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Introduction

We do not know how many ‘cultures’ there are in the world. The term has been used in somewhat inflationary fashion, referring to ‘national culture,’ ‘regional culture,’ and various subcultures, just to name a few examples. Raymond Williams has once stated that ‘culture’ is one of the most difficult words of all in the English language and has simply summarized its meaning as the “particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group” (qtd. in Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris 67). This definition of culture as ‘a way of life’ has been considered to have an *anthropological* or *ethnographic* value. [emphasis added] (67) It is this interpretation of the term ‘culture’ that is going to be referred to mostly in my theses, and that will be used here as the starting point.

In the present the awareness of different cultures is probably at its highest due to increasing cultural encounters, history and past experiences, a vast body of literature, media, ever improving travel opportunities, or processes like industrialization, modernization, and more simply, due to increasing effects of globalization. Among academic and other informative and scientific groups of people globalization is besides being accountable for some of the contributions to the modern world on the one hand, perceived as a threat to blend different cultures and wipe out the authenticity of each, on the other hand. While the blending of cultures¹ is not the issue of this paper per se, the increased multicultural contact², the clash of cultures and its effects on cultural or individual identities is. The adjective ‘multicultural’ can be understood as “of or pertaining to a society consisting of varied cultural groups” (226) and is to be distinguished from ‘multiculturalism’, which is here going to be shortly defined as the tolerance of difference, equality and inclusiveness of different ethnical groups into one society. In other words, multiculturalism can be viewed as the policy to encourage people in a multicultural setting to keep their identity, have a sense of belonging, and remain proud of one’s ancestry and heritage. Multiculturalism in this sense stands in opposition to assimilation policies. (226) According to Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris “the precise meaning of the word is never clear, [but] it refers generally to the dilemmas and difficulties of the politics of difference”. (227)

¹ In the sense of becoming a more homogenous society.

² As the idea of a mosaic; people of different cultures living along and next to each other, without losing the sense of their original culture.

To resume, fact is that people from different corners of the world meet and migrate and are part of the clash of cultures of everyday life, and it is increasingly so in the present. Especially metropolitan cities are crowded places of people of different historical and cultural backgrounds. Depending on the intensity of the multicultural contact, even with the collision of only two different cultures, it can be argued that a strong social impact from different cultural groups creates new hybrid identities. The idea is that in such a context one does not entirely adapt into the dominant culture, but rather, various experiences of all the past and present aspects of a mixed cultural life create a new hybrid identity. Since literature reflects human socio-cultural life it can be argued that these cultural and social phenomena are also manifested in literary texts, and are therefore of significant relevance too, that is, they create other social implications in the world. Therefore, the aim of my thesis is to analyze how through the 'clash' of different cultures new hybrid identities are shaped, and how this social phenomenon is manifested through literature, as well as the implications it might carry. It is therefore important to take into account a spectrum of ideas constituting what a clash of different cultures represents, how identities can be explained and defined, and what the meaning of a hybrid identity is in theory. In addition, literature that is concentrated on issues of identity through the context of multicultural contact or that of different cultures needs to be examined.

To bring this idea further, one can refer to the cultural impact of the Western world and its counterpart the East, as an example of a global clash of cultures. While the assumption about the meaning of the Western culture is a broad idea, it is sometimes in a certain context used to refer to its dominant world view which is in opposition to other cultures or minorities. Given its cultural force, American culture stands for one such representation of the West. For its immense cultural impact, it will be included in the analysis of this paper as one side of the cultural clash. Moreover, it will be put as a contrast against the Oriental culture that is perceived to have rather opposing views from the West, since it is most likely that a stronger distinction between cultures gives a more insightful and clear example which reflects the collision in cultural identity.

While one can argue that the American culture is, given its history, a migrant culture and perhaps in its creation a hybrid culture in itself, it is nevertheless most dominantly relatable to European cultures; hence nowadays considered to carry the thought of a Western society.

The assumption that cultural clashes create hybrid identities and that this in turn is manifested in literature, will be then analyzed here within the field of cultural studies and in relation to the postcolonial and postmodern point of view. Postcolonial theory analyses the relationship between the Western and non-Western civilizations and cultures after the independence of colonial rule, but implies the same power-relations. It refers to resistance and the reconstruction of the Non-West and among a few other aspects explores difference, race, representation, displacement and migration in relation to Western discourses. Intellectuals and authors like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak are the representatives of postcolonial theory whose work will also be useful in the analysis of this paper. The reference to postmodernism is due to the character development in literature which explores subjectivism and the inner state of consciousness and is therefore relevant for the identity construction. In addition, postmodernism as a way of life addresses the cultural attitude affected by globalization and the increased contact between cultures and networks that it facilitates, as well as the increasingly diverse and complex landscapes of for example various religious, ethnic and other groups.

The two primary texts chosen for the analysis are pieces of American literature; the focus on American literary texts is especially interesting for the analysis of the representation of mentioned issues from the perspective of the Western culture as dominant, or as a counterpart to the East. A decisive factor, however, is that these texts include or refer to aspects of other cultural forms from different corners of the world. Interestingly, the authors themselves, although American, have different cultural backgrounds too, which makes sense since their position corresponds to their writings, and the notion of America as multicultural, or implies that the American nation was made of migrants in the first place, and that this continues to be part of the American policy. In addition, this combination of authors addresses the representation of the West from a rather different point of view, which should be interesting in relation to postcolonial theory.

The cultural forms included in the primary texts include the Arab and Chinese culture as Oriental cultures; both are more autochthonous and inspired by particular cultural properties characteristic of its cultural and geographical climate, and both stand in opposition to the American culture, and the specific type of 'melting pot' it is.

Another important factor relevant to the literature choice and the topic is the time period chosen for the analysis. Since there is the assumption that globalization processes influence and facilitate multicultural contact and are becoming increasingly significant in present day, contemporary American literary works that fall within the last two decades have been chosen.

A Map of Home (2008) is the work of Randa Jarrar, who is an Arab-American novelist who was born in America, grew up in Kuwait and Egypt, and moved back to the United States after the first Gulf War. Her novel is a somewhat autobiographical coming-of age story. The protagonist Nidali is born in the 1970s in Boston to a Palestinian father and a mother of Egyptian-Greek descend. In her young life she moves from Boston to Kuwait, then from Kuwait to Egypt, and eventually back to America, but this time her family settles in Texas. While the migrating of her family is firmly a consequence of war, and the need to secure a safe living, the book tells about her childhood experiences as she grows up in different places and gets confronted with different cultural expectations of her surroundings. *A Map of Home* is a book where cultures of the Orient clash with the idea of the Western thought, and therefore qualifies in the analysis of an Oriental – Occidental clash of cultures and can support the idea of the formation of a hybrid identity. In the book mainly conservative Islamic (but also other) aspects of the Oriental culture and beliefs confront the protagonist's idea of the world, and cause confusion when there are impacts from the West in her upbringing. The protagonist clearly goes through a change, or shaping of her own identity as she grows up in different places of the Arabic world, and finally moves to America, her birth place, and along the way starts rebelling against the constraints in her life and the pressure to conform to certain cultural expectations.

The second book *China Boy* (1991) is an autobiographical memoir/novel written by Gus Lee, a best-selling American author. It is about Kai Ting, a boy of high-born Chinese parents who fled China's communist revolution and settled in America, which then became their new home. Kai however is born in a San Francisco ghetto in the 1940s, and already at his young age experiences a strong cultural confusion living in a multicultural city. He struggles with the loss of his mother, and experiences regular beatings from the kids in the neighborhood he calls 'China boy bashers', as well as everyday turmoil caused by his new American stepmother Edna, who has a cultural aversion towards him doing or being anything 'Chinese'. This

book is more concentrated on the multiculturalism in America, and is an example of how new generations with a cultural background from other corners of the world fit into the already mixed society. Similarly as in Jarrar's book, the protagonist struggles to find his place and identity between his Chinese ancestry and heritage that comes from his parents, and the life he is surrounded with outside that. The life he is exposed to is obviously different from the cultural values he himself has learned to appreciate. It is therefore interesting to examine it as another example of cultural confusion, the clash between cultures, and the way his identity is shaped under these circumstances.

Both books can be used as examples where the idea of hybridity caused by different cultural impacts manifests itself, and therefore can support the argument that this phenomena occurs in the real world, as the authors more or less put on their own experience into the book. The focus on novels is due to the type of analysis. Since novels are centered on a story and a plot, there is no direct criticism involved, but is to be interpreted from the context of the story.

However, in order to test the hypothesis of how a clash of different cultures creates new hybrid identities and how this is manifested in literary works, the cultural theory of secondary sources should be applied in the analysis of the two primary works. These will be analyzed using the methods of content and discourse analysis. Both methods will be adjusted to the research subject of cultural studies and used qualitatively, the analysis being of a descriptive and explicatory nature. In particular, the identity construction in each of the primary texts will be analyzed through the protagonist's/narrator's point of view, more specifically through the impacts the character is exposed to, the subsequent perceptions of reality, the collision in cultural identity, the state of belonging, aspirations, and the way the identity question (if at all) is resolved in the book.

This paper will try to show that the phenomenon of a mixed identity, a new hybrid cultural identity is a substantial consequence of exposure to intense multicultural contact, and that classifying individuals to one or another culture is rather a mistaken assumption, but that such individuals develop a wider sense of being among societies and cultures, enriched according to the input of various cultural influences, but simultaneously torn between worlds. In addition, the argument is that this observation can be a valid fact since it seems that authors have began to address the state of hybridity and cultural mixing on the level of the

individual subject more often through their literature whose content should serve as the proof of such a process of realizing the hybrid and the new. Last but not least, transferring of such thoughts into literary texts and making them available to a wider public might create a different outlook on the perception of certain cultures, the individual and its world as a whole. Such works might perhaps lead to a whole new level in understanding the human as a social being when put in a certain situation. It should be interesting to see how different authors address and represent this state of hybridity as writers of American literature. Finally, this thesis may contribute to and expand the already existent body of literature in multicultural and postcolonial studies in connection to the notion of hybridity, and might add to the relevance of the modern life in the present world with regard to cultural diversity within increasingly connecting processes of globalization.

I. Theoretical Background

1. Culture as a Way of Life and the Study of Culture

Defining the concept of culture is not a simple task. The term itself is ambiguous and has been explained in various ways and by different people who have tried to capture its essence. There have been times of disagreement on the understanding of the concept which eventually led to the transition of the meaning and the acceptance of several definitions of culture.

In “its early usage” culture was a term to describe the “organic cultivation” and extended to mean “individual human accomplishment.” (Brooker 58) In the 19th and 20th century, “the world of the arts” like music, theatre, literature, painting and film stood for the meaning of culture (Brooker 59), but soon opinions of those that understood it rather as something immaterial would be voiced. For example Sarder & Van Loon explain that for some anthropologists culture refers to “social behavior” and for others to “an abstraction from behavior” (4). They also point to other definitions, which allude to how widely the term can be interpreted. They write that Margaret Mead (1901- 1978) who was an American anthropologist defined culture as “the learned behaviour of a society or a subgroup” (5) and that Sir E.B Tylor (1832-1917) a British anthropologist suggests that “[c]ulture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. (4) Raymond William’s (1921-1988) explanation is included as the following:

Culture includes the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of the institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate. (5)

Culture can be also thought of as “[an] assemblage of meanings which are generated and consumed by a given social group.” (Lewis 396)

Ott & Mack, however, describe most carefully what culture is about, emphasizing that “it is constructed, multi-faceted, and uniquely human” and that its building blocks include physical, social, and attitudinal forms. (124)

The physical forms of culture are artifacts – “the material aspects of daily life” which have shared meanings and reveal for example social, political and national group identification. These artifacts include clothing, computers, music and any item

that is manufactured. The artifact is “a physical symbol that represents who we are as a culture.” (124)

The social form of culture refers to social codes and rules, practices, habitual performances, conventions and customs of daily live; these include the shared lived experiences like working, eating, exercising etc. (125)

Finally, the attitudinal forms of culture refer to “[o]ur customs, laws, and traditions [that] reflect particular ways of understanding the world”, such is for example the American notion of free speech, or concepts of individualism. (125)

More specifically:

[A]ttitudes display the overarching ways a particular culture makes sense of the world and itself, including values, tastes, concepts of right and wrong, religious systems, economic beliefs, or political philosophies. (125)

In addition, Ott & Mack emphasize the importance of the qualities of culture, that is, culture being collective, rhetorical, historical and ideological. With regard to the collective quality it is explained that individuals can be part of a culture, but that they cannot inhabit one on their own, rather it is shared between a group of people. However, culture might be as large as a nation, or as small as a fandom group of a television show. Thus by definition culture does not include everyone. From a slightly different perspective, society is “a collection of cultures and co- or subcultures” and individuals are “members of multiple cultural groups at one time”. (125)

Furthermore, culture being rhetorical refers to the notion of culture functioning symbolically. It is not being inherent biologically, but works as a result of shared symbols that enables members to convey meaning and understand each other. These meanings are transmitted through words and images that carry significance for the members of the cultural group.

Next, culture as historical “changes, evolves, mutates, fades, and even disappears over time” (126) and while some last for millennia in different forms, others appear and disappear quickly. Finally the ideological quality of culture refers to the idea that:

The cultures we inhabit teach us to see the world in some ways and not in others. The attitudes, practices, and artifacts of our everyday lives encourage us as individuals to interpret the world according to certain frameworks of culturally based knowledge (126)

Certainly one cannot exclude the fact that there is always room for individual interpretation; however ideology is a powerful force in the interpretation of every

culture, since it is a “system of ideas that unconsciously shapes and constrains both our beliefs and behaviors”. (127 & 128)

Sarder & Van Loon conclude that “culture seems to be (almost) everything” (5) or if we refer back to Raymond William’s “own founding definition of culture ‘as a whole way of life of a social group or whole society’ ” (Brooker 60) as mentioned in the introduction, the idea of what culture actually is, seems clear by now. Raymond William’s definition however can be well applied to this paper, according to which it may not be wrong to conclude that people of different cultures can adopt different ways of life. Accordingly, it can be said that influences from different cultures can lead to a collision in identity when different ways of life become part of one individual.

Although there has been some criticism on the definition of culture as a way of life, it is convenient, with regard to the topic of this paper, to think of it as implying an ethnographic or anthropological value. It seems useful in order to relate to the difference in cultures for the purpose of addressing the issue of how different world views of different cultures may create hybrid identities as a result.

But, the criticism is valuable as well. Exactly this grouping of people is seen as problematic, since it leads to the tendency to classify and divide cultures and societies with regard to their distinctive behaviors and believes. The argument evolves to cultures not being fixed or constituted of separate entities, but rather fluid and in process, as more recent terms like cultural hybridity, cultural flows and similar imply. Furthermore, “cultural activities are caught up in processes of differing rather than being simply different from the outset.” (Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris 68)

While these arguments are acknowledged and certainly no culture is a matter of pureness in its own characteristics, but is transforming or evolving over time, and acquiring from other influences, it does seem that the notion of some cultures being more autochthon and established than others applies to a certain degree. While perhaps all cultures are hybrid with regard to their shaping and coming to existence, some are by now acknowledged in the world as unique in its own way, and have established a strong sense of existence, so that we can address them along ethnic lines, and thereby consider the young processes, the early collisions between these already well established cultures as creating something new when there is immense contact and influence on the subject level of identity, that is, the emergence of hybridity.

Moreover, as stated by Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris the idea of the distinction between cultures can be traced back to the 19th and 20th century, according to which culture “appears to be best thought of as a historically specific set of mechanisms for sorting populations into groups and managing the relations between them.” (68) In the contemporary world social distinctions can be thought of as a reshaping “by virtue of the groups into which individuals seem naturally to sort themselves through the cultural activities they pursue” (69)

For the analysis of this paper the mention of cultural studies is relevant as well. In a more simple way it refers to “all aspects of the study of culture” and in this way includes the analysis of culture through history sociology, ethnography, literary criticism etc. (Edgar & Sedgwick 100) However, there is also the more precise understanding of cultural studies as a field of academic inquiry, a multidisciplinary approach. This understanding of cultural studies also takes into consideration the relation to other social practices, especially “in relation to political structures and social hierarchies, such as race, class and gender”. (Edgar & Sedgwick 101) It includes modes of inquiry like postcolonialism, poststructuralism, marxism, feminism etc., and examines with the goal to expose power-relations and to reveal how they shape cultural practices. (Sarder & Van Loon 8-9)

Useful for this paper is for example, the aspect of cultural studies known in the analysis as the representation of the other. Representation is “[t]he process, and the products, that gives signs their particular meaning” (13). According to Sarder & Van Loon:

Through representation, abstract and ideological ideas are given concrete form. Thus the idea/sign “Indian” is given a specific ideological shape in the way “Indians” have been represented in colonial literature – in the novels of Rudyard Kipling [...] and E.M. Forster [...] for example - as cowards, effeminate, untrustworthy. The representative entity outside the self – that is, outside one’s own gender, social group, class, culture or civilization – is the Other. Broadly speaking all non-Western cultures and civilizations are seen as the Other of the West. Within Western society, women, homosexuals and immigrants are often seen as the Other. The most common representation of the Other is as the darker side, the binary opposite of oneself: we are civilized, they are barbaric; the colonists are hard-working, the natives are lazy, heterosexuals are good and moral, homosexuals are immoral and evil. (13)

Therefore it will be interesting to analyze the representation of American literature in this paper, while taking into account that this representation comes from authors of mixed backgrounds, which might imply a different approach to the Other, or the ‘different’.

1.1. Multiculturalism

In the simplest way, multiculturalism is a concept that speaks of more than one culture, that is, several or many different cultures, and implies the state of their difference. In the most banal sense it can be looked at “as the availability of different ‘ethnic’ foods, music, art and literature in the one society.” (Milner & Browitt 142) But more importantly, multiculturalism denotes also something more political as Brooker states, it “is founded [...] on ideas of tolerance and a respect for DIFFERENCE.” (169) [capitalization in the original]

Nowadays cultural diversity in many places of the world is present in educational institutions, labor laws, the legal system, and government policy (Millner & Browitt 142) and due to its effects becomes significant in ordinary life. In Bennet, Grossberg & Morris there is also mention of the term as “the values of equality, tolerance, and inclusiveness toward migrants of ethnically different backgrounds” (226) as well as of multiculturalism being:

[A] social doctrine that distinguishes itself as a positive alternative for policies of assimilation, connoting a politics of recognition of the citizenship rights and cultural identities of ethnic minority groups, [...] [and] an affirmation of the value of cultural diversity. (226)

Due to increasing immigration from other countries Western liberal democracies have been often described as multicultural, implying also the multiethnic or multiracial dimension which has been equated with ‘the multicultural’. The debates were very often led around non-white migrants in white Western societies, and the issues addressed in the public discourse were those about the ethnic and racial tensions. (226) In more radical approaches multiculturalism has been identified as an attempt to overturn monocultural conceptions which were considered racist or ethnocentric, and served especially to highlight difference. (227)

National identity is also implicated by multiculturalism and its politics of cultural difference. This is mostly because national culture and identity are associated with cultural roots, and cultural purity, which can be linked to the nation as an imagined community. (Harindranath 43)

Multiculturalism has been also strongly criticized. It has been questioned whether it is possible that all cultures were pure and that their differences could be obtained equally. For Brooker multiculturalism is “at best partially enacted and characteristically disguises an assumption of the centrality of predominantly white

ethnic groups or of the dominant CULTURE [...] (Brooker 169) [capitalization in the original] Similar has been stated in Bennet, Grossberg & Morris:

From the perspective of postmodern and postcolonial theory multiculturalism is criticized for its implicit assumption that 'ethnic groups' are the inherent proprietors of 'culture' and that 'cultures' are fixed and static realities. These diverse critical stands have in common that they consider multiculturalism, as a state-managed policy and discourse, as not going far enough in transforming the white-dominated dominant culture. (227)

While the arguments about the criticism on multiculturalism are much more widely expandable, even to criticize that difference in the multicultural context can be exoticized and far-fetched; the most important criticism that can be applied in the analysis of this is paper is, however, exactly the one with reference to postcolonial and postmodern theory included previously. It implies the controversial politics of multiculturalism. While there are cultures that are distinguishable from one another, in the same society they are hardly equally dominant. Most importantly it is hardly the case that the cultural lines can be kept pure, as within each culture, so outside of these. It can be argued that at least some effects have to occur as a consequence of the multitude of cultures impacting one another in the same society. This is especially true on the basis of the individual identity where one can be impacted from different cultures, or the mixing of these. In fact, it is very likely that in such a context one can be at the centre of cultural mixing, for example coming from parents of two different backgrounds of a multicultural society, even if there is dominance of a particular culture.

In this paper, the multicultural context is necessary since it can be seen as a primary condition for the mixing or clashing of cultures, and where one can argue that it has strong implications about hybridization. Moreover, it is part of, and constitutes an important component of the whole idea of this paper. The following definition by Homi Bhabha summarizes it pretty well:

Multiculturalism – a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to chicano/a fiction – has become the most charged sign for describing the scattered social contingencies that characterise contemporary *Kulturkritik*. The multicultural has itself become a 'floating signifier' whose enigma lies less in itself than in the discursive uses of it to mark social process where differentiation and condensation seem to happen almost synchronically. (Bhabha qtd. in Harindranath 72)

1.2. Race and Ethnicity /Racism

Issues of race and ethnicity are historic as well as contemporary, and often play a role politically, culturally, and socially. However, while both terms are crucial, they should be strongly distinguished from one another.

Remarkably race denotes something that has been proven scientifically as non-existent at all, but nevertheless exists as a category. In earlier days people were considered to be different biologically and were classified on the basis of their look, mostly according to skin color. However, the concept is still used to address cultural difference. This notion of race is well summarized by Baldwin, Longhurst et al. They state that:

In the nineteenth century there were numerous attempts by European investigators to classify people according to racial groups ('white', 'yellow', 'Black') and ascribe unchanging characteristic to them. The attempts to legitimate sets of stable racial differences scientifically are now spurious (Miles, 1989: 70). However, race is an everyday concept that people routinely employ to categorize themselves and others. Irrespective of the scientific utility of the term, race is widely believed to serve as a potent marker of cultural difference. (117)

Accordingly, what is denoted under racisms was evident in the earlier days, i.e. from the belief that some races were superior to others, and which was used as a justification to colonise and civilize the 'less civilized'. But race as a category is prominent even nowadays, and so is racism.

Race, rather than being considered biological, it now related to "the sharing of particular kinds of personalities, values and dispositions, bound to particular body types, often marked by skin colour. " (During 161) Accordingly it creates a racism that makes use of hierarchies and works on building oppressions and discriminations as effectively as racism based on biology. (161)

Race is also a referent to cultural difference in the context of multiculturalism and ethnicity. That is, sometimes cultural differences are "based on the rooted or 'ethnic' differences between peoples, [and] are often displaced forms of race differences". (162) In this case it can be talked about cultural racism.

Racism is also, and very often, based on the look, that is, "the visual differences between different groups of people", that are associated with differences in culture, language, history, and geography. (162)

Finally race is present as the continuous experience in daily life. It can be described as the following:

The everyday experience of race is extraordinarily complex, but it often involves being the object of continual slights, petty exclusions, change of tone, avoidance of the gaze

and over-hearty responses as well as a sense of oneself based around feelings, bodily self-awareness, values, expressive forms and manners that are not shared by most of the people you encounter. (During 162)

The concept of ethnicity is also somewhat abstract and not easily defined, but can most simply be related to the sense of belonging to a certain group of people. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin the term 'ethnicity' is used

to account for human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry [...] Ethnicity refers to the fusion of many traits that belong to the nature of any ethnic group: a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviours, experiences, consciousness of kind, memoirs of loyalties (80).

In contrast to race, ethnicity carries a more positive meaning. It is a positive self perception of belonging to a group that can set itself apart from other cultural or national characteristics and understands itself by the name of the originating nation. (80) But a feature of the term 'ethnicity' also functions as a referent to minority groups. (80-81) Therefore, nowadays ethnicity also relates to immigration and can be defined as:

[A] group or category of persons who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits, who have a sense of peoplehood and of group belonging, who are of immigrant background and have either minority or majority status within a large society. (Isajaw 1974: 118) in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (82).

While it seems somewhat restrictive to connect the meaning of ethnicity to immigration, it becomes clearer how this adds to the notion and idea of ethnicity when we recall Max Weber's definition. For him ethnic groups are:

'Human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent – because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization or migration- in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of the nonkinship communal relationships' (quoted in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 82)

But if we take into consideration the anti-essentialist arguments of cultural studies which suggest that "ethnicity is a relation concept concerned with categories of self-identification and social aspiration" (Barker: *Cultural Studies* 63) it may well be said that not all groups identify through immigration, but that instead religion may be the determinant of how a group ethnically identifies itself, and at other times it might as well be race. In addition, ethnic groups being referred to as minorities, is not always the case, but the groupings may well make use of it as a powerful political function. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 82-83)

Finally, ethnicities and ethnic identity persist beyond assimilations of cultures in the society, but this is not automatically related to the maintenance of traditional cultures, since as Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin put it:

No ethnic group is completely unified or in complete agreement about its own ethnicity and no one essential feature can ever be found in every member of the group. Nevertheless, this dynamic interweaving of identifying features has come to function as an increasingly potent locus of identity in an increasingly migratory, globalized and hybridized world. (84)

But when one takes into regard racism, as was mentioned above, in relation to ethnicity it is very important to address this form of racism since it applies more to the analysis of the paper and generally is related to multiculturalism and the contemporary world. According to Harindranath this cultural racism is classified as a new phenomenon which:

...removes the emphasis from ideas of innate superiority and places it on the notion of diversity, by undermining the latter by arguing that differences in culture and ethnicity threaten national cohesiveness and security. In this formulation cultural difference is seen as both fixed and insurmountable, and veritable, babel of mutually incomprehensible voices and incommensurable value systems, which need to be regulated through the apparently 'neutral' national culture. The racial aspect becomes evident when, for instance policies, based on principles of affirmative action come to be perceived as undermining the principle of 'equal opportunity'. (36-37)

However the consequences of this type of racism stay the same. There is still marginalization of specific cultures and communities. This is because such a notion of race as differences in cultures, perceives culture, as well as cultural identity as unchanging and fixed, as Paul Gilroy argued. (Harindranath 38 - 39) This observation which essentializes cultures and ethnicities also "removes the dialogic aspect of multi-ethnic societies" (39)

Race and ethnicity, as well as racism are important notions to this paper. Every cultural clash is concerned with race or ethnicity, and therefore racism. Whether consciously or unconsciously, these are still in important function among cultures, and are a product of difference, and therefore cannot be left out

2. The Clash of Cultures

Very often cultural studies text books have used the expression of 'the clash of cultures'. Even whole books have been titled with the same expression. Brian Fagan for example in his book *Clash of Cultures* writes about the age of exploration and first contacts and conflicts of the Western civilization with other peoples of the world. He addresses the ethnocentrism and resulting racism between the various societies he includes in his book. The words alone 'clash of cultures' imply 'a getting into contact' of cultures, but the emphasis should be on the word 'clash' which implies

disagreement, perhaps even violence between two opposing sides. And as such it can be understood.

Nowadays the idea of clashing cultures can go somewhat further due to the largely developed contact between the countries of the world. There are different cultural ideologies, and while this must not necessarily be related to wars literally, these ideologies clash into one another and create disagreement in how the world is to be viewed. For example Mitchell, while he sticks metaphorically to the expression of cultural wars, nevertheless explains by example that these are “rooted in ideology, religion, class difference, the social construction of racial, ethnic, and gender difference, [...] that mark contemporary society.” (4) This is very much relatable to the broader and more abstract meaning of the clash of cultures.

The following subchapters should serve as further insight into the idea of the clash between cultures. Firstly, one can argue that there is a global clash between the Oriental and Western culture, which is still current in cultural discourses, even if only metaphorically. Secondly, the postmodern era and the way of life that results it, along with the processes of globalization, are responsible for the ‘moving closer’ of cultures, but also in ways that the contact creates disagreement. Most importantly, the clash of cultures as a consequence of these global processes is especially interesting on the level of identity, since when a clash becomes inevitable, it must create a certain outcome. Mitchell also states that in the contemporary world cultural wars take a particular style and shape: “they are battles of cultural identities – and the power to shape, determine, and, literally *emplace* those identities”. (11) [emphasis in the original]

2.1. Oriental vs. Western Culture (Postcolonial Theory)

In a global sense, it can be said that there is a cultural clash between the Western societies, and that of the East - the Oriental societies. Examples of where this argument is present are the discourses on Westernization or Americanization, as they are based on the idea that by forms of globalization the world is being strongly influenced to acquire the ways and perceptions of the West, and there is much criticism going on in this respect.

But besides that, there is also often the notion of Americanness as something distinctive. That is, in certain American discourses the American culture or nation has

been perceived as exceptional and distinguishable from other cultures. This has roots in history and national self definition; one can, for example, recall the famous question from J.H. St. John de Crevecoeur from 1782 who asked: “What, then, is the American, this new man?” (Campbell & Kean 2) and was only one of many that tried to define the American character. Although the American culture might not be any more or less exceptional than any other culture in the world, it may carry a component that is characteristic for its self-definition. Campbell & Kean state (2):

Indeed, as some commentators have argued, the centrality of the debate about American distinctiveness in America, may in itself be a key component of American identity: „The search for an American character is part of that character” (Wilkinson: 1988: 2)

This is what makes the analysis on the clash between cultures interesting: as stated in the introduction America can be included as a representative of the West, and it comes into cultural clashes with the Oriental. This may be especially interesting if the American culture is seen as the dominant, and exceptional as has been suggested from the American self-definition mentioned in the previous quote.

But there have been some more in-depth analyzes and interesting theoretical approaches about the clash of cultures and their distinctions and beliefs between the Eastern and Western Societies. Especially revolutionary was Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* published in 1978 which was a great contribution to cultural studies. In this book Said explains the view on the Orient and deconstructs the Western idea of it. Interestingly he states that the Orient is actually “a European invention” and that it has been “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, [and] remarkable experiences” since ancient times. (1) Moreover it is a place where Europe had its richest colonies. The Orient is also the cultural contestant of the West, and the source of its languages and civilizations. Most importantly, “the Orient has helped to define Europe³ (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.” (1-2) The West clearly distances and opposes itself from the East in order to define its own identity.

Orientalism among few other meanings also stands for the Western style which restructures, dominates and has authority over the Orient. (3) There is a strong sense of comparing the East and the West, whereby “the East [is] eventually coming off worse, even though this may be tinged with nostalgia. “(Baldwin, Longhurst et al. 170) This creates hierarchies while it uses dichotomies, for example: [...] the East is

³ Both Europe and America are understood as Western societies. Although there is mention of Europe to describe the West, the American culture is equally valid and used in the discourse in the clash between the Orient and the Occident, American being part of the latter.

produced as both something dangerous and something desirable. [...] [whereas] the West is both powerful and unexciting [...]. (170)

Many writers have accepted distinctions between the West and the East and used them for their social descriptions, elaborate thesis, novels, epics, as well as political accounts about the Orient and its customs. (Said 3) But it is a matter of representation of difference and this has evolved in to the deconstruction of the West.

According to Said (*The Edward Said Reader*) after *Orientalism* was published scholars approached questions of representation and the politics of difference in a new manner, the dichotomies and the essentializing could not be ignored anymore, and the ideas of Orientalism spread to different cultural groups as well. (67). With reference to *The Edward Said Reader*:

Native Americans, Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and other colonized peoples and oppressed groups located in *Orientalism* a method to challenge a chronic tendency of the West to deny, suppress, and distort their cultures and histories. In the academy this challenge has come to be known as postcolonial studies. (67)

Exactly this manner of representation where the cultures are essentialized leads to the constructions of ideologies, which in turn are substantial for the clash of cultures. While many authors of postcolonial theory deconstruct these, there are numerous other writers that reproduce the same ideologies over and over again, so a certain impression or belief of one or another culture persists, which inevitably leads to stereotyping and clashes between different ideas of what the world or people are like or should be.

Postcolonial theory is concerned with these issues a lot, and is therefore useful for the analysis to compare the direction which authors take in their writings in order to represent cultures and/ or difference. Postcolonialism is about the effects on cultures and societies that stem from colonization, and has been used by various literary critics in discussion. It has been often applied in analyzes of societies that were former colonies with regard to their cultural, social, and political experiences. (Bill, Griffith, Tiffin 186)

Known representatives of postcolonial theory are among few others also Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. Spivak's well known text *Can the Subaltern Speak?* is concerned with representation and power. She poses the question of how the subaltern, the Third World voices, can achieve "parity in dialogue with those of the West" in a world that is dominated by Western discourses. (Baldwin, Longhurst et al. 119) Just as Said, she focuses on the problem of the representation of the

‘other’ which is included in Western texts. (Baldwin, Longhurst et al. 119) It is furthermore stated that the Westerners voice is invalid in the representation of the Orient since they are unable to listen to the ‘other’ but; rather, they enforce their Western values through their own Western consciousness. Simultaneously the subaltern cannot speak because the Western is unable to listen. The West is in its own language talking to itself about the other (The Cultural Studies Reader). Ultimately Spivak concludes: “The subaltern cannot speak. [...] Representation has not withered away.” (Spivak 104)

Homi Bhabha’s theories are also very insightful. In *The Other Question* he refers to the colonial discourse and its concept of fixity that is related to an ideological construction of otherness. This refers to the representation of the Other. It is a mode of representation that stereotypes and degenerates. The stereotype is a strategy of the colonial discourse and in its function connotes unchanging order and has to be constantly repeated. (Bhabha 37). In addition, in another text he writes of border lines of lives in the present, a place he calls *beyond*, which comprises “a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction...” (Bhabha: *The Location of Culture* 1) He talks of “in-between spaces” which are “produced in the articulation of cultural differences“. (1) Similarly Anzaldúa refers to the postcolonial theory when she says: [...] we are neither one nor the other; we are really both. There is not a pure other; there is not a pure subject and not a pure object. We are implicated in each other’s lives.” (243) Much of this thought relates to Bhabha’s theory of hybridization, which however, will be elaborated further in the chapter on identity.

These arguments overall can be related to the clash of cultures as a continuous battle over representation of the opposing cultures whereby ideology and stereotype construct the meaning. It is a good background for discussion of powers over representation, and also an excellent base to argue against essentialist conceptions and a move towards the fluidity and hybridization of cultural identities.

2.2. Postmodernism and the Effects of Globalization

Before the relevance of postmodernism and globalization is brought to a connection with the clash of cultures, it is necessary to define, explain and distinguish the terms of postmodernity, postmodernization, and postmodernism. While we live in a world that is often described as modern, the era that encompasses this contemporary

way of life is called postmodernity. While it is easy to confuse it with postmodernism it is not quite the same.

Postmodernity is “a stage of social development” that is thought of as being “beyond modernity”, the previous social era. (Smith & Riley 207) It represents a drastic shift to a postindustrialized economy that is centered on culture and consumption, information technology, and the media. (207) Postmodernization on the other hand, is the process of change from modern societies to postmodern societies, (207) whereas postmodernity is “an experience of living in a postmodern culture” (Sturken & Cartwright 251)

Postmodernism, however, refers on the one hand to an artistic and aesthetic style that rejects the codes of modernism, but on the other hand in a more theoretical and philosophical way it is a position that comes from poststructuralism, and in this way also rejects the modernist thought. (Smith & Riley 207) Like poststructuralism, it has the epistemological approach to reject truth as something fixed. It argues for multiple truths or viewpoints by which the heterogeneous and complex human existence is interpreted. In postmodernism, knowledge is local, plural, as well as diverse and “specific to language-games.” (Barker: *Cultural Studies* 21)

But postmodernism in the cultural sense also relates to contemporary life. The characteristic of postmodern culture is “[a] sense of the fragmentary, ambiguous, and uncertain quality of the world marked by high levels of reflexivity ... “(22) This is also related to the “blurring of cultural boundaries”(22), irony and contingency. Postmodern texts include typical features like intertextuality, bricolage, and the sense of self-consciousness. (22).

According to Barker postmodernism argues “that subjectivity is an effect of language or discourse and that subjects are fractured – we can take up multiple subject positions offered to us in discourse.” (22) So, the postmodern indicates a set of cultural practices of uncertain and ambiguous nature, “recognition of cultural difference,” and the “acceleration in the pace of living.” (152)

Furthermore, the reflexivity of modern life which can be explained as the “discourse about experience” (Gergen in Barker 152) enables the “self-construction of multiple identities” (153). Other authors have also addressed this aspect of identity with reference to postmodernism:

Collins [...] argues that postmodernism acknowledges multiple **subject positions** and **identities** while actively encouraging a conscious moving in and out of positions, a playing with meaning and form. (in Barker 159) [bold letters in the original]

Moreover postmodernism invites the comparison of one tradition to another, therefore the voices that have been suppressed look for ways to speak and extinguish difference, and such are for example ethnic diasporas, feminists, etc. (Barker 153)

In addition, postmodernity includes discussions and debates on globalization, since it is a process within the era, and which is increasingly and mostly relatable to the contemporary world. It has been defined as:

the process by which the world is becoming more and more interconnected, with existing political, cultural, and economic boundaries being superseded. (Smith & Riley 207)

This is a link to globalization which is a process that involves and can be described metaphorically as the world becoming “a single space”(Harindranath 110) whereby the lives of individuals and that of local communities are influenced and affected by cultural and economic forces that are in function world wide. In the economic way it refers to accelerated economic activities, that is, the practices of capitalism. (Barker: *The SAGE Dictionary* 76) These then too affect culture. Accordingly, globalism refers to “the perception of the world as a function or result of the processes of globalization upon local communities.” (Harindranath 110) This can be further extended to say that:

In particular, cosmopolitanism is an aspect of day-to-day Western life as diverse and remote cultures have become accessible, as signs of commodities, via our televisions, radios, supermarkets and shopping centres. (Barker: *The SAGE Dictionary* 76- 77)

While this may bring cultures closer on the one hand, on the other hand one must not forget that the process of globalization include movements and travels of, for example, different ethnic groups, movements of media images, but also that of ideology and its conflicts that arise from these movements. As Barker states:

Rather, the speed, scope and impact, of these flows are fractured and disconnected. Metaphors of uncertainty, contingency and chaos are replacing those of order, stability and systemacity. (*The SAGE Dictionary* 77)

In addition, this may cause differences and a greater chance of clashing of cultures. This is more specifically addressed in Harindranath (22):

Rather than the emergence of a unified global culture there is a strong tendency for the process of globalization to provide a stage for global differences not only to open up a ‘world showcase of cultures’ in which the examples of the distant exotic are brought directly into the home, but to provide a field for a more discordant clashing of cultures. While cultural integration processes are taking place on a global level the situation is becoming increasingly pluralistic. (Featherstone qtd. in Harindranath 22)

In conclusion postmodernism and globalization are interconnected, the period in which it takes places is marked by the world becoming a smaller place in the sense

that the availability to different cultures is greater, and in a certain way cultures are drawn to another by these processes. However, at the same time this gives 'difference' a wider expression, and much more often, the clashing of cultures becomes a part of every day life in many places of the world. Perhaps such a contact is concentrated mostly in metropolitan cities, that draw different people with different cultures together, but overall media has been influential and carries its ideologies all over the world, and therefore clashes of cultures seem inevitable.

3. Identity in Cultural Studies

Identity construction is the central focus of this paper, and in order to argue about the hybrid as an outcome of a clash of cultures in a multicultural context, it is very important to understand what has been told about identity so far, and moreover how it is explained in cultural studies.

Longhurst & Smith give a very simple definition of what identity is. They say that "[i]dentity is how we define who we are". (142). Every human being has a sense of self and the way it identifies, it is perhaps that what defines our principles and character traits, but it is also applied wider culturally, that is, it might be in connection to what we do, or even where we belong. It seems that identity can be defined in several directions, and therefore the issue of identity seems to be complex.

Earlier it has been thought that identity is fixed and natural, and people have been classified to certain groups based on their traits. This means that identity is not only individual, but can as well be seen as collective. In this sense, from a social⁴ point of view one could refer to Durning who states that:

Identities [...] are not given in terms of what individuals are as a whole, but in terms of more or less arbitrarily selected features that they possess. For the most part, individuals have little power to choose what features will be used to identify them – these are determined socially, from the outside. (145)

In addition, sharing an identity implies a bond on fundamental levels like "national, 'racial', ethnic, regional, and local. " (Gilroy 98) Therefore it is "always bounded" and particular" and furthermore "[n]obody ever speaks of a human identity." (98) This notion of the collective identity also always includes the politics of naming, "we" vs. the "other". (Harindranath 39)

⁴ Not from the individual perspective.

There has also been privilege of some identities over others in Western modern societies. For example, men over women, white people over non-white etc. In addition, there have been assertions of normal vs. abnormal identities, and transgressions between these. (Longhurst & Smith 142)

Nowadays there is also the assertion of identity as performative. Meaning that individuals adjust their behavior to what is culturally expected. In other words, “identities are cultural constructions rather than pre-set“. (Longhurst & Smith 142)

Next, if one looks on identity on the basis of an individual, it is argued that there is not only one identity, but rather several identities. This is based on the idea that identities are based on traits that are partial, for example gender, region, socio-economic status, profession, nation, religion, skin color etc. An individual possesses all at the same time and can identify through each. However, not all of these traits have equal consequences and weight. For example ethnicity or race, gender, and class are the identities that give individuals a social place, whereas others create other influences depending on the context. (During 146)

More specifically identity in cultural theory “describes the consciousness of self found in the modern individual.” (Longhurst & Smith 142) This modern self is self critical and autonomous. It contains a self reflexive aspect according to which identity is seen as a project, and again, is not something fixed. Identity is constantly in remaking. However, this implies that the sense of self might be unreal, since:

The constant remaking of identity reveals that the sense of self is to some extent an illusion, because the making of the self requires a constant interaction with the not-self or non-identity: the external world. (Longhurst & Smith 142)

This remaking leads us to the next subchapter of hybrid identities. However, before we move forward, a few words on representation with regard to identity seem insightful, especially with respect to writers who in their process of producing the text are inevitably representing. It can be argued that writers cannot split their identity from their texts, since it is always part of their self and of that which they know. As Stuart Hall argues:

The practices of representation always implicate the position from which we speak or write – the positions of *enunciation* . . . We should think of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation. . . . We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, *positioned*. (Hall 68) [emphasis in the original]

3.1. Hybridity

Hybridity is a term that is widely used in postcolonial theory. It commonly refers to the transcultural forms that emerge from the contact lines produced by colonization. The term can be associated with cross-breeding as in horticulture whereby from two species a third new hybrid specie is formed. The concept of hybridization can be related to many forms of study, like linguistics, politics, and culture. Often however, the topic of hybridization has been associated with the work of Homi Bhabha. He analyzed the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and stressed their mutual construction and interdependence that is constituted in their subjectivities. According to Bhabha all cultural systems and statements are constructed in the “Third Space of enunciation” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 118) and cultural identity emerges in this ambivalent space. Therefore to establish hierarchies among cultures, as well as to proclaim them as pure seems invalid. According to him cultural difference operates through hybridity, and the validation of this third space may overcome the essentialism of cultures and the exoticism of difference. (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 118) Bhabha states:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory . . . may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*. (Bhabha qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 118-119)

In addition he stresses the importance of exploring this third space:

[I]t is the ‘inter’- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the ‘people’. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha: *The Location of Culture* 38-39)

The recognition, exploration and acknowledgement of the third space destroys the “mirror of representation” and challenges the idea of culture as authentic and homogeneous and cultural identities as fixed entities. (Bhabha *The Location of Culture*: 37). This is furthermore addressed and explained by Barker:

Each category is always already a hybrid form which is also divided along the lines of religion, class, gender, age, nationality, and so forth. Hybridization is the mixing of that which is already a hybrid. All cultures are zones of shifting boundaries and hybridization. (293)

But one ought to be careful in the interpretation. While it is suggested that cultural hybridization “involves the opening up of ‘imagined communities’ and while these

are “signs of increasing boundary crossing” it does not stand for the removal of boundaries, there is still cultural difference. (Barker: *Cultural Studies* 202) However, the concept of hybridity is still acceptable because it is useful in the recognition of new cultural forms and identities; it is a device that captures cultural change by a “temporary stabilization of cultural categories.” (203)

Most importantly, the concept of hybridity also implies and carries the idea of the clash of cultures, whereby the mixing is the space where there is potential for difficulties or collision, which is an argument that I am aiming at. In Bhabha’s words:

The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space -- a third space--where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences. (218)

Finally, the ideas of hybridity in contemporary US literature seem to be already well established and supported, and many authors have made use of the theoretical concept to address their own concerns. Such are for example Gloria Anzaldúa’s well known book *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* that is often used as cultural theory itself and a more recent book by Richard Rodriguez called *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. Both books are written in essay form and serve as examples of how hybridization or the in-between space, as Bhabha calls it, are addressed directly through their multicultural contexts in the contemporary world, and with a theoretical stance.

3.1.1. *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza is the memoir of Gloria Anzaldúa, who was an American scholar of Chicano cultural theory. She based her book on her life growing up on the border of Mexico and Texas. She writes about transition, ambivalence, conflict: the state of being infused with many cultures, and the inability to claim one for herself. In prose and poetry she explores the situation of living in a border between cultures and languages. It is more of a critical view on a fragmented identity, which is the result of a clash of ideas from different cultural value systems, and represents the effort to remain and be respected as a unique individual without the need to live up to the expectations of one culture or another. It includes the reflection of an identity that is under several cultural influences but in discord with some of the cultural expectations. It alludes to a mixed identity and is therefore serves as a good example for the exploration in the creation of a hybrid identity that is confronted with different cultural value systems.

Often she uses the term ‘mestiza’ to describe the state of her identity which is also a word included in the title of her book. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (136) mestizo is a Spanish term that describes the mixing of cultures or races. However, Anzaldúa also particularly stresses the notion of the border, and what she calls the borderlands. These concepts are important for the understanding of hybridity in the way she approached it. According to Anzaldúa:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal.’ (25)

While her definition of the border can be related to postcolonial theory and the politics of naming, that is, distinguishing the self from the other, or “us” from “them”, borderlands on the one hand can be understood as real places of borders, as living between two countries and cultures, as she describes in her book, living on the border of Texas and Mexico. On the other hand, it could be also understood more metaphorically, as a transition in the self, based on the perception of identity. Anzaldúa makes use of Kaufman’s definition and includes the idea of identity in her book as “[...] the essential core of who we are as individuals, the conscious experience of the self inside. “ (84)

In a similar way but through a different style of language Richard Rodriguez has written about his state of transition. But he called it being brown, not white, or black, but being of a color that is in-between. In *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, he writes:

The most important theme of my writing now is impurity. My mestizo boast: As a queer Catholic Indian Spaniard at home in a temperate Chinese city in a fading blond state in a Post-Protestant nation, I live up to my sixteenth-century birth. (35)

It is clear from this that he identifies through several forms of identification which suits the idea that one has multiple identities, but most importantly his very situation is that of hybridity. He possesses several identifications at the same time, and these are especially acquired from different cultures. While his use of color, to talk about himself, implies the idea of a certain race, one that is perhaps brown (although, brown is rather rarely mentioned in racial discourses in comparison to the black or white classification), he states that he actually has none. And this might be precisely the

case, that people like him who are brown are either classified as black or as white, from other groups, which makes “brown” appear invisible. Rodriguez explains:

I do not have a race. To my left [...] is an African-American academic who refers to himself as “black.” To my right [...] a journalist who calls himself “white.” My role is the man in the middle, the third man; neither. (125)

This position he identifies with, the middle, the neither, is perhaps the indicator to hybridity as a space of transition, and one where one simply does not belong to one group or another, but in the middle, since “[b]rown forms at the border of contradiction” and confuses. (Rodriguez: preface 11)

The state of hybridity might itself emerge from difference in the first place. Anzaldúa approaches the issues as she writes and confesses in her memoir: “Nothing in my culture approved of me. [...] Something was “wrong” with me. (38) It can be assumed that she apostrophizes the word ‘wrong’ to indicate that society would classify her as unacceptable, but that she herself was probably right, that it is a matter of perception. She reflects on her society:

The Chicano, *mexicano*, and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance. Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community. Most societies try to get rid of their deviants. [...] [B]eing different, being other, and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human. (40)

With regard to this interpretation of Anzaldúa, and if we recall the previous theories about the “other”, it can be said that probably any society either consciously or unconsciously operates in the same way towards difference. With her book, Anzaldúa tries to picture the inner turmoil of feeling or being considered different:

The secret I tried to conceal was that I was not normal, that I was not like the others. I felt alien, I knew I was alien. I was the mutant stoned out of the herd, something deformed with evil inside. (65)

Secondly, hybridity emerges from the collision of difference, different influences, different cultures. While Anzaldúa describes herself similarly as Rodriguez does, as Spanish, Indian, Chicana, white, queer, poet and writer, that is, as owing a hybrid identity, she in the same way refers to Chicanos, as a people of hybridity.

[W]e don’t identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. [. . .] When not coping out, when we know we are more than nothing, we call ourselves Mexican, referring to race and ancestry; *mestizo* when affirming both our Indian and Spanish (but we hardly ever own our Black ancestry); Chicano when referring to a politically aware people born and/or raised in the U.S.; *Raza* when referring to Chicanos; *tejanos* when we are Chicanos from Texas. (85)

So hybridity implies a state of confusion as well. Anzaldúa's case is especially interesting, since she is both hybrid through her individual identity, and hybrid through her collective cultural identity, the Chicanos, a people that define themselves as hybrid. Altogether the state of hybridity seems to emerge from the collision of cultures, or the clash of cultures, the term that has been used throughout the paper.

Anzaldúa describes this state of confusion and collision in the following way.

[...] the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to? [...]

Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la *mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision. (100)

When the state of hybridity evolves, Anzaldúa argues that the hybrid learns to handle the situation by developing tolerance. This seems also as the only plausible outcome.

According to Anzaldúa and by her own example:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (101)

Therefore, while the state of hybridity may cause confusion, it also has positive implications and connotations. What is more, hybridity can be seen as enriching, by which eventually it develops a new consciousness. So for example, contrary to early racist theories of the mixing of blood being bad, hybridity can be seen in a positive light, which is reflected in the following:

Jose Vasconcelos, Mexican Philosopher, envisaged *una raza mestiza, una mezcla de razas afines, una raza de color – la primera raza sintesis del globo*. He called it a cosmic race, *la raza cosmica*, a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world. Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, this theory is one of inclusivity. At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly "crossing over," this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological crosspollination, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making – a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands. (99)

Finally, it is important to mention the effect of Anzaldúa's writing. In particular Campbell & Kean argue that the book is a recognition of the complexity of American identities, and the work, hybrid in itself, an attempt to redefine the

American identities. That is, “it unfixes itself from any obvious, stable tradition that one might too neatly term ‘American’”. (37)

If one refers back to the part of the hypotheses that the notion of hybridity is present in contemporary literature, Anzaldúa may be one of the best examples, since it is the central topic of her book *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. However, one should take into consideration that what is written in this book, can only come from a person that has experienced that what she writes about. In this way her literature is self reflexive and postmodern, as well as postcolonial since she addresses the domination of other cultures, or in particular acknowledges herself as someone who deviates from the dominant, and with her book rebels against essentialist and reductionist notions of identity. She clearly states that her writing is connected to her identity, which is also relatable to Stuart Hall’s theory previously mentioned on the practice of representation, which is always positioned, coming from the context of the writer. Anzaldúa’s insight on that is the following:

Writing produces anxiety. Looking inside myself and my experience, looking at my conflicts, engenders anxiety in me. Being a writer feels very much like being a Chicana, or being queer – a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls. Or its opposite: nothing defined or definite, a boundless, floating state of limbo where I kick my heels, brood, percolate, hibernate and wait for something to happen. [...] I cannot separate my writing from any part of my life. It is all one. (94-95)

She is hybrid, her writing is hybrid. This is also implicated from her code-switching, and the use of both English, and Spanish in her text, or, as she calls it “Spanglish”.

Finally, the insight into Anzaldúa’s work on hybridity should serve as a useful example and aid for further analysis of the primary texts. Anzaldúa’s work is especially good because it directly stresses this notion and existence of the hybrid. While the primary works do not directly address this issue, and this may be due to their genre, that of a novel, which could serve several different purposes, they nevertheless certainly carry a message of value where the hybrid might be very well the part of this message. But this will be then analyzed in the next section of the paper. Perhaps the closing words of the theoretical part of this section should be that of Anzaldúa’s lyrics that she includes in the middle of her text in one part of her book. This may be a thought to carry through the rest of the paper:

Because I, a *mestiza*, continually walk
out of one culture and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time ... (99)

II. Literary Analysis: *A Map of Home* and *China Boy*

After the insight into the relevant theory that encompasses the topic of my thesis, we now move on to the analysis of the primary texts. As indicated in the introduction and throughout the theoretical part, these texts should serve to analyze the clash of cultures, which can be summarized under the description of a global clash between the Orient and the Occident. However, the particular examples are more heterogenous and specific as will be further clear from the analysis. The 'Oriental' is a broad term that encompasses the geographical region of the Arab world which is part of Jarrar's book *A Map of Home*, as well as cultures further East, like that of the Chinese, which is part of Lee's book *China Boy*. Both regions will be referred to as Oriental in the context of the analysis, either referring to the Arab world, or the Chinese culture. As stated at the beginning of this paper, both books are shelved under American literature, and carry also Western conceptions. How the clash of cultures and the hybridization of identity, as well as the overall representation of these cultures are undertaken should be explored in the further chapters. Both books will be analyzed through their specific historical context, language, representation and the use of stereotyping, and most importantly the identity construction with the particular focus on the protagonists of the book.

4. Orientalism and Western Influence in *A Map of Home*

4.1. First Gulf War and 9/11 Context

Jarrar's novel was published recently, that is, four years ago, in 2008. In order to start the analysis and understand the connections, it is important to address the historical background and the context around the novel. The story is interwoven with some of the author's real life experiences as well as with real life events that helped shape the context of Jarrar's novel. In an interview she addresses her life experience as a part of her protagonist's story:

Like Nidali I grew up in Kuwait and Egypt and I moved to the US when I was thirteen. I was born in Chicago but I have no memory of it, so like Nidali [...] [I was] born here but still didn't know America until I was a teenager. (KUT)

While the book seems to a large extent autobiographical, Jarrar also reveals that for Nidali's story she skipped on some parts, and draws a line between her fictional character and herself:

My life and my character's life are similar, but also, in other ways, they really differ. People who read the book assume that because my character moved to Texas after the first Gulf War, I did too, but that's not the way it went. I moved to a really stuffy part of New York and Connecticut. (Randa Jarrar: *Interviews/Zocalo*)

Historical events are a large part of what influenced the book and its content. These are however present on two levels. First of all Jarrar writes of the First Gulf War in *A Map of Home*, which is the context of the story, one of the main reasons of Nidali's migrating from one country to another, which is also part of Jarrar's life. From 1990 to 1991, Kuwait, her home at the time, was suddenly invaded by Iraq and Jarrar moved with her family to Egypt. Another real life experience that is also used in the book is the fact that Palestinians (and her father was one) could not return back to Kuwait after the invasion, which forced her family to stay in Egypt, and only later to migrate to America out of the necessity for a job. So it can be said, that the novel was largely influenced by the author's position, and the real life historical events that she also includes in her book. As a matter of fact, in an interview she states that writing the book was partly to overcome her trauma of the war, and the loss of what she thought was home. (KUHF)

On the other level, there is the significance of September 11th. This event is not part of the book's story line. However it plays a great role in the creation of the book. Jarrar was already living in America when she started writing *A Map of Home* in August of 2001, one month before 9/11. Jarrar as an Arab-American would be in an awkward position, since Americans developed a certain image of the Arabs, associating them with the very same attackers. Jarrar addresses how this influenced the further writing of her book:

Initially when 9/11 happened I thought well I'm not gonna write about this anymore, because no body wants to know about Arabs and Muslims, it's definitely not secular Muslims, so this is not gonna be a story that anyone wants to read, but then a couple of weeks after I found myself writing about it anyway because I just wanted to cocoon myself away from the news, and the sorts of questions that people were asking. Those questions tended to be or just seem kind of naive, bizarre and maybe a little offensive and I thought well maybe there is no information out there about you know secular Muslims, or secular Arabs and maybe there needs to be. (KUT)

So this very event that shaped or strengthened the stereotype of Arabs being extremely religious and dangerous, influenced Jarrar's book in that she saw the necessity to fight the prejudice against her and other Arabs, but most importantly she tries to fight the picture of Arabs necessarily being religious. In addition she argues on the perception of Arab or Arab-Americans before and after 9/11 as well as the importance of Arab-

American literature, which greatly explains the connection of the event and Jarrar's novel *A Map of Home*.

I think American perceptions of Arabs didn't really change, or weren't really tapped into or challenged, till 9/11. I don't think Americans had to think about Arab since before then, except as a distant menace or something to deal with from afar. I think after 9/11 Arabs and Arab Americans experienced hyper-visibility. Overnight, people were interested in Arab and Arab Americans, but unfortunately there was confusion between Arab Americans and Muslims and Muslim Americans. I don't think most Americans know the majority of Arab Americans are Christian. Arabs have been immigrating to the country since the early 19th century. But since 9/11 people were more interested in the Islamic aspect of Arabs and Arab Americans, because they were trying to figure out why 9/11 happened. I think definitely, if you see the number of published novels and stories before and after 9/11, you'll see a huge discrepancy between them. I think publishers were more willing to take on Arab American authors. There was a readership for it. ((Randa Jarrar: *Interviews/Zocalo*)

Altogether this implies first of all that the first Gulf war caused her family to migrate, which is the ultimate reason her identity is affected and implies a cultural change, as well as how she gets to experience the different cultures, the clash of cultures and the influence these different cultures exercise on her identity, which one can assume could be that of a hybrid since she undergoes these different cultural exposures, mainly to the East or the West. Tightly connected to this is difference, the other, or that which is being reduced and essentialized, the stereotypes she is trying to speak against.

4.2. Vivid Language and Arabic Expressions

The story is narrated from the first point of view, that is, that of Nidali, the protagonist of *A Map of Home*. The language style of Jarrar in this book is interesting for two reasons; first of all while she writes dominantly in English, at certain places in the book she also incorporates phrases or words in few other languages, but strikingly and most often Arabic, which is what somehow defines the book with regard to its topic. The second reason which makes her language style significant is the liveliness of the text. In addition, there is a remarkable change of tone after the fourteenth chapter, that is, when Nidali and her family move to the U.S., Nidali narrates about herself from a third perspective.

The use of different languages, mostly of the Arabic language, is already eye striking from the first pages. So for example when Jarrar writes about the day Nidali was born, the narrator, that is, Nidali's voice refers to her father in the following: "...

my *baba* stood at the nurses' station of St. Elizabeth's Medical Center of Boston..."

(3) The word 'baba' is in italics, which implies that the language difference was stressed on purpose and it gives a signal to the reader that this book although written in English, is about someone who does not quite correspond to the prototypical American, which is revealed instantly by the emphasis on the foreign language. However, the word 'baba' is only emphasized the first time as it appears in the book, but continues to be used in the rest of the story with standard letters.

Similarly Nidali refers to her Greek grandmother in Greek as 'yia yia' (Urban Dictionary), and her grandfather who is from Alexandria, Egypt as 'geddo'. The parents of her father that are from Palestine are referred to as 'Sido' and 'Sitto', while Nidali's mother and father call her sometimes 'habibti' which translates as 'my dear' or 'my beloved' from the Arabic (Islamic Dictionary). Only from these referents one can say that the linguistic strategy functions for the reader well, so that Nidali's character can be related to a mixed background, having parents who are from different places.

But there is also a small occurrence of Spanish, when her family moves to Texas. For example Jarrar writes: "On the bus, Mama had to tell people every 12.7 minutes that she didn't *habla espanol*. " (217) The language again, indicates the multicultural encounters and Nidali's experience as such. However, words from the Arab language are most often used in this type of strategy and one could say that there are representative of the book.

Sometimes Jarrar includes them as whole phrases, but translates immediately after as in: "None of '*amaatik* – your aunts – finished school past the sixth grade..." (23) or "Re-mem-ber – *Yata-thakk-ar!*"(33) [italics in the original] At other times the Arab language is used to refer to concepts that are specifically meaningful in context to the culture and perhaps cannot be always translated. Such are 'dishdasha' in "Baba came home from work and exchanged his suit for a long white *dishdasha* ... " (15), or: "She was nursing Gamal and watching a *tamsiliyya*." (49), or : "Sometimes he'd read the *Sharq al Awsat*, sometimes *Al-Ahram*" (43) as well as: "After I pronounced every word of *surat ul-sharh* ... " (49) [italics in the original] There are numerous uses of Arab words in this way.

Overall, the novel consists of a vivid text, and Jarrar successfully manages to incorporate a lively tone to it. Not only does she use capitalizations of whole phrases, but includes letters, essays, recipes, lyrics and lists that Nidali writes. Very often the

text is very open with regard to cursing, and sexuality, since Nidali as the narrator seems to have no taboo subjects. Her thoughts are depicted in an honest way, whereby they are naturally available to the reader, but not always to other characters in the book, but rather serve for Nidali herself. Such is for example her letter to Saddam Hussein that she writes in a car as her family flees Kuwait:

... I am bleeding in my panties and too embarrassed to make the caravan pull over, and I am writing you this letter to humbly inform you that, although I admire your sense of fashion, green is so last season. Also, when you decided to invade the country where I grew up (and when you decided this, sir, were you on some seriously strong hashish?) did you, at any point, stop and consider the teenage population? Did you stop and consider how many of them were dying, just dying for summer to be over and school to restart, for classes to resume and crushes to pick up where they left off in June? For your information, I was anxiously awaiting to see a certain Fakhr el-Din [...] He was supposed to be my boyfriend this year, but that's scrapped now, thanks to you. I hate your fucking guts. ... (155) [italics in the original]

While this is written from the perspective of a teenager, whose voice Jarrar successfully manages to adopt in her writing, it could well be assumed that this may also be a critique on the invasion of Kuwait. However, Jarrar's language is also very entertaining as well as naive as she tries to represent her main character, Nidali at a young age. Statements like: "Please God, I love what you've written, but I don't want to memorize a long verse." (45) or when her father explains the censoring on television, she states: "So there's a man who cuts out the kisses?" (69) [...] "I never realized that, that you could be a kiss-cutter when you grew up." (70) With regard to the entertaining, and what many reviewers called funny language, Jarrar stated in one interview in connection to the topic of 9/11, the perception of Arabs in America, and the reception of her book, that no one would hate somebody who makes them laugh. (KUHF) Therefore working against the prejudice through humor may well be one of Jarrar's language strategies used in the book.

Jarrar also successfully manages to depict Nidali's transition to adolescence, and her feelings of helplessness when she moves again to what should become another home, the U.S. She does so by changing tone; Nidali narrating about herself in the third person. This might imply that she loses touch with her identity, but also that the author steps in for a brief moment. At the end of the thirteenth chapter Jarrar writes: I had even taken to talking to myself, keeping me company, narrating my own movements. In this way, *me* became *her*, I became *Nidali*, *you*, *she*." (231) [italics in the original]

In a nutshell, Jarrar effectively uses language to illustrate Nidali's mixed backgrounds, her teenage attitudes and humor to make a universal appeal, and the

change of tone and transition from a teenager to an adolescent, as well as the transition from one culture and home, to another.

4.3. Representation of Orient and Occident

In *A Map of Home*, there are both, aspects of the Oriental culture, as well as that of the Western Culture. One can notice several layers of representation. Firstly culture here is often interwoven with religion. Secondly, culture is represented through popular culture and the contemporary world both from the Oriental, and the Occidental world. Thirdly there is a secular attitude, where it becomes visible that religion while often part of Nidali's experience turns out not so central to her character. While it influences her to some degree, the narrator reveals her own concerns, being rather consumed with her own identity as a teenager growing up. In addition, the secular tone is sometimes given away through the characters of her parents. This is often, but not always, contrasted to the religious aspects of the Oriental culture. Finally through Nidali's narration, a certain perception is given on America specifically.

The religious cultural aspects in the book include a contrast or even similarity between Islam and Christianity mostly. This is revealed at the beginning of the book when Nidali starts going to school with her classmates, and discovers that not all of her friends share the same religion. This is shown through a conversation between Tamer, Linda and Nidali. The kids are driven by religious perceptions of the world, which is evident from the dialogue between Linda and Tamer as they start arguing.

So for example, Tamer says: „Shut up Linda, you're going to hell because you're a Christian", upon which Linda answers "I'm going to heaven because Jesus will save me, and you're going to hell because you pray without shoes", and Tamar again states "I'm going to be allowed to fast Ramadan when I'm ten. Then when I go to heaven, I'll throw spit bombs on you, *if you're in heaven*" (13) [italics in the original]. This short disagreement between two children depicts a world of contrasting religions, and also the extent to which it plays an importance in their upbringing. Clearly each of them has certain preconceptions about what is right and what is wrong, and in this way their religious views collide. It is interesting for the reason that this is all set in Kuwait, which implies that the Oriental world is not necessarily Islamic, but that other religions might as well appear. This is especially

interesting since Christianity is being perceived in the world as a dominantly Western religion.

Jarrar also shows Nidali's unawareness about this at her young age, but also confusion with regard to what she believes to know when she interrupts Tamer and Linda and asks: "Who's Jesus" after which Linda answers "Jesus is the Son of God. He was crucified," and Nidali tries to correct her when she says: "God has no son. He's all alone. My baba made me memorize it". (13)

Soon Nidali connects Linda's Christianity to her Greek grandmother whom she knew was Christian as well. This implies that Nidali owes, or is influenced at least to some extent from her mixed heritage, although her family by living in Kuwait, and her father being Islamic, seems to carry more weight on her family's religious orientation.

However Nidali seems relieved when she finds out her and Linda's religions have similarities, and she says: "I asked about Adam and Eve, and she nodded. I asked about angels, and again she nodded. I asked about hell, which everyone called 'the fire,' and enthusiastically she nodded. I liked that Linda and I could be different but still believe in so many similar stories." In this way Jarrar perhaps stresses the silliness of arguing which story or religion is truer. And when Nidali confronts her mother and asks whether God has a son, she tells her: "*Habibti*, the truth is, different people believe different things". (18) as well as "For example, some people [...] think that God exists in fire. Some people believe God has a son. And some people believe that after we die, we will be re-formed into other beings." (18-19) On Nidali's question whether she believed people could really be re-formed her mother says: "Take the waves in the water at our feet. They aren't the same thousand waves, but they aren't completely different. Maybe people are like those waves, made of the same ocean of souls." (19) It is clear from this that the story leaves some impact on Nidali, however what is more relevant here is to consider the representation of the religions.

Jarrar includes several possibilities. Perhaps the impact of Nidali's mother is influential in that, although, she gives a somewhat spiritual definition, it implies that in her view people are all the same, that is, human. This is just one of the representations that are set against the notion of Arabs being strictly religious.

As a matter of fact, Jarrar goes even further to contrast and give multiple insights on how religion is culturally bound to the Arab culture or not, that is to what

extent. So for example she includes a dialogue in class on whether souls are like waves, where Nidali's and her religious teacher Mr. Dawoud's views confront, and the girl says that no one knows what happens after people die, after which the teacher stresses: "God knows! [...] and He says that our souls return to God not to others to be reused. [...] Our souls wait for the Hereafter, when we will all be judged." (40)

Similarly Jarrar pictures Nidali's religious cousin introducing him to the novel with: "MY RELIGIOUS COUSIN Esam ..." (44) [capitalization in the original] Esam soon has a minor verbal disagreement with Nidali's father who does not have as strictly defined religious views as he does. For example, Esam turns off the television set because of a weather forecast and proclaims "The forecast is blasphemous" (46) and Jarrar then includes the contrasting positions between the two characters:

'I thought' Baba continued, lowering his tea demitasse to his knee, 'that the God almighty equipped us with brains so we could discover these things for ourselves: the weather, chemistry, math, philosophy, physics – all these useful things . . .' (46)

Esam's attitude towards the matter is then included as:

'Predicting the weather, "Esam shouted, " is predicting the future, something only God can do. Weatherman, they're like . . . they're magicians, and surely you remember Allah's words against magic?' (46)

To what Nidali's father in turn tells him to "[s]it down, and shut up." (46) Similarly they have opposing views on whether girls or women should cover themselves. The girl in question was specifically Nidali where Esam and her father disagreed once again. Jarrar writes through Nidali's narration:

Baba would have never let me cover my hair. He said it was for donkeys. 'What? Don't even consider it,' he told me that evening. 'Forget those retarded idiots! You must be cleansed to read the Koran, but no one ever said you have to be covered.' Esam coughed from his post in the corner of the living room. 'Pardon me, Uncle,' he said. 'But this talk is incorrect. God has decreed that woman cover themselves.' (49)

In this particular case, Nidali's father again rejects Esam's viewpoint, and Nidali is satisfied with it. The eccentric representation of her cousin goes even further when he tears down Nidali's stickers of "Woman of Wonder"⁵ (52) that she has got from her mother. His argument is that these pictures are of a naked woman whom Nidali should not admire. When Nidali all upset asks why not, Jarrar writes Esam's response through Nidali's narration: "Because", and he looks straight into my eight-year old eyes, "she is a shameless prostitute". (53)

While Jarrar does represent various degrees of religious life in Kuwait, and Nidali's family seems not as stubbornly religious as some others, their life, culture

⁵ That is Wonder Woman.

and customs, also include specifically Oriental notions, which are sometimes indistinguishable from religious life. It seems to be part of the Oriental culture as well. The reader finds out about this particular way of life in the following way. For example, Nidali memorizes the “*fateha* from the Koran” (14) and it is implied throughout the book that she is reading it regularly, that she even wins a Koran contest and covers her head that day despite her father’s opinion. (50)

In addition the representation of their way of life is characterised by the fact that her father wears a white *dishdasha* (15) whereby one can assume that the word which is written out in Arabic implies a traditional Oriental wear. Moreover he drinks *Turkish* coffee (21) [emphasis added] Similarly some women read into coffee cups as in “... Mama banged a mosquito dead against the wall, then continued reading Sonya’s coffee cup.” (81)

Further implications about the Oriental way of life in the Arab world include that from the kids, only boys went to the mosque, as Jarrar writes: “... some kids – the boys – went to mosque”, (17) or that it is not appropriate for girls to have boyfriends as Nidali learns from her father: “Nidali [...] we don’t have boyfriends [...] boyfriends are fiancés, and then you marry them.”(16). Nidali reflects “Soon I learned that every other girl understood this rule; why didn’t I? “ (16) In addition there is the importance of virginity on the first night of marriage. (90)

Through Nidali’s relationship with Fakhr it becomes further clear that in the Orient it is not quite approved for young people to date. Although Nidali is a rebellious girl and explores life, she has to do it in secret. Nevertheless it makes her wonder about what she and Fakhr really feel. This is included in the following:

I was sure Fakhr would be there. We acted like we didn’t know each other when we were around other people. I asked him once if he thought we were embarrassed by each other, and he looked down and said, no, we’re just Arabs, so we’re scared. (120)

It is clear from this that being Arab means to keep relationships secret, since society does not approve. Even though, at this stage at the novel, Nidali and Fakhr are both still in Kuwait, and their relationship only starts developing. When they once again meet in Egypt, after having both fled Kuwait because of the invasion by Iraq, their relationship intensifies, but remains secret. It is further clear that in Egypt, as in Kuwait, shortly in that part of the Oriental world, relationships and intimate contact between teenagers and adolescents are taboo for the Arab society, especially in public. Jarrar writes:

Kissing in public is illegal in Egypt. The foreigners – American archaeologists and English teachers – all kissed on street corners and in alleys and on the beach, and people would stop their cars to watch as though the blonde people were television stars showing themselves in public. If Fakhr and I got caught, someone would beat us and possibly send us to the police station. (185)

In this way Jarrar draws a distinction between ‘blonde people’ and Arabs, people from the West like the Americans, or English, and people like Fakhr and her, Arabs. While it is implied that the foreigners as she calls them, do not get punished, since they are not really Easterners, or belong to their group of people, they nevertheless seem to be a sensation for the Arabs, doing something that is not allowed to them. This sensation could be both interpreted as desire or envy, as well as prejudice.

In this way, Jarrar represents the Arab way of life with regard to intimacy, and relationships; not only does she state that this is forbidden in public, but through her example of Nidali and Fakhr gives implicit meaning that Arabs actually have boyfriends, and girlfriends, that is, relationships before marriage; however, it happens in secret.

There are certain other cultural preconceptions revealed about the Orient in Jarrar’s book. For example, “[i]t’s not right to yell out a woman’s name in front of a bunch of people,” (74) or that in Palestine there is the tradition or perception of funerals lasting for forty days as is revealed when Nidali’s grandfather (Sido) dies. Jarrar writes:

During the forty day funeral (we only stayed for three days), the woman sat in a circle and told stories about Sido, once in while slapping their cheeks and rending their dresses. I slapped my cheeks and tried to rip my dress but Mama shot me laser looks and I stopped. I just wanted to be like everyone else. (103)

Certainly Jarrar gives insight into the Oriental cultures from several different countries of the Arab world, and it becomes clear that Nidali herself is not familiar with all of the traditions, either because she is still very young and has not been to funerals before, or because her parents do not practice their religions entirely as other religious people do. The forty days of funeral, probably refer to the traditional mourning period, and what Nidali described as women telling stories, slapping their cheeks, and rending their dresses is a form of prayer she did not recognize as such due to her childish view of these practices, that Jarrar efficiently represents through Nidali’s language.

That Nidali’s parents are not strictly religious or that they are also somewhat secular is further shown through the story. Her father states in one instance that she will not have to marry until she wants to, and talks about education. (44) Whereas her

mother recites a 'sura' from the Koran over the grave of 'yia yia' who was a Christian. (87) Although Nidali's mother was half Christian herself she takes up a prayer from Islam for her own mother. This implies that she was not fixed to one religion or another, or that it even mattered in what way she prayed.

When they arrive to America, Nidali's mother buys a Christmas tree into her Islamic family's house. In addition the reader might be surprised when in America Nidali's mother states that women from her country do not change their family name after marriage (227) and proudly adds: "It is more feminist, than you thought, yes?" (228) This shows that not all family related matters in the Orient are strictly patriarchal, and that not all families have to be religious, and thereby Jarrar distorts to some extent the picture of the Orient being connected to religion, and speaks against the stereotypes and prejudices.

However, there is the notion and emphasis on the Orient being a specifically different society from the Western world. The novel for example reveals that Arabic books are read from right to left (20) which is a known fact, however for the Western reader this remark may be a notable difference since it is opposed to the reading from left to right of the Western world, which seems natural to the Westerners.

In addition, there is the mention of a 'belly dancer' (39) which suits the Western perception that this culturally belongs to the Orient, even though nowadays different cultural practices can be spread around the world due to migration, and globalization, and so on. Moreover there is mention of some aspects of popular culture in relation to the Arab Oriental world which may not be familiar to the Western reader. Nidali talks of a 'za'tar burger' (60) and her mother refers to the 'Agha Khan' prize (18). A more familiar reference might be that of the *Thousand Nights and a Night* television show (14), which is also adapted in literature throughout the Western world.

Finally the Arab world of the Orient is also represented as a place of various people and different religions. This is revealed from several examples in the novel. Firstly, when Nidali wins the Koran contest and arrives back to the playground of the New English School that she attends she describes: "My girlfriends – Sunnis, Shia's, Christians, Hindus, and Mai, whose parents were communists – made a circle around me and hurled out questions." (51) or when she describes classes: "This class was usually filled with Southeast Asians science nerds and Palestinian Christian math nerds" (114) and: "The students sitting at their desks and staring into space were

mostly Arab boys, with the exception of a Dutch girl, Olga... “(116) Therefore, Kuwait is described as a place where one can find different people of different cultures living side by side. This is implied by the previous sentences Jarrar used in the novel, as well as by description of the streets of Kuwait. However, it is more based on the difference in social class, but also implies people of different cultural perceptions, according to how they dress, that is, identify for example by religion, profession, tradition or similar. The distinction is captured in the following:

There were veiled women, men in suits, women in tight jeans and makeup, men in long traditional robes, beggar boys who wanted some leftovers and we gave them some, white people with their white kids in strollers. (120)

Overall, it can be concluded that Kuwait is to a certain extent described as multicultural. While it can be said that what seems stereotypically fitting the Oriental on the one hand, are the veiled women, on the other hand it is striking here that whiteness has been made visible, when Jarrar explicitly refers to people as “white” obviously contrasting them to herself.

This brings me to the next argument. In *A Map of Home* there are many aspects of the Western culture, recognizable within the Oriental life of the Arab world. There is the use and influence of the American or Western popular culture (mostly through music) on the one hand, and the perception of America in particular, on the other hand. Both of these should be analyzed.

For one, at the very beginning of the novel, Jarrar makes use of intertextual elements by referring to American music artists and their songs. For example one of these is the famous song by Bill Withers *Just the Two of Us* when she in her humorous style writes: “It could have been like the Bill Withers song, ‘*just . . . the . . . two of us*’: poor and Arab.” (8) It should be noted that this is a narration through Nidali, and therefore a Western influence can be assumed, since she is familiar with the American song. Furthermore when Jarrar writes of the youth of Nidali’s father she states that his friends enjoyed the music from the Beatles (34) and the same refers to her mother as Nidali notices a poster from the Beatles in her mother’s old room where she grew up in Egypt. (180)

Further, there is the influence of the fictional American character *Wonder Woman* that is introduced to Nidali by her mother who gives her a collection of stickers and explains: “... when I lived in America [...] they had a show about her.” (41) Nidali admires the image of the character. In addition Nidali’s bed was covered with English alphabet sheets that her mother bought her (58) While this can be

interpreted as the influence from her mother who had parents of mixed backgrounds of the Arab world, and who has lived in America, it can be also interpreted as the influence and increasing power of globalization processes, where the Western starts to appear in the Oriental world. This is more visible in the following description:

Baba picked us up [...], carrying a box of pizza he bought from Pizza Italia [...] We watched television all day and all night, ate our pizza at the coffee table, drank our Nescafe [...] We watched English and American shows the country had imported for the year. (69)

According to this, it can be argued that Jarrar is aware of the outer influence of the global economy, introducing products from other parts of the world. So not only does her family drink Turkish coffee, but also Nescafe, and not only do they watch *Thousand Nights and a Night* but also specifically American and English shows.

Finally there is the influence of rap music, as Fakhr sends a love letter to Nidali and she realizes it is lifted from LL Cool J's song "I Need Love" (191) Also when in America Nidali's brother Gamal listens and buys rap music, among many, Jarrar mentions the Beastie Boys and writes "Gamal knows he's not black, but he comes from the home of the original rap battle." (245) This can be related to Jarrar's interview when she says that in the Arab world poetry is very popular and reminiscent of rap music, which is also popular and consumed by the Arab world. (KUHF)

A certain image and perception of America is also part of Jarrar's novel. First of all it can be interpreted as multicultural as the author gives several hints. So when Nidali is born in America there is a nurse that is black (4), and Nidali's parents are naturally Arabs in America; there is some narration on the first arrival of Arabs to the US as well (6). Later in the book when Nidali moves to America and starts going to school there she describes:

People sat in a student center in between periods and for lunch, and this student centre was like a map of the world: the white kids with the money [...] sat in the top left; the white people with no money [...] sat in the top right [...] Then the black people sat in the bottom center; the Latino kids sat in the bottom left... (221)

While this description resembles a class system, there is certainly the division by heritage and color, as well. Altogether Jarrar includes the notion of America as consisting of different people.

However, while Nidali and her family still live in the Arab world, there is a certain perception Nidali has about America. This is especially emphasized when her parents get the idea to return back to the US for a job. Nidali imagines how it would be like to live there:

When I thought of living in America, I pictured straw yellow hair, surfboards, snow; I saw girls and boys holding hands, and breaking up and kissing in public; I heard rock music and rap music and pop music and throngs of people swaying and singing; I tasted ketchup and mustard and mayonnaise; smelled streets and new cars and sometimes horses and barns, dollar bills and bacon. [...] my own ideal symbol for America: Privacy, as embodied in Lockers. (201)

In this way, Jarrar reveals what is American for her in contrast to what is her own culture. In addition, there is a comparison of Kuwait and America, Kuwait being negatively associated and small in comparison to the image and positive meaning of American culture. This is stated in:

My friends and I had always thought of America as the coolest kid in the world, one who would never acknowledge our existence. [...] We were thrilled to hear the name of the place where we lived – a place we believed to be a tiny spot of spit on the map of the world – uttered by a gorgeous actress in an American movie. We'd never stopped to notice, though, that it was being uttered negatively, in criticism of our place of residence. Still, the fact that we were noticed! That we existed! We relished it. America actually cared that we existed, and this somehow made us feel like we were worth existing. (207)

However, with reference to the invasion of Kuwait, there is a slightly different perception about America that Jarrar adds to the previous idea of the American culture.

So now that America itself had proved that it cared about Kuwait's existence, or at least about controlling Saddam and oil prices, now that it had gone to war for it, America was not as unattainable as it once used to appear. It was like a cool kid coming over to your nerdy table in middle school and kicking a bully's ass for you. Never mind that he kicked the bully's ass because you have a huge wealth of information you share with the cool kid during tests. (208)

While there is still the notion of America having a positive cultural image, Nidali describes as 'cool', there is also criticism of America having self-interests first. This criticism can be considered political and is even more explicitly criticized when Nidali first moves to Texas while having the trauma of the invasion of Kuwait:

I would have to remind myself that America was the one that attacks people and that I was safe here, because it was too strong and no one would dare invade it. That would set my mind at ease until I began to feel guilty about being in a place that never gets attacked but attacks others. (218)

America is therefore pictured as safe and strong, but at the same time as the 'villain' who attacks. Finally, there is the sense of America being more considerate about individual and private human rights, in the sense that there would be punishment for those who would exercise power excessively within the family household. This is in context of the rebellious Nidali gaining more power as she indirectly addresses her father's beatings as a disciplining and punishment method. In third person narration Nidali reflects about her actions towards her parent:

She will take you to court. Parents in America can't get away with Everything. She will drop charges against you. She will assume you've learned your lesson. Daughters in America can teach their parents lessons. (249)

Therefore America is also presented as a just and safe place with regard to individual rights.

Overall, in *A Map of Home* Jarrar includes both representations on the East, the Arab world, and the West, the American world, sometimes contrasting them to one another.

4.4. Cultural Stereotypes

Since *A Map of Home* is about Nidali's story of changing homes and adapting to different cultural environments, it is only natural that Jarrar along different perceptions includes some stereotypical views as the different cultures collide and contrast when they come in touch with one another. When people learn, live and acquire a certain cultural way of life, it seems understandable that cultures or people, because they are different, develop or classify others as being one way or the other. It makes sense that there are a few instances where the author uses the strategy, to make the cultural experience believable, in the sense that people sometimes do have stereotypical views about others.

I will here include some of Jarrar's stereotypical descriptions about the Westerners (English and Americans) and the Arabs, which are reflected through the opinions of her characters.⁶

For instance, Nidali finds her English teachers to be different than Arabs, and specifically characterizes them as cold. She states: They were English and cold and didn't resemble us at all. I liked this, that they did not hold a mirror up to me.“ (10) This implies that only because her teachers are English they are simultaneously cold, since she connects in one sentence both descriptions together 'English and cold.' This thought reappears later in the book when Nidali in an argument with her father says: “Look at the English. Stone faced and boring.” (203) In addition, Nidali's mother has a fixed perception about Americans, doing and accepting everything if it is cheap or for free:

⁶ Although some of the stereotypes used could be read from the previous chapter on Representations of cultures. This chapter is however specifically focused on stereotypes.

[I]f you give the flat soda for free, they drink it, you tell them they can see a very bad movie with fat-ass Sinatra free, they watch it, you try to sell them a bag of chips and say fifty percent more free, they buy it. Never mind it is fifty percent more chips compared to the old bag ... (227)

Furthermore, when Nidali and Gamal first find out that their father has found a job in Texas, they instantly think of cowboys: “Gamal and I were afraid of Texas, afraid of the cowboys that would lasso him away from us possibly forever.” (203) In this example, Texas is instantly associated with cowboys, and cowboys having a negative or rather dangerous connotation, reminiscent of their representation in a Western movie.

Next, there are some remarks or stereotypical views on Western music by Nidali’s father. For example he would claim “that it was un-Islamic to bring pianos into the house and play music all day” (72) as well as that classical music “and anything pop culture-related [...] was Western and weird and elevated and condescending”. (34) Nidali’s father also associates rap concerts with getting drunk and getting pregnant. (234) Although, this may be his protective feelings and fear for Nidali. Moreover, while he would curse as he flips newspapers he would say: “The Americans and their capitalism” (43) marking Americanness with consumption and economic activities.

Also, there are some preconceptions about Arabs too. In the same instance Nidali fathers comments: “The hypocrisy of Arabs, dirty Arabs”. (43) In addition he has a disagreement with Nidali generalizing that “ARABS ARE NOT EMOTIONAL!” (204) while he criticizes Nidali that “it’s racist to say that Arabs on the whole are emotional.” (203) He more or less generalizes as well, only in the different direction.

These are just several instances where one can argue on stereotypical views in the novel, but as previously mentioned it seems to reflect the colliding cultures and self-perception of one’s own cultural identity in contrast to that of others.

4.5. Identity and Changing Homes

One of the central themes of this thesis is the hybridity of cultural identities as a consequence of colliding or clashing cultures. In *A Map of Home* Jarrar’s main character is at the centre of encountering contrasting cultural influences. Nidali’s character should serve to the analysis in examining whether and how hybridity might

be the trait of her character. This will be analyzed through Nidali's perception on cultures, and the impacts on her identity, followed by collisions, feelings of belonging and her aspirations. Finally, it will be discussed how Nidali defines herself and what her resolution is to the identity question.

4.5.1. *Colliding Influences*

Nidali's story starts with the idea of her being different. Her identity is split in half from her parent's mixed background. Her mother is Egyptian with a Greek Christian mother, her father a Palestinian, and they are living in Kuwait. Nidali was born in America in Boston, and is according to her passport American. In the beginning of the novel she introduces herself: "I was Egyptian and Palestinian. I was Greek and American. My little blue passport, the one that looked nothing like Mama's medium green one or Baba's big brown one, said I was American." (8-9) At airports they would all stand in different lines and it would make her feel different.

It can be argued that much of who Nidali was came as an influence from who her parents were. Her mother was rooted since she grew up in one and the same apartment, but her father did not know where he belonged since he was forbidden to enter his home country Palestine after a war in 1967. (37) Her father often told her that "moving was part of being Palestinian" (9) and that they "carry their homeland in their souls" (9)

Watching and listening to her parents could have a great impact on who Nidali was. Her own mother, who was half Christian, half Muslim, was an example of someone who accepted the difference in beliefs and yet did not quite stick to one of them fully. We find out from Nidali that her mother did not resemble the typical image of a mother that her friends had. Her mother played piano, and her mother did not pray. (19) Her mother also gives Nidali the explanation that people believe different things, but nevertheless assumes that people are "made of the same ocean of souls." (19) It could be argued that for Nidali her mother is the window to another world.

In contrast, her father might have had another impact on her. While he was strict about some rules of behavior, disciplining her to read the Koran regularly, and making it strictly clear that she should not date, correspondingly to the Arab notion of society of how girls should act, he would yet direct her to education as a form of freedom. While the character of her father seems to know all that is right for Nidali,

this may not have a negative impact on her after all. For example he told her about his sisters who all married young and none had finished school passed the sixth grade, ending up cooking and cleaning for their husbands (23) That is not how he pictures life for Nidali, but instead he tells her

you don't want to be like them. You want to be free. [...] to be free, you must be educated. So you must do excellent work, always. That way, you can finish every year of school possible, including a doctorate.”(24)

On another occasion he tells Nidali: You can be a doctor! A big professor of literature! Write poetry like I used to. Write poetry and teach in England. Show these bastards the greatness of our literature. You can be whatever you want.” (65) Finally her father explains: “I lost my home [...] and I gained an education . . . which later became my home. That can also happen for you. “(106)

But also Nidali's surroundings, her school and outer impacts could have shaped Nidali's identity. At seven years she starts attending The New English school (10) where they read in English. She develops an interest to read Shakespeare, poetry and novellas. (171) There is also the impact of popular culture from America. Nidali liked listening to American music, dressing up with her cousins “in pretend American clothes and [dancing] ...” (59)

Interestingly, just as her father teaches her that school and education are good for her, Nidali actually herself relates to school. School was her escape as she states:

I knew from the beginning that home meant fighting, arguing, and embellishing, and that's why I loved school. School was where my parents were not. Teachers were there; they taught us facts based on reality. [...] Like some kids felt about play, school was my true escape. (10)

Moreover, Nidali identified with her homework:

Homework was an extension of me: it was like another hand or leg, and extra limb. If I did all my homework perfectly I was perfect too; if my homework was done badly I was bad. In Baba's mind, it seemed, there was no separation between effort and essence. We were one, the homework and I. (23)

While she herself seemed to love everything school related, it can be argued that her father's view impacted her as well as is included in the mentioned examples.

In addition, Nidali seems like a character that is very curious about life, she explores her sexuality, and is a rebellious girl who despite her parents, or especially her father's view does things she is interested in. This comes, as natural, knowing that the novel is a coming of age story, and includes many elements of Nidali growing up from a little girl to a young woman. However, her childhood is disrupted by war, that is, the Invasion of Kuwait, and Nidali has to change homes. This is clearly marked in

the book: “There’s a moment when most children know their childhoods are over. That was mine.” (124)

Finally, most interesting is probably the notion of Nidali being half-and-half. She retells a story Sitto told her (her grandmother), according to which being half one thing and half another was something good.

... [S]he told me about the half-and-half boy who was half a human because his father ate half the pomegranate he was supposed to give his infertile wife to help her carry his child. I wondered if she told me this because she thought I was half a girl since I’m only half-Palestinian. But Sitto told me that the boy in the story was stronger and better than the kids that came from the whole pomegranate, and that when she called me ‘a half-and-half one,’ that’s what she thought of me. (104)

Altogether, the people around Nidali, her heritage, and some stories she was told, as well as the external influences of her surroundings have created, from the very beginning, a context of a divided identity.

4.5.2. *Individual Perceptions and External Constraints*

The context of Nidali’s life creates difficulties and collisions for her own identity, starting with her confusion about the differences in cultures and people in the Arabic Orient, the religious life everybody seemed to practice, and the restrictions of her society she herself as a young girl did not understand. Followed by that, are her own fears with regard to her family problems inside their household, changing homes, new environments and the uncertainty about her future, as well as her own identity as a girl growing up. On the contrary, some of her own aspirations throughout the process of her struggling identity reoccur. Finally, most interestingly is her dilemma about her own hybridity, the clash of cultures between the Oriental world, and her new Occidental experience.

One of Nidali’s first confusions about her life and different perceptions was that of the different religions within Kuwait and among her friends. This is revealed by the following: “I was just an eight-year-old, one who couldn’t wrap her head around the idea of a large God, of souls, or infinite space, or religion. Linda’s Jesus, my Muhammad, Sherif the barber’s Marx . . . who were these people? “(39) The idea that everyone had a different philosophy about the world caused her great confusion to understand the life around her. She was getting contradicting images from society. Nidali struggles: “I didn’t understand how I could believe one thing when other people believed something else. It made me feel as though there was no way to really

know the truth.”(18) So much that she wondered “Was God real?” (43) and since everybody seemed to practice different religions: “[W]ould we all be together after we died?” (87)

But not only did Nidali get into confusion about the different beliefs, but she also felt strange that her father was teaching her a certain way of life in society, that she disagreed with, or at least did not understand. This is with regard to establishing relationships with boys, that is, having to stay away from them, since it was not ‘appropriate’. Nidali disconnects at that moment from her father: “I stared at the white wall ahead of me and avoided Baba’s gaze. I felt as though I was not truly his daughter, that I must have come from elsewhere if I disagreed with his rules.” (16)

What followed in the course of the novel with respect to Nidali’s identity is her fear about her inner struggles of growing up, her parents having to fight on the one hand, and the changing of homes that impacted her severely on the other hand. That she is troubled with the fact that her parents fight is revealed in a dialogue with Fakhr when she asks him: “Do your parents fight?” [...] Mine do.” (118) Subsequently, she is tortured by the idea that she could be liking both boys and girls, and that she deserves to be punished. She thought of herself as being bad: “I replayed that kiss over and over in my mind, tried to figure out, what it meant that I liked both girls and boys. It was bad enough to like boys! It was bad, bad, bad, and I was bad ... (176).

However Nidali’s real identity crisis starts with the change of homes, after Iraq invades Kuwait and her family flees to Egypt. Her greatest difficulty is to attend a new school and although she loves school she would rather avoid it for her fear that “new people and new teachers [...] will doubtlessly hate [her]” (163) She rebels strongly by saying “I’M NOT GOING TO SCHOOL!” (capital letters in the original 165)

Nidali was traumatized and sad that she had left home. It can be interpreted as a loss of part of her identity that she had established, and now was gone. She reveals her feelings then in her narration: “I didn’t tell them that my heart was broken. I didn’t tell them how I always felt like I’d left something behind at home until I realized what I’d left behind *was* home.” (166) [italics in the original] Later on Nidali describes “... thinking of how much I missed home was excruciating”. (174) Simultaneously, while in Egypt Nidali felt uncertain about her and her families future, she wanted to know what will happen to her and her family (180).

Her family was soon forced to consider other options, and the thought of having to move again was dreadful to her. Moving was what distorted her sense of belonging, of what was supposed to be her home, and who she was. She describes how she cannot do it all over again:” ... I didn’t want to move again, to work at feeling at home again, to lose that home again, then have to start all over again”. (207)

Through all her experience however, already before she leaves home, as well as after she experiences this kind of loss, along the impacts that she gets from the outside world, Nidali develops some of her aspirations, and these have an important function in how her identity gets constructed.

For example, at first she herself wonders about Boston, her birth place and has the idea and imagination of going once there (110). In an essay in school she writes of her imagination to fly to American libraries, cafes and book stores (113) which again connects her birth place to what she loves doing, and what she aspires to. Also, before Nidali experiences the feeling of leaving home, she lets her parents know that if they have to leave; America would be a good option. (127) However, as indicated before, this soon changes as for Nidali moving becomes painful. Only after she reconsiders through her teenage eyes that America is actually cool, she thinks of moving there would be doable. (208)

Nidali’s preferences are further given as she gets a little older. While her father tells her that they came to America to study, she argues that she wants to have friends (234) and as she cannot bare the situation of not fitting in or feeling lonely she runs away from home. (235) The reader receives a clear standpoint of Nidali’s wishes towards the end of the book: “She doesn’t want to live the life you’ve come all the way to America to give her. She doesn’t want to live it.” (248)

This can be connected to her split identity and all the confusion that changing homes had caused her, in other words, the feeling that was caused by the clash of cultures, resulted in issues and a crisis of belonging. Although, from a very young age, due to her heritage and situation, she already feels different, later on this causes her even more issues in identification. Her split identity can be traced back from when she admired the Wonder Woman stickers and thought: “if Wonder Woman was Egyptian and Palestinian, and American like [her] “ (42) since “when [she] saw the stars on her shorts, [she] was reminded of [her] blue passport, of how [she] was born

in America.” (42) Clearly Nidali was looking for someone to relate to, even if that was a fictional character.

When she then moves to Egypt, her concerns were that in her class no one was like her, a half-Palestinian, “and everyone knew it”. (165) Quite contrary, in America she meets their neighbors who are “half-German, half-Irish” and Nidali concludes that “... everyone here was half one thing, half another” (219) and she reflects: “I thought this would make me feel at home but instead I was sad that I was no longer special.” (219) Jarrar especially describes Nidali’s fear of not fitting in when she writes:

... [I] was unsure of myself, of my appearance, of my accent, of my intelligence. I was unsure if I could really, fluidly transition again, and I was scared. At least when I went to school in Egypt there was a uniform and I couldn’t wear the wrong thing. And I could speak the language with the right accent, albeit an imperfect one. But here all that was gone, and I felt as though I was expected to know what to expect. And that seemed really unfair. (219)

This represents Nidali’s fear of being labelled different which she knew she was, and especially because the world that she knew, the Orient, collided with the world that she heard of but had no memories of or experience. This is the point where she experiences real confusions, when the ideas of her way of life, and what she has known since she was born, suddenly does not apply in the new surroundings, but instead new notions of the Occident arise. The clash of cultures and the effects on her identity are described by Jarrar as follows:

There was a lot that confused me. Why were there so many commercials on TV? In Kuwait and Egypt there was a commercial segment and you could opt not to watch it. What exactly was daylight saving time? And did it mean I had to stay in school an extra hour? What was a tag sale? Why would anyone want to buy a tag ? What was homecoming? Was it something political, because everyone was asking me to vote for a Queen? What was Memorial Day? Veterans Day? Why were there so many special days? Where was the call to prayer? I didn’t hear it anywhere. I had a friend who once lived by the airport, and when she moved she couldn’t stand the absence of airplane sounds. That’s what was happening to me then, but instead of airplane sounds, I was missing a hundred different things from ‘home,’ and the sad part was, I was starting to forget what they were and where home really was. (220-221)

In addition, she describes how her and her ‘foreign’ parents start to adopt into the American culture, but all with a slightly negative tone, since there are a lot of awkward moments that remind them that they are foreign in this world. So she describes her thrill of going to McDonald’s with her family, but only to realize that it is “a nasty fast-food restaurant” (233) Then there is the awkward moment of having to translate movies in the cinema in Arabic to her parents, and explain “why the jokes are funny” (233), as well as the horrifying thought that “[i]n America [...] not

understanding a movie is the same as being illiterate”. (232- 233) In addition, your friends talk about requesting songs on the radio and sending shoutouts, “[y]ou don’t know what a shoutout is, but you like that your name is on the radio, even if they mispronounce it”. (233) Nidali also discovers that in America teenagers “were nowhere near as mean or as tragically cool as the people [she]’d grown up watching on *Dallas*.” (222) [italics in the original]

Finally Nidali’s inner turmoil continues as she confesses that while she cried and listened to a musician from home named Ab-Halim, “[n]o one [...] knew who Ab-Halim was, no one knew who I was... “(256) which implied that she felt invisible. Her identity crisis is further defined when she expresses: “I wished, then and for many months later, that I could translate the way I was, my old way of being, speaking, and gesturing, to English: to translate myself”. (225) Even at the end of the novel, when her parents finally collect enough money to build their own home that they had wished for so long, Nidali wondered: “how long that home would hold us, how long that home would last”, (279) which implies that Nidali was not rooted, and perhaps never would be.

4.5.3. *Deleting Borders*

Although Nidali’s feelings of a lost home follow her until the end of the book, the question remains whether she somehow finds a way out, and is her identity question resolved? Does she identify with a culture? These questions cannot be answered for the book is an open ending. But there are several hints to how Nidali could find herself, and perhaps at times has defined who she was.

At the beginning of the novel little Nidali tried to find the answers to understanding why people from her very own surroundings believed and practiced different religions or cultures by studying the Koran which she hoped would help her understand God, and therefore the world around her. (40) Similarly, she finds reassurance in Wonder Woman who made her “feel like a normal girl and helping [her] get to sleep...” (53)

Interestingly as Nidali’s father tells her how school and education could free her, this becomes more and more a fixed belief for Nidali herself. She for example, confesses to Fakhr that she would love to become a writer (209) and Ms. Quiff calls her to her office in school and tells her that she did well, Nidali’s opinion about what school meant for her is the following:

I wanted to tell her that school had been my only constant since I was a child. Mother, homeland, self, that could all be taken away, but school? School remained. It's why I love school. (257)

Nidali also makes her final decision about college by explaining to her father who was not so fond of letting her go away from their house:

Baba . . . even if I went to college here, I wouldn't want to commute from the house. Do you know why? Because I don't want to be different. I know I *am* different, I know it, but I don't want to feel like an outsider. I want to do college right, because . . . it means a lot to me." (288) [italics in the original]

In this way, Nidali takes control of her life and leaves to Boston, to attend college, which happens also to be her birth place. But perhaps, the best explanation for Nidali's way out is erasing the borders as she once did.

I took the map I drew to my room, flipped my pencil and brought the eraser's tip to the page. I erased the western border, the northern border. I erased the southern and eastern border. I surveyed what remained: a blank page, save for the Galilee. I stared at the whiteness of the paper's edges for a long, long time. The whiteness of the page blended with the whiteness of my sheets. "You are here," I thought as I looked at the page and all around me. And oddly, I felt free. (193)

In connection to that, perhaps Jarrar left us with the message that Nidali could find her home anywhere, since home was where she was, and "any point could be the world's center," (223) any point could become home. Nidali had to find home in herself.

5. Aspects of the Chinese Culture in a Multicultural America in

China Boy

5.1. Cultural Roots and Life at the Margins

Gus Lee's novel *China Boy* is semi-autobiographical. Therefore he based it on his life. The historical background of the Chinese revolution which began in 1911, and the Japanese invasion which began in 1931 caused millions of deaths, and Lee's family had fled to America (Penguin) arriving in 1944 to San Francisco "in the middle of the most cataclysmic war the planet had ever suffered" as Lee expresses in his book *China Boy*. (7) He, however, was born in America, which, at the time, was safe and peaceful:

There were no bombings, no invasions, no bandits, no savaging of women, no abandonment of baby girls (boys were saved whenever possible), no totalitarian government and no bloody impressments of roped-together-farm boys for military, warlord service or factory slave work. (Penguin)

But poverty was a great issue and Lee was a kid growing up in the streets, being regularly beaten by other kids and teased for being a “cowardly, sniveling, weeping, blind and physically inept kid” (Penguin). Lee stresses “it wasn’t America that was violent – it was poverty.” (Penguin) The story of the Protagonist Kai Ting is that of Gus Lee. The history of his family’s arrival is important for it provides the context of Lee’s difficult life in a multicultural America.

But Lee’s motivation for the book which he published in 1991 was a private matter. He reveals in an interview:

The book began as a journal for Jena, our seven-year old daughter and for Eric, our five-year old son. Jena had asked me about her missing grandmother [...]; my mah-mee—and when I told her that I remembered nothing about her, I suddenly saw the moral need to learn and then tell her story to our children. I researched her story with my family. When I reached the point in the journal in which our mother died, I could have stopped writing. But I wanted my kids to know what it was like for me when I was their age and to understand that they came from a former culture, so I kept writing. (Penguin)

The idea to publish his story occurred only later, when he already had finished it. (Penguin) Lee also explains to what extent his novel is autobiographical, and to picture it for the readers he says:

All the characters in the story are real, from Sippy Suds (real name unknown) to Angelina in the Y cafeteria (real name, Lola.) Uncle Shim was Uncle Shen. My sisters are Elinor (also, Lily), Ying and Mary (also Ming) instead of Jennifer, Megan and Janie. Tony, Pinoy and Bobby Lewis were my real instructors. The Y was my true home. The most fictional element is Chapter 24, Wood, which I added upon my editor’s suggestion. The events in that chapter never occurred. (Penguin)

Therefore, it can be concluded that Lee’s inspiration was personal, but that his representation is also a reliable depiction of multicultural America of the 1950s, a postmodern era and life at the margins, as he experienced it.

5.2. Descriptive Comic Language – Serious Topics

The language style that Lee uses in his novel *China Boy* is multifaceted. He uses a very descriptive language overall which is metaphorical, but also imitates the language of his various characters. For example, he uses code-switching on the one hand, and the language of the ghetto streets on the other hand. He also very often imitates Kai Ting’s broken English, and uses short sentence structures to make it believable. In addition some reviewers have described the novel as “largely comic [...] dealing with profoundly serious and painful experiences and life lessons,” (Lots

of Essays) which alludes to Lee's language style comprising serious topics and comic language which adds a different perspective to the experience.

The descriptive aspect of the language can be found in sentences like:

Although Mother looked very beautiful, the photo seemed historic, and ancient, suggesting that she was an archive from an earlier world. But she was my mother, and she was with me again, the wonder of her face, her presence, slowly seeping into my being. I clutched the frame to myself as if it were a lifesaving ring in the midst of a catastrophe at sea. (303)

The metaphorical description of Kai's mother as an archive from an earlier world, suggests that she was dead and a memory of Kai's previous life. Lee also provokes strong images to produce and describe meaning by comparing the frame of the picture to a life saving ring in a sea catastrophe.

Another example where Lee's language is being highly descriptive is when he writes about San Francisco: "captured within a square peninsula, seven by seven miles, framed by the vastness of the Pacific Ocean and the interior half-moon of satellite villages rolling on small hills with starlight vistas of Drake's Bay." (3)

As to Lee's language being also comic, is for example evident from: "I was [...] blessed with a body that made Tinker Bell look ruthless." (4)

Finally, an example of Kai Ting's broken English is when he asks his sister whether being called China Boy is bad: "Ming-li. 'China Boy' – it bad name? [...] But I boy. From China. Sort of. I think." (64) or "I hurt no living things. I set table *hao dao*, right way, fork on left. I listen in your temple house, in all temple house you have." (94). Similarly Lee illustrates the speech of Toos, Kai's friend: "Now. We'se frends, fo' sure,"⁷ (109) changing the spelling to indicate colloquial speech of the street. Similarly Hector's speech is represented through some code-switching: "He's muy rapido, you know, bery quick⁸..." (123)

In conclusion, Lee's language is somewhat complex, but very visual.

5.3. Modern America – Traditional China?

In *China Boy* the representation of cultures can be roughly structured into three parts. On the one hand there is the representation of America as multicultural, on the other there is the representation of the Chinese culture and the American

⁷ Now. We are friends for sure.

⁸ He is very fast, you know, very quick.

culture in opposition to one another. The notion of America as multicultural has been strongly depicted in the novel, and it is America as such where the story is set.

For example, Lee describes San Francisco where the story takes place, stating that:

San Francisco is possessed with its own atmosphere, proudly conscious of its untempered and eccentric internationalism. [...] It is foreign domesticity and local grandeur. It is Paris, New York, Shanghai, Rome, and Rio de Janeiro captured within a square peninsula ... (3)

It is a strong portrayal of 'the multicultural'. However, Kai Ting, the protagonist, or China Boy, as he is called, reveals through the first person narration to the reader that the streets where he lived were "half black" and that he was being the only Asian and non-black in his district among the kids. (14) He stresses that their neighborhoods were changing: "Whites were moving out, as blacks moved in." (35)

Throughout the book however, Lee introduces more and more characters, whereby it becomes clear that their lives are set in a multicultural context. Such is the example when Lee introduces the Mexican character Hector, who saves Kai from being beaten by Anita a girl who defends her brother. The multiculturalism is implied through Hector's language who says: "You keep swinging, he gonna fo'get why you hate him. You bein a *pendeja*, chica." (121) [italics in the original] as he mixes Spanish into his English.

In addition, when Kai starts going to the Y.M.C.A. to learn boxing he wonders about how the kids were all different, stating: "No one was the same color. I had never seen so many Anglos or Hispanics." (146) He also describes his instructor Mr. Punsalong as the definition of a cultural mix, by stating that: "Bruce Punsalong was a Mystery Man. A goulash of Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and French, or 'Pilipino, Nihon, Jungworen, and Francais,' as he would say". (189) Finally, the variety of different cultural backgrounds as part of the kids at the Y.M.C.A is explicitly addressed in a conversation between Kai and Connie: "'Black, Spanish, better boxer,' I said to Connie. He shook his head. 'Mr. Barraza, Mr. Punsalong, they aren't black or Latin. Joey Cohen, he's Jewish. Eric Kagiwada, he's Japanese...'" (202)

One of the descriptions that imply a multicultural society that Lee includes is also when Mr. Barraza takes Kai to the Crystal Palace Market, to an Eatery with food from cuisines of different places in the world as described in the following: "Rows and rows of food of every type and variety, from Jakarta, Juan de Fuca, Antwerp, Leeds, Vienna, and Singapore. Canned goods, fresh produce, fishmongers, breads, pastas,

legumes of every variety.” (231) Food in this way only shows the impact of the increased multicultural contact and globalization in San Francisco.

The representation of China, Chinese customs and their way of life is an important element to the story, since it is part of Kai’s character, the heritage of his family, and the contradiction to his actual life in San Francisco, as well as a strong obstacle to his American stepmother Edna.

So for example Kai described it as “the home of the tamers of dragons, the sailors of the sea, the students of the moon [...] The land of my heritage was like [...] an unfairly large bully.” (15) Describing the country of his parents’ origin as a bully, probably refers to the Communist Revolution of the time. Furthermore, as Kai continues the narration of the story, the image of Chinese societies and cultures also gets a more detailed representation.

For example, according to the book there is a hierarchical order between men and women: “Daughters, sisters, wives. In parts of society, a man and wife merely a permutation of a boy and his dog. Women were expendable birthing organisms for the glory of the family.” (24) Moreover, women in China at the time were not allowed to be writers, but some published their work under male names. (210)

However, Lee writes of the Chinese from another perspective too, he states that the Chinese people are social because “its labor-intensive rice, grain, and potato economy requires full cooperation for survival.” (39) Moreover the “traditional Chinese honor the dead”, they have white funerals, and only the Chinese “would use glittery adjectives to describe death”. (39) When Kai’s Chinese mother dies, there is the shocking revelation that it was traditional to hide parents’ death from their children. This was done

to protect the young children from the shock [...] while the adults burned incense, offered oranges, served spectacular dinners, overpaid for stupendous caskets, and prayed for the continuity of the family. Death was an important event, and respect to ancestors was a requisite ... (50)

According to the novel, a very striking characteristic of Chinese culture is their food, and eating. Their food is “complex artistry in preparation, and simple, unrestrained celebration in eating.” (78) Moreover Lee makes a distinction between Western smorgasbords and Chinese banquets, saying that the former serves the “least-valued foods at the front, inviting the dinner to fill the plate with mountains of ice berg lettuce and leaving only a smidgen of room for the roast beef at the end of the

line” whereas the latter “begins with the costliest delicacies and marches down the order to the lower-caste condiments” (134).

The distinction between the Western and the Chinese is best shown through the character of Kai’s father. Through his experience there is another view on Chinese culture. It is best captured by the following sentence: “He had suffered the chaos, the irresponsibility, the waste, and the obsolescence of a culture...” (70) The Chinese Culture at this point in the book was strongly compared to the Western culture and defined as its unsuccessful opposite as a “culture that could not fashion an airborne corps, run a modern railway, operate a film industry, or defeat superstition”. (70)

Further insight is given when Lee writes: “My father was proud of China’s past, but saw it as unbearable liability in the modern world. He saw old customs and superstitions as invitations to rapine, catastrophe, misery.” (212) Also, China was intellectual, the West was industrial. (212) This division between the modern and traditional as a problem in China itself was also addressed by Harindranath as the dilemma to acquire the global versus the local, and it led to chaos:

One side advocated the rethinking of the traditional culture, a restoration of traditional values and attitudes; the other side urged the importation of Western theories and discourses. The rapid transition from tradition to innovation and from Western ideas to Chinese ideas led to a dazzling chaos. (Yue Daiyun, qtd. in Harindranath 23)

For Kai’s uncle Shim however, Western thought is primitive (205) and it is explained through this character why family and learning are important for the Chinese. For example Kai remembers the words of his mother: “For Chinese, family is everything. Uncle shares with you his learning, which is why we, the Chinese, are on the earth. It is our national skill.” (211) In addition it is “a very deep embarrassment, to deny a service to family, or to those treated as family” (212) which made Kai’s father conclude that

[i]t keeps China from being strong and organized [since] [t]he Chinese *only* trust people under their own roofs. Meanwhile, everyone else in the world is making atomic bombs, and big cars, while the Chinese light joss, [and] cry about bad spirits ... “(212) [italics in the original]

The American culture in contrast, is first described through cinema, where it is stated that Kai’s father introduced his family to America by taking them to movies. Lee mentions actresses like Bettie Davis, and Barbara Stanwyck, as well as actors like John Wayne and Robert Mitchum, and stresses that “[i]t was an American ritual in the fifties, when the studios still produced a new movie every week, to go to the movies as regularly as to church.” (26) In addition “[m]ovies were picture windows

into a brighter newer world, where courage was honored and happy endings were routine” (33) and these were American productions.

In fact, Kai’s father is the character that was impressed with the Americans, and wanted to be one of them, since he was disappointed in China through the events that occurred in the world, and was impressed with the postmodernization that was going on in America at the time. It is through his eyes that Americanness is portrayed:

[Americans] were unspeakably component with machines, were far friendlier than the Germans in the China Military Mission, and generously shared the best cigarettes in the world. They spoke easily in front of large groups – always a sign of deep inner strength. They chewed gum like tall, two-legged cows and laughed as easily as the wondrous, multivoiced, rubber faced street storytellers in the International Settlement who spun gymnastic tales of lost lovers, luck peasants, seasick sailors, and hardworking students, and rewarded the most appreciative members of the audience with the treasured white rind filament membranes of ripe oranges. Even better, the Pretty Countrymen, Americans, came from a country so young – less than two hundred years old – that they possessed no rock-bound traditions. In fact, they had no truly independent traditions at all. (31)

Obviously Kai’s father was a man that disliked tradition, however there is a largely positive tone to this description, and America here can be already identified as a consumer culture, with strong capitalism. Moreover, America was a land “where second sons⁹ could begin anew [...] [a] new land that accepted everyone.” (34) Finally, America for Kai’s father was a land of safety, “the Beautiful Nation, the Pretty Country, so ripe with promise, unsullied by rapacious foreign invasion, uncomplicated by a cultural heritage that was heavier than its people” (54)

In this way, Lee projects the multicultural context of America, the Chinese culture as old and traditional, and its opposite modern, young culture of America.

5.4. Difference and Racism

Lee’s novel *China Boy* makes large use of stereotypes, discrimination and racism. It can be said, that racism is a topic of the novel. Racism can be read as an issue in the novel: all suffering that Kai experiences is because of the inability of many kids on the street and his stepmother Edna, to see him as one of their own, but rather, in their eyes he is awkward, and does not correspond to a cultural image of their surroundings.

⁹ Lee explains in his book that in China at the time the first born sons in the family enjoyed some privileges and were honoured in contrast to the other sons that were born later. Kai’s father was a second son.

However, Kai and his sister also have some stereotypical conceptions of others. Lee's book is the example of clashing cultural images, and racism, stereotyping and discrimination are products of it.

Whether Edna had some deeply rooted issues within herself, and let it out on the children of her new Chinese husband is not relevant here, but what is significant is that she seemed openly racist; everything she was disturbed with in connection to Kai, seem to be that she could classify him as Chinese or foreign. Although this is somewhat contradictory since she marries a Chinese man. This man however wants to be American and this may be the difference.

Edna's racist attitude can be shown through the following. Kai as a young kid was not proficient in English, would often use Chinese words, since it was how he talked with his mother, and when trying to speak English, his Chinese accent was a part of his language. Edna soon began to show her real attitude when she says to Kai: "I can't *stand* how *everyone* in this house speaks! [...] I cannot understand that barbaric speech [...] Do not talk to me unless you are prepared to speak *English*. And do not look at me like that!" [italics in the original] She also adds: "You must give up your past habits and learn new ones." (58) Obviously that she calls the Chinese speech barbaric, since she does not relate it to herself, implies her feeling of superiority, or American superiority. In addition, when she gets angry and tells Kai the truth about his mother having died, she says: "And don't think I didn't know about those filthy foreign books! And those awful Chinese pens and dirty inks!" (85) which she hides away from Kai. Furthermore when Uncle Shim dresses Kai in traditional Chinese clothes, Edna is having a dreadful reaction almost as if she would fear the difference that she would see in Kai. She says: "He looks – he – Kai – looks totally *foreign*!" (253) after which she exclaims: "You hie yourself into your room this instant, and remove those – *clothes*." (254) In addition, Edna provokes Kai's sister Janie when she says: "Because you have black hair, there's little you can wear." (83)

But Edna was not the only one who disapproved of Kai, his speech and his accent. On the street with the kids, once Kai referred to his stepmother "Stepmama Edna" in his "eccentric accent [...] those who heard [...] laughed [and] [t]hose who had not heard also laughed." That it was a negative laughter becomes clear from the sentence: "I thought laughter was good. Wrong again." (62) It is Lee's approach to show that Kai was ridiculed because he seemed different. In addition Lee describes

that they seemed to search for clues that Kai was human, since they found him so much different and unfitting into any category they knew. Lee writes:

It took little time to discover that I was a new category. I was the kid who knew nothing, played ball like a goat, had no fighting spirits and less ability, and would not stay in his house, leave the block, or die. Edna had locked the door and kept me within a whistle's reach. The kids too numerous to remember or name, tested me, hoping for a real fight, searching for evidence that I was human or that I possessed human potential. I occasionally swore in Chinese, which showed defiance to Edna. It inspired derisive laughter and never improved my station. (91)

Although this comes from his peers through the eyes of children, it is clear that Kai is even in his small world discriminated, because of his difference. Further examples are that another kid tells him: "I keep forgetting that you grew up without culture" (51) or "China Boy ain't no ghost. But, he still be the China Boy, and it be the same fucken thing! He ain't got no color in 'em . . ." (186) which implies that the kids have fixed presumptions of who Kai is.

However, Kai too has some ideas about how whites are or looked like. Interestingly Lee reverses the use of the adjective 'exotic' which has been usually applied to describe tropical places, and people from these countries, but Kai describes the American and white Edna as exotic, that implies that she was foreign to him, and that he had certain views on her as being white. While it is not explicitly stated that he had a fixed perception of her when he first met her, there is some sensation that is described as he felt about her just because she was different from him. Lee describes Edna from Kai's perspective: "Foreign country person. Tremendously exotic. I couldn't wait to see how she drove a car. Her face was slender, illuminated in the center by pale gray eyes and shimmering in its blond outline. " (56) In this way Lee reverses the strategy, and defines the white, American as the Other.

That Kai sees and defines difference as well is evident when he explicitly states: "Blond, blue-eyed children were seated in the room..." (82) and adds that "[t]hey were dressed like royalty and were [...] orderly [...] They were chubby and unbruised". (82) In this way Lee pictures a stereotypical society, the black kids, and especially Kai being poor, and bruised, whereas the white blue eyed kids are described or compared to royalty. While this may well be the case that Lee experienced in his childhood, and might have put it in the novel for this reason, it nevertheless carries the stereotypical image between white kids, and black kids, or Chinese kids. This stereotype is further strengthened by the example of Big Willie, the bully that Kai feared at school and on the street;

Big Willie persisted in the belief that because I was a China Boy, I had to be special. And special people, like whites, had to have money, somewhere. For years I struggled with the sense that Big Willie and Edna were related to each other. (93)

The racism and discrimination is mostly used in the story to describe Kai's estrangement from the society he was in. Racism and discrimination were mostly directed to him, usually through Edna and the kids from the block. Other adults accepted him, and with time Kai learned to fit into his multicultural neighbourhood. However, Lee uses also stereotypes to mark the difference and the various perceptions between the different groups of people that belonged to different cultures.

5.5. Belonging in a Multicultural Society

In the following subsections the identity construction of Kai Ting, Lee's main character of the book will be analyzed with regard to the impacts and his surroundings that shape and influence his identity, his collisions, doubts, and feelings about finding where he belongs while in a society that is multicultural, as well as with regard to what extent and whether Kai is able to define himself.

5.5.1. *Cultural Past and New Assimilation*

As every character, Kai is influenced by various events and people in his life, he is a character in transition who develops, and whose lively circumstances construct and shape his identity. Who Kai really is, should be analysed through the main sequence of events and facts about his life.

At the beginning of the novel Kai is introduced as a Chinese boy, with a small body, shorter and blinder than other kids, a seven-year-old that was ill-suited for the street. The novel introduces his family originally Chinese as having arrived to the US only few years before Kai was born. His mother had suffered for her home, and had felt a loss of identity when she came to America, but continued to explain and teach Kai the Chinese ways, as she understood the world. She was very protective of Kai, so much that she would not let him on the street with other kids, and even when it was time for Kai to go to school, there was the fear of exposing Kai to this foreign world. She saw the threat of his bad English so she said to Kai's teacher: "He has some trouble with English [...] I appreciate all you can do for him, in giving him very special help." and "He has a delicate and rare skin condition that worsens in sunlight.

Please. Keep him inside the school building while the other children are outdoors. Not knowing English, or having too much sun, could be very dangerous for him.”

(36) For this reason, Kai had no social interaction with other kids, which would create a strong impact when he did go on to the street. He was considered very different. Kai’s mother had different hopes for him: “Some day, My Only Son, we will return to the Yangtze. You will be so learned, so well prepared, that your future as a musician will be beyond doubt. Your music can unify traditional and new China, and my father will weep for the joy of you.” (48) When his mother died, he was not aware of what happened but felt her absence immensely and this led to a fraction of language: “Our mother’s absence had caught me between languages. My Songhai was pitiful, my Mandarin worse. My English was fractured. My Cantonese was nonexistent.” (50)

His father’s marriage to an American woman, stepmother Edna, was described as assimilation (58) after which Kai spends most of his time with other children who constantly beat him. He thought he “was being punished in a universal way for language incompetence. Stepmother Edna hated my dialect, which was at the me-Tarzan level, and it was unmistakably clear how the neighborhood children viewed my communication patterns.” (63-64)

Furthermore, Edna stood between him and his father stating: “We are having a wonderful life, without you. You and your *sister* [...] are ruining it for us. You children are just *burdens*.” (65) [italics in the original] It is soon revealed that Kai and his family were victims of Edna’s cultural chauvinism. (69) An example is that she had the power to decide: “We are only to speak English henceforth [...] absolutely *no* Chinese, in any form. The removal of this *foreign* food will help, since I understand that no proper words exist to describe it.” (77) [italics in the original] She also makes sure to keep Kai away from his Chinese books and other things that reminded Kai of his early childhood. (85)

On the other hand, there is some influence on Kai from his school of boxing, the Y.M.C.A where he starts to learn to fight so that he can defend himself against other kids who kept beating him. In part, this affects his way of life.

After interrupted contact to Uncle Shim, who disappears out of Kai’s life when his mother dies, Kai finds him at the bank he works in, and through him connects again to his Chinese roots. He for example teaches him about collective guilt, that is “the responsibility of family for the failures of any of its members.”

(202). At the same time his father is becoming more and more American (203) Through Kai's narration it becomes clear that he sees comfort in his uncle, a prototype "of all good uncles everywhere." (204) Also, he was the connection to Kai's mother: "China, like my mother, had grown in modern times to distrust men who accomplished things with muscles and swords; Uncle Shim and Mother both liked brains. " (204) So for example, Uncle Shim gives Kai Kuomintang money that was worthless in America but Kai realized it was a way to strengthen Kai's "relationship to the past" (205) He had influence on Kai's upbringing to some extent, previously before Kai's mother died, Kai recalls Uncle Shim's influence:

'See here, how do you expect your son to become a *Chu-ren*, a Recommended Man for Metropolitan Rank, if you do not read him the *Sheng-yu*, the Sacred Edict, or the Four Treasuries, on the first and fifteenth days of every month? How will he learn the shiao, filial piety, falseness, scholarly practice, cultivation of peace, and pao chia, collective guilt, if you do not teach him? '(207)

With regard to his identity, his father encourages him more explicitly as someone with Chinese ancestry, and living in a modern America, to choose one identity:

You must *decide*. [...] Very smart men, just before the Empress Dowager died, tried self-strengthening, *tsu Chiang*. 'Chinese Essence, Western Means,' they said, trying to be Chinese *and* European at the same time. They failed. So pick *one*. Be American. Or Chinese. And never change your mind.. (212)

The message is clearly that hybridity does not work, that identity should be rooted in one culture. Finally, the way Uncle Shim introduces Kai to the elders, his friends, best summarizes the influences in Kai's life, and therefore aspects of his identity:

A boy with a Kiangsu father who works for Amethyst Jade Cheng. With an American stepmother who went to Smith College. A boy who is the student of Barraza Syensheng, who is teaching him about iron, and who is learning about ancient literary and the Indian elephant game from us. (252)

It is clear from this that Kai's identity is under so various influences, torn between Chinese roots and ancestry and an American home, with an American stepmother, between the collision of Chinese traditions and literary intellectuality he used to acquired from his mother, and continues to acquire through his uncle's influence, and the modern world of America - fighting as a way of life, that he acquires on the street and learns more professionally from Mr. Barraza – all happening while he is living in a multicultural city.

5.5.2. *Searching for an Essence*

Just as there is a sequence of events and circumstances that shape Kai's life, so there is his struggle to define himself. The following should describe and identify what these collisions are, and what process Kai goes through in his identification, which is obviously a state of hybridity concerning the previous conclusion in the previous subchapter.

For example, being the only Asian kid, among black kids provokes Kai's wish to become black himself. This is a statement found in the introductory part of the novel as Lee introduces Kai: "I was trying to become an accepted black male youth in the 1950s – a competitive, dangerous, and harshly won objective. This was all the more difficult because I was Chinese. "(4) This reflects his early ignorance of the culture that was surrounding him.

Later on however, he confesses confusion between the American culture and the black subculture: "American culture was a mistery, the evolving black subculture of the Panhandle was an enigma, and both overlapped across my struggling mind like a galloping herd of octopuses; I had trouble distinguishing the origin of the tentacles. But foreign or not, I knew I did not want to get beaten up." (61) And the thought of being beaten made him question why he attracted the bad karma: "what exactly had I done to make all this necessary? (93) On his father's idea that it might be good for him to move back to China, he reveals to the reader: "I was having a hard time figuring out how to be black, how to be American. Now I had to learn to be Chinese?" (125) which implies that he was feeling neither truly: not black, not American, and not Chinese, but perhaps a mixture of these influences, a hybrid of these cultures. Going to China would make him stand out there as well.

From his household and under the influence of his mother Kai learned the Chinese religion, and tradition. This became confusing as he was in America, which has different religions, and traditions. So Kai through his childish understanding of life assumed as there where different Gods in Chinese culture, that there was also a Kitchen God. In addition there was confusion between Santa Claus, and how he perceived food as learned from his culture. This is best shown from the following. Kai was

utterly confused about the relationship between Kitchen God, who lived in Heaven and returned to the call of firecrackers, and General Electric, who operated the ice machine and only worked if money were sent to him in a white envelope with a magic stamp on it every month." and "Santa Claus Syensheng [who] lived in the North Pole, which was

near Tsingtao, and returned if you brushed your teeth. But he never brought food, which was not only very strange, but rude. Instead, you were supposed to leave food for him, which should make his job very popular. (41)

Similarly when he gets a little older he searches for his identity by going to different churches. When he asks his Jewish friend Joey whether he could join his church, Joey tells him: “Kai. It’s called a synagogue. You don’t *pick* ‘churches.’ You have one faith. You keep it, and never change.” (240) To what Kai answers: “Yeh, I do [...] I been to Christen Science. Rutheran. Preboterian. Community. I been to Episcoparian. Baptist.” (240) obviously unaware and confused of Joey’s fixed identity.

In the midst of all that he had a personal crisis; the need of a mother, and the pain of not having one. The loss of his mother was a loss of a part of his identity. She was “gone, for all time, and [his] vital essence, [his] *shigong*, has followed her”. (87) He would have wanted any mother but to his unfortunate circumstance Edna thought that he was “a bad, small person, probably of the wrong color, undoubtedly of the wrong personality, operating badly with the tongue of a monkey”. (65) He was worried about what he had in his face that Edna disliked so much (76) She was a stepmother who estranged him emotionally.

At the same time, his father did not know how to approach him and Kai himself did not know how to express his feelings due to constraints of language and understanding. Kai was yearning for his father to talk, to explain all that bothered him and he imagined asking him: “Tell me why Mah-mee died, what I did to invite the Cancer God into our home. How I can live with Edna. If we’ll have Chinese food at home again.” (183)

Kai becomes aware of his undefined identity: “My youth seemed interminable because my personal identity was unclear” (66) He however had hope along the forces of assimilation that were forced by Edna, she had allowed him to keep his blanket and Kai reflects: “I looked at my blankie with hope; if it could survive, then so might I. (74)

What Kai wished most was for his mother to return, and he reassured himself and dreamt about it:

My mother will return, her spirit alive. I’ll be a great boxer, a good dodgeball artist, a surviving swimmer, a less-than-disgusting basketball player, and maybe even learn music. No, I knew, that’s not true. She will come back to laugh and read me books of scholars and hardworking sons. She will burn toast and let Jane cook a hundred meals of Chinese food. She will do *something* about Edna. (225) [*italics in the original*]

At one point, after all of his fighting and struggling to fit in, he confesses that it was wrong that he tried to be different than what he is: “a loser, an out-of step, cultureless, skinny, offensive, myopic, babble-mouthed, rock talking, clueless, fool punching bag for other people.” (282) It becomes clear that Kai is deeply negatively affected by the circumstances in his life, by its complexity. All of this comes together to his main collision in life as he sees the source and describes it by the grief he felt: “I cried for my mother, for Jane-Ming-li, for my broken toys, my busted spirit, the misery of our home, the Big Willie beating outside, the slapping and kicking inside, the lack of simplicity in my life.” (288)

Altogether, Kai’s struggle for identity was complex, as he was divided by so many constraints and contradictions in his life.

5.5.3. *I Pick Y.M.C.A.*

There are several aspects in *China Boy* where one can argue that Lee incorporates an ‘escape’ to Kai’s confusion in identity, ways out of it. This is in relation to fighting, to going to church, to establishing contacts with the elders, going to Y.M.C.A., defeating Big Willie, and standing up against Edna.

In his introductory chapter Lee includes that fighting was a metaphor to fix identity. He states: “My struggle on the street was really an effort to fix identity, to survive as a member of a group and even succeed as a human being. (3) As the story develops and Kai experiences a chaos of his feelings, confusion, and desperation, the first time he feels secure after he has lost his mother is when he goes for the first time to the Ninth Church. Although he expected stares and judgment because he was the only non-white, he felt for the first time openly accepted, although he was different. (81) This is probably the reason he continued going to churches. In addition, as Kai grew a little stronger, he stopped crying when he got slapped by Edna, and it seemed like he was “beginning to have a place in the world” (180) although this was not a triumph yet.

Furthermore, his reconnection with his Uncle Shim and his contacts to the elders to whom he was introduced produced positive feelings for Kai. Upon their suggestion to invite him more often and for a dinner at the Far East Cafe because they quite liked him and considered it an honor to have him, Lee writes of Kai’s reaction and feelings as follows:

‘Please, oh please!’ I said, and they laughed again, creating a music so sweet, so innocent, so connected to their own pristine youth and to the joy of life that it surpassed, for me, anything I had known since the death of my mother. I looked at these old man and loved them, trembling with emotion. (251)

In addition, the Y.M.C.A had a huge positive influence on Kai’s self perception, although he struggled in the beginning, he learned to love it. That he identified through it becomes clear when his father gives him the advice to choose one identity, either Chinese, or American, and Kai answers to himself: “I pick Y.M.C.A.” (213) It is where he develops a feeling of belonging and that he enjoys: “I wasn’t alone. I had never been so elevated in society, so unified with others, so accepted and true to the baseline of ethos of boyhood.” (256) Moreover, his physical progress earned him some confidence, and this was confirmed when he defeated some minor bullies in his street. His victory changed how he felt about himself: “I began to think that I could whip anyone, and I chased a couple of smaller kids who approached me by putting up my dukes and swearing in my ferociously hybrid street English. I felt like the King of England. The China Boy Bashers were put on hold.” (274) The fact that he acknowledges his language as hybrid, seems to be a sign of self acceptance, an acceptance of the special hybrid boy he was.

However his real victory and his real way out seemed to be the moment he fought his biggest bully, that he dreaded and was scared of for such a long time. This happens at the end of the novel. In the middle of the fight Kai gets knocked out but regains strength, gets angry for all the bullying, and his consciousness raises about what is done to him and how he will stop this, he decides to win:

I have the power of an oppressed minority – little guys who are lunch for asshole bullies who laugh at the pain of others. [...] I am pissed at myself for being in this situation, for being knocked down after beating my opponent on points. I am pissed on him for enjoying it so much. I am going to resolve it by beating the crap out of him. (313)

Moreover, as he experiences this important battle of his life, he connects to his Chinese ancestors as he describes:

I feel that God or Uncle Han or Hector or Tony has touched my shoulder and unlocked instinctive reflexes. [...] My fists are in another word, propelled by ancient spirits, supported by all the ancestors in the Ting Clan, whipped forward by Bannermen in blood-red armor beating their chests with glinting weapons of East Asian wars. (316-317)

The novel puts a great focus on the final battle with Big Willie, describing it over several pages emphasizing Kai’s triumph, when he wins for the first time the biggest bully in the street, and one of his problems in his life. His triumph is simultaneously a shock and he releases his emotions:

The shock of fighting Big Willie set in. I started to cry, my shoulders jerking, tears leaking from my eyes and running down my cheeks. I bent over, locking my arms onto my legs again, trembling, leaking fluids onto the pavement. (319)

This big triumph connects him to the idea of his mother, picturing the horror for her “Only Son” bruised and bloody, and the nonscholarly, unmusical, and brutish sport he “had adopted as a way of life”. (319) The same moment, is a moment of recovery for Kai, as he releases his painful emotions that were growing for so long within his mind, and body. Lee describes it: “Oh, Mah-mee, oh Mah-mee, I cried, crying for all of us, the forever dead, the lost, the injured, the pained, the recovery. “ (319) Remarkably, it seems that the whole experience strengthens Kai’s identity and connection to his ancestry, his roots, his mother, since he carries them within himself, and thinks of them in this very important event of his life.

Furthermore he gets acknowledged by Big Willie himself who says: “China Boy [...] where da *fuck* you learn ta box like dat? “ (13) and who thereby shows some signs of respect for the first time for Kai. Toussaint, Kai’s best friend adds: “...I wouldn’ be callin him no *China Boy* no mo, if’n I be you. He ain’t fo’ yo’ pickin-on no mo’.” (320) Toussaint’s remark that he would not be calling Kai China Boy anymore, implies that Kai gets free from the weak and weird stereotypical image that was attached to him by others.

Finally, Kai’s biggest triumph is actually that over Edna. Lee describes only the beginning. It is the last message from the novel. Kai decides to go to his doorbell, his door that Edna denied him entering for so long during day time. As always she positions herself in the same way rejecting Kai’s wishes: “It is not dinnertime, and you have no business ringing this bell.” Kai responds by saying: “I want go inside [...] I want drink water,” upon which Edna angrily says “Why, you little – “ (322) raising her hand to hit him. Lee carefully describes Kai’s stance:

I brought my guard up while presenting my profile, my head down. There was no ache, only the comfort of a familiar stance, the security of the now-routine geometry of arms presented for defense. One finger stuck out of my right fist, like a small flag. (322)

The description implies that Edna’s violence would not pain him anymore, that he has become immune to her heartless actions, that now his position to her was a familiar one, the stance of defense, of sport, nothing more. He has become strong, she has lost her meaning, he was not afraid of her anymore. Edna naturally shocked to see Kai stand up against her for the first time exclaims: “You – you would raise your fist – to – to your *mother*? “ (322) Kai keeps his guard up and determinedly answers: “You not my Mah-mee! [...] I ain’t fo’ yo’ pickin-on, no mo!” (322) Kai defines for

himself how he is to be treated, by disassociating Edna from her mother role and by taking the power from her, by defining her as non-mother. Interestingly he uses his friend Toussaint's words to make clear to Edna that she will not subjugate him anymore. These words are a referent to the language of his street, to the black community. By relating to the sport that was a part of him, to remembering and recalling memories of his real mother and his ancestry, and by using Toussaint's words as his own, Kai is able to define himself as a hybrid of the culture of China, the subculture of black America, and his personal way of life as a fighter.

6. Relationship and Results

The aim of my thesis was to analyze how through the clash of different cultures new hybrid identities are shaped and how this phenomenon is manifested in literature. The clash of cultures was based on the example of a global clash between the Orient and the Occident, or differently, between the Western and the Eastern world. I have based my analysis on American literature, that is, two novels that incorporate the Oriental and Occidental clash. Along to the Western culture, *A Map of Home* is centred on the Oriental Arab world, and *China Boy* obviously incorporates the Oriental Chinese culture.

In order to prove my thesis, I have included a theoretical part. First of all I included a chapter on culture, multiculturalism, race/ethnicity and racism. Second of all, I have provided some insights into what is understood under the expression 'clash of cultures' and I have connected it to postcolonial theory and the practices of representation as well as to the notion of hybridity. I have also explained the connection of the clash of cultures to postmodernism and globalization as an effect of increased cultural contact, as well as defined the contemporary era as one of a particular way of life by which the self-reflexive aspect of identity is addressed in literature, but also in culture. I have then especially focused on theory on identity and the notion of hybrid identities, also including Gloria Anzaldúa *Borderlands* as a prototypical example of what hybridity constitutes.

The second part of my thesis was the analysis of the two novels, where I have paid special attention to how cultures are represented in these books, after which I moved to the individual subject, the protagonist, to analyse his/her identity. I had to

consider the impacts these characters were getting from their mixed cultural surroundings, which led me to highlighting the cultural confusions, issues of belonging etc. in the next subchapter, and finally to the analysis of whether such hybrid identities could be defined, and what their solution is.

Both novels were to some extent autobiographical and the authors of the novels are actually people of a mixed background, who put their experience into their books. The difference between these two novels is most strikingly due to the settings of the described events, but also they differ in time. While both are contemporary novels, Jarrar's published in 2008, and Lee's 1991, and the stories are set in postmodernity, Jarrar describes the 1980s, and Lee the 1950s, and this affects the shape the stories take. With regard to how the stories are positioned, it is interesting to conclude that Jarrar describes the Orient, the Arab world as one of the main settings of the story, but also America as another setting. The characteristic of her story is movement and migration. Nidali moves around and in this way comes to the collision of cultures, although there is something inherently mixed in her identity from the beginning of her existence, namely that her parents are from different parts of the Arab world, who have also travelled to America together, where Nidali was born, but end up living in Kuwait, a country that is not part of their origin. Nidali's first memory of a home is Kuwait, and the Arab World.

In contrast to that, Lee sets his story in America in San Francisco, and there is no movement. Migration is only a story of Kai's parents who have come to America in the 1940s. Similarly, although the story is also about the Chinese culture, the story is told from the Chinese culture being in America, as apart of increased migration and multiculturalism. Therefore Kai is never in China. His connection to the Orient is his parents, and his ancestry and heritage. It is part of his culture since he is taught in the ways of the Chinese. Lee's story is then a multicultural story of America, set in America.

Both stories however include war as the context and background of the story that causes the movement, either of Nidali's whole family, or Kai's parents. So war can be defined as one of the reasons, sources of and equations to cultural clashes. The other view to that is simply globalization and facilitated possibilities of movement.

Furthermore what the novels have in common is that in their distinctive way and style both authors use other languages than English to indicate the presence of other cultures, be it Arabic, or Greek in Jarrar's book, or Chinese, and the colloquial

English of Kai's black neighbourhood in Lee's novel, or Spanish in both works, as the characters encounter other people in multicultural America. Exactly language is a marker of a cultural clash and of hybridity. If we recall Anzaldúa's Spanglish, this is exactly a marker of her cultural hybridity. Her example states:

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. (77)

Lee and Jarrar both use humour in their writing. Jarrar does so to be relatable, and entertaining, so that she connects to her readers, in order to fight the prejudice by diverging from the stereotypical images of the Orient as sternly and dangerously religious. Lee's intended audience were his children, and his intent was to leave a family story of the cultural background from their father. According to So:

Gus Lee's *China Boy* utilizes humor to mitigate the alien status of a Chinese-American boy while also incorporating him into a multicultural, largely male society. Lee's jokes establish the novel's main character, Kai Ting, as an American, even as they question the myth of unconditional American acceptance. (143)

West and East are largely contrasted in these books, and the difference is used to define one from another. However they may be a universal appeal to each cultural side. Jarrar interchangeably describes both the Oriental and Western culture through Nidali's life. She includes religion and tradition which seems to be a significant part to the identification of the Orient. But she also includes another perspective, one which is not so religion-bound. Jarrar contrasts Nidali's eccentric religious cousin with her family who is less religiously defined in comparison. For example Nidali's mother suggests that people believe different things, but that all are the same ocean of souls. It sends out the message that quite contrary to popular belief, some families are secular, and that there are people of mixed backgrounds in the Orient too.

Nidali is however influenced by Western thought, she loves American music, American actresses, Wonder Woman etc. Once when she is there she does not want to stand out, she tries hard to be part of the Culture. However, Jarrar does not hold back to criticize both Eastern, and Western aspects of each culture. This is for example evident when Nidali writes a letter to Saddam Hussein and criticizes the invasion of Kuwait, or states that America was safe but that she disliked that it was a country that attacked everyone.

In Lee's novel there are also different perspectives to the East and to the West. In the view of Kai's father China was unsuccessful, traditional, presented in a rather negative way, whereas America was the representative of modern age, the opposite of China. Through Uncle Shim, Kai's mother, and Kai himself, China is described in a positive tone, and is a culture that Kai keeps within himself. Interestingly however, despite the view of Kai's father, there is not much representation of white America, but only that of its multicultural character. The only white American character in the book is Edna. According to Malcolm:

...[T]he absence of any other white characters in the novel, in particular the absence of any positive white characters, implies that his stepmother is meant to be a representative white figure and that whiteness, power, and oppression go together. In contrast, the range of black characters makes it impossible to equate Blackness solely with either good or evil. (414).

Aspects of postmodernization, the process from modernity to postmodernity is especially notable in *China Boy*. There is a change in perception. Just as there is a dichotomy between the East and the West in general, there is the dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, China representing tradition, and America representing the modern way of life and its innovations. Kai's family seems to be on the threshold of this process.

Nidali lives in a more contemporary world and her life is already part of the consumer culture: the Orient imports from the West. Both novels include the notion of cinema as part of the American consumer culture. Postmodernism is also reflected in the novels with regard to how they function as texts; there is no fixed truth, but rather the different cultures and the collision between those offer multiple ideas about the world. In addition, the very aspect of hybrid identities reflects the postmodern fragmentation in characters, as well as their self-reflexivity as they wonder about their lives in connection to their cultural confusions. In addition, the novels include the recognition of cultural difference, since these books are also shaped within this context. Moreover there is the comparison between cultures and traditions in both novels, and therefore they are largely fitting to postmodern literature. The books reflect a disorder as understood from the postmodern view of globalization, culture, and literature.

In relation to postcolonial theory and whether the novels adopt a representation reminiscent of the explanation of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, that is the East as 'degenerate', and the West as its 'dominant other', it can be said that the authors make use of some stereotypical notions about the Oriental cultures, however

this is employed as a strategy, the final message is the opposite. From another point of view one could argue that the Western world is criticized, especially if we impersonate Edna as the representative of white America in Lee's novel. She is the oppressor, a negatively projected image. Similarly Jarrar refers to America as the attacker.

Nevertheless it cannot be concluded that they wholly subvert the picture and define the Western in a negative way, but rather there are different layers of representation where they include positive values from different perspectives to both the Orient and the Occident. This can be related to the authors being of mixed cultural backgrounds. They are in touch with the Eastern culture, and the Western culture, both is part of their experience and their identity, therefore their writing reflects positive and negative images to both sides of Cultures.

In connection to Gayatri Spivak and her question whether the subaltern can speak, (which she answers with a 'no' because the Westerners are unable to listen, to understand since their consciousness processes everything through their context of the world) it should be first questioned to what extent are for example Jarrar, and Lee subaltern? On the level of the characters, if we look at Nidali as suppressed because of her father had beaten her, or because she could not make decisions on her own without him knowing, this is hard to argue, because Nidali is a child, and her father is her parent. However, on the other side, Nidali is a rebellious child, and once she has the opportunity she brings her father to court. In this sense Nidali has a voice, in this sense she can speak. Similarly, Kai through the novel really cannot speak, he has language constraints, does not understand the world around him, and he is in a much worse situation than Nidali. Kai's character might really be subaltern. But even he finds his way out, and once he improves his physical skills and gains confidence, he speaks out against Edna. His ability to speak has been described as gaining an American identity as:

The combat through which Kai's body is recognized also enables him to vocalize its existence. Physical and verbal prowess develop interdependently, a relationship that establishes manhood and American identity concurrently by engaging in the process of overcoming the silence and weakness engendered by the ambivalence of ethnic confusion. (So 151)

However Gayatri has argued that the subaltern are immobile, and such Kai or even Nidali may have been at the beginning. But both come out stronger, both get a voice. Nidali goes to college away from her family by her own decision, and Kai raises his fist towards Edna and tells her she is not his mother. Kai also beats up Big Willie and

gets rid of all of his fear and all the other bullies. In this way they can both speak, but it is only after they become mobile. This means, that they needed to undergo a process from which they could come out and have a voice.

Similarly, Lee and Jarrar speak through their novels, but this is only after they have become part of the Western society, after they have established their place in the world. They speak of their past experiences, not the present. In the present their issues are resolved. So it can be said that authors address important issues and they speak for the subaltern they once were, but this is only possible because now they have some power, are mobile, and one could also say Western. However, their voice might be still more valuable in the representation since they are also Eastern; it is a part of them. In this way they have both an Eastern and Western perception of the world and might through their hybrid identities show exactly these two worlds in relation to one another most closely to reality, although reality and truth are relative terms.

Authors like them might actually provide a clearer picture, and in this they can partly speak for both through their Eastern and Western consciousness. However, they still need to be distinguished from someone who was only shaped by the Western world, or only by the Eastern experience. Overall their position is a positive contribution because they can put things in relation to one another, depending on their own experience and context; they can speak for those like them.

But most importantly what was relevant for this thesis is that their writings correspond to Bhabha's, as well as Anzaldúa's notion of hybridity. Both Nidali and Kai can be identified as having hybrid identities. Both are surrounded with intense multicultural contact. Kai is born Chinese, his neighbourhood is black, and in Y.M.C.A there are other cultures like as well, for example Jewish, Hispanic and similar. He is just one of many that belong to a different culture. America is in this way hybrid. But Kai is even more exposed to the diversity, because his stepmother is a white American who tries to destroy his Chinese identity. According to Shen: "...no resistance is tolerated and no punishment is too severe in the name of Americanization/normalization" (105) which is an interesting description in relation to how identities are defined. If one cannot be classified, or is too different, perhaps a hybrid, the same person is deviated from society, considered abnormal. It is how Edna perceives Kai's difference.

In Nidali's case this was not so extreme. She just did not want to feel estranged from what she knew, but also she knew she was different among the

Americans, and even in Egypt she feared she was the only half-Palestinian and she wished to fit in, just like Kai did. As Jarrar states: "From the very beginning, she has this feeling of being out of place, or being strange, or being a mix of things. Throughout the novel, she explores this mix, and tries to figure out a way for herself to be whole in the face of all this mixing." (Randa Jarrar: *Interviews/Zocalo*)

However both fight their way through life, and at the end identify themselves by the activities that they pursue. Kai does so literally through boxing, and Y.M.C.A where he finds group identification:

The Y.M.C.A., a culture with its own tenets, languages, citizens, and government, allows him to be both Chinese and American: it stresses American values such as "good citizenship," "fair play," and "self reliance," while also appreciating individuality, history, and the diversity of its members. (So 145)

At the end it is clear that he identifies as Chinese, as a fighter which gives him some of the American identity, and finally even as black and Jewish, as he starts speaking in the way his friends do. Kai accepts his hybridity; he makes use of all the cultures.

Nidali finds her identity in school, as she defines, it is the only constant in her life, but also accepts that home becomes something else to her, she finds it within herself, and even leaves her parents house for education, understanding that she does not need to be defined by borders. Both Nidali, and Kai come out stronger and one can say that both are enriched through their hybridity, they make new sense out of it. Anzaldúa describes the state of hybridity as an opportunity to choose different possibilities:

At some point, on our way to our new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and (100) eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage from the dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react. (100-101)

In addition the message that comes from both Jarrar and Lee through their novels is that the outcome of a hybrid culture is positive for them. It enables them to cross borders in themselves and in the real world. And often within the book this difference is understood as special by the characters themselves. Difference is sometimes stressed in literature that deals with hybridity. For example: "I am visible – see this Indian face – yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist. They'd like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven't, we haven't". (Anzaldúa 108) This kind of describing implies that

difference is, and will be there among others, even if they pursue the idea of one homogenous culture.

Now only the question remains whether difference is indirectly celebrated in the novels, whether this could be a critique of radical multiculturalism? I believe not, since clearly both Nidali, and especially Kai struggle to fight stereotypes about themselves, and therefore hybridity also implies a hard way of life in today's society where people still classify one another, either according to ethnicity, race, nation or geographical region, and therefore culture. Exactly the grouping of people is problematic and provides for issues between members of society, as within the group, so outside of it.

Jarrar's and Lee's book are only two of the instances that deal with hybridity among an increasing literature, but the message overall is important since the books show that cultures are not pure, they are not obtained equally, and just as postcolonial theory sees it, cultures are not static. Likewise identities are not fixed and not static, but always in motion. The message of the hybrid is that if people start to understand it, and understand the concepts of identity, and how cultures behave, that all came into existence from different influences anyway, and that all are inherently hybrid, that therefore issues of racism, stereotyping and discrimination may be transformed, changed, or even stopped if it is realized that all is hybrid. But besides that, maybe the time has come for the hybrid to be recognized as an identification in wider circles that also others can relate to since the current conditions in the world are perhaps in the process of creating more and more hybrid identities.

Finally that through the clash of different cultures new hybrid identities are shaped is shown by the example of the two analyzed novels, which are autobiographical and which therefore speak for a true experience. That this is becoming part of literary texts is evident from the theory on hybridity which has been identified already several years ago, and continues to fill cultural texts.

Conclusion

My thesis was built on a theoretical part on culture, the clash of cultures, and identity, by which especially relevance to postmodernism and postcolonialism was given. By means of two novels I tried to show how their topics that were based on belonging, and change of home actually incorporated the essence of the hybrid, be it culturally in a broader sense, or on the individual level. I tried to show that stereotypes, and race or ethnicity are interconnected aspects of various cultures due to the assumption that cultures and identities are fixed, although they are reality only constructed. Analyzing the hybrid is a way out of this. There should be increasing awareness of the importance of such literary texts and their purpose. It is to move the world, to change the meaning of our conceptions, and it is a way to better the world if the knowledge is used fairly and with good intentions. As Anzaldúa states: “Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. ‘Knowing’ is painful because after ‘it’ happens I can’t stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before. (Anzaldúa 70) Therefore knowledge implies change and progress. Authors inspire and share what they have found and learned in their lives and this way benefit society. They also spread the message that “the experiences that you have are worth being told and written about” (232) especially because everybody is in a way different and has different experiences. Anzaldúa explains:

People pass as though they were average or normal; (236) however, everybody is different. There is no such thing as normal or average. And your culture says: “That is reality!” Women are this way, men are this way. And you start seeing behind that reality. You see the cracks and realize that there are other realities. Women can be this or that, whites can be this or that. (237)

Finally, my thesis is only a small portion of what could be analyzed with regard to the state of a hybrid identity. There are processes in the creation of the hybrid, and one is not aware of it as it happens. Some circumstances are given, but others get created, and it is a process of complex social interaction. At the end, one is anyway, constantly in remaking of oneself, and one way is by means of learning and taking from the various cultural effects at hand. I agree with Anzaldúa that the hybrid will belong to the future:

Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos – that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the way we behave – *la mestiza* creates a new consciousness. (102)

Appendix

From Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*¹⁰ (216-217)

To live in the Borderlands means you

are neither *hispana india negra espanola*
*ni gabacha*¹¹, *eres mestiza, mulata*, half-breed
caught in the crossfire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back
not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing

that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,
is no longer speaking to you,
that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*¹²,
that denying the Anglo inside you
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

Cuando vives en la frontera

people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
you're a *burra*¹³, *buey*¹⁴, scapegoat,
forerunner of a new race,
half and half – both woman and man, neither –
a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to

put *chile* in the borscht,
eat whole wheat *tortillas*,

¹⁰ Translated word taken from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* on page 217.

¹¹ *gabacha* - a Chicano term for a white woman

¹² *rajetas* - literally, "split", that is, having betrayed your word

¹³ *burra* - donkey

¹⁴ *buey* - oxen

speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;
 be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;

Living in Borderlands means you fight hard to
 resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,
 the pull of the gun barrel,
 the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands
 you are the battleground
 where enemies are kin to each other;
 you are at home, a stranger,
 the border disputes have been settled
 the volley of shots have shattered the truce
 you are wounded, lost in action
 dead, fighting back;

To live in the Borderlands means
 the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off
 your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart
 pound you pinch you roll you out
 smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive in the Borderlands
 you must live *sin fronteras*¹⁵
 be a crossroads.

¹⁵ *sin fronteras* - without borders

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Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit befasst sich mit der Konstruktion von Identitäten in multikulturellen Kontexten und plädiert für eine Bildung von neuen hybriden Identitäten die sich als Folge von starken Einflüssen aus zwei oder mehr kollidierenden Kulturen ergeben. Darüber hinaus wird die Bedeutung der Literatur die auf Fragen der Hybridität spiegelt hervorgehoben, da somit andere Implikationen in der Wissenswelt produziert werden. Diese Idee basiert auf dem globalen Kampf der Kulturen zwischen Orient und Okzident, oder mit anderen Worten, zwischen den westlichen und östlichen Gesellschaften. Da die westliche Kultur in sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Diskursen oft als dominant wahrgenommen und bezeichnet wird, wurden amerikanische literarische Texte für die Analyse gewählt da die amerikanische Kultur auch eindeutig als westlich verstanden wird. Daher scheint als interessant die Darstellung von den verschiedenen Kulturen aus der Sicht dieser Texte zu untersuchen.

Im Einzelnen sind dies zwei Romane: *A Map of Home* von Randa Jarrar und *China Boy* von Gus Lee, die eine Geschichte von verschiedenen und zu einander gegenstellenden Kulturen erzählen. Erstere stellt die arabische Orientale Welt vor, während zur gleichen Zeit die Sichten der Westlichen Welt mit inkorporiert werden. Letztere ist über die Kultur von dem anderen Teil der orientalischen Welt, nämlich China, die das Leben eines chinesischen Jungen im multikulturellen Amerika beschreibt. Beide Bücher sind zeitgenössische literarische Werke, die das postmoderne Leben widerspiegeln. Für die Analyse von Hybriden Identitäten und die Darstellung der gegensätzlichen Kulturen ist die postkoloniale Theorie von Edward Said, Homi Bhabha und Gayatri Spivak aufgenommen wurden, sowie Gloria Anzaldúa's berühmtes Buch *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* als Beispiel eines Werkes das den Zustand von Hybridität, einen Raum widersprüchlicher Grenzen, wo Kulturen aufeinander prallen und neue hybride Identitäten entstehen, hervorgebracht worden. Interessanterweise haben die Autoren selbst einen anderen kulturellen Hintergrund und setzten ihre Erfahrungen mit in ihr autobiographisches Buch. Daher wird argumentiert, dass die Darstellung von Kulturen, von Autoren die sich sowohl mit den orientalischen als auch den westlichen Lebensweisen auskennen dargestellt wird. Ihre Darstellung umfasst sowohl positive als auch negative Aspekte jedes Kulturraumes, vor allem aber beweisen sie die

Existenz von hybriden Identitäten und unterstützen die These dass Identitäten nicht fixiert sind, aber immer im Übergang geformt von den externen Einflüssen der multikulturellen Umgebung. Daher ist es auch relevant die Wichtigkeit dieser Werke hervorzuheben da ihre Veröffentlichungen auf die Wahrnehmungen der östlichen und westlichen Gesellschaften beeinflussend wirken können, im Sinne dass sie gegen Vorurteile sprechen. Vor allem aber implizieren solche Werke eine metaphorische Streichung der Grenzen zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen, denn jede Kultur ist schon in sich selbst heterogen, und von hybriden entstanden.

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