

ISLAMIC BARBIE: THE POLITICS OF GENDER AND PERFORMATIVITY

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This article examines the refashioning of a gendered Muslim identity that is taking place around the iconic fashion accessory of a lifestyle doll amongst young Muslim girls. The doll named Razanne has been created and marketed by a Muslim couple in the United States and is sold primarily through their internet website, Noorart. Razanne with her visibly Muslim accessories of a hijab, jilbab and prayer rug has captured the imagination of Muslim parents who wish to provide their children with suitable role models in the 'western world'. It can be argued that she has come to normalise Muslim identity through the lens of fashion. Bearing a strong resemblance to Mattel's Barbie, Razanne signifies a new fashion trend amongst a global Muslim community which has increasingly come under pressure in the international war on terror. The Muslim company's marketing strategy around Razanne relies on their toned down mimicry of a recognizable branded product such as Barbie. Thus Razanne embodies the modest Muslim woman who retains her cultural values while living in the west. With an estimated potential market of eight million Muslims in North America, the consumer ethic of brand buying has been utilised by a diasporic and ethnically diverse Muslim community to capture a niche market of both ethnic minority and Muslim buyers. Claims have been made that companies such as Noorart have received an unexpected boost after the events of 9/11 from buyers who are increasingly at odds with American foreign policy and wish to dissociate themselves economically from the imperial retribution that has followed in the wake of the events of September 11. A report by the Chicago branch of Reuters has argued that Muslim

Americans feeling the pressures of a renewed nationalism hinged around the notion of a 'clash of civilizations' between Islam and the West, have turned toward Muslim-branded products as a way of asserting their identity in the face of a narrowing view of their community.ⁱ

The popularity of Muslim-branded products is not limited to North American consumers. Similar trends are taking place across the Middle East and Europe. Significantly, there have been a variety of Muslim dolls in the Middle East market ranging from the national Iranian twin duo of Dara and Sara to the Syrian Fulla. Dara and Sara were introduced to the Iranian market in 2002 as an attempt to curtail the popularity of Barbie and Ken. Developed and marketed by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in consultation with the Ministry of Education, the dolls are supposed to be 8 years old siblings. They wear modest clothes representing traditional values and Sara has a white scarf covering her hair. According to an Iranian toy seller Masoumeh Rahimi, the dolls are an important addition to the market as they are representative of Iranian values and a much-needed intervention against the 'wanton' Barbie who she believes to be 'more harmful than an American missile'.ⁱⁱ Fulla on the other hand has a similar body type to that of Barbie and an equally expansive wardrobe. The most noticeable difference between Barbie and Fulla is that of clothing, lifestyle and hair colour. The dark haired Fulla wears a full-length black abaya, which covers her from head to toe when she is outdoors, has a wide selection of head scarves and most significantly does not have a boyfriend. For the manager of a toy outlet in Damascus, Mohammed Sabbagh, 'Fulla is one of us. She's my sister, she's my mother, she's my wife. She's all the traditional things of Syria and the Middle East'.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Great Britain there has been a considerable degree of interest from the press in the transnational Razanne and Fulla dolls since their arrival in the market. They have been reported both in the national broadsheets and tabloids. Ranging from *The Guardian's* 'Islamic Barbie' to *The Daily Star's* 'Burkha Barbie' both Razanne and Fulla feed into the public imagination of Muslim stereotypes reconfirming the popular perception that Muslim values cannot be integrated with the demands of modernity.

The matter of Muslim women's dress itself has been a topic of public controversy in England since 2002 when Shabina Begum, a 13 year old British Muslim girl was suspended from school for continuing to wear a jilbab and ignoring the school uniform code.^{iv} Shabina Begum stopped going to school and initiated legal proceedings in court supported by her guardian and brother and advised by the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir. According to Emma Tarlo, the political activism around the hijab/jilbab debate deployed by the radical Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir has allowed for a sartorial means of 'rejecting and resisting "the West" from within the West.' Hizb ut-Tahrir are an extreme example of an Islamist activist group that has operated in Britain since 1986. They and are not in any way linked to the production of consumable dolls. But what they share in common with the creators of these transnational subjects is the fact that they are contributing to the production of a fixed 'visual stereotype' for Muslim women^v and trying to make that stereotype a reality.

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REPRESENTATION, STEREOTYPE AND THE MEDIA

Historically, television, radio, internet and the print media have all participated in the cultural act of the representation of the other. It can be argued that the new face of the transnational 'other' in the western media post 9/11 has been Muslim. This is not to

say that Muslims have not been part of an orientalist discourse pre-9/11.^{vi} However, the media reports that followed in the wake of 9/11 carried an ominous ring for Muslim communities worldwide. The stereotypes closed in. Depictions of Muslims crowding our television screens were – and still are – none other than those well-loved staples of women in the ‘uniform’ of the veil, and rows of men prostrating themselves up and down in prayer.

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A common feature in the various media manifestations mentioned above is the utilisation of the stereotype for purposes of representation of both the self and the other. Here to give you an example with regards to Islam the most familiar representation of the stereotype often takes place around the theme of female sexuality. The two well-known stereotypes which feed into this discourse have been discussed eloquently by Rana Kabbani in *Myths of the Orient* with reference to the cultural characterizations of Sheherazade from *The Thousand and One Nights*, and Haideh Moghissi who has critically analysed various stereotypical ‘orientalist’ and ‘Islamist’ standpoints which have succeeded in normalising a particular perception of ‘Muslim’ cultural practices with reference to women in western societies in her study on *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism*.^{vii}

More broadly, in the context of the self of western modernity which often asserts itself in ways antithetical to the tenets of religious morality, there is an imposition of an ethical order which fails to reconcile itself with the split Muslim subject settled in a non-Muslim environment. In this situation, the minority Muslim community has often chosen to visibly normalise discursive religious practices in their everyday life to distinguish themselves from the other. Thus, as Muslims they have to perform Islam in western societies in order to normalise and universalise its

teachings for both the self and the other. This takes the form of the wearing of certain forms of dress, the ritual of prayer five times a day and so on. These acts then become the markers by which Muslimness is identified in non-Muslim countries. In doing so there is an inevitable collusion with the formation of stereotypes.^{viii}

From a postcolonial perspective the most immediately familiar paradigm for understanding the stereotype is probably that constructed by Homi Bhabha in his essay, 'The Other Question: stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism'. Influenced by Freud and Lacan he presents the stereotype as a dualistic structure expressing both fear of and desire for the Other. The stereotype, according to Bhabha, marked by the knowledge of what is 'already known' draws its ambivalence from the constant act of repetition therefore 'the same old stories of the Negro's animality, the Coolies inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish must be told (compulsively) again and afresh'.^{ix} Recently, Peter Morey has suggested that in order to locate the stereotype discursively it is useful to consider Bakhtin's concept of dialogism.^x This focuses our attention on the historicity of utterances in society and thus suggests how the stereotype can be understood in relation to the intersections of communications instead of as a point of fixed meaning. Taking on board Morey's analytic viewpoint, I am interested in exploring that intertextual dialogic process which exists between the representation of Muslims as stereotypes and the deployment of some of these stereotypes by Muslim groups in order to re-present themselves. In adopting these stereotypes, such Muslims not only reinforce the stereotype imposed upon them by the west they also construct a stereotype of their own other, the secular liberal west through which a finite bounded notion of Muslimness can be delineated.^{xi} Therefore to counter the dominant discourse of secularism which perceives religion as a deviance, some Muslim groups have initiated

a counter-offensive to normalise aspects of Muslim identity for a transnational Ummah.

For the purpose of this paper I wish to focus specifically on an isolated example of an ideological construction of Muslim minority identity which is taking place on the internet and how this identification perceives itself within a self-other binary which reinforces ideas of stereotype, normalisation and performativity for the Muslim Ummah versus the west. This reformulation of identity is foregrounded by the emergent discourse of a renewed nationalism in America and Britain intent on normalising the new imperial condition of democracy and free market economy. It is disrupted by a significant Muslim minority insistent on deploying the conditions of globalisation in order to manifest an alternative site of resistance and mobilise minority opinion against the norms of a western hegemony.

Firstly, it is useful to think about the frame in which we construct the idea of the Muslim Ummah and the way it constructs itself in turn. Ummah is understood as a 'global Muslim community' and has traditionally operated within the context of trade and travel networks. As a general code of practice, the Islamic Ummah privileges the Quran and Sunnah and regulates conduct in accordance with the principles of Islam. It is not a national construct but it does have sympathetic overlaps with the territorial struggles of Arab nationalism.^{xii}

In recent times cyberspace has become the most current form of establishing or maintaining transnational Muslim networks. Miriam Cooke and Bruce Lawrence argue that the Internet 'reveals a paradoxical aspect of the metaphorical function of networks: they are de-territorialised and gender inclusive even while remaining socially restricted in other ways'.^{xiii} There are of course countless cyber Islamic networks which have emerged post 9/11 and it is not in the scope of this paper to

present an overview.^{xiv} I will instead explore the phenomenon of Razanne, the Muslim Barbie, sold by the Michigan based company Noorart, which markets Islamic education and toys for children amongst other consumable products on the internet. I propose to unpack the theme of representation and stereotype in relation to their most popular selling item, the Muslim Razanne doll, who it can be argued is a stereotype of a stereotype. While doing so, I am aware that Arab identity in America is itself subject to stereotyping and monologic representation by the mainstream media as it is in Britain. Sally Howell has noted how Arabs in America ‘feel bruised by a media that seems interested only in portraying them as terrorists, oil-sheiks, sexpots or lechers’. She also argues that Arabs in Detroit try to construct their own subjectivity by expressing ‘individual and group identities that lie beyond mainstream television channels, art galleries, and publishing houses’.^{xv}

CONSUMER CULTURE: Razanne as PARODY (this is new heading)

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With regards to Noorart it is worth considering that they rely on the culture of commodification to recreate their own subjectivity but I argue that in doing so they are tied to a singular transnational culture of consumerism which creates new consumer subjects but still transports the values of an American lifestyle. In another context, Inderpal Grewal puts forward the inference that the multiple subjects of transnational consumerism are not ‘in opposition to either globalization or nationalism’. Grewal writing about economic liberalization in India and the phenomenon of the ‘traveling Barbie’, as exported by Mattel, points out that Barbie in a sari is ‘not an Indian or South Asian Barbie’ but ‘what Mattel calls the traditional Barbie’ who is essentially American in body but plays at being Indian through dress

and performativity. 'The doll suggests that difference, as homogenized national stereotype, could be recovered by multinational corporations, that the national could exist in this global economy' (Grewal, p.800).^{xvi} But we have to question which nation is at the centre and whether the stereotype that is being fixed for the national imaginary is one of an 'exotic' ethnicity which merely reiterates the 'normative power of the center'. Radha Hegde focuses on the ethnicity element within the multicultural packaging of Barbie arguing that 'Barbie as ethnic spectacle demonstrates how a certain type of "Indianness" is created and promoted through the white female body of a plastic Barbie. Indianness is packaged as a newly improved product and sold as the Orientalist fantasy of white femininity' (Hegde, p.131).^{xvii}

Barbie is a problematic icon for women as has been argued convincingly by Mary Rogers in her book on *Barbie Culture*.^{xviii} As an iconic doll she represents fantasy, and the gendered female identity of a young white adult. She has no parents nor does she have any children of her own. Her family consists mainly of siblings of whom the most recognisable is Skipper and the rest are friends except her boyfriend Ken with whom she brokeup in 2004. Barbie and Ken who had been dating for 43 years have been replaced by the pairing of Barbie and Blaine her new Australian partner who is a surfer from Sydney. This is a sign of the new reconstruction of Barbie in order to rescue her sales from the doldrums. As consumers, we are not simply tied to Barbie the doll but also to her lifestyle.

In order to understand the ideology behind Barbie and her lifestyle choices it is important to consider Mattel the company which has been instrumental in shaping the doll. Barbie became part of a global transcultural network and was referred to as a 'global power brand' by the former Mattel president and CEO Jill Barad who played a major role in transforming her from a \$320 million dollar domestic business to a \$2

billion dollar global brand.^{xix} She is marketed in 140 countries and is linked to brand names from fashion designers such as Carolina Herrera to soft drink companies including Coca Cola. Barbie was introduced to the US domestic market in 1959 and was the brainchild of Ruth Handler, the wife of Elliot Handler, and co-founder of Mattel. Mrs Handler's vision of Barbie was inspired during a shopping trip in Switzerland when she came across Lilli, a German doll based on a cartoon strip character and sold mostly to men as a sex object. Until that time Mrs Handler had been looking for such a toy for her children who preferred playing with adult dolls rather than the baby shaped ones which were available in the market. Through this act of cultural borrowing by Mrs Handler and later Mattel it is ironic that Barbie was transformed from one kind of fetish to another (Rogers 1999).

Mary Rogers locates Barbie within the fashion industry as a mimetic construct which allows women to imagine themselves as 'perpetually young and ephemerally ageless' and essentially views Barbie's identity as performative despite her fixed body plastic. She argues that Barbie's assemblage of accessories points 'to a self continuously in the making under shifting circumstances'.

Barbie represents the sort of contemporary selfhood some see as embattled and others see as liberated. ... [She] represents the sort of interaction as well as the sort of selfhood ascendant in postindustrial societies with their commodity cultures. ... her identity hovers between two cultures, the modern and the postmodern (Rogers p.136).

This commodification of dolls has also been recognised as a symbolic symptom by Ann Ducille and the argument extended to include a debate on multiculturalism and its failure to accommodate racial difference despite the promise of cultural diversity. Her critical reading is in response to Mattel's targeting of the ethnic market in the early 1990s. Mattel's packaging of racial difference in the 'brown skinned' Shani,

'honey coloured' Asha and 'deep mahogany' Nichelle is merely a symptom she argues of the commodification of Afro-chic.^{xx}

The debate about Barbie's suitability for a Muslim audience in particular was ignited in 2003 when the Saudi religious police declared 'Barbie dolls a threat to morality, complaining that the revealing clothes of the "Jewish" toy already banned in the kingdom – are offensive to Islam'.^{xxi} Even more interesting was the appearance of the Fulla doll in Kuwait, as mentioned earlier, who is a mimicry of Barbie but a veiled one. Most significantly she is a best-seller in Egypt and other Muslim countries. Since her launch her rising star has been faithfully recorded by publications in the US and UK. In one of the UK tabloids, *The Daily Star* she is captioned as 'Burka Barbie: she puts fun into fundamentalism' with an accompanying close up of Fulla's face in full black Hijab.^{xxii} The cover story itself is continued on page three and juxtaposed against the uncovered 'free' breasts of Annie the Page 3 girl are the demure and fully covered Fulla dolls with the accompanying caption 'Burka Barbie can't see Ken'. The underlying message being sent out to the readers is that of the incompatibility of liberal western values with 'modest' Arab values.

While Razanne hasn't enjoyed the same kind of tabloid publicity, she is the older version of Fulla and has come to represent the personification of Islam in the west for transcultural Muslim subjects. She was introduced to the children's market on the internet since 1996 in the US. Her publicity campaign in the Middle East and the UK was launched in 2004. Prior to that she had only been marketed in the US, Canada, Singapore and Germany. This doll is the brainchild of an American couple Noor (Sherrie) and Ammar Saadeh. Her name is Razanne and she is, according to Noor, an alternative to the 'overly sophisticated and skimpily dressed Barbie doll'. She is as Jo Tatchell in her review of the doll *The Guardian* has named her, the Islamic Barbie.^{xxiii}

She comes with a heavy dose of ideology as well. The website advertising the Razanne doll includes the usual informative descriptions of the doll as well as a text box highlighting the educational and play benefits which will be gained by children who will acquire her as a toy. Other than the universalising attribute of shaping interactive play, Razanne ‘builds Muslim identity and self-esteem, ‘Provides Islamic role model, Promotes Islamic behaviour’. She comes in various guises, there is an ‘in and out’ Razanne who dresses in the latest fashions including short skirts while at home but dons the jilbab coat and hijab when going out to signify her modesty. She is to quote the creator’s ‘more than just a fashion statement.’ She comes with her distinctive colouring book which gives us a day in the life of Razanne from daybreak to sunset. There is also Playday Razanne who demonstrates that Muslim girls can have fun in the playground as long as they dress modestly in a loose fitting jumper and scarf and Muslim Girl Scout Razanne. Continuing the range is a professional group of Razanne dolls including ‘Dr Razanne’ and ‘Teacher Razanne’ who reinforce the importance of education and religious piety in Islamic society as well as shattering the stereotype that Muslim women can’t have careers according to Ammar Saadeh.^{xxiv}

The most recent addition to the range has been that of the ethnic category in the Playday Razanne collection. These Razanne dolls wear ‘light and breezy two-piece sets’ or shalwar qamiz worn by Asian Muslim women. They epitomise ‘Fun-Time Razanne’. The information included with the doll explains that the shalwar qamiz is a modest dress which combats conditions of extreme heat. The three ethnic variations are: Caucasian, ‘Pakistani Indian’ and black as well as racial colourings ranging from, fair skin/fair hair, olive skin/dark hair to dark skin/dark hair. Questions have been raised about the possibility of a future Ahmad doll but so far the creative team have no plans of mimicking Barbie’s heterosexual matrix with Ken by introducing an

Ahmad doll. In the words of the Razanne storyteller and creator, Noor, 'it wouldn't fit with Razanne to have a boyfriend'.^{xxv} It is not just the Muslims who are enjoying the benefits of Razanne because there have been various messages of support posted on the website message-board from non-Muslim friends and supporters mainly commenting on the pleasing modesty of Razanne in contrast to Barbie's nakedness and immorality. Noor's other half, Saadeh has emphasised the message behind the doll saying, 'The main message we try to put forward through the doll is that what matters is what's inside you, not how you look'.^{xxvi} But the dilemma for the Islamic Barbie is that it does matter how she looks because she has to personify Islamic identity through role-play and religio-performativity as her story unfolds. Saadeh in response to Mattel's ethnic representations of the Moroccan Barbie and Leyla, a slave in the court of a Turkish sultan responds as follows, 'It's no surprise that they'd try to portray a Middle Eastern Barbie either as a belly dancer or a concubine'. Both dolls have not had very good sales figures and it is interesting to note Saadeh's own acknowledgment that Razanne is a critical response to these kinds of stereotypes. However one of the key differences between Razanne and Barbie is that the Barbie is an extremely bendable toy doll while Razanne is not flexible at all.^{xxvii} This significant difference quite clearly impacts on children's experience of both dolls and while Muslim children may recognise themselves in Razanne their experience of the doll will not be the same as with the Barbie.

In order to critically analyse the ideological implications of Razanne it is useful to consider Judith Butler's theoretical approach toward gender in her influential study *Gender Trouble*. She examines the genealogies of gender in a Foucaultian sense, decentering any notions of a foundational discourse. She argues:

Precisely because “female” no longer appears to be a stable notion, its meaning is as troubled and unfixed as “woman”, and because both terms gain their troubled significations only as relational terms, this inquiry takes as its focus gender and the relational analysis it suggests. (Butler 1990: xxix)^{xxviii}

This relational analysis includes the historical contextualization of the discursive elements which have contributed toward the formation of sexuality such as language discourses, psychoanalysis and the body. By illustrating the different constructions of gender, Butler is able to derive her conclusion of a ‘performative theory of gender’ in which:

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. (Butler 1990:185)

Hence gender identity is not predetermined but is enacted repetitively according to cultural practices. Butler goes on to propose a set of parodic practices within gender performativity which subvert the ‘categories of the body, sex, gender and sexuality’. Later reviewing her own work in *Gender Trouble* she has commented that her example of drag as a parodic practice is not meant to illustrate a liberatory performativity, instead she has included it to critique the ‘false naturalisation’ and ‘unity’ of gender relations. Her point being that there is no original which exists so drag as a copy of a copy pushes the boundaries of representation.

I wish to engage with this idea of gender performativity with regards to Barbie and Razanne. Barbie creates the stereotype of a white American blue-eyed blonde-haired beauty who is the object of desire. She has a voluptuous body, her accessories are in tune with modern fashions and she imbibes a significant proportion of the luxurious comforts on offer in material society. Barbie is marked with desire. Razanne on the other hand has been described as possessing a pre-teen body and a sensible and modest attitude in contrast to Barbie’s frivolity. She too has accessories but they are

predetermined by religious conformity or professional obligations. So Praying Razanne has a prayer rug, the schoolgirl has a backpack and books, the teacher, a cell phone, laptop, briefcase and sunglasses and so on. Barbie on the other hand has her own bubble bath amongst other things. Razanne's responsibilities begin from sunrise when she gets up to say her Fajr prayers, during the day she has a sensible and modest dress code wearing her jilbab and hijab when she goes out. Her creator's state that 'Razanne helps Muslim girls understand that in the home they can be the ultimate fashion statement' on the condition that they dress modestly outside. In other words, Razanne is marked with the loss of that very desire which is cultivated by Barbie. Appropriating a modest universalising Muslim identity for children who grow up in western societies she is a parodic response to Barbie. She is the stereotype of a stereotype. The report on CNN.com plainly states that Razanne 'the new girl on the block doesn't give Barbie much of a run for her money. After all, Barbie is everything Razanne is not – curvaceous, flashy and loaded with sex appeal'.^{xxix} I would argue that Razanne's performative behaviour is an attempt to stabilise the meaning of 'Muslim woman' and set it firmly within the foundational discourse of Islam. Here there is also an important link to be made with anti-colonial sentiment and nationalist movements. Also interesting to note is the sexualisation of Razanne and Barbie. In contrast to Barbie, Razanne comes equipped with sensible white underpants which cover her reproductive organs while Barbie's sexuality is fetishised through her amply proportioned breasts.

Various scholars working on nationalism have illustrated the ways in which women are appropriated as symbols of identity and differentiation in the struggle toward liberation. One such scholar, Valerie Moghadam in her overview of the gender dynamics of nationalism, revolution, and Islamization has remarked that nationalist

struggles tend to make motherhood sacred and categorise cultural identity as an expression of women's role and status. In Islamist movements gender politics take a central role and women become the carriers of tradition and an 'authentic' Islamic identity. They represent the structures of the family, the home and religious ideals.^{xxx}

It can be argued that Razanne presents a counter-hegemonic move against the hegemony of a multi-national brand such as Mattel's Barbie. Similar trends have been seen with the growing trend in the marketing of Islamic brand names giving us products such as Mecca Cola, Qibla cola, Ummah chocolate which compete alongside Coca-cola and Cadbury's.

The web-based company Noorart who have launched Razanne represent a clearly articulated educational subversion of the norms of American society utilising the internet as a space of alterity. They are tapping into the lucrative market of children's toys with a thoughtful parodic response to products such as dolls, children's books, nursery rhymes etcetra which have particularly troubled their upbringing of children especially girls in western societies. So their Razanne is indeed 'more than just a fashion statement'. She represents a way of life.

Noorart represents a key moment in the shifting of attitudes amongst the migrant Muslim community settled in America. They are no longer content to sit back and be stereotyped and marginalised. Instead they have embarked on their own project of self-representation with the potential of universalising an Islamic code of behaviour amongst young Muslim children.^{xxxi} Historically, Islam has differed widely in accordance with cultural codes in different regions and traditionally madrassah's have been used to generate a politicised universal Islamic code of ethics amongst Muslim men, for example the Jamat-e Islami is one such institution. What is interesting about Noorart is that they have used the medium of the internet to spread a

globalising image of young Muslim girls which is in direct response to the dress codes of the dominant self in western countries. This Muslim self participates in a liberal lifestyle but does so by ring fencing a modest and Islamic lifestyle beginning with early years education. The hijab and the jilbab are thus normalised as key components of Muslim identity for children from the age of three years. The fashioning of a gendered dress code is not done in isolation as they also engage in a dialogic pattern of familiarisation through story-telling. For instance, their website offers heroic tales such as 'The Swirling Hijab', in which the hijab ranges from a flying carpet to a sword building on influences from the Thousand and One Nights; the everyday 'Meat-Eating Vegetarian', a story focussing on the dilemmas faced by young children while adhering to a halal meat diet in a predominantly non-Muslim environment; as well as re-appropriations of familiar nursery rhymes such as 'Twinkle Twinkle little star' including references to God up above in order to shape a culturally aware new Muslim identity.

Razanne is marketed as a fashion trend which competes alongside Barbie and Bratz dolls. She sports the latest fashions at home in the domestic sphere and dons her outer-wear for public life. She conforms to the public/private dichotomy which has been commented on in Muslim reform movements but the ambiguity in her private sphere comes from her appropriation of the latest western fashion trends alongside the performativity of her ritual obligations as a Muslim. Noorart thus offers an alternative conceptualisation of Muslim identity by engaging with current market trends and the centralised culture of commodification.

However, through the positioning of Razanne in response to the discourse of western secular femininity it is arguable whether Noorart actually manage to break out of the frame of representation through the stereotype, or whether that frame is

merely reinforced through the universalising of a female Muslim subject. Women as always are made to carry the burden for an entire culture.

- i Andrew Stern, 'US Muslims seek alternatives to American Products' http://www.noorart.com/Convention_France.html
- ii http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1856558.stm. Accessed 04/03/06
- iii <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/L.A.C.20051027>. Accessed 10/31/2005
- iv Shabina Begum, supported by her legal guardian and brother and advised by the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir took her case to the courts, where she was initially turned down by the High Court in 2004 but won her case in the Court of Appeal in 2005. The case is still on-going. For an engaged analysis of the sartorial agenda of Hizb ut-Tahrir and its connection to the Shabina Begum case see Emma Tarlo, 'Reconsidering Stereotypes: anthropological reflections on the jilbab controversy'.
- v See Tarlo p. 3.
- vi See Edward Said, *Covering Islam: how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*, Vintage, 1997.
- vii Rana Kabbani, *Myths of the Orient*, Indiana University Press, 1986; Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, London: Oxford University Press 2000.
- viii The discussion on the stereotype and representation in this paper is drawn from a larger argument, which is part of a joint monograph with Peter Morey in preparation.
- ix Homi K Bhabha, 'The Other Question: stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p.77.
- x Peter Morey 'Spooks and the Stereotype etc.', Postcolonial Research Seminar, University of East London. 03/11/04.
- xi For a demonstration of how Islamist activists rework popular Western stereotypes of Muslims into Muslim stereotypes of the Westerners, , see Tarlo 2005
- xii Talal Asad, p.188-92.
- xiii Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, London, 2005, p. 11.
- xiv See Gary Bunt, 'Defining Islamic Interconnectivity' in Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence (eds) *Muslim Networks: from Hajj to Hip Hop*, 2005, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London.
- xv Sally Howell, 'Cultural Interventions: Arab American aesthetics between the transnational and the ethnic', *Diaspora* 9:1 2000, 59-82.
- xvi Inderpal Grewal, 'Traveling Barbie: Indian transnationality and new consumer subjects', *Positions*, 1999 7:3, 799-826.
- xvii Radha S. Hegde, 'Global Makeovers and Maneuvers: Barbie's Presence in India' *Feminist Media Studies*, 2001, 1:1, 129-133.
- xviii Mary F Rogers, *Barbie Culture*, Sage Publications, 1999.
- xix Barbara Brotman 'The Workplace: Under Fire', January 9, 2002, *Chicago Tribune*. <http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/news/hits/020109ct.htm>. Accessed 05/02/05.
- xx Anne Ducille, 'Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the merchandising of difference' *Differences*, 1994, 6:1, 47-68. I've devised the term Afro-chic borrowing from Saadia Toor's article where she identifies Indo-chic as a highly desirable consumable cultural commodity amongst diasporic Indians.
- xxi 'Saudi Religious Police Say Barbie Is a Moral Threat' Wednesday, September 10, 2003. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,96961,00.html>.
- xxii *Daily Star*, Tuesday November 15, 2005, Frontpage; p.3; p.6.
- xxiii Jo Tatchell, 'Meet the Islamic Barbie', *The Guardian*, 30.09.04.
- xxiv See Jo Tatchell, 'Meet the Islamic Barbie', 2004.
- xxv Quoted in Jo Tatchell, 'Meet the Islamic Barbie', 2004.
- xxvi Quoted in The Associated Press 'Muslim Doll offers modest alternative to Barbie', 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/EDUCATION/10/08/muslim.barbie.ap/index.html>
- xxvii I am grateful to Sharmila Sen for alerting me to this key difference.
- xxviii Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999.

xxix See The Associated Press, 'Muslim Doll offers modest alternative to Barbie', 2003.

xxx Valerie Moghadam (ed) *Gender and National Identity: women and politics in Muslim societies*, Zed Books, 1994. See introduction. Also see Gail Minault, Secluded Scholars and Partha Chatterjee 'The nation and its women'...

xxxi See Kari Haus, 'Quest for the Muslim niche market: entrepreneurs and artists offer-up fresh fair for long-neglected minority', 2006, <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/3130288>