

Fridarose Hamad

Honors 200-012: Poetry and Empathy

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This poem is a reflection on Amit Majmudar's title poem *Dothead*, with my own spin on the similar experiences that Majmudar expresses in both the poem *Dothead* and the wider collection. I hope this poem contributes to the current conversation on hijab, Islamophobia, immigration, stereotyping, and empathy. After taking this class, and writing this poem, I have grown. I hope that poetry becomes an accessible outlet for others to learn how to empathize with those who are different and provide comfort to those who are in pain. Majmudar's experience, as written in his poetry, both challenged me and comforted me. I hope that my poem can do the same.

## Towelhead

Well, yes, I said, my mother wears the scarf.  
I know they said “it was forced” but that’s a farce  
It’s not forced, not like that. It’s not like someone went  
Up to her and made her wear it. It’s about respect,  
Judging the character, not the appearance.  
And she did not even put it on right away,  
And she did not even tell us when she did, she just did.  
Some idiot became president and she put it on to protest.  
The ‘friends’ stayed quiet. Or at least momentarily.  
When my mom dropped off a Tupperware container  
at the ‘friend’s’ house, her mom answered the door,  
and asked, “Will your daughter be *forced* to wear that?”  
It took me another year, after it was apparent  
the apple did not fall far, until I BLEW UP at  
her during biology class. Haha. Blew up. Bombs.  
We were talking about refugees.  
Apparently, the apple started,  
They are the reason my home country is falling  
apart, crumbling infrastructure, and broken subways.  
I remember the look on my teacher's face  
Almost horrified that the “funny freshman”  
Turned into an “angry Arab”  
And guess what? I’m still funny, I’m still angry,  
And now I am a *towelhead* too.