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**The Representation of Muslim Youth in Na'ima B.
Robert's *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014)**

*A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirement of a Master
degree in English Literature and Civilization*

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Dedication

I dedicate this modest work to my family :

Father and Mother, my sisters Hayat, Amel, Ines and brother Yacine.

This research is dedicated first and foremost to my wonderful parents, who have raised me to be the person who I am now. I am so grateful because you have been with me in every step on the way through the good as well as the bad times, thank you for all the unconditional love and guidance, I love you.

*To my whole family uncles, antes, cousins and best friends for their understanding and encouragement throughout all my years of study. I sincerely thank them for their prayers and support that helped me to surmount the hardship of my whole academic years. For all my friends, my classmates, and all the people I know. Last but not least ,this work is specially dedicate to very special persons in my life, peace be upon them my Grandfather from my father's side **ABDELKADER Guendouz**, and the source of tenderness my Grandmother from my mother's side **ZINEB Guendouz**.*

Dalal

Dedication

To my beloved parents, family, friends and classmates.

Salah eddine

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proofreading our work, and all other warriors in this noble mission.*

Thank you all

Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyze Na'ima B. Robert's novel entitled *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014) in order to explore the author's portrayal of Muslim youth's life, struggles and concerns in contemporary Britain. Furthermore, this work represents a theoretical as well as a historical account for the presence of Islam in Britain. It also examines the Islamic fiction as a remarkable literary genre through which many Muslim writers tend to explore the different perspectives of the Muslim youth's perception as an effective part of the contemporary British society. The method of studying the novel is achieved through psychological and thematic analysis, relying on the writer's accurate descriptive method that vividly depicts the hopes, fears, dreams and struggles of the Muslim community living in a western country. Especially that, Muslim youth prove to play an essential role as British citizens despite the numerous difficulties they face every day to keep consistent bound with their faith. Some extremely succeed to make a balance and keep their identity while others fail.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
Table of Contents	VII
List of Acronyms.....	V
General Introduction.....	01
 Chapter One: Islamic fiction in Britain	
1.1 Introduction.....	07
I. Muslims in Britain	
1.2 The Muslim presence in Britain –Historical background.....	07
1.3 Muslims in Britain	10
1.3.1 Muslim migrant in Britain.....	10
1.3.2 Local converts.....	14
1.4 Conversion.....	15
1.4.1 Conversion.....	15
1.4.2 Reasons behind British conversion.....	17
1.4.3 The Western Attitude towards Muslims Culture.....	18
1.5 Muslim youth in Britain.....	20
1.5.1 Muslim Youth in Britain.....	20

1.5.2	Obstacles facing Muslim Youth.....	21
1.5.3	Muslim Youth Organizations.....	22
II. Islamic Fiction in Britain		
1.6	Introducing Islamic Fiction.....	23
1.6.1	Definition of Islamic fiction.....	25
1.6.2	Historical background of Islamic Fiction	26
1.7	Contemporary British Muslim Fiction Writers.....	27
1.7.1	Abdoulela Leila.....	29
1.7.2	Fadia Faqir.....	30
1.7.3	Tahmima Anam.....	31
1.7.4	Na`ima B. Robert.....	32
1.8	Representation of Islam through the British Media	34
1.9	Na`ima B.Robert Representation of Islam	36
1.10	Conclusion.....	37
Chapter two: Islamic aspects in <i>She Wore Red Trainers</i> (2014)		
2.1	Introduction	41
2.2	Novel Synopsis	41
2.3	The Main Young Characters.....	46
2.3.1	Ali Jordan	46
2.3.2	Amirah Wyatt	47
2.3.3	Zayd Wyatt	48

2.3.4 Rania	48
2.3.4 Usamah.....	49
2.4 Representation of Islamic Aspects in <i>She Wore Red Trainers</i>	49
2.4.1 Hardships as Ordeals of Muslim Characters.....	49
2.4.2 Introducing Islamic Culture to Western Readers	51
2.4.3 Qur'an and Prophetic Sayings.....	53
2.4.4 Inclusion of Muslim Public Figures, Clothes, and Terminology.....	54
2.5 Mirroring Muslim Youth's struggle	56
2.5.1 Religious Rules and contemporary British Society	57
2.5.2 Muslim Youth and Family	60
2.6 Muslim and Non-Muslim Relationships.....	63
2.7 The Contributions of Muslim Youth in the British Society	65
2.8 Conclusion	67
General conclusion	68
Bibliography.....	71

List of Acronyms

ELIF: English Language Islamic Fiction

FOSIS: Federation of Student Islamic Societies

IWA: Islamic Writers Alliance

MA: Master of Arts

MP: Member of Parliament

UK: United Kingdom

MYL UK: Muslim Youth League United Kingdom

YA: Young Adult

YMYK: Young Muslim United Kingdom

YMO: Young Muslim Organization

General introduction

General Introduction

General Introduction

Britain, as Ismail Patel once stated, has “a Muslim community that is able to contribute to a greater extent in many spheres of society, from politics to sport, and academia to business” (49). For aeons upon aeons, an undeniable and long chain has been bridging the Muslim world to the European one with Britain on the top of the list. Traders, travelers, job seekers, and even slaves have all contributed to building a link with the British lands in a way or another, in addition to the original British citizens who embraced Islam. Mainly the British lands are covered with a huge mass of Muslims most of whom are very young.

The transformation of the British society from one race to multi races with different backgrounds is what stimulates such a change in the contemporary British novel. Furthermore, Orientalist discourse can explain most of the more recent representations of Islam and appearances of Islam in English literature (Said 1978; Kahf 1999).

Britain grasps an important young Muslim population who contribute events in building the British society by playing effective roles among their environment whether in schools, charitable works, sports, and many other fields. Comparatively, the maiden age of British Muslims was marked as 25 five years while the one of the general population was 40 years (Ali 27). Thus, young Muslims are proved to be an undeniable vein in the British body. For these reasons, the representation of the British Muslim youth has become more present in many forms of human expression ranging from media to literature in both of its factual and fictitious forms.

In the world of fiction, a myriad of works have fulfillment ranging from texts by non-Muslim authors in their imaginative works about the Islamic world to a wide library of fictitious pieces written and published by Muslim hands. Mainly, they produce analyze, yet reflective texts for the purpose of drawing a close image about Muslims and their lives,

General Introduction

adventures, as well as challenges as living in a diversity of European settings, especially Britain. This literary genre is known as (EIF) English Islamic Fiction and it is written for the purpose of reflecting the lives of Muslims through the English language. Moreover, Islamic fiction “blends history and literary imagination to convey a message and present a community” (Riaz and Fair 140). Noteworthy, Na’ima B. Robert is one of the contemporary British Muslim fiction writers who has produced a rich shelf of imaginative pieces where she puts Muslims as a main interest and reflection. Mostly, this female author focuses on young Muslim Adults as they form the main theme in most of her novels, especially the one entitled *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014).

The rationality behind this research lies in its effectiveness to present the audience and readers to a literary genre that could be described as recent. Moreover, it proves the effectiveness of Islamic fiction, *She Wore Red Trainers* in this case, in reflecting the life of young Muslims through a text that is imaginative, yet reflective and effective in forming the reader’s perception of Islam and Muslims as a part of Britain through a Muslim hand and pen. Last but not least, the work brings into light an author and a literary genre that is unknown to the vast majority of the audience despite their rich, meaningful, as well as up to date creative texts.

This research is designed to focus on Robert’s novel *She Wore Red Trainers* by concentrating on the author’s reflections on the theme of Muslim youth as a part of the 2014 contemporary British society. The main objective of the study is to analyze the different events in the novel’s plot including youth’s life, challenges, adventures especially their psychological status as living in a society that is not based on the same norms and religious principles. Thus, the main focus of the study lies in the representation of Muslim youth and any social, familial, religious, emotional, and other factors that might affect their lives as contemporary British citizens as represented by a Muslim imaginative literary piece.

General Introduction

The main problematic of this research is derived from a need to analyse Robert's novel *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014) by focusing on the theme of Muslim youth and their representation through the author's perspective and lenses. Specifically, this research attempts to focus on the daily challenges that young Muslims experience as well as the variety of factors that contribute to determine their interests and style of life in a country and society that do not practice Islam religion. For aforementioned reasons, the question that manifests itself is:

- How are the British Muslim youth represented in *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014)?

This question triggers other sub-questions:

1. What is Islamic fiction in Britain?
2. What was the author's aim behind choosing the novel's events, characters, and plot?

We might set as hypotheses; the fact that Muslim youth are capable of sharing a life that is joyful, full of hope as well as crucial and full of struggles. *She Wore Red Trainer* (2014) might provide us a clear image of the Islamic life by means of effective reflections on the Islamic aspects in the novel .Another hypothesis that seems to be relevant to the questions raised above is the fact that it can prove the efficacy of artistic literary text of Islamic fiction as revealing the truth about the life of Muslims as British citizens. As well as presenting the efforts done by the authors of such a genre to fight back the Western stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. Finally, it can highlight to us the impact of displacement on cultural dislocation.

The present research has been designed to focus on the representation of Muslim youth in the novel of *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014). Chiefly, the work has been built upon exploratory bases as it seeks to analyze the chosen novel and gain a clear understanding of its events, plot, and characters. For all of that, a qualitative research is to be conducted as to fit

General Introduction

the research's underlined objectives which lie mostly on analysing and describing the theme of Muslim youth.

On the level of literary theories, a psychoanalytical study is to be applied as to dive into young Muslims as principal characters in the novel. This theory has been chosen for the reason of interpreting the characters' daily psychological challenges. Mainly, it studies the ongoing struggles of ego and superego as they fight to keep a certain balance between their hearts' desires and religious principles. Moreover, this literary approach fits the work's aim in terms of reflecting Muslim youth's daily events as passionate souls who have to face life with its sweet and bitter moments all at once. Additionally, an ethnic, as well as a cultural study, are to be applied for a better fulfillment and an accurate analysis of the novel because they provide a deep view in the representation of Muslim youth as a part of the British society. Consequently, the novel's analysis is meant to cover a set of psychological, ethnic, as well as cultural and social facets.

Likewise, the present work will be divided into two chapters: the first one comes as theoretical vision on historical presence of Islam in Britain, and Islamic fiction as literary genre .as well as introducing some British Muslim Islamic fiction writers to give a clear image of the aim behind this recent literary genre .while the practical chapter contains an examination of the Islamic aspects and Muslim youth's life in *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014).analysing the plot, characters and crucial events .

Chapter One: Islamic Fiction in Britain

1.1 Introduction

1.2 The Muslim presence in Britain –Historical background

1.3 Muslims in Britain

1.3.1 Muslim migrant in Britain

1.3.2 Local converts

1.4 Conversion

1.4.1 Conversion

1.4.2 Reasons behind British conversion

1.4.3 The Western attitude towards Muslims culture

1.5 Muslim Youth in Britain

1.5.1 Muslim Youth in Britain

1.5.2 Obstacles facing Muslim Youth

1.5.3 Muslim Youth Organizations

1.6 Introducing Islamic Fiction

1.6.1 Definition of Islamic fiction

1.6.2 Historical background of Islamic Fiction

1.7 Contemporary British Muslim Fiction Writers

1.7.1 Abdouela Leila

1.7.2 Fadia Faqir

1.7.3 Tahmima Anam

1.7.4 Naiima B. Robert

1.8 Representation of Islam through the British Media

1.9 Naiima B Robert Representation of Islam

1.10 Conclusion

Chapter One

Islamic Fiction in Britain

1.1.Introduction

Recently, Islam is playing a major part in the British society. Starting with Muslim migrant to local native citizens who converted to Islam due to many social, political and psychological reasons. Currently, Muslims came to be noticed in every British city. Despite the fact that, Muslims were and still facing numerous difficulties and challenges. Yet, they tend to create their own identity that based on religious background and British sense of belonging. As result, dozens of literary works came to existence. Productions of Muslim pens that tend to reflect Islam and those who embraced the faith. Likewise, fiction written in English is one of the genres through which Muslim writers tend to echo the lives, concerns, interests and fears of British Muslims focusing on specific themes.

This chapter represents a historical background of Muslim communities in Uk and Islam as a part of contemporary Britain. It includes concepts of conversion, Muslim youth. In addition, it tackles in brief the representation of Islam in both literature and media. Then, the concept of Islamic fiction is to be introduced with the main themes and principles. Finally, a sample of contemporary British Muslim fiction writers is presented.

1.2.The Muslim Presence in Britain – Historical Background

Islam in the United Kingdom (UK) is not a new phenomenon. It dates back to more than one hundred years and has deep roots in the British history. However, there is little awareness among today's population that Muslims are not foreigners in British society. They influenced the growth of Britain and contributed to a great extent to the country's growth and reconstruction of after World War II.

Muslims form 4.8% of the population in England and Wales. The population has increased from 1.55 million in 2001 to 2.71 million in 2011. There are 77,000 in Scotland and 3,800 in Northern Ireland. Moreover, the Muslim population is larger than all other non-Christian faith groups put together and 47% of Muslims are born in UK (the Muslim Council of Britain p16)

The early interactions between the British and Muslims root back to the eighth century and the trade links between Islam, Spain and Portugal. Christian territories gradually came to be influenced by Islam in the tenth century and subsequently the expanding of Muslims as groups and sometimes as a minority. Intermarriages took place between Muslims and non-Muslim Britons during the crusades. In addition, more and more Muslims arrived at England's shores; they were mainly North Africans and Turks. As a result of British colonization of Muslim territories in the 1800s, so many Africans, South Asians and Middle Easterners resided in Britain (Hellyer 148). They settled down in the British sphere living in towns and villages and throughout the years they came to be part of the immigrant force (Halliday). Moreover, they established the first Islamic schools and first mosques and printed the first British Muslim–Arabic newspaper in West Europe *Al salam* from the Nur Al salam mosque (Sophie Gilliat 39) and the first mosque created in the United Kingdom of Britain was *Masjed Abu harairah* in Cardiff in the year 1860.

It is worth recalling that the British protectorates during the 'age of empire' entailed an extensive period of social and political contact between Britain and territories with large Muslim populations," (Hopkins 4). This brought up a pattern of Muslim settlement in Britain. Moreover, after the WWII, Britain was almost devastated and witnessed a sharp shortage of labor because of the deaths and the immigration of its citizens. In order to heal and stabilize the economy, the British government encouraged migration and jobs advertisements in its

former colonies were the solution. Mainly the Indians subcontinent and Carribean. Later on, the 1948 legislations made it easier and changed the status of migrants into citizens of UK and stated their rights, introducing them to new economic and social advantages (Hasen 26)

A sizeable Muslim presence in Britain stems back over 300 years when the East India Company recruited sailors from the Indian subcontinent known as Lascars. Settlements of sailors were to be found around British ports. In the 18th and 19th Centuries there were a number of converts to Islam amongst the English upper classes, including Edward Montague, son of the ambassador to Turkey. Other notable conversions included Peter Lyle, the Admiral of the Tripolitanian Corsair Fleet during Nelson's nineteenth century Battle of the Nile, and Hedley Churchward, the first recorded British Muslim to perform Hajj. (Batol al toma, Ruqaihabell 21)

The settlement of Muslims in Britain served as bridge for the upcoming waves of migration "mass migration". The pioneers arriving in Bradford and Birmingham were former seamen who moved inward from port cities that had been their point of entry to Britain (Hopkins). The early arriving groups were not only south Asians but also of Yemeni and other Middle Eastern backgrounds. Moreover, the imperial history accounts to a large extent to for the huge diversity of the British Muslim populations. Subsequently, the British Muslim presence has been augmented through the arrival of new migrant groups, such as from Eastern Europe and Somalia.

During the nineteenth century, many British people converted to Islam. The earliest British convert was solicitor William Henry Quilliam¹ who was directly linked to the emergence and establishment of the Muslim community in Liverpool. Quilliam helped in building up the mosque, Islamic center and orphan age, where Christian orphans were raised as Muslims (Hellyer 144-148). During this period of time, the number of Muslims was still

¹ William Henry Quilliam had been responsible for the spread of Islam in England in the Victorian era. He helped to convert about 600 people. They included the wealthy landowner, Lord Stanley of Alderley, in Cheshire, the first Muslim peer in the House of Lords. This also proved controversial.

small. However, they grew and had a great number of supporters through local converts who were well known in their communities.

The golden age of Muslims migration is between 1940 and 1960. Waves from east Africa and south Asia dominated the immigration to Britain. Moreover, the Arab migration expanded in great way during the 1970s and the 1980s from North Africa and it is estimated that half a million people of Arab descent were living in UK (Halliday and Touris 1-5).

From the 1970s onwards, there have been waves of political refugees from places such as Somalia, Iran, Bosnia Kosovo, Afghanistan and some Arab states, as result of political upheavals in these countries (Zeberi 20).

1.3. Muslims in Britain

Nowadays, Britain is full of Muslims from all around the world (the whole “metropolis”² of Europe, Africa, America, and Asia). Britain has experienced many episodes of immigration over the centuries. one of those immigrants are the Muslims .They immigrated for the purpose of economic necessity or economic prosperity .there are two kinds of Muslims in United Kingdom .The 1st is the immigrants who came from North Africa ,Turkey ,Pakistan ,India and all around the world .The 2nd is the purely British converted to Islam .

1.3.1 Muslim Migrants in Britain

In the 19th century, Muslim rulers were supported to send their students abroad for further studies .Since then, the presence of Muslim migrants lasted till today in the European countries including Britain.

² Metropolis according to Cambridge Dictionary means a very large city, often the most important city in a large area or country.

The early waves of Muslim migrants were from North Africa, Turkey, Pakistan and India. They were workers who fled to Britain due to an economic necessity. They were with no educational background which is the reason why they did not think about having a European Islam; as well as they were generally poor.

After the 2nd world war, that might be considered as the 2nd wave. There was another status of Muslim migrants by the new comers named 'Guest workers'. They fled to Britain for economic prosperity which means that Muslim parents had no more power to manage the needs of their family, especially their children and this case warrants. Muslim communities played an important role in the society as they contributed to the economic and social welfare of Britain as whole.

Britain, in the beginning of the century, had small Muslim communities across the port areas such as Cardiff, Tyneside, Liverpool where the 1st Mosque was built by Abdulla Qwilliam in 1889 and finally London. In the depression times of the world war one and world war two a huge number of Somali, Yemni and Bengali seamen had been marooned by their ships. In the late 1950s Britain's major migrants were from Pakistan and India. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s Britain saw an explosion of Asians from East Africa, about 50000 fled to Britain among whom was an important percentage of Ismailis³. In the 1970s and 1980s the Bangladeshis were the 1st group to increase rapidly in terms of population. They were from the three main South Asian groups, the Pakistanis and Indians. In that time, about half of Asia was settling in Britain.

³ According to Reverso Dictionary a Shiah sect whose adherents believe that Ismail, son of the sixth imam, was the rightful seventh imam

The table below will explain more in percentage:

South Asian groups	Indians	Pakistanis	Bangladeshis
Ethnic minority population	26%	16%	06%
Born in Britain	47%	57%	47%

Adding to the Muslims of South Asian origin in Britain, there are Somalis and Arabs. Unfortunately, their numbers are complicated to figure out, by the fact that place of birth is taking account; those who were born to members of the British forces serving in Egypt and Libya before they withdrawal from those countries. There is no relationship between children born there and those with Muslim identity.

Muslims often praise the granted religious freedom in Britain, and they mostly show a sense of pride for being a part of that nation; they are chiefly free to practice their religion publicly (Moosavi "The Imagining of Muslim Converts" 170). Additionally, Muslims do not suffer from racism as in other European countries because Britain has:

A Muslim community that is able to contribute to a greater extent in many spheres of society, from politics to sport, and academia to business; that has fostered a resultant confidence and reliance of one upon the other, although there are still problems with prejudice and discrimination, on the rise since September the 11th and the London bombings. (Patel 49)

This is probably what makes Britain one of the most chosen directions for Muslims, despite their differences in matters of mingling within the British society.

In order to investigate in Britain, Muslims fall into four categories .firstly, Muslims who have little sensitivity towards religion; they are particularly seen as “cultural Muslims” who form the largest category (Ramadan 46). Secondly, the group of British Muslims who are bond to the Islamic teachings, without been noted by their appearance from the whole society. Thirdly, Muslims who contribute to aid the society and enhance a positive impression of Islam, they are traditional Muslims in terms of clothing and practice of religion. Last but not least, the category of Muslims who avoid contributing in any practice with the society, they forbid any interaction with non-Muslims, which results in given a negative image of Islam in media. As a result, this category tends to involve Muslims in social, political and economic problem matters.

From the mid-1980s British Muslims became more effectively organized in their dealings with local government and other areas of public life. As they gained in confidence and experience, they broadened their agendas to address issues ranging from gaining recognition of Muslim family law to political representation. Much of the early organizational machinery was inherited from the societies to which Muslim migrants originally belonged, but soon new organizations emerged. Though, Sophie Gilliat-Ray portrays the economic and social status of Muslims in Britain as going through “structural and social difficulties” (129).Notably, Muslims are more likely to face shortage in matters of housing, education, and work chances. In this regard, politicians and other groups link the mentioned problems to the Muslims” desire of segregation (Gilliat-Ray “Muslim in Britain”129), especially immigrant ones.

In a report Prof David Voas, director of the Institute for Social and Economic Research based at Essex University, said that “Even if immigration stopped tomorrow, it is clear that in due course by the middle of this century or a bit later, 10 per cent of the population of Britain will be of Muslim heritage.”

1.3.2 Local Converts

Muslims from a long time ago took an integral part in the society of Britain. Purely British Muslims from the beginning had a complicated life, especially while talking about their identity and how to struggle to keep their practice of religion safe. They have to follow the circle of faith because everything surrounding is just demonic.

Talking about Muslims in Britain, unconsciously, the image of the immigrants from Muslim and Arab countries comes to one’s mind. Nevertheless, there are purely British citizens converted to Islam.

In order to examine converts to Islam, there is a need to distinguish between two very different types of converts. On one hand, the converts of convenience, is the person who convert to Islam purely in order to facilitate the marriage to a Muslim partner and thereafter shows a bit or no interest in practicing the religion .This type will not be identified as Muslim and usually does not practice religion .On the other hand , the converts of conviction, converts who chose the Islamic religion in response to some other intellectual or emotional reasons, may become very meticulous in their belief of Islamic teachings and will self identify as Muslim. Regarding to the two previous types of converts, an acknowledge reveals that there are a “hidden” Muslims, those are people who converted but, over time for various reasons have disengaged with not only the local Muslim community but also with convert groups.

This 'hidden' Muslims have no contact with other Muslims, even if they may continue to practice Islam.

1.4.1 Conversion

The term convert/revert is used to define a person who had decided to make a declaration of faith, called "shahada", and attempts to live as a practicing Muslim. This means that the converts believe in one God (monotheism) and that prophet Mohamed (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is Allah's messenger. According to the Oxford dictionary 'to convert' means 'to change one's religious faith and belief and the word to revert means to return to the previous state or condition.

Speaking about conversion to Islam by Europeans, we find that Britain is one of the European countries that witnesses great numbers of converts to Islam about 80.000(Brice 10-11).Half of the British Muslims had been born in UK.(Zeberi 23).The 1990s were marked by great events that changed the international scene such as the Gulf war and the Bosnian and Kosovan and the Chechnyan crisis. These events contributed to a great extent to increase a worldwide consciousness and reimagining of Islam as a global religion. In addition, the increasing numbers are related to "the increase of exposure that Islam has had since 9/11 which occasionally leads people to adopting Islam teachings"(Moosavi chapter thirteen).

The 2001 events made Islam an urging issue to know about which drove huge waves of non Muslims to choose Islam and seek further information about the faith through searching and questioning. Brice argues that:

The increase in the profile of Islam and greater visibility of Muslims in daily life meant that awareness of Islam amongst non-Muslims has increased and opportunities for contact between Muslims and non-Muslims has also increased. Raised awareness and increased contact are seen as two major contributing factors contributing to conversion. (10)

The legacy of British converts is rich full of names who participated to a great extent to strengthen Islam presence in Britain among which William Henry Quilliam .In this vein, *Batol al toma and Ruqaihabell argue:*

Perhaps the most interesting conversion recorded is that of William Henry Quilliam, an industrious, resourceful Liverpool solicitor, a Freemason and Zionist, who embraced Islam in 1887, followed by his mother and his sons. Quilliam graduated as an Alim (religious scholar) from the Qarawiyyin University at Fez and inaugurated the Liverpool Muslim Institute.(21)

Despite of the hostile opposition to his efforts and ridicule in media, the number of converts attracted to his institution continued to grow. It is from there, the weekly publication of *The Crescent* was produced .Establishing schools for boys and girls alongside with classes available to the whole community, Quilliam was known as a deeply compassionate man with a deep sense of social justice ,' who provided help and assistance to Liverpool's poor and needy. The Madina Children's Home where illegitimate and abandoned children were cared for until they fostered by Muslim families is illustrative of this '(qtd.in *between isolation and integration "a report on the Muslim convert in Liecester p22)*

Part of Quilliam's legacy for British Muslims is his great success in the propagation of Islam helping to secure 250 conversions and his active involvement in opposing the British foreign policy that was considered as "un-British". Due to his devotion, great and remarkable efforts to ingrain Islam in Britain, Quilliam earned the title of Sheikh Ul-Islam which was conferred upon him by the Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid II which was endorsed by the Shah of Persia, the King of Afghanistan and the Emir of Morocco with the wholehearted approval of Queen Victoria. He continued his efforts until the last moments of his life in London in 1933.

Converts are constantly eager to know more details about Islam. Consequently, Muslims by birth find the convert's questions difficult and confusing. In this vein, Muslims by birth think that people who come from outside are more inquisitive about Islam because

they ask hard questions that a Muslim by birth rarely asks or eager to know about. The reason may lie in the fact that some, if not most Muslims by birth, follow cultural aspects rather than religious ones. A matter that takes them through a journey of discoveries.

In any Western community, converts often serve as interaction moderators within their societies:

Conversion to Islam can be seen as a challenge to a binary view of the world. In a British context, converts have the potential to adopt the role of 'bridge builders' straddling Western and Islamic cultures thereby aiding non-Muslims to understand more about Islam and born Muslims to have a greater comprehension of non-Muslims and non-Muslim society. Converts may also be able to assist the British to stop seeing Islam as a threat.(qtd.in between isolation and integration "a report on the Muslim convert in Liecester p28)

Converts try to have role of cultural mediators between Western Muslims with immigrant background and non-Muslim Westerners. These Western Muslim converts facilitate the idea of accepting Islam and Muslim identity in the minds of both non-Muslim Westerners as well as Western Muslims of immigrant backgrounds. Moreover, the British converts fight permanently to show the possible combination of Islam and their 'Britishness' in a united "British Muslim identity

1.4.2 Reasons behind British Conversion

The reasons behind the highly rates of the British conversion are numerous. Yet; we try to include the most important and the most relevant to our research.

It appears paradoxical that conversion/reversion to Islam continues to grow in Britain amidst an increasing climate of fear and hostility to the faith that is expressed as Islamophobia and expounded particularly through the media.(sic) Conversion to Islam is frequently viewed as strange and odd particularly in view of trying to comprehend why someone would embrace a religion that is often perceived as regressive and running counter to the prevailing norms and values postulated by Western societies .(Batol al toma and Ruqaihabell, 28)

Disaffection towards their original societies is one of the most important reasons for westerners to embrace Islam. Mainly; the new Muslims are more likely to reject the values and practices that were accepted in their previous lifestyle. Moreover, converts, drive themselves away from Alcohol, music, some specific types of clothes, and interactions with opposite genders (Zebiri 2). Furthermore, being close to Muslim people and countries is another reason for them to embrace this faith.

Interacting with Muslims, reading Qur'an and Traveling to Muslim countries are other mesmerizing factors that attracted the British to become Muslims. As an illustration, a simple look at an Egyptian woman in a headscarf, and then a question, were the first step in N'aima B. Robert's conversion to Islam. Interestingly, those simple things persuaded her to put stereotypes away by looking through Muslim lenses. In this vein, interactions are essential factors that help to understand the 'other' and go beyond the stereotypes to investigate life from another perspective. Additionally, the "Orient"⁴ is not only an idea, as Edward Said argues that to an extent both peripheries the West and East reflect each other and have a history as well as a traditional of thought to portray their identity.

1.4.3 Western Attitude towards Muslims Culture

From the past till today, a significant amount of journalistic publications about the position of Muslims in Western Europe, Islam, and Muslim world. Mainly because, the crucial events and revolutions all around the world that happened. This led to the growth of the power of Islam as a political aspect in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, From the eighteenth century; Muslims were considered as enemies without presenting any official prove that back

⁴ Orient according to Oxford dictionary literary means the countries of the East, especially East Asia. And Contrasted with Occident.

up their concerns .Many comments and illustration can reject these considerations of Muslims .In contrary, Shadid and Van Koningsveld argues that Muslims are myth because;

Muslims in Europe have more frequently fallen victim to terrorist actions carried out by right-extremist groups, rejecting them and wanting to expel them from their countries. Besides this, the allegations that Islamic and Western culture as not compatible and that Muslims cannot fit into European societies are generated by an unfounded prejudice towards this religion and its follower.(2)

Whether it is the right of freedom of expression or the right to a fair trial, the right to food, shelter and the right to found a family is only a document which is proposed to the notion of the individual. Because, today Islam as well as in some other civilizations, there is also a communitarian⁵ dimension that is very important. That means there is a crucial concept of the community dimensions to consider not only the rights of individuals. They are always considered as “Orient” as Edward Said might define them. They are not appreciated and considered as uncivilized people.

Islam as a religion is seen as a constant enemy and Muslims as followers of Islam are viewed in the same light. Islam in its true sense is not accepted by Western nations, for this reason Western nations enact laws and create hostile atmosphere, to have the major powers and public opinion to their esteem.

The West completely understands that there is no possibility to make all Muslims abandon Islam. However, the West identifies that there is a strong possibility to deflect or divert Muslims from an accurate understanding Islam. Moreover, the struggle that Muslims in the West face is either to accept Islam fully or accept a watery version of its concepts and

⁵ To understand the aspect of Communitarian, we just to understand the definition of communitarianism. Communitarianism is a philosophy that emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community. Its overriding philosophy is based upon the belief that a person's social identity and personality are largely molded by community relationships, with a smaller degree of development being placed on individualism

teaching practice. This results in a kind of cultural dislocation and ambivalence that could develop sometimes to be a state of alienation.

1.5.1 Muslim Youth in Britain

Contemporary Britain holds considerable numbers of Muslims most of them are very young. Comparatively, the median age of Muslims in 2011 was 25 years in relation to the median age of the overall population of 40 years (Ali 27). Additionally, The shortage is getting higher than most expected, as John Bingham, a Religious Affairs Editor portrays in his article in 2015 that “The number of children growing up as Muslims in the UK has almost doubled in a decade in what experts have described as an “unprecedented” shift in Britain’s social make-up” (Bingham). Moreover, the young Muslims are proved to be an undeniable vein in the British body, the reasons that they play an effective role among the environment in schools, charitable works, sports and many other field.

Before decades, the first generation of Muslim immigrants settled with the idea that Britain is safer and freer than their homelands .So, they saw in Britain a free and better life to practice their religion. Yet, the new generation would not agree on the same idea, they would claim that it is hard work being a British Muslim.

Additionally, many reporters claim that the future of Britain according to the census is all related to the young British Muslims .Because, their percentage number is getting higher in these following years. And, they might be in the future election and can easily take the power in politics and social affairs .However , Muslims tend to be represented only in terms of their ‘Muslimness’ – they do not appear as ‘normal’ members of British society and the ‘British public’. Yet, Muslim Youth faced many obstacles in gaining their faith and their own belonging.

1.5.2 Obstacles Facing Muslim Youth

Britain was described as the most permissive country in terms of religion and culture. Nevertheless, Muslim youth suffers from significant extent from stereotypes that interfere in the portrayal of Muslims in the non-Muslim society view. Most of British Muslim youth are distressed by poverty, burned by racism and are victims of inequality, with the intervention of environment that brutal ideologies set with justifications through warped religious misunderstanding often fester. As an illustration, young Muslims, particularly those of school age, are mostly rejected for the mere idea of belonging to the faith, no matter if they are Religiously practicing or not (Aboulela). More than that, Muslim youth's struggles include social exclusion, religious discrimination, and aspiration of fitting within society, as well as the concept of identity (Hamid 84), causing many convolutions in their daily life.

In a nutshell, there is an unavoidable generational conflict between 'traditional' parents and their 'modern' British born-children. This conflict and chaos in identity and the historiography arguments is the primary factor that causes a part of young Muslims to become more religious and use their faith to gain the satisfaction of Allah and their own satisfaction. Noteworthy, many hate crimes were taken all over Britain. Since, there are many issues of anti-Muslims, young British Muslim were unfairly targeted for themselves from far right sympathizers who attacked them with bottles. And, a strong sense of doubt over community policing and the lack of action on hate crime cases made Young Muslims face many obstacles.

Conserving religious identity is one of the disapproving challenges for young Muslims in Britain as they are "Experiencing the challenge of integrating traditional religious belief and practice with new conditions arising from rapid social and economical changes" (Hermansen 119). Furthermore, Muslim youth adopted a globalised identity, due to the fact that economical growth leads to an association between youth and "fashion,

accessories and music” (Herding 28). Moreover, young Muslims are taught to read the Qur’an in Arabic rather than to comprehend and understand it, draw most Muslims to the neglect of religious side of life as adults, because they learn it as nothing more than words, not as a piece of their Islamic identity. Therefore, Britain endorses a foundation of a set of institutions to help Muslims youth in conserving their sense of belonging and identity.

There for, many organizations have been emerged in response of those critical and obstacles and hate crimes. Those Muslim Youth Organizations are aimed to get a solution to most important issues facing the young Muslims. As well as, they reflect some of the most active and essential issues which they daily face in the British Muslim community. Yet, the first goal of each organization is to work for the interest in the future of Islam in Britain.

1.5.3 Muslim Youth Organizations

The organizations are founded in Britain with the purpose of spread of teachings and culture of Islam in UK, and especially to the younger Muslim generations. Britain witnesses a diversity of Muslim youth Organization. Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) established in 1962 the Federation of Student Islamic Societies caters for the needs of Muslim students in further and higher education across the UK and Ireland. While, the Muslim Youth League UK (MYL UK) a non-governmental youth and student organization affiliated with the United Nations. It supports those involved in young Muslims' personal and social development and works to enable them to fulfill their potential in British society. Also, the Young Muslim Organization (YMO) that is run by young Muslims originating from Bangladesh (Hamid 86). Moreover, The Muslim Youth Helpline which is a registered charity that provides pioneering faith and culturally sensitive counseling services to Muslim youth in the UK. As well as, the largest organization The Young Muslim UK (YMUK) is an

organization with local youth group. To conclude, all those organizations are founded with the aim to support and cover the needs of Muslim youth, which means that they are a part of the Islamic youth work in the society.

Such a cooperative associations aimed to a nationwide collaboration on certain Muslim youth. Especially concerning religious and social welfare interests of all young Muslims .Moreover, those associations show how evident Muslims are being part of the British nation. Eventually, Muslim presence urged the British native pens to tackle Islam in many works that emerged long time ago, and that still exist in the meantime, either in the Islamic countries, or in Britain.

In an effort to understand the life of these youths, the radicalization, or potential radicalization of Muslim youth is linked, in the literature, to “alienation”⁶ due to living in separated or parallel communities, identity crisis and intergenerational conflict. Because of this terrorism, radicalism and extremism have become entangled with notions of identity, integration, segregation and multiculturalism, and this entanglement have made being a “Muslim youth” a precarious designation in the United Kingdom.

1.6 Introducing Islamic Fiction

Islamic fiction is a literary genre that grew up as an attempt from Muslim authors to draw clear reflections about Islam and its followers. This literary genre is a mixture of imagination and religion in order to send a message and portray the real life via creative texts. Moreover, Islamic fiction is a “creative, imaginative and non-preachy fiction literature written by Muslims who intend for readers to learn something positive about Islam and benefit from

⁶ According to **Marx's theory of alienation**, when a person is engaged in the lower rungs of a capitalist system, in which they are just cogs in a much larger system, they are driven by those within a higher social class to produce as much as possible. From his point of view, this social position discouraged the laborer from taking control of their own future or pursuing ways to climb the social ladder, which put increasing distance between individuals and their human nature.

reading an Islamic fiction story” (Delgado). Therefore, it is a genre that has an entertaining as well as a reflective and educative purpose through numerous names and authors including Na’ima B. Robert.

Fictitious pieces came into existence on the bases of Islamic beliefs and commitments. Cleanth Brooks confirms that “A religion makes some ultimate claim on our belief. It demands a commitment” (50). Indeed, this commitment is what pushed Robert’s after her conversion towards writing fictitious pieces where she defends and reflects Islam. In most of her works, Robert focuses on young Muslims making them the main characters for the purpose of representing their daily adventures as energetic souls as buds who are eager to blow up into the world but at the same time face certain challenges and obstacles. In her special way, Na’ima B. Robert focuses on “Muslim youth growing up in London, Sydney, Ney Jersey, Toronto, learning to straddle two or more cultures, dealing with coming of age, finding themselves and their places in the world” (Robert 2015). Thus, the British Muslim youth specifically, and all the ones living in European settings in general are the leading themes in all of her novels.

By the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the exclusion of Islam and Muslim existence from world thought has become impossible. Social media, social networks, and travels were tools through which the Islamic culture has spread widely. Moreover, Muslims and Muslim communities became more eager to prove their existence and expose the real “Islamic self”. Fiction is one of the tools used in this mission.

Despite the fact that Muslims are considered as Orient and had to struggle to define themselves in terms of culture, image, religion, vocabulary ..., Bhabha maintains that those Muslims have a Hybrid identity. In Papastergiadis Book, the term Hybridity for Bhabha means the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the

identity of the colonized (*the Other*) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new. Thus, this concept is driven from literary and cultural theory. Moreover, it is stated that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.” (Rutherford 1990: 211). Talking about Hybridity, Bhabha reveals the emergence of third space precisely through ambivalence and construction of hybrid identities. Due to the exposure of the third space⁷ to contradictions and ambiguities, it provides a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion that “initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation.” (Bhabha 1994: 1).

1.6.1 Definition of Islamic Fiction

Islamic fiction is a combination of imagination and Islam in a one unique genre of literature. It is a literature written by Muslim authors to include Islamic themes and characters in an attempt to send a message, and teach Islamic principles far away from stereotypes⁸. The Islamic Writers Alliance (IWA) undertook the mission of defining Islamic fiction and placed it as a sub-category of Adult and Juvenile fiction in 2005 and 2006. This was because the Muslim publishing industry made no attempt to include Islamic fiction as literature in its classification of books written by Muslims, as claimed by Linda Delgado in “ELIF-Historical Background 2008”. According to her, Islamic fiction refers to Creative, imaginative, and non-preachy fiction literature written by Muslims who intend for readers to learn something positive about Islam and benefit from reading an Islamic fiction story. Islamic fiction incorporates religious content and themes in the stories and may include non-fictionalized historical or factual Islamic content with or without direct reference to the Qur’an or the

⁷ According to Paper Presented to Te Oru Rangahau Maori Research and Development Conference 7-9 July 1998 Massey University, The third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a *productive*, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new *possibility*. It is an ‘interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative’ (Bhabha 1994) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity.

⁸ Stereotype is an image presented to depict a reality, but instead we have a false and deceitful effort which is built alongside to this true function.

Sunnah. Islamic fiction may also include modern, real life situations and moral dilemmas. (Delgado 2008)

It is worthy to mention that Islamic fiction is a genre that cropped up in recent decades; this is why it basically deals with contemporary issues like modern life and its concerns and fears which contributes to the necessity to adapt and acknowledge the principles and ideals of Islam to state the right reactions to the political, scientific, and cultural challenges of the West and of modern life. Mainly this is done through Muslim characters and plots taking place in Western settings, or doubled settings between Muslim and Western countries. It is due the vast numbers of Muslim writers who lived in the west and experienced life there.

The issue of identity⁹ is a key element of the Islamic fiction; it is reflected through references to Islamic rituals, beliefs, teachings, and practices of Muslim characters. In addition, Moreover, Riaz and Fair state that “Islamic fiction blends history and literary imagination to convey a message and present a community” (140). This fiction mixes imagination with historical and religious contents in order to reflect a specific cultural communal heritage.

1.6.2 Historical Background of Islamic Fiction

Islamic fiction started to be more visible in the near past .Lyden and Mazur observed that this popular, didactic genre appeared in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Though there are only some scanty novels belonging to this genre, Islamic fiction has been proved as a growing production with high future expectations (201).

Islamic fiction grew as a rebellion against popular fictions written by secularist authors. It started to develop since the late 1990s, especially after new generations discovered

⁹ Identity focuses on the main aspects of the person as age, gender, ethnicity or religion. Therefore, religion is one of these aspects. Islam contributes to the foundation of Muslim identity and its major issues.

its effectiveness in reflecting all aspects of the political, social and religious life in a way that drags the attention of all social groups. This genre provided a tool for people against secular fiction (novels were the most popular form of Islamic writings). Therefore, Islamic imagination found its way and took part in the field of fiction.

Among the reasons of the emergence of this type of fiction was the reaction against Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic verses* known as "the Rusdie Affaire" a novel that was an open insult to God, the prophet Mohamed (pbuh) and to all Muslims which lead to accusing Rushdie of blasphemy. Soon, the event became a cause of expression of the real Muslim identity and a chance to clarify the wrong assumptions. Thus, many writers embraced literature to introduce people (Muslim and non Muslim ones) to a new Muslim identity and defend on the Islamic beliefs. This polarization shows that Muslim writers were first line soldiers, ready to fight back any attack against their faith. However, Islam existed in pieces of literature even before the "Rushdie Affaire".

1.7 Contemporary British Muslim Fiction Writers

There is black British literature¹⁰ and London writing as well as Muslim writing too. Muslim writing emerged in response of political and social events in Britain. Thus it is just after the condition of consolidation that Muslim identity in Britain gave birth to Muslim writing just then, it started to be understood. According to Ahmad and Evergetis research (2010) from the political events that spread the Muslim identity such as Rushdie Affair, The Gulf War, 9/11, 7/7 and the Israeli attack in Gaza in 2008 raised Muslim writing .

Before the emergence of Muslim writing fiction, there were only Non-Muslim writers to write about Muslims, they were merchants and adventures who just observed. In all their

¹⁰ Black British literature, or that literature written by Caribbean, Asian, African, and other people who originated from ex-British Empire, has an ancient pedigree, as ancient as the Empire itself. It is a generation of writers who expressed their frustrations about being born and brought up, but not accepted in Britain.

writings there was a sense of superiority and comparison with the inferior Arabs and Muslims. After all those events Muslims were no longer invisible, they started to get use to be in newspaper and in social media in general .they started just thinking as Janmohamed¹¹ claimed:

I don't remember reading anything when I was growing up that I could relate to and say 'look a story like mine!' In fact I think literature and books are just part of a wider lack of role models...there came a day where I couldn't bear to see any stories that weren't a bit more like mine. And I figured nobody was going to write it if I wasn't going to write it .

That means that many Muslim writers started to break stereotype of the past and make their voices heard. Thinking to spread their real identity and make themselves visible. As Edward Said claimed in his book "Orientalism" that the East must and can represent themselves by their own selves and not by the Western perspective. He argues that "Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (10). Moreover, it appears a new literature genre 'the Islamic fiction 'which is dedicated for both Muslims and Non-Muslims. Islamic fiction may also include modern, real life situations and moral dilemmas. Islamic fiction introduces creativity and imagination in books. As well as, the books may assimilate themes and religious content in the stories as well as it may include non-fictionalized historical or factual Islamic content from the Qur'an or the Sunnah it might be sited directly with its references or without. Islamic fiction does not include sexually explicit content, "UnIslamic" practices that are not identified as an Islamic, or content that portrays Islam in a negative way. This means that there is no 'Harmful Content 'in the books.

¹¹ Shelina Zahra Janmohamed is a British writer. She grew up in North London and is a graduate of New College, Oxford. She is the author of *Love in a Headscarf*, a memoir of growing up as a British Muslim woman. She is also a blogger: her blog is called Spirit 21.

In most cases, Fiction written by authors in Arab countries does not reflect the Islamic teachings; this is probably due to the fact that Arab societies are more acquainted with Islam in a way that calls no need to represent the faith in fiction (Hassan 190).

Examples of these writers including Leila Aboulela, there are Thamima Anam, Fadia Faqir and Na'iam B. Robert.

1.7.1 Abdoulela Leila

According to Clair Chamber, in his *British Muslim Fictions interviews with contemporary writers* (2011), Leila Aboulela is a Sudanese writer, previously resident in Britain, who now lives in Doha, Qatar. Writing is her main career, and she also brings up her youngest child. The daughter of a Sudanese man and an Egyptian woman, Aboulela was born in Cairo in 1964, but grew up in Khartoum. Egypt and Sudan were both colonized by Britain, although they had very different experiences of colonial occupation, which is in Aboulela's most recent novel, *Lyrics Alley* (2010).

In Aboulela's four fictional works to date, she is interested in examining the ethical dilemmas that Muslims all over the world are confronted to, and provides gradated descriptions of members of the transnational Islamic *ummah*. Her fiction is linguistically composite, including words from colonial discourse, Arabic alongside English, and Scottish street slang. Aboulela also her texts adverted to the Qur'an, Sudanese writers such as Tayeb Salih, Western romance fiction, and Arab poets, this is why she is a highly intertextual writer. Finally, Aboulela cleverly simulates three very different locations in her prose: the snowy, remote cities of Scotland (particularly Aberdeen), the teeming multiculturalism of London, and the heat and conviviality of Khartoum.

Aboulela tends to portray a realistic image of Muslim immigrants in Western societies and their struggles to maintain religious stability, rather than choosing ideal perfect and unrealistic Muslim characters. Notwithstanding this, as a Muslim immigrant and an author of English literature, Aboulela said in an interview that she wants to write fiction that:

Follows Islamic logic. This is different than writing „Islamically correct“ literature-I do not do that. My characters do not behave necessarily as a good Muslim“ should. They are not ideals or role models. They are, as I see them to be, ordinary Muslims trying to practice their faith in difficult circumstances and in a society which is unsympathetic to religion. (quoted in Hassan 190)¹²

1.7.2 Fadia Faqir

Fadia Faqir, though resident in Britain for over twenty three years, Fadia Faqir, the short story writer, novelist, editor, and human rights activist was born in 1956 and brought up into a conservative Muslim family in Amman, Jordan. Faqir has produced many pieces with central female characters blending the European and Muslim contexts under one literary roof. Faqir’s best known work *My Name is Salma*, also known as *The Cry of the Dove* (2007) was the first to tackle the Arab migration to Britain as drawn through Salma, the eponymous character who strives to wear up a British identity through superficial changes in her appearances. Through this piece of fiction, Faqir attempts to reflect and criticize most of what is seen in the Muslim migrants of Britain as she writes: “Now, Salma the dark black iris of Hima must try to turn into a Sally, an English rose, white, confident, with an elegant English accent, and a pony” (Faqir 4). By writing those lines, Faqir portrays the case of a vast number of Muslims in European countries in general, and Britain in particular, who seek a total change of identity even if it goes against their religious principles (Santesso 108).

¹² Hassan W I. *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print

Faqir argues of her character *Shahrazad*, who is, and is not, herself:

She sings with Achebe 'The Song of Ourselves', celebrating differences and similarities, rejecting absolute truths about herself and others, welcoming disruptions of linear narratives, embracing debate, uncertainty and dissent. Standing outside the whale, 'in this world with no safe corners', she sings for bridges, those destroyed and those to be built. The truth is that there is no house apart from the fragile, strong house of writing.¹³

Chamber claims that this comment, illustrates many of the interests of Faqir's *oeuvre* entirely with its belief in the power of literature, doubt, contradiction, and oppositional politics, and. suspicion of grand narratives and linearity. Although, Fadia Faqir is one of the most remarkable Anglo-Arab Fiction Writers .She uses the power of writing to depict, reflect, and describes the reality and identity of Muslims.

1.7.3 Tahmima Anam

Tahmima Anam is a Muslim fiction writer born in 1975 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, but who grew up in New York, Paris, and Bangkok as the daughter of a media consultant for UNESCO. The concept of Islamic identity against the secular life is mostly present in the works of the studied author; a vivid example lies in the totally different responses of the two siblings *Sohail* and *Maya* in *The Good Muslim* towards the political and religious changes of their society. Accordingly, the former joins a proselytizing religious movement while his sister holds her loyalty for the secular Marxist politics (Chambers "Imagining Muslims" 143).

Her first novel, *A Golden Age*, was long listed for the 2007 Guardian First Book Award, shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award, and Europe/South Asia regional winner of the 2008 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. Following the success of *A Golden*

¹ Nasta, Susheila ed. (2004). *Writing across worlds: contemporary writers talk*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Age, a ferocious bidding war took place between four publishers over rights to Anam's further novels in her Bengal Trilogy, which Scottish publisher Canongate acquired from John Murray¹⁴ (Chambers "British Muslim Fiction Interviews with Contemporary Writers" 160).

while *The Good Muslim* ends with the historical writer Jahanara Imam demanding that war criminals make reparations and the victims are brought justice. In *A Golden Age*, Anam dedicates the novel to Bangladesh with 'gratitude and love' as she is unashamedly nationalistic. Despite this self-declared bias, both her novels are complex and thoughtful meditations on war, sibling rivalry, parenthood, linguistic conflict, and love.

In the first place, Anam uses her characters in order to criticize the negative results of thought extremism and to encourage moderation, as it is the case with many other British Muslim Fiction writers. Moreover, she focuses on the Muslims identity and the religious understanding through all of her characters.

1.7.4 Na'ima B. Robert

Na'ima B. Robert was born as Thando Nomhle McLaren (1977) in Leeds, north of England to a Scottish father and Zulu mother, and moved with her family to Ethiopia, then Zimbabwe where she received her basic education. When in Harare Girls' High School, she lived a total "Americanized" life, but had a great passion and was highly successful in arts and writing for which she received many prizes. After that, Robert left Harare to study French, Politics, and Business Studies in London. When in university, she travelled as a part of a musical band to Egypt where she was closely introduced to Islam. She was 21 years old and in her second year of university when became Muslim and married in third year. She moved to South London in 2000 and began teaching in Brixton. After her son was born, she started a

¹⁴ **John Murray** is an English publisher, known for the authors it has published in its history, including Jane Austen, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Lord Byron, Charles Lyell, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Herman Melville, Edward Whymper, and Charles Darwin. Since 2004, it has been owned by conglomerate Lagardère under the Hachette UK brand.

home school. After the need to spend more time which was so difficult with her son because of the home school work; she got the inspiration to write children's stories and poems and sent them to several publishers, both Islamic and multicultural. The multicultural publishers loved it and she begins her publishing career with one of the multicultural publishers. She eventually branched out with Tango Books and that was how she met her agent, an American from New York. They eat dinner together at Naima B Robert house where she explained to her the real definition of Islam and hijab then the agent informs her that she could get her first book published, *From My Sisters' Lips*. Moreover, Robert did a book tour in South Africa, where a lot of women were inspired by the book and then the idea for the magazine flowered. In present days, Robert is an acclaimed editor of the Sisters Magazine and a successful writer who wears the Islamic *niqab*.

In the world of fiction, Na'ima B. Robert has produced a diversity of works. In a first category, there is a sample of children picture books mostly with children characters including: *The Swirling Hijaab* (2002), *Journey Through Islamic Art*(2005), *Welcome to the World Baby* (2005), *Yum! Let's Eat!* (2008), and *Ramadan Moon* (2009) in which a little Muslim girl explains the Islamic month *Ramadan* with its traditions and practices (Northrup and Cianciolo 54). Moreover, most of these picture books are intended to help Muslim children to learn about Islam and the Islamic way of life. Nevertheless, Robert's writings go far beyond children books as she has also produced many YA novels.

Additionally to Robert's production to Muslim youth, she produced a large number of novels committed to teenagers. Furthermore, Robert pays a considerable attention to "Muslim youth growing up in London, Sydney, New Jersey, Toronto, learning to straddle two or more cultures, dealing with coming of age, finding themselves and their place in the world" (Robert 2015). Noteworthy, all her YA works including *From Somalia, with Love* (2009), *Boy vs. Girl* (2010), *Far From Home* (2011) and *Black Sheep* (2013) have central Muslim young

characters. As well as, all of these novels rouse up the relationship of understanding between a child with his parents' weather in terms of his life and struggles in living the life, all in an educative way. This is mainly the case with her latest novel *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014).

1.8 Representation of Islam through the British Media

Media is the other extension of human being. It affects our attitudes concepts and shapes our opinions about a certain culture or people. In this vein, Muslims have been paid more attention especially after 9/11 attacks on US and London bombings .Consequently, Muslims came to be more visible as they were telescoped and looked at suspiciously.

The differences between Islam and Western values and Muslim extremists are greatly tackled throughout a considerable number of article and series in the British media. Recently, though Muslims' problems decreased in the British community .Yet, media still focus on them. It is a fact that Muslims are represented through a process of stereotypes and they are represented in terms of their 'Muslimness 'only, they do not appear as normal component of the British society to which they belong to with what their citizenship implies to. Furthermore, this means that Muslims' have to choose either to be Muslims or British, not both of them; an issue is covered with some other subtopics within the media.

Terrorism and backwardness are the most tackled issues. They are typically linked to Islam and Muslims with a view that Islam is religion of firm instructions and oppressive laws especially when it comes to women rights. Media tends to focus on the clashing elements between Islam and the western value with a particular emphasis on Islam is a real threat to the British way of life. Thus, most Muslims receive the British media as a bias and post London bombings media is totally hostile and against them ignoring that they have been for decades citizens participating in the society in many spheres and that many of Muslims are purely

British descendants. Furthermore, there is a dominant perception among today's Muslims that media does indeed portray them in inaccurate way.

Specific images and stereotype are dominating both visual and print media. This type of representation and discourse convey to the reader the "Otherness"¹⁵ of Muslims and Islam and through these cultural myths creates a distance and in some cases a gap between dominant and minority group. It is these myths and predetermined notions about minorities that contribute to a social order that dictates who participates and who does not – who 'belongs'¹⁶ and who is an 'outsider' (Campbell: 1995).

In order to create a united and firm Islamic identity within Islamic communities, Britain was introduced to a media created by Muslims. Moreover, a comprehensible media in English has been asked for, to fit the younger generations' lingual capacities. In addition, Britain the first European country presented to Muslim media created by immigrants and later on developed by younger generations to be an alternative to the mainstream media (Rigoni 491-92). Hence, Islam shifted from being represented only through British non-Muslim literature and media to be introduced by Muslims themselves.

Throughout time, the Anglophone literature started to witness a wide range of fiction written by Muslims writers and tackling Islamic themes. That literature is written mainly by women, and in the English language.

¹⁵ "Other" and "otherness" are technical terms used in the social sciences and humanities for the way people tend to view others (people or nature) that are dissimilar and separated. Otherness in this text means that the reader has the perspective that The Other "Muslims" are not like them. Inability or refusal to see similarity, continuity, etc.

¹⁶ Concept of belonging is rooted for the satisfaction of the basic human needs, as food, water and shelter. It can be powerful to create a value in life. As well as, the concept of belonging is the most important aspect of the structure of the human society.

1.9 Naiima B Robert Representation of Islam

Naiima B Robert is a writer that impresses the readers immensely by using the Islamic Fiction. She believes that stories tell a lot about the culture of a particular era, and it is correct because while reading a book you learn more about the background of the author as well as the history conditions. Although, Robert's books humanize Islam and Muslims. She writes about Muslims life in a true light, and describes the Islamic ideals and modern life style using reality and imagination combined together in piece of fiction. And, the most wonderful thing about Naiima B Robert's writing is that she is sincere and honest as she claimed in an interview¹⁷:

Everyone has a *haraam* element in their life; it's what you do about them that make the difference. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to write a book about a perfect Muslimah as the majority of readers can't relate to that. The Muslim narrative shows what's really happening with the *deen*, it tells people that they can write their own narrative.

Notwithstanding, she wrote books especially for young children to deal with the issues touching them, to attain this category of people; such as the generation and cultural gap between parents and children, the moon sighting debate, the gluttonous attitude towards Ramadan, treating segregation of sexes as a minor issue, culture coming before Islam, etc. Even though, her books are categorized for the teens yet many adults are interested to read her books. If we search on the internet we find plenty of reviews written by adults Muslims or Non-Muslims who are absolutely satisfied and happy to read her stories.

¹⁷Bushra. "Being Na'ima B. Robert: An Interview with Award Winning Muslim Woman Author." *MuslimMatters.org - Discourses in the Intellectual Traditions, Political Situation, and Social Ethics of Muslim Life*. N.p., 19 July 2010. Web. 09 Mar. 2017.

As an example of Muslim adult reader of Robert's book SALWA¹⁸ wrote a review on Robert's two books "Ramadan Moon" the illustrator Shirine Adl and "Going to Mecca" the illustrator Valentina Cavallini. She argues that the two books that she's reviewing are the writers first books aimed to small children, "3-9". And she is an adult "25 years old" and she loved the books.

Another example of a reader, a Non-Muslim reader of Robert's book MICHELLE¹⁹ wrote a review on 'She Wore Red Trainers'. She claims that:

It was great to see people using their religious beliefs to do good things, like setting up a youth group and raising money for charity. It was great to explore the Muslim faith more. I found it really interesting to see the pressures that both Ali and Amirah were under - from themselves, their families, their friends, and their community and within their religion. It was a very interesting experience.

1.10 Conclusion

All the afore mentioned information in this chapter tackled the Islamic presence in Britain, their history, both as Immigrants and purely British citizens who converted to Islam. All this concentrate on their presence, struggles to locate themselves. Additionally, Muslim writers are a part of the British society; a substance that authorized to depict from a closer angle Muslims lives in the production of pieces of writing. In fact, literature abides a tool through which reader's thoughts are organized. Apparently, the purpose of the majority of writers is to portray the world in general and Muslims in particular, the pure and real Islam and how it should be lived, generally through a critical fiction.

¹⁸Muslimah, Salwa. "Naima B Roberts, Book Review." *Naima B Roberts, Book Review*. N.p., 20 Jul. 2012. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

¹⁹Butterflies, Michelle Fluttering. "REVIEW: She Wore Red Trainers by Na'ima B. Robert." *REVIEW: She Wore Red Trainers by Na'ima B. Robert*. N.p., 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 03 nov. 2016.

In most cases, the major themes of Islamic fiction present Islam as youth and faith. Furthermore, Islamic literature is in a serious attempt to show the Muslim identity and British Muslims who are usually minorities'. Just as the African-American literature and African literature attempt to prove their identities and culture using fiction.

Chapter two: Islamic Aspects in “*She Wore Red Trainers*”

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Novel Synopsis

2.3 The main Young characters

2.3.1 Ali Jordan

2.3.2 Amirah Wyatt

2.3.3 Zayd Wyatt

2.3.4 Rania

2.3.5 Usamah

2.4 Representation of Islamic Aspects in “*She Wore Red Trainers*”

2.4.1 Hardships as Ordeals of Muslim Characters

2.4.2 Introducing Islamic Culture to Western Readers

2.4.3 Qur’an and Prophetic Sayings

2.4.4 Inclusion of Muslim Public Figures, Clothes, and Terminology

2.5 Mirroring Muslim Youth’s struggle

2.5.1 Religious Rules and contemporary British Society

2.5.2 Muslim Youth and Family

2.6 Muslim and Non-Muslim Relationships

2.7 The Contributions of Muslim Youth in the British Society

2.8 Conclusion

Chapter Two

Islamic Aspects in “*She Wore Red Trainers*”

2.1 Introduction

Literature has always been an artistic production through which different aspects and angles of real life are reflected. Different writers from different cultural and religious backgrounds constantly give birth to literary pieces that deeply mirror their world view and focus on their interests including religious matters. The aftermath of the 9/11 events as well other events concerning the perception of Islam have urged many Muslim writers to highlight the Islamic principles and way of life to the Muslim reader as well as Non-Muslim ones for the purpose of revealing the truth of this faith.

In this context Robert's *She Wore Red Trainers* is of no exception as it deeply focuses and sheds light on different religious aspects and images that make it easy a task to identify the studied text as a pure Islamic one. The following paragraphs are designed to dive more into the text and prove the novel's Islamic identity.

2.2 Novel Synopsis

Ali Jordan a teenager 18 years old, he is a hardworking student and a basketball player, who just moved to London with his father and two brothers for the summer vacation. His life recently witnessed radical changes after his mother's death detained the eclipse of his father's job which is the case of moving from Hertfordshire to London. Ali is struggling to build a strong Muslim personality. Amirah Wyatt's life, Ali's neighbour in London, has totally big responsibilities, she needs to take care home especially her siblings because of her mother's depressions with her several divorces, her mother is on her husband number six, and her level 'A', in immense passion for finding refuge later at University.

All of a sudden, Ali and Amirah become attracted to each other from the first meeting in the Basketball court that Ali was invited to by his new friend Usamah. Amirah comes near

to call her brother Zyad .He is strongly affected by her, that he noticed every detail about her. With the same manner, Amirah noticed every detail as well. Since then, they thought both were only for each other. Despite the fact that Amirah's solemn promise of never getting married, neither Ali nor Amirah were prepared for this radical change in their way of thinking and feelings. After that meeting, Amirah draws unconsciously Mr Light Eyes 'Ali's' hand holding a basketball. After that, she started to feel guilty and insecure, because those feelings might be as wonderful as dangerous. On the other hand, Ali was invited to the Islamic Centre for helping youth as charity and join the club of Muslim Bikers, he believed that this membership will get him more involved and in touch with the community and through time getting off the feeling of unpleasant desires as he will be busy all the time with the kids.

Amirah contends her battles every day by shopping with her friends Rania, Samia and Yasmine, and preparing for the coming event planned with auntie Azra, Rania's mother and an old friend to Amirah's mother. Moreover, Amirah takes her siblings to the 1st Launching day of the Islamic Centre where she talks for the first time to Ali. Unpredictably, Amirah's deaf brother Abdullah leaves a strong stamp in Ali's heart and felt comfortable to fit in the Islamic Centre which was unusual for him. At the same time, Amirah was impressed and completely relaxed leaving Abdullah with Ali. Amirah highly exalted with the extraordinary paintings and talents from her teachers. Ms Fergus impulses her to promise her that she will follow Art. But, she is dispiritedly obliged to choose Business Administration as a future choice for University because there is no other field to study accepted in Amirah's community as those fields because Arts were still viewed with suspicion. At the same time, Ali contends his problems heartaches and endeavors to maintain the unity of his family particularly Umar who is aggressive, with a broken heart from the loss of his mother and the changes he is going through from Hertfordshire life and fights.

Chapter two *Islamic Aspects in 'She Wore Red Trainers'*

Amirah is still struggling with the rude attitude of her step-father AbuMalik. She went out with Ziad to the park where she fell gravely choked after knowing that Ziad has suggested her to be the wife of his friend Hassan from Saudi Arabia. Even if she refused the proposal of her brother to his friend, she caves in a deep dissatisfaction and grief when her brother affirms that Hassan is coming to London for a meeting with her. After a long time, Ali and Amirah met again in front of her door. Next to this, Ziad Amirah's brother doubts the girls' conversation about Ali. But, his sister affirms that she is innocent and has done nothing. On later occasions, Ali was trying hard to gain the trust of Ziad, but he was always surprised by the defensive averting standing because he 'was a private guy; I could tell that' (Robert 108).

One day, Ali receives a call from his friend Pablo who knows Ali's past life, before he turned to the teaching of his religion .he was ' A boy with a Muslim name, lost in the world'(Robert 122).Pablo passes him the message of Amy his ex-girlfriend telling him that she misses him and want to meet him soon. The call of Pablo made Ali regret and remember his ancient life that he used to lead.

After Ziad's conversation with Amirah, she made herself too busy. Ali decided to go to the Croydon Library with Jamel after a long discussion about their mother and how much they miss her. At the Library Ali was fascinated with the view of Amirah's prize – winning painting on the wall. He just got totally confused with hope and threat of possibilities. Unable to hide his knowledge about the piece of Art, Ali comments on Amirah's photo on Facebook. On the other side, Amirah concludes that he knew that it is his hands. While coming back home it was raining Ali, Jamel and Amirah met at the entrance to the compound because Ali forgot to make note of the new gate code. Amirah becomes extremely

confused though she contends to hide her stress by talking to Jamel while helping them to find the new gate code.

In the third Deen Rid trip of Ali at the end of the meeting with the Brothers Ali suggests that he can take the donation to sister Azra for the fundraiser and get some flowers for Yasmine show's party. Amirah just got to the party, and then she was asked by Rania's mother to take the charity money that was collected by the Deen Riders. At her surprise, she finds that Ali is the one waiting; he gives her a bouquet of flowers that causes her endless happiness until she knew that the flowers are for Yasmine sent by Yusuf, her brother. Furthermore, with all the shocking news, Amirah went to her home crying and embarrassed. That night, Ali found out that Umar is missing and start looking for him. He directly went to Abdullah's house to ask if he was there, unfortunately, he was not. Zyad helps Ali to search for Umar till Ali had a call from Umar telling him that he is safe at Grandmother Nana's house in Hertfordshire.

A whole weekend passes before Ali and Amirah meets. It was at the supermarket their conversation was cold. Usamah talks about Amirah and Ali, the relation between Amirah and Hassan and Ali's future. Amirah was preparing for her meeting with Hassan. Eventually, Ali gathered his fortitude to ask his father if someday he decided to marry a girl, is he going to support him for this early marriage, Yet, his father refuses the idea making Ali extremely angry. He does not understand that it is only because he is afraid of the view of the society and the problems that he might face if he gets married. A few days after, Ali's father obtains a new job and all the family went to Hertfordshire to see Umar and Nana. When he simultaneously grows impressed with his excellent 3A's. Nevertheless, Ali's happiness did not last because Amy his ex-girlfriend came to London to tell him that she misses him, wants to be with him and she can convert to Islam if it is necessary just to gain him back in her life.

Yet, Ali affirms his sincere refusal to her demand. Unfortunately accompanying Amy to the door he saw 'the shocked accusing eyes of Zyad staring back at me' (Robert 207).

Amirah hopes were all crushed on the floor when seeing the shocking grades except for the Arts. Usamah motivates Ali to take a serious step about all his dreams. Next to this, Amirah is fighting her stepfather harassment and torments. At the same time, Ali plucks up enough courage and persuaded his father about his wish to volunteer in Mexico. Yet; he fails to convince Zyad about his serious intentions to marry Amirah chiefly after the scene of Amy at Ali's house. Notwithstanding, Amirah is informed that Hassan 'doesn't want to go ahead with the marriage' (Robert 228) from Zyad. Her stepfather told the man that Amirah ran away from home when she was fifteen because her mother's attitude and this is why Hassan changed his point of view after hearing this disturbing thing. Amirah reminisces her past life specially the week she passed away from home consequently of her mother's pressure and the practice of Islam. After that, she had a strong pain and remembers the fact that Zyad has sacrificed his studies in Saudi Arabia only to bring her back and take care of her.

At the end of summer school, Ali notices Amirah coming with Abdullah who gives him a 'Thank You' letter painted in sign language. Amirah joined them for dinner till the dinner started to degenerate after her mother knew about her husband's action towards Amirah. She orders him to leave the house.

Ali heads to the airport prepared to take the flight to Mexico. Meanwhile, Amirah, Zyad and Rania were driving faster as they can. On the road, she starts revealing her feelings towards Ali. Their mothers remained at home celebrating their friendship reunion after a long disagreement. In the end, they married at the airport and fly to Mexico together, starting a new life as husband and wife.

2.3 The Main Young Characters

Naima'B Robert 'She Wore Red Trainers' reflects life for contemporary young Muslims whose contact with the opposite sex is structured by the traditions of their faith and community. Na'ima has rooted the love story firmly in the urban British Muslim culture, to offer both a story that teens growing up in this culture can relate to and a challenge to preconceived ideas about attitudes to marriage and relationships in Muslim families, such as the tradition of arranging marriages. And for that, the author's leading aim is to convey certain messages and values to the reader's mind through a number of characters who hold different personalities, and experiences. Each character is meant to depict an image of the contemporary young Muslim spiritual part of the human being as the following characters are illustrated.

2.3.1 Ali Jordan

Ali Jordan a Youngman of eighteen years old rose in a family converted to Islam and trying hard to practice this religion .He is a basketball player and a motorbike rider after. He lost his mother and left his ancient life after his father's job business collapsed .He always had that own personal battle to face each day because they just moved from Hertfordshire to London with his father and two brothers. From his last exam, Ali decided to get busy and follow his father's advice cutting all bad relationships as his relationship with Amy his ex-girlfriend and try to fit in to the new society, without forgetting taking care specially of Umar his youngest brother because he is lost and want to get to his oldest life .He started to fit within the new community and forgetting the pain of leaving the life he experienced by leaving his original place "I took a deep breath. I hated this bit: explaining why we had left Hertfordshire" (Robert 25).Furthermore, Ali endeavours a new personality practicing more Islam, being firm and following the religious path that he missed in his old society in

Hertfordshire where he had a non-Islamic way of life. Next to this, with the new responsibilities and struggles facing Ali each day obliged him to change his plans for the future and decides to take a gap year before university for the purpose to take care of his family. Moreover, Ali's life goes all over, its love at the first glance when he meets his neighbour. But, falling in love is not simple when trying to remain true to the deen, the spiritual path of Islam. Unless, he fights his teenage mainstream lifestyle and chose to navigate relationships within Muslim culture.

2.3.2 Amirah Wyatt

Amirah is a gifted artist and a talented high school student in the same age of Ali, and his neighbour in London. Lives with heavy responsibilities at home by caring for her mother that got into depression several times because of her several divorces and marriages. Her mother is on her husband number six. This female protagonist strives to take care of her family and studies. Her mother, stepfather and three siblings leaves Amirah under an immense pressure. As she is struggles to protect herself from her stepfather's provocation and harassment, "His smile widened and I was suddenly afraid, so afraid that I could hardly breath [sic]" (Robert 169). She finds the space that she needs with her girlfriends, who supports her thought and decisions specially her plan of staying single till she gets the life that she wants of as an Artist. Besides this, Amirah has experienced a tone of harsh moments as a teenager to build a strong personality and a glossy future particularly after seeing the shocking grades that she got. In addition to that, Amirah's life turns upside down when she falls in love with her neighbour Ali, Yet, she tries to hide her feelings, afraid that it might be a wrong and against the religious principles. More than that, Amirah feels proud and imprisoned at the same time due to her brother's infinite pressure, teachings, lessons, and advices.

2.3.3 Zayd Wyatt

Amirah's oldest brother, respectful, dutiful son and the man of the family. He stopped his studies in Saudi Arabia to take care of his family, he is conservative Muslim and severe man that always repeats the rules and the right path to follow to his sister "The believer is always vigilant coz shaytan is always ready to trip us up" (Robert 153). Zayd is a young man who likes helping the others, as he is a volunteer at the Islamic centre for the youth but keeps his distance from the other volunteers'. In addition to this, Zayd suggested his sister as a wife to his friend and affirms that the best life for a Muslim girl is the domestic life; but never forced her to marry him. Though, he is known by his conservative thought in matters of family, specifically his sister. Even if he does not show his emotional side, but he always protects and help her to come through the tough times.

2.3.4 Rania

Rania is Amirah's best friend and her classmate in school in London. She keeps supporting Amirah to fight for her dreams and passion and never ignore them for the sake of getting married "if you go into this without being really clear on what you want and who you really are, you will regret it for the rest of your life" (Robert 219). More than that, Rania is a highly spiritual, and the one who shares with Amirah the good and the bad moments. Furthermore, Rania is highly affected by her mother's spirit, strong personality and productiveness. She drives a care, works extremely hard for her first fashion show and does whatever satisfies her as far as it is not forbidden. Eventually, Rania is also "Miss Hijabi fashionista so, for her, shopping is a real investment" (Robert 50).

2.3.5 Usamah

Usamah is Ali's new friend in South London from America, and the first one he met in London. He is a really funny man, but a right Muslim who follows the straight path in the religious principles and rules. In addition to this, he is profoundly religious and a confident student study fashion and design at Central Saint Martins, the summer school, a part of The Deen Riders motorbikes club, and a man who follows his dreams and passion. Mainly, Usamah is "confident in his identity: his roots, his accent, his quirky dress sense and interest in fashion and spirituality. He wore it all with pride" (Robert27). Most important, Usamah is presented as a reminder and an adviser to Ali about issues concerning religion and his feelings for Amirah.

2.4 Representation of Islamic Aspects in *She Wore Red Trainers*

2.4.1 Hardships as Ordeals of Muslim Characters

Hard times and problems that might face Muslims in their daily life are basically believed in Islam as ordeals through which God examines the patience, strength and belief of his believers'. As cultural response alienation overcome through faith. In her novel Robert tackles the concept of hardships and obstacles that might stand in the path of Muslims through a group of imaginative characters, most of whom are young adults. However, orientalist discourse can explain most of the more recent representations of Islam and appearances of Islam in English literature, especially after the middle of the eighteenth century (Said1978; Kahf 1999).

One of the most important examples could be seen through the character of the protagonist Amirah whose self confidence and dreams are shattered on the floor after receiving the negative grades at school. Being shocked and sad, Amirah finds refuge in her

friend's mother who reminds her that all of her problems, especially her failure in exams, are tests through which Allah examines her and her patience: "this life is a test, don't forget that. Remember the words of Allah: "Do they think they will be left to say we believe" and that they will not be tested?" this is the Sunnah of Allah. The Sunnah of life" (Robert 198). Through this imaginative scene Robert mainly exposes the different problems and knots that might cause distress to Muslims and break their hopes. Moreover, those tests are presented in a way that strengthens Muslims' belief and trust in Allah. As well as, it shows mainly that a Muslim's first concern that should be lied on attaining the best religious and devote Islamic personality rather than following and chasing earthy hope. In addition, that will surely come to an end, a belief deeply found in the Islamic principles and at the same time does not neglect following one's passion and dreams.

Another instance of Allah's tests is presented through Rania's mother who stands for a true believer who trusts her fate and is deeply convinced that they are meant to make her stronger. When Azra talks about the loss of her husband whom she still loves even after his death, she reminds herself as well as Amirah that the purpose of those tests is to make a Muslim attached more to Allah the Almighty rather than any other human or creature:

Allah tests us with the things we love so that we can return to Him and long for His love, not the love of his creation. That was when I realised that this life isn't meant to be perfect. It's a place for test and examination. The true happiness, the true bliss, will be in the afterlife, Akhirah. (Robert 200)

Ones more, hardships are presented as events and tests that examine and at the same time build a strong Muslim identity for they bring Muslims to the right path and remind them of the true principles and cause of their existence, pleasing God and accepting His will.

Further in the novel, a reader comes close to an important image of hardships and difficulties faced by Muslim youth and that contributes to the building of their Muslim identity. Amirah's words to herself are the best example. After failing in the exams and

refusing the proposal of Ali whom she deeply loves, Amirah starts thinking about her future life especially when she remembers that her best friends have succeeded and they will leave for University while her brother will probably marry and leave her alone in her struggle. However, those ideas are in the same instant denied by Amirah when she reminds herself that “All the prophets had been tested. The prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him had been tested. The early Muslims had been tested. So we would be tested, too. That was one thing Mum had always taught me that I knew to be true” (Robert 248). In this context Amirah cries her bad luck, then suddenly her senses are awakened as she is convinced that difficulties are meant to be a part of the Muslims’ life, their main effect is to make her belief even stronger.

2.4.2 Introducing Islamic Culture to Western Readers

Prayers and supplications are standard practices in all religions and faiths though they take different forms and are performed in different ways. due to the growing interest in spaces and places and their effects on the lives of individuals. Alienation overcomes through Muslims faith as a Cultural response. *She Wore Red Trainers* is an Islamic text that reflects upon the five Islamic prayers as well as supplications (Du’a) in times of distress and as a way of asking God’s guidance.

Fajr prayers, are the first one performed in a Muslim’s day and in this novel Robert mirrors the importance of prayers (Salat) through Ali who wakes up in the early morning and strives to make his brother Omar perform his prayers on time by reminding him that “Remember, prayer is better than sleep, I called out, just like the adhan of Fajr” (Robert 47). This example shows the importance of prayers for practicing Muslims and it reflects an Islamic spirit through Roberts words, especially when Ali wakes up in the early morning before bird are out of their nests in order not to miss Salat on its stated time.

In addition to Ali's example that draws attention to the five daily prayers, deeper ideas about different types of Muslim prayers are presented throughout the novel's events that make even a Non-Muslim character have a closer idea about the faith. Precisely, Robert presents an example of Islamic prayer known as *Salatul-Istikhara* which is mainly performed when a Muslim person is in distress and when he/she is seeking and asking Allah's guidance to make the right choice. This type of Salat is presented through Amira who goes on saying "please, Allah, if this is good for me, decree it and, if it isn't, remove it from me and replace it with better" (Robert 258). Here prayers are taken as a definite example of the devotion and total reliance to Allah and the fate of each Muslim for the fact that their lives, futures, and even present times are guided by the Almighty God.

Du'a or supplications are other types of prayers that are omnipresent in the novel and within a diversity of circumstances. One instance could be seen where Du'a is taken as a way of consolation to someone who had lost a close person by death. Usamah here is the best example when he shows a feeling of consolation when addressing Ali's family after knowing that the family has lost the mother as the most important pillar in any family home. At that moment Usamah, though not yet knowing the family closely, expresses his grief for the news and he makes a Du'a "“May Allah make it easy for all of you, he said quietly. “Losing someone that close is never easy”” (Robert 15). Here, making Du'a for a Muslim brother is for the purpose of consolation and support.

In other occasions, Du'a is used as a way for calling and seeking Allah's mercy and guidance, especially in times of distress when a Muslim feels lost or not able of approaching a certain action. As an illustration, Amirah's is extremely afraid and her thoughts are unclear when she is called to meet her suitor whom she does not want to marry. Out of fear and stress the female protagonist raises her hands and makes a Du'a asking Allah to help her and guide her towards the best decision: "O Allah bless and protect me. Guide me to make the right

decisions” (Robert 178). Another example is seen through Ali when his father refuses the idea of marriage because his son is still young. Being broken and weak Ali addresses his words to Allah asking for guidance (Robert 182). The Islamic practice of Du’a is then rooted in the hearts and minds of old and young Muslims as a way through which they seek to escape hardships, provide consolation, or ask Allah to enlighten their paths when they are lost and not able to make a right decision. *She Wore Red Trainers (2014)* is loaded of such examples that prove the text’s Islamic principles.

2.4.3 Qur’an and Prophetic Sayings

Religion and its concerns have always been a central point in the world of literature where they are heavily reflected. Robert in the discussed novel is one major example as she constantly embraces quotes from Qur’an and the Prophetic saying of Prophet Mohammed peace and blessings be upon him. By tracing the events of the novel a reader could easily identify those quotes as illustrations for a point of view or a religious advice, especially through young characters.

The existence of quotes from the holy Qur’an is omnipresent in different parts of the novel starting with the beginning of it when Ali reflects his sadness and broken heart after the death of his mother to whom he was very close. On that moment Ali remembers the Qur’anic verse that tells him all people belong to Allah and that to him they will return: “Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un” (Robert 2). These lines are basically used to remind Muslims that they should be closer to Allah more than anything else no matter how important and beloved they might be. Again, another Islamic principle is provided through the distress and the lesson that Ali learns after the death of his mother.

When reading the novel deeply one also comes in touch with the use of Qur’anic quotes as providing consolation as well as hope for Muslims who are facing certain

difficulties. In the novel, Robert mainly focuses on the group of young Muslims and how they learn from the Holy Qur'an in order to live their days based on its teachings as it is the case with Amirah when she runs broken to the park. The first thing she does is to open her Qur'an and start reading surat Sharh that says "Verily, with difficulty, there is ease. Verily, with difficulty, there is ease" (Robert 248). At that moment Amira's face changes from sadness to happiness and from depression to relief as she trusts Allah's words and promises that no pain lasts forever.

In addition to quoting words of God from the holy Qur'an, Na'ima Robert also uses certain lines and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed as a way to reflect the Islamic and Sunni belief in her book. One example of this is shown when Amirah talks to her brother about Ali's proposal telling him that she accepts to marry him, especially because Ali is a religious pious Muslim and the prophet Mohammed had urged Muslims to accept such suitors: "If a man comes to you with good deen and character, marry him'. Sounds familiar Zee?" (Robert 256). In this example Amira uses the words of the Prophetic Hadith in order to strengthen her argument and persuade Zayd to accept Ali as a husband for his sister, especially because she knows well that her brother is deeply religious and would not refute teachings of the Prophet.

2.4.4 Inclusion of Muslim Public Figures, Clothes, and Terminology

When diving deeply into Robert's novel a reader could easily identify different famous contemporary Muslim persons who reflect Islam. More than that, Robert uses a variety of Islamic terms as well as Islamic clothes in order to draw a closer image and identify the Muslim characters within the text.

Starting with Muslim public figures, one might draw attention to some names that are a part of the contemporary Muslim world and who have a certain influence on the author herself. Welding the name of Maher Zain is one example that is mentioned when Amirah

steps in to the ball room where the party of Auntie Azra is held to find that “Maher Zain nasheeds played in the background” (Robert 154). Maher Zain is a contemporary singer of Islamic songs mainly known as Nasheeds; he aims first at sending and reflecting Islamic messages through his songs that are widely celebrated by Muslim youth living in the second decade of the twenty first century. Another example is presented through mentioning Mishari Rashed, a famous Muslim figure in both of the fields of Nasheeds and reciting Qur’an. When feeling stressed and not at ease Ali decides to “run . . . to flood my ears with Mishari Rashid” (Robert 70), for Qur’an is taken as the best way and refuge out of problems and negative influences. These figures all prove the Islamic spirit of the novel as they play an immense role within the actual contemporary Muslim world.

In addition to mentioning important Muslim figures Robert also sheds light on the different expressions that are only and basically related to the Islamic faith. In brief one might mention expressions such as A’udhu billahi min ash-shaytan ir-Rajeem: I seek refuge with Allah from Shaytan (satan) the accursed, As-salamu ‘alaykum/salam: The Muslim greeting that means „peace be upon you“, Ikhwan: Brothers, La hawla wa La quwwata illa-billah: There is no power or might except with Allah, Astaghfirullah: I seek forgiveness from Allah, Barakallahu feek: May Allah bless you. The mentioned expressions are purely related to Islam as they are used in a variety of positions and in accordance with the characters’ different circumstances.

After drawing attention to the different famous Muslim characters as well as Islamic terms and expressions that reflect the Muslim narrative, here come different descriptions of clothes that are found within the pages of *She Wore Red Trainers* and that are strictly linked to Islam as a faith. One striking example could be seen through Ali’s words when he first meets Usamah and starts describing his clothes as “dressed in a brown linen thobe with a crisp white turban tied around his head” (14). In this example the dress code worn by Usamah

reflect a person whose religious beliefs are Islamic, the thobe and the white turban are basically worn by Muslim men, especially when performing the prayers of Jumu'ah, the Muslim holy day. Moreover, Clothes convey other social messages including the stating or claiming personal or cultural identity, the establishing, maintaining, or defying social group norms, and appreciating comfort and functionality. Thus, Robert includes further images of clothes related mainly to female characters. One such example is presented through the words of Amirah when talking about her brother's expectations for his future wife telling her friends that "he won't consider any sister who's not already wearing niqab" (61). Mentioning such a type of clothes (niqab) is omnipresent within the folds of the story, another example of it is presented when Amirah is trying to cover her face to meet her possible suitor, in this occasion she says "I stood up to put on the niqab that Zayd had brought me a few months before. It had never been worn and a fine crease ran down the middle of the black chiffon" (178). Through these words, Robert tends to mirror the face-cover that is by choice worn by Muslim women and that deeply reflect the sense of Islamic spirit and the author's religious principles. Other examples of Islamic clothes also include "black hijab and abaya" (18), examples are very rich within the novel; yet, the mentioned ones are sufficient to prove the Islamic spirit as reflected through clothing habits.

2.5 Mirroring Muslim Youth's Struggle

Young souls are always described as the most important category in any contemporary society. As individuals as well as groups they play an immense role and they cover a variety of fields within their societies, they share happy and sorrowful times, and they also go through different events that mark changes on their lives. In the world of literature, the representation of such a group has been heavily focused on, and Na'ima Robert in *She Wore Red Trainers* is no exception. The plot of the narrative is basically built upon the different

adventures, events, and journeys that a Muslim youth could really witness in real life. For this reason, the following titles are to be mainly devoted to dig into the heart of the studied novel for the purpose of reflecting the author's imaginary representation of Muslim youth.

2.5.1 Religious Rules and Contemporary British Society

All of the characters in the novel are Muslims situated in a Non-Muslim society. Besides that, young souls share an extremely excited teenage spirit that hopes hoping to break all rules and restrictions for enjoying every facet of the contemporary developed and active life. Young Muslim Londoners in the novel have started out a journey that is full of struggles when trying to enjoy their spring years and at the same time fighting to stick to the rules and limits of the Islamic faith. This section is then designed to extract the different instances as adopted by Robert and that show the struggles of Muslim youth to maintain a stout Islamic life.

One of the themes that are broadly reflected in the given novel is the constant fight within one's self in order to follow the right path that is told by the Islamic principles. As it is a normal process, certain characters are portrayed to have a strong self-control, i.e. they can successfully fight unhealthy desires and practices that go against Islam. However, some other characters witness a wild life that is commonly experienced by young teenagers before finally settling down and living on the Islamic way. The life of Ali before the death of his mother is one of the most important examples stated within the book. before moving to London his life was based on music, tattoos, and girls: "Even when I was in a relationship, I was a mega flirt, I had to admit it, and I'd have had that girl's number so fast, she would probably still have been checking out my hair, the stud in my ear, my light eyes. Girls always loved my light eyes" (Robert 2). Nonetheless, the death of the mother wakes up Ali's brain and then he turns to the strict Muslim boy willing to step away from non-Islamic practices and at the same time

enjoying his life without having to do things that are wrong from the point of view of his religion.

Similar to Ali, Amirah's previous life was a one of rebellion against the norms and restrictions of the religions that she had inherited from her mother who converted to Islam. Amirah's mother had been going through different marriages and divorces, a matter that made her unable to take care of her teenage daughter, and other times she would be extremely severe, thinking that force is the right way to raise a Muslim girl and teach her right from wrong. For these reasons, Amirah rebelled as a way to flee from her miserable life and she claims: "dyed my hair platinum, then purple. Took off my hijab when I was out. Got a few piercings- nose and ears – and would have pierced my tongue" (Robert 232). Thus, the present time Amirah Wyatt who is known for her deep attachment to culture, a girl in the Islamic abaya and hijab had went through a very different way before finally going embracing a new life through the help of her brother Zayd who brought her to home after escaping: "when I came back from Brighton with Zayd, it was the beginning of a new chapter in my life. Everything changed after that. I became a new person"(234). Thus, the process of positioning one's self on the right path had for many characters been a tough mission, yet, a mission completed at the end. However, this could not be found in all the characters of the novel.

While Amirah and Ali finally set new identities and personalities after being lost, other characters could not resist their personal desires, and so, they were constantly driven by them. Ali's friend Mahmoud is having a very weak ability to strive for an Islamic style of life, especially for living in a western society that does not encourage such a strict life, precisely in matters of girl-boy relationships. The situation of Mahmoud is described by Ali when he notices the former's looks at a group of girls who passed near the place where the young men were playing basketball:

Chapter two *Islamic Aspects in 'She Wore Red Trainers'*

Two girls sauntered across the bleachers and paused, posing, preening, looking out on the court. Mahmoud let out a low whistle from between his teeth and nudged me, a crooked smile on his face. 'Hey', he said softly, 'have a look at that. Now that is hotness'". (Robert 17)

From this example, Robert attempts to remind the reader of the difficulties that young Muslims could face when attempting to build a stout identity, some could fight outside effects, while others fail to do so. This issue could be based on the wrong or weak teachings upon which Muslim parents raise their children as it is due to the contemporary cultural openness that changes the perception of life in the lenses of those Muslim buds and prevents them from sticking to the principles of their religion (Hermansen 119).

In addition to the aforementioned struggles, the most heavily reflected psychological battle within the souls of young characters in the novel is about the ability of keeping one's self away from wrong deeds that might be created by certain feelings of affection and love for opposite genders. From the first time when Ali caught sight of Amirah, the young man could not stop thinking about her, her image keeps crossing his head, her smile and her voice are always a wish for him to be attained. For many times, Ali wished to tell the girl about his feelings and to ask her to be with him, however, commitment to his religious principles, and the fear of bringing Allah's anger were the reasons that kept him from following the desires of his heart. One instance of this is marked when Ali catches sight of Amirah who has come to register her brother in the Muslim centre where he is working. At this moment, he goes through a serious struggle to hold his principles and not say or do something wrong: "I had seen her, my mind was a blur of confused questions. . . I needed to keep it together get a hold of myself. Be polite, not too friendly. Try not to drop the forms I was meant to be giving her. God, she's pretty, I thought. Astaghfirullah"(77). Ali's feelings for Amirah keep growing and also his pain for not being able to be with her, especially that he was afraid that someone else would come and take her away, however, the young man keeps fighting, and it is also his

serious attentions and religious principles that prevent him from doing something wrong: “Amirah had been playing on my mind like a soundtrack on repeat and it was only the deen that was keeping me from going up to her and asking her out . . . I wasn’t about to compromise her principles or mine like that” (Robert 212).

On a similar manner, Amirah shares the same feelings for Ali, but again she keeps her feelings a secret for the purpose of not deviating from the right path that she had drawn for herself. This is seen when the two young souls meet at the gate of the place where they both live, drops of rain are pouring from the sky of London, Amirah steps forward to see that Ali had not taken the new code of the gate. Amirah attempts to control her feelings and struggles to remind herself that what she is thinking about is against her principles saying to herself: “Stop Amirah, just stop, OK? Do yourself a favor and control yourself” (Robert 142). Thus, feelings of love and affection for the other gender are presented by Na’ima Robert as the most difficult issue that threatens the ability of young Muslims to control their desires and stick to the principles of Islam and not cross its red lines.

2.5.2 Muslim Youth and Family

Family in Islam is given a great value. It is considered as a building where each member holds an immense responsibility to protect it and keep it standing. Teachings of the Prophet as well as words of Qur’an have all set basic instructions upon which a Muslim family should be built, and the role of young members within any family are of mammoth importance. Through *She Wore Red Trainer’s*, Na’ima Robert attempts to show the importance of family bounds in the Islamic faith and the different roles that young Muslims play as family members.

Support and encouragement towards parents when going through difficult times is deeply inserted within the events of the novel, especially through the protagonist characters. The reaction of Ali upon the fall of his father’s business and the idea of leaving their

hometown to live in London is a best example. When receiving the negative news from his father, Ali, who is already broken and extremely sad struggles to hide his sadness and broken heart in order to lighten the burden laid on his father's shoulders, moreover, Ali remembers the great efforts that his father have done till the time of his fall in order to support his family. At this time, Ali remembers the caring attitude of his father and his powers that were "much more subtle than that. But the effect was the same: just like superman, he made us feel safe, like there was nothing that could touch us, that he was always there to shield us from the baddies, from the harsher side of life" (Robert 5).

Despite of the harshness of those news on Ali's heart, and though he is obliged to leave his friends, hometown, grandmother, and the life that he has loved for a long time, this young Muslim shows no hesitation to follow his father in order to support him till he stands again and overcomes the misfortunes that came upon him "I wanted him to believe in himself again, to see a stronger version of himself reflected in my eyes. 'OK, Dad, that's great. Alhamdulillah. Where will we be staying?'" (Robert 5). By creating such a scene, Robert aims to reflect the strong bounds that gather a Muslim family through showing the roles of both a caring father and an obedient son. Thus, the young Muslim is presented as a one capable of holding responsibility, a one who can fight for family and who can stand strongly for its good.

When diving more deeply within the pages of the novel, a critical reader might as well recognize the intention of the author to highlight the bounds and relations that link Muslim siblings together. The role of older brothers and sisters as taking care of their younger siblings is omnipresent. When Umar, Ali's brother leaves home without informing his father, or his brother about his destination, feelings of guilt and distress jump into Ali's head when he thinks that he was the reason for his brother's problem for not taking enough care of him: "Umar was my responsibility. I had promised mom I would look after him- and now look

what had happened . . . This was my fault. I hadn't kept a close enough eye on him. I hadn't been there for him" (Robert 161-63). At the light of these lines, a deep feeling of responsibility is shown from the part of older siblings towards younger ones. A similar example is shown when Ali finds his brother in his grandmother's house and the two brothers come close supporting one another "He let me put my arm over his shoulder and there we were, two wounded boys on the way of healing, holding each other under an oak tree" (191). Thus, Ali has indeed been taking care of his brother and the whole family, a scene that serves as a perfect evidence for the strong relationships between siblings in a Muslim family.

Amirah and her brother Zayd reflect another side of the family bounds as embodied in the Muslim siblings' tight relations. Throughout the story, Zayd is reflected as a man who strives to protect his family, especially his sister Amirah to an extent that obliges him to leave university for the sake of taking care of her. Consequently, Amirah feels colossal gratitude and guilt at the same time for not being able to reward all what her brother has done for her, "Zayd, oh, Zayd, who had stood by me through everything, who had never given up on me. How would I ever be able to pay him back? I never would" (Robert 230-31). At the same time Amirah is not being only taken care of, but she personally takes care of all her younger siblings as well as her ill mother. She takes children to school, dresses them, cooks for them, and even plays for them.

From what has been mentioned, the text reflects the deep feelings of responsibility that a young Muslim soul could hold. Those responsibilities range from supporting, to care-taking, teaching, and protecting different family members.

2.6 Muslim and Non-Muslim Relationships

The events of the novel are mainly set around a specific number of Muslim characters. However, Robert, for the purpose of making a clearer idea about Muslims in London, has inserted a number of non-Muslim characters for the purpose of providing a more realistic presentation of Muslim Londoners.

One of the most important issues that are highlighted in the first chapter is the relation of Muslim converts to their Christian relations and family members. By converting to Islam, many new Muslims in Britain and other parts of the world start to face serious difficulties with their relations who deeply refuse Islam as a belief. At this point, many converts struggle to keep stout relations with their relatives; some could succeed to do so while others could not. A very important example of the relations of Muslim characters with non-Muslim ones is seen through Ali's parental grandmother who strongly refuses her son's conversion to Islam, especially because by his conversion also his three sons embraced the same belief that go against her desires. This issue is mainly seen through her phone conversation with Ali as when asking him to visit her and at the same time asking questions about Islam and what is says about visiting family members: "Just how long am I going to have to wait before I am blessed with a visit from my grandsons, eh? Doesn't that religion of yours say anything about the rights of grandparents?" (Robert 97).

However, Ali and his brothers still look forward to keep close relations with their grandmother Nana by calling her and asking about her constantly. On the other side their father does not feel comfortable about the situation, mainly because he is afraid of the possible effect that his mother could cause to his children, especially Umar whose Islam is still raw. Though the grandmother is not much mentioned within the novel, she is still described as refusing Islam, telling her son directly that she wishes for her grandsons to

change it and turn to Christianity again “would pray till her dying day that her grandchildren would return to Christianity” (Robert 165). Thus, the relations between Muslims and their relatives of other beliefs are described as witnessing certain problems as those non-Muslim relatives refuse the new religion. Nonetheless, young Muslims always hope to keep a stout relation and to protect family bounds, even with characters who are not Muslims.

Amirah is also another character through which Robert reflects different instances of relations that gather the two religions. Unlike Ali’s grandmother, Amirah’s teachers show friendly attitudes towards her and they also support her creativity and strength. Miss Fergus for example is one character that encourages Amirah when she discovers her real gift of drawing and sketching; at that time, she tells her ““You have a gift, Amirah, you really do. I hope you will be allowed to use that gift. It would be a crime if you hide it” (Robert 85). On the light of this example, Robert attempts to prove that there is always a great possibility for young Muslims to build important and positive relations with people of other beliefs, in opposition to what is always spread of news about enmity between Muslims and other people.

Another image of positive relations between Muslims and non-Muslims is shown through describing the reaction of Amirah and her friends with the sister of Rania’s mother, aunt Caroline. When the date of the fashion show approaches Caroline, Rania, Amira, and her other friends meet in Azra’s house and they all enjoy the time of preparations. Happy to see this girly gathering, Amirah appreciates the attendance of Caroline and she describes the preparations as “a real family affair” (127), again this one defends the existence of positive relations between the two religions. Moreover, Ali presents another positive example through his relation with Pablo, his friend from Hertfordshire with whom he is gathered again. Though Ali had attempted to be away from Pablo for a certain period of time because he was not able of controlling himself easily near his Christian friend who shared a life of music and other

practices against the Islamic teachings, Ali calls his friend again and rebuilds their own friendship (25).

In a nutshell, Robert includes countable imaginative accomplishments that reflect Young British Muslims by the free time work for humanitarian activities as Charity activities for example the Islamic Centre. Moreover, this novel introduces a restricted but at most a positive number of Muslim and Non-Muslim confrontations.

2.7 The Contributions of Muslim Youth in the British Society

As a part of the British society, and as a minority within western settings, Muslim youth in Robert's work are divided between different activities through which they can be helpful to their Muslim brothers and to the British society as a whole. For the purpose of playing a positive role, numerous Muslim buds are involved in works of charity including Ali, Usamah, Zayd, and many others.

Founding and joining the Deen Riders club of motorbikes reflects a way that is both full of pleasure and helpful to society. By joining such a group, young Muslims participate in certain competitions from which all the rewards are addressed to help people in need. Precisely, Robert attends to prove that Muslims are all the time able to mix times of pleasure with those of beneficial and rewarding work. At the same time she attempts to reflect the Islamic teaching that all the activities of a Muslim person should be productive and form a type of worship.

This view is illustrated through Yusuf, the young Muslim who founded the Deen Riders club:

Although I loved riding, it wasn't necessarily helping me deen wise, y'know? I didn't feel like there was much benefit in it, in terms of my Islam. So we started thinking about how we could make our love for bikes into something that benefited us and others. And Deen Riders was born. (Robert 38)

Thus, Muslim characters are seen as seeking always fruitful pleasure through being involved in works from which society could take benefit.

In addition to the Deen Rider club Ali and his friends are also involved in the Islamic centre that is designed for the purpose of filling the leisure time of Muslim children with activities and teachings that strengthen their Islamic identity. All of the children in the Islamic centre were born in London, thus, their identity could be shaped by outside effects and then be deviated from Islamic principles. For these reasons Ali and his friends suggested to join the Islamic centre and put their efforts together in order to teach those children about Islam, Qur'an, and at the same time to help them enjoy times of sports, games, and fun. For protecting those children "the need for youth programs was clear: without them, kids were on the streets, getting up to no good" (Robert 57). For another time young Muslims share similar interests in building and protecting the Islamic identity through volunteering in charity works from which their society could benefit.

As for female characters, they also play an important role in works of charity. The Urban Muslim Princess event i.e. the Islamic fashion show held by Aunty Azra and the girls is one example. Though the show was organized to expose to people the creativity of Aunty Azra and her daughter Rania, a deeper reason for holding such an event was to help the needy and people in distress. "All money raised was going to help a Muslim charity that worked with orphaned victims of war" (Robert 31). Here, for another time pleasure and charity are gathered in the same event reflecting again the same Islamic principle mentioned earlier.

Another example could also be noticed through the decision of Amirah to participate for free in children's art therapy where she could both enjoy a shared passion of drawing with a productive work that helps a certain social category.

From all what has been mentioned, the text of Robert could be described as a piece of writing that is basically and in core designed to reflect the lives and adventures of Muslim youth as a part of the contemporary Britain. Those Muslims play different roles within family and the wider society. Moreover, the author attempts to prove that Muslims in western countries could enjoy their lives and have as much fun as they want while serving their religion. It is not an impossible task for them to stick to their religious principles, though the mission could be perceived as a miracle at the beginning.

2.8 Conclusion

Islamic writers have produced a great number of pieces of writing that presented the Islamic principles and their lives. This new genre of writing "Islamic fiction" in the English literature, according to Claire Chamber in our days, it is the most interesting fiction in the United Kingdom (272). A great number of authors had gathered effort and sacrifices to authenticate the validity and possibility of a future wide Islamic library of fiction has become more possible.

Nai'ma B Robert is one of the brilliant authors that contribute to the validity of such emerging genre. She wrote a set of fictional books that are concerned mainly with the struggle of the young adult to build the strong personality, and a firm Islamic identity with all the cultural pressure and the moral dilemmas that they face as part of the contemporary Non-Muslim British community.

Chapter two *Islamic Aspects in 'She Wore Red Trainers'*

Robert's *She Wore Red Trainers* is a window through which readers are invited to have a look on the daily life as experienced by a group of contemporary young British Muslims. Nevertheless, this novel does not present only a love story that the majority would describe, yet, it is a novel that goes deeper with the humanitarian activities as charity work and conserving a good relations with family and friends because these are an important part of their life. Furthermore, Robert is one from the Islamic category of writers who includes Islamic quotes and teaching principles through the young imaginative, yet realistic characters picked by the author.

General conclusion

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Muslims presence in all quarters of Britain resulted writers of Muslim backgrounds. Choosing a fiction of their own, they started to make consistent efforts to emphasize the Muslims and Islam presence in that country throughout an imaginative and a reflective world of fiction. Specifically, Robert is one of those writers who chose novels as a way to overcome the marginalization and stereotypes that have overtaken the western minds for long. Representing Muslims' contemporary struggle as British citizens is at the top of Robert's post-conversion interests, and precisely, young British Muslims are a priority in all of her works.

This research focused on Robert's novel *She Wore Red Trainers* (2014) as an imaginary and reflective, to a great extent, version of the daily activities, psychological struggles, hopes and dreams of the young Muslims while living in the British capital. Through her characterization, the author tackles the psychological challenges that a young Muslim witnesses when trying to deal with affections towards the other gender, familial responsibilities, humanitarian activities and educational dreams.

The novel proved that, in contrast to the endless claims about Islam as a religion of rough rules and hard restrictions, Muslim youth are capable of sharing a life that is joyful, hopeful, and productive along with keeping their Islamic pride and sense of belonging, they could be Muslims and effective citizens at the same time. In addition, through her work, Robert provides clear images about the Islamic life by means of effective reflections on the Islamic aspects with illustrations and by portraying also the efficacy of the British Muslims as a part of society through

General Conclusion

charitable works and productive activities. Hence, Islam is introduced as a way of empowering younger generations instead of creating obstacles and restricting their freedom and happiness. Yet, some young characters are presented as unable to stick to the Islamic way of life; this is an attempt by the author to highlight the category of Muslim youth who cannot face the cultural clashes as being Muslims in a western sphere. Probably, this is done for the purpose of accuracy and truthfulness.

This research might be of significant importance in proving the efficacy of the artistic literary texts of Islamic fiction as revealing the truth about the lives of Muslims as British citizens, as well as presenting the authors' efforts of such a genre to fight back the western stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. Future research would be extremely useful by studying the effect of using the standard Arabic and Islamic terminology in pieces of Islamic fiction by providing certain links of the sociolinguistic field with the one of literature.

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