

Exploring Bicultural Identity in Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith

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Abstract

In "*Ten Acrobats*," biculturalism examines the dynamic interactions between two different cultures in the setting of an enthralling acrobatic show. The acrobats are people who embody and manage the intricacies of bicultural identity in this representation. Their artistic expression and athletic prowess demonstrate how customs, beliefs, and life experiences from two distinct cultural origins have been blended together. The protagonists struggle with issues of identity as they are pulled in different directions by the rules and expectations of their own cultures. The battle to reconcile their dual origins might be reflected in times of doubt or confusion throughout their performance, which is a manifestation of this internal conflict.

Because of their bicultural status, the characters run against prejudice or preconceptions from other people. Their feeling of self-worth and belonging are significantly impacted by these discriminatory encounters, which further complicates their path as performers. It takes constant work and commitment to become fluent and competent in both of their cultural origins. As they strive to understand the subtleties of both cultures, the protagonists battle feelings of inadequacy and a sense of never quite belonging in either environment.

Keywords: biculturalism, Arab Americans, Islamic values, stereotypes, clashes.

استكشاف الهوية الثقافية الثنائية في مسرحية عشرة بهلوانيين في قفزة إيمانية مذهلة

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الملخص

في "عشرة بهلوانيين"، تدرس الثنائية الثقافية التفاعلات الديناميكية بين ثقافتين مختلفتين في إطار عرض بهلواني أسر. البهلوانيون هم الأشخاص الذين يجسدون ويديرون تعقيدات الهوية ثنائية الثقافة في هذا التمثيل. يُظهر تعبيرهم الفني وبراعتهم الرياضية كيفية مزج العادات والمعتقدات وتجارب الحياة من أصلين ثقافيين متميزين معًا. يكافح الأبطال مع قضايا الهوية إذ يُجذبون في اتجاهات مختلفة بسبب قواعد وتوقعات ثقافتهم الخاصة. معوكة التوفيق بين أصولهما المزدوجة قد تنعكس في أوقات الشك أو الارتباك طوال أدائهما، وهو ما يعد مظهرًا من مظاهر هذا الصراع الداخلي.

بسبب وضعهم ثنائي الثقافة، فإن الشخصيات تتعارض مع التحيز أو المفاهيم المسبقة من الآخرين. يتأثر إحساسهم بقيمة الذات والانتماء بشكل كبير بهذه المواجهات التمييزية، مما يزيد من تعقيد مسارهم كمؤدين. يتطلب الأمر عملاً والتزامًا مستمرين ليصبحوا بطلاقة وكفاءة في أصولهم الثقافية. وبينما يسعون جاهدين إلى فهم التفاصيل الدقيقة لكلتا الثقافتين، يحارب الأبطال مشاعر عدم الكفاءة والشعور بعدم الانتماء التام إلى أي من البيئتين. الكلمات المفتاحية: الثنائية الثقافية، العرب الأمريكيون، القيم الإسلامية، الصور النمطية، الصدمات.

Introduction

Arab American immigrants are people of Arab ancestry who fled the Arab world and arrived in the United States. They have made the decision to move to the United States for a variety of reasons, such as to join family members who are already residing there, to pursue higher education, to escape political unrest or violence, or to pursue better economic possibilities. Immigrants from Arab countries in the United States bring their languages, customs, and traditions with them and frequently work hard to integrate into their new communities while upholding their history. They add to the great diversity of the United States by enhancing its cultural, social, and economic fabric.

A well-known Arab American playwright Yussef El Guindi (1960-) has made significant contributions to Arab American theatre. El Guindi's works discuss monitoring and profiling, the employment discrimination; identity development and assimilation; family dissolution; acculturation and the clash of civilizations. El Guindi and other Arab American writers have also shown the social unrest and violence that occurred in their home countries as a result of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, the War on Terror, the despotic nature of regional governments, and the Arab Spring on stage.

Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith: An Overview

Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith (2018) illustrates the worry and anxiety that an Arab American family experiences when adjusting to a new country, as well as their struggles with identification and American culture. The struggles faced by each character shed light on a variety of identity related commentary points, and this play specifically demonstrates how the idea of identity is portrayed with numerous Arab Americans. The play is an excellent representation of biculturalism and intercultural practices; it shows how the issues of Arab American identity are represented by each character and how these issues are viewed from various angles (Ar, 2022, p. 114).

History and traditions serve as a vital source of culture preservation. However, Individuals who find themselves in a social situation where they do not belong have significant difficulties while attempting to live between two different cultures. Unfortunately, this silences their voices as well as the customs and tales that have been passed down throughout the years (Patterson, 2011, p. 1).

Ten Acrobats according to biculturalism is akin to seeing a harmonic performance in which each acrobat symbolizes a different aspect of culture. The leap of faith is the group's readiness to accept and meld various components, resulting in an amazing show of harmony and cultural synthesis. Each figure, representing a different cultural influence, adds special abilities, viewpoints, and customs to the group jump, demonstrating the value of collaboration and variety. The characters' flawless cooperation and mutual trust show how bicultural people negotiate their two identities while overcoming the difficulties of juggling disparate cultural contexts.

The term "leap of faith," according to The Free Dictionary, refers to a choice or readiness to take an action based on the belief that something is correct or will succeed, even when there is minimal or no evidence of it (2022).

Ten characters are included in this play, most of them are Arabs and two are American characters. Kamal, the father of the family who holds Islamic teaching and is very stick to them; Mona, his wife who is more assimilated in the new world than him; Tawfiq, the elder son of the family; Huwaida, their daughter; Hamza, their youngest son; HD (Huwaida's double) who appears in the dreams; Aziz, Kamal's friend who comes to America to visit Kamal; Murad, Aziz's son who is supposed to propose to Huwaida; Pauline, Huwaida's American psychiatrist and Kevin, an American person.

Kamal and Mona question their decision to come to the US because of the shifting of their children's character traits. Tawfiq, their son, doubts the value of his family's religious beliefs. Huwaida, their daughter, has doubts about the arranged marriage and Hamza is unsure about his gender identity.

Religion is a system of values, customs, and beliefs that offers a framework for comprehending the holy or divine. It frequently has a significant impact on how moral standards, social cohesiveness, and cultural identity are shaped within a group or generation. Religions have an impact on literature, art, customs, and social

structures since they are ingrained in cultural settings. Internal conflicts resulting from opposing religious ideas between the two cultures may make it difficult to reconcile differing moral and ethical convictions.

An identity crisis results from the strain to uphold religious standards from both cultures, since the person feels divided between opposing religious and cultural identities. In addition, strict commitment to religious customs or beliefs from both cultures can lead to social isolation since it can be difficult for the individual to completely integrate into the community of that culture or religion as what have happened in kamal's family.

A Muslim American family deeply ingrained in both their Muslim identity and the American way of life is shown in *Ten Acrobats*. A family of immigrants from Egypt navigates intergenerational strife, their Islamic faith, and the ideals of two cultures as they attempt to find their place in American society. *Ten Acrobats* opens a new chapter in the story of the American immigrant as it is portrayed on stage by bringing to life the universal themes of faith, culture, belonging, and desire.

El Guindi's *Ten Acrobats* is one of the plays that explores how the questions of home and belongingness may be crucial in addressing the subject of identity searching in Arab American theatres. El Guindi was born in Egypt but raised in America; therefore he possesses dual identities as an American and an Egyptian. His piece is an Arab American family story that addresses a variety of Los Angeles issues (Ar, 2022).

In general, the mainstream culture, which is frequently the dominant culture in the society in which bicultural people reside, has a substantial impact on their sense of self. There are different levels of cultural absorption as a result of the dominant culture's influence. To fit in, bicultural people adopt mainstream language, habits, and lifestyle choices. Their need for social approval in the mainstream culture affects their feeling of value and belonging. Their entire identity can be impacted by how they perceive approval or rejection.

Islamic Values and Assimilation in *Ten Acrobats*

Religion is crucial in El Guindi's *Ten Acrobats* where he explores via the use of love, disappointment, fear, and rage. Tawfiq may be the finest reflection of the fragmentation of religion because of his atheism, he also symbolizes the breakdown of religion (Ar, 2022).

El Guindi portrays an Egyptian family who come to the US in order to find employment. In spite of this globalization of cultures, Kamal, the father, maintains his Egyptian customs and values and rejects American culture outright for his family. He adheres to Egyptian culture and is completely distinct from American society. Mona, the mother, on the other hand, mostly forgets her Egyptian culture and morals as she assimilates into American society. While Mona consistently rejects her Egyptian ancestry, Kamal persistently holds onto his (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 37).

The play starts with Tawfiq telling his mother that “I don’t want to go to prayers with him” (El Guindi, 2018, p. 6). He does not want to be a muslim anymore “I don’t want to be part of something that doesn’t make sense to me” (El Guindi, 2018, p.6), he does not want to go to the mosque with his father and wants to inform his father about his new ideas concerning Islam but his mother refuses in order to keep tranquility among their family members.

TAWFIQ: Didn’t you both bring me up to be always tell the truth?

MONA: The truth is not a knife you stab someone with. What do you achieve by telling him? Is it fasting you’re fed up with?

TAWFIQ: Oh, mom, stop.

MONA: It’s not the end of the world if you don’t want to fast. We’ll make up some excuse to your father (El Guindi, 2018, p. 5).

Mona, who adopted American ideas, claims that she attempts to dispel her husband's delusions by claiming that Egypt is not marked on a map and that America is a powerful nation in the globe. Mona's thought process demonstrates how much of an American society she has adopted.

The mother follows Islamic law and Arabic cultural customs, but due to her caring ways towards her kids, she also adjusts to American culture. She attempts to dissuade Kamal from making sarcastic remarks about Tawfiq's atheism (Ar, 2022, p. 116).

KAMAL: Of course, it matters. It matters if our children have become so irresponsible, they don’t know how to behave.

MONA: Kamal, it’s the floor. It’s dirt, it’s not a crisis.

KAMAL: It tells me they have no respect for anything anymore. Were you here the entire time?

MONA: Don’t worry about it (El Guindi, 2018, p. 25).

Because his son Tawfiq acts badly within the framework of Arab norms, Kamal feels upset. He is not, for instance, kissing his father's hand or speaking Arabic in his daily speech. As made very evident in these exchanges, Mona attempts to convey that this is not a crisis and that she is acting with respect by acting in this manner or by not allowing Kamal and Tawfiq to continue their conversation. Mona tells her husband that it is not a problem and she tries to ease the situation

Born in America, Tawfiq, the son of Kamal and Mona, a second generation Arab American. In the play, his religious emptiness makes him an atheist, and each character responds to his atheism in a different way (Ar118). Kamal views this circumstance as a disease and says “I would seek medical advice” (El Guindi, 2018, p. 60). However, Aziz is inquisitive about atheism and he says “Every family should have an atheist. It keeps God’s voice fresh and the faithful on their toes” (El Guindi, 2018, p. 87). El Guindi views Aziz's comments as an ironic criticism since it illustrates how individuals are oppressed by religious customs and ultimately convert to other faiths (Ar, 2022, p. 118).

Hybridity denotes the blend of Eastern and Western cultures in the contact zone formed through colonization or cross-cultural interactions (Ali, 2022, para. 3). Being a hybrid character, Tawfiq embraces the freedom of American culture in

choosing his religion. However, he remains rooted in Egyptian culture, supporting his sister and avoiding actions that may lead to regret. Tawfiq's caring and loving nature as a brother is evident, emphasizing that he will always stand by and care for her due to their familial bond. His perspective highlights the retention of certain Egyptian cultural values instilled in him during upbringing (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 40).

In El Guindi's play, cultural crossbreeding possibly causes the second generation to be divided between the American and Egyptian civilizations. Tawfiq acts in a way that is dictated by the duality in his views. It is proved that Tawfiq has a hybrid identity that is divided between the two cultures. As a consequence, mixing oneself with the other leads to ambivalence. Tawfiq makes use of the aspects of the American environment that provide its residents the freedom to act and adopt their own views, just as he would if he were a member of the American culture. He therefore informs his mother that he is no longer a believer in Islam and that he no longer prays in the mosque (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 38).

Tawfiq's parents are unable to explain to him the fundamentals of Islamic prayer. He therefore rejects the idea that a Muslim's outward appearance may only influence their character and chooses to stop acting, namely by praying. He spends a long time thinking that God has declared it is forbidden for us to have our views and attitudes without questioning, but in America, he is free to have the beliefs he wants. He gets to the point where he looks about and questions everything, claiming that he should examine and explore (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 38).

Tawfiq struggles to comprehend Islam, viewing Allah's love as conditional. He tells his brother:

TAWFIQ: Conditional love. God's love is conditional. I love you unconditionally, and somehow God's love is less than mine? Dose that make sense? That my love should be bigger than his?

HAMZA: No: what it says, it's repeated enough times is, the "All Merciful, the Compassionate".

TAWFIQ: As long as you play by his rules (El Guindi, 2018, p. 19).

He suspects that Allah's love is a game with strict rules, leading to eternal punishment in hell for human mistakes. Hamza says "the rules are guidelines, to support you", Tawfiq adds "They are more than guidelines. These are player's rules. Break one and you're that much closer to getting kicked out of the game permanently" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 20). His misconception stems from a lack of understanding about Allah's forgiveness and the belief that people must repent for their flaws. Tawfiq does not see God as Merciful or Compassionate; instead, he perceives God through actions, beliefs, and inner emotions.

This misunderstanding of Islam is partly due to his parents, who, being Muslims by birth, have not prioritized teaching him the essence of the faith, leading to conflicting opinions about his evolving beliefs. Kamal states "Being a Muslim in this country has become too difficult now. Too many complications. Nobody wants to take the trouble to actually live their faith" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 29).

Islam in America, particularly for second-generation migrants such as Huwaida, Tawfiq, and Hamza, is termed 'diasporic Islam'. One defining aspect of this form of Islam is "its view of itself, not solely as a religious practice, but also as a crucial element of identity" (Bilici, 2012, p. 70). However, due to the conflict within their identities, these individuals struggle to align their American and Islamic aspects. Consequently, society perceives Islam not as an integral part of their identity but as a potential threat to their social and psychological well-being (Heidarzadegan, 2020, 47).

It is critical to acknowledge the many dynamic ways in which Islam has shaped Arab American identity. The Islamic identity of individuals within this group may be interpreted and expressed in a variety of ways, and the complexity of Arab American identity is further shaped by the intersectionality of elements including race, nationality, and personal experiences.

Beyond Stereotypes: Americans Perceptions of Arab American Identity

There was a change in how some Americans perceived Arab Americans after the events of September 11, 2001. Regretfully, unfavourable prejudices and preconceptions spread, with some linking Arab Americans to terrorism. Many in the Arab American community had difficulties as a result of the heightened attention and prejudice. A more realistic and nuanced picture of Arab American identity in the post 9/11 world is fostered via education, cultural understanding, and open debate, all of which are efforts to combat these prejudices.

The legal classifications of Arab immigrants, as revealed by racial prerequisite cases from 1878 to 1944, highlight the contradictory practices that favour White supremacy in political identity and, ultimately, in social welfare, even though these immigrants have a long history in the United States and despite the need for a distinct and well defined identity within social services (Tabahi and Bucher, 2022, p. 108). One of the greatest difficulties in modern life arise when individuals struggle to assert their own identity and autonomy in the face of powerful societal forces that seek to control or influence them. It highlights the tension between personal freedom and societal norms or pressures (Musir, 2018, 189).

The way that the immigrants' native culture and the culture of their host nation are intertwined may alter how their psyche is constructed. Huwaida suffers from double consciousness. Her character becomes hybrid as a result of her swinging between two distinct cultures; this is something that appears often in her dream.

Huwaida reports to her American psychiatrist Pauline that she sees a multitude of individuals wearing conservative veils in her nightmares; her friends and family are competing for Miss America and are shown on a large screen. Huwaida's American counterpart, H.D., who is her doppelganger, entered the competition wearing a veil (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 41).

HUWAIDA: It's bad enough I'm in a swimsuit. But on top of that I'm also veiled. Like I have to humiliate myself in front of Muslims and non-Muslims alike, like I'm a circus freak.

PAULINE: When you say veiled—

HUWAIDA: Just my hair. The rest of me barely covered. Though I have to say, I look really good. The swimsuit fits fantastically on me (El Guindi, 2018, p. 10).

Huwaida performs two roles in her dream; she observes and participates in the competition. Stated differently, the victim and the judge simultaneously. She does not wear a sash despite being a contender, indicating that she is unrelated to this competition. But in place of the sash, she wears a veil to symbolise her identity as an Arabian Muslim. Huwaida believes she looks like a circus performer, which has mentally damaged her (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 42).

Dreams, according to Sigmund Freud, are unconscious ideas and desires. According to his theory, the mind uses dreams as a means of expressing suppressed desires and feelings; these dreams frequently have symbolic imagery and deeper meanings. A fundamental component of Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the human psyche is his notion of dreams. Freud in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) declares that:

The unconscious will manifest its suppressed needs and desires. These cravings may be too strong for the conscious mind to manage without causing feelings of anger or self-loathing, even though the conscious mind has suppressed them and driven them into the unconscious. The unconscious then uses pictures or symbols that appear in our dreams and/or writings to reroute and restructure these hidden desires into socially acceptable actions (Bressler, 2011, p. 129).

In Huwaida's dream, she embodies a dual representation of both Egyptian and American cultures. Her dream serves as a mirror reflecting her thoughts and internal conflict, emerging involuntarily in her subconscious.

The play's best example of American prejudice is Pauline, the psychiatrist. The theological dispute is revealed in the chat she had with Huwaida. Pauline gives the following mental explanation of Islam:

[Y]our religion has stopped being a living, breathing support and has become instead an excuse for men to put down women... You're making your life now, in America, and I honestly don't know if the two go well together. It's not okay that we take on the prejudices of one gender and make them our own. So that we women end up being the gatekeepers of our own oppression; to the point that we make of our manacles things of pride and even become vain about it. I don't know how you can call yourself a feminist and say that, and cover yourself as if you have something to be ashamed about, as if you have anything to apologize for (El Guindi, 2018, p.64).

Here, Pauline criticises Islam for favouring males over women and establishing taboos against them in society. In Western culture, veiling is viewed as hiding

something shameful. Islam is therefore seen in the Westernised mentality as being opposed to women's advancement and feminism. In her dream, Huwaida imagined herself with her head covered and dressed in a swimsuit. Huwaida's subconscious mind's portrayal of the conflict between two religions is excellent. She is the middle ground, unable to articulate who she is (Ar, 2022, p. 118).

Huwaida experiences in-betweenness which entails constantly negotiating one's identity in an effort to incorporate the expectations, customs, and cultural values of both sides while being torn between two different worlds. She struggles to fully fit into either culture, but at the same time, the variety of experiences she has enriches her life and gives her a feeling of dual belonging. She states in a response to her psychiatrist about why does she wear hijab in her dream "Because it's still me; I suppose. I can't leave myself behind completely" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 14).

As an American person, Pauline, always throw the situation back to Huwaida's origin. The former asks the latter "On the sash. What did it say? California? New York?" (El Guindi, 2018, p.15), she answers that she was not wearing one. Pauline continues: "Were you representing anything? If not a state, something else? A country? A religion? I guess I'm suggesting... that maybe your not wearing a sash because—in a sense...is the veil the sash?" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 16). Huwaida gets annoyed by these accusations and adds " If she's having problems it has to be because she's veiled" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 16). She informs Pauline that she has came to see psychologist "not an anthropologist" who analyses human societies and cultures.

Due to prejudices and misunderstandings, Pauline has a poor opinion of the hijab. Stereotyping driven by media depictions, cultural unfamiliarity, and disinformation are the main causes of negative impressions. Hijab is misinterpreted as a sign of oppression rather than a personal decision or statement of religion and cultural identity.

Ambivalence is presented in Huwaida's character. She has a very high degree of cultural sensitivity. Huwaida attempts to hide the truth from Pauline, which is that wearing the veil burdens her. She wants to keep her dream from Pauline, but she continues to defend Islam. Her ambiguous identity makes her feel that she is always divided into two parts, with half of her enjoying the headscarf and the other half being embarrassed of it. She is prepared to rebel against her Egyptian limitations by cancelling her engagement and removing her headscarf (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 43).

Every character is expertly designed to showcase the clash of nationalities. In Murad's dream, a customs officer represents the bias of the Western mentality against him as he travels to America in order to see Huwaida. The parents' choice in arranging this marriage reflects the significance of family in Arabic culture. A customs officer acts as though Murad's purported luggage is the bomb squad in Murad's dream (Ar, 2022, p. 119).

CUSTOMS OFFICER: Whose suitcase is this?

MURAD: I didn't come with that.

CUSTOMS OFFICER: Uh-huh. (Into a walkie-talkie) Bomb squad.

H.D: Murad!

CUSTOMS OFFICER: (To Murad.) Passport please. (Murad searches his pockets for his passport.) (El Guindi, 2018, p. 70).

Murad's dream symbolises his total disavowal of H.D. and her American way of life. In his dream, Murad is conversing to H.D., who was born and raised in a distant country, while they are on an aircraft. She calls attention to Egypt's shortcomings, viewing it as a tomb where people bury themselves (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 44).

Murad expresses his love for Egypt and says he “would miss the skies over my city” (El Guindi, 2018, p. 73), feels nostalgic to the faces, the language, the call for prayer and even the broken pavements. After 9/11, bicultural people in America have difficulties because of increased cultural tensions, possible discrimination, and a feeling of being torn between two cultures. Trying to balance many identities make them feel excluded and alienated. Murad adds “This is not my country; I don't belong here” (El Guindi, 2018, p. 70).

There is still a stereotype about Arabs that produces emotional problems in people's thoughts. The characters' nightmares represent their dread of the American society they want to adapt. Dreams of some characters like Huwaida's or Murad's provide insight into their psychiatric histories. Multicultural outlooks create their marginalised identities in the minority groups like Arab Americans in this environment.

Murad confesses that he will not be survived in America. Being a bicultural person in American society frequently carries the burden of being seen as the "other." The difficulties of adjusting to two different cultures might contribute to this experience of otherness and result in sentiments of incompleteness in both. The person struggles with cultural misconceptions, stereotypes, or a persistent feeling of being watched since they do not fit neatly into the accepted standards. Murad continues “I don't want to live my life as a foreigner. I don't want to have that eating away at me. I can be of more value in my country” (El Guindi, 2018, p. 72).

In the given scenario, Hamza emphasizes the incompatibility of homosexuality with Islamic and Egyptian cultural norms, citing his commitment to fasting as a sign of a devout Muslim. Kevin counters, acknowledging the shared humanity of Muslims and Christians and urging Hamza to prioritize happiness over rigid religious beliefs. Despite being homosexual, Kevin expresses his devotion to prayer and belief in God, pleading with Hamza to grant him the freedom to savor life.

Kevin takes advantage of the fact that Hamza is fond of ouds by introducing him to the legend behind the instrument's creation. The oud was created by Lamak, the sixth grandchild of Adam through his son Cain, by hanging his deceased son's body parts on a tree until they dried up. At last, the skeleton took on the shape of an oud. Kevin is able to convince Hamza of his homosexuality by alluding to the story

of the oud and concluding with the position of the oud during the musician's performance (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 45).

This Orientalist mythological tale begins with Kevin using derogatory terms like "funny myth". Furthermore, Kevin, who stands in for the prevalent Westernised belief system, views religious figures like Cain and Adam as components of legendary tales. The exchange of words between Hamza and Kevin also reveals how passive Hamza is in comparison to Kevin, who uses gestures and remarks to represent American power (Ar, 2022, p. 120).

KEVIN: Where are you from?

HAMZA: Originally? San Diego.

KEVIN: I mean—where's your family from?

HAMZA: Oh. —Egypt (El Guindi, 2018, p. 44).

Kevin serves as an illustration of how Americans see Arab identity. When Hamza responds, "San Diego," he does not accept it; instead, he is curious about his background. It illustrates how Americans do not think Arab Americans originate from anyplace in the country. Hamza experiences a sense of otherness due to Kevin's behaviour, as Westernized individuals perceive him as an outsider, not belonging to America (Ar, 2022, p. 121). Otherness arises not solely from the differences in the Other but rather from the viewpoint and discourse of the observer perceiving them as such (Staszak, 2008, p. 1).

Out of hybridity, Hamza thinks that he has done a sin, according to his Egyptian Islamic traditions, indicating that he is moved by the myth of Oud creation and the enchantment of music. Since he is fasting for Ramadan, he feels guilty and humiliated of this abhorrent case (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 46).

Following the events of September 11, 2011, Arab American identity has encountered particular difficulties. The way people view Arab Americans has changed as a result of the heightened attention given to terrorism and the ensuing surge in anti-Muslim prejudice. Numerous people have encountered racism, racial profiling, and discrimination. They have struggled against preconceptions while attempting to claim their identity.

Tradition and Transition: Conflicts Between First and Second Generations

Conflicts between first and second generations captures the conflict between the first generation's cultural traditions, which are frequently ingrained in their nation of origin, and the experiences of the second generation as they adjust to a new cultural setting. As the first generation tries to preserve legacy and the second generation forges an identity in a different cultural context, conflicts can emerge in domains including language, values, and social conventions. In order to resolve these conflicts, it is important to comprehend both points of view, promote dialogue, and identify strategies for bridging cultural and generational divides.

In *Ten Acrobats*, the first generation immigrants are depicted as either distinct from or integrated into the culture of their host nation. The father rejects American

culture in favour of preserving his Egyptian one. He makes a constant effort to maintain the outward look of a Muslim by fasting during Ramadan and praying at the mosque. On the other hand, the mother fully integrates into American culture. As a result, the children of the second generation of immigrants are raised to have a hybrid identity. According to Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity, ambivalence, imitation combine to create the hybrid identity of the second generation (Al Bayomy 49).

Kamal upholds the precepts of Islam in American culture with discipline. He also used Arabic phrases and words like "Haram" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 77), "Assalam alaykum" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 22), "Allah yarhamah" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 83) and "iftar" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 50). He fasts throughout that time of year according to the guidelines of Ramadan. He desires for all of his kids to submit to him as being their father and to observe Islamic law. Their tough actions, which will be described soon have disappointed him.

KAMAL: Don't you kiss your father goodbye anymore?

HAMZA: Oh. (Goes over to his father) Sorry.

KAMAL: You can't forget these things with me. I'm very sensitive (El Guindi, 2018, p. 22).

The second generation; Tawfiq, Huwaida, and Hamza, are raised with hybrid identities as a result of the combination of their mother, who is largely devoted to American culture, and father, who upholds his Egyptian cultural identity; this causes their ambivalence. Tawfiq does not think he is an Arab American. Rather, he considers himself to be American and disapproves the Arabic customs.

Huwaida experiences a state of in-betweenness due to the disparities in the marriage and clothing systems. Hamza is the final kid and he is unsure about his sexual orientation. The other Arab family are Aziz and Murad in addition to this primary family. At the beginning of the play, the father Aziz attempts to force his son to propose to Huwaida, despite the fact that these two have never met. This type of marriage is planned by the family. The men in this family are also highlighted, and they have identity issues related to Americanization (Ar, 2022, p. 116).

Frantz Fanon views the family as a "psychic object." In all developed nations, the family symbolizes a portion of the nation (cited in Shaalan, 2020, 78). The image of the father has undergone many changes throughout the years, especially during the twentieth century. In the previous centuries, the father used to be considered as an embodiment of the patriarchal authority, a dominant power that must be obeyed by the family members. However, the new century offers a new image, one where the father is no more a fearsome figure. He is a caring and a loving father, who enjoys spending time with his children (Alias, 2021, p. 10). In keeping with Egyptian customs, Kamal views himself as the head of the household and believes that no one may act against his wishes. On the one hand, in accordance with Egyptian culture, fathers are the only ones who can make wise judgements. But, when his father requested him to stay in Egypt twenty years ago, Kamal refused to accept his father's choice (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 39).

Mimicry can exhibit both mixed feelings and complexity, in Mona's instance, Bhabha's idea of mimicry is almost a successful imitation (Ashcroft et.al., 2003, p. 156). She successfully bridges the gap between her Islamic and American identities by adapting to the ideal model of the United States. However, Huwaida, Tawfiq, and Hamza are unable to connect with Western civilization because of their psychological ambivalence as a result of failing to mimic mainstream culture. As a result, Middle Eastern Americans who are unable to fit into the ideal image will experience melancholy and sadness and will be shunned (Heidarzadegan, 2020, 43).

Mimicry is the ambiguous bond between the immigrant and the native population of the nation they are living in (Mambrol, 2016, p. 3). While maintaining their own culture, the immigrants mimic the customs, values, and beliefs of their hosts. As a result, Huwaida attempts to undermine the authority of discrimination by imitating other identities as a marginalised identity (Al-Bayomy 2022, p. 42).

Huwaida is an ambivalent person, she changes her opinion and wants to refuse Murad's proposal, "I don't want to get engaged tomorrow" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 54). When Kamal's position as a parent is reduced and he is later cut off from his children's lives, he turns into a horrified father. He is completely let down by his kids when Tawfiq becomes an atheist, Huwaida cancels her engagement and becomes perplexed about her hijab, and Hamza is jailed while having an extramarital affair with Kevin. The three offspring of Kamal symbolise the idea of self hybridity (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 46). Kamal remarks "Our house is not a circus for your silly behaviour. You will leave that rubbish outside when you come in here" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 56).

Tawfiq's atheism is an attempt to reject his father's religion and be accepted as an American; Hamza's homosexuality and disregard for his ethnic values are indications of being the other and Huwaida with a swimsuit and a veil in the nightmare, symbolising her suppressed desires (Heidarzadegan, 2020, 44). Their father discovers that he suddenly finds himself in a new family with new rules and way of thinking, he gets extremely furious because of Hamza's action and comments:

This abomination...This will spread like wild fire—in the community, and back to Egypt. Oh they will love this. We will be the best show in town...Switch off your television and come see the Fawzi family as they explode. First my son goes insane and becomes an atheist. Then my daughter goes insane and dumps the engagement. And now my other son goes insane and goes fornicating in the bushes (El Guindi, 2018, p. 76).

As a first generation person, who believes that migrating to America is his biggest mistake, Kamal is convinced that this country turns strange switches on and off in people's minds and makes them behave in odd ways and they are losing their religion and souls. He counsels his friend Aziz not to live in America and comes to the conclusion "[G]o home and warn anyone who thinks of coming here to

appreciate what they have. It's much better than anything they think this place can offer. You have permission to use us as an example" (El Guindi, 2018, p. 88).

First generation immigrants, exemplified by Kamal, navigate a path avoiding assimilation, carrying the weight of unresolved mourning and loss. While they pass on melancholy to the second generation, hopes and dreams remain untouched. Unlike intergenerational melancholy, assimilation does not transfer seamlessly (Heidarzadegan, 2020, 43). Kamal's second-generation offspring will not attain their father's American Dream through assimilation alone. Involvement in American culture and the active negotiation of dreams and hopes, rather than mourning lost identity, become imperative for their journey.

Kamal's apprehension regarding the outward Islamic portrayal is evident in El-Gunidi's approach, as he stages his play during the month of Ramadan. Kamal's goal is to unite his family for Iftar, a significant moment during this special month when family and friends come together. El Gunidi aims to convey insights into Muslim rituals and the way Arab Americans navigate them (Al-Bayomy, 2022, p. 47). HD describes Ramadan as follows:

[W]hat really makes Ramadan special for me...When the whole family and the friends you've invited gather around the table...The sense in the room that you've all been through something together...So that the first thing that passes your lips is tasted by something deeper inside...God enjoys that...Maybe even applauds this struggle we have taken on. And somewhere in our hearts...perhaps we do too (El Guindi, 2018, p. 107).

Migration has varied effects on individuals and cultures. It leads to the spread and blending of cultural ideas and artifacts across different contexts, fostering the emergence of new cultural forms and practices. This phenomenon also gives rise to cultural hybridity, where diverse cultures intertwine in unpredictable ways. Cultural hybridity signifies the exchange and innovation of ideas and artifacts between cultures, stemming from migration and globalization, creating a mix of cultural elements through people's interactions and shared ideas (Hasty et al., para 22). Cultural hybridity, the most usual form of cultural adjustment, happens when both the host and guest groups' cultural aspects influence each other. This creates a mix of both cultures, along with new traits that come from blending similar traits from both cultures (Raetzsch, cited in Al-Sammarraie, 2022).

The Egyptian family is finding it difficult to fit in with American culture (Kan, 2008, p. 20). Kamal, the family's father, emigrated to America a long time ago, much like Samir in *Language Rooms*. However, he is not pleased in his current role as a carpet salesman and longs for his former life in Egypt. The first generation of immigrants, like Kamal and Samir, are not quite at home in America and are dissatisfied that they have not lived up to the American Dream's expectations. They know they are starting to lose their children, so they stay for their benefit (Alshetawi, 2020, p. 188).

For people who identify predominantly as Muslims, Islam is presented as the component that shapes their identity more than gender, ethnicity, or nationality. The Middle Eastern population should endeavour to engage in negotiations with

the host culture to support acknowledgment of this truth as an integral component of their Muslim identity, as this will help to mitigate the issues that result from disregarding it, which pose a threat to Western civilization and cause identity issues for Muslims. Some Muslims find it difficult to negotiate their identity, which makes it difficult for them to assimilate into Western society. However, theatre may serve as a direct communication tool for negotiation (Heidarzadegan, 2020, 51).

The authentic symbolization in plays like *Ten Acrobats in An Amazing Leap of Faith* fosters self-identification, delving into immigrant family dramas where characters grapple with cultural conflicts, embodying the marginalized and fragmented life experienced by Arab Americans in the country.

Arab Americans in the US struggle with identity issues, which are typified by a persistent sense of alienation. Religious differences and cultural differences add to their constant process of becoming rather than existing. Playwrights such as El Guindi portray this battle, highlighting the pursuit of visibility in the face of challenges to American cultural standards. The difficulties are shown clearly in works like *Ten Acrobats in An Amazing Leap of Faith*, where the figures represent the dispersed and marginalised life, representing the complex dynamics of Arab American identity in the nation.

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