

Mazes of Boundaries, Identities, Memories and Longings:

Letters Between Two Border Passing Women

■ Azza Basarudin and Maddy Mohammed

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Maddy Mohammed, Intellectual-activist, Chicago

Dear Maddy,

It has been quite some time since we had a dialogue in this format, and I welcome the chance to do it again. How are you? Not writing you as often is unhealthy for my soul. Lately, I have been thinking a lot about the topic we so often used to discuss when I lived in Chicago – about a non-Arab woman doing research on Arab women. I know we covered so much ground on this topic, but being back in graduate school makes these questions more prevalent, frustrating and at times, painful. Shall I demonstrate what I mean?

Scene 1: In a graduate seminar at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), a white woman sitting next to me introduced herself and we started talking. One of the questions graduate students obsessively ask each other is about research and/or areas of interest. I explained that I am interested in researching how factors such as gender, culture, religion, colonialism and imperialism (among other factors) shape the construction of Arab-Muslim women's identities (as I have been "trained" to do!). She looked at me and said how exciting and brilliant it sounds. Then came the real comment – but you are not Arab right? You do not look Arab. Looking pleased when

I shook my head negatively, she asked me where I am really from and upon knowing my nationality (disregarding that nationality is a complex concept), asked why I am not interested in studying my own people/culture. Surely, she said, that would make my research process uncomplicated and more meaningful. She of course sees nothing wrong with her research about Chinese women working in the agriculture industry in Hunan, China.

Scene 2: In a Women's Studies conference, I was having lunch with a group of graduate students from various institutions in the United States. The topic of conversation revolves around who is doing what type of research, in which geographical locations, etc. I dreaded my turn. When it came, I embarrassedly mumbled something similar to the explanation from Scene 1. Sure enough the onslaught of questions began – why the Middle East? Why Arab-Muslim women? Why not your own people/society? Is it less fascinating and less challenging to study your own people?

Scene 3: I was visiting a close Arab friend in Oakland, California. A noted artist and writer, her house is never void of family, friends and strangers who cannot seem to get enough of her company. At one of these gatherings,

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I was introduced to a Lebanese graduate student visiting from New York. The topic did not fall far from our research interest. For some reason (probably my physicality), this person assumed I am researching South East Asia until with some embarrassment and an uncomfortable silence (after my clarification), he asked why I am interested in Arab women and the Middle East. I wonder if he felt "put in his place" by my clarification. Perhaps not because he then asked if I am Muslim. He seemed pleased that I possess at least one "requirement" (despite the fact that Islam is not just a religion, but also a world view that does not seem to matter to him – e.g., people can be Muslims, but are not necessarily religious). He proceeds to mumble on how interesting it is that my name is Arabic and that perhaps I have some long lost connection that "legitimizes" my interest. After countless such encounters since starting school, I never cease to be amazed how many ways there are to inquire about one question, to patrol borders and boundaries, to authenticate, and to rationalize and/or de-legitimize my interest!

Azza

Tuesday, 2003, 12.41pm

Dear Azza,

Good to hear from you. I am doing well, thanks for asking. So it would seem our discussions on the topic of non-Arab women doing research on Arab women did not go in vain. I hope you have found some usefulness in our intense conversations. I wish we had more of them. But let us use this opportunity to engage in dialogue once again. One can look at your scenarios from a variety of locations: whiteness, identity politics and questioning of authenticity and representation, racializing and qualifying, border crossing/passing and patrolling - institutionalized and internalized.

Scene 1- I had to smile when I read scene 1. It is all too familiar - classic experience of American racial politics between a white person and a non-white person. It is important to note the place of where this is all happening, in an institute of higher learning in the United States.¹

It has been my experience that many white Americans do not believe race is an issue, so I am told, but with a critical eye and a closer look, their life beliefs and practices and social interactions reveal this is not the case. This statement in itself bares witness to the colorblindness that prevails in our society and recycles

unexamined practices of maintaining and sustaining a system built on white supremacy that subscribes people to categories that carry power, authority and status. What becomes clear is that a system built on whiteness over the ages has repositioned and reshaped and recycled itself and often resurfaces in encounters such as the one you described. Keep in mind though that we have ample examples of whites that are aware of white privilege and whiteness and reposition and rearticulate themselves.

You might be thinking why I am connecting Scene 1 with whiteness when you are depicting how people respond to your research. Let me try to explain my intentions by asking some questions. Her being a non-Chinese woman researching Chinese women and you being a non-Arab woman doing research on Arab women can/would be a location for sameness. So why was it not the same in her eyes? Why could she not find sameness and some sort of link/connection? Why was it that she identified your research as harder or less meaningful for you because you are not studying your "own" while her interest and meaning goes without question? She is not only non-Chinese, but white and you are not only non-Arab but Malaysian ("colored"). One can speculate that she was not just asking questions, offering you advice and sharing/exchanging conversation, she was asserting her white privilege over you and naming and authorizing you through a sense of knowing and belief system assumes that whiteness holds superior authority and status. I wonder what would have been the response if you told her that perhaps she would make more meaning of her research process if she studied whiteness history and culture?

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Scene 2) Perhaps the obsession of graduate students as you pointed out, of obsessively asking each other their area of interest and research, is something you may need to adjust to. It doesn't seem though that this is only what frustrates you. It is assumed that your interest would be your own people and therefore maybe you should be doing research on this. I guess when folks assume incorrectly they cannot seem to place you. I think it is natural for people to place each other as a way to sift through knowledge and learn something about someone. But I have grown

to become troubled by this idea that people need to place each other in categories, it can be quite dangerous when squeezing into something that does not fit. It creates a sort of mental, spiritual, intellectual crisis. It fragments people and creates an unhealthy relationship

between self-actualization (meeting one's own human potentials on this earth) and our responsibility and contribution to community, greater society and the global world.

Scene 3) Well at least you do have that one check off on the list, you are a Muslim, and there is that name of yours that sounds Arabic! I apologize for my remarks, but after a while one needs humor to deal with such things. Before I respond further, I am curious to know if this is also a common example of your encounter with Arabs in relation to your topic of study?

*Maddy,
Wednesday, 2003, 2.30pm*

Dear Maddy,

I can always count on you for making these issues more complicated! I thought of whiteness when Scene 1 was happening, but given the topic of conversation, whiteness was the furthest factor from my mind. Often times I forget how white privilege is exercised in so many different ways, and how it reshapes and represents itself in even more dangerous ways. Perhaps I was just too agitated with the question to really take notice of how whiteness was in action (not that I should ever forget). Why the overwhelming need to categorize people in this country? (I realize that this form of categorization takes place in many other countries as well). I guess when "attacked" that way, more often than not I am "silenced", regardless of who is asking the questions. Why the silence? Entitlement, ownership, identity, borders, boundaries, privilege, ethics, social reality, representation, intruder, outsider, belonging, and purpose are all agents of silencing when it comes to researching a people/group not my own.

My dilemma is neither new nor unique. Many scholars have debated and written about the phenomenon of the insider/outsider in conducting research. I am thinking of our professor at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Heather Dalmage's theory², whereby people are taught from an early age to know where "borders" exist, why there are needs to "patrol" those borders, and the consequences of attempting to cross them. As a non-Arab woman researching Arab women, the borders I encounter are loaded with meanings and signify the most important sites of struggle, resistance and accommodation. I think the woman in Scene 1 asserted her whiteness over me through policing the boundaries of authority and

superiority, in Scene 2, the borders are created to identify and locate me to fulfill categorization needs and in Scene 3, cultural borders are created to protect power and privileges, which are kept in place by cultural norms, language, and individual actions. By being a Muslim and fulfilling one of the "requirements" I am allowed to "cross" the border. However, this "crossing" also comes with a price - does "crossing over" legitimize my research interest? Perhaps other forms of "border patrolling" will now come into play? Who and/or what determines the boundaries of outsider/insider? Isn't the insider/outsider category fluid and ever changing?

Interesting that you asked about Scene 3. Recently I had an encounter with an Arab-American woman who was about to begin graduate school. When it came to the question of my research, she did not exhibit any of the responses from Scene 1, 2 or 3. To her, the project sounds important and exciting. Even when I asked her opinion (of the fact that I am not Arab but doing research on Arab women, etc) the response was simple: "Why do white people think they can study us and never exhibit guilt or discomfort? Why should you? Besides, are you not a Muslim?" For her, the Muslim half of me allows one foot into the world of Arab-Muslim women and minimizes the question of identity and authenticity. I am not claiming that being a Muslim automatically grants me an "insider status" because the differences that exist in our histories, cultures, norms and languages are all very

salient factors. By positioning myself as a Malaysian-Muslim woman interested in researching Arab-Muslim women, I hope to expand the possibilities of discovering, examining and understanding sameness and/or differences. Going back to my encounter with the Arab-American woman, I think our mutual respect for each other also stems from the fact that we are both women of color and perhaps that is a bond the also 'legitimizes' my research interest. To answer your question about my encounter with Arabs, I would say that many are generally curious as

to why I have so much interest in the Middle East. Sometimes when they find out that I am also a Muslim, the curiosity sorts itself out. Interesting isn't it? Perhaps the Muslim part of me (which I cherish dearly) does "legitimize" certain issues.

As an Arab-American, how do you feel about this? No doubt our friendship might make you biased, but what do you really think? This is the perfect opportunity to

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hear an Arab woman's perspective on my dilemma. How do you feel about non-Arabs doing research on "your people"? (your people is in quotation marks because I know like many people, you inhabit multiple spaces and negotiate multiple identities as Palestinian, as Arab, as Arab-Palestinian, as Arab-American, as Arab-Muslim woman, as Palestinian-Muslim woman, etc)

Azza

Friday, 2003, 3.27 am

Dear Azza,

I am going to attempt to answer your question about my views on non-Arabs doing research on Arabs. It is a loaded one and not that easy for me to use written language to explain.

Let me begin by speaking from my experience of growing up in the American Educational "banking" system (note Freire's Chapter 2 (pg 52) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for the definition of "banking concepts" in education). From grade school through secondary school I was surrounded by teachers, textbooks, curriculum and social experiences that portrayed histories, cultures and identities of Arab people in ways that were false (particularly when the topic involved Palestinians), and romanticized, orientalized and misunderstood, along with the history of Blacks, Latinos, Asians and the first Americans who always seemed to be remembered last - the indigenous ones.³ I grew up suspect of those that constructed and taught knowledge, in general, and in particular on that dealing with Arabs. I was able though to get a good sense of self-identity as a youth through groups such as my family, my Arab ethnic communities and solidarity groups. I was also fortunate enough to visit and live with relatives in Palestine for a short time. It was not until I got to college that I was introduced to positive curricula, images, history and culture on Arabs.⁴ However, this was not consistent and I can count the places this happened and with which academics, fellow students and associations it happened. And with every positive experience there were more negative ones. It did put some hope in me and over time I began to re-think the possibility of non-Arabs doing research on Arabs (I must be honest and say my sense of distrust has not completely disappeared).

Growing up Arab in America is a story I'm not inclined to discuss that much. I'm sharing this because I feel that I

can offer you insight by speaking from my locations and experiences, my sense of knowing. I believe that counts as "legitimate" knowledge. If you can't speak from your location and recognize it, you sometimes, through process, repeat and recycle the very thing you are attempting to get some knowledge or better understanding of. We are in different locations, spaces and environments. I am speaking to you outside the academy, as a non-student in the university (this does not mean one is not learning). I have chosen to postpone graduate school until I am "ready". I am very interested in your experiences because I think you can share some insight about what it is like. I work at a civic public policy organization in Chicago, our initiatives and projects center around public policy and race. Because we work with all sectors of society I get to step inside the academy occasionally to work with people and network. Many times I feel back at "home". I always did enjoy the classroom, even with all its limitations one can still appreciate the opportunity of space and time to study, learn, deconstruct and re-create ideas and such. It is important to have a place of one's own to think and make sense of what is happening in our lives and the lives of others.

So with that said I will answer your question and say that I have no trouble with the idea of non-Arabs doing research on Arabs. Purpose and meanings are exposed through research and analysis: what was set out to do and why; what was attempted to do and how it was

done; what was the process and challenges, how one adjusts and performs and interacts with informants, what was the outcome, and with equal importance, what the research and constructed knowledge is being used to do. This is the judge and indicator of whether the research holds "valid" knowledge, is it not? Even bias or questionable and suspectable research (from anyone's perspective) can be deconstructed, re-created and such. This does not take away from the damage of what this type of research can do and the purposeful intent and

sponsorship of the scholarship. And I will add that I am not just critical when dealing with non-Arabs but with all that do research and construct, govern and process knowledge.

I have a few questions of my own; I hope you don't mind answering them. "Do you feel guilty about doing research on Arab women or not doing research on your own "people" (more and more that is beginning to

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sound intrusive for me)? Do you always have a sense of “solidarity” among women of color? Because I do and I don’t. Is it becoming easier to find your space among the academy and communities and groups you encounter relating to your studies (this includes places outside the academy that offer support to your studies and sense of knowing)?

Do people honestly think that it is fascinating to study their own people? I would imagine it is not fascinating but rather necessary (and you don’t need the academy for this but I know what context you were writing in). Perhaps, though I am biased in this sense because I am Palestinian and feel studying one’s own people and culture is crucial to survival and existence (but I can’t be the only one to think this way).

Sometimes I wonder why people from other countries come to America to study their own country? I know there are many different answers and I don’t want to be ignorant to the fact that there are global conflicts, occupations, wars and economic instability that would bring someone here to study. I suppose I’m talking to those that might not fall into those categories (I’m using the categories now). I think though we unwillingly volunteer to put American institutions in a higher place and I’m not so sure they have earned it. But who am I to judge?

I would imagine that doing research on the topic of Muslim or Arab Muslim women reveals many complexities? How are you finding it so far?

Maddy
Saturday, 2003, 1.45 pm

Dear Maddy,

You are not being intrusive. We are comfortable in our spaces with each other and that is why we are able to dialogue about this. This dialogue feeds and nourishes my soul. There is something to be said about researching a group not one’s own. I cannot describe this feeling, but it is a combination of trespassing, guilt and pain. I wish I could name and explain this dilemma, but it is something I am still struggling with and for now it is the “problem that has no name.”⁵ I often wonder if perhaps this is a problem because I dwell on it constantly, but this is an issue that I need to come to terms with (the sooner the better) and to work it out the best way possible. Why the guilt about doing research on Arab women? It is proba-

bly because I am a “woman of color.” Reflecting on your question about solidarity, I’ve always had a problem with the word “solidarity” and term “women of color.” I did not become “colored” until I arrived in this country, and even then, the term didn’t evoke “solidarity” as I would hope. Yes, maybe we should have solidarity as “women of color”, but we are also divided through our nationality, religion, sexuality, race, class and various other issues. Do I feel solidarity? It depends on who is asking the question. Solidarity reminds me of my experiences in “sisterhood,” being turned down for my volunteer effort for a

non-profit Arab organization because I am not “Muslim enough.” What does “Muslim enough” mean? I would feel better if they turned me down because I am not Arab or because of my lack of fluency in Arabic, etc. I am reminded of Audre Lorde’s words, “It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences.”⁶ So much for solidarity and sisterhood. Having organized with other women of color reminds me of how sometimes we are not only fighting white racism, but also racism

among people of color. Sometimes internalized racism has a more damaging effect. As of now, I prefer alliances, for alliances “advocate love, commitment, responsibility. They are about concrete manifestation of our rebellious spirits and our sense of justice. They are about shared visions of a better society for us all.”⁷

Does my research on Arab-Muslim women reveal many complexities? Definitely. For as long as I can remember, I have always been fascinated and intrigued by the Middle East. As a child, I remember studying the history of Islam and Muslims and wondering why Islam was revealed in the Arabian Peninsula and not elsewhere. Never having the chance to visit the Arab world (I will this summer), and only hearing stories from family members who performed the Haj, and had the opportunity to explore other Middle Eastern countries, ignited my curiosity. Why the fascination? Perhaps I am reproducing colonial fantasies. Perhaps I am romanticizing Islam and its revelation some fourteen hundred years ago. Perhaps I am terrified of discovering the “truth” about my own society. The speculation is endless. I honestly do not have the answer. You must be frustrated and think that I should pack my bags and leave the graduate program!

Am I finding more agreeable spaces in the academy? Yes and no. For the most part, many people in the academy

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think there is nothing wrong with them studying/researching other people. After all, that is how we produce knowledge for the human race (not to devalue other forms of knowledge and knowing). So, in that sense, I get away with it, but most of the time, scenes like the ones I've depicted come into play. But other times my conscience gets the better of me and thinking how anthropology originated (as a tool for colonialists to gain insight into native societies) brings out all these troubling questions: Who am I to feel "entitled" to pick and choose any group of people, any geographical location and any issue to further my academic career? Is this how privileges are supposed to be utilized? How can I be accountable to my informants? Who owns knowledge? How do we reinterpret knowledge so that we can give back to the community and the rightful people and let it benefit them? How can we be accountable in transmitting knowledge?

Your question on studying one's own society reminds me of a book I read some ten or eleven years ago, entitled *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society* by Altorki and El-Solh (published in 1988, perhaps it's too old to be referenced, but I think the book is still useful). Some of the benefits of studying your own society are that one has the advantage of possessing a similar body of knowledge (is this likely?), meanings of cultural patterns are more readily understood (I am inclined to agree), it is easier to build rapport and closeness and to better understand social reality on the basis of minimal clues (what about differences among people of the same group?).⁸ Do all those factors (among others) make researching your own people more exciting? Like you said, perhaps not fascinating, but necessary and in that necessity, I think fascination and/or satisfaction will kick in. Possibly.

So this is my dilemma – given all the uncertainties and fears I have about the research process and its outcome, I know that I will try to present knowledge as it is given to me, but why do I still feel like an unwelcome intruder? Not a complete foreign intruder (interesting that I say that, perhaps the Muslim half of me that has "crossed over"), but an intruder nonetheless. I am thinking of Anzaldua, "Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a travesia, a crossing. I am again an alien in a new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape 'knowing,' I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious.

'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens, I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before."⁹

Azza,

Monday, 2003, 2.54 am

Dear Azza,

It sounds like you are in the process of working your issues out. Because I know you I have all the confidence that you will be conscious and use each challenge to be an accountable educator and researcher. Perhaps this is part of your "training" process.

I absolutely do not want to see you pack your bags and leave graduate school. I think the pain and silencing you speak of is real and should be recognized. If you didn't care you would not be agonizing. I think you should always remember the pain, whether it is yours or someone else's, use it as a tool to heal injustice, create and work for change.

Of course you did not become colored until you came to the United States. It comes with the territory. Were you not stamped and labeled "alien" when you entered the borders? That's a hint courtesy of United States hegemony. People have told me that we are so obsessed in America about race. I would have to agree and that is one of the reasons why I need and want to make sense of it all. Remember this is my topic of interest and research. We have been naming and giving examples of what we mean by all this. I feel no need to keep going. It becomes quite draining.

About the women of color issue. Your experience in being rejected and your feelings about solidarity I can relate to and validate. I have had my share of border patrolling (you defined it rather well earlier) in my in-group and outside groups to know that it is a life process that fluctuates, moves and grows. One last thing about your comments on fighting racism among people of color, whiteness is not only sustained and practiced

by whites alone, there is room for non-whites to believe in the system, and they benefit from it too. Whiteness becomes a state of mind- very clear but mythical. It is not enough to have a sense of sharing sameness with a certain race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender sexual orientation, but also one must possess and share like minds and actions.

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I thought maybe you were rejected by the non-profit Arab-group because you don't wear the hijab (in addition to what you've mentioned) - interpreting you as not "Muslim enough" thereby disqualifying you. I have myself experienced this among some Arab Muslims/Muslims (mostly women and men who believe all Muslim women should wear the hijab). Sometimes being born something does not necessarily give you the "inside status," being a Muslim woman wearing or not wearing the hijab can be an example. I'm not sure if I am correct in my statement though because rarely do I get an opportunity to discuss this openly and honestly with others and don't have a good sense of all the multiple feelings and experiences.

Thanks for sharing with me your story of how and why you became interested in your studying Arab women. I get a better sense of your location and where you are speaking from. I love to hear autographical testimonies. I would be interested to know more about what your relatives described of their travels to the Middle East. Perhaps another time.

In closing, I would like to end with our beginnings. In many ways it highlights some of the intersecting themes and topics we have been discussing through out this exchange.

We both were taking the same women's studies class on the history of ideas on women. It was the second or third day of class; we were finishing up reading/discussing the philosophy on creation of man and women. The instructor and most of the students were focusing on Christianity and citing passages from the Bible and having what seemed to be a "inside" limited discussion in many ways. I felt frustrated because the last class period they were doing the same thing and I didn't understand them and no one, including the instructor, seemed to notice and went on as if everyone knew what they were saying. I felt a little invisible and did not want to disappear in this class, I thought to myself: is this how the rest of the semester will be in this class? I did not want to continue in this position. I hesitated but spoke up and said something like I was not that knowledgeable in Christianity and although I am familiar with some things I am not familiar with what they were discussing and asked if someone could explain so and so. The professor (who newly emigrated from Europe) turned red and apologized for assuming we all knew. She thanked me for bringing this to her attention. The white female student who was doing most of the talking turned to me and asked me what I was. The discussions after that were more inclusive but had many agents of silencing throughout the semester. I felt out of place, but was relieved that I was able to move out of invisibility and pass into visibil-

ity and voice myself. I remember looking around the room and came upon your smiling face. I felt a warm connection. We talked afterwards and re-introduced ourselves outside the circle. I later learned you were interested in doing research on Arab-Muslim women and you discovered I was interested in race and whiteness. I remember feeling that sense of hope I was writing to you about earlier. You are a welcomed "intruder" in my space!

Who owns knowledge? This is a great question to ask and reminds oneself to stay grounded. There are endless multiple answers to this question and even still you cannot finish seeking all of them out. I would like to believe we all own it. But that is somewhat naive.

I enjoyed this dialogue very much. I am reminded of Freire in concluding, "dialogue requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in the power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is not privilege of an elite, but the birthright of all)." ¹⁰

I wish you the all the best. Take care and keep in touch.

Peace, Maddy
Wednesday, 2003, 5.50 pm

Dear Maddy,

I smiled to myself when I read the story of how we first met. I remember looking at you (you were sitting across from me and I sensed you were looking around for some "connection") and when you asked that question (about Christianity), I knew I had found an ally (perhaps I am categorizing you?).

Feeling trapped in this maze of complexities (despite every now and then seeing a light at the end of the tunnel), I can only hope that the pain and silencing that you and I speak of will heal itself as we move along in our lives. I identify with what you wrote, "I think you should always remember the pain, whether it is yours or someone else's use it as a tool to heal injustice, create and work for change."

You also wrote, "Sometimes being born something does not necessarily give you the 'inside' status ..." - but being born an "outsider" will never make a person an "insider" ever, no matter how connected oneself is to a group that is not one's own.

Dialoging with you gives me hope and makes it more viable to think through the issues that I am dealing with. I was not hoping for solutions, but insights and pointers to raise more questions (it's unavoidable) and take it to

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the next level. My location as a woman of the global south now living and working in the United States also plays an integral part not only in constructing my new fragmented identity, but it also unfortunately contributes to my dilemma as a researcher. One might ask if I lived in my country of origin (Malaysia), would my positionality and the research process be less problematic? That is a question that I constantly ask myself and I regret to say that might be something that I wish I had had the opportunity to explore before I migrated to the United States. New knowledge occurs through tension, difficulties, mistakes and chaos.¹¹ I am hoping that the knowledge I am gaining, sharing, exchanging and producing is a knowledge that will go through such stages.

Thank you for going on this journey with me. I hope we have many more ahead. Say hello to your feline friends for me, perhaps I will see them sometime soon. I leave

you with this poem¹² that speaks to and for my troubled soul.

The bridge I must be
Is the Bridge to my own power,
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate

My own weaknesses
I must be the bridge to nowhere
But to my true self
And then
I will be useful
By Donna Kate Rushin

Azza
Thursday, 2003, 1.45 pm

End Notes

* Azza Basarudin was born and raised in Penang, an old colonial town in Malaysia and grew up living among a blend of working and middle-class Muslim, Chinese, Hindu and Eurasian cultures. Maddy Mohammed lives in Chicago where she is a fulltime student of conscious living. She is an intellectual-activist working on multiple social justice projects. She is interested in returning to the Academy some day to continue her research in Race, Ethnicity and Whiteness studies.

1. See Churchill, Ward. *White Studies: The Intellectual Imperialism of U.S. Higher Education* (1995) and Semali, Ladislaus. *Perspectives of the Curriculum of Whiteness* (1998).

2. See Dalmage, Heather M. *Tripping on the Color Line: Black-White Multiracial Families in a Racially Divided World*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2000.

3. As I write this the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq continues. The American educational institutions that educated me rather poorly on Arab people's history, culture and religions is now in an authority and holds "consulting" positions in overseeing Iraqi educational institutions. This is truly concerning.

4. This does not mean that it was only in college I was reading credible research on Arabs by non-Arabs. I was reading in and out of school, (multiple kinds of books and narratives by non-Arabs and Arabs alike) on my own.

5. I am borrowing this term from Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

6. Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. New York: The Crossing Press, 1984.

7. Cited from Molina, Papusa. "Recognizing, Accepting and Celebrating Our Differences." *From Making Face Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspective by Feminist of Color*. Ed. Gloria Anzaldua. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990. pg.328.

8. The benefits of studying one's own society is cited from Altorki and El-Solh's book.

9. Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987. pg. 70.

10. Friere, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000. pg 71.

11. Cited from Anzaldua, Gloria. "Now Let Us Shift...the Path of Conocimiento...Inner Work, Public Act." *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Eds. Gloria E. Anzaldua and Analouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 1990. pg. 563.

12. Cited from Andemicael, Iobel. "Chameleon" from *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Eds. Gloria E. Anzaldua and Analouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 1990. pg. 40.