muslim counterparts; Kloskowska argues that "there exists no one legitimate type of 'genuine' member of any nation" (qtd. in Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe 321), meaning that no ethnic or religious group has more of a claim on Australian identity than others as people have always mixed with other communities, therefore any 'ethnic purity' is non-existent and invalid.

Another point that needs to be addressed is the idea that there is actually no discrepancy, no inherent conflict, between having two different identities – one can easily have a Muslim identity as well as an Australian one. Hussain argues that "there is no conflict between the two systems" (para. 2), a belief that is utterly supported by Woodlock who states that these "two identities 'work greatly together'" (*Aussie Mossie* 401). Ameri has a similar understanding; according to her, "multiculturalism and national identity are not contradictory" (55), meaning that these two separate identities are not mutually exclusive and that "the notion of an Australian Muslim is not an irresolvable paradox" (58) as one can be passionate about both religion as well as one's country (ibid.).

As a result, pluralism is actually beneficial to a society; a variety of ethnic and religious identities within a country "need not be state destroying" (Safran qtd. in Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe 319). Instead, as Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe argue, "consideration must be given to how to extend [a nation's] scope beyond a single national or ethnic group in order to cross cultural borders, or build bridges within multi-ethnic states" (319). Multiculturalism is simply inevitable these days, therefore it is advisable for a country such as Australia to adjust to these changes and try to encourage diversity among its citizens. Turner, for instance, believes that "Australian national identity should be characterized by notions of plurality and hybridity, with cultural difference seen as constitutive of identity rather than in terms of a deviation from an Anglocentric and normative identity" (referred to in Bradford 113). Bouma and Ling, meanwhile, point out that Australian society has always been highly diverse and that religious and cultural uniformity would not necessarily result in "a conflict-free society"

(qtd. in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 403). Woodlock goes even further and claims that a monocultural society can do more harm than good; she believes that

> the promotion of monoculturalism threatens to establish a two-tier Australian identity. Members of the first tier are the 'true Australians', those who possess the ascribed attributes of a Judeo-Christian heritage and an Anglo-Saxon or Celtic ancestry, whose ancestors were transported as convicts, or who settled here during European colonization of the continent. The second tier is everyone else, tolerated by the good graces of the true Australians. They can achieve a measure of Australian-ness so long as they do not rock the boat too hard and attempt to challenge the hegemony of the first tier. (*Aussie Mossie* 403)

Certainly, this is to be avoided at all costs as a society based on these two tiers would only lead to exclusion instead of integration.

According to some scholars, Australia has actually been partly successful with its multiculturalism policy. While there are certainly still people left who are against diversity, Fozdar claims that not only have Muslim Australians sought the company of their fellow Australians, but that also white Australians want to include Muslims in their society (182). In fact, "[f]ifty-nine percent of Muslim participants reported mixing with Australians entirely or mostly" (Fozdar 178), which is certainly striking and reveals that despite different cultural or religious backgrounds, Australian society is actually quite open and inclusive. Bouma certainly agrees with this as he claims that the majority of the Australian population "is pro-inclusion" (439). He then concludes with the following statement:

> [a]ll in all, the basic Australian story is one of inclusion, mutual respect and harmony. Discourses of 'negative othering' drive the target communities into isolation, alienated from the society, and make them prone to the very things those who use this discourse fear. Inclusion erodes fear, dissolves alienation and builds relationships that cut across the racial, ethnic and religious differences. Australia is an example of how this works and of how much effort it takes to achieve it. (440)

While there are certainly still many problems in Australia with regards to its ethnic makeup, it seems that parts of Australian society have slightly progressed over the last years and become more inclusive of immigrants and the new cultures and beliefs they brought with them. However, in order to attain complete integration and acceptance of immigrants into Australian mainstream society, their voices have to be heard as well – so that any form of misunderstanding with regards to terrorism, violence and misogyny can be avoided.

4 Identity & Diaspora – An Introduction

4.1 Diaspora

4.1.1 Introduction

> As we approach the beginning of the twenty-first century we witness a new phase of mass population movements. There has been a rapid increase in migrations across the globe since the 1980s. These mass movements are taking place in all directions. The volume of migration has increased to Australia, North America and Western Europe. [...] Some regions previously thought of as areas of emigration are now considered as areas of immigration. (Brah 178)

While the early 1970s were a period of relatively modest migration movements due to a "[worldwide] immigration halt" (Vertovec and Cohen xiv), the situation changed remarkably in the 1980s; "migration of all sorts has rapidly increased" (ibid.) over the last thirty years. According to Brah, there are several factors that have encouraged this development; amongst them are economic inequality, famine, political instabilities such as wars as well as "people's desire to pursue opportunities that might improve their life chances" (178). Precarious circumstances like these have totalled in approximately 80 million migrants in 1990, while two years later, in 1992, the worldwide number of migrants rose to 100 million, meaning that "[t]hese recent migrations are creating new displacements, new diasporas" (Brah 179). Brah consequently understands "contemporary diasporas as 'exemplary communities' of late twentieth-century forms of migrancy [as] [t]hey resonate with the meaning of words such as immigrant, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker" (197).

With this new phase of mass migrations, the concept of diaspora has become "very general and all-embracing" (Brah 196); originally, diaspora – deriving from the Greek words *dia* and *speirein* meaning 'to scatter' and 'to disperse' (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 21; Brah 181) – referred to Jews and was spelled with a capital D (Cohen, Global Diasporas 1; Vertovec and Cohen xvii). The Jewish community used to be the "diaspora *par excellence*" (Brah 181 emphasis in original); they were the archetypical diaspora (Safran 10) and, if one is willing to disregard the atrocious events of the Holocaust which resulted in the death of approximately six million Jews, this concept, if one disregards the Holocaust, "may be the most important

contribution that Judaism has [...] [made] to the world" (Boyarin and Boyarin 110). It is generally agreed upon "that the dominant Jewish tradition is at the heart of any definition of the concept" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 34).

At the core of Jewish Diaspora, as a result of the Holocaust, lies trauma; the "experience of victimhood" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 1) is what defined this community. Hence, the "key [feature] of the classical, victim diaspora" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 2) is "the idea of dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland, to two or more foreign destinations" (ibid.) – a criterion which Jews certainly fulfilled. Naturally, as a result of this, the concept of diaspora "assumed a predominantly negative meaning" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 21) for centuries as it evoked associations of "forced displacement, victimization, alienation and loss" (Vertovec and Cohen xvii). Due to these negative experiences, "members of a diaspora retained a collective memory of 'their original homeland'; they idealized their 'ancestral home', were committed to the restoration of 'the original homeland' and continued in various ways to 'relate to that homeland'" (Safran referred to in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 4). Based on this, Cohen argues that the archetypical diaspora had two defining features: "*the traumatic dispersal from an original homeland* and *the salience of the homeland in the collective memory of a forcibly dispersed group*" (*Global Diasporas* 4, italicised in original).

The definition of diaspora has undergone a massive change in its meaning though; no longer referring to the Jewish community exclusively, diaspora is "used today to describe practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialised' or 'transnational'" (Vertovec qtd. in Vertovec and Cohen xvi). Brubaker argues that

> [l]ike the original phenomenon, [...] the concept had itself become dispersed: [a]s the term has proliferated its meaning has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas in the service of which it has been enlisted. This has resulted in what one might call a 'diaspora' diaspora – a dispersion of the meaning of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space. (qtd. in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 9)

Diaspora, it seems, has "escaped its conceptual cage" (Dufoix referred to in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 8) and is therefore "a long way from the melancholic sentiments of displacement, alienation and exile associated with the prototypical diaspora" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 9) as its "label has been stretched to cover almost any ethnic or religious minority that is dispersed physically from its original homeland, regardless of the conditions leading to the

dispersion, and regardless of whether, and to what extent, physical, cultural, or emotional links exist between the community and the home country" (Safran 9) – the concept of diaspora has certainly been "overextended" (Cohen qtd. in Safran 9).

This development, it is widely believed, has been helped by globalisation and advanced technology; Cohen, for instance, states that "[i]t is a commonly expressed belief that enhanced flows of technology, information, capital, trade and migration are remaking the world by sweeping all forms of localism aside" (*Global Diasporas* 142). Ackermann certainly agrees with this statement; he claims that "[d]iasporas are disproportionately advantaged by the many changes in technology, economic organization, modes of travel, production and communication" (157). Ultimately, Cohen elaborates on four cardinal factors that have contributed to the growing number of diasporas:

1. *A globalized economy* that permits greater connectivity, the expansion of enterprises and the growth of new professional and managerial cadres, thereby changing but creating new opportunities for diasporas;

2. *New forms of international migration* that encourage limited contractual relationships, family visits, intermittent stays abroad and sojourning, as opposed to permanent settlement and the exclusive adoption of the citizenship of a destination country;

3. *The development of cosmopolitan sensibilities* in many 'global cities' in response to the multiplication and intensification of transactions and interactions between the different peoples of the world; and

4. *The revival of religion as a focus for social cohesion* through dispersal, renewed pilgrimage and translocation resulting in the development of multi-faced world religions connected in various and complex ways to the diasporic phenomenon. (*Global Diasporas* 141, emphasis in original)

For Cohen, these instances are proof of diaspora's flexibility; he believes that "[g]lobalization has enhanced the practical, economic and affective roles of diasporas, showing them to be particularly adaptive forms of social organization" (*Global Diasporas* 155). Schwalgin echoes a similar sentiment; she argues that "[d]iasporas are perceived as social formations that are particularly qualified to adapt to the demands for mobility in the age of globalization" (75). Due to the speed of globalisation, the number of diasporas has grown significantly, which in turn has resulted in many countries declaring themselves multicultural – instead of monocultural – these days (Fortier 185; Lowe 139).

4.1.2 FEATURES OF DIASPORA

> I have been away from Nigeria for 30 years ... In all these 30 years I have been convinced that I was living abroad and, at a push, overseas. It now turns out, however, that I have actually been living in the diaspora. This sounds like a very lovely place, with flora and fauna, nubile virgins, blue skies and a certain *je ne sais quoi*. The sort of place where you can tiptoe through the tulips, stopping every so often to smell Rose, her friends Chantel, Angel, Tiffany and any other delicacies that take your fancy ... All this time I have been 'abroad' studying and working my ass off, sitting in dull offices, with dull people, doing dull things to pay off dull bills, when I could have been in the diaspora with nubile virgins with understanding ways. I am so mad. (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 8, emphasis in original)

Written by a frustrated Nigerian, this statement perfectly illustrates the changes that the meaning of diaspora has gone through; it is no longer associated with Jews and the trauma of forced dislocation, but it has rather become an umbrella term for people of all cultural, political, religious and socio-economic backgrounds who simply do not live in their home countries anymore. The term has certainly experienced a positive makeover; so much, in fact, that Cohen believes that "[f]rom the mid-1990s diaspora was chic, and, it seemed, nearly everybody who was anybody wanted to be part of one" (*Global Diasporas* 8). Chariandy, echoing Cohen's sentiment, considers the concept of diaspora "fashionable" (qtd. in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 15) and "highly-favoured" (ibid.), while Sökefeld thinks it has become "hip" and "in" (ibid.). Meanwhile, Donald Akenson, another scholar, "annoyed at its popularity […] [,] complains that 'diaspora' has become a 'massive linguistic weed'" (referred to in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 15). In any case, there seems to be no denying that diaspora has become an extremely popular and much-discussed topic both inside as well as outside of academia. So much so that many people claim to be part of one – however, "[n]ot everyone is a diaspora because they say they are" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 15). Nevertheless, the "conflation of the term […] has made it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish diasporas from other kinds of minority communities and to reduce the concept to a useless metaphor" (Safran 10).

To counteract this, numerous scholars have identified certain features that do distinguish members of diasporas from other migrant communities. While the classical diaspora had two main features, i.e. the traumatic dispersal from one's native country as well as the cultivation of positive memories of that home, modern diasporas can be identified through several more characteristic traits.

Brubaker, for instance, identifies "three core elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora" (qtd. in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 12); these would be "*dispersion* (either traumatically or voluntarily and generally across state borders [)]; *homeland orientation* (whether to a real or imagined homeland) and *boundary maintenance* (the process whereby group solidarity is mobilized and retained, even accepting that there are counter processes of boundary erosion)" (ibid., emphasis in original). For Brubaker, modern diasporas seem to hardly differ from the classical one; *dispersion* and *homeland orientation* were the main characteristics of the Jewish diaspora as well. However, Brubaker extended the meaning of this concept by adding *boundary maintenance*, a feature that did not apply to the prototype diaspora, and the idea of *voluntary dispersion*, meaning that contemporary diasporas have come to include various types of migrant groups who were not forced to relocate. Clifford has a very similar understanding of diasporas; he believes the main features to be "a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship" (qtd. in Olwig 55). While these are certainly constitutive factors, Cohen and Safran have come up with a much more extensive list of typical characteristics; according to the latter, modern diasporas exhibit the following features:

1. They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original 'centre' to two or more foreign regions;

2. they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;

3. they believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;

4. their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return;

5. they believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and

6. they continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran qtd. in Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 6, enumeration added)

Drawing on Safran's work, Cohen revised this list and added further characteristic traits to it:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;

2. alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;

3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;

4. an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;

5. the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;

6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;

7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;

8. a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and

9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (*Global Diasporas* 17, enumeration in original)

While Brubaker's and Clifford's lists are compact and short in nature, Safran and Cohen produced an extremely comprehensive and detailed enumeration of the common features of diasporas. Just like the two aforementioned scholars, Safran and Cohen certainly agree that diasporas include people who either voluntarily or forcefully had to leave their home country, yet still maintain a strong connection with their home by retaining favourable memories of it. Added to that, Safran and Cohen also believe that a sense of alienation is integral to diasporic identity; while members of a diaspora were not necessarily forced to emigrate, the feeling of exclusion stays – 'diasporans' perceive themselves as different, inferior and excluded from mainstream society. Because of their alleged lack of acceptance, their feeling of not belonging, diasporas are "primarily [discussed] along a 'majority/minority' axis" (Brah 186), reinforcing the idea that members of a diaspora are not fully accepted parts of their new home, that they are the 'Other', the unwanted minority – after all, you can be *in* a country, but not *of* it (Brah 191).

Due to this sense of alienation, borders are an important keyword when discussing diasporas; "[e]mbedded within the concept of diaspora is the notion of the border, and, indeed, it is not

possible to address the concept of diaspora without considering its relationship to the idea of borders" (Brah 198). According to Brah, borders are

> arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership – claims to 'mine', 'yours' and 'theirs' – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over. (198)

While these borders, these dividing lines between diasporas and their host societies, are "arbitrary constructions" (Brah 198), they are also "part of the discursive materiality of power relations" (ibid.) as members of a diaspora believe that there is an invisible line between them and the rest of society, that they are located outside of their new nation (Fortier 183). Therefore, "the concepts of border and diaspora together reference the theme of location" (Brah 180) – important key words are "home, location, displacement and dislocation" (ibid.), meaning that these erected borders are symbols of experiences of difference and social exclusion.

As a result, 'diasporans' idealise their home countries and fondly think back to their past; "[i]n short, the members of a diaspora may or may not have adjusted to life in the hostland, but they have a spiritual, emotional, and/ or cultural home that is outside the hostland" (Safran 13). Therefore, "[b]eing in a diaspora implies a tension between being in one place physically – the place where one lives and works – and thinking regularly of another place far away" (Safran 12). This nostalgia means that diasporas "are characterized by an overlapping double orientation: toward two cultures and two states" (Safran 23), a statement that is supported by Brah, who argues that diaspora "refers to *multi-locationality* within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries" (197, emphasis in original). Often due to unpleasant and discriminating experiences, the feeling of simply "not being there" (Safran qtd. in Ackermann 162), members of a diaspora cultivate positive memories of their former home; these memories – whether of families, customs and rituals (Safran 14) – are a certain form of "loyalty" (Tölölyan referred to in Schwalgin 76). One could also refer to this as "diaspora consciousness" (Vertovec and Cohen xviii) which is

> a particular kind of awareness said to be generated among contemporary transnational communities. Its particularity is variously described as being marked by a *dual or paradoxical nature*. It is constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and

exclusion, and positively by identification with an historical heritage (such as 'Indian' or 'Armenian civilization') or contemporary world cultural or political forces (such as 'Islam'). (ibid.)

Fuelled by negative experiences with the new host community, this 'diaspora consciousness' gains significance, memories, "rather than territory" (Fortier 184), begin to form "the principal ground of identity formation in diaspora cultures [...] [as]'territory' is de-centred and exploded into multiple settings" (ibid.). Due to the tension between one's former home – one's "mythic place of desire" (Brah 192) – and the new place of residence, culture and identity in a diaspora "are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several homes" (Hall qtd. in Fortier 183).

As already indicated, memories of the past become particularly significant when members of a diaspora are not satisfied with the living conditions in their new home country. Because of that the "'return to the homeland' – not so much in terms of an actual physical return [...] –" (Fortier 183) is a crucial defining factor of contemporary diasporas – if not even "*the* major element that distinguishes a diaspora from ordinary immigrant expatriate communities" (Safran 16, emphasis in original). However, this preoccupation with one's past is tricky and can have damaging consequences;

> [v]ery often [...] when we feel deeply dissatisfied with marketplace pluralism and its unwillingness to confront and correct the injustices of dominant racism that we turn our diasporan gaze back to the home country. Often, the gaze is uncritical and nostalgic. Often, we cultivate the home country with a vengeance. Several dangers exist here. We can cultivate [our home country] in total diasporan ignorance of the realities of the home country. By this token, anything and everything is [...] according to our parched imagination: half-truths, stereotypes, so-called traditions, rituals and so forth. [...] These options are harmful projections of individual psychological needs that have little to do with history. (Radhakrishnan 128)

Consequently, Radhakrishnan urges that

> [t]he diasporan hunger for knowledge about and intimacy with the home country should not turn into a transhistorical and mystic quest for origins. It is precisely this obsession with the sacredness of one's origins that leads peoples to disrespect the history of other people and to exalt one's own. Feeling deracinated in the diaspora can be painful, but the politics of origins cannot be the remedy. (128)

Radhakrishnan certainly understands this longing for one's home, however, he also considers this intense attachment to one's native country potentially harmful; memories do not always

correspond to the truth, but they are rather reflections of the individual's wishes and desires – often these attachments are "created through [...] contradictory experiences, memories and imaginations" (Malkki referred to in Schwalgin 72). As Radhakrishnan pointed out, these memories are often half-truths that will only further the gap between members of a diaspora and the mainstream society. While wistful memories of one's past are a natural reaction to relocation, this 'diasporan gaze back to the home country' should not overshadow the way members of a diaspora lead their lives. To become a part of their new home country they have to integrate so that their new life can take a successful turn – the key term here is 'hybrid identity' (a concept which will be defined in the next part of this chapter). Members of a diaspora, as suggested by Radhakrishnan, should "[seek] the hyphenated integration of ethnic identity with national identity" (121) as "identity is always plural and in process, even when it might be construed or represented as fixed" (Brah 195). Consequently, "[d]iasporic identities are at once local and global" (Brah 196), meaning that one identity does not exclude another. On the contrary; diaspora identities, because of their versatility, "are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 244). Instead of solely focusing on the past, 'diasporans' should try to embrace the various facets of their identity in order to make the transition into their new host society easier and less painful.

However, to which extent members of a diaspora can maintain their diasporic identity – or develop a hybrid identity – depends on several factors; for one,

> diasporic identity is easier to maintain in democratic countries than in authoritarian ones, for the ability of citizens to define their cultural and social spheres, including their cultural and social relations to another country, is part and parcel of personal freedom – as long as such behaviour does no harm to the hostland and does not offend its democratic values. (Safran 18)

Furthermore, "[d]iaspora identity also depends on the sort of relationship the homeland wishes to maintain with its expatriates" (Safran 20), meaning that occasionally some countries might distance themselves from their own people who have formed diasporic communities in other countries, the reasons being of political or religious nature.

In any case, members of a diaspora certainly have many challenges to face; the worldwide rise in diasporas has attracted an equally large number of critics. Many opponents have

expressed their worries about the increasing migration of people as they fear "that diasporas can represent a threat to the nation-state and the liberal-democratic order" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 171). They believe that these newly-arrived migrants are not going to integrate into mainstream society and that they therefore will "contribute to the fragmentation of a society" (Safran 19) – a point that is often raised in multicultural societies (as mentioned in chapter 2.4).

Leaving these fears aside, there certainly "is little doubt that the process of massive expatriation of people will continue, both because of the growing economic disparities between homeland (or sending) countries and hostland (or receiving) countries and because of the growing 'transnationalization' of commerce, travel and communications" (Safran 27).

4.1.3 FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION

> And in a way, the diaspora is an excellent opportunity to think through some of these vexed questions: solidarity and criticism, belonging and distance, insider spaces and outsider spaces, identity as invention and identity as natural, location-subject positionality and the politics of representation, rootedness and rootlessness. (Radhakrishnan 129)

While Radhakrishnan's assertion certainly cannot be contested, it has to be noted that these experiences will certainly differ from one 'diasporan' to another – particularly between the first and the second generation. As Brah argues;

> the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to reorientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities. (194)

Considering this, it seems absolutely logical that the experiences of the first generation will significantly differ from those of the subsequent ones; they are the ones who moved to a new country, who grew up with different customs, traditions and language and now have to leave those behind in order to adjust to their new host society. Their memories of home will be still vivid and consequently their longing for their native country will be stronger and more

persistent than that of the future generations who do not share the same memories. The acclimatisation of first generations to their new home is therefore likely going to be a long and complicated process – if ever fully achieved.

Regarding group identity, Boyarin and Boyarin believe that it "has been constructed traditionally in two ways. It has been figured on the one hand as the product of a common genealogical origin and, on the other, as produced by a common geographical origin" (86). Focusing on group identity based on geographical location, it makes sense that the second generation's sense of selfhood will diverge from that of their parents as they did not grow up in the same region and consequently their memories, and forming experiences, will be fundamentally different. While the first generation possibly had to face many hardships – ranging from political unrests, economic challenges to religious persecution – the second and future generations are often spared from these obstacles; by moving countries, their parents tried to establish a safer environment for them, hoping that their descendants would not have to struggle with the same hurdles as them.

Due to these different circumstances while growing up, and "because diaspora involves renegotiations of tradition and culture" (Gray 34), second generation 'diasporans' might "experience themselves as failing to fulfil the exalted duty of cultural reproduction and maintenance, so there is a mismatch between expectations and experience" (ibid.). Later generations will often find themselves unable to adhere to their parents', or grandparents' cultural norms and customs (or their expectations of them) as they have not lived through the same past and the same experiences. The more time elapses, the more the younger generations keep losing track of their families' pasts and cultural traditions and the bigger intergenerational conflicts might get; the younger ones might feel restricted by their parents, having grown up in countries with possibly more liberties and freedom, e.g. with regards to sexuality and dating, they become frustrated with their parents' lack of understanding and support.

Another conflict involves bullying and discrimination: while members of the second generation might experience various forms of harassment – be it because of their skin colour or their religious beliefs – these assaults possibly represent experiences that their parents or grandparents never had to live through in their home countries as they most likely were not

outsiders in their communities, but instead belonged to the majority. As a result of these discrepancies, children and teenagers might feel misunderstood by their parents, believing the older generations to be unable to comprehend their situation, unable to sympathise with them. Radhakrishnan supports this view of intergenerational conflict;

> they talked about being the targets of racial slurs and racialized sexist slurs, and they remembered not receiving the total understanding of their parents who did not quite 'get it'. Sure, the parents understood the situation in an academic and abstract way and would respond with the fierce rhetoric of civil rights and anti-racism, but the fact was that the parents had not gone through similar experiences during their childhoods. Although the home country is indeed replete with its own divisions, phobias, and complexes, the racial line of color is not one of them. Thus, if the formulaic justification of parental wisdom is that the parent 'has been there before', the formula does not apply here. (122)

It is hardly surprising then that younger generations will often find themselves in conflict with the older ones due to their slightly different lifestyle and attitudes to life as "[t]he two generations have different starting points and different givens" (Radhakrishnan 123). To overcome this "historical rupture within the 'same' community" (Radhakrishnan 123), Radhakrishnan believes that young 'diasporans' should "coalition with other minorities" (125), suggesting that interaction with young members of other diasporas might help them in overcoming these tensions and conflicts with their parents. By relating to other people going through the same experiences, they can shed some of their confusion, this sense of feeling lost between two different cultures and homes and the various conflicting demands imposed on them. However, leaving the tensions between first and second generations aside, the focus should rather be on similarities, on a sense of shared identity, as "[i]n a complex world, full of uncertainty and even fear, it is comforting to express a known and familiar identity – with the warmth of an extended family and the intimacy of a shared religion, language and way of life" (Cohen, *Global Diasporas* 155).

4.2 IDENTITY

4.2.1 THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

Before elaborating on the concept of identity, it is vital to introduce the term 'culture' as "culture and identity are inextricably linked concepts" (Brah 21). Not only do these two terms

affect each other, but both their meanings are "elusive" (Brah 20) and therefore not easy to pin down. While Brah argues that culture evokes images of "the whole spectrum of experiences, modes of thinking, feeling and behaving; about the values, norms, customs and traditions of the social group(s) to which we feel we belong" (17), she also claims that "[t]here is no single 'right' definition of the term 'culture'" (18). Kroeber and Kluckhohn, for instance, even identified as many as 164 definitions of this concept (referred to in Brah 18). Given the impossibility of providing that many definitions in this thesis, it is best to focus on culture

> as the symbolic construction of the vast array of a social group's life experiences. Culture is the embodiment, the chronicle of a group's history. Since the group histories of different sections of society differ in important ways, their 'cultures' are correspondingly different. Further, group histories are inextricably linked with the material conditions of society, so that cultures are marked by the social and economic conditions of a group at the various stages of its history. Cultures are never static: they evolve through history. That is why the process of cultural reproduction is, in part, a process of cultural transformation. (Brah 18)

However, just like culture, identity is quite an elusive concept; it "is a difficult term: more or less everyone knows more or less what it means, and yet its precise definition proves slippery" (Lawler 1). Gilroy argues in a similar way: "[a]t first glance identity might appear very clear in its meaning and function, but its complexity is affected by different historically, culturally or scientifically developed knowledge and ideologies inherent in the term" (referred to in Gronold 16). And "[a]s such, various definitions of identity are possible" (Gronold 16).

What is certain though, is the fact that the word identity stems from the Latin word '*idem*', meaning 'same' (Wren 236), thereby implying that the notion of "sameness" (Lawler 2) is central to identity as "not only are we identical with ourselves (that is, the same being from birth to death) but we are identical with others. That is, we *share* common identities – as humans, say, but also, within this, as 'women', 'men', 'British', 'American', 'white', 'black', etc." (ibid., emphasis in original). Richter and Song deduce from this that "[t]he concept of 'identity', then, is a concept that seeks out sameness and constancy, a core of continuity in the face of change" (92). Because of this, identity is a deeply social matter; while some believe that one's "'true identity' [is] being contained 'inside', while the social world is firmly 'outside'" (Lawler 6), this is certainly not the case. Identity formation relies on people's common characteristics, their similarities – even though "Westerners are accustomed to thinking of themselves as their own little self-enclosed world" (Elias referred to in Lawler 7).

Consequently, as Lawler argues, "identity needs to be understood not as belonging 'within' the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations" (8) – thereby demonstrating that "identity, far from being personal and individual, is a deeply social category" (Lawler 143). Furthermore, "identities are lived out relationally and collectively. They do not simply belong to the individual; rather, they must be negotiated collectively, and they must conform to social rules" (Lawler 143) as they are "formed *by* the social world" (Lawler 7, emphasis in original) and are thus "constituted in and through culture" (Brah 21).

However, just as much as identity is concerned with people's sameness and similarities, it also focuses on "people's uniqueness, their *difference* from others" (Lawler 2, emphasis in original) as "Western notions of identity rely on these two modes of understanding, so that people are understood as being simultaneously the same and different" (ibid.). In general, "*difference* is perceived as a fundamental dimension" (Woodward referred to in Martin 99, emphasis in original) of identity formation. Martin argues that "[c]losure and unity are effects produced by differentiation, by the raising of a symbolic barrier of meaning to distinguish one thing from another. Thus the 'male' identity is distinguished by its difference from 'female', or 'Englishness' is given content by its opposition to the Irish or French" (99). The byproduct of this, though, is the formation of a hierarchical order; according to Martin, "[d]ifferences such as these mark out the limits of identity by referring to what it is not, and, in so doing, actively produce coherence by 'framing' certain characteristics in a hierarchical manner" (99). To illustrate his point, Martin uses examples such as "the ghettoisation of certain ethnic groups" (99) as well as "the association of women with domesticity" (ibid.). Because of this, Martin believes that "'[h]aving an identity', therefore, comes with a series of associated practices through which it is concretised and involves relations of power, subordination and exclusion" (99).

Besides sameness und difference, Lawler – who is lecturing at Newcastle University – has identified several more ways in which identity formation can be discussed. For one, she believes that identity is "[*produced*] […] through assembling various memories, experiences, episodes, etc. within narrative" (11, emphasis in original) meaning that identity is "'made up' through making a *story* out of a *life*" (ibid., emphasis in original). By this she is not suggesting that identities are "fabricated" (11), or even "falsified" (ibid.), but rather "that identities can be seen as being creatively produced through various raw materials available –

notably, memories, understandings, experiences and interpretations" (ibid.). Lawler claims that it is because of these "stories about our lives […] that we make sense of the world, of our relationship to that world and of the relationship between ourselves and other selves" (12), meaning that every human, albeit the similarities he or she shares with the rest of the population, has a slightly different – and unique – sense of identity and selfhood. As a result, "identity is not something foundational and essential, but something *produced* through the narratives people use to explain and understand their lives" (Lawler 17, emphasis in original), thereby implying that identity is constantly changing and reinventing itself.

Identity formation, according to Lawler, can also depend on one's ancestry and "what is genetically inherited" (31), meaning that "forms of individual identity [are] embedded within a collective (familial, kin) identity" (32). What is noteworthy about

> [t]his form of identity-constitution [is that it] raises important questions about individualism and collectivism, about the place of various forms of inheritance, and about the shifting relations between 'nature' and 'culture'. Ultimately, it exposes some of the contradictory ways in which identity is understood and 'done' in the contemporary West. Further, kinship points up a number of contradictions in understandings of the person – for example, between the individual and the collective, the natural and the social – and has important ramifications for thinking about identity, both within and beyond kinship. (Lawler 32)

Overall, "[e]stablishing identities is kinship work in action" (Franklin qtd. in Lawler 32) as "family relationships lie at the heart of understanding the condition of social life in advanced industrial, or late modern, societies" (Finch and Mason qtd. in Lawler 37) as well as "at the heart of understandings of identity, both through the 'doing' of family relationships, and through understandings of kin groups and one's place within them" (Lawler 37).

Lawler also addresses the question of authenticity and masquerade regarding one's identity; she states that "[p]eople in the West conventionally counterpose *being* an (authentic) identity against *doing* an identity (performing). While the former is assumed to be an expression of 'who we are, really', the latter is usually assumed to be playing a part: a 'false' expression, denying, negating or concealing 'who we are really'" (101, emphasis in original). Generally, "this 'real person' is assumed to be more authentic then [sic] the 'mask' or 'masquerade'" (Lawler 101). Wendy Doniger, however, does not fully agree with the idea that 'masquerade' needs to be equated with fakeness; "[w]e assume that masquerades lie, and often they do, at

least on the surface. But often masquerades tell a deeper truth, that masquerading as ourselves reaffirms an enduring self (or network of selves) inside us, which does not change even if our masquerades, intentional or helpless, make us look different to others" (qtd. in Lawler 103). Lawler argues similarly; she believes that through masquerading "we assume characteristics we claim as our own. Through this process, we become (social) persons through performing our selves" (104). What follows from this is the idea that

> identity is *always* something that is done: it is achieved, rather than innate. However, identity is not something achieved in isolation; it is part of a social and collective endeavour, not an individual odyssey. Further, it is not a matter of individual 'choice': I cannot simply choose to be one person rather than another (although I may resist the positioning of others). The question, then, is not 'who we are really' but how we achieve identity, under what constraints and in what contexts. (Lawler 104, emphasis in original)

For Goffman, it is exactly this masquerade, these "roles, or performances, far from masking the 'true person' (as is commonly assumed) are what *make us persons*" (referred to in Lawler 106, emphasis in original). Lemert explains that "copying an imagined original; knowing, more or less consciously, the repertoire of behaviours associated with our roles, we do those behaviours over and over again: they become second nature. We are constantly playing various parts, but what those parts add up to is *ourselves*" (referred to in Lawler 106, emphasis in original). Consequently, "[t]o be a person, then, is to perform being a person" (Lawler 106) as "[s]ocial identity, and indeed social reality, are made through performance" (Lawler 108).

However, the right to perform one's identity is not given to everybody; individuality, as Lawler argues, "is not available to all" (146). She argues that "[t]o be seen as a member of the 'underclass' – as to be a refugee – is to be positioned as without a meaningful identity: simply to be made as part of a 'mob'. Characterizing persons as 'mob-like' divests them both of identity and of value" (Lawler 146). Bauman argues similarly: "[t]he meaning of 'underclass identity' is an *absence of identity*; the effacement or denial of individuality, of 'face' – that object of ethical duty and moral care. You are cast outside the social space in which identities are sought, chosen, constructed, evaluated, confirmed or refuted" (qtd. in Lawler 146, emphasis in original). Considering their current status in society, this 'underclass identity' can certainly be applied to Muslims as well.

Overall, it has to be noted "that the concept of personal identity has changed over the past centuries" (Hall referred to in Pristed 24). Stuart Hall believes that "…in what is sometimes called our post-modern world, we are also 'post' any fixed or essentialist conceptions of identity" (qtd. in Pristed 24), suggesting that "instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 234) – basically, "'me' or 'I' is not the same in every situation; […] we are changing from day to day" (Brah 20). Identity has therefore become "a project to be worked on" (Lawler 54), it is not an innate or stable category but instead

> [i]dentity has come to be understood not only as temporally and spatially variable but as intrinsically plural and contradictory. This contrasts with the received notion of identity as a stable 'container' rooted 'inside' the subject and separated off from external contingencies. Instead, it is increasingly conceived not as marking out some inherent or essential features (e.g. reason, racial characteristics, class position, etc.) but as a fractured, overlapping, sometimes unstable condensation of various social influences. (Martin 99)

Because of this, identity "is increasingly regarded as porous, fluid, open to modification" (Martin 99) and as a consequence "the subject is understood more as an unfinished entity, one that is an active force in its own construction" (ibid.). Due to humans being 'unfinished entities' – according to Lacanian theory – "the subject is conceived as an empty place or 'lack'" (Martin 99). Because of this lack, humans "seek ways of 'filling the gap' by acts of *identification*" (Stavrakakis; Laclau referred to in Martin 99, emphasis in original). Therefore, "[t]he secret of identity […] lies in an ongoing struggle to conceal an intrinsic absence by entry into the symbolic order or the world of fantasy. Thus claims to an essential 'belonging' to a homeland, a nation or ethnic group are efforts to invoke the mythical unity and stability of a closed identity rather than expressions of something that actually already exists" (Martin 99).

As mentioned before, identity has come to be understood as "fluid", "fractured", "multilayered", "hybrid" and "hyphenated" (see Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 397), meaning that there are always "various forms of identity with which people identify" (Lawler 2) as "[n]o one has only one identity, in the sense that everyone must, consciously or not, identify with more than one group, one identity" (Lawler 3). Instead, as Lawler insists, "[t]his is about more

than combining multiple identities in an 'additive' way" (3) as "[d]ifferent forms of identity, then, should be seen as interactive and mutually constitutive, rather than 'additive'" (ibid.).

Speaking of several and multiple identities, the concept of 'hybridity' needs to be discussed at this point; according to Zannettino, "[i]n very basic terms, hybridity can be defined as the emergence of new identities through the melding of different and often incongruous elements of ethnic identification" (100). Furthermore, hybridity has highlighted "the inescapable impurity of all cultures" (Ang referred to in Zannettino 100) as well as the "the impossibility of essentialism" (Young referred to in Zannettino 100), thereby "[disrupting] the idea of nation and national identity" (Zannettino 100). For Homi Bhabha, hybridity refers to the "liminal space in-between the designations of identity… an interstitial passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (qtd. in Zannettino 100), thereby identifying "a place of ambivalent existence for minority subjects who are situated between the 'same' and the 'other'" (Zannettino 101).

Poynting, meanwhile, defines "strategic hybridity" (375) as

> almost the opposite of being trapped between cultures; it involves appropriating elements of parents' homeland culture and the 'dominant culture' in creative and quite fluid ways, shifting according to circumstances. What the various hybrid forms share is that they are misread and deprecated both by the traditionalists of their parents' generation and those of the dominant culture who feel threatened when (only) elements of this culture are appropriated by 'others' […]. (ibid.)

All in all, "the concept of hybridity has the potential to generate important insights into the intra-psychic experience of the subject of diaspora including the pain and awkwardness of being 'suspended in-between' and the potential of becoming anew by living with and through difference" (Hall referred to in Zannettino 100).

Due to hybridity and the never-ending process of identity formation, it has to be noted that "there is not a single Muslim identity but many, which are constructed from a multiplicity of sources and referents that individuals use, from the local context and the interplay of power relations, as well as the influence of transnationalism and globalization" (Ismail referred to in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 397). As a consequence, "'Muslim' identities are constantly

rearticulated" (Naber qtd. in Woodlock, *Aussie Mossie* 397), with their religious community "crafting what it means to be 'Muslim'" (ibid.) on a daily basis.

4.2.2 IDENTITY AND GENDER

Before turning to the literary analysis of Randa Abdel-Fattah's novels, it is crucial to define gender identity – "a concept that applies to our personal identity as a whole" (Steutel and Spiecker 157). According to Steutel and Spiecker, "'gender identity' is often rather formally defined as the subjective sense of oneself as male or female. Usually one's gender identity, in this particular sense, is consistent with one's biological sex" (156-157). Furthermore, gender identity

> is also [...] substantially defined as the degree of conformity to, acceptance of, or identification with, one's gender role. All societies do have normative conceptions of masculinity or femininity, that is: of the qualities that are considered appropriate for a male or a female. And 'gender identity' [...] refers to the extent in which these qualities have become part of someone's personal identity. (Steutel and Spiecker 157)

Examples of these normative conceptions are, according to Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, "active/passive, subject/object, phallic/castrated" (Rowley and Gross referred to in Lawler 91), an idea that also got picked up by Hélène Cixous, a renowned feminist writer, who stated that "[t]raditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity" (232), arguing that "[t]hought has always worked through opposition" (ibid.) and that this system of binary thinking is applied to alleged gender differences. However, these differences between masculinity and femininity are based on "dual, hierarchical oppositions" (Cixous 232) such as inferiority and superiority (ibid.), implying that not only is there an alleged gap between men and women but that these differences are actually centred around positions of power, with men occupying the space of dominance and superiority.

Discontent with these artificial gender constructs, Judith Butler, an American gender theorist, "argues against the idea that gender identity is founded on a natural, sexual division between

'male' and 'female'. Rather, that distinction is 'performed' through a multiplicity of institutionalised social practices and sites of 'expert' power that invoke, materialise and naturalise sexual identity" (Martin 100). She believes that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result" (*Gender Trouble* 33). Therefore, "the exaggeration of traditional (gender) roles can be used to raise awareness of the artificial moment of identity, where performativity constitutes an important part of learning different social roles" (Gronold 32). Clearly, as Butler suggests, one's gender identity is most certainly neither innate nor natural, but rather based on society's expectations of what constitutes masculinity or femininity – hence they are "made up" (Lawler 117). She believes that "[s]ex and gender are not just internalized (taken on as an identity) but materialized (produced within the material body)" (Butler referred to in Lawler 113), particularly through 'performativity', the re-enactment of artificially constructed gender structures. Hence,

> for Butler identities [...] are not *expressions* of some inner nature; rather, they are performed in that they are constantly and repeatedly 'done', and they are performative in that they bring into effect what they name. Furthermore, they are done within a matrix of social relations that authorizes their being done. This is why one cannot simply decide, at will and without consequences, to be one thing rather than another. The social world is divided along gender lines and people are assigned to one of two genders. (Lawler 114, emphasis in original).

What needs to be mentioned here is Simone de Beauvoir's famous quote that "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (qtd. in Butler, *Sex and Gender* 128), again asserting the idea that one's gender identity is a construct, an idea dictated by social norms and expectations and certainly not an innate category.

Before moving on to the final chapter, a brief mention of Laura Mulvey has to be made; she believes that

> [i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: […] she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. (589)

While Mulvey is a film theorist, therefore applying her theories to cinematic narratives of women, her ideas can also, to a certain extent, be used for other forms of cultural representation. Just like Cixous, she believes that men and women are assigned different roles in society, different positions based on a hierarchical order, meaning that women are passive objects, while men are active and, without any doubt, more powerful. They are, according to Mulvey, the ones who are in charge and who determine women's roles in society. While this certainly cannot be extended to every single cultural narrative about women, Mulvey raises an important point: namely, that women are still often regarded as sex objects who have no voice of their own and nothing to contribute as they are silenced in public discourse, busy pleasing 'the determining male gaze' that 'projects its phantasy onto the female figure'. Drawing on this idea, it is not surprising, then, that Muslim women wearing the veil attract that much attention in Western countries as they subvert this idea of '*to-be-looked-at-ness*'; wearing this much-contested piece of clothing on their head prevents the male gaze and hinders society from seeing them as signifiers of male desire.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 DOES MY HEAD LOOK BIG IN THIS? BY RANDA ABDEL-FATTAH

5.1.1 SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

In her debut novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Abdel-Fattah introduces her readers to Amal Mohamed Nasrullah Abdel-Hakim, the heroine of this story, whose life is soon to be turned upside down. Amal, who was born in Australia,

> lives with her Palestinian-born parents in an affluent suburb just outside of Melbourne. She and her parents, like so many immigrant families, have carved out distinct identities for themselves, blending their Middle Eastern roots and their Islamic faith with mainstream Australian culture. She is, in every way, a typical 16-year-old girl. She has Muslim and non-Muslim friends, the former being her classmates from her Islamic school, which she attended until the tenth grade, and the latter from her current school, an exclusive private institution in which she is the only Muslim student. (Lochte 1)

And who, most importantly, decides to go from being a "Part-[timer]" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 2) to becoming a "Full-[timer]" (ibid.), meaning that she will wear the veil at all times, including school.

A decision which – understandably – has not come easily to her as "[s]tatus is a major preoccupation of students in high schools. Who one is friends with, who one eats with, who one dates – these are critical for high school social life. Status is gained by conforming to social norms, and by one's associations" (Milner referred to in Ali 523). Deciding to wear the veil at "a snotty grammar school where you're seriously doomed to the non-cool list if you're one issue behind on the latest *Cleo* fashion" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 14, emphasis in original) is certainly not going to be an easy experience for a teenage girl at an age where appearances and conformity are deciding factors for one's popularity and degree of inclusion. Particularly at high school where a strong sense of hierarchy exists and where one's status is a constant site of struggle: "whether you overcome ridicule, acne, cellulite, rejection, unrequited lust, bitchiness and the rest of what can make high school awesome fun (*not)* is entirely dependent

upon who maintains the upper hand" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 267, emphasis in original, comment in brackets in original).

While Amal and her friends Simone and Eileen are certainly not unpopular, they are certainly not the 'alpha females' at their school, a status which is reserved exclusively for white girls of Anglo-Saxon background (e.g. Tia) who have a wealthy background, attractive physical attributes and hence an unpleasant attitude (also known as bullying to Amal and her friends). Insults regarding weight and appearances are rife, especially against Simone, who is overweight and constantly trying to lose weight by dieting, usually by testing very unorthodox methods. Story lines likes these reveal that Amal and her friends, as well as the rest of their schoolmates, are highly concerned about looks, with appearances seemingly being their biggest concern at times. Clothes, make-up and diets are topics that are covered in their daily conversations, painting a picture of adolescent girls who all share an obsession for fashion and style, yet, at the same time, are incredibly insecure, even vulnerable, when it comes to how they are perceived by their environment. Girls for whom a spot in one's face equals social suicide as, according to Amal, such a little blemish is "ruining my life" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 347) as well as making her "a social outcast for the rest of my school life" (ibid.). The pressure to look attractive by adhering to society's (unrealistic) concept of beauty is omnipresent and pervasive.

However, while Amal and her friends know what it feels like to be subjected to vicious taunts regarding one's looks, they are equally as quick to dismiss other people based on their appearances; at one point Amal attends a wedding with her Muslim friend Yasmeen and, when surveying the available guys there, she notes that "[a]nybody with white socks and black shoes is immediately disqualified" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 279). However, at least she is aware of her shortcomings and acknowledges her shallowness by stating "[n]obody is free from prejudice I guess" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 279).

Amal's and her friends' superficiality does not only extend to others, but to themselves as well; they are extremely critical of their looks and constantly struggling with their body image. They are teenager girls whose level of happiness drastically increases when "nobody's hair frizzes in the wind […] [and when] there's a possibility the chocolate won't go straight to

our hips" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 203). So if dressing-up for a social event does not go as planned, Amal reacts with a meltdown:

> [m]y entire wardrobe is on my bed and floor. I've decided that I hate all my clothes. Everything. I am a girl with nothing to wear. To make matters worse, I put on liquid eyeliner and it smudges. That's when I go berserk. I mean, I'm wearing a hijab, so if my face doesn't look good, what hope have I got? A good manicure? I attack my eyelids with cotton buds but that only makes it worse. My eyes are black and puffy now. Great. I feel well and truly hideous and all I want is to sit on the couch with a packet of Tim Tams and watch back-to-back episodes of *Survivor*. I feel a teeny weeny bit better after I throw my clothes at the wall, have a bit of a cry and scream at my mum to leave me alone and not dare enter my room. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 281, emphasis in original)

By depicting Amal in this way, Abdel-Fattah succeeds in creating a realistic image of a teenage girl who, despite her Muslim background, is just like any other young girl in modern Australian society. A girl who indulges in occasional vanity, calls herself "a real *Cosmo* [i.e. *Cosmopolitan* magazine] fanatic. A *Cosmo* quiz guru" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 66, emphasis in original), discusses her boy crushes with her girlfriends and is a big fan of shopping. Hence, Amal is as 'normal' an Australian teenager as can be; "an Australian youngster like any other Australian teenage girl [whose] lifestyle, interests, likes and dislikes […] define her as an Australian girl" (Ameri 59). Certainly, Amal is a girl who is just like her peers at an upscale grammar school in Melbourne – up until she decides to wear the veil full-time.

As mentioned before, adhering to social norms – especially in the world of hormonal teenagers – is crucial if one does not want be socially excluded, but rather wants to belong. By wearing the *hijab*, Amal is, in the eyes of her schoolmates, visibly distancing herself from her environment; wearing a symbol of one's religion is not very common in a secular country like Australia – particularly not after 9/11. Hence, Amal is certainly facing one of the biggest decisions in her life – "monumental" (Lochte 1) even – a choice which "influences most of the events that unfold for Amal over the course of the story as she struggles to make sense of the anticipated and unanticipated ways her decision impacts her life and those closest to her" (Lochte 1).

5.1.2 To Veil or Not to Veil

Life for a sixteen year old girl is already complicated enough with hormones running wild and teenagers trying to do outdo each other in the hopes of enhancing their reputation. Life can be even tougher when you are a sixteen year old Muslim girl attending a highly prestigious grammar school where nobody else has the same religious background as you and when a complicated-sounding name like Amal Mohamed Nasrullah Abdel-Hakim only attracts unwanted attention as well as "teachers [labelling] me slow in preschool because I was the last child to learn how to spell her name" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 3). But life will certainly become even tougher in case Amal carries out her decision to wear the *hijab* full-time. Being aware of the controversy that her veil will cause, she nervously states that "it's hard enough being an Arab Muslim at a new school with your hair tumbling down your shoulders. Shawling up is just plain psychotic" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 6).

Clearly, Amal is highly "terrified" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 7) of her decision, nervous about the repercussions it will cause and, most importantly, worried about other people's reactions. According to Ameri, "[t]he worries of the fictional character are not without basis. Some mainstream Australians are not comfortable with the *hijab* at all. The *hijab* can remind them of Muslim identity, which they might have problems with for different reasons" (57, emphasis in original). Ameri believes that there will be a lot of "inner and outer battles she has to fight in order to re-establish her position among her friends and to deal with her identity hyphens in a society which considers a hijab-wearer not necessarily an insider" (57) – something that Amal is certainly aware of and, rightly, dreading. She recounts her experiences growing up as Muslim-Australian and tells us: "[s]o when you're a non-pork eating, *Eid*-celebrating Mossie (as in [sic] taunting nickname for Muslim, not mosquito) with an unpronounceable surname and a mum who picks you up from school wearing a hijab and Gucci sunnies, and drives a car with an 'Islam means peace' bumper sticker, a quiet existence is impossible" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 10, emphasis in original).

While contemplating going full-time, Amal is also reflecting on why she is even considering becoming a full-timer, what the driving force behind this decision is; she explains that while on the one hand she is completely petrified, she also feels that her

passion and conviction in Islam are bursting inside me and I want to prove to myself that I'm strong enough to wear a badge of my faith. I believe it will make me feel so close to God. Because it's damn hard to walk around with people staring at your 'nappy head' and not feel kind of pleased with yourself – if you manage to get through the stares and comments with your head held high. That's when this warm feeling buzzes through you and you smile to yourself, knowing God's watching you, knowing that He knows you're trying to be strong to please Him. Like you're both in on a private joke and something special and warm and extraordinary is happening and nobody in the world knows about it because it's your own experience, your own personal friendship with your Creator. I guess when I'm not wearing the hijab I feel like I'm missing out. I feel cheated out of that special bond. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 7-8)

Thus, for Amal, wearing the veil is a signifier of her religious identity, going full-time will strengthen her connection to her religion; it is an expression of her Muslim identity and faith. By wearing this 'badge of her faith' at all times, Amal emphasises her wish "to commit more completely to her faith" (Lochte 1) as well as her "desire to feel closer to Allah by making such a public sacrifice for him" (ibid.).

But before stepping out with the veil in front of her schoolmates – making her "wonder whether I harbour severe masochistic tendencies" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 14) as remarks about her "nappy head" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 7) will be rife – she remembers her old school – the Hidaya – a school for Muslim children where she was just one of many, where she belonged and did not attract anybody's attention because of her name or her religious beliefs. Reminiscing about that time, she informs her readers that

I can't stop thinking about Hidaya and I feel sick with longing for my friends and teachers. Sick with longing for a school where you learnt what every other student in any other Melbourne school learnt but you could also pray and fast and wear a hijab and get on with being a teenager without having to answer questions or defend yourself against news headlines. Where you sang 'Advance Australia Fair' every morning at assembly and got detention if you didn't take it seriously. Where you could deal with puberty and the teenage angst thing and have your crushes and go through your diets without being a prefix to terrorism, extremism, radicalism, any ism. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 12)

Attending a Muslim school certainly made her feel more accepted as she did not have to combat any stereotypes about Muslims; she simply belonged. Hidaya provided the perfect environment for nurturing her Muslim identity, while at the same time maintaining her 'Australianness', a place where she felt she could be both at the same time. As for the veil: it was part of the school uniform and she was obliged to wear it there at all times. Interestingly

though, back then she did not feel confident enough and even disliked wearing it; initially, "[w]hen I first started at Hidaya I hated wearing the hijab. I found it itchy and I absolutely despised wearing it during sport" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 13). Her attitude started changing when she

> got to know the other kids and it no longer felt awkward. I got used to it and I met girls who were wearing it full-time outside of school, like, *voluntarily*, and I started to really respect their courage. I was even a bit jealous because there I would be ripping it off as soon as I was off school property and there they would be, calmly and proudly stepping on to a train filled with students from schools all over without so much as a hint of fear or doubt. They looked so at peace with their identity and everybody got to know and respect them on their own terms. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 13, emphasis in original)

This statement perfectly illustrates Amal's gradual change towards acceptance, a transformation which even sees her envying her friends who have the courage and the confidence to wear it even after school, outside the safe bubble of that environment. Back then, however, Amal was not yet ready for such a big step, she lacked the confidence and the self-esteem to commit to her religion fully – even if she wanted to be just like her former colleagues, full of confidence, at peace with their identity and not worried about letting the world know that about their faith. At that stage, it was too early for her – regardless of her environment, which was certainly highly supportive at Hidaya.

However, now that she is sixteen her mindset is gradually changing further; while she is still worried about going full-time in public, nervous about how this will affect people and their behaviour towards her, she also feels ready to commit to her religion more vigorously. Before actually wearing it to school, Amal decides to go for a test-run at her local shopping mall in order to witness other people's reactions and to test her own determination. Prior to that, she gets increasingly nervous, revealing her three greatest fears:

> 1. smart-arse comments (*e.g. I'm standing on the escalator and a group of guys yell out 'nappy head' or some equally original comment*);
>
> 2. humiliation (*e.g. toilet paper on my shoes, tripping on my heels, the painful public moments made even more excruciating when you already stand out like a Big Mac in a health food store*);
>
> 3. fixated staring (*e.g. I'm trying to order chips at the food court and the girl at the counter can't register that I don't want sauce because she's too preoccupied burning her retina*). (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 27, emphasis in original)

Clearly tense about this little 'experiment' and its outcome, she informs the readers that "I'm walking around the shops as if I'm in combat mode, avoiding eye contact with other people and waiting for something to happen" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 27), revealing just how much of a stir she is expecting. To her surprise though, this experience is not proving to be as nerve-wrecking as she had imagined: "as I browse through the shops I realize how uncomfortable and irrational I'm acting because it feels like most people really couldn't care less. I mean, sure there's staring, but it's not enough to rate in my fears list. There are the occasional goggle-eyes but most people give me the once-over top to bottom, which I can deal with" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 27-28). Not only are people's reactions much less disconcerting than expected, but Amal experiences another revelation: when passing three Muslim women wearing the veil, she is greeted by them in a very friendly manner, with a warm smile on their faces even though they are complete strangers. For Amal, this proves to be a formative experience: "[t]hey go back to their conversation and I walk off with a big grin because it is now that I think I begin to understand that there's more to this hijab than the whole modesty thing. These girls are strangers to me but I know that we all felt an amazing connection, a sense that this cloth binds us in some kind of universal sisterhood" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 28).

Later that day, at home,

> I lie in bed that night and replay the scene over and over in my head. I'm experiencing a new identity, a new expression of who I am on the inside, but I know that I'm not alone. I'm not breaking new ground. I'm sharing something with millions of other women around the world and it feels so exciting. I know some people might find it hard to believe but walking around Chadstone [i.e. the shopping centre] tonight I'd never felt so free and sure of who I am. I felt safe that people weren't judging me and making assumptions about my character from the length of my skirt or the size of my bra. I felt protected from all the crap about beauty and image. As scared as I was walking around the shops in the hijab, I was also experiencing a feeling of empowerment and freedom. I know I have a long way to go. I still dressed to impress and I took ages to get my make-up, clothes and hijab just right. But I didn't feel I was compromising myself by wanting to make an impression. I was looking and feeling good on my own terms, and boy did that feel awesome. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 28-29)

This passage illustrates the slow transformation Amal is going through; yes, she is still worried about people's reactions, an insecurity that she cannot shake off, but at the same time she is becoming increasingly convinced by her decision, more assured that she has to do this. She realises that by wearing the veil full-time she is not only forging her Muslim identity, but also advocating the ideal that as a person you should not be judged on the basis of your

appearance or your looks. In addition, by becoming a full-timer, Amal hopes to foster this new-found sense of group identity that she experienced with the other veiled women at the shopping centre, that connection that she felt with females who share the same religion, the same beliefs and ideologies. By wearing the veil permanently, she would not only develop her personal identity, but would also intensify a sense of group identity with other Muslim women, meaning that her sense of selfhood also emanates from a feeling of belonging.

Inspired by this encounter, Amal resolutely decides to put her belief into action and wear the veil to school. However, before finally carrying out her plan, she discusses her intentions with her parents, who – much to her surprise and disappointment – are certainly not enthusiastic about Amal's plan: "[a]t dinner I tell my parents that I'm thinking about wearing the hijab and to my disbelief they look at each other nervously. I was expecting a cheerleader routine around the family room. Not two faces staring anxiously at me" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 23). A heated discussion ensues in which her parents caution her, telling her "[w]e're proud of you. But it's a big decision, honey, and you're not at Hidaya any more [sic]. It's a different environment at McCleans. It might not even be allowed" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 23). While her parents promise their encouragement, they also urge her not to make any hasty decisions: "[w]e'll support you but you have to think this through. Are you sure you are ready to cope with such a huge change in your life?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 24). In a bout of defiance, Amal reacts with "[w]hat's the big deal? It's a piece of material" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 24), which is met with disbelief from her mother, asking Amal "[s]ince when do people see it as a mere piece of material? You and I both know that's being a tad optimistic, ya Amal" (ibid.), acknowledging the fact that the veil is certainly not a neutral piece of clothing, but rather loaded with cultural symbolism – negative, that is. A signifier of Islam that is often perceived as evidence of Muslim women being "simultaneously the victim of Islamic tradition and a powerful signifier of its existence and perpetuation" (Zannettino 97).

Amal's decision to go full-time is also met with caution by some of her girlfriends, who nevertheless support her, no matter whether they are Muslims themselves (i.e. Leila and Yasmeen) or not (i.e. Simone and Eileen). However, Yasmeen's initial reaction was one of shock: "[w]hat are you trying to do to yourself? Isn't it hard enough with a surname the length of the alphabet? Now you want people to wonder if you're batting for Osama's team? Stick with anonymity, girl!" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 21). Fuelled by her cautious attitude, Amal

exclaims that "I can deal with all the crap . . . I want to try . . . and I want that identity. You know, that symbol of my faith. I want to know what it means to be strong enough to walk around with it on and stick up for my right to wear it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 24), thereby proving her determination and her strength, revealing that not even bullying will stop her from wearing the veil.

Finally the first day at school has arrived and Amal, despite her conviction, is experiencing a panic attack, realising that this will be like "a fresh start for me" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 31), and not just "a game or a fashion statement or a new fad. It's more serious than that" (ibid.), acknowledging the idea that the veil is an extension of herself and her religious identity. Still struggling with the imminent impact of this, she tries to downplay and deconstruct the importance of the veil, tries to ease her fear: "[s]o I take my veil out of the cupboard and stand in front of the mirror, staring at myself. It's just hair. Follicles attached to my head, which occasionally frizz out anyway. Hair. A piece of material. Hair covered *by* a piece of material. Nothing to it. Sweet" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 31-32, emphasis in original). Still nervous about her looks, Amal, being a 'typical' teenager, spends an eternity on her looks:

> [i]t's going to be one of those mornings because now my hijab won't work. I want a perfect shape, a symmetrical arch to frame my face. That means no creases, no flops, no thread pulls. As I'm struggling in front of the mirror Mum comes in and offers to help, but whether it's about how to wear a shirt, a pair of jeans or a hijab, my dress sense is out of bounds to motherly advice. After pulling and coaxing the material around my face, I finally have the shape I want, and fasten it with a safety pin at my neck. It's taken me forty-five minutes. Not even moussing my hair takes this long. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 32)

Upon entering the school grounds, Amal once again reminisces about her old school, the Hidaya, and how much she misses it as she "just [doesn't] feel at home" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 34) at McCleans, as, explaining the social dynamics, it is an institution where "[h]ow much your dad earns, how many cars you have, whether your money's 'old', all that sort of crap counts as your initiation ceremony. But even if you do fit the 'financial' résumé, some people still don't make it" (ibid.). Whereas at Hidaya, "[a]ll that mattered was how hard you studied or bludged and your friendships. And it was no big deal if you didn't have a clue who you were because nobody was asking for an explanation anyway" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 34), implying that she did not have to deal with her identity at a school where everybody was the 'same', whereas that is different now that she is attending a school where she is the only

Muslim girl. Finding herself in such a position means she has to define herself as identity is often formed on the basis of similarity or dissimilarity – which in this case is the latter. With her Middle Eastern background, Amal is aware of her 'unique' position, knowing that she is perceived as different – which certainly has made her uncomfortable but, at the same time, more conscious of her identity, urging her to deal with herself and her sense of selfhood.

Much to her expectation, the students' reactions reveal their uncertainty on how to approach this delicate subject: Amal fathoms that "[t]here seems to be something almost X-Men-like about this piece of material on my head. Too many people look at it as though it has bizarre powers sewn into its micro-fibres. Powers which transform Muslim girls into UCOs (Unidentified Covered Objects), which turn Muslim girls from an 'us' into a 'them'" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 37-38), acknowledging that the veil is carrying a lot of culturally loaded meaning and that it has the power to divide people and, in people's perception, turn innocent Muslim women into brainwashed ambassadors of Islam. The veil acts as a barrier, as a means of separation, therefore instilling uncertainty and even fear in many who are not familiar with this religion. Except for her close friends Eileen and Simone and her favourite teacher, Mr Pearse, Amal is met with a wall of silence as "nobody approaches me and nobody says anything. So I wait for people to say something in-between classes. But nobody does" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 43).

While she is certainly unsettled by this, this experience is nevertheless boosting her determination to prove everyone that she is one-hundred percent behind her decision to display her religious belief. Even after anew discussions with her parents, who wonder whether she is truly ready for this and whether she has thought everything through – particularly regarding her future at university and in the labour market – Amal heatedly retorts

> Maa! I'm not a kid! I've spent every last minute in these past four days thinking through every single potential obstacle. I've predicted all the smart-arse comments people can throw at me. Nappy-head, tea-towel head, camel jockey, and all the rest. Yeah, I'm scared. [...] I'm petrified. I walked into my classroom and I wanted to throw up from how nervous I was. But this decision, it's coming from my heart. I can't explain or rationalize it. OK, I'm doing it because I believe it's my duty and defines me as a Muslim female but it's not as . . . I don't know how to put it . . . it's more than just that. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 51-52).

Amal reveals that she is certainly aware of the fact that wearing the veil will bring many obstacles and hostile reactions with it, but she will accept that in turn for her being able to forge her Muslim identity. Wearing the veil for her is "an instrument of liberation, [...] an embodiment of agency, constituting a dignified, spiritually empowered space where [...] [she can] choose to engender [...] [her] own subjectivity" (Pearce 60).

Two days later, most of her peers still have not reacted to Amal's veil:

> it's been two whole days since the start of term and there's still an uncomfortable *politeness* between me and everybody else. Well, I wouldn't call it politeness with Tia, Claire and Rita [McCleans' 'mean girls'], who are still into their sniggering routine, which is fine. That I can handle. At least they're acknowledging I exist. But everyone else is acting way too civil with me. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 62, emphasis in original)

What is also striking is that some of her male peers seem to be almost scared of her, confirming Amal's remark about the transformative power of the veil, turning girls into 'UCOs (Unidentified Covered Objects)'. Amal recounts how

> [o]ne of the guys, Tim Manne, accidentally bumped into me while we were walking out of class and then fumbled and *apologized* and moved on quickly, like he didn't want me to think he'd given me an invitation to talk. Since my first day here, I've *never* heard a guy apologize to a girl for bumping into her. I was about to make a joke about it, to ease the tension, but he was already halfway down the hallway. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 62, emphasis in original)

Worse than that is Adam's, her crush, reaction: "[h]e hasn't spoken a word to me since the start of term. He just smiles awkwardly if our eyes meet and quickly turns his head away" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 62), a reaction which she describes as "gruesome" (ibid.). Later on, adding to her growing frustration, Amal overhears "some girls talking about me next to the lockers. One of them says the word 'oppressed' and the other one is saying something about me looking like a dag" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 62), leaving her shocked and unable to defend herself, thereby making her "[feel] like a boiling kettle of water about to whistle and screech" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 63).

Finally, after one long week, "my class has finally decided to confront me about my hijab. I almost want to jump up and down with relief. I can handle an insult or an interrogation. I can't handle going from getting along with everybody (with the obvious exception of Tia and her Mini-Mes) to being a social outcast" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 69). Her peers' reactions,

however, reveal an abundance of stereotypes and a considerable amount of ignorance towards her religion as questions range from "Did your parents force you?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 69) and "Do you wear it in the shower?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 70) to "So is it like nuns? Are you married to Jesus now?" (ibid.). While her colleagues lack knowledge about this subject, they finally show genuine interest in her and her decision and Amal is immensely enjoying it: "[i]t's unreal. Everybody's asking me about my decision and seems genuinely interested in hearing what I have to say. They're all huddled around me and I'm having the best time explaining to them how I put it on and when I have to wear it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 70). Finally being asked about her veil, Amal is basking in all the attention she is suddenly receiving, relieved that people have started to act normal again and that she is not being treated as an outsider anymore. Also, the reactions show her that her colleagues and friends do care, but were too timid at first and had to get used to her wearing the veil. Her schoolmates' reservations also highlight the fact that Islam, particularly after 9/11, has become an extremely sensitive subject, one which non-followers often do not know how to address.

Even her crush, Adam, is finally approaching her, asking her whether it was her decision to become a full-timer, as, at a later stage in the book, Amal realises that Adam, just like most people, had thought she was forced by her parents. He tells her that "[i]t was weird. I thought . . . well a lot of people, we all thought you'd been forced by your parents. But a couple of us soon threw that idea out 'cause we thought, well, if you'd been forced you wouldn't seem so, I dunno, into it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 144). Concluding that she was not forced by her parents, Adam explains that "then we thought you'd become, like, some fanatic. Like what you see on TV, you know?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 145), revealing that he and his friends could only come up with two possible explanations for Amal's decision: either that her parents forced her – confirming non-followers' idea that Islam is a forceful, misogynistic religion – or that she has all of a sudden turned into a religious fanatic. Neither option is particularly flattering for Muslims, however, Amal is so engrossed by her schoolmates' sudden interest that she is not really hurt by these misconceptions.

Interestingly enough, her own relatives – Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy – reveal a similar attitude: when they hear about Amal's decision to become a full-timer, their reactions are far from euphoric and instead verbally attack her mother, asking her whether it is not "enough you wear it, so you have to force your daughter to as well?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 99), thereby

indirectly suggesting that Amal is susceptible to manipulation and blindly follows what others tell her – reinforcing the idea that Islam's followers are manipulative and also revealing that the negative discourse on Muslims in the media has even taken a toll on Muslims themselves.

Despite becoming more and more confident wearing the veil – partly due to her schoolmates' support – Amal is still very conscious of her changed appearance and particularly worries about strangers' reactions to her veil, fearing backlash and negative comments, which results in her declining an invitation to go out to a café with her friends by inventing a lie. A decision which deeply troubles her as "I'm supposed to be pious and God-fearing. Not a lying, hypocritical, pathetic coward" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 78). With her confidence crumbling, she wonders "[w]hat's happened to me? Haven't I decided to wear the hijab because I feel proud of who I am? Suddenly I'm too chicken to go to a café? I don't recognize myself" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 78). This meltdown of hers reveals that Amal is still far from feeling absolutely confident in her decision to become a full-timer, that she is still struggling with the impact this decision has on her life, still worrying about people's reactions and thereby giving away her deep insecurity. She is disappointed with herself, disappointed by her lack of strength as she realises that manifesting her new identity cannot be accomplished within a week, but is a rather long process, a gradual development that cannot be achieved easily.

In an attempt to consciously work on and boost her confidence, the next time Simone and Eileen ask her for a meet-up at a café, Amal finally agrees to meet them. This being her first social outing since becoming a full-timer, Amal is experiencing a minor panic attack: "[n]ow my hands are sweaty, I'm worrying about whether my scarf matches my jeans and I'm convinced my make-up has smudged" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 83). Feeling deeply anxious, Amal is "also fiddling self-consciously with my top, wondering if I look OK, if I can get away with a veil among all these cool people" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 83), revealing her fears of being seen as a social outcast. Amal wonders whether "it was stupid of me to come. I look so out of place. I mean, I've worked on the whole trendy clothes and accessories thing, but you add a hijab and you might as well be wearing a kilt. I can see some people narrowing their eyes as they look up from their conversations and take notice of me" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 84). Her initial concerns and worries evaporate though once she realises that this experience at the café does not turn out to be that bad and that despite her fears she still manages to have a lovely evening with her girlfriends. After this social gathering she explains that "[w]hen I'm home in

bed later that night, it occurs to me that all it's taken is a couple of good friends and a lot of chocolate to make me forget I'm the 'girl who wears hijab'" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 85), making her realise that all she needed was the support of her close friends, her 'allies'. Life-changing decisions such as wearing the veil can turn everything upside-down, so having a close-knit social circle is essential; when faced with negative reactions, it is good to feel the support of friends and family. While her decision to stand up for her religious belief is laudable, this episode illustrates that Amal's quest for her Muslim identity is not only based on internal but also on external factors – gaining confidence in yourself is certainly easier to achieve when you have got a strong support system.

To Amal's luck it is not only her friends who support her, but also her favourite teacher, Mr Pearse, who lets her know that "[i]f you experience an iota of prejudice I want you to inform me immediately, Amal. Got it?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 217), further adding that "I have every faith that you will achieve your goals if you work hard and stand up for yourself when challenges arise" (ibid.), revealing a very encouraging teacher who strongly believes in Amal's capabilities. While touched by his gesture, Amal starts thinking about his words, expressing that "[e]ver since I wore the hijab I've been feeling pretty scared" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 218). Despite Mr Pearse's kind words, Amal believes that

> [e]ven if I get the marks I need to get in to the best uni course, [...] I probably couldn't find a casual job now. So what about later on? Look, I'm not some whinging conspiracy theory victim who blames red traffic lights and rainy days when you forget your umbrella on 'prejudice'. But you hear stories, you know? Friends who get top marks in university and then when they get up in front of an interview panel they find the interviewers choking on their bottled water because the candidate is wearing hijab. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 218)

This internal monologue reveals Amal's concerns about the future, her worries whether she will be able to find a job one day or whether she will only face discrimination and prejudice. Mentioning her concerns to Leila, one of her Muslim girlfriends and a fellow full-timer, they discuss these fears, yet, after initial worries, realise that they both strongly believe that at one point somebody will employ them, somebody who will not judge them based on their looks but who will recognise their capabilities and professional skills. Leila argues that "I wouldn't fight so hard if I didn't believe that *someone* wasn't out there" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 219, emphasis in original), attesting yet again to the girls' optimism and faith despite the obstacles they are facing on a daily basis.

Shortly after this Amal's confidence is being challenged again when coming across a casual job advertisement at a takeaway shop. Immediately upon expressing her interest in the position the owner blurts out "[s]orry, love, we can't accept people like you" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 309), explaining his prompt rejection by "[t]he thing on your head, love, that's what I mean. It's not hygienic and it just don't [sic] look good up at the front of the shop. Sorry, love. Try somewhere else" (ibid.), making it clear that he does not care about her motivation or previous work experience in the slightest, but that he based his decision on her looks. Realising that this is a case of discrimination, Amal is shaken by this experience, stating that "I'm completely taken aback and stand there, not knowing how to walk away without looking like a rejected loser" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 310). Feeling hurt by this rejection, Amal informs her mother about this incident who becomes furious and wants to make a complaint, urging Amal "to stick up for yourself. You can't cave in like this" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 310). Bursting into tears, Amal yet again doubts her decision regarding the veil, exclaiming "Mum, maybe I shouldn't have worn it. . . Maybe I was stupid. . . Where am I going to go now? It's just going to hold me back" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 311). While Amal has certainly become used to wearing the veil at school, a sort of micro-universe, she still has to realise that outside of that safe environment there are still many hurdles to be faced, challenges that lie outside of her influence and power.

Shaken by this encounter and with a debating competition at school coming up, she explains that "[t]he debate's this week and I'm so scared. People are going to laugh, I know it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 311). Contrary to her expectations though, Amal proves to be extremely successful at the debate, with her team even winning the competition, thereby immensely boosting her confidence and, with this debate representing a turning point for her, making her exclaim that "I've been injected with the formula for confidence and butt kicking. Not in spite of my hijab but because of it. Because I want to prove to everybody that it's just a piece of material and that I'm here, representing my school, supporting my team, kicking some serious rear ends" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 318). Excelling at the debate makes Amal realise that the *hijab* certainly does not have to represent an obstacle, that it will not prevent her from success, but that the only thing that can hold her back from being victorious is her attitude, her way of approaching challenges. Not only has this success made her realise which degree she wants to pursue at university (Law and Science), but she also feels "like I've turned a corner tonight. Call it what you want. Proving myself. Competing as an equal. Living up to my

potential. Whatever way you want to analyse it, I go to bed feeling like nothing can stop me" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 320).

5.1.3 IDENTITY ISSUES

When Amal decides to become a full-timer, one thing is certain: it will change her and her perception of her individuality, her sense of identity. According to Bauman, "[i]dentity comes to the fore when there are doubts about belonging" (qtd. in Ameri 57) – and doubts about belonging will certainly be rife for Amal. While at the beginning of the novel Amal informs the readers that "I'm an Australian-Muslim-Palestinian. That means I was born an Aussie and whacked with some seriously confusing identity hyphens" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 6), she is still certain about one thing: that, despite her religious background, she is a true Australian. Despite experiences which suggest otherwise: remembering her childhood, she muses that "it's not like I'm not used to being the odd one out. I attended a Catholic primary school because we lived too far away from an Islamic school" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 9-10).

Furthermore, "when you're a non-pork eating, *Eid*-celebrating Mossie (as in [sic] taunting nickname for Muslim, not mosquito) with an unpronounceable surname, [...] a quiet existence is impossible" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 10, emphasis in original). In order to better fit in with her Australian friends, "I learnt how to suppress my Muslimness, and I pretty much got on with having a fun and religiously anonymous primary school life" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 12), explaining that "[d]on't get me wrong. I wasn't one of those children who had a mixed-up, 'syndrome' childhood. Yeah, sure, it didn't matter how much my parents told me to feel proud of my identity, there was always somebody in the playground to tell the wogs to go home" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 11-12). Despite her parents' support and their assertions that Amal was both Muslim and Australian and that she should be proud of her diversity, Amal did not manage to fully adopt that attitude, but rather tried to blend out and deny her Muslim background in order to fit in with the other Australian kids. She clearly lacked the courage as a child, and as a teen, to stand up for herself and take pride in her ancestry. A behaviour which is certainly understandable considering her age, a time where everybody is trying to be as 'normal' as possible in order to be included. And being a Muslim in the current political

situation is certainly going to guarantee a lot of unwanted attention, so by repressing her Muslimness Amal only tried to escape being associated with "terrorism, extremism, radicalism, any ism" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 12).

But at the age of sixteen, Amal has reached a turning point: she is slowly learning to embrace her uniqueness and when trying to encourage her friends to do the same (who are fighting their own inner demons as in the case of Simone who is constantly struggling with her weight and loathing her body image), she calls out "[y]ou know what? Who cares what normal is, Simone. Let's protest. From now on we're the anti-normal, anti-average, anti-standard. You can eat what you want to, I'll wear what I want, and we'll die with a packet of chips in our hand and a tablecloth on our head" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 81). While it is typical that all teenagers want to be as conventional as possible, Abdel-Fattah is reminding her readers that that is bland, that diversity should be celebrated and not frowned upon. Amal is starting to realise that everybody's differences are what make them unique and distinctive – and not 'abnormal'. Thus, a "bi-cultural identity" (Ameri 59) is not only achievable but also desirable. Therefore, according to Abdel-Fattah, complete assimilation is certainly not the solution: "if we try to create a common culture by artificial means, we will only succeed in producing something bland and lacking vitality" (C.L. Ten qtd. in Ameri 60). Instead, the focus should be on integration, a concept which leaves space for maintaining one's cultural, social and religious background while not excluding the possibility of adapting to one's new home culture.

While Amal tries to be strong for, and in front of, her friends, it is clear that she is not always as confident as she wants her friends to believe. With her going through several phases of doubts and uncertainty about wearing the veil, reflecting on her confidence, Amal realises that "I've been strong and defiant in some situations and an absolute wuss in others" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 96). However, she also comprehends that "maybe people have to go through a lion and mouse syndrome at different points in their life. One thing seems certain. If I survived a polka-dot dress experience on a primary school camp then something tells me that I've got it in me to survive wearing the hijab" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 96-97). Being aware of her inconsistency regarding her feelings of confidence, Amal grasps that this is normal for human beings, that one cannot be one-hundred percent self-assured at all times. It is absolutely common to experience nagging doubts from time to time, no human is barred from

feeling insecure – an idea which testifies to the change that Amal's personality is experiencing, a process which indicates that Amal is gradually growing up and becoming more reflective and aware of her emotions and her identity.

However, while she has the support of her friends, parents and teachers when going through this process of transformation, not everybody is as accepting and enthusiastic about her decision to wear the veil. By introducing the readers to Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy (whose real names are actually Ismail and Aysha), Abdel-Fattah created "a set of [...] characters whose behaviours and views are provocative in regard to identity issues" (Ameri 59) as they tell Amal that she has "got no hope of a future if I continue to wear the hijab. According to his [i.e. Uncle Joe's] theory, in today's climate Muslims are better off retreating and concealing their identity not only because they need to assimilate but also to get ahead in society" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 104), urging her to "[blend] in with the crowd" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 104-105). For them, hybridity is an illusion, a hindrance. To be accepted into mainstream society, they believe, one has to assimilate and adopt their lifestyle. Maintaining their Muslim identity would only backfire and prevent them from advancing in Australian society. Being aware of the negative discourse on Muslims in the media, Joe and Mandy fear that revealing their true background would only result in rejection and discrimination, therefore they try to conceal that background as much as possible – a behaviour which Amal regards as "ridiculous and intolerable" (Ameri 60). For a second though, Uncle Joe's remarks unsettle Amal, making her wonder whether "Uncle Joe [is] right? Sure, I sometimes feel a strong temptation to retreat and to withdraw to the safety of anonymity. With the flick of a safety pin my hijab will fall off my head and I'll look like an unhyphenated Aussie" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 104).

As Amal starts thinking about this, a sense of determination comes back to her and she explains that "some weird sensation started raging through me. I don't know what it was. Defiance? Anger? Pride? I can't define it. Whether I choose to be an astronaut, a pilot, a lollipop lady, a scientist or a Tupperware party host, this piece of material is coming with me. Whether Uncle Joe likes it, or not" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 105), thereby proving that she has a lot more confidence and guts than her adult relative. Unlike them, she is ready to stand up for her individuality, ready to make sacrifices if it means she can express her religious identity and does not have to hide who she truly is. For her, the veil has become of a part of who she is, a part of her identity and she is not willing to let go of that because some people think that

she will have a quieter and easier life if she abandons it. This episode perfectly illustrates the transformation that Amal is undergoing: turning from a girl who used to suppress her Muslimness into a strong adolescent who is ready to brave the challenges that will accompany her decision to wear the veil. Clearly, Abdel-Fattah's aim here is to illustrate that identity is fluid, an ever-changing process and not "a fixed entity" (Pearce 60), but rather "continually evolving and adapting to new circumstances, in a space of contradiction, repetition, ambiguity" (ibid.).

While Amal's personality is becoming more and more defined, Amal realises that her strength not only depends on her and her state of mind, but also on her surroundings: she is certainly susceptible to her environment and their support (or lack of). Not only does she need her friends on her side, their encouragement when going out to a café for the first time, she also comprehends that she draws her energy, her degree of determination, from a sense of group identity, an identity based on similarities – as illustrated by her encounter with Muslim women at a shopping mall. Amal realises that identity is not only a private, individual matter, but often a collective affair as it is might be based on a sense of communality and similarities. Expressed in E. Erikson's words: identity is a "psycho-social phenomenon, where the sense of me and myself is formed in relation to others and their responses" (qtd. in Ameri 58).

While Amal is trying to evolve and foster her 'bi-cultural' self, she is occasionally met with resistance from fellow students, particularly whenever terrorist attacks dominate the news. So when the news about the Bali bombings, in which several Australians were killed, is announced, Amal finds herself under scrutiny yet again: while she is just as concerned about the victims and their families as the rest of her schoolmates, angered and upset students make spiteful remarks such as "[t]hose bloody Islamic terrorists! Has to be them!" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 245), revealing that "there are some people among her fellow countrymen and her classmates who find it difficult to continue to consider her one of them" (Ameri 58). While Mr Pearse immediately steps in – "I don't want to hear anybody using this as an opportunity for ugly racism or for making other Australians feel less. . ." (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 246) – the damage is done and Amal finds herself feeling drained and exhausted by the abundance of rage against her religion, beginning "to doubt her Australianness" (Ameri 58). She explains that "[b]y recess I've had enough. I spend the rest of the day in the sick bay wondering how naïve I was to ever think that I could find my place in my country and be unaffected by the

horrors and politics in the world. I have nowhere else to go and nowhere else I want to go. Once again I don't know where I stand in the country in which I took my first breath of life" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 246). While Amal has never doubted her Australian identity, explaining that she has always felt like a true Australian as this is her home country, current world affairs always seem to turn that belief of hers upside down. Being born and raised in Melbourne, this is her only home, yet events like the Bali bombings make her anxious as she knows that these attacks will only turn fellow Australians against followers of her faith, causing even more alienation, separation and misunderstandings. She wants to find her place in her home country as a Muslim Australian, but she fears that atrocities like that will prevent her from doing that, that they will only further the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims. While Amal is certain "that the notion of an Australian Muslim is not an irresolvable paradox" (Ameri 58) and "that national and religious identity [...] are not contradictory and that we can be as passionate about our country as we are about our religion" (ibid.), she worries that her fellow citizens cannot accept that idea.

With Amal certainly having to endure occasional setbacks and disappointments, she also learns that acceptance is two-way street. In the course of the novel she realises that she has expected acceptance towards her decision from the start – from everybody. Yet, when it is her turn to return that favour to others, she fails to do so, but rather offers judgement and criticism. This is perfectly illustrated by her relationship with Leila's mother Gulchin, an uneducated, conservative woman who seems intent on preventing Leila from becoming an educated and independent young woman. Enraged by Gulchin's backwardness and ignorance, Amal, losing her composure, insults her and blames her for Leila's disappearance towards the end of the novel. However, when Leila's absence is getting longer and longer, Amal realises just how much this incident is affecting Gulchin, how worried she is. Amal is slowly starting to comprehend that Gulchin is a typical mother: worried and concerned about her daughter. Only because she has a different way of raising her daughter – using her interpretation of Islam as the foundation of her decisions – does not mean she does not care for her daughter like Amal's mother does. Wondering whether her assumptions about Gulchin were completely wrong, Amal observes that "[t]here's something so different in her eyes now. Something maternal, and it's a shock because I've never associated the word maternal with Leila's mum. I've always understood her in terms of conflict and stress. [...] All I saw was a bitter, backward woman who only cared about clean dishes, ironed tea towels and marrying

her daughter off" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 323). She comes to the understanding that she "was wrong. Somehow her love for Leila seems no less than my own mum's love for me" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 324). Feeling a growing sense of guilt, Amal admits that "I never gave myself the chance to see things from Leila's mum's perspective and to understand her fears. It was easier to dismiss her as an ignorant villager. All those times I laughed behind her back with Yasmeen, ridiculed her paranoia" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 324). Trying to make sense of her ignorance, she states that "[i]t's not that I was arrogant. It's the fact that I felt that somehow, because I'm being educated and brought up in an open-minded environment, I had the *right* to be arrogant and superior" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 324, emphasis in original). She concludes that

> [a]ll this time I've been walking around thinking I've become pious because I've made the difficult decision to wear the hijab. I've been assuming that now that I'm wearing it full-time, I've earned all my brownie points. But what's the good of being true to your religion on the outside, if you don't change what's on the inside, where it really counts? I've been kidding myself. Putting on the hijab isn't the end of the journey. It's just the beginning of it. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 324)

As the reader can witness, Amal is experiencing an impressive amount of personal growth particularly towards the end of this novel, understanding her own mistakes, becoming aware of her own shortcomings. Amal comprehends that she has been acting in a condescending manner to others, particularly to those who have a different interpretation of Islam than her, believing herself to be slightly superior because she has been wearing the veil, thinking of herself as more religiously devout than others. Clearly, "Muslims can indulge in stereotyping their fellow Muslims if the latter do not fit into their own definition of Muslim identity" (Ameri 60). Setbacks like Leila's disappearance and the ensuing confrontation with Gulchin prompt a maturing process in Amal, who finally understands that wearing the veil is certainly showing her religious devotion, yet not proof that she is somehow a better Muslim than others. If she really wants forge her religious identity, one that she can be proud of, she also needs to change on the inside as a piece of material is not going to initiate a change in her personality. If she wants to truly become a better person – as an Australian citizen, as a Muslim – she has to initiate the process to change for the better herself, an episode which illustrates that identity is always a process, always developing and never static. It is best regarded as a construction site; always in progress, always open to modification – particularly to improvement.

At the end of the novel the reader is facing an exhilarated Amal, a girl who at the end of the semester exclaims that "[i]t feels like the happiest of times" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 349) – despite her still "[getting] paranoid and oversensitive about how people react to my hijab" (ibid.). She acknowledges that she still occasionally struggles with her confidence, but she is at peace with that, understanding that feelings like that are normal for a human. Furthermore, these struggles have helped her with developing her identity; these insecurities have shaped her individuality and have made her become a better version of herself, a more empathic person. Amal is finally able to accept her hybrid self, uniting her religious background with her national identity by stating that "I am a colourful adjective" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 350), adding that she has come "to embrace my identity as a young Australian-Palestinian-Muslim girl" (ibid.). Supporting the thesis that identity is a psycho-social matter, "it's mainly been the migrants in my life who have inspired me to understand what it means to be an Aussie. To be a hyphenated Australian" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 350). She explains that "[i]t's been the 'wogs', the 'nappy heads', the 'foreigners'[,] the 'persons of Middle Eastern appearance', the Asians, the 'oppressed' women, the Greek Orthodox pensioner chain-smoker, the 'salami eaters', the 'ethnics', the narrow-minded and the educated, the fair-dinkum wannabes, the principal with hairy ears" (Abdel-Fattah, Head 350) who have helped her with her bi-cultural development as "[i]t's their stories and confrontations and pains and joys which have empowered me to know myself" (ibid.). According to Amal, it has been mostly with the help of 'outsiders' that she has become comfortable with her transformation into a hybrid and diverse character.

5.1.4 THE (NOT SO) TYPICAL AUSSIE MOSSIE

Deciding to wear the veil full-time is certainly not coming at an easy point in time: with the last years having seen a multitude of terrorist attacks committed by people of Muslim background, the reputation of Muslims worldwide has significantly deteriorated. Amal herself has had to endure a lot of negativity; whether in the form of teasing – "Hey Amal, do you have a camel as a pet?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 10), calls for her return to her home country – "Why don't you just get out of our country and go back to some desert cave where you belong?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 240) – to outright discrimination when applying for a casual job. Being a teenager of Muslim background is certainly not very easy, and it is going to get a

lot harder once she is wearing the veil due to prejudices and misconceptions circulating about Muslims, in times when "most people are looking at me and wondering whether I've got an AK-47 assault rifle inside my jean jacket" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 82).

Throughout the novel Abdel-Fattah presents the reader with situations in which non-Muslims bluntly reveal their prejudices and ignorance: at the beginning, for instance, Amal realises that most people at her school, even her principal, believe that wearing the veil was not her decision, but was rather forced onto her by parents, disclosing their belief that Islam is an authoritative religion that operates in a dominant, patriarchal way. When discussing her decision with Ms Walsh, the head of her school, she appears to be shocked upon learning that this was completely Amal's decision: "[l]et me get this right. [...] They were actually opposed to this decision to cover up?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 41). To her, the idea that Amal would willingly wear the veil is beyond belief; the only logical explanation seems to be coercion, which once again illustrates a gap between non-Muslims and Muslims due to a lack of knowledge and a lack of communication.

On another occasion, Tia, the school bully, mentions an article about Muslim women and circumcision in Nigeria, asking Amal in front of the whole class whether she is still intact "down there" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 168), clearly intent on ridiculing her. Shamed by this, Amal recounts "[t]he humiliation of everybody looking at me, wondering if I've gone through with it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 168), an experience which "makes me almost giddy with sickness" (ibid.) – an episode which perfectly highlights the various stereotypes Amal encounters on a daily basis and has to tolerate repeatedly.

Another recurring problem is the negative depiction of Muslims in the media: one Monday morning, after a newspaper article reports about a crime that presumably was committed by "people of Middle Eastern appearance" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 151), Tia seizes this opportunity as well and attacks Amal by asking whether she has watched "that interview with those girls who were raped by those Lebo Muslims? You must feel so ashamed" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 151). The next day, after a documentary about Muslim fundamentalists aired, she has to endure taunts again, this time with "[y]ou're Arab aren't you? It must feel awful knowing you come from such a violent culture" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 152). When Adam, her crush and good friend, also mentions a documentary about 9/11, Amal becomes absolutely furious; she

is tired of being the scapegoat for all Muslims, tired of having to explain herself. She starts wondering: "[d]o they think I'm a walking ambassador, that because I'm wearing hijab I'm watching every single documentary about Islam?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 152). Losing her temper with Adam, she explains her situation to him, telling him that

> [i]t's just . . . overwhelming. Do you have any idea how it feels to be me, a *Muslim*, today? I mean, just turn on the television, open a newspaper. There will be some feature article analysing, deconstructing, whipping up some theory about Islam and Muslims. Another chance to make *sense* of this *phenomenon* called 'the Muslim'. It feels like you're drowning in it all. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 153, emphasis in original)

While trying to explain her outburst, it is obvious that the targeting of Muslims is taking its toll on her as she is always being addressed whenever Muslims commit a crime somewhere in the world. She is tired of being humiliated continuously, tired of being associated with criminals and terrorists who she has nothing in common with.

Abdel-Fattah, being a Muslim woman herself, has probably based Amal's story on many of her own experiences, experiences which attest to the homogenisation of Muslims. As Amal becomes increasingly exasperated by her ignorant environment, she exclaims that "[w]e're not a plural, or some big bloc, all acting and feeling and saying the same things" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 143). Tired of these generalisations, Abdel-Fattah thus "presents her readers with a range of different Muslim characters in this novel" (Lochte 2), hoping that her audience will grasp that Muslims are just as diverse and different as any other community. To prove her point, she created the characters of Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy, Amal's relatives who are certainly unlike any cliché surrounding Muslims as

> [t]hey're not into Islam or Arabic culture like we are. They're more into changing their names, peroxiding their hair and acting like they were born in Wagga Wagga and not Jerusalem. They're always freaking out about us being 'fanatics'. For example, in Ramadan, we're 'mad' to fast. When it's prayer time, they ask us why we bother. When we buy halal food, we're 'too extreme'. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 97-98)

The two of them seem in denial about their heritage, too afraid of being misinterpreted and of being associated with Muslims extremists. They have probably had their share of negative experiences themselves and now, for fear of being associated with radical fanatics, try to hide their Muslim identity as much as possible. Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy certainly seem to believe that assimilation is the only option if one wants to be accepted into Australian society.

It is not surprising then, that they do not support Amal's decision to wear the veil as it draws too much attention to her and her religious background.

Trying to distance themselves from their heritage, and to demonstrate just how well integrated they are, they regularly invite 'real' Australians over for their family dinners. According to Amal, "[i]t's part of the whole Joe and Mandy campaign to show off how Aussie they are" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 180). Indeed, on one of these occasions, once the evening progresses, Uncle Joe gives a little speech in front of his family and his Australian colleague Alan:

> [w]e live in Australia. [...] So we should assimilate and act like Australians. How can we be accepted and fit in if we're still thinking about Palestine and talking Arabic? Multiculturalism is a joke. We need to mix more. Make friends outside our own community. Look at my family. We're not stuck in Palestinian or Egyptian or Turkish ghettos. We're part of the wider community. Our friends, our colleagues, they're all average Australians, not wogs. (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 181)

Clearly, Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy want to belong to Australian society so much that they completely deny their background, almost deprecate it. They are desperate for their fellow citizens' approval, almost as if they are trying to make up for the wrongdoings committed by other Muslims. Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy certainly seem to believe that to get ahead in Australian one needs to shed any Muslimness and appropriate the Australian culture as much as possible.

To illustrate just how diverse Muslims are, the novel also introduces the character of Cassandra, the mother of Amal's friend Yasmeen, who turns out to be a lady of wealthy English background and who converted to Islam out of conviction and after meeting her future Pakistani husband. Being fascinated by her, Amal wonders "what some people say when they learn that Cassandra's surname is Khan. When they see her blue eyes, pale skin, freckles, blonde eyelashes and light eyebrows underneath her beanie. When they see her arms linked with a dark, balding Pakistani. When they're introduced to her freckle-faced, dark-eyed, white daughter and chocolate-skinned son" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 132), concluding that there is no such thing as a Muslim identity nor a "Muslim appearance" (ibid.) – Muslims are just as diverse and multifaceted as any other group of people.

With Leila and her mother Gulchin Abdel-Fattah created a completely different set of personalities as well, perfectly illustrating the conflict that can arise between first and second

generations in a diaspora. While Leila is an extremely smart, intelligent and driven teenage girl, very keen on becoming lawyer, her mother is her complete opposite; Leila's priorities predominantly revolve around education, while her mother's are mostly focussed on finding a husband for her daughter. An attitude which results in Leila being kept in a gilded cage, unable to go out and socialise with her friends, unable to look for a casual job because her mother fears it might give them a bad reputation if her daughter is seen outside, on the streets. The only thing that Leila should aspire to, according to Gulchin, is becoming a housewife – loyal and obedient, that is.

An upbringing that is not only going to cause Leila to disappear for several weeks, but that will also arouse Amal's fury and anger as she is unable to accept how backwards and stifling some of her fellow Muslim peers can be. Condemning Gulchin's behaviour, Amal is particularly upset about her using Islam as an excuse to justify her way of parenting when she has not even read the Koran, but solely relies on "what her mum told her and what her mum's mum told her. That's her *scripture*" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 90, emphasis in original), with Leila angrily claiming that it is her who is "offending Islam" (ibid.) and not herself by seeking education. According to Leila, "[m]um's following her own customs more than Islam. She doesn't really have an in-depth understanding about the religion" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 148). Abdel-Fattah is trying to point out that some Muslims, like Gulchin, are "more into following social customs" (*Head* 149) than the actual commands as laid out in Koran, highlighting "that there are differences between the tenets of Islam and the cultural or political interpretations of it" (Lochte 2). Some traditions are certainly not based on Koran, but were, as in Gulchin's case, verbally passed down from generation to generation, therefore being mistaken as customs based on Islam. However, a line needs to be drawn between religion and culture as these things are certainly not one and the same; Islam should not be used as a false excuse by Gulchin for not wanting a proper education for her daughter.

In Gulchin's case her way of approaching parenthood is based on her own upbringing, a childhood which was shaped by a very simple life in a small village in Turkey, a life formed by extreme poverty and a lack of opportunities. It is this background that has influenced Gulchin's restrictive way of parenting, not Islam, as Abdel-Fattah argues, with Gulchin even admitting towards the end of the novel that it is her culture that has shaped her, not her religion: "[y]ou think my culture I just throw away? It is my culture. It is me. All I know is

how I grow up and what my mum taught me. It is my village culture and my family culture and my home culture. If you losing your culture you becoming nothing" (Abdel-Fattah, *Head* 322). This is the way she grew up, however, it is not to be mixed up with the teachings of Islam. Abdel-Fattah tries to hint that a lack of education often results in a lack of knowledge about Islam.

By inventing all these highly diverse and different personas, who are all struggling with their individual problems, Abdel-Fattah tries to illustrate that the Muslim diaspora is heterogenic and certainly not easy to pin down – whether it is

> Amal's aunt and uncle, who live secular lives and have worked very hard to assimilate into Australian culture; her friend, Yasmeen, whose White British mother converted to Islam after meeting her Pakistani future husband; and Amal's friend, Leila, whose mother worries that her daughter is being corrupted by Australian culture but who turns a blind eye to her son's drinking and drug use. (Lochte 2)

Abdel-Fattah certainly managed to provide an insight into the diversity of the Australian Muslim community by painting "an even broader portrait of diversity within the Muslim Diaspora" (Lochte 2), thereby hoping "to combat the stereotypical images of Muslims" (Ameri 57).

5.1.5 Conclusion

> One of the greatest charms of Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does My Head Look Big in This?* is how utterly ordinary it is in so many ways; it has all of the required hallmarks of a young adult contemporary realistic novel. The plucky female protagonist leads us through a school year full of insecurities and rivalries, teen angst, budding romance, and questions about the future. What makes this novel unique is that its heroine, Amal Mohamed Nasrullah Abdel-Hakim, is Muslim and has just made the monumental decision to wear a hijab at all times, what she and her friends call being a 'full timer'. This choice influences most of the events that unfold for Amal over the course of the story as she struggles to make sense of the anticipated and unanticipated ways her decision impacts her life and those closest to her. (Lochte 1, emphasis in original)

Yes, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* is most certainly a typical young adult novel insofar as it deals with "Amal's more mundane teenage concerns, such as the perils of acne being quite visible when wearing a hijab and being embarrassed by her parents' tendency to wear

matching sweat suits and power-walk through her neighborhood" (Lochte 2). A novel that, for an adult reader, is sometimes delving into rather trivial pastimes, such as the Amal's penchant for quizzes found in women's magazines or her fondness of her mirror when trying on outfits for social gatherings for the umpteenth time.

Yet, at the same time, Abdel-Fattah has created a "sympathetic and complex character whose personal and spiritual journeys help paint a human and relatable portrait of a Muslim young adult" (Lochte 2) who is trying to find her place in modern Australian society while wearing the veil on top of her head. Abdel-Fattah, according to Lochte, has succeeded in "showing her heroine as a unique individual; she does not shy away from or attempt to simplify Amal's religious faith, nor does she allow it define Amal's character entirely" (2-3).

Most importantly, "[h]ers is a perspective rarely heard in popular fiction and her presence is surely illuminating for non-Muslim readers and validating for Muslim ones" (Lochte 3) as "[i]t is urgent for the Muslim community to combat stereotyped representation by others and to project their culture from within. It is important to have alternative versions of the reality of an individual Muslim's life, not just as a person belonging to a religious community but as a human being who needs to be recognised as a human being" (Ameri 56).

Just as there is "an overwhelming thirst for alternative narratives" (Abdel-Fattah qtd. in Ameri 57), with the public longing for "an insight into the Muslim community" (ibid.) in these politically tumultuous days, Abdel-Fattah has succeeded in offering "her readers an engaging Muslim voice that manages the delicate balance of being informative enough for a cultural outsider to understand and enjoy, while refusing to pander to non-Muslim sensibilities" (Lochte 3).

5.2 TEN THINGS I HATE ABOUT ME BY RANDA ABDEL-FATTAH

5.2.1 WHO AM I?

Set in Sydney in the year 2005, *Ten Things I Hate About Me* starts with a heated discussion at Guildford High about the 'beach riots', a series of violent clashes that formed because of racial tensions between white Australians and Australians of Middle Eastern background. One of the novel's characters, Ahmed Latif, shows off a scar after he got involved in the brutal riot; infuriated by crowds who were chanting "*No more Lebs!*" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 2, emphasis in original), "*Wogs Go Home*" (ibid.) or "*Ethnic Cleansing*" (ibid.), Ahmed started to verbally fight back, explaining that "[t]hey were callings us wogs. Giving us shit for being Lebanese. They were telling us to get off *their* turf. Do you think we're going to sit back and take it? I've been going to that beach since I was a kid. It's mine just as much as theirs" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 3, emphasis in original). A statement which is met with ridicule by the school's popular kids such as Peter who retorts "[m]an, you ethnics and Asians are always complaining" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 3), echoing the sentiment that immigrants should leave the country if they do not like the way they are being treated. According to Peter, "[i]f you want to be Aussie you have to abandon your culture. And if you're so oppressed by this country, you can always go back to where you came from" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 4), adding that "[e]ven our politicians have singled your kind out as troublemakers[.] [...] You just refuse to integrate. Your women wear that funny headgear and most of you don't speak English" (ibid.), thereby illustrating the blatant tensions between white Australians and Australians of ethnic background at this high school in Western Sydney.

Enter Jamie, the novel's main character, who, once this argument turns into a power struggle between the popular and the not-so popular kids at her school, "[pretends] to be fascinated by an ingrown fingernail" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 3). And who, when Peter remarks upon "[t]he delusions of immigrants" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 4), only "[smiles] back meekly. That's what I do when I interact with Peter. I do coy, self-conscious, shy. That is the extent of my repertoire" (ibid.). Trying to elicit a reaction of approval from Jamie, Peter launches into a tirade against Lebanese Muslims:

What a joke, hey Jamie? Ahmed probably spends his weekends in a garage making bombs or training for a terrorist cell. I'm glad the riots broke out. My dad told me that it's been a long time coming. He used to surf those beaches when he was younger. Sure, there were Italians and Greeks but there weren't *too* many, so you didn't notice and it was OK. But now the Lebs have invaded the beaches and it's not the same. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 5, emphasis in original)

While this rant illustrates Peter's xenophobic tendencies, Jamie, when "trying to disguise my mortification at his comments" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 5), only "[gulps] hard and [nods] half-heartedly" (ibid.). A reaction which is highly peculiar considering the fact that Jamie is actually of Lebanese Muslim background: "[y]ou see, neither Peter nor anybody else in my class has any idea about my Lebanese-Muslim background. In fact, my real name is Jamilah Towfeek but I'm known as Jamie when I'm at school because I'm on a mission to de-wog myself" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 5). She explains that "[e]ver since Year Seven (I'm in Year Ten now), I've hidden the fact that I'm of Lebanese-Muslim heritage to everybody at school to avoid people assuming I drive planes into buildings as a hobby" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 6). Being aware of her personal shortcomings, Jamilah admits that

[u]nlike [...] Ahmed, I don't have the courage to be upfront about who I am. I'd rather not deal with people wondering if I keep a picture of Osama Bin Laden in the shape of a love heart under my pillow. Call me crazy but I'm also not particularly excited about the prospect of having to stand accused every time somebody who happens to be of Lebanese background commits a crime. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 6-7)

Terrified of having to endure taunts like Ahmed's on a daily basis, Jamilah has made the decision to "[anglicize] my name. And [dye] my hair blonde. And I sometimes wear blue contact lenses. Maybe the logic isn't apparent. But when you have brown hair and brown eyes, avoiding a 'Middle Eastern appearance' tag at my school is made easier when you're hiding behind peroxide and optical aids" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 7). She explains that "[t]he blonde locks have probably helped me in my mission to stay incognito. Nobody at school knows about my background. I'm not popular enough for people to want to probe, and I'm not loser enough for people to think my vagueness is weird. I guess you could say that I don't make much of an impact" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 7).

Jamilah's lack of self-esteem is that pronounced that she even has a list of ten things that she hates about herself, thereby revealing an extremely insecure and vulnerable teenage girl who is unable to accept herself they way she is. The list reads as follows:

1. I was born and raised in Oz but people still assume I was born under a camel in a cave in a desert in the Middle East to parents who belong to a tribe with Osama Bin Laden genealogy.

2. As a Lebanese Muslim, we're only always *randomly* held up at airports (it's *randomly* happened to my dad and I every single time we've flown to Perth to visit my uncle).

3. The only introduction most people have to my LM culture is through headlines about terrorists under pictures of men with monobrows, missing teeth, back hair and guns.

4. I want the right to apply for a pilot's licence or own fertilizer or have a non-mainstream opinion without being blacklisted. (This is all theoretical. I actually want to be a dentist or primary school teacher when I grow up.)

5. I'm one person at school and another person at home […].

6. I'm low enough to be embarrassed to be seen with my sister at school because she wears the hijab.

7. A charter of curfew rights is stuck on our fridge door.

8. I'm treated differently to my brother.

9. I'm attracted to a jerk [i.e. Peter] at school because I want to be popular.

10. I have brown hair, brown eyes, brown skin and curly hair. Totally boring. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 89-90, emphasis and numeration in original)

Reading through this, it is obvious that Jamilah is a completely different heroine than Amal, her counterpart in *Does My Head Look Big in This?*; instead of being gutsy and courageous like Amal, who is trying to openly to commit to her religion, Jamilah is her complete opposite. Being intimated by the public's opinion on Muslims, she has decided to shroud her background in complete mystery by creating Jamie. Faking her 'new' identity is her way of protecting herself from turmoil, her attempt at shielding herself from confrontations and prejudices. According to Jamilah, leading a double life is the only option she has if she wants a place in the midst of Australian society. Denying her family's heritage, she believes, will result in her being seen as a true Aussie, that abandoning her culture will equal popularity and acceptance. She is driven by her wish to belong, her desire to be as 'normal' as possible; she is desperate for not being seen as the 'Other', an inferior human being denunciated because of her religious and cultural background.

Explaining the harsh dynamics at her school, Jamilah informs her readers that "this is high school. The system is designed to sort out the cool from the uncool, the strong from the week, the smart from the dumb. We're not protected by political correctness or common decency in high school" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 156). High school, according to her, is an extremely harsh environment, a place where you are quickly singled out if you do not fit in and do not adhere to social norms – only the fittest survive. And clearly, according to Peter and the other popular kids at Guildford High, "non-Anglos aren't real Aussies. They're imposters. Fraudulent Australians" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 6). Against this backdrop, it is no wonder that Jamilah believes her background, her identity, to be "a source of tension, particularly when expressions of multiracial and biracial identity are not supported or allowed" (Townsend, Markus and Bergsieker 185). Having witnessed Peter's behavior towards Ahmed and others, Jamilah knows that there is a price to pay for standing out from the crowd. She knows that by 'coming out' as a Lebanese Muslim her "group membership" (Townsend, Markus and Bergsieker 188) would get challenged – a prospect that she firmly wants to avoid.

Her behaviour is also fuelled by a sense of envy; thinking about Liz and Amy, the closest she has to girlfriends, she admits that

> Amy and Liz seem to have it all. They're untouched by stereotypes, racism and family problems. They're of Anglo background. They have blonde hair and blue eyes. They don't have a strict curfew and never seem to have a problem getting permission to go out on the weekend. I envy them. Sometimes the Jamie in me aches to be a blue-eyed, blonde girl of Caucasian appearance. The yardstick against which all Australians are measured. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 9)

By pretending to be Jamie, Jamilah creates a world which she desperately wants to be a part of. Unlike her, Australians of Anglo background do not have to argue with their parents about 'mundane' topics such as curfews. In Jamilah's opinion, Australian teenagers have a much easier life – and she wants that for herself as well.

While her disguise protects her from being a victim of bullying, "[t]he Jamilah in me longs to be respected for who she is, not tolerated and put up with like some bad odour or annoying house guest. But it takes guts to command that respect and deal with people's judgments. Being Jamie at school shelters me from confronting all that" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 9). A part of her wants to break from her disguise and reveal her true self as she is tired of hiding behind a façade, unable to connect with others due to her web of lies. However, she knows

that disclosing her true identity would take a lot of courage and strength, traits which she believes she cannot muster.

Torn between two conflicting attitudes, Jamilah finds herself increasingly admiring Timothy Reynolds, the new boy at her school who is unlike anybody else at Guildford High; he is the epitome of confidence and therefore a non-conformist and loner. While Timothy is harassed by the school bullies on a daily basis, Jamilah is impressed by his confidence: "[m]aybe people feel intimated by his 'don't give a stuff what people think' attitude. But I, for one, am in awe that somebody can be so confident in themselves that they don't care who they hang out with or what people whisper behind their back" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 11). A part of her admires him for his courage and wishes that some of that confidence could rub off on her, but she knows that she is too busy trying to pretend to be somebody she is not, busy avoiding doing things that are "bad for the image" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 11). Instead of defending Timothy in front of his bullies, Jamilah and her friend Amy resort to silent compliance:

> [l]ike me, [Amy's] an onlooker. We buy tickets as audience members only. We never volunteer for the show itself. I know that's not an excuse. In fact, maybe we're worse. Our status in the regular crowd is parasitical. It feeds off the uncoolness of others. We can only be semipopular as a measure of those who aren't. So we naturally try to maintain the status quo; support the system that supports ours. Our complicity is self-serving. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 13)

Jamilah certainly knows that her behaviour is not laudable, but she lacks the backbone to stand up for an outsider and therefore resorts to mirroring her schoolmates in their responses. Once again, Jamilah informs her readers that her fake identity is a means of "survival" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 19) in this harsh environment and that "[s]tandard human decency has nothing to do with the situation. This is about my social standing" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 61).

However, there is one place where she truly belongs, a place where she feels comfortable in her own skin: madrasa, which is the Arabic school she attends weekly. She explains that "all the other kids in my class are wholly unconnected to my school, so madrasa is like a sanctuary for me. There I'm Jamilah. I play the *darabuka*, eat my Lebanese food and listen to Arabic pop music. I'm not a walking headline or stereotype. I'm just me" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 31, emphasis in original). When playing there with her band, Jamilah feels "a strange sense of calm and exhilaration" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 62), making her exclaim that

"[t]his is where I belong, I think to myself. This is who I am" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 63). Surrounded by teenagers who are all like her, who all share a similar background as they are Muslims, Jamilah does not feel the urge to be somebody she is not – she is not subjected to restrictive identity labels. She feels accepted and included just the way she is. At madrasa, she is just like everybody else: an Australian teenage girl of Muslim background trying to find her place in Australian society. Whatever problems she may be facing, whether it is her strict father and his curfew rules, Jamilah knows that she will not be made fun of, that her peers will understand these types of problems. Unlike her Australian schoolmates, they know what it is like to be juggling "a double consciousness" (Leela Gandhi referred to in Pearce 61), an awareness "where individuals come to possess multiple layers of identity, allegiance and loyalty, across different registers that may be local, regional or national" (ibid.).

While these hours at madrasa represent a welcome change for Jamilah, these inklings of confidence evaporate as soon as she is back at Guildford High – particularly after Peter, the school leader and bully, has taken a liking to her. While she is not particularly fond of him – "[h]e's a bigot and a bully but he's popular because he provides entertainment value" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 119) – being seen with him is the gateway to social elevation. So when he starts courting her, Jamilah does not resist his advances but rather basks in his attention. Yet, at the same time, she realises the effect this has on her: "[t]he more attention Peter gives me, the more the Jamilah in me fades away. I begin to believe my lies. That I'm a girl without cultural or religious baggage. That I'm Peter's type" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 103). While she is certainly enjoying this new-found attention, seeing it as a sign of recognition and validation that she has always been longing for, she realises the consequences this has on her identity; the more Peter flirts with her, the more she feels wane her determination to come to terms with Jamilah. She is aware of the fact that Jamilah would never get the same kind of attention as Jamie and that even if "Peter asked me out, he'd be asking *Jamie* out. He wouldn't look twice at Jamilah" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 104, emphasis in original).

With Peter's affection towards her growing, Jamilah comes to understand that the cause of his feelings is highly unflattering: when badmouthing his ex-girlfriends, Peter informs Jamilah that the reason for his fondness lies in the fact that she is not "obsessed with the sound of [her] own voice" (Abdel-Fatah, *Ten Things* 58). Comprehending the true meaning of this, Jamilah explains that "I am not obsessed with the sound of my own voice because I don't have a

voice. I'm stifling it beneath layers of deceit and shame" (Abdel-Fatah, *Ten Things* 58), realising that Peter likes her for all the wrong reasons; i.e. her weak personality and her inability to defend herself and others. Soon afterwards, Peter gushes about how she has got "no confidence" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 146) in herself, that unlike her, the other girls are "always out to prove themselves. They want to be defined. You, on the other hand, seem happy just floating along" (ibid), adding that "[y]ou're so shy and awkward and quiet. It's such a refreshing change to all the chicks who are so *out there*" (ibid., emphasis in original). It is here that it dawns on Jamilah that "I am officially walking around without a spinal cord" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 145) and that "I've attracted the attention of Peter Clarkson for all the wrong reasons. Although I've tried so hard to hide my identity, I never imagined I had reduced myself to a passive, mute *chick*" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 146, emphasis in original). For the first time since Year Seven, Jamilah realises that her mission to 'de-wog' herself actually has consequences; while she believed that by anglicising herself she was only ensuring herself a life in anonymity, she had not anticipated that her environment would actually see through her lack of confidence. By being Jamie Jamilah has created a person that she does not actually want to be – "even though my silence protects me, I'm the one walking with my head down" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 145).

Prompted by this revelation, Jamilah understands that she has to change and that she has to work on herself. Unsure of how she can achieve that desired transformation, she confides in John, her cyber friend and the only person she trusts, who, recognising her struggles, tries to spark her confidence. According to him, "[i]t's clear that you don't respect yourself and that is disturbing because [...] you are worth it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 162), urging her "to stop worrying about how other people judge you" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 161) and "to trust that your friends will respect you for who you are. [...] But they'll never do that if you don't respect yourself first" (ibid.). Instead of focusing on her negative characteristics, John advises her to emphasise her positive traits, the things that make her special: "[y]ou need to know that there are more than ten things you should LOVE (or at least like – small steps) about yourself" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 162, emphasis in original). It is only once she realises that she is just as unique as everybody else, once she has found a bit of pride in her background, that people will accept her.

Another formative figure in this transformative process is Miss Sadja, her madrasa teacher, who seems utterly confident in and comfortable with her Lebanese background, yet informs Jamilah that it has certainly "been a long struggle to accept myself" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 166), implying that accepting one's hybrid identity is certainly not an easy endeavour, but one which takes time and a lot of endurance. Being aware of Jamilah's struggles with her identities, she reminds her that assimilation is not the solution to her problems. Instead, she should focus on the different influences in her life, finding ways of how to combine them:

> But wait, Jamilah. Look closer. The family dinner is in the backyard of your suburban Sydney home. The Arabic coffee is being boiled over a barbecue you bought from Bunnings. The *warak ayneb* is home-grown and the humous is from the local supermarket. The boys and girls experiment with their parents' instruments while *Neighbours* is on in the background. That's *your* Australian landscape, Jamilah. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 167-168, emphasis in original)

Instead of suppressing her diversity, she should appreciate it; being Australian as well as Lebanese Muslim is not mutually exclusive – contrary to what she believes.

Initially unable to accept her friends' encouragements, Jamilah reveals that "I've only ever felt that my heritage is something to be ashamed of" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 168). She recounts how

> [w]hen those teenage boys gang-raped girls in Sydney, it was the boys' Lebanese-Muslim background that was put on trial. I went to school and I watched Peter Clarkson cross-examine Ahmed for a crime he did not commit. I read headlines describing the crimes as 'Middle Eastern rape'. I've never heard of Anglo burglary or Caucasian murder. If an Anglo-Australian commits a crime, the only descriptions we get are the colour of his clothes and hair. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 168)

While she wishes she had Miss Sadja's strength, she wonders "[w]hen there's so much fear and misunderstanding and ridicule, why would anybody want to stand out? As well-meaning as Miss Sadja's efforts may be, I'm not interested in being a hybrid identity. I've learned that the safest thing is to leave the kebaps at home and stick to fairy bread and Vegemite" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 169) – an attitude which suggests that Jamilah still has not progressed very far.

With the formal at her school coming up, she finds herself in a difficult situation yet again; her principal at Guildford High has booked her band from madrasa as an act, thereby

threatening her exposal to her schoolmates who are still very much unaware of her background. Unsure of what to do, Jamilah finds her ambivalence surfacing again; on the one hand, "I realize that I can't deny that I love my Lebanese culture. I love the food. I love the fact that we have such a huge circle of family friends. I love my dad's stories about growing up in Beirut. I love Lebanese weddings and I love Arabic music, especially dancing to the latest pop songs. I love the way our friends stuck by us when my mother died" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 189). However, on the other hand,

> [a]ll I want is to fit in and be accepted as an Aussie. But I don't know how to do that when I'm juggling my Lebanese and Muslim background at the same time. It's not like juggling an orange, an apple and a banana. [...] But the way I see it, juggling Aussie and Lebanese and Muslim is like juggling a couch, a letter box and a tray of muffins. Completely and utterly incongruous. How can I be three identities in one? It doesn't work. They're always at war with one another. If I want to go clubbing, the Muslim in me says it's wrong and the Lebanese in me panics about bumping into somebody who knows somebody who knows my dad. If I want to go to a Lebanese wedding as the four hundredth guest, the Aussie in me will laugh and wonder why we're not having civilized cocktails in a function room that seats a maximum of fifty people. If I want to fast during Ramadan, the Aussie in me will think I'm a masochist. I can't win. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 189-190)

Contrary to what her family and her friends believe, Jamilah is not convinced by the concept of hybridity. In her experience, having such a diverse background is the cause of problems and confusion – not celebration.

However, the more the story progresses, the more Jamilah realises that her silence, her indirect consent to racism and discrimination, has grave consequences; ramifications which do not only affect her, but her relationships with other people as well. On one occasion, when skipping school with Peter and his friends, she has to listen to them making fun of people of Middle Eastern background. Feeling uncomfortable, "I clear my throat and play with my fingernails. This is wrong. I regret being here. I want to be around people who make me feel good about myself and who bring out the best in me. But I'm sitting here listening to my heritage being rubbished and I'm a mute" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 221). Thinking of Timothy and his tremendous amount of confidence, she expresses her wish

> to be like that. I've got so much protective padding strapped to myself that it's suffocating my voice, my conscience, my personality. And then there's the guilt. Trust. It's all I've ever wanted from my dad. I've defended myself. Argued that I'm worthy of it. That my word is my honour. That he can snuggle up to it and sleep well

through the night. But I'm betraying my father and the hypocrisy is sitting in my stomach like an undigested sandwich. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 222)

Jamilah comprehends that Jamie, her invention, is not only damaging herself, but that it is also affecting those around her, particularly her family; by denying her background she indirectly supports the defamation of her Lebanese Muslim community. Worse than that is the fact the she is also betraying her father's trust, his belief in her reliability. Revelations which trigger the following in her:

> [a]ll I want to know is what place I have in this country I call home. It all comes down to emotional real estate. Finding your place, renovating it as you go along (a haircut here, a university degree there), and having neighbourly relations with other property owners. So far, I've figured that dyeing my hair blonde, poking my eyes out with contact lenses and living a lie at school all guarantee me a share in the Australian property market. But I'm starting to realize how empty my bit of 'place' is. It's got no soul. The cosmetics are fantastic and would look great on domain.com. But you can't smell life. It tastes like stale Ryvita biscuits and sounds like socks on carpet. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 268-269)

After a long battle with herself and her obsession with being seen as an Aussie, she recognises the repercussions of her actions. Trying to salvage the damage, she decides "to do something about it. I'm going to fix things with Amy. [...] And I'm going to risk it all and play in the band [at the formal]" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 269). Not only does she reject Peter's invitation to the formal – finally, "[f]or the first time in my life I realize that I deserve more" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 250) – but she also makes a full-blown confession to her friend Amy about all her lies: "[s]o I explain it to her. Paint her a picture of my world. A world of headlines and documentaries and summits and bad press. A world of stereotypes and generalizations. A world in which I'm a perfect target for Peter's racist game of archery" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 272). When coming clean with Amy, Jamilah realises her own wrongdoings: "[a]s soon as I say it I realize how misguided I've been. I've been so afraid of people's generalizations. But I've been just as guilty of making my own" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 273). Following this exchange, after understanding that she is equally guilty of stereotyping people, she states that "[h]onesty is liberating. And tough. And worth it. It's weights and bricks and cement blocks off your shoulders. It's an orthopaedic remedy. You can suddenly stand straight and tall again. I tell Amy everything because I'm learning to trust again. I tell her my complete family history" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 274). It finally dawns

on Jamilah that hiding all these years was unnecessary, that there are people she can rely on, people who will accept her no matter what.

Followed by these revelations is her decision to 'come out' as a Lebanese Muslim at her formal by playing with her 'Middle Eastern band' in front of all her schoolmates. While still slightly worried about this big step in her life, she realises that being herself, while not always easy, is still preferable to deceiving others. Fuelled by her family's and her friends' support, Jamilah exclaims: "I can't believe I'm here, at my formal, in front of all my classmates, exposing myself like this. There's no shame; there's no embarrassment. With every drumming down on the *darabuka* I'm announcing who I am. For the first time in my life, knowing the answer has never felt so sweet" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 303, emphasis in original), thereby revealing the transformation she has finally undergone and how she has come to terms with the multiple influences in her life. A change which has also made her "realize that I want complications. I need them. Because without them I'm a shadow in the playground. A whisper in the classroom. Barely here or there" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 249-250).

5.2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING FRIENDS

Hiding your true self from your environment has one major disadvantage: you cannot confide in others for fear of jeopardising your masquerade. This is certainly the case with Jamilah and her so-called friends Amy and Liz; explaining the dynamics of her friendship with these two girls, Jamilah tells her readers that

> [a]lthough Amy and Liz are my friends, they're closer to each other and basically tolerate me as something of a third wheel. Whereas Amy and Liz spend hours on the phone and go out on weekends, I rarely see them outside of school. There's a definite distance between us, and I have to say that it's deliberate on my part. I avoid getting too close to Amy or Liz, or anyone else at school for that matter. If I get too close then I run the risk of exposing myself. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 8-9)

Worried about giving away too much information about herself, Jamilah has instead focussed on erecting a wall between her and her environment, meaning that her few friendships are of a

shallow and superficial nature. While she longs for more intimacy, Jamilah is unable to open up to her friends as she is too worried about being seen "as a poor, pitiful, repressed Lebanese girl. [...] I know that I'm not a stereotype and I'll do everything in my power to protect myself from being seen as one, even if that means lying to my closest friend" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 47-48). Jamilah is certainly conscious of the fact that deceiving her friends like that is "deceitful. It's dishonest. It's two-faced" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 19), but for her, "it's about survival" (ibid.) as she has "to protect [herself]" (ibid.). However, not opening up also has the consequence that Amy is just as withdrawn as Jamilah:

> not for the first time [...] [I realize] that I don't have a proper relationship with my so-called closest friend. We're like the two sides of a train track, comfortable in our parallel existence. We don't intersect or touch each other. But sometimes you need to collide. You need to crash and make an impact just to feel your friendship is alive. To feel that it's more than passing notes to each other in class and sharing hot chips at lunch time. I don't have any collision scars from this friendship. And as deliberate as that is, it's not something I'm proud of. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 46)

While she desperately wants to connect with her friend, Jamilah is unsure of how to break down the wall between them. Instead, she resorts to a friendship with John, an email buddy that she meets in a chat room. While he is a complete stranger to her, the two of them develop a strong bond and soon start exchanging the smallest details about their lives. She even confides in him that she is of Lebanese Muslim background and that she is basically living two lives. She confesses that "[t]o everybody at school I have no cultural or religious baggage. I wish I could be me but I'm too scared. I've learned to adapt, like a chameleon changing its colour to blend with its environment. That chameleon's got the right attitude. Stick out and you've got no chance of survival" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 89). With John, she feels like she has "finally made a true friend" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 91), with her even revealing the ten things she hates about herself to him – which is definitely a first for her.

Thinking of her friends at school, she believes that she

> can't afford to show them the real me. They wouldn't understand my culture or my religion. I've done everything I can to disassociate myself from being identified as a wog. Amy likes me as Jamie. She doesn't know about Jamilah who speaks Arabic and goes to madrasa and celebrates Ramadan and plays the *darabuka* and can cook Lebanese food and has a strict dad. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 91, emphasis in original)

Her friendship with John, however, is completely different; "at least I've started on a new page with John. The honesty of our friendship is so raw and real that sometimes I can't wait to open my inbox and step into a world where being Jamilah comes naturally" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 92).

It is this friendship with John – who actually turns out to be Timothy – that strengthens her courage and her determination to 'come out'. In their numerous conversations he is always encouraging her to stand up for herself, demonstrating his faith in her: "[y]ou'll walk into class. And you'll be yourself. And it will be glorious for you" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 176). Inspired by his constant encouragement, Jamilah, towards the end of the novel, realises that "[h]e's taught me to only give a damn about people that matter" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 279) and that she needs to replace her constant doubts with self-confidence and courage.

Triggered by her soul-baring friendship with John/Timothy, and in an attempt to take her friendship with Amy to the next level, Jamilah decides to finally come clean with her and unveils her background, her whole family history. After revealing all her lies, Jamilah exclaims: "I can't believe I've admitted it out loud. The relief floods through me but is instantly swept away by panic. Panic that Amy will no longer want to be my friend. I look over at her, shamefaced, hoping she won't despise me for it" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 272). Realising that her fears are completely unnecessary, that Amy is not bothered by her Lebanese Muslim heritage in the slightest, she realises "that true friends are those who love you not in spite of your faults and imperfections, but because of them" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 277).

5.2.3 GENERATIONAL CONFLICTS

Unlike her schoolmates, going out to social gatherings is a constant source of tension between Jamilah and her father; according to her, her "dad has a policy about going out at night. It's called Never. Subtitles: Not In A Trillion Years" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 18). To illustrate just how strict her father is, she informs her readers that he has actually drafted curfew rules, regulations which she refers to as "Stone Age rules" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 20) and which read as follows:

1. Jamilah is not allowed to go out after dark. She must be home before sunset.
2. Jamilah may go to the movies with her FEMALE friends *sometimes*, provided that her brother or sister or family member picks her up from the cinema immediately after the movie finishes. No loitering around in the car park permitted.
3. The movie must be in the daytime.
4. Bilal's [i.e. her brother] friends do not constitute family members.
5. Under no circumstances are boys allowed.
6. Under no circumstances are boys allowed.
7. There will be NO going out until all homework is finished. (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 20-21, emphasis in original)

While Jamilah is worried about her friends finding out about her father's strictness and misconstruing it as Islam's fault, she explains that the reason for his behaviour lies elsewhere: "[m]y mother died of a sudden heart attack when I was nine years old. My father changed instantly. Before my mother's death, he was fun and carefree. Afterwards, he became rigid, overprotective and paranoid. He worries about what happens and what *could* happen. He wants to control every variable in my life and it drives me mad" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 20, emphasis in original).

Regardless of his motifs, Jamilah, when asking him whether she can attend a party, is met with resistance; he exclaims that "I would feel more comfortable letting you sleep in a lion's den" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 32). Tired of their constant differences, Jamilah laments that "I'm sick of being left out all the time. I don't have a social life" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 33) and that "I'm just so sick of being different" (ibid.). Being constantly restricted by her father, Jamilah feels that this is only adding to her social isolation, that with a background like this she cannot be a true Australian. With her father having a different concept of what a teenage girl's life should look like, Jamilah often finds herself trapped between two worlds, unable to please both sides.

Jamilah is also infuriated by her father's double standards: according to him, "[g]irls have more to lose than boys" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 34) and "the rules of life are different for boys and girls" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 49), an attitude which further deepens the conflict between first and second generation diasporans. Exasperated by her father's inability to adapt to Australian norms, Jamilah wonders if she will "ever have a normal relationship with my dad. If we'll ever be able to understand each other; reason with one another" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 49).

Not only is Jamilah is frustrated by her father's behaviour, but also her siblings Bilal and Shereen who lament that "[h]e has these high expectations for all of us. But he sets them without consulting us or thinking about what we want or how we feel" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 129). Revealing that their father actually holds a PhD in a highly specialised field in agriculture, but only works as a taxi driver, they understand where his frustration, his strictness, is coming from, yet are exasperated by how this is affecting their lives in a negative way. Again, this illustrates the various sources of tension that can arise between different generations of a diaspora, conflicts which arise when the first generation wants a better life for their descendants – even if it means being perceived as a 'Stone Age' parent by their children.

Besides her irritation with her father's rules, Jamilah also feels "frustrated and embarrassed that my dad's English is still so broken after all the years he has been here. He can get by, of course. He drives a cab so he can obviously communicate. But sometimes I feel that people would take him more seriously if he were fluent. They hear his heavy accent and he's suddenly less Aussie" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 75). In paragraphs like these, Jamilah displays an almost resentment-like attitude towards her background, embarrassment towards her father's inability to become 'invisible' in Australian society. Instances like these also reveal why Jamilah has such a low self-esteem, why she feels that her background is best hidden.

An attitude that is certainly not shared by her father at all; he firmly believes that Jamilah is "an Australian, not a *wog*" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 77, emphasis in original), to which she retorts with disbelief: "[a]t my school if you speak two languages or have dark skin or don't celebrate Christmas, you're never really accepted as an equal. That's why keeping a low profile is the best option" (ibid.). An argument ensues in which her father maintains that "[y]ou should be proud of who you are, Jamilah! You can be Australian and still have your heritage and religion. They are not at war with each other. Why is this life always like a battlefield for you? You are Australian and Lebanese and Muslim. They go together, Jamilah" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 77-78). He adds that "[y]ou were born here. You were raised here. I am the migrant. And yet I feel more comfortable with my identity than you do! […] My struggles should not be endured by my children. That means we have not progressed. We have gone nowhere and learnt nothing. There's something very wrong with that" (Abdel-

Fattah, *Ten Things* 78). Trying to explain to her that he is the immigrant, not Jamilah, he stresses that she should stop marginalising herself. While he has had to face many obstacles, she is in a better position than him and should rather focus on all the opportunities that she has. Experiencing the first inklings of a maturation process, Jamilah admits that "[i]t's one of the rare occasions in my life that I can see that my dad has a point" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 78).

As the novel progresses, Jamilah also starts to understand that her father is just under as much pressure from his community as she is at her school: "[n]one of you understand that our family is under the microscope. Ever since Najah [i.e. Jamilah's mother] died people have been watching to see if I will do a good job, what will become of my children. I have every right to care!" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 84). Jamilah's aunt, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the two generations, explains that "[w]hen your mother passed away your father's role suddenly changed. When your mother was alive your father's primary job was to drive the taxi and support the family. […] Your father threw all his energy and purpose into supporting you. With your mother's death, the roles merged. Don't you think he was scared?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 195). According to her, he was afraid "[o]f failing […]. Of being a single parent. Of how people would judge him. He has had to raise three children. Don't you think he worries about the fact that you don't have a mother to be there for you through your teenage years?" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 195).

Jamilah realises that it is not only her who is trying to prove herself in front of her environment, but also her father. While there was "a gulf of misunderstanding" (Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things* 229) between the two of them at the beginning of the novel, this barrier is waning more and more as the story progresses; both Jamilah and her father realise that they are on the same side and that they have to work on understanding each other.

5.2.4 Conclusion

Clearly, unlike in *Does My Head Look Big In This?*, Abdel-Fattah in *Ten Things I Hate About Me* has chosen a completely different approach and perspective for dealing with the topics of

identity and Muslim diaspora. While Amal is a relatively confident teenage girl, with her occasional phases of doubt, Jamilah seems to be her complete opposite; shy, self-conscious and, most importantly, so uncomfortable in her Lebanese Muslim identity that she, in a rather extreme move, decides to completely deny her heritage by anglicizing her name, her looks, her style. In an attempt to fit in with her Australian peers Jamilah is certainly willing to go to considerable lengths – even if it means deceiving her friends and her family.

While Amal is seeking ways to visibly display her religious background and beliefs, Jamilah is determined to do the exact opposite; she feels that it is impossible to reunite the three influences in her life – i.e. Australian, Lebanese and Muslim – and therefore decides to stick with the Australian way of life by rejecting her family's heritage. In Jamilah's opinion, a hybrid identity is an illusion, the third space does not exist – one has to choose a side.

For three years, Jamilah successfully managed to hide herself by inventing a completely new identity, however, she realises that these actions have consequences; not only are her friendships superficial, but by denying her Lebanese and Muslim self she is also deceiving her family's trust, trust that she has always expected from her father but not given anything in return.

Putting on this show, this masquerade, is also having its toll on her self-worth, her psychological well-being. Slowly though, with the help of her friends, Jamilah learns that that a hybrid identity is certainly possible and not necessarily the source of conflicts. She realises that being an Australian of Lebanese Muslim background does not mean she has to live in two different worlds, in two different sets of realities, but that she can combine these influences and turn them into something exciting, colourful and vibrant. A realisation which comes after her environment's strong support, with her understanding that identity "is not just a personal or private project; it is a group project. It includes how individuals identify themselves, but also how others in their social worlds identify them" (Townsend, Markus and Bergsieker 201).

While Abdel-Fattah has certainly chosen two completely different approaches on how to deal with the topic of hybrid identities, it is clear that she wanted to illustrate one thing: that being a second generation diasporan means experiencing manifold challenges on a daily basis,

challenges which are the result of conflicting realities and influences. Challenges which they encounter in their everyday lives; the unequal treatment that they often receive by their environment, the struggles they face at school or in the working world, the complications with their friends and their crushes, the fights with their parents who do not always fully understand their children's generation and, most importantly, the "discrepancies between a person's chosen identity and the identities supported or allowed in a given context" (Townsend, Markus and Bergsieker 201).

Abdel-Fattah is certainly raising a few interesting points about Muslim Australians and their lives in Down Under, points that are often disregarded by mainstream media or shown in a one-sided way. Therefore, just like in *Does My Head Look Big In This?*, "Abdel-Fattah [...] has offered a persuasive representation of Muslims who are also Australians, and has given the message that stereotypes of any kind, of Muslims and of Australians, are problematic" (Ameri 61). Furthermore, novels like these "can perhaps [also] remind us of the exceedingly important role that fiction [...] can have in bridging the gap that at least currently exists between the academy and the wider community and in dramatising the theoretical questions – in this case the question of national identity – in a way that confronts us with their complexity" (Ameri 61).

6 Conclusion

While it is certainly easy to label people and to put them into categories, Abdel-Fattah's two novels aim to illustrate that these artificial classifications are counterproductive, dangerous even, as identity is a highly complex matter, a construct which differs from individual to individual, thereby implying that Muslim diasporans are not identical, but instead have highly distinct personalities and characteristics.

Trying to counter-act the one-sided representation of Muslims in the media, Abdel-Fattah wanted to give an insight into the Muslim community in Australia by providing an account of how teenage girls try to negotiate their sense of selfhood while being confronted with stereotypes and clichés. While these girls are rooted in their Muslim heritage – despite being born and raised in Australia – they initially display doubts about how these dissimilar influences can be combined. Doubts which in both *Does My Head Look Big in This?* and *Ten Things I Hate About Me* will be replaced by the realisation that hybridity is not just a theoretical concept, but very much a realistic way of existing – the third space, therefore, certainly does exist; it is a space where diverse and even contradictory identities can be blended instead of being repressed.

Witnessing Jamilah's and Amal's process of maturation, the gradual acceptance of their hybridity highlights that identity is certainly never a static or fixed construct, a concept which is unable to adapt to new circumstances and situations. Instead, identity, according to Abdel-Fattah, is best regarded as a site of construction, a process that is never fully completed but always open to modification and, hence, improvement.
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Not only is identity's fluid nature determined by the individuals themselves, but also by society's influence. Identity, as we've learned, is a psycho-social phenomenon, a concept that heavily relies on one's environment as well. Whether friends, family, teachers, politicians or even enemies – they all play a central role in an individual's subjectivity, whether in a positive, encouraging or in a negative way.

In conclusion, identity is always a complicated and tricky matter – no matter what your background is or what your beliefs are. Particularly with a hybrid identity, which individuals often experience as confusing and disorientating. However, as Amal and Jamilah realise, being the 'Other' is often self-inflicted; contrary to their beliefs, the majority of their friends and acquaintances whole-heartedly embrace their diversity. While the two heroines have initially regarded their subjectivity as fragmented, their friends have not, but have rather seen them for who they are – melting pots of vibrant, varied and fascinating influences.

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8 INDEX

9 DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Masterarbeit hat es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, den Prozess der Identitätsfindung aus der Perspektive von (fiktiven) muslimischen Teenagern in Australien zu beleuchten.

Zuvor wird ein theoretisches Hintergrundwissen vermittelt; es wird die Geschichte von Australien dargelegt, die demonstriert, dass Down Under schon seit Anbeginn aus einer sehr vielfältigen und multikulturellen Bevölkerung besteht und auch schon Muslimen seit mehreren Jahrhunderten ein Zuhause bietet. Gefolgt wird dies von einer Schilderung der Realität von Muslimen im modernen Australien, mit besonderem Fokus auf die diversen Herausforderungen denen sie im Alltag aufgrund von Vorurteilen und Diskriminierung begegnen – besonders wenn sie sich visuell, z.B. durch das Kopftuch, vom Rest der Gesellschaft unterscheiden. Abgerundet wird der Theorieteil durch eine Erläuterung der Konzepte Identität und Diaspora und wie diese sich gegenseitig beeinflussen können.

Basierend auf diesem Wissen wurden zwei Romane – *Does My Head Look Big in This?* und *Ten Things I Hate About Me* – von der muslimisch-australischen Autorin Randa Abdel-Fattah analysiert und untersucht. Diese zwei Jugendbücher geben einen interessanten Einblick in den Alltag von Diaspora Mitgliedern der zweiten Generation und ihren Prozess der Identitätsfindung. Ein Unterfangen, das höchst unterschiedlich gestaltet werden kann – ob durch die Bekenntnis zum Islam durch das Tragen des Kopftuchs oder durch die komplette Verneinung des muslimischen Hintergrunds aufgrund der Befürchtung, an den Rand der australischen Gesellschaft gedrängt zu werden. Durch diese konträre Herangehensweise hat Abdel-Fattah versucht zu demonstrieren, dass die Formation der Identität nicht nur ein fortwährender Prozess ist, der durch viele verschieden Faktoren beeinflusst wird (intern als auch extern), sondern dass auch eine hybride Identität, auch wenn es manchmal noch so unmöglich scheint, sehr wohl möglich ist und dass sich verschieden Einflüsse, ob religiöser, kultureller oder sozialer Natur, sich durchaus vereinen lassen und sich nicht gegenseitig ausschließen müssen.

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