

## Introduction

One of the challenges for history, then, lies not with any sense of its disappearance—or even its irrelevance—but in the capacity for historical narratives to interrogate critically our present circumstances and to open, rather than close, forms of dialogue about what matters to Australia as a nation, as a people, as a diverse and compassionate community.

- **Kate Darian Smith, 'Challenging Histories, Re-reading the past' (2002, p.1-2)**

...literature is a forum for public history: for contesting versions of how we understand where we've come from, and competing versions of where we're going.

- **Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Future fusions and a taste for the past: literature, history and the imagination of Australianness' (2002, p.128-9)**

For non-Indigenous Australians, the public historical past offered is a ubiquitous white past, of which the Bush legend remains the most politically powerful and emotionally resonant myth.

- **Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Future fusions and a taste for the past: literature, history and the imagination of Australianness' (2002, p.131)**

Throughout the production of Australian literature and film the outback has been used as a symbolic space within which to explore, create, dissemble and challenge Australian identity. Whether positive or negative, representations of the outback speak to this landscape's mythic status as the progenitor of the Australian ethos, as well as Australia's ongoing fascination with the desert landscape:

...the desert is now accepted as Australia's most appropriate national symbol...For many Australians, the journey to the Centre is inevitably linked with the exploring expeditions of last century, and they see their journey as a form of pilgrimage, preserving the nation's history by participating in a ritual celebration of its heroes. (Haynes 1998, p.264)

The outback has long been considered the 'birthplace' of the Australian national character, comprised of qualities such as egalitarianism, mateship, stoicism and fortitude, epitomised in the figure of the bushman and outback pioneer (Hirst & Ward 2003; Schaffer 1988).

Artistic and historic portrayals of the outback provide insight into conceptions of Australian identity, that is, what is regarded as the 'real Australia' and by extension who are 'real Australians'. Alongside these portrayals of what Australia 'is' are portrayals of what Australia 'isn't', a discrimination predominantly made upon the basis of race, religion and gender. Indigenous Australians, immigrant communities (particularly those considered non-white), and women are commonly excluded from Australia's historical portrait, creating a mono-cultural, mono-racial, and mono-gendered account of Australian history and identity. The recovery of elided and distorted histories has been essential to re-envisioning Australian history and subverting Australia's self-conceptualisation as a white male nation (Ang 2001; Enstice & Webb 1998; Heiss & Minter 2008; Magarey, Rowley & Sheridan 1993; Pybus 2006; Reynolds 1989, 2000, 2006).

The recently re-discovered history of the 'Afghan' Muslim cameleers in Central Australia adds a new chapter to this re-imagining of the nation, joining in the reclamation of various 'forgotten' histories from an overriding 'white' narrative (Deen 2011; Kabir 2004, 2005b, 2009; Jones & Kenny 2010). This thesis seeks to continue the challenge to traditionally monocultural imaginings of the outback, and by extension the Australian nation, through an analysis of 'Afghan' history, its translation into literary and filmic works, and its elision from Australia's dominant narrative. This includes why this history has been forgotten, what impact this has had on conceptions of Australian national identity, and how this identity relates to Muslims and Arabs.

The history of the 'Afghan' cameleers and their portrayal in media, literature and film, signals the beginning of a tradition of representation wherein Muslims and Arabs function as a 'surrogate, underground' self for White Australia. This underground self functions both as something against which Australian identity can be defined and valued, as well as a figure onto which White Australian anxieties and sins can be projected and consequently externalised from the Australian national body. Arabs and Muslims were not the first to act as surrogate enablers for the reification of White Australian identity in the Australian imaginary.<sup>1</sup> Rather, these communities entered a pre-established tradition beginning with Indigenous Australians and including such groups as women and the Chinese (Ang 2001; Moreton-Robinson 2000; Rutherford 2000).

The construction of the 'Afghan' figure as an alien threat has created learned modes of representation and thinking about Arabs and Muslims, naturalising the belief that these communities are antithetical to, opposed to and foreign to the Australian nation. Post 9/11 Islamophobic rhetoric reproduces this figuring of Arabs and Muslims and employs the tools of its construction, revealing a consistent and powerful tradition of imagining these communities as dangerous interlopers – those who corrupt and do not belong. In the face of the cultural and social alienation that has affected Muslim-Australian communities, particularly after 9/11, this thesis aims to expose how this mythology has become naturalised within Australian society while reasserting Muslim-Australian history and belonging within the Australian national body. Accordingly this thesis includes analysis of how Muslim-Australians have positioned themselves, and have

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'imaginary' is used in this thesis to refer to dominant cultural, social, and historical narratives that circulate as the primary currency for understanding and acting out 'Australian identity'. It refers to the way that 'Australia' has been imagined and produced in order to create an idea of what is 'Australian' and what is 'Un-Australian', "our individual and collective understandings of who we are, what we have been and what Australia is to become." (Larbalestier 2004, *n.p.*)

been positioned by others, within the outback; from the portrayal of the Afghan cameleers in the 1890s through to modern day representations of Muslim-Australians, ending in 2011.

### **The Cameleers in Australia**

During the 1890s approximately 2,000 – 4,000 ‘Afghan’ cameleers came to Australia as a part of the colonial effort to ‘conquer’ the Australian interior. The benefits of the cameleers’ immigration to Australia were plentiful, as their skilful camel-handling enabled outback exploration and settlement, as well as the maintenance of various industries (Jones & Kenny 2010; Kabir 2004; Stevens 1989). Camels and their handlers played an imperative role in several projects, among which were the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line, the Goldfields Water Supply and the Ghan railway. The transportation of supplies to outback towns, mines and stations, as well as the transportation of goods for export, such as wool, significantly contributed to the economic development of Australia for which the outback posed serious logistical difficulties. Camel-handling remained the predominant role of ‘Afghans’, followed by hawking, while others found employment in areas such as mining, labouring and shop-keeping.

There was great diversity amongst those who immigrated to Australia as camel-handlers and hawkers. Although the term ‘Afghan’ was applied liberally it often included individuals from “Beluchistan, the Punjab, Kashmir and the Sindh province, areas that now straddle north India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.” (Ganter 2008, p.487) This meant that many of the cameleers and hawkers were British subjects (Ganter 2008, p.487). As was characteristic of the time, generalities and misnomers were often used when referring to this diverse group of people. These terms included Asiatics, Orientals, Aliens, Mussulmen, “Sepoys, Indians, Hindoos, Jemadars, Malays, Arabs, Turks, Lascars, and

Mohammedans” (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.22). Among these misnomers ‘Afghan’ was most commonly used, creating a shifting and contradictory figure that could at once be Asian and Arab, Muslim and Hindu, without regard to the actual nationality, race, or religion of the person in question.<sup>2</sup>

From the time they first arrived in Australia in 1860, Muslim cameleers were part of some of the most significant European expeditions into the interior. Arguably the most well-known of these expeditions was that of Burke and Wills in 1860, infamous for the death of many in the party. Of the eight cameleers to arrive in 1860 three accompanied the expedition – Dost Mahomed, Hassam Khan and Belooch (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.50). Although the expedition was a failure both cameleers and their camels were soon considered indispensable to anyone hoping to cross or venture into the outback. From 1860 to 1939 ‘Afghan’ cameleers and camels accompanied expeditions such as the Warburton Expedition (1873), the Gosse Expedition (1873), the Giles expedition (1875-6), the Wells Calvert Expedition (1896-7) and the Madigan Expedition (1939) (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.50).

Cameleers were invaluable to the success of these expeditions (and others) and often won the respect of the European pioneers for their hard-work and expertise. A few pioneers expressed their admiration by naming landmarks after the cameleers in their company. Ernest Giles named a body of water ‘Saleh’s Fishponds’ in honour of Saleh

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<sup>2</sup> Jones & Kenny (2010) warn against use of the term ‘Afghan’ as “[i]t carries the risk of romanticism and the inaccuracies of a superficial cliché” (Jones & Kenny 2010). This thesis tacitly acknowledges that the term ‘Afghan’ reflects an essentialising myth of White Australia’s making that summarily denied the distinct and varying heritage of those who came to and settled in Australia as cameleers, hawkers, labourers, business owners, butchers, herbalists and so on. With this in mind, the term ‘Afghan’ is used critically in this thesis and not without reservation. The deployment of the term ‘Afghan’ in this study intends not to perpetuate the reductive and essentialising discourse of 19th-20th century Australia but rather to illuminate it. Although the use of this generic term runs the risk of perpetuating the myth of singularity, this study’s concern with the creation of an ‘Afghan’ figure, or ‘Afghan’ type necessitates its use. When appropriate, however, other alternatives are used, such as ‘cameleers’, ‘Muslim cameleers’, or ‘camel-handlers’.

Mahomed whose hard work ensured the success of Giles' 1875 expedition through western South Australia. Cameleers Kamran and Allanah received similar tokens of appreciation from William Gosse for their part in the 1873 expedition during which they became the first non-Indigenous people to climb Uluru (Jones & Kenny 2010). Gosse named Kamran's Well and Alanah Hill after them. Initially the importation of camels and the subsequent immigration of their handlers was organised by Europeans such as Thomas Elder and Samuel Stuckey (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.44), however by the 1890s the camel industry was largely Afghan run with some cameleers operating independently and others partnering with Europeans.

Apart from accompanying expeditions the cameleers also delivered goods that were essential for survival to outback towns. The sight of the camel trains was often a welcome one for these isolated townships and the cameleers were known to give sweets to the towns' children (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.101). These trips were usually co-ordinated so that the cameleers would return with loads of wool or mineral ore to be transported to ports and railheads, either for exportation or domestic use (Jones & Kenny 2010). The camel-trains were particularly useful during drought time when long trips through the interior were otherwise impossible for the pre-existing bullock teams.

The lives of the cameleers were arduous. The tough work of cameleering and the long trips across the outback were combined with social alienation and a longing for home and family. The cameleers were forbidden from bringing their families to Australia under the 1901 *Immigration Restriction Act* and before this there are no known records of women accompanying the cameleers and making a home in Australia (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.20). Some cameleers married European women or Aboriginal women and had families. Those women who did marry an Afghan subsequently lived in the Ghantowns, segregated from the white community.

Prejudice against 'Afghans' also marred their lives. Throughout much of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, 'Oriental' presence in Australia was a highly contentious issue that sparked significant public and political debate. Much like Chinese immigration and settlement, 'Afghans' were resented largely for the economic threat that cheaper Afghan labour was perceived to pose to white workers. 'Afghans' were consistently derided in the press, socially ostracised and suffered discrimination under government legislation (Kabir 2004, 2005a; Jones & Kenny 2010; Morgan & Poynting 2009; Stevens 1989). Despite the various benefits of Afghan immigration and labour, several factions (such as the Anti-Afghan League, Australian Worker's Association and Charleville Camelphobists) called for their social segregation, economic exclusion and ultimately their expulsion from Australia.

Accompanying media attention fed off this tension and served to exacerbate it through sensationalist and pejorative news articles, opinion pieces, letters to the editor and fictional works. 'Afghans' were varyingly accused of possessing poor hygiene and health, violent temperaments, misogynistic beliefs and practices, and traitorous intentions to destroy Australia from within. As a result, Afghan presence in Australia became a highly scrutinised issue that garnered significant attention. Such scrutiny intensified particularly around the turn of the twentieth century as Australia moved towards Federation and conceptions of white masculinist nationalism became reified in government policy, such as the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 (otherwise known as the White Australia policy). This widespread attention to 'Afghans' in a racially charged atmosphere turned 'Afghans' into a figure of fear and fascination, "exoticism and degeneracy" (Clark 2003, p.57), as local tensions and racial antipathy combined with the intrigue of Orientalist exotic mystique.

Failure to advertise or even acknowledge the role that cameleers and hawkers played in Australia's economic development added to this tension as it encouraged the perception of 'Afghans' as economic parasites who sought to take *from* rather than contribute *to* the nation. Overriding resentment of Afghan presence effectively framed any Afghan contribution as invasive, unwelcome and injurious to the Australian nation. Afghan labour, expertise and achievements were regarded to take away from the glory of Australia and its intended narrative of White superiority and achievement. The desire to uphold this narrative almost certainly contributed to the denigration and de-emphasis of Afghan contribution. This absenting process within the public sphere translated in various other aspects of Afghan life and most significantly led to their historical elision.

Despite efforts to persecute the cameleers and eject them from Australian soil, the cameleers made their mark in Australia not only economically but culturally. Islam was rigorously practiced and upheld, including the building of mosques (some of which still stand) and the observation of religious celebrations, such as Eid – the breaking of the fast after the month of Ramadan. The Afghan community regularly invited white townspeople to attend these celebrations in order to share food and listen to music. Eid celebrations aroused much curiosity from those outside the community and were frequently described in great detail in various newspapers, such as in this evocative report from *The Advertiser* in 1911:

The turbaned Indians after alighting from the vehicles selected a green place among the pines and eucalyptus, and spread long strips of matting on the grass...The young pale amber leafage of the oak trees rustled in the wind and a honey bird was singing when Said Jeelani Shah, the chief priest, stood before the little assemblage, facing the east where Mecca lies, and prayed that God's blessings might be poured down upon the faithful and that their prayers might be heard...At the conclusion of the ceremonial...[c]ases of oranges



and mandarins were opened and the fruit distributed, not only to Indians, but also among the onlookers. Some children of the faith were playing about on the grass all the while, tossing oranges in the air, picking wild flowers, and enjoying the sunshine as the young of all climes do. ('Feast of Ramadan' *The Advertiser*, 27 Sep 1911, p.11)

There was also great exchange between the cameleers and Indigenous Australians on all levels – personal, economic and cultural. Cameleers' navigation of the inland largely depended on the knowledge of Indigenous Australians who also granted the cameleers safe passage through "neighbouring tribal lands...reassuring the elders there that the Afghans came in peace" (Stephenson 2010b, p.14.25). Consequently the desert trails of the cameleers, called camel pads, followed the "migratory pathways" of Aboriginal people – eventually these became the same roads used today (Stephenson 2010b, p.11.25).

These working relationships, and the marriages that sometimes resulted from them, forged not only strong personal connections through family bonds and friendships but also mutual cultural exchange. The impact upon Indigenous Australian cultures is evident in the incorporation of new vocabulary and hand signs to describe the Afghans (Stephenson 2010b, p.12-25), as well as the use of camel hair for "traditional string artefacts" (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.113). The most evident impact lies in the adoption of Islam by some Indigenous Australians. Unfortunately there is also testimony of ill-treatment of Indigenous Australians by some of the cameleers. Although the Muslim cameleers and Indigenous Australians shared a similar lifestyle and belief system, and the cameleers are generally said to have treated Aboriginal people better than the Europeans, exploitation of Indigenous Australians still occurred, either as a cheap source of labour or as a source of sexual gratification (Stephenson 2010b, p.15.25). This history of Afghan-

Aboriginal interaction (both good and bad) as well as the fundamental role played by Indigenous Australians in the success of the camel trade, and thus the economic development of Australia, has been forgotten and/or written out of history along with that of the cameleers (Nebhan 2002, *n.p.*).

The 1920s saw the decline of the camel industry as a result of the introduction of motor transport.<sup>3</sup> This new technology largely supplanted the camel carrying trade and consequently forced many Afghans to leave Australia, their livelihoods now redundant. In 1925 the government created the *Camel Destruction Act* ordering cameleers to kill their camels. Many refused to do this, viewing their camels like pets, and instead set them free into the interior. Of the cameleers who remained in Australia they either switched professions or survived on the minimal camel work that remained. With the disappearance of the camel trade the history of the cameleers also started to fade, only hinted at by place names, the Ghan railway, and the feral camels of the interior.

### **Afghans in literature and film**

Literary output from the 1890s inevitably began to feature Afghans as subjects of poems, short stories, plays and later, film. However marginal, these portrayals provide an important insight into how Afghans were conceptualised in Australian society and what influence this conceptualisation has had on the current day. Although research has been conducted into Afghan portrayal in White Australia (Isakhan 2009; Kabir 2004, 2005a; Jones & Kenny 2010; Morgan & Poynting 2009) this research has focused mainly on media representations and historical record. To date, no extensive investigation has been

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<sup>3</sup> Although motorised transport entered Australia in the early 1900s, it wasn't until the late 1920s that it began to replace the need for camels in the outback and thus negatively impacted upon the livelihood of the cameleers (Jones & Kenny 2010, p.21).

conducted into the nature of artistic representations of Afghans during this period and the legacy of Arab and Muslim imagining which this has left behind.<sup>4</sup> To address this dearth, this thesis analyses artistic depictions of Afghans set in the outback in an effort towards an understanding of what influence these portrayals have had on the imagining of both Australia's Afghan history, and Arabs and Muslims generally within Australian society. As stated in Hanifa Deen's account of her personal journey into the history of the Afghans in *Ali Abdul V The King* (2011): "These stories may even help explain some of the moral ambiguities and strange ironies that still trouble us today." (Deen 2011, p.xi)

The time period chosen for analysis in Chapters One and Two (1890-1940) is based upon the prevalence of media debate regarding Afghans and their presence in Australia, both of which peaked during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as Afghan immigration increased and the camel industry flourished. 'White Australia' (1890-1940) is defined in this thesis as the period immediately surrounding the peak in Afghan immigration and their prevalence in public discourse in the late 1800s to the decline in their occupation and presence in the late 1920s. Inclusion of texts until the 1940s allows for the incorporation of this episode of 'moral panic' as well as its abatement.<sup>5</sup> This makes it possible to assess the legacy this period left behind in terms of artistic representation and social relations. Various events during this time frame such as several droughts, Federation, World War One and the

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<sup>4</sup> Breyley (2003, p.5) briefly mentions the consistency of Afghan representation in the press and literary output, particularly the works of Vance Palmer, but does not conduct further analysis.

<sup>5</sup> The use of the term 'White Australia' prior to the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901) (Commonwealth of Australia 1901), or 'White Australia policy', is based upon both the prevalence of the terminology in public discourse and State based statutes which restrict, bar and tax non-European (particularly Chinese) immigrants coming to Australia. In NSW these statutes include the *Chinese Immigration Regulation and Restriction Act* (1861) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1925), the *Influx of Chinese Restriction Act* (1881) (New South Wales Government 1881) and the *Coloured Races Restriction and Regulation Act* (1896) (New South Wales Government 1896). Under these and similar acts Afghans, Chinese and other non-Europeans could be denied naturalisation and the subsequent rights of citizenship (Cigler 1986; Kendall 2008). Similar acts were also passed in all other Australian states (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1925), informing the development of the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901) (Commonwealth of Australia 1901).

Great Depression of the 1930s means that a consistency of Arab and Muslim representation can be genuinely accessed through the inclusion of periods of duress, crisis and stability.

The exclusive focus on texts set within the outback acknowledges the historic and symbolic potency of this landscape as the locus of Afghan experience in White Australia and the progenitor of White Australian nationalist mythos, respectively (Haynes 1998; Hirst & Ward 2003). These texts also document the all too elided Afghan presence within this landscape while reflecting White Australia's perception of this Afghan presence. The importance of the outback's symbolism during the move towards Federation and the creation of a nationalist literature mean that artistic portrayal of Afghans in this white, male space takes on a political significance, speaking to issues of identity and nationalism.

Throughout this thesis the texts chosen for analysis range widely from the canonical, to the non-canonical, to the obscure. The inclusion of these varying types of texts is partly an acknowledgement of the nature of Australian literary publication during this period and the ensuing literary culture that developed. The predominance of British and European works made it increasingly difficult for Australian authors to get published and consequently contributed to the development of a "magazine culture" (Osborne 2007, p.49), that is, the influence and popularity of literary works in magazines, newspapers and journals such as *The Bulletin* and *The Australian Journal* (Arnold & Lyons 2001).

The strain put on the publishing industry by the First World War, due to price increases in book production, added to the importance of short stories and serial publications in the early twentieth century (Arnold & Lyons 2001, p.6-7). The presence of literary journals such as *The Australian Journal* and *Figaro* gave space to Australian authors and provided opportunities otherwise difficult to come by in the market of the

1920s. Roger Osborne (2007) describes these journals, from which some analysed texts are drawn, citing David Carter: “As cultural institutions, these periodicals performed a significant critical function and their pages often reveal a ‘lively, wordy, intelligent, sometimes intellectual and certainly literate and ‘literary’ local culture’ (Carter 9-10).” (Osborne 2007, p.49)<sup>6</sup>

This was also true of *The Bulletin*, from which many analysed texts come. Although *The Bulletin* was not a literary journal, it holds a unique place within Australia’s literary history due to its popularisation of fiction, and the marrying of its political concerns with its artistic production. While *The Bulletin* showcased the works of established writers, its decision to include literary works of its readers on its famous ‘Red Page’ significantly contributed to the popularity of the magazine. *The Bulletin* promoted itself as a publication that appealed to the sentiments and interests of the ‘everyday man’ by virtue of its foregrounded themes of the bush and the working man, earning it the affectionate title ‘the bushman’s bible’ (Arnold & Lyons 2001, p.269). The relatively indiscriminate approach of *The Bulletin* (in its publication of amateur works) enhanced this reputation, reflecting the evolving ethos of egalitarianism in Australian nationalism – the “myth...of everyone having a story that could be told, of verse that would draw on the actual experiences of outback life” (Arnold & Lyons 2001, p.359).

By pairing this writing with the “rough-and-tumble of journalism”, *The Bulletin* “popularised short fiction and verse” while effectively merging the magazine’s decidedly political interests with that of the works submitted, helping to engender a kind of ‘nationalist literature’ that reflected *The Bulletin’s* “masculinist and racist” ideology

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<sup>6</sup> Osborne (2007) cites: Carter, D. (May 2001) ‘Magazine History’, Media International Australia Incorporating, Culture and Policy 99, pp.9-14.

(Arnold & Lyons 2001, p.269).<sup>7</sup> While some of the literature of *The Bulletin* may lack artistic merit, the relationship between public discourse and literary output within its pages shows the ways in which the public interacted with, interpreted and responded to the media's portrayal of Afghans and how these responses became transposed into literary production.<sup>8</sup> The subsequent incorporation of this literary production into media publications reveals a bilateral relationship wherein each branch – of media and literature – draws upon the other. Some of these works were actually written in response to articles from various newspapers, placing them directly in conversation with the media.<sup>9</sup>

Other works written by aspiring or acting politicians were utilised to “popularise their manifestos” (Enstice & Webb 1998, p.143). Literature was therefore not merely a passive recipient of public discourse, it also actively contributed to this discourse. As noted by Enstice and Webb (1998) in their analysis of ‘Asian invasion’ fiction, despite the popularity of these types of novels, they were excluded when it came to study of

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<sup>7</sup> The extent of *The Bulletin's* influence over national culture and social attitudes is a matter of debate. Djubal (2009), for example, warns against overestimating the impact that *The Bulletin* had on Australian culture due to its relatively small distribution that never rose about 4% of the population. Djubal (2009) proposes that the Australian public may have been “unwilling or uninterested in engaging with the magazine’s radical/intellectual/literary and/or political agenda” that was aimed towards a “specific and narrowly-defined market” (Djubal 2009, p.412). On the other hand, Tasker (2004) argues that *The Bulletin's* overt xenophobia, sexism and racism appealed to many, but not all, of the time,. Tasker (2004) evidences the presence of ‘other voices’ in another popular publication, the less radical *Review of Reviews for Australia*. In light of this debate, works from *The Bulletin* are not given any more or less weight than texts from other sources that are analysed in this thesis. Works from the *The Bulletin* are only treated as a reflection of predominant attitudes when they are otherwise evidenced through newspaper analysis, government policy and popular fictions with a larger audience than *The Bulletin*. While *The Bulletin's* influence at the time of publication may be debated, its influence on later literary culture and its perception as a publication of artistic significance means that the construction of Arabs and Muslims within its pages holds import for the analysis of the tradition of Arab and Muslim representation in Australia.

<sup>8</sup> Public discourse is defined here as non-fictional social and political discourse.

<sup>9</sup> Two texts from *The Bulletin* examined in this chapter (‘When Abdul Had Gone’ (1906) by Bakblox and ‘Mahomet’s Still’ (1912) by F. Born) are, for example, printed under quotes from newspaper articles that speak to the themes of the poems.

Australian literature at a university level, particularly as “their racist and xenophobic views were so at odds with the emerging intellectual sensitivities of the 1960s” (Enstice & Webb 1998, p.16). Quoting Janine Burke, Enstice and Webb maintain the importance of uncovering these “uncomfortable stories” as they “most often tell the truth” (Enstice & Webb 1998, p.16). Djubal (2009) also stresses the importance of these popular works that have been neglected due to “the high culture bias of contemporary historians and academics” (Djubal 2009, p.411). The popular appeal of these works acts as a more genuine reflection of what appealed to the Australian public than those considered to be canonical works that nonetheless had limited distribution.

While the later popularity of canonical works reflects something of contemporary Australian society and the construction of Australian identity, Djubal (2009) argues that they should not be taken as a true reflection of the time lest a historical mythology be perpetuated. The inclusion of non-canonical works for analysis therefore acts in recognition of the varying factors that contributed to their exclusion while seeking to continue the effort towards their recovery. The inclusion of canonical works, on the other hand, is in recognition of the impact they have had on Australian mythology in the perpetuation of the construction of Arabs and Muslims as alien to Australian identity and nation.

### **The Afghan Figure**

The ‘Afghan figure’ analysed in this thesis is treated similarly to that of Toni Morrison’s ‘Africanist’, that is as a system of representation that reflects not an Afghan actuality but what the Muslim cameleers and others “have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people.” (Morrison 1993, p.6-7) Much like Morrison’s ‘Africanist’ presence

the Afghan figure operates as a reflexive creation of a 'white' imagination, an "extraordinary meditation on the self" in which "the subject of the dream is the dreamer" (Morrison 1993, p.17). Within the white-authored dream of American literature the 'Africanist presence' acts as "surrogate and enabler" for white identity – a presence against which whiteness can be measured, validated and reified:

Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfilment of destiny. (Morrison 1993, p.51)

While of course in Australia this system of Self reification and Other denigration was most avidly and destructively carried out in White Australia's relationship with Indigenous Australians, Afghans were conceived via a similar strategy of othering in the White Australian imaginary – their supposed barbarism, cruelty, and racial inferiority used to evidence white superiority. Morrison proposes that the inherently narcissistic figuring of the Other necessarily reveals more, not of the people it claims to represent, but of those doing the representing. In the Africanist presence a white American identity is inscribed, revealed both in the characterisation and purpose of the Africanist figure as one which functions *for* whiteness and is spoken of *by* whiteness.

Whiteness is not a pre-existing, natural state of being inherently linked to white skin, rather it is a discursively produced subjectivity engendered within historical narrative, social conversation, and artistic representation:

Whiteness is more than a characteristic of identity; it is a way of thinking about race and a way of being in place. Firstly, whiteness is a discourse. It refers to ideas about race and



those ideas have actual, material consequences. White ideas about race – sometimes conscious, sometimes not – are acted upon to secure material white privilege...Whiteness can also refer to how white people act and think, as well as how they relate to non-white 'Others' and the environment. (Miller 2011,p.127-8)

The 'white self' is therefore produced, written, and read into being by the producers of social, cultural, and historical currency: "[t]o read is to write oneself: it is an autobiographical act" (Ravenscroft 2007, *n.p.*).

As in the white American imaginary that Morrison (1993) describes, the imagined Other is fundamental to the creation of whiteness in Australian literature by acting as a foil against which whiteness can be measured and defined: "The reader claims her whiteness through finding in the text an image which inspires her to say 'I am this'...and just as significantly another image against whom this subject who aspires to whiteness can say 'I am *not* that.'" (Ravenscroft 2007, *n.p.*) Within this process 'whiteness' exists not as a prediscursive state equated with white skin, but as a continual self-production created in the act of reading and writing oneself into whiteness via an identification with what one 'is' and what one 'is not'. In other words, whiteness is created by fantasising oneself to be white and aspiring to this whiteness: "...it is a moment in the formation of a white 'I' that turns out not to be a thing-in-itself but something produced in the very reading and writing practices which are meant to describe what is already there" (Ravenscroft 2007, *n.p.*). It is through this understanding that we find in the Afghan figure, *not* the Afghan but the 'white' who has autobiographically written their self into the imagined construct of the Other "which whiteness makes and says it has found" (Ravenscroft 2007, *n.p.*). In other words, to say anything of the 'Afghan' is to speak of a

fantasy, one created by a White Australia as a way of reifying an imagined self against an imagined otherness.

The creation of this fantasy is not a conscious process. Rather, it is a betrayal of unconscious desires and fears (Rutherford 2000). Desires fuelling this fantasy creation are the desire for White Australian identity to be reified and irreproachable, the desire for completely ontological monopoly, the retainment of privilege and power, and the ability to exercise that power at will over whatever or whomever it is deemed appropriate, while retaining a position of moral superiority (Hage 2003, p.48-55). Fear of losing any of these things or having them threatened, motivates the need for fantasies which uphold the basic organizing principles that structure the Self (Hage 2003, p.48-55; Rutherford 2000).

Power is fundamental to this Self and Other construction both in the question of who can direct this construction and the assumption of “an exclusive right to look” (Ravenscroft 2007, *n.p.*). Morrison’s (1993) analysis of the Africanist presence works to invert this power hierarchy, or at least expose it, by redirecting “the gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served” (Morrison 1993, p.90). This thesis’s analysis of the Afghan figure’s construction and operation within White Australian literature similarly aims to redirect the critical gaze from the racial object (‘the Afghan’) to the racial subject (White Australia).

Bhabha’s (2005) theory of mimicry is helpful towards this aim in its discussion of the narcissistic self-imagining the coloniser sought in the colonial mimic. The coloniser’s desire to create the colonial mimic is bound within issues of power, control, and difference. By seeking to create the colonial mimic, the coloniser seeks to control the Otherness of the Other, producing one who is ‘like’ the coloniser but who is still comfortably separated by the ‘immutability’ of racial difference (Bhabha 2005, p.122).

Difference is controlled, the coloniser's image is pleasingly reflected, and the power of the coloniser is reinforced. There is an inherent narcissism to this project which seeks to reaffirm the coloniser's self-view as a superior and 'preferable' being. This narcissistic impulse to create the Other in one's own image reveals a desire for ontological monopoly – a desire for the coloniser to inhabit *all* spaces, both physical and subjective.

This is also true for reverse mimicry, where the coloniser seeks to inhabit the Other's subjective space by either dressing as the Other, 'going native' or imagining one's self as the Other. White privilege and power enable this fantastical, fraudulent voyeurism and grant the coloniser the ability to fantasise and act out Otherness as the coloniser desires that Otherness to operate. Blackface performances and Other portrayal in White Australian literature, are examples of reverse mimicry's creation of an Other as desired by the coloniser – a figure of farce, existing happily in recognition of their own inferiority and white superiority. By inhabiting this space, the coloniser imagines the Other in way that supports their self-view and prevents the possibility of being subjected to the Other's returned critical gaze by imaginatively taking control of that gaze. This desire characterises a great deal of White Australian literature's creation of the Afghan figure which, as a subjective space inhabited by whiteness with the pretence to 'Afghanness', was a project of power and control.<sup>10</sup>

Two major structures and devices of power frame the various ways in which Afghan disempowerment was effected in White Australian society making it possible for the Afghan figure's fantastical construction to remain largely unchallenged. Processes of demonization and ostracism, or "deviance and absence", (also identified in modern day Islamophobia by Kevin Dunn (2004)) were used to disenfranchise Afghans in the media,

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<sup>10</sup> The implications of applying Bhabha's (2005) theories of mimicry and reverse mimicry to the Australian context and to a non-Indigenous subject are considered in Chapter Three (p.187-190).

politics and artistic representation. Both of these processes are designed to fundamentally injure claims to citizenship and belonging. Deviance or demonization involves portraying the 'Other' as an aberrant and inferior social element, fundamentally incompatible with 'our' way of life. Within this framework the 'Other' becomes conceptualised as 'thief'; the thief of jobs, wealth, safety, women and jouissance (Rutherford 2000). Chapter One of the thesis analyses the construction of Afghan 'deviance' in Australian literature, film and media between 1890 and 1940 through tropes of Afghan barbarism, cruelty and licentiousness. These representations of Afghan deviance created an idea of Afghans as diametrically opposed to, and inferior to, cultural norms.

'Absenting' allows these cultural norms to be reinforced via the erasure, marginalisation and silencing of the 'Other': "The silencing of cultural groups is potentially the most oppressive method of Othering. Groups of people can be constructed as non-existent, and in these circumstances their claims to belonging and citizenship are fundamentally injured." (Dunn 2004, p.334) Afghan 'absenting' manifested in several ways, most prominently in the erasure of Afghans from the outback altogether, either through the "metaphysical condensation" (Morrison 1993, p.68) of the Afghans into metonymic signifiers such as the camel, or the usurpation of Afghans by white characters either disguised as or taking the role of Afghan men (discussed in Chapter Three). This absenting process led to the historical elision of Afghan contribution to Australia that is reflected in both the meagre literary representation of this history and the extent to which it remains an unknown within Australian society. The texts analysed in Chapter Three extend from the 1890s into the current day in order to assess the effects of this elision on the legacy of the Afghan cameleers.

Portrayal of Afghans, particularly between 1890-1940 when the political potency of the 'Afghan question' was most pronounced, follows these processes wherein Afghans are imagined within a separatist narrative that designates this group as a dangerous 'Other' – external, foreign and unknown to Australia. Several of the literary devices identified by Morrison in her study of the Africanist presence enable this construction of Afghan 'deviance and absence':

1. Economy of stereotype. This allows the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful description.
2. Metonymic displacement. This promises much but delivers little and counts on the reader's complicity in the dismissal. Color coding and other physical traits become metonyms that displace rather than signify the Africanist character.
3. Metaphysical condensation. This allows the writer to transform historical differences. Collapsing persons into animals prevents human contact and exchange; equating speech with grunts or other animal sounds closes off the possibility of communication.
4. Fetishization. This is especially useful in evoking erotic fears or desires...Fetishization is a strategy often used to assert the categorical absolutism of civilisation and savagery.

(Morrison 1993, p.67-8)

The 'economy of stereotype', for example, allows the Afghan figure to occupy a unique, complex and often contradictory position in the White Australian imaginary, straddling both Asian and Arab categorisations and stereotypes. Without the burden of 'specificity and accuracy' the Afghan figure can function in whatever way is most convenient to the construction of 'whiteness'. Thus the vague and generic descriptors of 'Asiatic' and 'Oriental' often see slippage between the terminology used to describe 'the Afghan', at once aligning Afghans with the 'Asian menace' while characterising Afghans within uniquely Arab stereotypes and archetypes.

Ien Ang (2001) notes that the generalised and indiscriminate application of the descriptor 'Asian', which can include people from China to the Middle East (described as 'West Asia'), has led to continued application of this term 'en masse' through Australian history: "As a geographical entity, 'Asia' is an artificial construct with uncertain boundaries, especially on its western front where its border with 'Europe' has never been firmly established" (Ang 2001, p.112). As a consequence of this slippage between categories and geographies, and its prevalence in public discourse about the Afghan cameleers, this thesis' analysis of Afghan portrayal will at times engage with traditions of Asian representation in Australia in addition to traditions of Arab representation.

Assessing the position of Afghan representation within a particular tradition of racial representation is therefore not a straightforward task and requires an incorporation of different aspects of both Asian and Arab modes of representation. For example, Afghan men are predominantly portrayed within the tradition of Orientalist, Arab stereotype: predatory, licentious and devious. Unlike the depiction of Chinese men, Afghans are not emasculated and infantilised (generally), nor are they de-sexualised. If anything, Afghans are hyper-sexualised and fetishized as in-keeping with the archetypal figure of the harem owning, wealthy Sheikh with an appetite for white women (Shaheen 2009; Said 2003). On the other hand, Afghans are conflated with the supposed threat of Chinese invasion and most particularly with the 'threat' that 'Asian labour' posed to Australia. Depictions of 'shrewdness' and 'illegality' are also common to both traditions. The fetishization of Afghan sexuality is examined in Chapter Two as a device to explore White Australian fears of vulnerability. Afghan agency, acted out through sexual aggression, and Afghan invasion through racial miscegenation are the vehicles for this anxiety.

The absencing of Afghans from Australian history enters into a joined tradition of non-representation wherein Asians are rendered non-existent within Australian soil (Ang

2001; Teo 2002, p.132): “As the gratuitous Other, they have no narrative position. They do not feature as part of everyday Australian life or of the sanctified Australian family. They are either silent, or they make strange noises.” (Castro 1998, *n.p.*) Ang (2001) also notes this absencing of Asians in Australia, describing the “exclusion and expulsion of Asians” as “central to the very formation of the modern Australian nation” (Ang 2001, p.122). These differences and similarities will be examined in some texts that portray both Afghan and Asian characters, such as *Silent the Sahib* (1923-4), a serialised novel by Corey E. Player, examined in Chapter Three. Common to these texts, despite their ‘Asianisation’ or ‘Arabing’ of their Afghan character, is the reification and reinforcement of whiteness as a predetermined category and subjectivity inherently linked to white skin through the construction of the Afghan racially determined ‘Otherness’ that denies him access to ‘white’ membership. The employment of ‘deviance’ and ‘absence’ in White Australia’s literary portrayal of Afghans therefore not only affected their denigration, it denied their very claim to belonging within Australia, and it continues to deny their very existence as a part of Australian history.

The figuring of the Afghan through these processes reveals three important aspects of White Australian identity: a highly defensive and territorial racially bounded (white) identity; the need to maintain an idealised image of Australia as ‘Good’ (measured and proven against a ‘Bad’ other); and anxiety and insecurity regarding the unacknowledged illegitimacy of White Australian sovereignty founded upon invasion, dispossession and genocide of Indigenous Australians. The Afghan figure joins a tradition common throughout Australia history wherein Others (racial or otherwise) are identified as the source of any and all ‘badness’ present in Australian society, leaving White Australia untainted and able to maintain a position of inviolable moral integrity and authority:

Mainstream Australia has tried to tear off a part of its soul associated with intense abnegation and self-constriction during the formative years of the country. With an immense psychological effort, it has displaced its self-hatred onto others who symbolise Australia's discarded self. White Australia has to look at the Asian and Indigenous Australians as well as its Asian neighbours as inferior and fearsome, for it has itself felt inferior, and it has feared its own self – socially, culturally and morally. (Nandy 2003, p.3)

The most obvious and prevalent example of this is the displacement of blame for White Australian crimes against Indigenous Australians *back onto* Indigenous Australians. The staggering decrease of the Indigenous Australian population after British colonisation, for example, was at the time explained by theories that suggested Indigenous Australians were a 'dying race' and it was merely their biological inferiority causing this stark decline as opposed to genocide through rape, massacre and disease (Moreton-Robinson 2000, p.5-7). Similarly, the rape of Indigenous Australian women by white men was (and continues to be) blamed upon "Indigenous women's sexual promiscuity, lack of dignity and lack of self-respect" (Moreton-Robinson, p.166). Even when this violence was acknowledged, it was justified via tropes of 'Aboriginal savagery' and the need to civilise and control an otherwise chaotic and self-destructive race (Moreton-Robinson 2000, p.5-7).

Contemporary discourse continues to mirror this process of displacement, absolving White Australia of blame through recourse to the coloniser's 'good intentions' towards Indigenous Australians (Hage 2003, p.76-77). Contemporary Australia is also absolved via narcissistic discourse wherein recognition of racism transforms into self-congratulatory 'gestures of goodwill' and Indigenous Australian protests against racism are used to evidence the 'goodness' of Australian democracy and free speech (Standfield



2004, *n.p.*). Within this white logic, crimes against Indigenous Australians are displaced and Indigenous acts of protest and agency are co-opted into “a metaphor for what [is] best about white Australia” (Standfield 2004, *n.p.*).

Demonization of the Afghan figure is tightly bound within this system of representation. Afghans were not only made to shoulder the blame for White Australia’s failures of inter-racial conflict, economic disadvantage and even failed expeditions into the outback, they were also increasingly blamed for White Australian crimes against Indigenous Australians, such as introducing alcohol and drugs into Indigenous communities, raping women and inciting violence (discussed in Chapter Two). Through this process of displacement not only are White Australia’s crimes displaced but White Australians are then depicted as the saviours and protectors of Indigenous Australians from Afghan lechery and corruption.

Delegitimising Afghans and consequently re-producing whiteness within Australian society also ties heavily into issues of sovereignty. The dispossession of Indigenous Australians and the subsequent British possession of the land depended upon the myth of *terra nullius*. *Terra Nullius* stated that no one ‘possessed’ the land, according to British standards, as evidenced by a lack of cultivation and infrastructure. The supposed inherent superiority of the British meant that only they could bring the land to its full fruition:

British civilisation is the highest of all civilisations in terms of ideals and achievements...British civilisation is a racially determined civilisation...Those who are not White are by definition unable to appreciate or commit themselves to, let alone create, societies which uphold the British values of democracy, freedom etc. The sheer presence of non-Whites ends up deliberately or accidentally undermining those values and the culture based on them...by migrating to the West they undermine civilised culture and the

civilised high standard of living...The more a White society is penetrated by non-White elements the less it is capable of expressing the values of White civilisation. (Hage 2003, p.53)

The maintenance of this myth required an ongoing effort to undermine and delegitimize Indigenous Australians' knowledge of, use of, and connection to the land. It also required similar denial of non-Indigenous, non-white interaction with the land that yielded any success or benefit to the nation (Curthoys 2000). To admit that non-white people were capable of either matching or surpassing white achievements relating to the land (such as agriculture and exploration) would in effect act to expose the mythology of *terra nullius* and bring British sovereignty (and superiority) into question:

Control of the landscape is vital to the settler psyche. The victors' histories falsely paraded as the history of Australia. These histories are those of absence: of *terra nullius*. In order to uphold the lie of an 'empty land', Europeans have either denied the Indigenous people's presence, or have completely devalued our cultures. These hegemonic histories take possession of 'other' histories and silence them, or manipulate and 'deform' them. (Birch 2003, p.152)

Acknowledgment of the benefits and successes of Afghan immigration and presence in Australia would therefore mean to undermine the underlying beliefs supporting the colonial project. Afghan success in the outback was particularly threatening to the myth of white British superiority given the consistent failure of the British to cultivate, explore, and 'conquer' this landscape. For British colonisers the desert mainly represented death and disappointment, having failed to realise the hopes of explorers for either an edenic wilderness or an inland sea. The deaths of the outback explorers who pursued these

hopes cast the desert as “destroyer of the nation’s heroes”. The “hideous void” of the outback, so divergent from the familiar landscape of Britain or even the Australian coast, became “a nightmare landscape” embodying “the deepest fears of European colonists – isolation in an alien land, drought and thirst hitherto unimaginable, and the fear of a lonely death far from home” (Haynes 1998, p.111).

The outback’s hostility to human life, its resistance to cultivation and domestication, and its vast unknown spaces, transformed the outback into the “antagonist in the evolving history of a nation” (Haynes 1998). The outback landscape embodied fears of the colonial project’s failure in Australia; its untameable presence aggravating an already present anxiety about the “unknown and unnameable world” of the Australian frontier (Rutherford 2000, p.29). Haynes (1998) notes this in the “archetypal lone figure lost in the desert [who] became, in the national consciousness, an icon not only for the inland explorers but also for the nation’s view of its history, its battle for survival, and, increasingly in the twentieth century, for the individual soul marooned in an existential void.” (Haynes 1998, p.209) The colonisers’ anxious desire to ‘tame’ the land was inseparable from fears of Indigenous Australian sovereignty over the land which not only illegitimated British sovereignty but rendered the colonisation of Australia illegal. The outback, therefore, while used to reify White Australian identity, is also a space that evokes anxiety and insecurity surrounding this identity’s foundation upon illegitimate sovereignty and a mythologised white history.

The negation of Indigenous sovereignty through *terra nullius*, for example, necessitated an erasure of Indigenous resistance to colonisation from historical record (O’Dowd; Reynolds). These conflicts, at first rigorously recorded, were instead transferred into the narrative of British conflict with the land, enabling white Australia “to talk about what we felt” (O’Dowd, p.80) while perpetuating a narrative that *proved* rather than

*disproved* the British right to claim the land: “With the land as harsh we could talk of our mastery, courage and its defeat from wild unknownness. The construction of the land as hostile enabled the silence about the killing and mistreatment of Indigenous people, their resistance and the expropriation of their land.” (O’Dowd 2006, p.8)

This political resonance transforms outback narratives into national narratives interlaced with issues of sovereignty, power and national identity. The hopes and fears of the British colonisers are played out within the human landscape through the figures of the pioneer and the bushman, Australia’s first national heroes (Haynes 1998): “...for a country that had hitherto not considered itself worthy to do more than admire from afar the great figures of European history and literature...[the outback was] a unique, epic landscape of almost limitless literary potential.” (Haynes 1998, p.111) In these outback figures a growing sense of Australian identity can be found along with wider national concerns.

### **Islamophobia and the legacy of the Afghan figure**

White Australian society’s treatment of the Afghan cameleers, both in fiction and actuality, holds stark commonality to current Islamophobic discourse (Iskahan 2009). Arab and Muslim deviance (purportedly evidenced via tropes of misogyny, lasciviousness, and criminality) and absence (purportedly evidenced via Muslim nonexistence in Australian history and society) are common between these two periods of moral panic: the 1890s-1920s moral panic surrounding the cameleers and the post 9/11 (2001 onwards) moral panic, termed ‘Islamophobia’.<sup>11</sup> Drawing upon inherited ideologies of

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<sup>11</sup>Anti-Islamic and anti-Arab prejudice are not restricted to these periods of moral panic, rather they draw upon and perpetuate an ongoing tradition of an Orientalist imagining of Muslims and Arabs within Australia (Ata 2007; Kabir 2007; Saniotis 2004).

British colonialism and Orientalism, this consistent representation has provided “the Australian populace with a limited discursive field that continues to engender the kind of myths and images that have long demarcated the divide between Oriental backwardness and Western civility” (Isakhan 2009, p.732).

In today’s context of Islamophobia, the modern Australian media has “not so much invented the tropes and stereotypes that they have used to construct this negative image and limited discursive field, as they have invoked a rich tapestry of pre-existing notions about the non-Western world” (Isakhan 2009, p.732).<sup>12</sup> The reproduction and replication of these processes has effectively encoded Muslim and non-Muslim Australians into a separatist narrative of ‘Us and Them’, naturalising the belief that Arabs and Muslims are ‘outside of’ the Australian nation despite the long presence of Muslims in Australia and their extensive contributions to the nation (Ganter 2008; Haveric 2006; Kabir 2004; Stevens 1989).<sup>13</sup> This construction of Arabs and Muslims within White Australian discourse reveals a linear progression of “ideological uniformity” (Isakhan 2009 quotes McKnight 2005, p.54) that extends from Oriental and colonial ideologies to current day Islamophobia in surprisingly consistent ways.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Oriental representations have also been reinforced in contemporary Australia through Arab and Muslim characterisations in Hollywood films that also “inherited and embellished Europe’s pre-existing Arab caricatures.” (Shaheen 2009, p.13)

<sup>13</sup> Muslim presence in Australia pre-dates British colonisation of Australia. The trading relationship between Muslim Macassans and Indigenous Australians in Arnhem Land and various other areas was first recorded in 1721, although there are suggestions that this relationship dates back into the 1600’s (Ganter 2008). This trading relationship was seasonal and ongoing which, in combination with familial relations formed between Macassans and Indigenous Australians, contributed to “profound imprints on the cultures and languages of the far north shores” (Ganter 2008, p.482). In light of this history of Muslims in Australia, followed on by the Malay pearl divers and Afghan cameleers, Ganter refers to Muslims as Australia’s “most long-standing non-indigenous segment” (Ganter 2008, p.481).

<sup>14</sup> Iskhan (2009) quotes McKnight, D. (2005) ‘Murdoch and the Culture War’ in R. Manne (Ed.), *Do Not Disturb: Is the Media Failing Australia?* Black Inc, Melbourne, pp.53-74

While the superficial content of this discourse varies over time depending upon social context and current events, studies of Arab and Muslim portrayal in Australia have revealed underlying constructs of stereotype as well as modes and stratagems of social interaction that consistently operate (Ata 2010; Isakhan 2009). For example, Abe Ata's (2007) review of the portrayal of Muslim Arabs in the media and school textbooks since 1976, reveals that "images of lechery, stupidity, viciousness, veniality and blood thirstiness are commonplace" as are suggestions that Arabs thrive on conflict and have a "neurotic sexuality" that creates a "preoccupation with sexual power" (Ata 2007, *n.p.*). Women specifically are portrayed as oppressed and abused by their inherently aggressive male counterparts. Ata (2007) also reveals a tendency to portray Islam as anti-Christian and as a threat to the Australian way of life. These kind of stereotypes only serve to be exacerbated during periods of conflict with Arab countries, such as in World War I (Isakhan 2009), the Gulf War (Kabir 2004), the Iranian Revolution (Ata 1987) and the 'War on Terror' (Kabir 2006). For example, Humphrey's (2005) observation of the Lebanese community's internalisation of otherness during the Gulf War period, exacerbated by a lack of self-representation, echoes contemporary concerns regarding the Muslim Australian community:

Muslim immigrant response to media representations reveals their political inequality through the inability to define their own cultural identity...The Lebanese, or different sections of the community, cannot fix the co-ordinates of their identity...The media itself becomes their source of identity, often with the reciprocal effect of stereotyping both their own Islamic culture and Australian culture; for example, Islam is seen as unitary and unchanging, and the West as bad and threatening their values. (Humphrey 2005, p.141)

This observation is strikingly similar to the experiences of Australian Muslims in the present day. Spatial, cultural and historical absencing of Muslim-Australians also occurs across time: through the construction of communities with a Muslim presence as a 'Christian' space with "no local Muslims" (Dunn 2004, p.333); through Islamophobic discourse reinforcing a supposed cultural incompatibility between Islam and Australia; and through the repressed history of Islam in Australia. These commonalities do not mean that the figuring of Arabs and Muslims never changes (these changes are documented throughout this thesis), rather that the mechanics of social ostracism and demonization persist throughout time. The effects of Anti-Arab and Muslim sentiment, expressed via pre-established demonizing stereotypes and reinforced via repetitious processes of social ostracism, has been to disenfranchise these communities while reinforcing the dominance of White Australian norms and narratives. The translation of this relationship into literary works has enabled the extent to which this conceptualisation has been naturalised in the current day.

It is important at this point to briefly define what is meant by 'Islamophobia' and what sections of the community are affected by it. In this thesis, 'Islamophobia' is defined as a state of 'moral panic' (Cohen 1973; Morgan & Poynting 2009) drawing upon Orientalist schools of thought that have predisposed Western societies to view Islam, Muslims and Arabs as direct threats to personal, national, moral and spiritual security (Said 2003). 'Moral panics' can manifest in either "passive" or "active" expressions of anti-Islamic sentiment, which range from "the mere embodiment of unfavourable attitudes towards Muslims" to "hate crimes against Muslims and symbols of Islamic identity as well as institutional discrimination." (Islam 2005) This prejudice also extends to non-Muslim Arabs due to the common conflation of Arabs and Muslims in public discourse that has led to a misconception as to their separability (Manning 2004). By including both Arab

and Muslim representation this thesis does not seek to further this conflation, rather to recognise its existence and its effect on each community.

Within this discourse Islam is imagined as an inherently misogynistic and barbaric religion (Said 2003) with aspirations for world domination through religious subjugation if not conversion. Furthermore Muslims and Arabs are envisaged as agents of “terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians” (Said 2003, p.59) and are increasingly dehumanised and essentialised through their depiction as inseparable agents of a common cause. This discourse of fear and paranoia posits Muslims as intrinsically alien and ‘unlike us’, establishing Muslims within the role of a modern day folk-devil, or fifth columnist (Abdalla, Ewart, Rane 2010, p.v). Running alongside this discourse of fear is a system of misinformation wherein Islam is either intentionally or unintentionally misrepresented, particularly in the media (Ata 2007; Collins et al 2000; Manning 2004).

In addition to Orientalist predilections and catalytic events Islamophobic sentiment also extends from the historical inheritance of Australia’s complex existentialist relationship between Self and Other whereby the integrity of the Self is dependent upon the expulsion of the Other: “...security is imagined on the basis of a bounded and vulnerable identity in perpetual opposition to an outside – an *Other* – whose character and claims threaten its integrity and safety.” (Burke 2008, p.4) In contemporary Australian society there continues to be an emotional, psychological and political investment in colonial Australia’s Self conception as an idealised non-violent ‘settler’ nation with a legacy of moral integrity and social equality (Rutherford 2000; Veracini 2008). This requires an imagining of Australia dependent upon a denial of Australia’s racial *and* racist past. By denying the presence of non-white histories in Australia, and the inter-racial violence accompanying these histories, Australia is able to maintain the fantasy of the Australian ‘Good’. Rutherford (2000) defines the ‘Australian Good’ as a moral code



(purported to be uniquely Australian) of “neighbourliness, a generosity to the other in times of need, coupled with a spirit of equality and the rejection of visible hierarchies” (Rutherford 2000, p.7). Inherent to the imagining of the ‘Australian Good’ is the belief that it is under attack or in the process of being lost. This “beleaguered moral universe” (Rutherford 2000, p.9) therefore requires defence against those who “fail to live up to the canon of Australian virtue” (Rutherford 2000, p.7) and would corrupt the Good nation with the “inequalities of other cultures” (Rutherford 2000, p.8). Rejecting these Others is consequently framed as a defensive, rather than offensive (in both senses of the term), project.

Maintenance of the ‘Australian Good’ requires an imagining of Australian identity that is founded upon a myth of wholeness, “that is, that we Australians are subjects without lack, and subjects of a nation without lack.” (Rutherford 2000, pp.186-187) To be without ‘lack’ is to be without the point at which the ‘Australian Good’ fails; that is, where a desired position of inviolable moral authority fails to eventuate and is undermined through the existence of contrary evidence such as immorality, violence, racism and so on. The presence of the ‘Other’, historically and culturally, exposes the lack or void which the myth of plenitude attempts to conceal. The full recognition of ‘Others’ such as “the Aboriginal, the immigrant, and the feminine” destabilises notions of the Australian ‘Good’ through an inherently necessary acknowledgement of Australia’s “violent history of misogyny and racism” (Rutherford 2000, p.118). Australia’s ‘bad’ past therefore becomes an ‘Other’ in and of itself as do those who seek to illuminate it (Hage 2003, p.77). The recognition of this past ultimately threatens to take away Australia’s view of itself as ‘Good’ through the returned gaze of an uncensored history.

Full recognition of the wronged Other requires a psychological effort that “involves cognition, emotion, morality and action. Action requires that we know, remember, rescue

and do justice” (Havemann 2005, p.57). The inherently painful and traumatic nature of the Self-critical revision this would require, demands the ability to deny and disavow even when faced with the knowledge of wrongdoing:

Denial, as conceptualised by Stanley Cohen, is the process whereby atrocities are neutralised, normalised, legitimised or rendered invisible by being blocked out of consciousness and conscience. Such denial involves denial of knowledge, denial of feeling, denial of responsibility, and/or inaction in the light of knowledge. (Havemann 2005, p.57)

Veracini (2008) suggests, for example, that the exclusion of Aboriginal history in Australia and the reproduction of a ‘white’ history creates “successive renditions of the same dream” (Veracini 2008, p.373) of Australia as an idealised settler nation. Australia’s “founding violence” (Veracini 2008, p.365) of genocide, racism, and dispossession is subsequently replaced by a “fantasy” of Australia as a society “devoid of disturbances or dislocations” (Veracini 2008, p.364). In order to avoid the “painful conflict between fantasy and reality” defensive formations of disavowal and repression are developed and deployed (Veracini 2008, p.365). These defensive mechanisms seek to sustain the original fantasy of settler societies as ideal societies by supplanting histories that threaten this fantasy (such as histories of violence, gender inequality, sectarianism and racism (Veracini 2008, p.373)) with mythologised histories of peaceful settlement, inter-racial harmony, gender equality and social equity.

Without the ability to disavow, deny or repress such histories, settler societies are unable to sustain the idealisation of the settler nation and therefore experience a traumatic confrontation between the imagined and real Self (Veracini 2008). This confrontation is traumatic as it undermines the Self’s image as a morally sanctified body

and consequently requires a critical re-imagining of the Self. Memmi's 'Nero Complex' argues that this moment of realisation results in twin disgust, both towards the Self as 'usurper' and the 'usurped' Other whose existence inherently condemns the usurper:

...accepting the reality of being a colonizer means agreeing to be a non legitimate privileged person, that is, a usurper...the more the usurped is downtrodden the more the usurper triumphs and, thereafter, confirms his guilt and establishes his self-condemnation. Thus, the momentum of this mechanism for defense propels itself and worsens as it continues to move. This self-defeating process pushes the usurper to go one step further; to wish the disappearance of the usurped, whose very existence causes him to take the role of usurper, and whose heavier and heavier oppression makes him more and more an oppressor himself. (Memmi 2003, p.96-7)

The desire to 'wish away' the Other and therefore maintain the Self necessitates the creation of histories and narratives that absent either troubling Others or troubling Other histories. By creating a historical amnesia in the national memory the Self remains protected and unchallenged, although at the cost of the marginalisation of the Other (Havemann 2005). This tendency towards disavowal and denial extends from both a psychological and political position. For Australia, the absencing of Indigenous Australians is fundamental to the justification of the process of colonisation itself (Havemann 2005; Reynolds 2000) and to the ongoing maintenance of systems and hierarchies of power that privilege 'whiteness' (Larbalestier 2004; Moreton Robinson 2000, 2004; Standfield 2004).

In Australia this was achieved through the concept *terra nullius*, that is the imagining of Australia as an empty uninhabited land, and through a continuing historical narrative that perpetuates this process of absencing Indigenous Australians both spatially, as existing within the land, and socially, as integral to settler society (Havemann 2005;

Perera & Pugliese 1998; Atkinson 2005). In her analysis of settler nationalisms in Israel and Australia, Joyce Dalsheim (2004) also notes the desire to 'wish away' the presence of the indigenous Other. Settler nationalisms "require a particular kind of nationalist imagining" with regard to indigenous populations which must be imagined in "ways that support the settler project" (Dalsheim 2004, p.52). The "partial imagining away" of Others must therefore be enacted without overtly contravening the "social democratic values" and "liberal sensibilities" of the 'settler' nation (Dalsheim 2004, p.152) in order to maintain a "morally acceptable self-portrait among descendants" (Dalsheim 2004, p.167). For such a portrait to be created an alternative narrative must be formed to replace that which is undesirable.

Although both Dalsheim (2004) and Veracini (2008) are referring specifically to founding settler relations with indigenous communities, the desire for the maintenance of an idealised self through the absence of the Other is also applicable to settler societies' relationships with the immigrant Other, particularly when that Other is present throughout the process of colonisation – as was the case with the Afghan cameleers. While the immigrant Other presence does not raise the same anxieties regarding legitimate sovereignty, it does raise anxieties regarding belonging and the idealised Self. Not only does the long-standing presence of Other communities in Australia undermine a racially constructed narrative of belonging that was epitomised in the White Australia policy, it also complicates the untroubled construction of Australia as a nation whose successful development inherently hinged on the racial superiority of the British. Furthermore, full recognition of histories of racial discrimination and persecution, such as those suffered by Aborigines, the Afghan cameleers and the Chinese, would challenge the construction of Australia as an idealised society based upon values of equality, egalitarianism, 'mateship' and inclusivity. With specific relation to migrant populations,

such recognition would greatly challenge the narrative of “ethnic success and integration concealing trauma, poverty and ongoing exclusion” (Veracini 2008, p.373).

Although government policy’s move away from the desire for racial homogeneity (with the abandonment of the White Australia Policy) and the move towards a heterogeneous imagining of Australia (with the push towards multiculturalism) could suggest a contemporary lack of identification with such a racially constructed identity, Ang (2001) proposes that the multicultural narrative in Australia has actually allowed Australia, to an extent, to disown or disavow its racist past. This racial identity continues to operate in contemporary Australia rather than reflecting a fundamental shift in Australia’s identity:

It has enabled the production of a new national narrative which tells the reassuring story that Australia has now relinquished its racist past, and embraced a non-racist and non-racial national identity...It signifies a tendency to disavow, rather than confront and come to terms with the racist past of the nation, and with the central importance of racial differentiation in the very historical constitution of Australia as a nation-state...this past is reduced symbolically to a childhood sin, as it were, which doesn’t have anything to do with the mature Australia. (Ang 2001, p.104)

By engaging in this type of denial and disavowal the “history of exclusionism” (Ang 2001, p.106) in Australia is simply being silenced and the importance of race in Australian identity formation is being repressed.

Although multiculturalism has transformed the ways in which we talk about nation, the development of this vocabulary merely replaces ‘race’ with cultural and ethnic descriptors and does not effectively “re-imagine the nation in the image of a non-racial paradise of ‘cultural diversity’” (Ang 2001, p.107). Consequently, “the trace of ‘race’

continues to lead a subterranean life which remains effective in people's everyday understandings of what's happening in their country" (Ang 2001, p.107). Hage (2003) poses a similar criticism to that of Ang. He suggests that the shift towards multiculturalism was characterised not by "the disappearance of the racial strand of White paranoia but rather its increased marginalisation" (Hage 2003, p.57). Rather than undoing Australia's racially constructed narrative of belonging and identity, multiculturalism has merely discursively shifted the focus away from race without confronting and coming to terms with the implications of Australia's racial history. Race remains fundamental to the imagining of an Australia for whom, until forty years ago, whiteness was such an overt element of national identity.

The desire to disavow Australia's racial history, either by relegating it to the past or by denying it completely, has left White Australia without the discursive equipment to effectively handle an increasingly nuanced and complex imagining of Australian identity and nation that does not privilege the Anglo-Saxon subject as either the host, the mainstream or the status quo (Ang 2001, p.106-7). In turn, those communities who suffered discrimination or persecution are effectively illegitimated by a nation that either denies or disavows their trauma (Havemann 2005). The preference for silence rather than discussion, repression rather than confrontation, has in turn created a precarious position of fundamental insecurity and anxiety from which White Australia is unable to create a new and constructive way of thinking, speaking and celebrating nation without denial or disavowal (Ang 2001; Hage 2003; Veracini 2008).

Hage (2003, p.22) suggests that a national culture of 'worrying' has become the predominant way of expressing care for and belonging to nation. He terms this as a "paranoid nationalism", one that imagines the nation as continually under threat. By allowing this culture of worrying to become dominant, belonging to nation becomes an

inherently defensive project, continually in opposition to the threat which is the source of concern. This state of defensive insecurity can easily transform into a state of aggression against the Other whose very presence is posed as a threat to the sanctity of the Self. In the case of Muslim-Australians, this threat is established via the proliferation of tropes of criminality, barbarism, mental degeneracy, self imposed isolation (such as the forming of ethnic 'ghettoes') and sexual licentiousness, all of which seek to cast the Other as thief, "the one who wants to steal our enjoyment by threatening our way of life" (Rutherford 2000, p.141-2).

### **Effects of Islamophobia and counter-discursive responses.**

The impact of Islamophobia upon Muslim-Australian and Arab-Australian communities has been widespread and varied but more often than not negative and damaging. Internalisation of 'otherness', developing feelings of victimisation, negative media portrayal, and increased experiences with discrimination and racially motivated abuse suggest an increasing risk of alienation within Muslim-Australian communities.<sup>15</sup> Fear and anxiety have come to be commonly experienced by many Muslim-Australians who feel themselves under attack by the broader Australian community. In their 2005 'National Fear Survey' Aly and Balnaves (2007) found that after 9/11 Muslim-Australians were experiencing heightened levels of fear that exceeded those of non-Muslim Australians (Aly & Balnaves 2007). Most significantly it was found that, rather than fearing activities such as travelling overseas, Muslim-Australians feared leaving their homes or travelling locally due to concerns about being targets of racial or religious abuse. Much of this fear is attributed to the perception of negative media portrayals and their impact upon the attitudes of the broader Australian community towards Muslims and Arabs. Another

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<sup>15</sup> For further discussion of public attitudes towards Islam see Abdalla & Rane (2008) and Ata (2009).

survey conducted by Aly (2007a) revealed that the media's portrayal of Muslims had a negative impact not only on Muslims' self-image but also the way that they imagined themselves relating to the wider Australian community:

"Even though we don't believe what they [the media] are saying it still has a big impact because you've grown up here all your life, you consider yourselves an Australian and the media basically, is almost stabbing you in the back...they always, not clearly, not specifically state the fact that they'd almost be better off without us in a way; that Australians would be better off without the Muslims." (quoting survey respondent; Aly 2007a, p.27)

The Ismaʿ Report (Jonas 2004) compiled by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) also showed that 80% of participants in a survey conducted by UWS reported increased feelings of fear, anxiety and alienation: "After September 11, it felt like our home, which Australia has been our home for almost all of my life and definitely all of their lives [referring to children] was somehow not home anymore...I've started feeling more like a foreigner." (quoting survey respondent; Jonas 2004, p.77) Aly (2007a) contends that Muslim-Australians have begun to internalise this negative perception of themselves as 'Other', thus furthering an oppositional relationship with the broader Australian community (Aly 2007a, p.27). This sense of opposition subsequently becomes the framework through which Muslim-Australians perceive the media and broader Australian community creating a perpetual sense of victimisation:

Muslims who engage with negative media messages that are perceived as anti-Muslim are using the discourse to reconstruct a Muslim identity framed by a shared sense of injustice. They also engage alternative media discourses that substantiate victimhood to reinforce the



victim identity...The victim identity is rooted in a notion that Australian Muslims are being victimised because of their religious beliefs. (Aly 2007a, p.34-5)

This internalisation of the role as 'outsider' can in turn have an effect on individuals' perceptions of their sense of belonging on a national scale. Integral to this sense of Otherness is an awareness of how Muslims are negatively perceived as terrorists, criminals, rapists, inherently violent, oppressed by men/oppressive men, intellectually inferior and 'un-Australian' (Ryan 2007, p.51-59; Kamp & Mansouri 2007, p.93-4; Noble & Tabar 2002, p.137-8). In a study conducted by Kamp and Mansouri (2007) it was found that some Muslim youth reciprocally reject Australia as 'home' as a result of their perceived rejection from the national body: "Some students argued that Lebanon was their sole, true home—despite the fact that they may never have lived in Lebanon. When asked why this was the case, they related their apparent rejection of the Australian national space to the exclusion and racism they experienced within it." (Kamp & Mansouri 2007, p.95)

These negative experiences, particularly those experienced within the school institution, can pose risks for Muslim youth both psychologically and practically:

If, because of their Muslim identities, Muslim-Australian youth are not receiving as strong and inclusive an educational experience as they could be, there is a danger that their educational outcomes will suffer, in turn impacting their ability to access the labour market and participate fully in civic life, two of the main avenues for active citizenship. The risk is that if the current societal pattern of exclusion of Arab and Muslim Australians from full Australian citizenship is allowed to penetrate the educational system, this will engender long-term marginalisation and exclusion for future generations. (Kamp & Mansouri 2007, p.88)

Such negative impacts are also reported in the Ismaʿ report where participants gave statements revealing an increasing sense of alienation. Alienation is particularly detrimental to Muslim youth struggling to develop their sense of identity. Incidents of youths becoming depressed and suicidal due to discrimination are especially concerning (Jonas 2004, p.79-80). In her auto-biographical work *Caravanserai* (2003) Hanifa Deen comments on this sense of alienation:

Stereotypes now define people as less than human and what a litany there is to choose from: veiled women, fierce bearded men, barbaric parents, rapists and suicide bombers – these are the images taken to represent Islam. But where is the human face that I know? Where are my parents, my brother and my sister. Where are my friends? (Deen 2003, p.287)

Deen's questioning highlights two important things: firstly the violent effects Islamophobia has upon the Muslim subject's frame of reference; and secondly the dearth of positive, personalised self/representations of Islam and Muslims in which Muslim experiences and identities are reflected. Fanon describes a similar process of transgression in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) where the knowledge of how he, as a 'Native', is conceived in the stereotyping of the colonial imaginary violently disrupts his frame of reference, temporarily disassociating him from himself to effectively create a double consciousness:

I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world the man of colour encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema...I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects...I took myself far off from my own presence...What else could it be for me but an amputation,

an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (Fanon 1986, p.112)

Although Muslim-Australians have not undergone a process of colonisation in Australia, what is of significance here is the similarity of the violent experience of fracturing within a Self when deconstructed by, and confronted with, a system of information that transgresses its frame of reference; which for the Muslim subject is the knowledge of their conception within the Islamophobic imaginary.

An inability or reluctance to speak back to negative portrayals of Muslims in the media and elsewhere, and to speak out about incidents of discrimination and abuse compound this sense of violation with a feeling of voicelessness (Dreher 2003; Jonas 2004, p.84-93; Kamp & Mansouri 2007). Although the Ismaʿ report reveals a variety of varying responses to discrimination and abuse, such as confrontation, avoiding certain public places, ignoring abuse and providing education, surveys showed that there is a widespread reluctance to formally complain or report instances of discrimination (Jonas 2004, p.84-93). Reasons given included fears of being victimised by the authorities by either being exposed to more discrimination or being labelled a 'troublemaker', and doubts as to whether complainants would be listened to and taken seriously (Jonas 2004, p.92; Dellal 2004). Suspicion and mistrust of the media is also common due to instances of manipulation and misrepresentation (Kabir 2006; Nahdi 2003).

Unwillingness to speak back to a negative discourse surrounding Islam is further compounded by the political inequality of Muslim-Australians that silences the Muslim voice and creates a sense of powerlessness in the face of Islamophobic systems of representation. The increasingly fractured self-perceptions of Muslims in Australia combined with the disassociation from community and nation reveal not only the

detrimental impact of Islamophobic discourse (particularly in the media), it also speaks to the importance of the development of an alternative discourse within which Muslim-Australians are able to both assert their identity and claim a belonging within the Australian nation.

Recent efforts have been made by Muslim-Australians to combat these processes of Othering and engage in the politics of self-representation through interventions into popular media and culture. Since 9/11, various forms of self-representation from within Arab and Muslim Australian communities have markedly increased.<sup>16</sup> Thematically, many of these works overtly engage with the politics of Islamophobia, transforming their works into discourses of resistance, subversion and assertion. Written texts include Hanifa Deen's semi-autobiographical book *Caravanserai* (2003), Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does my head look big in this?* (2007a) and *Ten things I hate about me* (2006), as well as Taghreed Chandab and Nadia Jamal's *The Glory Garage* (2005). There have also been TV series such as *Salam Café* (Coombes & Nabulsi 2005) and the comedy tours of Nazeem Hussain and Aamer Rahman, *Fear of a brown planet* (2008-2011). Peta Stephenson (2010a) states that by engaging with "mainstream techniques of storytelling and popular entertainment" such as "the novel, the memoir, the rap and the panel show", Australian Muslims are able to negotiate between inter and intra-cultural identities whilst being able to "connect with broader Australia and remain true to the tenets of their faith" (Stephenson 2010a, p.1).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 'Self-representation' is defined as the representation of Arabs and Muslims by Arabs and Muslims, including biography, auto-biography, fictional and non-fictional works.

<sup>17</sup> Of these texts those that have garnered the most public attention and critical analysis have mainly been focused around an urban Muslim (often masculine) youth identity, such as films *The Combination* (Field 2009) and *Jammin' in the Middle E* (Mordaunt 2006). They address the negative representation and stereotyping that has predominantly fallen on young Muslim men, particularly those of Lebanese extraction (Grewal 2007; Collins et al 2000). Although the Muslim community as a whole has undergone extensive scrutiny and criticism, this negative attention has often focused upon Muslim men as the source of disruption. In both media and political discourse Muslim men have been maligned and stereotyped as misogynistic, violent, 'un-Australian', immoral and criminal (Collins et al 2000) with

By taking the outback away from its traditionally masculine, mono-cultural imagining through representations of the spatial and historical presence of Muslims in the outback, Muslim Australians are symbolically reinserted into the Australian national body from which they have been socially and culturally alienated, particularly post 9/11. By studying Arab and Muslim representation in the outback from 1890-2011, this thesis joins in recent efforts towards the recovery of the Afghan cameleer history, and the challenge this recovery has posed to Islamophobic discourse which positions Muslims and Arabs as an 'Other' which is external, foreign and unknown to Australia and antithetical to its 'way of life'.

Chapter One examines negative media treatment of Afghans and how it carried seamlessly into their artistic representation wherein Afghans are envisaged as villains who undermine, invade or corrupt. This includes a summary of extensive newspaper research and analysis of 1,859 articles between 1890 and 1923 that was conducted for this thesis.<sup>18</sup> Within media and literary representations, Afghans are presented as foils to the true Australian character, entirely antithetical to the qualities of egalitarianism, honesty and 'Christian' morality. Oftentimes they are even depicted in direct conflict with white settlers, whom they deliberately attempt to harm or disadvantage, thus incorporating real anxieties about Afghan presence.

The combative relationship between Afghans and White Australians is often allegorised within the landscape of the outback which, as a symbol of White Australian virtue, actively rejects the Afghan presence. Themes of contamination are prevalent in

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particular focus being placed upon the Muslim men's treatment of women (Ata 2007; Grewal 2007; Said 2003). This is particularly so within the past twenty years after incidents such as the Lakemba shootings of 1998 and the Sydney gang rapes received extensive coverage in the media and led to rising concerns about 'ethnic gangs' in Australia (Collins et al 2000; Poynting 2002, p.145).

<sup>18</sup> For ease of reference, all newspaper articles referenced by title throughout this thesis have been compiled separately in the References section under the title 'Newspaper Articles'.

public discourse and literary representation as Afghans are represented as deleterious to water supply, public health and the 'purity' of the outback landscape. Andrew 'Banjo' Paterson's poem 'Shouting for a Camel' (1896) for example, combines tension surrounding Afghan use of public water supply, themes of drought and stereotypes of Afghans as miserly and underhanded in order to demonise an Afghan cameleer whose camel threatens to 'drink the town dry'. Other poems such as C.G.A Colles' 'Yussuf Khan' (1907) represent Afghans as weeds, whereas 'When Abdul Had Gone' (1907), published under the pseudonym 'Bakblox', portrays Afghans as pungently odoured. These texts envisage Afghans as parasitic organisms sucking the life out of the thriving outback and leading to its eventual ruin.

Chapter Two continues the analysis of Afghan representation, focusing on texts that deal with themes of racial miscegenation, sexual violence and drug trafficking – including Charles Chauvel's film *Uncivilised* (1936) and the short stories of the author A.G. Hales, among others. These texts reveal the racial fears associated with Afghans and how these fears manifested with regard to Indigenous Australians. Texts after 1920 reveal a tendency towards the displacement of the effects of British colonisation of Australia, and the injustices perpetrated against Aboriginal communities (in the form of violence, the supply of alcohol, sexual violation, community breakdown and inter-tribal conflict), onto the Afghan community whose members are identified as the perpetrators of these crimes. By displacing settler violence and Indigenous degradation onto Afghans, White Australia is able to take the role of Indigenous protector and saviour whose moral virtue remains untouched.

Chapter Three explores how resentment of Afghan success in the outback, and resulting 'white' insecurities, plays out in consistent themes of Afghan incompetence and villainy in White Australian literature. In these portrayals, if Afghans are not deliberately

attempting to deceive or undermine their white counterparts, it is their stupidity that impedes expeditions, causes conflict and may even result in their own death. The white characters in these stories, on the other hand, act out a kind of wish-fulfilment – exceeding Afghan skill in camel-handling, thwarting attempts of Afghans to hurt others (or the nation), and in some cases taking over the camel-industry altogether. The Afghan figure therefore became another villain over which the white hero could triumph and against whom he proved superior. The need to maintain this oppositional relationship while denying the importance of Afghan history in Australia continues to have resonance to the current day, evidenced both in the elision of Afghan history and in contemporary attitudes towards and treatment of Arabs and Muslims.

Chapters Four, Five and Six explore positive textual representations of Muslims in the Australian outback as a counter-narrative to demonizing and absenting discourses. Chapter Four examines a counter-narrative of positive Afghan representation (1890-1970) and the possibility of regarding these texts as an alternative tradition of representation of Muslims and Arabs in Australia. These texts are analysed in conjunction with contemporary texts (1980-2011) which seek to reclaim Afghan history and provide an alternative discourse about the Afghan communities. Within this discourse Afghans are portrayed interacting positively with the land of the outback, enriching the natural environment and benefitting those who live within it. Processes of absenting are challenged within this discourse through considerable focus upon the importance of Afghan contribution and Afghan presence in the outback.

Chapter Five examines Mena Abdullah's *The Time of the Peacock* (1992), originally published in 1965, and her subjective deconstruction of place and identity and consequent challenging of the Australian outback as a territorial space of exclusive white, male national belonging. Chapter Six analyses Eva Sallis' *Hiam* (1998) and its portrayal of

the outback as a site of Muslim spirituality. Employing several traditional outback narratives, such as the pilgrimage, the pioneer journey and the road narrative, Sallis' text makes an important intervention into these narratives through the representation of a Muslim, female perspective. The outback unites with Islam in this text in order to give birth to a new identity for its protagonist Hiam and create a sense of belonging within the Australian nation. Saunders (1997) contends that the value of this transcultural literature lies not in mere oppositionality but in the "unlearning [of] the 'inherent dominative mode' found in mainstream literature, which subsequently lays the foundations for a more equal distribution of power" (Saunders 1997, p.67).<sup>19</sup>

Sallis' text, which engages overtly with anti-Muslim prejudice in Australia, predates the events of 9/11 and the ensuing period of Islamophobia, yet due to its common thematic of anti-Muslim prejudice *Hiam* (1998) joins (or acts as a precursor to) post 9/11 literature that seeks to break down stereotypes about Islam as a misogynistic and violent religion. For Muslim and Arab communities that have increasingly found themselves recipients of defensive nationalist aggression, and have consequently suffered social marginalisation and psychological alienation, positive textual representations (particularly self-representations) are paramount. These texts provide the opportunity to create an alternative discourse about Islam and Muslims, to challenge white masculine imaginings of Australian identity, and to reclaim a sense of belonging within the Australian nation.

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<sup>19</sup> Saunders (1997) is discussing the function of 'migrant literature' however this is not how Muslim and Arab Australian literature is generally perceived in this thesis lest the common misconception of most Arabs and Muslims as 'new arrivals' in Australia be perpetuated. The function that Saunders attributes to migrant literature can, however, also extend to Arab and Muslim Australian literature, as they each represent the voice of communities and individuals that have been discursively positioned as outside of the 'mainstream' – either racially, socially, historically or culturally. Arab and Muslim Australian literature, whether migrant or not, therefore has a similar opportunity to present a perspective that challenges and complicates naturalised and essentialised ways of thinking that frame discourses of Australian history, society and culture.