Dress as Metaphor in Diasporic Fiction

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DECLARATION

I certify that the work contained in this thesis, or any part of it, has not been accepted in substance for any previous degree awarded to me, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise identified by references and that the contents are not the outcome of any form of research misconduct.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the significance of dress in literary constructions of gendered, especially female, diasporic identities and examines patterns of dressing as strategies that allow for engagement with a grander narrative that takes into consideration history and politics, mapped through changes in dress, during and post colonisation. The thesis is primarily concerned with the metaphorical uses of dress in literary, political and cultural discourses. More broadly, the thesis is concerned with how shifts in style, as presented in literature, reflect and inform transitions in social structures in South Asia, and its diasporic communities, in the aftermath of colonialism and in the contemporary context of transnationalism. Writers examined span the colonial period to the twenty-first century and are drawn from a broad geographical range; their texts inform an understanding of dressing patterns as politically, socially and historically constructed across time, geography and literature. I first establish a theoretical framework with which to explore the contexts for modes of dressing and their literary and cultural representation. Chapter one provides a history of South Asian dress to illustrate how the notion of cultural authenticity is problematised through an understanding of centuries of exchange and the hybrid forms of colonial encounters. In subsequent chapters, I examine the work of Santha Rama Rau, in particular her memoir *Home to India* (1945), and the dilemma in articulating Indian identity. Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) reveals an emerging, modernist feminism at the juncture of Indian independence. Chapters four and five focus on diasporic communities in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) and representations of conflict, identity and dress. Finally, Kamila Shamsie's novels are considered in chapter six as contributions to a world literature that attempts to transcend the enduring colonial legacy of constructed and debilitating nationalisms.

CONTENTS

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Timeline

1600	East India Company is formed by British Royal Charter.
1772	Ram Mohan Roy born (d. 1833).
	Calcutta established as British capital in India.
1828	Ram Mohan Roy founds the Brahmo Sabha movement to initiate socio-religious reform.
1835	Macaulay's *Minute on Education* Act passed.
	English is made official government and court language.
1857	Sepoy Mutiny/Great Indian Mutiny is the first major Indian revolt.
1858	The British government takes over the governance of India in the name of the Crown from the East India Company.
1861	Rabindranath Tagore born (d. 1941).
1869	Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi born (d. 1948).
1885	Indian National Congress established.
1889	Jawaharlal Nehru is born (d. 1964).
1905	First Partition of Bengal strongly opposed.
	Boycott of British goods initiated in *Swadeshi* movement.
1906	Muslim League political party formed.
1913	Rabindranath Tagore wins Nobel Prize in Literature.
	Attia Hosain born (d. 1998).
1919	Jallianwala Bagh ('Amritsar') massacre.
	Gandhi demands full independence from British rule.
1923	Santha Rama Rau born (d. 2009).
1939	World War Two breaks out.
1940	Muslim League calls for the creation of Pakistan.
1945	United States drops nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
	World War Two ends.
	Home to India published.
1947	India gains independence on 15 August and Britain exits India.
	Partition of country into India and Pakistan.
1961	*Sunlight on a Broken Column* published.
1966	Nadeem Aslam born.
1967	Monica Ali born.
1971	Civil war after East Pakistan demands autonomy.
	Bangladesh created out of former East Pakistan.
1973	Kamila Shamsie born.
1978	General Zia-ul-Haq sworn in as President.
1979	Hudood Ordinance enacted.
2001	Terrorist attack in the United States of America by Al-Qaeda.
2003	*Brick Lane* published.
2004	*Maps for Lost Lovers* published.
2006	*Kartography* published.
2009	Sheikh Hasina Wazed of the Bangladesh Awami League secures a second term as Prime Minister. Sheikh Hasina was the first woman Prime Minister from 1996 to 2001.
	Burnt Shadows published.
2014	A growing tide of Hindu nationalism sees Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party, (BJP) sworn in as Prime Minister.
2017	Shahid Khaqan Abbasi of the Pakistan Muslim League becomes Prime Minister.

Maps of South Asia

British India, 1860
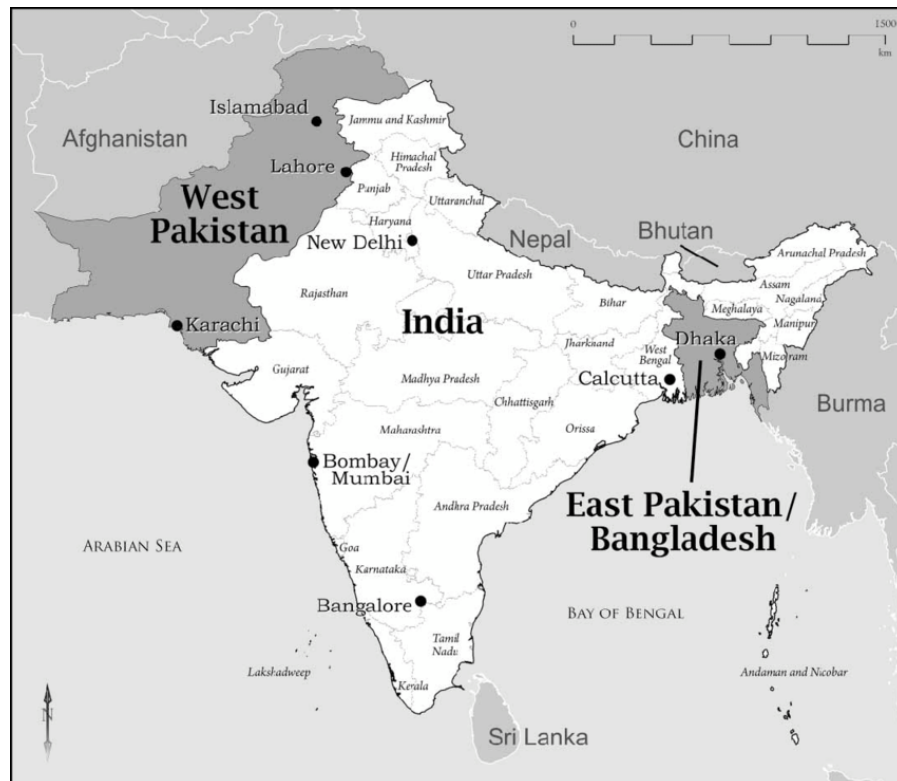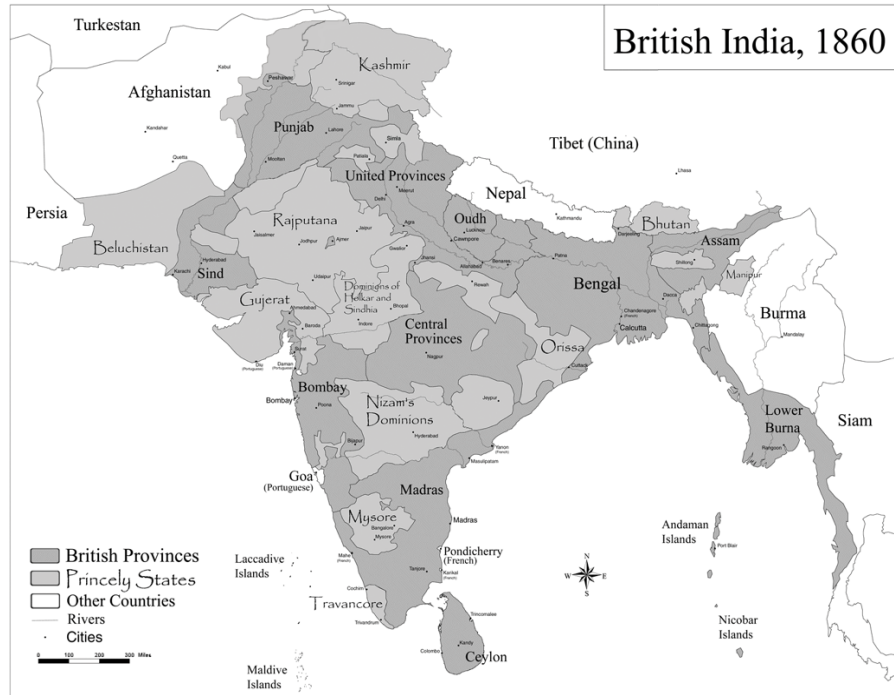
Abbreviations

Home to India - HI

Sunlight on a Broken Column - SBC

Phoenix Fled - PF

Distant Traveller - DT

Brick Lane - BL

Maps for Lost Lovers - MLL

In the City by the Sea - CS

Salt and Saffron - SS

Kartography - K

Broken Verses - BV

Burnt Shadows - BS

References to primary texts will be given in parenthesis in the main body of the thesis, using the above abbreviations followed by page numbers.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Beloved* (1866)

Introduction: perspectives and context

The frontispiece, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Beloved* (1866), is illustrative of the intersections of gender, ethnicity and dress that are the concerns of this thesis. Returning the male gaze of her beloved, the bride's luminous beauty finds relief against the racial ambiguity of the bridesmaids and the sexual ambiguity of the black page. The painting's biblical inscription, taken from *The Song of Solomon*, 'she shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework', provides the source of Rossetti's inspiration and indicates the significance of dress. In dressing King Solomon's bride in Japanese kimono fabric and Peruvian headdress, Rossetti presents the female figure as 'other' whilst simultaneously representing her western beauty.[1] Dress, here, becomes metaphorical for beauty, sexuality and colonial conquest rather than merely visible and universal ornamentation. The painting is an illustration of reciprocal cultural exchange in patterns of dress and the images they create. Dress has metaphorical significance in the construction of gendered identities that are historically, socially and politically informed. Traversing time, religious and geographical borders, modes of dress constitute a performative function in negotiations of authenticity, patriarchy and nationalisms.

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[1] Jan Marsh notes 'the growth of an influential if specious discourse on "race classification" in the Western world whereby racial difference was systematically promoted to justify European superiority, through a descending chain of proclaimed perfection that placed the European "race" at the pinnacle and the African as lowest on the evolutionary scale. The inclusion of the finely painted child, and indeed, the global play of racial references within *The Beloved* as a whole suggests a covert – even unconscious – reference to these socio-political theories, from a half-liberal artist who resolutely insisted he was merely concerned with the jewelled surface of his work. Each of the maidens has a darker skin than the fair Bride, so that the six figures together span the spectrum, while the green Japanese kimono and red Peruvian hair ornaments gesture towards further ethnic groups. Given its contemporary context, the picture's ambiguities multiply' in Jan Marsh, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Painter and Poet* (1999) (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 292-293.
Rossetti inscribed the frame with lines from *The Song of Solomon* and *Psalm 45*:
'My beloved is mine and I am his' (*The Song of Solomon* 2:16). 'Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine' (*The Song of Solomon* 1:2). 'She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee' (Psalms 45:14).

The reconstruction of *The Song of Solomon*, despite Rossetti's liberal intentions, belies its nineteenth-century Orientalism; an Orientalism which, as we shall see in the theoretical framework outlined in this introduction, Edward Said sees as expressive of inscribed evocations of the East as the West's opposite.

This introductory chapter provides a brief overview of a relevant body of work by writers ranging from Edward Said (1935-2003), Judith Butler (1956-), and more recently, leading author in the study of dress and identity in India, Emma Tarlo (1963-) and Adam Geczy (1969-), artist, writer and academic. These latter two writers take into consideration the processes of constructing an image in relation to identity, during and post colonisation. The exploration of dress facilitates examination of a broader thematic spectrum that is inclusive of history, politics and gender ideologies as projected in patterns of dressing. The body of criticism discussed in this introduction helps situate the literary analysis, in later chapters, within an existing framework of discourse. The thesis is underpinned conceptually by a notion of dress as informing historical narrative and having contemporary relevance as clothing is always a manifestation of developing identities as well as a means of demonstrating affiliations with political groupings in evolving contexts. The criticism discussed here represents an overview of developments in postcolonial scholarship and informs the brief studies of textiles and dressing patterns included in chapter one, as well as later literary chapters. The memoir and novels examined in chapters two to six have been selected as, taken together, they represent the constituent parts of South Asian identities that formed during and post colonisation. The theoretical framework included in this introduction supplements the understanding and subsequent analysis of narratives by South Asian authors writing within or about a range of historical contexts, from impending Indian independence, postcolonial diasporic movement and a post-9/11 landscape. The following overview of significant developments in the field of postcolonial studies facilitates an understanding of how works of literature are the products of particular historical moments, demonstrating how wider political and social

concerns permeate individual lives, even within the context of the basic human need to be clothed.

Early subaltern scholarship

In the field of literary theory, and more specifically postcolonialism, the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha have been seminal to the development and understanding of the postcolonial subject in academic, social and cultural terms although whether this remains the domain of the economically privileged western educated elite is a contentious point. Robert Young has described the three individuals as the 'Holy Trinity' of postcolonial critics who have achieved eminence within their field and who are here discussed in chronological order of publications.[2] Each of the three scholars have courted controversy as a result of their insights into the contradictory effects of colonialism and the persistence of imperialist attitudes in the post-colonial period, even in anti-colonial thought. Whilst their work provides a critique of the effects of colonisation, their criticism also seeks to deconstruct the role of colonialism in the enlightenment project. More widely, a theoretical debate about postcoloniality considers whether the term 'post' itself can be justified when the structures of colonialism linger. John McLeod in *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000) writes:

> It is worth considering if we can ever really talk of a "postcolonial*ism*", with all the coherency that this term implies […] There is no one singular postcolonial*ism*. But […] "postcolonialism" can be articulated in different ways as an enabling concept, despite the difficulties we encounter when trying to define it.[3]

If colonialism is the process through which European powers gained a stronghold in African, Asian, South American, Canadian and Australian land/space, then postcolonialism follows the end of the European political

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[2] '[I]t would be true to say that Said, Bhabha and Spivak constitute the Holy Trinity of colonial-discourse analysis, and have to be acknowledged as central to the field' in Robert Young, *Colonial Desire* (1995) (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 163.

[3] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000) (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 3 (emphasis original).

dominance over the first three of the continents as listed. Postcolonialism itself, as a term of academic study, is subject to debate and understandings of its usage are often challenged. The concept of 'postcolonialism' can be approached as a utopian one arising from the processes of decolonisation, and the newly acquired political independence of nations and cultures across Africa, Asia and South America. Political independence and its consequent representation in cultural studies provided the momentum for the expansion and dissemination of postcolonial studies. Changing geo-political contexts and the passage of time have urged a re-evaluation of early postcolonial concerns and prompted considerations of how theoretical criticism is itself subject to trends and fluctuations and, as is exemplified in the work of fiction writers and theorists, reflects contemporary understandings of postcolonialism.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is arguably the most influential text in the field of postcolonial studies and is regarded as foundational in postcolonial discourse.[4] In his critical study of representations of the East by the West Said argued that imperialists produced the Orient as an apparatus, nominally created to enhance the imperial project as its opposite and superior image, in order to exert western authority. Said writes:

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[4] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978) (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2003).
Graham Huggan writes that *Orientalism* is 'conceived by many, unreflectively perhaps, as a "foundational" critical work' in Graham Huggan, '(Not) Reading *Orientalism*', *Interdisciplinary Measures* (2008) (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 196-209, 200.
McLeod points out that it would be 'grossly reductive to assert that Edward Said is the instigator of postcolonialism […]' but 'it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that, institutionally, the success of *Orientalism* did much to encourage new kinds of study' (McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism,* 23).
Antecedents for example can be seen as far back as the slave narrative *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789), W.E.B. Du Bois's theory of 'double consciousness' in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Of course, in the South Asian context, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) as well as others are significant as we shall see.

> [T]he Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of the Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.[5]

In the 2003 preface to *Orientalism,* Said writes that '*Orientalism* is very much a book tied to the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history'[6]. Orientalism is examined as a project that is fictional, and fashioned by European attitudes and perceptions, as one that also includes the construction of a sweeping binary of European and non-European cultures. Said's observations reveal how Orientalism is a depiction of the East that is suspect and serves its own agenda. Orientalism can be seen as a method of storytelling in a particular style that involves the imposition of representations of the East as 'the other' linked to an imposition that has material political consequences. For Said, 'the Orient studied was a textual universe', a totalising narrative that originates with stories, but extends to include scientific modes of writing about the East.[7] Pramod Nayar writes: 'Orientalism *begins* with imaginative narratives but then moves into a project of enquiry, discovery and knowledge-gathering. The East is written about in diverse ways – in the way of fictionalized creations as well as "authoritative" commentaries, personal memoirs of Western experiences in the East and the administrative study'.[8] Said traces Orientalism back to the thirteenth-century poet Dante, in whose work the first European vocabulary to represent non-European culture emerges. As Nayar states in his own summary, 'the language of representing the Orient need not match the Orient's material reality; it was enough to provide a ready-made language in which the Orient could be described by any Westerner' as part of a homogenising project.[9] It is important to note that while Said's studies in *Orientalism* provide founding

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[5] Said, 1-2 (emphasis original).
[6] Said, preface, xii.
[7] Said, 52.
[8] Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism* (2010) (London and New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2010), 13 (emphasis original).
[9] Nayar, 16.

principles of postcolonial debate, those same debates evolve, as Said himself acknowledged in a later book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Here, Said focuses on the cultural legacy of imperialism and the ambivalence this entails:

> Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and canons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.[10]

With reference to 'forms' and 'images', Said's theoretical perspective draws attention to the perception and indeed portrayal of the colonised bodies, how these are 'originally' dressed, and latterly redressed, as part of the orientalist and civilising project. Said argues that imperialism continues to pervade culture and that certain struggles are in a sense timeless and continue even after historical political changes. Such is the prominence of *Orientalism* (1978) that Spivak has described it as 'the source book in our discipline' that has initiated subsequent postcolonial scholarship.[11] As we shall see in the analysis of the selected fictional texts, dressing patterns are also useful cultural signifiers and universally employed across cultures and over an expanded time frame. Concepts relating to education, class, religion and ideas of modesty can be articulated through the manner in which an individual is dressed.

Although Said, Spivak and Bhabha are firmly placed within the postcolonial studies framework, this should not be taken to imply unanimity amongst them. Rather, what can be drawn from the intersections to be identified in their work is the way in which Said's ideas are extended in the work of the others. Although Spivak and Bhabha do not necessarily engage with Said or each other directly, there is a shared preoccupation and a conversation develops

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[10] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) (London: Vintage Books, 1994), 6.
[11] Spivak writes 'I certainly meant it when I "described *Orientalism* as the 'source book in our discipline,'" as Moore-Gilbert writes, but I meant it for the sake of the entire discipline' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (2000), Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds.) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), xxi, foreword. Spivak refers to Bart Moore-Gilbert's essay, 'Spivak and Bhabha' in Schwarz and Ray, 451-466.

between their respective contributions to the debate. Spivak's work, although central to postcolonial studies, also intersects with elements of Marxism, Feminism and Poststructuralism. Spivak's engagement with the work of Freud, Lacan, Marx, Derrida and Foucault has been significant in the development and integration of feminist and poststructural critiques of psychoanalytic and Marxist thought. In 1976 Spivak wrote the preface to an English translation of Jacques Derrida's *De La Grammatologie* (1967). Spivak's preface to *Of Grammatology* came to prominence for her questioning of 'what it meant to translate the work of the French philosopher' and how Derrida's theories of deconstruction were applied in Spivak's own introduction to Derrida himself, where Spivak draws on the sense of occasion that the act of writing creates.[12]

In her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988) Spivak proposes that subjects come into being through the acts of *discourse* so that an individual will develop an identity as the subject of a discourse that she/he has limited control over.[13] Spivak coins the term subaltern (adopted from its use by the Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci) to describe a state of subjugation. Subaltern status is a theoretical construction by a discourse that requires a (colonised) subject to be central to a hierarchical proposition of binaries that is imposed by colonial administrators. The 'subaltern' is a term that has been adopted to describe the colonised subject who is situated outside a hegemonic power structure in relation to the articulation of a postcolonial South Asian identity. Spivak argues that in this particular formulation the subaltern subject cannot speak and is, rather, spoken *for* – and in this respect her work bears similarities with Said's theory of Orientalism. Spivak aligns identity to the notion of a grand narrative and political strategy. However, Spivak also indicates the fallacy of the postcolonial project where ironically postcolonial discourse is neocolonial in the sense that it privileges one societal grouping to the detriment of another. Spivak interrogates postcolonialism as a first world,

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[12] *The Spivak Reader* (1996), Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (eds.) (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).
[13] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988), Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.) (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 271-313.

male, privileged and institutionalised discourse and perhaps the most quoted and misquoted passage from her essay is the line '[w]hite men are saving brown women from brown men' in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. Stephen Morton writes of the oft-quoted line that:

> Spivak marks the limitations of her analysis. As part of this strategy, Spivak invents a sentence summarizing the repression of Hindu widow sacrifice by British colonialism that is inspired by Freud's 'A Child is being Beaten' to predicate the history of repression described by many of his patients. That sentence is "White men are saving brown women from brown men". [14]

For Morton, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' is illustrative of both Spivak's participation in, and challenge to, European academic and political discourse. For example, Spivak's essay appears to allude in some respects, to Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) in that a challenge or argument is directed against the metaphorical mechanics of society.[15] Whilst Spivak's reference to the 'aura narrative specificity'[16] can be seen to take a lead from Said to a degree, her ideas can also be viewed in the context of Benjamin's observations on mechanical reproduction and the effect that the 'significance of the masses'[17] has on the concept of 'aura'.[18] As such, Spivak's work can be seen as part of a wider discursive network that whilst seeking to counter imperialist values, at some level is also a product of the institution that is challenged. Morton sees that Spivak's desire to "'give

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[14] Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (2007) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 113.

[15] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations* (1970), Hannah Arendt (ed.) (trans.) Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 211-244.
Benjamin describes the concept of aura as vulnerable to decay given the increasing dominance of industry, and makes a counter argument to the prevailing attitudes towards mechanisation in society which were equated with societal progress. 'The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura' (Benjamin in Arendt, 216).

[16] Spivak in Nelson, 272.

[17] Benjamin, 216.

[18] Spivak in Nelson, 273.

the subaltern a voice in history" is shaped by the same masculine-imperialist ideological formation that shaped Freud's account of hysteria'.[19] A point to draw on is the development of a 'conversation' or dialogue that occurs in critical theory, as demonstrated by considering Spivak's own work as a response to existing critical thought both in the postcolonial and the wider academic field. In relation to the concerns of this thesis, the focus on dress will include an examination of the extent to which dress too is part of a longer line of discourse that originates from its own set of social and political allegiances and is interwoven within numerous histories. In this thesis, I will seek to demonstrate the ways in which dress reflects changing identities and central to this will be a consideration of how authentic any construction of identity can be; the notion of authenticity remains a contentious issue in a post-truth era. As Reina Lewis and Sara Mills note, 'even in projects like postcolonialism […] lines of legitimacy become established and are invoked by practitioners as a way to confirm their own authority'.[20] In their study, Lewis and Mills attempt to redress the key problem of the 'marginalization and exclusion of a separate trajectory of feminist thought' where a part of the problem is the dominance of voices such as those of Said, Spivak and Bhabha.[21] In general, the contributors to Lewis and Mills' anthology explore non-mainstream perspectives in postcolonial criticism. However, Spivak is 'very visible as the exceptionally cited voice' and her contribution to literary theory and cultural criticism continues to inform research and development in the field of postcolonial studies.[22]

Spivak defines the subaltern as a social group that is outside hegemonic power through its social, political and geographical placement (such as in the case of the South Asian female) by European colonisation and indigenous patriarchal structures in what has been described as 'double colonisation'.[23] In 'Three

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[19] Morton, 113.
[20] *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (2003), Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.) (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 1.
[21] Lewis, 1.
[22] Lewis, 1.
[23] Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford, *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-colonial Women's Writing* (1986) (University of Dundee: Dangaroo Press, 1986).

Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism' (1985) Spivak details methods of female empowerment within structures as a means to facilitate being heard or to 'speak' through the practice of 'strategically taking shelter in an essentialism […] which will continue to honor the suspect binary oppositions—book and author, individual and history' as a temporary measure of solidarity for wider purposes of social change.[24] The 'essentialism' that the colonised subject seeks 'shelter' in is a form of armour, which is suited to, or is advantageous for, the colonised and for a time works constructively or positively, even though the 'essentialism' may be discriminatory in terms of privileging particular identities. More recently, in 2002, Spivak has returned to essentialism in relation to terrorism and states that 'willed suicidal terror is in excess of the destruction of dynastic temples and the violation of women, tenacious and powerfully residual'.[25] Stephen Moore writes that Spivak's 'unique style of theorizing and reading are potentially invaluable models for theologians struggling to hold together the deconstructive imperative to engage in the critique of theology and self-critique, on the one hand, and the ethical imperative to engage contemporary socio-political contexts on the other hand'.[26] Spivak's reflections in recent years have been directed towards the intersection of postcoloniality, theology and religion. Postcolonial theology is emerging as an interdisciplinary field within religious thought that is concerned with combining an understanding of an ancient past with the contemporary landscape in a critique of hegemonic power structures and embedded ideologies. The discipline attempts to achieve social transformations in ways that recognise and validate the perspectives of marginalised groups of societies in a re-evaluation of the past. Such a trajectory takes Spivak's earlier theories and aims to develop them alongside an understanding of ancient histories that predate colonial history. In considering pre-colonial history as a period marking a central and defining

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[24] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Text's and a Critique of Imperialism' in *"Race," Writing and Difference* (1986), Henry Louis Gates, Jr (ed.) (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 263-280, 263.
[25] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Terror: A Speech after 9-11', *boundary 2*, 31.2 (2004), 81-111.
[26] *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality and Theology* (2011), Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (eds.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 'Introductions', Moore, 13.

feature of intellectual development, understanding of history is broadened in both chronology and perspective. Postcolonial theology engages in a reciprocal exchange of perspectives in a complex overlap with other more established areas of theological enquiry, such as liberation, contextual and political theologies.[27] In relation to the concerns of this thesis, particularly in chapter five, a 'post-postcolonial' critique of historical patterns of dressing is arguably reflective of the extent to which the ideology that is attached to specific patterns of dressing, such as embodied in the practice of purdah, is reappraised in terms of its affiliations with religious practice. In chapter three, the practice of purdah and terms such as female modesty through veiling are also linked to manifestations of political realities. Spivak's continued presence in cultural studies highlights her eminence within the field and how her theories continue to evolve alongside contemporary political and social movements. In terms of tracing a genealogy, Spivak follows on from Said but precedes Homi Bhabha, the third figure in the 'Holy Trinity' of postcolonial scholarship.

Contemporary theory

Bhabha's theoretical perspectives are also significant in the context of understanding a genealogy of relatively seminal postcolonial scholarship. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha moves away from the Saidian structure of binaries of East and West by focusing on the flaws and contradictions inherent in colonial discourse. Bhabha argues that identities are never fixed or stable, but based on difference and opposition so that in essence the colonial identity relies on a native identity and draws distinctions between identities in order to formulate group identities. Bhabha proposes that cultural production is most productive where it is most ambivalent and introduces terms such as mimicry, hybridity and liminality. In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha proposes the idea of mimicry as the conscious imitation of the coloniser by the colonised. Bhabha argues that the mimicry is actually the point at which colonial authority deteriorates. Bhabha uses the term 'sly civility' to articulate the surface obedience and the deeper mockery or

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[27] Moore, 4.

difference that occurs through the act of mimicry. Through mimicry, then, the colonised in fact engages in resistance. The multiplicity of these acts is what Bhabha refers to as 'hybridity'. Bhabha's studies draw out the failures of colonial discourse and shows how colonial resistance emerges as a result of colonial weaknesses and dependence on the colonised or native subject. Ambivalence is thus a feature that results from the colonial encounter and affects the ways in which modernity is understood and subsequently reflected in scholarship.

In Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), Bauman argues that modernity or modern civilization imposed rationality with the aim of attaining a greater degree of order.[28] Bauman observes that the modernity project's goal to achieve order through rationality has not been met and for him the modernity project reveals its impossibility through its very resistance to ambivalence or 'flux'. Bauman writes:

> That resistance is the stubborn and grim reminder of the flux which order wished to contain in vain; of the limits to order; and of the necessity of ordering. Modern state and modern intellect alike need chaos – if only to go on creating order. They both thrive on the vanity of their effort.[29]

Bauman however proposes that the postmodern age is a time to accept ambivalence and continue to process how to negotiate the prospect of ambiguity as ongoing, rather than try and decode and control it. The concept of ambivalence and the idea that a given context cannot be rendered static by way of reason complicates the desire for a fixed idea of history in relation to identity. In *Gender Trouble*: *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler argues that gender identity is socially constructed and performative.[30] In the preface to the 1999 edition Butler writes:

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[28] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1991).
[29] Bauman, 9.
[30] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) (New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2008).

It is difficult to say precisely what performativity is not only because my own views on what "performativity" might mean have changed over time, most often in response to excellent criticisms, but because so many others have taken it up and given it their own formulations. I originally took my cue on how to read the performativity of gender from Jacques Derrida's reading of Kafka's "Before the Law". There the one who waits for the law, sits before the door of the law, attributes a certain force to the law for which one waits. The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object. I wondered whether we do not labor under a similar expectation concerning gender, that it operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repletion and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.[31]

Although Butler's ideas in relation to gender are regarded as foundational to queer theory, the influence of her work also informs the development of feminist discourse and will be revisited in this thesis in chapter two, in relation to Santha Rama Rau in *Home to India* (1945), in a consideration of how identities are performed through actions that are learned, repeated, and adapted in response to a given social or political circumstance. In this respect Spivak's argument, referred to earlier, that 'strategically taking shelter in an essentialism' is also a construct, though temporary, which helps facilitate overarching goals of universal emancipation is relevant.[32] It is important to note that in the field of postcolonial theory and criticism there is the overlapping of ideas as well as contradictions. In *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, Benita Parry brings together her essays in pieces ranging from 1987 to 2004.[33] In the earlier section of her book 'Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies' Parry is critical of Spivak and Bhabha and the poststructural traditions that they draw on. In her 1987 essay 'Problems in

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[31] Butler, xv.
[32] Spivak in Gates, 263.
[33] Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (2004) (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

Current Theories of Colonial Discourse' Parry interprets Spivak as having replaced one type of violence for another, 'epistemic violence and cultural colonization for material violence and dispossession'.[34] Parry writes: 'To dismantle colonialist knowledge and displace the received narrative of colonialism's moment written by ruling class historiography and perpetuated by the nationalist version, the founding concepts of the problematic must be refused'.[35] What Parry seems to be suggesting is that in order to 'dismantle' and 'displace', the task at hand is, as much as anything else, a psychological one, where a refusal of 'colonialist knowledge' is addressed at a fundamental level in order to address the issues of postcolonialism. Whether this is achievable is always questionable as the argument is that once colonialism has occurred the idea of reversion is impossible. However, postcoloniality may also be viewed as a process that offers an altered state of being, enhanced even by the experiences of the past, and understandings of events initiates further processes to decolonise the mind.[36] The challenges that Parry outlines in her essay contribute to overall debates within a postcolonial framework which is at times contradictory as the desire to dismantle dominant constructions is replaced with yet new constructions.[37] David Huddart writes:

> Parry's position, and it is one that Bhabha's writings often confirm, is that Bhabha seems to want to *replace* the actually existing texts and general practices of anti-colonialism. For

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[34] Benita Parry 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse' From Oxford Literary Review 9(1-2) (1987) in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (1995), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (eds.) (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
[35] Parry, 28.
[36] The phrase 'decolonise the mind' is taken from Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his collection of essays *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986).
[37] Parry writes that the 'story of colonialism which she [Spivak] reconstructs is of an interactive process where the European agent in consolidating the imperialist Sovereign Self, induces the native to collude in its own subject(ed) formation as other and voiceless. Thus whilst protesting at the obliteration of the native's position in the text of imperialism, Spivak in her project gives no speaking part to the colonized, effectively writing out the evidence of native agency recorded in India's 200 year struggle against British conquest and the Raj – discourses to which she scathingly refers as hegemonic nativist or reverse ethnocentric narrativization' (Parry in Ashcroft et al, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, 37).

Parry, such replacement has been what in practice has taken place in colonial discourse analysis.[38]

Parry emphasises the limits of Bhabha's theoretical approach and its effectiveness in moving forward and whilst she does not dismiss his work, Parry suggests looking outside of colonial discourse in order to balance the discursive dialogue.

Intangible concepts such as imagination, emotion and nostalgia prove to be prevalent and recurring preoccupations of scholars. Postcolonial studies include a retrospective study of history in light of subjects that have been historically marginalised, although whether marginalisation in society can ever be 'post' is still an on-going concern as a result of new formulations of gender, class and educational groupings in neocolonial structures. Elleke Boehmer's *Stories of Women* is a study of gender, nation and postcolonial narrative constructions where, in the space of national literatures, 'the writing of a nation' also takes place.[39] Boehmer states how the nation builds and recognises itself through a gendered history described as 'intrinsic to national imagining'.[40] Her study takes into consideration significant voices in the postcolonial field and the exchange that takes place between writers, theorists, historians and scholars. Boehmer is aware of the contradictions of nationalism 'deployed to both reactionary and […] progressive end'.[41] Here she is contributing to discursive conversation herself, such as developing and responding to Benedict Anderson's observation, in *Imagined Communities* (1983), of nations as imagined spaces that are fictions constructed by which a community can define itself.[42] Boehmer extends this argument and states that gender too is a construct that shares similarities with ideas that contribute to construction of the nation. Boehmer writes of the modern novel as a 'key site

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[38] David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (2005) (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 155.
[39] Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (2005) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 1-14, 3.
[40] Boehmer, 5.
[41] Boehmer, 4.
[42] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983) (London and New York: Virago Press, 2006).

where the nation is articulated'.[43] Given that India was only granted its independence seventy years ago, its postcolonial status is still in a period of relative infancy. After 1947, and as would be expected, setting nationalist agendas would be a concern for both the newly formed India and Pakistan. This point is central to the thesis, as is the re-examination of the South Asian context and the creation of the three independent states India, Pakistan and Bangladesh formed in stages between 1947 to 1971 from a single nation. For Boehmer, women writers 'use the novel as a powerful instrument with which to reshape national cultures in a way more hospitable to women's presence'.[44] Boehmer, however, also recognises that her statement can be interpreted as engaging in homogenising acts and refers to Spivak's subaltern studies in her observation of Spivak's point that 'spoken for is no speaking subject'.[45]

Spivak too, is critical of theoretical observations and interpretation. In *In Other Worlds* (1987), she quotes Partha Chatterjee from his essay on modes of power in relation to Foucault's theoretical perspective:

> Although Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, the awareness of the topographic reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions. He is taken by the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription and thus helps to consolidate its effects.[46]

In agreement with Chatterjee, Spivak focuses on the consolidating effect of a Euro or western centric voice and the homogenising effect this can have, even if the attempt is ostensibly benevolent. Whilst Foucault may be representative of a European philosophical tradition, as Spivak notes, there are also complexities when the postcolonial writer 'speaks' in terms of authenticity. For example, Salman Rushdie in 'Imaginary Homelands' (1981), examines the way in which the past is remembered and the extent to which this

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[43] Boehmer, 12.
[44] Boehmer, 12.
[45] Boehmer, 13.
[46] Chatterjee quoted in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds* (1998) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 288.

remembrance is imaginary – producing 'Indias of the mind'.[47]   Rushdie's

work is significant in marking an important stage in the development of

postcolonial fiction, as well as scholarship, given the impact that his novel

Midnight's Children (1981) had on the literary canon in its focus on Indian

Independence after nearly two hundred years of British colonialism.   In *The*

Postcolonial Exotic (2001), Graham Huggan identifies the tension between

the development of a self-reflexive postmodern aesthetic and the construction

of meaningful, historically aware narratives:

> The Booker prizewinning novel that best exemplifies these
> contradictions is of course, Rushdie's aforementioned
> *Midnight's Children* (1981). Ostensibly, *Midnight's Children* is
> a radically revisionist novel, a work of 'historiographic
> metafiction' (Hutcheon 1984/5) that shows the inescapably
> ideological character of historical facts.   Yet as previously
> suggested, this has not prevented the novel being read – and
> judged accordingly – as a surrogate guidebook, or as a medley
> of incomplete historical narratives that engage with India's
> (post-)imperial historical past.[48]

Rushdie looks to the migrant experience as one that entails 'a sense of loss,

some urge to reclaim, to look back'.[49]   As part of this thesis an analysis of the

memoir *Home to India* (1945) in chapter two and the semi auto-biographical

novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) in chapter three reveals how

dressing patterns are also a response to India's political turmoil in the lead up

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[47] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (1991)
(London: Granta, 2010), 10.
[48] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001) (London and New York:
Routledge, 2001), 115.
Coined by Linda Hutcheon, the term 'historiographic metafiction' refers to 'those
well-known and popular novels which are both intensively self-reflexive and yet
paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages […] Historiographic
metafiction incorporates all three [literature, history, theory] of these domains: that is,
its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs
(historio*graphic meta*fiction is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of
the forms and contents of the past' in Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*
(1988) (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 5 (emphasis original).
'For Linda Hutcheon postmodernism is more interrogative and instructive […] she
has come to identify postmodernist fiction pre-eminently with what she describes as
"historiographic metafiction"; a mode […] which self-consciously problematises the
making of fiction and history', Peter Brooker, Introduction to 'Linda Hutcheon,
'Telling Stories: Fiction and History' in *Modernism/Postmodernism* (1992), Peter
Brooker (ed.) (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1992), 229.
[49] Rushdie, 11.

to Independence in 1947. Rushdie writes that in attempting to hold onto the past, one relies on memory and imagination in order to 'create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind'.[50] From a diasporic perspective, the work of memory and its inherent unreliability informs the way in which the past in constructed. Rushdie states that 'redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it'.[51] Dennis Walder in *Postcolonial Nostalgias* (2011) studies the emotions involved in feelings of nostalgia and how nostalgia serves as a connector between people across national, historical and personal boundaries.[52] One way this connection is achieved is through dress and the shared nostalgic aspects of dressing patterns and strategies. Dress can be both a unifier and simultaneously a differentiator – an idea that will be returned to and examined more closely in the novels *Brick Lane* (2003) and *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) in chapters four and five of this thesis. Walder illustrates how an admittance of the past into the present through emotions leads to a deeper understanding of the power struggles that persist in former colonial communities and their diasporas.

The desire to understand the past from an alternative perspective and one that attempts a detachment from colonial interests is precarious too, especially when we consider the reliance on imaginaries such as nostalgia and memory. Michael Rothberg in *Multidirectional Memory* (2009) brings together holocaust and postcolonial studies.[53] In Rothberg's formulation, '*competitive* memory' should, he suggests, be '*multidirectional*' and reconfigured and memory for him is 'subject to on-going negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative'.[54] Rothberg writes that making memory a focus of his work allows him to 'synthesise concerns about history, representation, biography, memorialization and politics'.[55] Rothberg's analysis of memory, and its effects as being interwoven with identity politics,

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[50] Rushdie, 10.
[51] Rushdie, 14.
[52] Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias* (2011) (London: Routledge, 2011).
[53] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (2009) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[54] Rothberg, 3 (emphasis original).
[55] Rothberg, 4.

demonstrates how emotion intersects with politics in ways that enable frameworks to be established and thus eventually to govern individual lives. In essence, the development of the political outlook is a biased process that is subjective in its received wisdom and is based on the memories of lived experiences. More broadly, Rothberg's analysis highlights the subjective nature of any historical representations in any specific context and he invites the possibility for examination of other modes, such as dress, that may challenge historical constructions of identities that are rooted in social and political power structures which although significant are also tangential. The role of other factors such as memory and nostalgia is also imperative in the collation of events and later understandings of a period of history.

An acknowledgement that any form of cultural affiliation relies heavily on 'intangibles' such as memory makes it apparent that observation, study, analysis and overall scholarship are perhaps always underpinned by a level of subjectivity. As Bill Ashcroft has noted: 'Subjectivity is always a matter of flow, of locations or as Stuart Hall says, of central positions'. [56] In *Feminism without Borders* (2003), Chandra Mohanty draws on her own experiences growing up in a post-independent India with an 'acute awareness of the borders, boundaries and traces of British colonialism […] and of the unbound promise of decolonization'.[57] In terms of linking Rothberg's ideas of 'multidirectional memories' that are constituted in a political framework within communities, Mohanty's own studies and her experiences exemplify the significance of 'borders while learning to transcend them'.[58] Mohanty draws on her life experiences as indigenously living in India, travelling to America and then negotiating the multiple cultures she encounters. She 'strive[s] to envision a critically transnational (internationalist) feminist praxis moving through these borders'.[59] The transnationality that Mohanty describes is becoming more prevalent in literature as the term postcolonial is not always

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[56] Bill Ashcroft, 'Globalization, Transnation and Utopia' in *Locating Transnational Ideals* (2010), Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (eds.) (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 13-29, 22.
[57] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* (2003) (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 1.
[58] Mohanty, 2.
[59] Mohanty, 4.

sufficient for describing an age that reflects increasingly visible globalised social structures as a result of internet technology. My thesis however will seek to show how Mohanty's transnational identity is not a contemporary phenomenon and this will be examined in the selected literature. For example, an analysis of the memoir *Home to India* by the writer Santha Rama Rau (1923–2009) in chapter two details her experiences of living both in India and America and the memoir recounts her own tribulations. Rama Rau's privileged upbringing and the mobility it afforded in turn affected the way she integrated with an indigenous community and negotiated her later diasporic experiences. Mohanty also reflects on her own earlier studies and details how she revises her earlier thoughts. In her essay 'Under Western Eyes' (1986), Mohanty engages in western feminist discourses in the 'Third World' calling for a 'decolonisation of feminist cross-cultural scholarship'.[60] In her reflections, Mohanty is self-conscious about the sixteen-year gap between this early work and *Feminism without Borders* and the changes that have taken place during the time period. She writes in 2003 that it is time to move from 'critique to reconstruction'.[61] Of her assertions made in 1986, Mohanty states 'I wrote mainly to challenge the false universality of Eurocentric discourses […] Now I find myself wanting to reemphasise the connections between local and universal'.[62] Mohanty, in a similar vein to Butler, is critical of her earlier observations and publicly revises her own ideas to reflect on her own sense of maturity and developing philosophy. What Mohanty describes suggests a circularity of experience as a critic of her own earlier beliefs.

To draw on an industry perspective, I refer to Alexandra Shulman OBE (Editor-in-chief at British *Vogue* from 1992-2017) and her views on dressing influences and facets. Shulman states that fashion is both an expression of individuality and yet also provides a uniformity and coherence in society.[63] For Shulman, dressing patterns can be thought of as a form of tribalism, a line

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[60] Mohanty, 11.
[61] Mohanty, 221.
[62] Mohanty, 224.
[63] Inside Vogue: A Diary of my 100th Year
http://oxfordliteraryfestival.org/literature-events/2017/april-01/inside-vogue-a-diary-of-my-100th-year
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

of thinking which has parallels with my own argument developed in this thesis, that dressing strategies for both genders can represent authority, status and resistance in power structures. In written correspondence, I asked Ms. Shulman for her opinion on the significance of dress and below is her response:

> There is no quicker or more visible way to send a message about the person we are than in how we dress. Whether that be to show inclusion, rebellion, to stand out or to demonstrate status, clothes say a great deal about the individual and where they place themselves in their world.[64]

Shulman infers that the way dress is received collectively reflects a discourse that is political, social and which incorporates interactions *against* and *between* race and gender in social structures. A variation of the sentiment is also evident in an essay written by Virginia Woolf for *Vogue* in 1924, 'Indiscretions', as well as in Woolf's short story 'The New Dress' (1924).[65] This appreciation of the significance of appearances was vividly captured by Woolf in the '"Dreadnought" Hoax' in 1910, a practical joke that she and her friends played on the British navy by disguising themselves as Abyssinian princes and convincing the navy to give them a private tour of Britain's flagship, H.M.S. Dreadnought.[66] Fig. 1 shows a photograph of the group in drag (Woolf is on the far left) and is illustrative of the manipulative/coercive power of appearances and dress to garner a specific mode of treatment. The anticipatory moment that the picture captures is illustrative of how the

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[64] Appendix: Written correspondence from Alexandra Shulman.

[65] In this essay Woolf discusses how our affection for an author is based on more than their stories and is related to a public image and draws comparison between George Eliot's waning reputation and Jane Austen's rise based on their appearances and public personas.

Virginia Woolf, 'Indiscretions' (1924)

http://www.vogue.co.uk/article/vogue-archive-article-virginia-woolf

[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

Virginia Woolf, 'The New Dress' (1924). In this short story, thought to be a chapter from Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), a guest at Mrs Dalloway's party is unhappy with the dress she wears and this brings to the surface other anxieties.

Virginia Woolf, *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories* (1944) Susan Dick (ed.) (London: Vintage, 2003), 164-171.

[66] Adrian Stephen, *The Dreadnought Hoax* (1936) (London: Chatto and Windus, 1983).

performance of dress acts as an engagement with hierarchical structures in society and facilitates societal exchanges.

Fig. 1: The "Dreadnought" Hoax participants, Virginia Woolf (far left)[67]

The codes of dress bear the wider anxieties, ambiguities and contradictions pertinent to communities. It is the understanding of codes (be that through dress and discourse) that enables an intellectual engagement with lived reality. This approach is also applicable to theoretical perspectives as responses to what has come before in an exchange of ideas and how they are received. This thesis is informed by theoretical perspectives and how they relate to dressing patterns to produce identities and it is to this theoretical framework that I shall now turn.

Social significance in codes of dress

I will begin by examining connections between cultures through forms of dress and considering the extent to which these are framed by historical, social and political narratives. In 'Fashion' (1904), Georg Simmel writes 'fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change'.[68]

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[67] The Dreadnought Hoax was originally printed in *The Daily Mirror*, February 1910, No. 1098.

[68] Georg Simmel, 'Fashion' (1904), *American Journal of Sociology*, 62.6 (1957),

Simmel argues that in each social relation there are two contradictory forces. The first is one of imitation as a way to connect ourselves with others and the second is through distinction as a way to differentiate ourselves from others. The engagement in either one of these approaches undoes the other. Kant, who influenced Simmel's own arguments, described society as based on *ungesellige geselligkeit,* "unsocial sociability".[69] Kant's ideas on human will and the ability to choose are relevant in understanding the way in which communities choose to dress themselves and the statements the act of dressing and choice entails.[70] What can be drawn from this early criticism is the notion of change that occurs through fashion and the act of dressing. As the French poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé illustrated in the periodical *La Derniére Mode,* fashion was the most stable way of displaying publicly that one belongs to change and is open to change.[71] Virginia Woolf also contributed to this debate in her essay 'Three Guineas' (1938) in which she discusses men, militarism and women's attitudes to war. In the following passage taken from the extended essay, Woolf compares the functions of female and male dressing:[72]

> Apart from the ceremonies, such decorative apparel appears to us at first sight strange in the extreme. For dress, as we [women] use it, is comparatively simple. Besides the prime function of covering the body, it has two other offices – that it creates beauty for the eye, and that it attracts the admiration of your sex. Since marriage until the year 1919 – less than twenty years ago – was the only profession open to us, the enormous importance of dress to a woman can hardly be exaggerated. It was to her what clients are to you – dress was her chief, perhaps

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541-558, 543.

[69] 'In Kant's own terms, philosophical concepts were *acroamatic* and not *axiomatic,* by which he meant that they were the discursive outcome of an open-ended process of reflection upon philosophical problems' in *A Kant Dictionary* (1995), Howard Caygill (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 2.

[70] 'What stands out in Kant's vision of the morality through which we govern ourselves is that there are some actions we simply have to do. We impose a moral law on ourselves, and the law gives rise to obligation, to a necessity to act in certain ways' in J.B. Schneewind, *Essays in the History of Moral Philosophy* (2010) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 250.

[71] Stéphane Mallarmé, *La Derniére Mode* (1874), in Henri Mondor and Georges Jean-Aubry (eds.) (Paris: Gallimard Pleiade, 1945), also quoted in Adam Geczy, 6.

[72] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own / Three Guineas,* Introduction by Michele Barrett (1993), (London: Penguin Group, 2000).

her only, method of becoming Lord Chancellor. But your dress in its immense elaboration has obviously another function. It not only covers nakedness, gratifies vanity, and creates pleasure for the eye, but it serves to advertise the social, professional, or intellectual standing of the wearer.[73]

Although Woolf focuses on men's fashion, the view that dress has the potential to serve functions that go beyond mere ornament is drawn out and further implies that for women the extended 'function' and field of dress is yet to be realised as an autonomous area of study. In chapter one I discuss the story of a young and new bride, Hansaben, referred to in Emma Tarlo's monograph *Clothing Matters* (1996), as her story effectively demonstrates how Hansaben employs wearing a cardigan as part of a wider strategy against the outdated traditions of her husband's family and as a catalyst to change the treatment she faces living with her in-laws.

Recent critical developments

As the following theoretical perspectives in this chapter highlight, there is a growing body of work that is engaged with the socio-political effects of fashion and approaches to dressing. Emma Tarlo in *Visibly Muslim Fashions, Politics, Faith* (2008) examines the subversive potential of dress and sees its possibilities as a conduit for accessing the wider world in its function as a 'globally informed aesthetic repertoire'.[74] Adam Geczy in *Fashion and Orientalism* (2013) claims that 'fashion and dress are the very best loci by which to understand the various spaces by which the signs of nation, identity and novelty have become transacted, adapted and owned'.[75] Margaret Maynard's observations in *Dress and Globalisation* (2004) are influenced by

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[73] Woolf, 137.

[74] Emma Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim Fashions, Politics, Faith* (2008) (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishing, 2010), 73.

[75] Adam Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism, Dress Textiles and Culture from the 17th to the 21st Century* (2013) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013). Geczy interrogates the term transorientalism in relation to fashion, through an analysis of three planes of articulation; firstly, in the 'developed world before it gets transformed into the "oriental" exotic "other" from which the Westerners draw aesthetic and economic sustenance', secondly, as a 'space of fantasy and freedom' and finally, as the 'self conscious use of the Orient as a geographically uncircumscribed zone whose cultural specifics are secondary to the imaginative uses to which it can be put' (Geczy, 5-6).

Baudrillard and her study is concerned with 'more than the obvious language of clothing in a complex, fragmented world. It considers dress at a more symbolic level of indication, as a manifestation of the variable, sometimes contradictory social tactics of individuals and groups as they seek advantage and register their momentary place in the world'.[76]

The essays included in the volume *Culture, Diaspora and Modernity in Muslim Writing* (2012) includes writers that will be included in this thesis, such as the novelists Kamila Shamsie and Nadeem Aslam, but as a more general point secondary criticism on both writers is to date limited, meaning there is scope to expand the analysis of their fiction.[77] The study's contributors aim to move beyond a populist framing of Muslims as a social group that largely rejects modernity by exposing essentialist assumptions that underpin such perspectives. Whilst the collection shares a preoccupation with notions of belonging in the contemporary world, it also reveals how 'Muslim writing' deals with universal anxieties, not exclusive to Muslim identity, that of negotiating the tension between following individual impulses and conforming to social conventions. As we have seen, early understandings of the construction of difference or otherness can be traced to Said's framework as outlined in *Orientalism*. In chapter four and six we shall see how Monica Ali in *Brick Lane* (2003) and Kamila Shamsie in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) transcend oppositions of West and East, identified by Said, in narratives that move towards depicting the South-Asian experience as universal rather than merely marginal.[78] The protagonists in both novels share preoccupations that relate to Mohanty's own experiences as drawn on earlier in the 'connections between the local and the universal'.[79] Whilst the acknowledgement of

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[76] Margaret Maynard, *Dress and Globalisation* (2004) (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 3.
[77] *Culture Diaspora and Modernity in Muslim Writing* (2012), Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey, Amina Yaqin (eds.) (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2012).
[78] 'The assumption that there are irreducible features of human life and experience that exist beyond the constitutive effects of local cultural conditions. Universalism offers a **hegemonic** view of existence by which the experiences, values and expectations of a dominant culture are held to be true for all humanity' in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies*: *The Key Concepts* (1998) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 268 (emphasis original).
[79] Mohanty, 224.

universality may seem like progress, the term itself is problematic in what may be perceived as its homogenising of experiences in a sweeping generalisation. With this in mind, the arguments for universality are limited, utopian and usually Eurocentric. Shamsie's novel *Burnt Shadows* is a transnational, anti-nationalist novel of migratory experience in which ideas of the nation are dispelled as the narrative takes place over four countries where boundaries between these separate nations become blurred.[80] Bill Ashcroft has described the 'transnation', which is albeit utopian in perspective, as a 'liberating region of representational undecideabilty'[81] which can be seen to develop from Bhabha's theoretical approach as well as the earlier work of Frantz Fanon.[82] Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) begins her study by asking: 'What does it mean to think about politics of diaspora in the present historical moment?'[83] Brah brings into focus ideas of home and the construction of identity in a wide-ranging exploration of the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, generation and nationalism. In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Brah considers the effects of mass population movements and increased migrations. I will be considering Brah's arguments in terms of the effects population movements have both diasporic and indigenous communities. In subsequent chapters I will examine how

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[80] 'The term "transnation" serves to emphasize the fact that subjects within the nation can differ from the nation, subverting and circumventing the nation-state's claims upon them. The transnation thus extends from tensions within the nation to the diaspora and questions traditional centre-periphery models and dependency theories' (Goebel, 4).

[81] Ashcroft in Goebel, 22.

[82] The time of liberation is […] a time of cultural uncertainty, and most crucially, of significatory and representational undecideability' in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994) (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 51.
Homi Bhabha writes the forward to the 1986 edition of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952). Bhabha writes: 'It is not for the finitude of philosophical thinking nor for the finality of a political direction that we turn to Fanon. Heir to the ingenuity and artistry of Toussaint and Senghor as well as the iconoclasm of Nietzsche, Freud and Sartre, Fanon is the purveyor of the transgressive and transitional truth. He may yearn for the total transformation of Man and Society, but he speaks most effectively from the uncertain interstices of historical change: from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of an unresolved contradiction between culture and class; from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality' in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), with forwards by Ziauddin Sardar and Homi K. Bhabha (London: Pluto Press, 2008), xxii.

[83] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 1.

diasporic movement finds expression through metaphors of dress. Brah notes that 'recent migrations are creating new displacements, new diasporas' where 'in the context of a proliferation of new border crossings the language of "borders" and "diaspora" acquires a new currency'.[84] Brah's examination of the 'subtext of "home" which the concept of diaspora embodies' includes a critique of 'the problematic of the indegene' subject position and its precarious relationship to 'nativist discourse'.[85] Brah's perspective highlights a recurring feature of postcolonial study and criticism, namely the process of negotiation entailed in a 'post' or historically retrospective context.

More recently, Ruvani Ranasinha in *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction* (2016), provides a comparative analysis of fiction by authors that she describes as forming a new generation of Anglophone diasporic South Asian female writers.[86] Kamila Shamsie, Monica Ali and Kiran Desai are considered as members of a new generation of writers that provide Ranasinha with the opportunity to consider South Asian literature in terms of regional representation. Ranasinha acknowledges that the longer history of South Asian migration is complex in its concern with movement away from national paradigms and borders towards a focus on the interrelatedness of the three nation states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as acknowledging the heterogeneity of experiences that contribute to South Asia's complex history.[87] Dressing patterns form one aspect of this complex history in the sense that national politics can be played out through dress as an expression of political and social standing.

Literature and authenticity

The debates around ideas of authenticity will be discussed in chapter two, particularly in relation to how Santha Rama Rau in *Home to India* views her

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[84] Brah, 179.
[85] Brah, 180.
[86] Ruvani Ranasinha, *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalisation* (2016) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[87] Yasmin Begum, *Book review*: *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalisation* (2017).
http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/winter-2017-newsletter/
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

own identity as evolving as a result of her migratory experiences. The wider debate about authentic culture and the viability of the term is ongoing and authenticity is seen to have a longer history that began to develop towards the end of the eighteenth century in the philosophies of René Descartes and John Locke.[88] The preoccupation with authenticity is also a by-product of the Romantic period and the concerns that the movement gave rise to. In the following passage Marylin Butler describes the development of the term 'Romantic' as a collective name:

> We have come to think of most of the great writers who flourished around 1800 as the Romantics, but the term is anachronistic and the poets concerned would not have used it of themselves. Not until the 1860s did "the Romantics" become an accepted collective name for Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats, and an agreement begin to emerge about what an English Romantic Poet was like. There seems to have been little inkling until the later nineteenth century that such a historical phenomenon as an English Romantic *movement* had occurred. It was not until the twentieth century that there was analytical discussion of the abstraction "Romanticism", as a recognized term for theories of art, of the imagination and of language.[89]

Romanticism encouraged a deeper understanding of the world and entailed a philosophy that advocated a feeling that was greater than the immediate world around us, and as such the concept itself exudes a mythic quality. In *Romanticism*, published in 2014, Cynthia Chase examines the survival of poetry from the Romantic period.[90] Chase writes:

> Romanticism resists being defined as a period or a set of qualities that can be comfortably ascribed to others and assigned to the historical past. There are several reasons why this is so. One is that major historical changes of the Romantic period still determine basic conditions of our lives: the invention of

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[88] See Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991) (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 25-30.

[89] Marylin Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (1981) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1 (emphasis original).

[90] Cynthia Chase, *Romanticism* (1993) (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

democracy, the invention of revolution, and the emergence of a reading public.[91]

Abdur Raheem Kidwai writes about authentic images of India in the works of British Romantic women poets and begins his essay by quoting a reflection made by the poet Ann Candler (1740 – 1814) of her own situation: 'The tales these eastern writers feign / Like facts to me appear'.[92] Kidwai writes that '[i]n representing, one is liable to err. This human limitation applies to writers of every region, religion and era. It is not therefore surprising to note that the history of Western literary Orientalism is shot through, in large measure, with religious and cultural prejudices, as well as what might be termed inauthenticities'.[93] The concept of authenticity is under strain to address lived experiences through the literary imagination and the lacuna that this creates. My own understanding of authenticity in relation to individual identity is through both a reconciliation as well as an abandonment of self- awareness, even though these may seem like contradictory terms. The term authentic thus also translates to ideas of genuineness although whether this is a realisable and conscious state is inevitably problematic.

Roland Barthes described such a process in 'The Death of the Author' (1967) in which he viewed writing and texts as a 'tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture' so that meaning is given by the reader rather than the author.[94] The advantages of looking to 'minor' details (such as dress) may be one way to interrogate a grand narrative constructed through a social and political prism where the attention to detail of dress is insightful of a period in history and its later resonance. In *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986) Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari state that it was the

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[91] Chase, 1.

[92] Abdur Raheem Kidwai, 'A Gorgeous Fabric': Authentic Images of India and the Orient in the works of British Romantic Women Poets' in *Literature and Authenticity, 1780-1900 Essays in Honour of Vincent Newey* (2011), Ashley Chantler, Michael Davies and Philip Shaw (eds.) (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 91-106, 91.

[93] Kidwai, 91.

[94] Roland Barthes, Stephen Heath (trans.), 'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text* (1977) (London: Fontana, 1977), 142-148, 146-147.

minority or "the minor" that allows access to a narrative.[95] The minor was in fact *not* a minor but as insightful as the major narrative. In terms of the focus of this thesis, the concept of dress may be seen as minor in a narrative that has a markedly different emphasis, one that perhaps even overlooks dress, however a critique of a literary text may draw out observations within a narrative and thus offer another dimension to the interpretation of a narrative. The theoretical observations of Barthes and Deleuze and Guattari can be construed as a structure or aid to the interpretation or dismantling of a text. However, whilst the theories are useful for the purposes of framing the thesis, it is also noted that there are inherent tensions with this theoretical approach. A poststructural perspective marked by Barthes's transition from structuralism in the era during which he wrote 'The Death of the Author' suggests that a text is in perpetual movement and that meaning cannot be fixed or stable, so that any interpretation I offer is constituted by my own history. This is arguably no more or less authentic than earlier observations or criticism of a text but serves to broaden the scope of criticism and perspective. Christopher Lasch describes the desire for authenticity as another form of narcissism drawing attention to the ongoing tension in the debate in identifying cultural authenticity.[96] Somogy Varga in his book *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal* (2012) constructs a critical concept of authenticity by drawing on different traditions in critical social theory and philosophy to discuss the problematic nature and practices involved in claims of authenticity.[97]

Charles Taylor in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991) places a higher value on achieving authenticity and defines it with regard to the ethics of being true to oneself.[98] In *Meaning and Authenticity* (2008), Brian Brahman argues that it is possible to examine authenticity as a relationship between an ancient

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[95] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Dana Polan (trans.), *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
[96] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) (New York and London: Norton, 1991).
[97] Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal* (2012) (London: Routledge, 2012).
[98] Taylor, 15.

history and a contemporary concern.[99] Whilst the concept of authenticity is possibly always going to underpin writers' narrative strategies as they are subjected to particular ideologies, authenticity as a reliable marker is vexed and limited, by its components of memory and vantage point. Attempting to project a stable, convincing authentic self involves the postcolonial writer in complex and, at times, fraught relationships with nationalist, religious and gender discourses. The debates raised in this thesis thus acknowledge the contentious nature of trying to determine either an authentic identity or an authentic culture. Writers may seek to construct an identity through the representation of a transformed postcolonial figure, modern and adaptable to a new postcolonial existence, and yet, paradoxically, aware of and determined to preserve the cultural particularities of a mythical pre-colonial past. Preoccupations with notions of authenticity suggest that postcolonial and diasporic communities may conceptualise an authentic ideal as a focus for cohesive national and cultural consciousness. Such conceptualisation, however, ultimately reveals authenticity to be strategic, utopian and fictional as well as ideological and political in its construction. However, having stated the limitations of authenticity, as a cultural concept it nonetheless remains as a potent factor in acquiring knowledge and the belief that achieving it will lead to other perspectives. Geczy summarises the significance, and indeed the relevance, of dress in terms of a wider understanding of context. Geczy writes '[...] dress--the site in which politics, identity and subjectivity encounter one another--is perhaps the best way of understanding the superficiality of this opposition. For East and West are not contraries, but they require the fallacy that they are, for the sake of their own self-image and illusion of autonomy'.[100] The history of textiles and types of dressing (discussed in the next chapter) is formative and corresponds to culture and group psychology within communities.

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[99] Brian J. Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Existence* (2008) (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
[100] Geczy, 2.

As Stephen Morton notes in a forthcoming chapter 'Poststructuralist theorists from Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida to Gayatri Spivak have foregrounded the etymological connection between the text and the textile from the Latin *texere*'. [101] Julia Kristeva coined the term 'intertextuality' in her early work of the late 1960s but as has been noted by Graham Allen in *Intertextuality* (2000): 'Kristeva's work stands beside the work of many other seminal poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser' and is representative of the intertextual nature of modes of discourse.[102] An examination of dress as a by-product of the textile trade and British colonialism in South Asia helps, in tracing the patterns of developing identities, both community and gender-driven, in a postcolonial neoliberal and arguably transnational world. Chapters two and three of my thesis include writers not generally perceived to be mainstream, such as Santha Rama Rau and Attia Hosain, who attempt to achieve a level of authenticity, by virtue of establishing an alternative perspective. The thesis focuses on a period of history that ranges from the cusp of Indian Independence to the present and within this timeframe on the representation of dress and clothing in selected literature. My analysis of the work of lesser-known authors such as the aforementioned writers Attia Hosain and Santha Rama Rau forms an attempt to address imbalances in attention paid to 'peripheral voices'. More contemporary popular writers such as Monica Ali, Nadeem Aslam and Kamila Shamsie are, however, also studied. In each writer's work, I will be considering the extent to which textiles are significant to the narrative and the wider resonances for history, politics and geography that can be extrapolated. I will be assessing the significance of patterns of dressing within the specific contexts of South Asian postcolonial and diasporic identities and in relation to specific articles of clothing. The

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[101] Stephen Morton 'Multicultural Neoliberalism, Global Textiles, and the Making of the Indebted Female Entrepreneur in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane'* in *Muslims, Trust and Multiculturalism: New Directions*, Amina Yaqin, Peter Morey, and Asmaa Soliman (eds.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2018).
I am grateful to Stephen Morton for providing me with a draft chapter of his forthcoming monograph. The chapter informed his paper at the 2nd bi-annual Postcolonial Studies Convention 18th - 20th September, 2017.
[102] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (2000) (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 15.

analysis of dress in literature enables the focus on a 'minor' detail and this in turn enables engagement with the texts in ways that the primary narrative may not seemingly direct.

Colonialism and diasporic travails

The texts and authors have been specifically selected to include a broad range of social and historical contexts in an examination of factors that contribute to South Asian identities as colonial and postcolonial subjects. Whilst I am only too aware that such selections can, albeit unintentionally, fall prey to the homogenising tendencies of particular regional identities, the choice of texts provides opportunities for a survey of the way in which dressing patterns are closely linked to changes brought about during and post colonisation. The selection brings together identities that have been constructed along religious as well as cultural lines and divisions.

Chapter one does not focus on any one text in particular but rather provides an historical framework to illustrate how patterns of dressing have developed in South Asia as a result of colonial influences. The chapter provides a brief history of dressing patterns in South Asia and the influences that brought about changes at different points in history and which occurred at different stages for men and women respectively. The chapter also highlights that prior to the arrival of the British in South Asia, there was no single way of dressing in India and suggests that colonialism encouraged dress distinctions for imperialist gain by creating divisions within communities. In this chapter, men's dressing patterns, in terms of significant changes under colonialism, are brought to the fore. For women, the changes are not as pronounced and this can be attributed to the limited role that they had in wider society and their confinement within the domestic sphere, both through patriarchy and practices such as purdah. However, the chapter also gives an example of how women instigated personal change by dressing in particular items of clothing as a concealed or subversive means of protest to enhance their authority and living conditions inside the home.

Whilst chapter one illustrates how men's dressing patterns evolved, the subsequent analysis of the memoir and novels in chapters two to six focuses mainly on female identity and gender constructions of women as it is in women's dress that changes are most visible after the end of colonialist rule in India. The analysis of the significance of dress is thus located in specific texts from different historical and geographical contexts and takes impending independence as its starting point. Whilst understanding of dress in South Asia has been homogenised in popular culture, my analysis draws out particularities of dress and different experiences of dressing patterns and the connotations that emanate from alterations made to modes of dressing. As is stated in *The Language of Fashion* (2006), a collection of Barthes's previously untranslated writings on fashion:

> [S]ince the Renaissance there have been works on clothing: these either had archaeological aims (with ancient clothing for example), or else they were inventories of clothes governed by social conditions: these inventories are veritable lexicons linking vestimentary systems very tightly either to anthropological stages (sex, age, marital status) or to social ones (bourgeoisie, nobility, peasantry, etc.), but it is clear that this sort of lexicon of clothing was possible only in a society which was starkly hierarchical, in which fashion was part of a real social ritual.[103]

The language of fashion and dressing patterns can be seen as part of a discourse of clothing that constitutes resistance against colonising practices. In each of the primary texts the fact of diaspora resonates in different ways. At its most basic level, diaspora refers to the spread of people from their homeland. The etymology of the word diaspora can be traced back to ancient Greece and the word *diaspeirein* meaning 'disperse' from *dia* 'across', and *speirin,* 'to scatter'. Bill Ashcroft et al expand the definition by stating '[t]he development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions **essentialist** models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, "natural" cultural norm, one that

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[103] Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion* (2006), Andy Stafford (trans.), Andy Stafford and Michael Carter (eds.) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 21.

underpins the **centre/margin** model of colonialist discourse'.[104] The effect of the movement of people is complex in that diaspora entails new compositions of identity which add dimensions to inherited or originary identities. Ashcroft et al. write:

> The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop their originary cultures. Creolized versions of their own practices evolved, modifying (and being modified by) indigenous cultures with which they thus came into contact.[105]

In each of the subsequent chapters the primary texts will consider aspects of diaspora across a range of historical and social contexts. In chapter two I will examine Santha Rama Rau's memoir *Home to India* (1945) which is written from the perspective of a European educated Hindu woman and I consider how she locates herself in relation to experience and travel. In particular this chapter critiques the notion of authenticity in relation to identity, and more widely discusses the limitations of such an elusive concept, at a time when the region of South Asia comes to terms with the end of British rule and the return of sovereignty. The chapter will also consider portrayals of the South Asian female in social, indigenous and hybrid formations and how political dimensions resonate with women at a time when women's roles were limited. In this respect, the memoir can be seen to share the modernist concerns that were surfacing in European literature and which would have influenced Rama Rau's own intellectual development given her western education and familiarity with European literary traditions.

Chapter three focuses on Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) as a narrative that has modernist features, inherited both from European writers and reformist movements in India such as the Bengal Renaissance. In Hosain's novel the declining practice of purdah is indicative of a changing social context in which the influence of the British colonial administration on Indian social practices has consequences for gender relations.   More

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[104] Ashcroft et al, *The Key Concepts*, 82 (emphasis original).
[105] Ashcroft et al, *The Key Concepts*, 82.

specifically, the dynamics of gender, drawn out through close textual analysis, are illustrative of the heterogeneous nature of South Asian womanhood in an era when the image of femininity was particularly vulnerable to 'Orientalist' constructions. With this in mind chapter three examines how Attia Hosain, in both her novel and in her personal life, addresses the challenges of heterogeneity and Orientalism in her novel.

Home to India and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* are narrated from female perspectives, are set in colonial India and share two major thematic strands. Firstly, the nationalist agenda as Independence draws closer and secondly (and perhaps more significantly), gender inequalities identified in indigenous patriarchal structures. In terms of furthering the feminist cause in India, the British presence enabled the quest for women's rights as the British suffragette movement resonated with, and inspired, women in South Asia and the Bengal Renaissance.

Chapters four and five focus on the diasporic experiences of South Asian migrants after Partition and the forging of new, distinct national identities, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Partition was the division of India in 1947 to create two separate nations based on religious majorities. There was also the later partition of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971 (as well as earlier separations of Myanmar and Sri Lanka (previously Burma and Ceylon) - this thesis focuses on India, Pakistan and Bangladesh respectively). The process of Partitions from the 1940s to the 1970s led to mass displacements and large-scale conflicts of an unprecedented nature.[106] Coming to terms with the effect

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[106] 'During Partition and its aftermath, an empire came to an end and two new nation states were forged from its debris. This "operation" which is often described using the metaphors of surgery, was far from clinical. Partition played a central role in the making of new Indian and Pakistani national identities and the apparently irreconcilable differences which continue to exist today. We could even go on to say that Indian and Pakistani ideas of nationhood were carved out diametrically, in definition against each other, at this time. Partition, then is more than the sum of its considerable parts – the hundreds of thousands of dead, the twelve million displaced. It signifies the division of territory, independence and the birth of new states, alongside distressing personal memories, and potent collective imaginings of the "other". Partition itself has become a loaded word, with multiple meanings in both English and the vernaculars, and triggers complex feelings with deep psychological

of Partition in 1947 and 1971 is an ongoing process that manifests itself in literature, notably postcolonial fiction, as I examine in this thesis.

In chapter four, I focus on Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and the experiences of Nazneen, a first-generation migrant from Bangladesh. Nazneen is a new bride who moves to England in the late 1970s and the novel charts her developing maturity as wife, mother, lover and a final triumphant individualism. Morton describes *Brick Lane* as a 'neo-liberal multicultural *bildungsroman*'.[107] For Morton, the narrative of female independence is about the material conditions of Nazneen and her sister's lives on both sides of the gendered international division of labour. My own reading of the novel also interprets it as *bildungsroman*, but additionally considers how Nazneen's growth includes resistance to inherited cultural beliefs as well as the achievement of economic empowerment as an articulation of individual and gendered agency.

In chapter five, Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* is examined as a narrative of multiple layers with implications for individuals and a community. The story is a murder mystery that takes place in a small-town community, but it is also a story about individuals and the ways in which they are both successful and unsuccessful in integrating into communities in the foreign country to which they have migrated. The novel addresses the loneliness of individual existence; a loneliness perpetuated by organised religion in communities. In *Maps for Lost Lovers* Aslam also considers the role of women in society and their strategies for survival. These include the deployment of sexuality, where dressing functions as a means to curate individual identity for personal gain. Intergenerational conflict is shown to be a force that is at least as destructive as the conflicts that exist between different communities and segregations based on racial and religious grounds. The novel is interpreted as an argument for cultural pluralities that can reduce conflict and its destructive qualities.

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significance' in Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition* (2007) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 9.
[107] Morton in Yaqin, forthcoming 2018.

The final chapter of the thesis is focused around Kamila Shamsie's fiction, which, in general, is sceptical about nationalist ideologies. Shamsie in *Burnt Shadows* incorporates a wide historical and geographical scope in order to critique the fixity of nationalist identities. I also examine Shamsie's novel *Kartography* (2002), which charts the conflicts brought about by the civil war in Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. Shamsie's protagonists represent a wide range of nationalities and her stories can be seen to reject nationalism and those constructions of nationhood in which political policy manipulates interpretations of religious beliefs. Shamsie's earlier novels express concerns about the effects of the unprecedented scale of violence and trauma after the first Partition in India in 1947. More recently she has turned her attention to the effects of 9/11 and its global reverberations. In Shamsie's novels memory is shown to be a source of optimism as individual memories can be employed to add alternative perspectives on collective historicised accounts. Shamsie suggests, however, that society ought not to be impeded by memory and that the task is to acknowledge the past from various perspectives as a way of coming to terms with, and thus moving forwards from past trauma.

Chapter one

Dress in South Asia: viewpoints and frameworks

'Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than to merely keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us.'

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)

Representations of dressing patterns in diasporic literary texts provide metaphors for social, historical and political upheavals in the lead up to Indian Independence, Partition and after – where dress can be seen to reflect national gender identities during and post colonisation. Before turning, in chapters two to six, to the metaphorical functions of dress in literature it is helpful to consider how dressing patterns and changes to modes of dress are experienced by men and women in different ways and can be traced back to the effects of indigenous patriarchy and British imperialism - structures that notably reflect gender relations and forms of colonisation. This chapter on dressing patterns establishes a historical context and introduces South Asian dress in ways that inform my emphasis, in later chapters, on the metaphorical significance of particular modes of dressing in literature.

The influence of colonialism in India can be seen in the evolution of the dressing patterns of both male and female indigenous South Asians, but before considering the colonial period I turn to the origins of textile production in South Asia which can be traced back to India's ancient history and its location in Mohenjo-daro, one of two leading cities of the Indus civilisation along with the ancient city of Harappa.[1] India's recorded history of clothing reaches as far back as the fifth-century Indus civilisation where cotton was spun.

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[1] Andrew Robinson, *The Indus: Lost Civilisations* (2015) (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2016).

In relation to arguments for the nationalist argument Jawaharlal Nehru stated '[i]t is surprising how much there is in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa which reminds one of persisting traditions and habits – popular ritual, craftsmanship, even some fashions in dress' in Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (1946) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72.

'Evidence of cotton's essential role in early societies can be found in the foundational myths and texts of many peoples. In Hindu scripture, cotton appears frequently and prominently. Vishnu, Hindus believe, wove "'the rays of the sun into a garment for himself"'.[2] There is a more general idea, or presupposition, that has contemporary resonance where modesty in the manner of dress is considered part of South Asian tradition. This idea is apposite in the current climate when we consider how the dressing patterns in some South Asian diasporic communities have developed, most notably in recent years around the revival of veiling for Muslim women. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown in *Refusing the Veil* (2014) writes: 'These pieces of cloth have become the flags of revolution and counter-revolution, of enforced conformity and sassiness, of tyranny and political resistance'.[3] Dress is once again conspicuously linked to global politics in a post-9/11 landscape through the expression of reactionary views in certain forms of its adoption. As previously noted, Tarlo examines the fact of being 'visibly' affiliated to a group or community, highlighting 'the changing landscape of visibly Muslim dress practices in Britain, practices which are undergoing major transformations, shaped by both local and global social, religious and forces and by issues of personal aesthetics, ethics, fashion, identity and faith'.[4]

The range of 'shapings' Tarlo identifies raise the issue of authenticity as more recent dress appropriations and practices can be linked to emerging identities that assume the existence of an authentic religious belief system that is associated with authentic garments. The earliest representations of dress in South Asia show minimal clothing. During the Maury and Sunga periods (about 300 BC) men and women wore rectangular pieces of fabric, on the

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[2] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (2014) (London: Penguin Group, 2014), 6.
'From the earliest time until well into the nineteenth century—that is for several millennia—the people of the Indian subcontinent were the world's leading cotton manufacturers. Peasants in what are today India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh cultivated small quantities of cotton alongside their food crops. They spun and wove cotton for their own use and for sale in local and regional markets' (Beckert, 7).
[3] Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *Refusing the Veil* (2014) (London: Backbiting Publishing, 2014), 5.
[4] Emma Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim Fashions, Politics, Faith* (2008) (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishing, 2010), 2.

upper and lower part of the body. In the Gupta period – about seventh or eighth century – stitched upper and lower garments were worn. Furthermore, regional variations of dress have dictated the way in which both men and women dressed. [5] For example, in southern India some women did not cover the upper part of their body and in Bengal women wore saris and went bare breasted. For men too, traditional dressing is also varied and has developed over time. In this respect, the term 'traditional', in a similar vein to the concept of 'authenticity', is under scrutiny and is at risk of homogenisation in terms of what constitutes South Asian dressing. For example, a popular garment is the pancha or lungi (also known as sarong) and is mostly worn in Southern parts of India as well as Bangladesh and other countries in the Far East due to the comfort the garment offers in a humid climate; whereas in northern regions such as Kashmir, the shawl was historically worn by men and originates from the Indian town of Shaliat. Early dressing patterns were primarily influenced by the climate and as a means of protection against the elements and this is apparent in a more general history of clothing through the ages.

Muslim dress through the ages

Muslim women normally covered themselves and wore divided garments such as the shalwar kameez, influenced by the Mughal rulers.[6] During the rule of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, a change in dressing style occurred and men's dressing came to include the coat, turban and trousers. Over a full sleeved garment, a half sleeved long coat was worn which was fitted tightly to the waist and then reached below the knees like a skirt. Normally, it was the wives of high ranking officials and noblemen who adopted the kameez, also known as the Mughal kama, with a flowing skirt, tight trousers and a orhni (scarf that covered the shoulders, breasts, back and head). The veil did not appear as a common rule to be followed until around the tenth century; and the veil itself predates Islam and originated in ancient Indo-European cultures

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[5] Shiv Nath Dar, *Costumes of India and Pakistan* (1982) (Bombay: D.B. Taraporeval Sons and Company, 1982).
[6] G.J Sumathi, *Elements of Fashion and Apparel Design* (2002) (New Delhi: New Age International Publishers Ltd, 2002), 139.

such as the Persians.[7]   The veil has a long and complex history, but most significantly implied a woman's status in society. The introduction of the veil can be traced back to the Assyrian Kings, who secluded women in the royal harem without veils, but who veiled them in public, leaving women of a lower rank unveiled.[8] The Persian influence on South Asian dressing for women has been lasting although the use of the veil is the cause of an ongoing contemporary and often contentious debate. The veil has also indicated an aspirational dimension throughout history with it being adopted as a means of upward social mobility for the peasant classes. However, women with certain amounts of privilege, such as the Egyptian feminist and nationalist Huda Sharawi (1879–1947), also joined the movement to reject the veil.[9] Huda Sharawi, from a wealthy family and raised in Cairo, grew up in a harem system in which women were confined or secluded in separate quarters and were required to wear veils covering their faces when venturing outside. Huda Sharawi is thought to have removed her face veil as part of the movement for women's suffrage and in 1923 the Egyptian Feminist Union was founded. Although Huda Sharawi's contribution relates to Egyptian history, this particular wave of feminism is relevant in the context of South Asian traditions and the way in which these were being challenged around

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[7] Max Dashu (1950-) is a feminist historian and in 1970 Dashu founded the Suppressed Histories Archives to document women's history. In 'Some thoughts on the Veil' (2006) Dashu writes that the 'contraposition of The West versus Islam certainly has historical roots, but these two systems have similarities as well as differences. Women in medieval Europe dressed more like women in the Muslim world than is generally realized'
Max Dashu, *Some thoughts on the Veil* (2006)
http://www.suppressedhistories.net/articles/veil.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[8]'The adoption of the veil by Muslim women occurred by a similar process of seamless assimilation of the mores of the conquered peoples. The veil was apparently in use in Sasanian society, and segregation of the sexes and use of the veil were heavily in evidence in the Christian Middle East and Mediterranean regions at the time of the rise of Islam. During Muhammad's lifetime and only towards the end at that, his wives were the only Muslim women required to veil. After his death and following Muslim conquest of the adjoining territories, where upper class women veiled, the veil became a commonplace item of clothing among Muslim upper-class women, by a process of assimilation' in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1992) (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1992), 5.
[9] Sania Sharawi Lanfranchi, *Casting off the Veil* (2015) (London and New York: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2015).

Sharawi's time. In colonial India, figures such as Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, were also promoting a feminist agenda.[10]

Fig. 2: Mughal Dress: Portraits of Sovereigns and ladies.[11]

Development of Indian/subcontinental dress

Prior to the arrival of the British there was no single style of Indian dress and climate conditions played a significant part in clothing choices. It was during the British colonial period that dressing codes for both sexes became clearly identifiable as dress came to be expressive of the relationship between the British coloniser and the indigenous colonised as well as representative of internal social structures such as class and caste in a patriarchal society.

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[10] Bharati Ray writes that both Chaudhurani and Hossain 'were deeply concerned with the abject position of society and the means of alleviating it. However, both looked at the issue from their own points of view that were shaped by their respective social and familial backgrounds and other historical circumstances that they encountered'
in Bharati Ray, *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (2002) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 57.
[11] Auguste Racinet, *Le Costume Historique* (1876) (London: Taschen Books, 2015), 192, 193.

Towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century the status of women came under growing scrutiny from both British and Indian intellectuals, liberals and reformers. The Bengal Renaissance movement also had a part to play in the attempts at social reform. Taking a lead from colonialists, figures such as Ram Mohan Roy in India were in favour of reforming women's status, and as part of this re-considering the ways in which women were dressed. This will be explored in more detail in the analysis of Attia Hosain's semi-autobiographical novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) in chapter three. In parallel, changes were also taking place in other parts of the world such as North Africa where the veil was viewed as a restriction on women's liberty. For example, in Egypt, Qasim Amin (1863–1908) wrote *The Liberation of Woman* in 1899 and *The New Woman* in 1900 in which he called for a new, more liberal, interpretation of the *Qur'an* and drew on western models for indigenous development. [12] In *The Liberation of Woman*, Amin critiques ideas of modesty, calls for a discarding of the veil and argues for women to have opportunities beyond domesticated space, a move which has wider societal benefits. In Arti Sandhu's study *Indian Fashion* (2015), Sandhu examines the politics of women's dress during British rule and her employment of the term 'The "new" Indian woman' was translated in parts to dressing and the modification of older traditional versions of womanhood.[13] Ania Loomba has also examined the construction of the "new" Indian woman as a fusion between the "gentlewoman" (known as the *bhadramahila* in Bengal) with Victorian ideals of womanhood.[14] In English literature elements of the 'new woman' can be identified in representations of female characters in novels such as Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) which challenged the traditional view of women's role in upper-middle-class Victorian society as captured in the long narrative poem by Coventry Patmore,

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[12] Qasim Amin became known for his advocacy of women's emancipation in Egypt which would propel Egypt's overall liberation from colonialist rule.
Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism* (1899) (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000).
[13] Arti Sandhu, *Indian Fashion, Tradition, Innovation, Style* (2015) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 33-34.
[14] Ania Loomba, 'The Long and Saggy Sari', *Women, A Cultural Review,* 8.3 (1997), 278-292.

The Angel in the House (1854). The poem, and later the title, describes and adopts the ideal of femininity as being a devoted wife and mother within the confines of the marital home. Whilst there was the promulgated ideal, there was also a rebellion against this construct which manifested itself in art and literature around the fin de siècle in characters such as Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*.[15] This collection of examples suggests that the changes being instigated for and by women resonated with women from a wider sphere and indicates the challenges to patriarchy and its colonising rubric.

Some dressing patterns we now typically associate with South Asia were in fact bequeathed by the British colonial period, for example the blouse and petticoat, as the undergarments of the sari, explained more fully later in this chapter. As a broader point women's dressing in South Asia during the British colonial period in both the form of the sari (which can be draped over the body in numerous ways and which has its own politics) and the shalwar kameez were worn at times as acts of defiance, as we shall see in chapter two in Santha Rama Rau's *Home to India*, and this reflected internal political divisions in South Asia.[16] Although originally regional dress, mainly Punjabi, the shalwar kameez came to be the national dress for both men and women in Pakistan after 1947. Before this point, the shalwar kameez developed an association with university education, and eventually became acceptable dress for women across India. The distinctions made between the sari and shalwar kameez is indicative of a fundamental conflict between two ways of thinking,

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[15] Sue Bridehead does not marry Jude and has children out of wedlock. However, she also states that 'I am not modern' and Jude describes Sue as having 'strange ways and curious unconsciousness of gender' in Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Norman Page (ed.) (New York and London: Norton, 1999), 107, 119.
Greg Buzwell, *Daughters of decadence: the New Woman in Victorian fin de siècle* (2017)
https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/daughters-of-decadence-the-new-woman-in-the-victorian-fin-de-siecle
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[16] Mukulika Bannerjee and Daniel Miller, *The Sari* (2003) (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 2.
'Some of the ways of tying the sari are so very different from one another that they hardly seem to form the same garment at all: for example, the sari is pulled between the legs in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, while in Bengal it is wrapped three times around the body'.

tradition and modernity.[17] It is also worth noting that the earlier distinctions are based on social status (education as a privilege), rather than religious biases and that the adoption of the shalwar kameez as Pakistani and Muslim dress is a later appropriation. The history of how dressing patterns evolved illustrates how appropriations of dress formed part of nationalist projects and this was the case for both men and women.

A greater degree of specificity can be applied to both the evolution of the sari and the shalwar kameez. The shalwar kameez was also subject to 'continual fluctuations' as Nirad Chaudhuri examined in his 1976 study where for example, he states that 'at times it looks almost like a corset without straps and suspenders', in line with Victorian attitudes to female dressing.[18] Whilst English fashion was inspired by Britain's imperial presence in India and the export of textiles, Indian fashion too would seek inspiration from western colonial influence as Tarlo highlights in *Clothing Matters* (1996):

> While some Indian men wore a combination of Indian and Western garments, (the term 'Western' refers here to garments originally popularised in Western countries) others varied their clothes according to the situation, while yet others tried to combine Indian and Western features within a single garment.[19]

The combining of western and eastern clothing can also be seen in how women's dressing patterns developed, both in the East and the West.[20] In terms of South Asian dressing patterns, the way in which the sari is worn

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[17] Bannerjee, 5.

[18] Nirad Chaudhuri, *Culture in the Vanity Bag: Being an Essay on Clothing and Adornment in Passing and Abiding India* (1976) (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 1976), 9.

[19] Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters* (1996) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 24.

[20] For example, in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South* (1855), Margaret Hale is asked to try on shawls for her cousin, a mark of extravagance and indicative of wealth. In chapter one, Margaret 'touched the shawls gently as they hung around her, and took a pleasure in their soft feel and their brilliant colours, and rather liked to be dressed in such splendour […] "Ah, I knew how you would be amused to find us all so occupied in admiring finery. But really Indian shawls are very perfect things of their kind." "I have no doubt they are. Their prices are very perfect, too. Nothing wanting"' in Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (1855), Alan Shelston (ed.) (New York and London: 2005), 11-12.

contains the hallmarks of European influence and yet is now accepted to be part of the sari tradition. The sari, particularly in Bengal, was often made of transparent fabric and worn without a blouse or petticoat and presented conundrums of modesty when compared to European standards. The solution to this conundrum has been credited to Jyananda Nandini Devi, a social reformer who influenced women's empowerment in nineteenth century Bengal. Jyananda Nandini was also Rabindranath Tagore's sister-in-law, married to his brother Satyanendra Nath Tagore. Jyananda Nandini socialised in European circles as the wife of a civil servant and incorporated colonial ideas of modesty in sari design by wearing a stitched bodice (blouse) and petticoat.[21] The *Nivi* style of draping that Jyananda Nandini introduced was a marker of modernity during the Indian national movement for Independence and to an extent has been subject to a level of homogenisation itself.[22] The *Nivi* style allowed greater freedom of movement for women and became a standardised way to wear the sari outside of the domestic sphere due to the way it was draped and the convenience this offered.

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[21] 'The story is that Jyananda Nandini developed the Nivi style under the influence of the Parsi ladies she had come to befriend in Bombay in 1864. Her husband Satyanendra Nath, was a liberated man who, to the chagrin of his family insisted his wife accompany him on being transferred to Bombay rather than be confined to the women's quarters in Calcutta. Jyananda Nandini was faced with the dilemma that women wore saris without a blouse or petticoat inside the house, and this would clearly be unsuitable in public. For her journey to Bombay she wore an "Oriental" costume, a cumbersome dress held together with many pins and tucks made to resemble a sari, acquired in Calcutta. But in Bombay she noticed that her Parsi hosts wore saris with a blouse and petticoat and draped it in the style of the *seedha palla,* i.e. with the pallu brought over from the back over the right shoulder, in the manner of Gujarati women. Finding the pallu flapping against her right arm inconvenient, she brought the pallu around her body and threw it over her left shoulder (similar to the style of local fisherwoman), thus giving birth to the "Nivi" style of draping which went on to become the ubiquitous outdoor style for all women in India. In 1866 the press reported on this original attire as worn by her at a Christmas party hosted by the Governor-General, John Lawrence. It can be assumed the style became adopted over the next few decades, alongside the involvement of women in public life. It appears in images of women in the nationalist movement in the early years of the twentieth century, and from there it developed a mass appeal' (Bannerjee and Miller, 254).
[22] Andrew Reilly, *Key Concepts for the Fashion Industry* (2014) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 49.

Fig. 3: Nivi style:

Mistress and pupils, Government Normal School, Bombay [23]

Fig. 4: The Art of Saree Wearing[24]

[23] *Group of mistress and pupils of the Government Normal School, Bombay* - British Library

http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photocoll/g/largeimage65324.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

[24] *The Art of Saree Wearing*
http://www.tanvii.com/2012/02/how-to-tie-saree.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

Jyananda Nandini's adoption of the blouse and petticoat, both articles of Anglo origin, became part of the Indian vocabulary and is now synonymous with the sari and accepted as South Asian dress.

Fig. 5: Jyananda Nandini Devi.[25]

Fig. 6: Hindu girl from Sindh (1870).[26]

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[25] *100 Extraordinary Women – Jyananda Nandini Devi*
http://100extraordinarywomen.blogspot.co.uk/2017/11/jnanadanandini-devi-tagore.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[26] *Portrait of a Hindu girl from Sindh* – British Library
http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photocoll/p/largeimage65476.html

The development of the way in which the wearing of the sari and the shalwar kameez evolved can be seen to be directly linked to the British presence in India. Indeed, as a result of colonial influence, the sari was adapted in order to meet British standards of female modesty, through both the incorporation of under garments as well as a draping style that also allowed greater freedom of movement for women outside of the home when they came into interaction with the British in official roles. In a similar vein, the shalwar kameez came to be viewed as progressive dressing when worn as uniform at educational institutes.

Fig. 7: Princess Sudhira of Cooch Behar in Nivi style sari (1910)[27]

[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

[27] *Princess Sudhira of Cooch Behar* – National Portrait Gallery
http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitLarge/mw168799/Princess-Sudhira-of-Cooch-Behar
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
Princess Sudhira Mander (1894-1968) was the daughter of the Maharajah Nripendra Bahadur, ruler of the state Cooch Behar in West Bengal. She married Alan Mander (1888 – 1967) of the Mander family of Owlpen. Figs. 7 and 8 show her in both a sari and European dress. (Princess Sudhira's adoption of both eastern and western dress can also be seen in chapter two of this thesis in the descriptions of Kitty in *Home to India*, a European wife living in India, whose identity comes to reflect both the East and West).
See Lucy Moore, *Maharanis: The Lives and Times of Three Generations of Indian Princesses* (2004) (London: Penguin Group, 2004).

Fig. 8: Princess Sudhira of Cooch Behar in European dress (1910)[28]

Historical influences in South Asian dress

A consideration of the term 'hybridity' (as an influence in syncretic identity construction) will examine intersecting colonial, postcolonial diasporic identities as presented in literature and the challenges that such ambivalences entail. However, this 'third space' is indicative of being open to change and can also be perceived as a marker of postmodernity.[29] The broader concept of modernity, rather than Modernism as a movement, will be explored in more detail in *Home to India* and in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* as both share a preoccupation with India's reform against traditional practices, which were perceived, in elitist social circles, to be antiquated in comparison to how western feminism was developing.[30] Joanne Eicher summarises: 'Dress is a

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[28] *Princess Sudhira of Cooch Behar* – National Portrait Gallery
http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitLarge/mw168808/Princess-Sudhira-of-Cooch-Behar
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[29] 'It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew' (Bhabha, 55).
[30] The term Modernity is used in the context of imperial influence across colonised countries and the structuring of an indigenous society that privileges enlightenment ideals over culture originating in the host country under British rule. The concept of Modernity is also set against the backdrop of the increasing reliance on science and technology and the reaction the changes brought to social structures.

coded sensory system of non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time.'[31]

The importance of textiles and dress were recognised in the nineteenth century and captured in the work of John Forbes Watson, *The Textile Manufacturers and the Costumes of the People of India* (1866).[32] Watson catalogues fabrics and how they were used in particular items of clothing in India. The aim of the text was both to introduce these fabrics to Europe and draw attention to the manufacturing possibilities and trade opportunities that the British could take advantage of. As noted at the Indian textile and Empire exhibition at the Victoria and Albert museum, Watson's work 'often included notes on cost, who might wear the complete pieces and how', demonstrating how textiles were another reason why the colonisation of India was colloquially referred to as the 'jewel in the crown' of The British Empire, given that the raw materials and resources for dress were being extracted from the land under a colonial regime.[33] In the introductory page of his book, Watson writes about the longer history of textiles and how it brought together two faiths, Hindu and Muslim, with different cultural traditions:

> COSTUME OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA:-
> Indian Textiles divided into two great classes scarf-like and piece goods
> The past and present costume of Hindus and of Mahomedans
> Sewing not practiced before the Mahomedan invasion

The canonical status that T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) has achieved captures the themes that the Modernist movement in Art was concerned with and the scrutiny directed at aspects of modernity. *The Waste Land* exemplifies the impact of cultural changes brought about by new ideas and posits these against longer traditions of history and spirituality of ideas from different cultures such as Eliot's study into the Upanishads, a collection of ancient Sanskrit religious and philosophical texts.
See Lawrence Rainey, *The Annotated Wasteland with Eliot's Contemporary Prose* (2005) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 6.
[31] *Dress and Ethnicity* (1995), Joanne Eicher (ed.) (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 1.
[32] John Forbes Watson, *The Textile Manufacturers and The Costumes of the People of India* (1866) (Milton Keynes: Lighting Source UK Ltd, 2010), 1.
[33] *Indian textiles & Empire: John Forbes Watson*
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/indian-textiles-and-empire-john-forbes-watson/
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

Assimilation of the costumes of the two great races influenced by political conditions.[34]

The 'Assimilation of the costumes' is potentially instructive of the newer forms of assimilation that developed as a result of British colonialism in India, which had historically been the case between 'Hindus and […] Mahomedans' in the period prior to colonialism. Textiles were further acquisitions of British interests in India, along with spices, jewels and the population of India as a labour force, all of which would strengthen the overall Imperial project. Through the control of textile production, such as cotton, over time Britain could appropriate more of the textiles industry to suit the British paradigms of dress and the imperial economy. The history of a particular textile, and even its earlier uses, in some respects became obscured by Watson's historical account of 'Costumes' and dress in India.

The cultural presence of textiles in Asia and the Middle East resonates at a fundamental level in the naming of pre-synthetic textiles. As an example, cotton derives from the Old French *cotton,* the etymology being from the Arabic ḳuṭn, and the list extends with fabrics such as cashmere from Kashmir, jute from the Bengal, the word chintz originating from the seventeenth century meaning a spattered calico cloth from India. As Geczy notes:

> [T]he study of dress—the site in which politics, identity and subjectivity encounter one another—is perhaps the best way of understanding the superficiality of this opposition. For East and West are not contraries, but they require the fallacy that they are, for the sake of their own self-image and illusion of autonomy. Differences abound, but opposites are few. Orientalism in fashion and dress is a series of overlaps, codependencies and shared redefinitions hiding behind a simplistic binary.
> *We might start with the astonishing fact that almost every name for pre-synthetic textiles derives from Middle Eastern or Asiatic roots.*[35]

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[34] Watson, 1.
[35] Geczy, 2, (emphasis added).

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As part of the imperial project, textiles became an area that the British sought to gain a stronghold over and to an extent was part of the 'civilising mission' through appropriation.   Thomas Metcalf in *Ideologies of the Raj* (1995) writes:

> One might argue further that, as Europeans constructed a sense of self for themselves apart from the old order of Christendom, they had of necessity to create a notion of an 'other' beyond the seas. To describe oneself as "enlightened" meant that someone else had to be shown as "savage" or "vicious". To describe oneself as "modern", or as "progressive", meant that those who were not included in that definition had to be described as "primitive" or "backward". Such alterity, what one might call the creation of doubleness, was an integral part of the Enlightenment project. As the British endeavoured to define themselves as "British", and thus "not Indian", they had to make of the Indian whatever they chose *not* to make of themselves. This process […] had as its outcome the creation of an array of polarities that shaped much of the ideology of the Raj. These oppositions ranged from, among others, those of "masculinity" and "femininity" to those of "honesty" and "deceit". In the end, such contrasts encompassed anything that would serve to reassure the British of their own distinctive character and keep the Indian "Other" in its proper place.[36]

Whilst the exchange of textiles can also be seen as a signifier of a cultural exchange between Britain and India, the process of colonisation was complex in its procedure and entailed the creation of hierarchies. The process of emulation, albeit with marked differences, was desired by both colonialists and indigenous people. Maintaining a level of difference was also a signifier of the divisions between the two communities, as well as a means of asserting tribal identity on both sides. As Geczy has noted: 'There is a degree of lived, performative intent to clothing's role in asserting personality and identity that is odious to art, which claims to make statements that not only epitomise the moment but also transcend it. With clothing, the fact that it is inhabited as well as seen means that the positioning of gaze, the locus of power, is potentially skewed'.[37]   The English Education Act (1835) permitted

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[36] Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Volume 3 (1995) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5-6.

[37] Geczy, 3.

expenditure by the East India Company on Education and Literature in India, a move which in essence was to further strengthen the British Empire in India. Thomas Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835) promulgated the education of Indians to a European standard so that the indigenous people would be better equipped to be loyal subjects of British India. This was preferable to spending the allocated funds on teaching Arabic or Sanskrit or translating works from English to indigenous languages and vice versa.[38] The thesis was that imposing Britishness upon the Indian infrastructure could only strengthen imperialism in India. Macaulay argues that:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.[39]

The discourse surrounding clothing is not so straightforward. Rather than an importation of wholesale Britishness, the imperial influence created new vistas of cultural identity to incorporate, assimilate and differentiate and this comes to light in the evolution and adaptation of dress codes. The effect that colonisation had on representation of the psychology of dressing in literature, though not principally or overtly focused on dressing in a particular manner, demonstrates how understanding patterns of dress can inform both the immediate reading of a text and, more widely, a particular context. The detailed analysis of clothing and ways of dressing provides insights into particular moments in history and the formation of identities that deviate from

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[38] Zareer Masani, *Macaulay: Britain's Liberal Imperialist* (2013) (London: Vintage Books, 2014).
Masani describes him as 'the first Western thinker to predict that the future of global modernity, science and capitalism lay with an Anglo-Saxon model of development, based on the English Language, liberal political and economic ideas and representative government' (Masani, xi).
[39] 'Thomas Babington Macaulay *From* Minute on Indian Education' in *The Norton Anthology English Literature* (1962), Stephen Greenblatt (ed.) (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 1611-1612.

archetypal structures or ethnographic accounts of dress. At a fundamental level changes in patterns and ways of dressing can be differentiated by gender, and in particular reflects how influences vary depending on whether the subject is male or female.

Changes that occurred to patterns of male dressing in the period of colonial rule show that there were a variety of aspects to the selection process of particular types of dress as markers of class, status and allegiance to political views. This included how dress was a way to classify colonial subjects by the coloniser, how the colonised sought to emulate the colonial masters through dress (which was satirised, initiated debate and as markers of cultural authenticity, and drawn out in detail later in this chapter). Travel would also influence dress as well as how particular items of dress became politicised in the drive towards Independence from British imperialism. Dressing in traditional and indigenous clothing became a tool for Nationalist expression known as the *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) movement. For women however, particularly around the later parts of the nineteenth century, dress can be seen as contained within a domestic setting, and determined to an extent by class status, level of formal or Eurocentric education and subsequent mobility outside of the domestic sphere. Dressing for women was, and to a degree still remains, linked closely to patriarchal structures and changes are representative of challenges to social conventions through factors such as education, industrialisation or urbanisation, ideas of female modesty, and the tensions between rural and urban settings. The subaltern woman through 'essentialisms' seeks 'shelter' in the manner described by Spivak, as drawn out in the introduction, and brings to the fore the continuing relevance of Spivak's early theoretical perspectives. Although the subaltern woman is arguably historically confined within the realms of patriarchy, she can also be situated at the nexus of intersecting discourses that share the preoccupations of postcolonial study into the effects and remnants of colonialism. Sara Mills notes in 'Gender and Colonial Space' that '[c]olonial space has often been described in monolithic terms, since it is the dominant spatial representations

of British male colonialists which have been examined'.[40] Mills also writes
that:

> It should be added that different groups of women have different
> relations to space. Groups of women at various times in history
> have had to be chaperoned when in the public sphere, have seen
> the public sphere as a place of potential sexual attack and have
> been taught to consider the domestic as primarily female space.
> However, this does not mean to say that women have not
> negotiated with those constraints. Nor does it mean that the
> public sphere is one which is threatening for all women.[41]

The social construction of space, both domestic and public, can also be seen
as a product of particular contexts where to prescribe a homogenous
framework for the subaltern women re-inscribes a dominant discourse to the
analysis. Rather, a renewed perspective is both a postcolonial and feminist
concern in acknowledging heterogeneous female experience and constructions
of essential identities as practices created from *both* colonial and patriarchal
ideologies.[42]

Whilst the effect of colonialism and patriarchy are significant factors in the
changes to patterns of dress, an understanding of transnationalism, and the
interpretation of the concept in culture, is gaining prominence in societies that
are increasingly attuned and globally coordinated, as pointed out in the
introduction of the thesis. The impact of increasing globalisation, or rather the
visibility and rise of global culture through advances in technology and
communication, affects indigenous cultures and tradition and the extent to
which hybrid identities develop as a result of global culture that is relatively
easily accessible through online platforms. Notions of hybridity are also

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[40] Lewis and Mills, 693-694.
[41] Lewis and Mills, 699.
[42] '[C]olonised space troubles some of the simple binary oppositions of public and
private spheres, since some of the values circulating within the colonised countries
are profoundly at odds with the values of the imperial culture. There seem to be
extreme forms of the public/private divide at an idealised, stereotypical level: for
example, the perceived restriction of some Indian women in the private sphere within
the harem or zenana, and the ultra-conservative spatial arrangements within the civil
lines in British Indian cities' (Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener, *The Incorporated
Wife* (1984), quoted in Lewis and Mills, 699).

reflective of power structures and the concept can prove problematic when trying to establish how the hybrid subject is constructed and the constituent elements as they are represented in hybrid identities. As Foucault's theories have proposed in the *'historical knowledge of struggles'*, knowledge is a powerful overarching form and is never innocent. Foucault states: 'Power represses nature, the instincts, a class, individuals'.[43] As part of a power strategy, the construction and creation of knowledge participates in both including and excluding contentious points and this ultimately affects its positioning in society and the consequences of knowledge to either individuals or a community.[44] The construction of knowledge and its correlation with power, as detailed by Foucault, can also be applied in understanding the transitions that occur from a state of colonialism to transnationalism as a result of postcoloniality.[45] The idea that transnationalism can be seen as a form of neocolonialism is evident in intellectual thought. As Todd May writes, it is 'consumerism, not production, that forms the core of contemporary capitalism. Alongside the rise of transnationalism, the emergence of consumerism is another effect of the substitution of performativity and exchange for the values embedded in metanarratives'.[46] May's observations draw on the consequential effects of increased accessibility to different cultures, and the reverberating impact this has. Transnationalism and its increasing prominence is a theme which is evident in arguably all of the selected texts of this thesis in the way identities develop as a result of transnational ideas. For example, the effect of European education and exposure to different communities in the work of Santha Rama Rau in *Home to India* and Attia Hosain in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is indicative of how transnational ideas can infiltrate communities through individual experiences such as western educated minorities like Santha and Laila in the respective

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[43] Foucault in Gordon, 90.

[44] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (1980), Colin Gordon (ed.) Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Joseph Mepham, Kate Soper (trans.) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 83.

[45] 'It may be that we live in a world of transnational capitalism that is guided by codes, mediated through a hyperreality, and in the process of reducing all discourse to that of capitalist exchange' in Todd May, *The Philosophy of Foucault* (2006) (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2006), 152.

[46] May, 144.

narratives. Transnationalism may also be linked to the concept of diaspora whereby the ability to consider oneself transnational can be both a privilege to some whilst debilitating for others such as the characters in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* demonstrate. Nazneen in *Brick Lane* eventually thrives as a first-generation migrant whereas Kaukab in *Maps for Lost Lovers* becomes more and more isolated as her own family grow apart from her and a disparity emerges between Kaukab and her family's experience of settlement in England. In Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Burnt Shadows*, the character Hiroko is an exemplar of successful transnational identity as Hiroko seems to have the ability to be at 'home' in multiple different countries, which may in itself be idealistic, and will be considered more fully in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

From one perspective, transnationalism entails further power imbalances created in a paradigm driven by capitalism and market forces where boundaries are extended and go beyond national borders. The articulation of transnationalism and the manifestation of it in ways of dressing incorporates a sense of global culture, and the effect this has on the smaller community which does not transcend geographical borders, such as rural villages in contrast to urban communities. Urban habitation also brings with it increased access to global trends as centres of trade and industry whereas a village or rural setting may be logistically challenged in its ability to offer choice. As a result, those living in towns have increased opportunities which ultimately connects them to the wider world which may lead to either tension or even conflict between the two settings of town and country, of which dressing is a facet and which will be examined in consideration of a case study, later in this chapter, of an urban dwelling young woman who wishes to wear a cardigan after her marriage in the rural village of her in-laws.

The concept of dressing patterns draws out the interaction between fashion and changes in cultural perspectives so that when we examine the dress of either an individual or a group we are inadvertently addressing the links to wider fields such as identity and difference, tradition and modernity. The trope of dress is thus also a conduit for accessing the larger narratives of

history, memory and intersecting discourse. Through the lens of dress the thesis is concerned with how sartorial trends are part of a longer-term debate on identity. The discussion of historical influences that contributed to particular types of dress will go into some detail in relation to gender and is illustrative of how changes occur and are indeed instigated by differing social factors for men and women respectively. The observations will seek to demonstrate that the aesthetics of dress are directly, and at times strategically, linked to notions of both individual and community agency.

Political manifestations in dress and gender ideologies

The maintenance of a traditional way of dressing is a metaphor for preservation and this concept resonates across different cultures where dress is also a metaphor for identity and belonging. In South Asian history the sense of preservation, or rather the renewal of national identity through articles of clothing, is indicative of an intersection of politics with dress. Manifestations of this are most visibly apparent in movements such as the *Swadeshi* movement, as led by Mahatma Gandhi in the drive towards political Independence, through to the Nationalist Movement after British colonisation in India.[47] However, it is an important point to note that one form of independence can also be a catalyst for further conflicts and that Independence does not, and did not, necessarily equate to resolution or harmony. In the history of Indian Independence, the period after 1947 brought further challenges and further processes of decolonisation as the creation of Pakistan demonstrated. Pakistan became a nation separate from India in two sections, East and West and later the civil war between East and West Pakistan culminated in the formation of Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971.[48] The wider debate that ensues is the issue of colonial legacy at various stages and the problematic nature of achieving postcoloniality, as well as a consideration of the validity of the term itself. Further still, changes in patterns of dressing, and using dress as a deciphering tool, can lead to a

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[47] Shiri Ram Bakshi, *Gandhi and Ideology of Swadeshi* (1987) (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1987).
[48] Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India* (2009) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

critique of postcolonialism and emergent neocolonialist ideas. Factors such as European or hegemonic power structures demonstrate the influences that drive the textiles industry and eventually determine the dress of group identities whilst being determined by factors such as gender and social status through education and economic means. The influences on male and female clothing archetypes are examined in more detail later in this chapter to generate a conceptual framework in the introductory stage of the thesis. The nuances and subtleties to the ways of dressing within gender constructs will be examined in subsequent chapters in the detailed reading of dress in literature from the analysis of texts in specific contexts.

Guidance or even jurisprudence about forms of South Asian dressing can be traced back to ancient Sanskrit religious Laws in founding texts such as the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra (Manusmriti)* and in Islam the *Qur'an.*[49] The moral approach to Indian dressing, both Hindu and Muslim, is a concept that predates British colonialism, where clothing dictates were established by social groups as well as dressing accordingly for various stages of the life cycle as marked by ritual practices. However, aesthetics is shown to be an important part of projecting or expressing identity and British settlement in India can be seen as a pivotal historical period that contributed to challenging traditional or conservative attitudes. The colonial presence in Indian society was brought about most fundamentally through the physical presence of the British, as well as through travel and European education which resulted in changes to male dressing. Indian men, rather than women, being equipped with experiences of foreignness, and often of professional status, adopted western styles of dress having been exposed to a different culture to their own. In this respect, the changes brought about to men's dress had little to do with religion but were a direct result of British imperialism in India. As Tarlo notes in her anthropological study:

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[49] Patrick Olivelle, *The Law Code of Manu* (2004) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

> The decision to adopt European dress was therefore a risky one, implying a change of identity and lifestyle. Yet the emergence of Western clothes in India could not be ignored by educated Indians any more than that of the British themselves since British dress represented all the values which the British boasted: superiority, progress, decency, refinement, masculinity and civilization. These values came to be shared by some men of the Indian élite, particularly those educated in the Western fashion. If they wanted to be modern and participate in this civilisation, wearing the correct clothes was surely one means of doing so.[50]

Whilst the image of the South Asian subject may have been presented in ethnographic studies as static, advocates such as George Birdwood, founder of the Victoria and Albert Museum in Bombay, and William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts movement in England, encouraged hand-made and traditional forms of textile production.[51] They held the view that locally sourced materials and traditional methods had inherent value and were under a form of threat, borne from collective societal desires for modernity and mechanisation. Both Birdwood and Morris, along with the likes of Ananda Coomaraswamy (discussed later in this chapter), believed that unless concerted efforts were made to preserve tradition and artisanal methods, these would be lost amongst the prevalent markers of modernity such as mass economic production.[52] However, it is perhaps inaccurate to present the choice of dress as binary, either traditional or European. Indeed, as the evolution of men's styles illustrates, the development of dress was a lengthy process that reflected power structures in society.

At a fundamental level, one major impact of British colonialism in India was the issue of classification of the inhabitants, both indigenous and settlers. Furthermore, the complex interactions were not exclusively between

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[50] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 45.

[51] 'The philosophical basis of early work documented modes of cultural life that were expected to die out; referred to as *salvage ethnography*. Sometimes contemporary dress was overlooked or purposely ignored in order to document and photograph forms of cultural dress described as "unchanging" and "traditional"' in Joanne Eicher and Sandra Lee Evenson, *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture and Society* (2014) (New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 81.

[52] George C.M. Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India* (1884) (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1997).

'coloniser and colonised' but also within the groups. Altering dress or favouring one type of dress over another would have caused tensions *between* and *within* groups. For example, European men who adopted Indian styles of dressing, for whatever reason, would have come under scrutiny for adopting a native style and thereby showing disloyalty to British values.[53] The wider issues relating to dress are thus complicated, multifaceted and at times contradictory. Bernard Cohn has written about Indian dress at length and in particular the Sikh turban which has its origins of the military uniform for Sikhs in the British Indian army. As Cohn details, the trajectory of the turban shows that it is no longer worn in a display of allegiance to former rulers but rather in an effort to maintain uniqueness of religious identity.[54] Cohn's study draws out that clothes and dressing provided a way to classify on both sides and a way to maintain difference and reinforce social order. Even subtle changes that hint at hybrid forms, challenge ideals of cultural authenticity and perhaps even extend to challenging Victorian desires to maintain order through the construction of dress codes and hierarchies. Diana Archibald writes that femininity and masculinity 'are constructed notions that exist in a constant state of flux, or as Judith Butler puts it, are "troubled and unfixed"'.[55] The point that both Archibald and Butler make is that concepts such as gender identification are subject to a temporality that reinforces order in society at a given point in time.

In relation to the construction of feminine identity, Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) argues that the political landscape shapes identity: '"the subject" is crucial for politics […] because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not "show" once the structure of politics has been established'.[56] Although Butler's work is centrally concerned with gender constructions, her theoretical approach can be applied

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[53] Tarlo, *Clothing* Matters, 52.

[54] Bernard S. Cohn, 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century' in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (1996) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 106-162.

[55] Diana C. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism and Emigration in the Victorian Novel* (2002) (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2002). 8-9.

[56] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) (New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2008), 3.

to the wider context of how identity ambivalently develops through projected imagery and ideology. Butler states that the 'performative invocation of a nonhistorical "before" becomes the foundational premise that guarantees a prosocial ontology of persons who freely consent to be governed and, thereby, constitute the legitimacy of the social contract'.[57]

It is through a sense of 'social contract' that British attitudes to Indian dressing can be stereotyped to an extent, through portrayals in newspapers and satirical magazines that are illustrative of the impact of Indian dress in contrast to the impact of European dress. *The Indian Charivari* or *The Indian Punch* was an Anglo-Indian satirical magazine, inspired by *Punch,* poking fun at the social life of the British in India and sharing private jokes within Indian society. In particular the magazine created caricatures of the Bengali character, the uneducated buffoon exploited by the educated Bengali. As Partha Mitter has noted 'Many of its cartoons were clever, funny and a few were even brilliant. But the English magazine did not invent these stereotypes, it simply exploited the existing ones of the educated Bengali', as the selection of illustrations (Figs. 9-12) demonstrate.[58]

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[57] Butler, 4.

[58] Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922* (1994) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 149.

Fig. 9: 'Origin of Species', *The Indian Charivari* (1874)[59]

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[59] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters,* 43.

Fig. 10: Taken from *Indian Pictures drawn with Pen and Pencil* (1891)[60]

Fig. 11: An image of a 'baboo', *The Indian Charivari* (1873)[61]

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[60] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 48.
[61] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 50.

"It was here," I said, reverently, "that the Swan of Avon was hatched!"

Fig. 12: 'Baboo Jabberjee B.A.', *Punch* (1895)[62]

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[62] Mitter, 151.

Projections of dressing in a specific way are thus complicated especially in light of the colonial administration, both for Europeans and Indians of different social and educational status, and highlights the 'messages' that were transmitted depending on the type of dress one chose to wear. Dressing in a particular manner yielded power in certain circumstances and invited criticism or even ridicule in others. The introduction of this thesis reflected on the arguments put forward in 'Of Mimicry and Man' from *The Location of Culture* in the idea that mimicry is actually the point at which colonial authority deteriorates, through a conscious imitation of the coloniser by the colonised. The act of mimicry is also a force of resistance which Bhabha describes:

> [M]imicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is thus a sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualises power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference of recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.[63]

The illustrations in Figs. 10 and 11 are indicative of the debates circulating in India in the nineteenth century, notably with men's dressing patterns, and adaptation of European styles. The illustrations on one level reflect the farce that was associated with the way in which dressing patterns were evolving as a result of British imperialism and Fig. 9, 'Origin of Species', directly charts the development of indigenous identities as originating from non-human forms to scholar and '"Master"' of '"Arts"'. On a deeper lever, it could be argued that the development of Indian identity, which was now comprised of European education and the influence of European styles of dressing, posed a threat to the colonial regime. Bhabha writes:

> The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in 'normalizing' the colonial state

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[63] Bhabha, 122-123.

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> or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms.[64]

The fact that new dressing patterns were emerging was disturbing on both sides as change reflected a loss of control to an extent, and that a new 'breed' of identity was entering a sphere of regulation that was threatening to an established rule of order which the parody of Darwinian evolution in Fig. 9 depicts. Whilst on the one hand, European fashion was revered, it was also the subject of some ridicule that incited terms such as *baboo* when an Indian man attempted to dress like an Englishman (see Fig. 11). Fig. 12, 'Baboo Jabberjee B.A' caricatures the European-educated Indian so that although he has a serious look on his face, his white female companion is amused by his behaviour and the sketch projects the satirical nature of the scenario. The title 'Baboo Jabberjee B.A.' is loaded with innuendo and mocks both the attempt to dress in a European fashion (Baboo) as well as the European qualification (B.A.) attained. The speech "'It was here," I said, reverently, "that the Swan of Avon was hatched!'" reinforces Baboo Jabberjee's failed attempt to speak in the appropriate idiom as he tours Shakespeare's birthplace and the pretentiousness of his reference to Ben Jonson's memorial poem to Shakespeare reveals his inauthenticity as an Englishman.[65] The illustration itself has racial undertones and displays the ridicule that Indians were subjected to, even as they abided by European standards, which were ultimately perceived to be counterfeit and inauthentic. Tarlo writes that the 'British were not alone in their discriminatory judgments. Members of the Indian élite who had adopted western dress were often equally prejudiced against their own people, whom they now considered insufficiently dressed'.[66] Both the sketch and Tarlo's comments are indicative of the overall and overwhelming sense of inferiority that indigenous people were subjected to, so that their actions in general were scrutinised, by the British and their own people. The British mocked their attempts to integrate and assimilate as

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[64] Bhabha, 123.
[65] Ben Jonson, 'To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare' prefixed to the first folio of 1623.
[66] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 55.

farcical and the subject of ridicule, whilst indigenous Indians, who were staunchly holding onto the traditions of an old order, could equally be insulted by the behaviour of their fellow countrymen. British patterns of dressing when worn by non-British citizens were in both instances deemed inappropriate, either by being mocked or derided as being representative of allegiance with the coloniser.

Tarlo also notes an experience recorded by Rabindranath Tagore when on holiday near the Ganges where he was not allowed to join the elders to a nearby village on account of his 'indecent' dress. Tagore writes:

> My feet were bare, I had no scarf or upper robe over my tunic, I was not dressed fit to come out; as if it was my fault! I never owned any socks or superfluous apparel, so not only went back disappointed for that morning, but had no chance of repairing my shortcomings and being allowed to come out any other day.[67]

Tagore describes the feelings of exclusion, of not being dressed in a manner that was becoming increasingly accepted and even expected in the subcontinent, especially of a person of some notable social standing. Dress is shown to become less about what is appropriate for the setting and indeed what is suitable for a given climate, but becomes entwined with a code of aesthetics arguably fueled by imperialist values. Edward Said's later theories, as detailed in *Orientalism* (1978) in which the West creates an ideological inferior and opposite image in the East for its own advances, can also be traced in instances such as the example given by Tagore. Tagore writes about feelings of 'fault' or inadequacy through 'shortcomings', a sentiment that seems to be delivered with a level of irony, coming from a Nobel Prize winning intellectual. In 1905 the art critic and philosopher, and friend of Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy published *Borrowed Plumes.* Coomaraswamy himself was of Anglo-Ceylonese heritage and was brought up by his English mother and received an English education. Coomaraswamy was a prolific writer, having produced upwards of a thousand pieces in

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[67] Rabindranath Tagore, *My Reminiscences* (1917) (South Carolina: BiblioBazaar, 2009), 51.

subjects ranging from geological studies (the subject of his specialism) to art theory and history, psychology, mythology, folklore and religion.[68]   In spite of his English upbringing, Coomaraswamy saw European dress as contributing to 'the continual destruction of national character and individuality and art'.[69] As Harry Oldmeadow has written, Coomaraswamy's work had particular focal points that expressed concerns similar to those of Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Mathew Arnold and John Ruskin.[70] 'Coomaraswamy picked up a catchphrase of Ruskin's which he was to mobilize again and again in his own writing: "industry without art is brutality"'.[71] Oldmeadow states that three focal points of Coomaraswamy's work are 'a concern with social and political questions connected with the conditions of daily life and work, and with the problematic relationship of the present to the past and of the "East" to the "West"; a fascination with traditional arts and crafts which impelled an immense and ambitious scholarly enterprise; and thirdly, an even deeper preoccupation with religious and metaphysical questions'.[72]

In a similar vein to figures like George Birdwood and William Morris, Coomaraswamy held the view that art had an intrinsic value and that the manufacturing process should be somehow 'authentic'. On a particular research trip to Ceylon, Coomaraswamy described the process of adopting western traits by the Ceylonese as 'vulgar imitation'.[73] Coomaraswamy founded the Ceylon Social Reform Society in 1906, which set out to encourage the reclamation of nation through cultural influences such as food, social customs and dress. The Manifesto of the Ceylon Reform Society, which is thought to have been written by Coomaraswamy, discourages 'the

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[68] James Crouch, *A Bibliography of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy* (2002) (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2002).
[69] *Coomaraswamy, Volume One: Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism* (1977), Roger Lipsey (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 18.
[70] Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East: 20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions* (2004) (Indiana: World Wisdom Inc., 2004).
[71] Oldmeadow, 196. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) (New York:
Columbia University Press, 1983) for discussion on anti-industrial movements in England.
[72] Oldmeadow, 194.
[73] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 10.

thoughtless imitation of unsuitable European habits and custom'.[74]   The recurrence of the 'destruction of national character' was amplified in The Nationalist Movement led by Gandhi, which brought together elements of growing arguments for political, economic and aesthetic independence, with dress used as political apparatus through active encouragement and for Indians to revert to national dress, a move that Gandhi became historically renowned for. However, a point worth noting is Coomaraswamy stating that 'Swadeshi must be something more than a political weapon. It must be a religious-artistic ideal' is illustrative of differences within a shared cause as Gandhi and Coomaraswamy's approach to dress elucidates.[75]   The consideration of differing viewpoints that emerge, even within shared concerns, highlights how problematic, and indeed ambivalent, the psychology towards dressing can be. Coomaraswamy and Gandhi may have both envisioned a return to traditional ideas of dress but for markedly different reasons. The art of dressing is thus a reaction to a given set of social and political circumstances; after the basic physiological need has been met, dressing develops into a moral and aesthetic dichotomy that is continually subject to shifts. Dressing for men, as a general term, may be seen to have reached a plateau of stability, especially when we consider a contemporary context where men's dressing patterns has achieved a level of homogeneity. However, as the study into male dress around the late nineteenth century in South Asia has shown, this was not always the case and changes were more pronounced at specific stages in the evolution of men's dress, resulting in a relative standardisation and conformity to an originary European tradition.   As such chapter one of the thesis draws out the prevalence of changes in men's dressing patterns, in part to establish that men's dressing had a place in the history of British colonisation in India, at a time when women's roles were limited largely to the domestic sphere. The subsequent chapters focus on women's dress as represented in female characters in each of the selected texts as it is women's clothing and dressing

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[74] Lipsey, 22.
[75] Daniel Rycroft, 'Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Art and Swadeshi (1909-1911)' in *Fifty Key Texts in Art History* (2012), Diana Newall and Grant Pooke (eds.) (Routledge: Abingdon, 2012), 63-86.

patterns that display a greater interaction with a changing landscape after Independence.

Dress and honouring feminine identity

In terms of feminine identity, South Asian dress may not objectively be linked to colonialism per se, but is rather the product of multifarious social factors, the differences between a rural and urban setting, caste, education, and overall ideas of female modesty, honouring sexuality and the female form. It is fair to argue that whilst the changes in dressing patterns were occurring for men through relatively clear and defined stylistic changes, for women the changes were not so pronounced but took place in a subtle and longer timeframe, and continues to evolve at a rate that is different to the evolution of men's clothing. Without necessarily making any changes to the form of clothing, South Asian women adopted fabrics introduced by the foreign markets and imported into India and through the incorporation of accessories, in an effort to modernise their style whilst still maintaining the traditional dressing archetypes.[76] For women, changes to ways of dressing is an ongoing and active challenge that is continually shifting as it reflects the socio-political landscape for (South Asian) women in indigenous and diasporic communities where changing dressing patterns can also be perceived as markers of resistance and agency. In *Visibly Muslim*, Tarlo argues that for women, an adoption of Islamic dress that has been altered from past generations in the interpretation from passages in relation to modesty and sexual decorum in the *Qur'an.* Distinct interpretations of how modesty can be practiced in dressing patterns has resulted in a minority group with more visibility 'resulting in the emergence and expansion of an Islamic fashion industry catering to their requirements'.[77]

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[76] *Indian Ladies Magazine* (published in Madras), was one of the first English-language journals for women in India. In the 1920s and 1930s it ran a weekly editorial in which contemporary fashions were discussed and suitable clothes recommended to women readers. Sometimes Indian women were accused of imitating the West, thereby detracting 'from the grace of Indian dress and even looking ridiculous' (*Indian Ladies Magazine* (1930), III, 8: 380) (This record is held at the British Library: Asian and African Studies) (also in Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 46-47).

[77] Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim*, 9.

Throughout South Asian history, the giving, receiving, wearing and acquisition of clothes are entwined with the life cycle and the various stages of maturity that a woman will go through such as engagement, marriage and widowhood. These stages of a woman's life can be seen to be intrinsically linked to patriarchal governance in South Asian society. The ancient Brahmanic legal code of *Manusmriti* states that:

> Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers and husbands and brothers in law for their own welfare […]. The houses on which female relations, not being duly honoured, pronounce a curse, perish completely as if destroyed by magic. Hence men who seek their own welfare should always honour women on holidays and festivals with ornaments, clothes and food.[78]

In this section I refer to Tarlo's work and a case study she examines, where by changing an article of clothing, a young newly married woman can be seen to challenge deep-seated patriarchal structures that privilege male dominance within an extended nuclear family. The particular woman in question subverts notions of patriarchy and power through her use of governing societal tools such as honour and shame and their prevalence in a South Asian context and uses these to her advantage. The case study illustrates how the different strands of dress and changing a pattern or structure are powerful themes, especially in the domestic setting. The abridged description of the narrative is included in order to set out the context from which subsequent critical analysis follows. Tarlo describes the story of a young woman, Hansaben and the seemingly innocuous decision she takes in choosing to wear a cardigan in 1989 in Jalia, a small village in Gujarat, India. Tarlo describes the story with vivid detail; in essence Hansaben chooses to wear a cardigan in spite of her father-in-law's disapproval and the item of clothing takes on a more symbolic means of protest. The family that Hansaben has married into is of Brahmin Hindu caste - the highest caste - and the offence caused by Hansaben wearing a cardigan is that her father-in-law believes it to be an attack on the tradition

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[78] Chapter Two: Hinduism, Laws of Manu 3.55-6, 43 in Robert E. Van Hoost, *Anthology of World Scriptures* (1993) (Boston: Loose Leaf Edition, 2015).

that his lineage represents. When Hansaben persists in wearing the cardigan after she has been reprimanded, her father-in-law loses his temper and threatens to throw her out of the family home. As it is winter, Hansaben decides to endure the cold rather than submit to wearing a shawl or squash the cardigan underneath her sari. She carries on with the household chores and refuses to eat despite being pregnant. Hansaben then tells a neighbour about the mistreatment she is subjected to, knowing that this will be the topic of gossip and even goes on to mention that she has contemplated suicide. The news gets back to her in-laws who of course do not want to tarnish their reputation from the disrepute a suicide would cause, so when Hansaben says she wants to visit her parents for a few days, they agree. In the end, Hansaben stays for over six months with her parents, giving birth to a second child, and goes through a process of taking back her saris and jewellery under different guises. Eventually, she does return but only after setting her own conditions and dictating new living arrangements. Hansaben knows that her in-laws will take her back for fear of their reputation and the implications for other siblings if a divorce were to take place. 'At first sight, it might appear that the seemingly exaggerated response of Sureshkaka [her father-in-law] to a mere cardigan tells more about the temperament of one particular man than it does about the significance of clothes'.[79] The cardigan is thus a catalyst for conflict in a strained family set up. However, a closer investigation of the meaning and value of clothing suggests that the cardigan was not circumstantial in its role and the course of events that the wearing of the item of clothing led to.

An examination of the importance of giving and receiving clothes helps to explain the apparently extreme reactions of Hansaben and her father-in-law. Since clothes are given in the context of specific relationships and events, they embody the relationships between individuals, families and groups. Hansaben's cardigan had been made by her mother and evoked a whole series of associations and was emblematic of Hansaben's city life before marriage into a traditional family living in a village setting. Her refusal to adhere strictly to her father-in-law's codes of conduct both challenged and denied his

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[79] Tarlo, 175.

authority which he views as natural and rightful. Hansaben's action may have been indirect but they were effective and illustrate how even a daughter-in-law, traditionally placed lower down in a traditional nuclear family structure can carefully negotiate the rigidity of traditional culture. In choosing to wear her cardigan, Hansaben places herself in the advantageous position of appearing like the innocent victim and although Hansaben is unhappy with the patriarchal environment she is by no means a helpless victim of the incident and carefully manipulates the events in her own subtle way.

Tarlo has focalised Hansaben's story from her perspective, and in some respects, it is therefore easy to empathise with Hansaben's predicament and credit her for the way in which she achieves her goals. I additionally suggest that her father-in-law too is caught up in an inherited culture and tradition so ingrained that departing from it causes pain and difficulty. Hansaben's father-in-law is possibly threatened by the cardigan and the modernity he associates with it. Hansaben may well be the product of a certain context and upbringing, but so too is her father-in-law, and we should not underestimate the generational divides within a community, a point which will become more apparent in the upcoming analysis of fiction such as *Maps for Lost Lovers* in chapter five.

By taking into consideration texts in specific contexts, an examination of alternative perspectives that are vulnerable to marginalisation will be taken into account such as the tensions within families. At times, familial tensions supersede tensions between an individual and the wider community as becomes apparent in Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* and Ali's *Brick Lane*. Hansaben's journey is insightful and her methods display a level of resourcefulness that 'colonisation' or patriarchy can precipitate. However, the perspective of her father-in-law is one which the thesis also aims to address through interactions between characters and protagonists and I will seek to draw out possible motivations that lead to certain choices being made at a specific point in time. More widely, the thesis considers the implications that choices, such as dress, have on identities and how society evolves. The next

chapter will be considering the negotiation of choice and conformity, in relation to dress, in the memoir *Home to India* by Santha Rama Rau

<u>Chapter two</u>

<u>Tradition and Authenticity: Santha Rama Rau's *Home to India* (1945)</u>

This chapter will examine the memoir *Home to India* (1945) by the writer Santha Rama Rau (1923-2009) (referred here to as both Santha when describing her actions in the memoir and Rama Rau as the author of the memoir) in relation to female identity, and more specifically that of a young Hindu woman, who grapples with her authenticity in her efforts to identify as a 'real Indian' (*HI*, 57, 67). A sense of anticipation pervades Rama Rau's memoir, especially in light of the achievements of later critics and fiction writers such as Said, Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. Rama Rau's writing can also be read alongside those feminist discourses in which women were challenging canon construction as Rama Rau, it is argued, can be placed within a feminist literary tradition. Rama Rau is not a modernist writer in terms of literary experimentalism or technique, but her desire for reform of India's internal social systems reveals her engagement with modernity.

Rama Rau's first publication *Home to India* was written when she was twenty-two years old, and in it she describes returning to India after a period of absence, capturing her mixed emotional responses to the transformation of her country of birth, now on the cusp of major social and political change.[1] The memoir also charts Santha's adolescent years against the backdrop of the political ferment precipitated by India's colonial history and India's preparation for Independence and Partition. The memoir illustrates Santha's heightened awareness of a crucial moment in the country's history and the role of leading figures, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, in attempts to capitalise on the moment as an opportunity to modernise indigenous infrastructure. This chapter will explore the impact of networks of new power had on the development of Santha's worldview as she attempts to gain an understanding of her surroundings on her return to her homeland. As well as realising the influence of Nehru, Gandhi and Tagore on India's transformation, Santha's interactions with her

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[1] Santha Rama Rau, *Home to India* (1945) (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1945).

grandmother and upbringing by her mother in the absence of her father, brings to the fore the role of women, both historically and moving forwards, as pioneers of social transformation, albeit with little official recognition. Thus, *Home to India* provides an intimate account of Santha's adolescent experiences as well as an insight into the culmination of colonialism in India amidst religious, national, and political turmoil which was to change its history, geography and government.

Rama Rau's written work has in some respects fallen into relative obscurity. It is fair to state that when South Asian writers are recalled she is often overlooked as her absence from publications in recognition of South Asian writers implies.[2] In fact, Rama Rau was one of the best-known South Asian writers in postwar America and was widely regarded as a journalist, novelist, travel writer and expert on India and its affairs. Her writing included travelogues, novels, a memoir and a *Time-Life* cookbook.[3] She was also a regular contributor to periodicals such as the *New Yorker,* the *New York Times, McCalls* and *Readers Digest.* Rama Rau also adapted E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* (1924) for West End and Broadway theatre in 1962. The title of the memoir, *Home to India*, reminds the reader of the title of Forster's novel *A Passage to India* suggesting that Rama Rau's choice of title may relate, or rather be a response, to Forster's own novel. Forster's title

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[2] *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* (1997), Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West (eds.) (London: Vintage, 1997). The collection brings together a range of writers from the Indian subcontinent and was published to coincide with the fifty-year Independence anniversary of India.
For a list of writers included in the anthology see:
https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1032750/vintage-book-of-indian-writing-1947-1997/
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[3] Santha Rama Rau's published works are:
Home to India (New York: Harper, 1945)
East of Home (New York: Harper, 1950)
This is India (New York: Harper, 1954)
A View to the Southeast (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957)
My Russian Journey (New York: Harper, 1959)
A Passage to India: A Play by Santha Rama Rau from the Novel by E.M. Forster (London: Edward Arnold, (1960)
Gifts of Passage (New York: Harper & Row, 1961)
The Cooking of India (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969)
The Adventuress (New York: Dell, 1970)

comes from Walt Whitman's poem 'Passage to India' (1870).[4] Forster writes that he intends the novel to be 'a little bridge of sympathy between East and West' and wants the novel to speak to 'something wider than politics'.[5] The narrative draws on the complexities of colonialism and the inescapable impact it has on individuals such as Dr. Aziz who is wrongly accused of assaulting an Englishwoman he has befriended.[6] In her own memoir, Rama Rau's ambitions seem to extend beyond those of personal recollection, as she engages in the grander narrative of Santha's spiritual awakening. Rama Rau's replacement of '*Passage*' with '*Home*' in the memoir title denotes the anticipation of impending postcolonial status for India especially in relation to the 'Passage' and its connotations in colonial history, and more specifically, in the role of the East India Company and its trade routes to and from India in the export of goods and labour. Where the title *A Passage to India* implies the process of journeying from one place to another, *Home to India* suggests a more permanent return or homecoming. Although published early in Rama Rau's literary career, the titling of her memoir and its link to Forster's novel, as well as Whitman's poem, indicates a mature awareness of literature as a response to existing discourse and as a medium that intersects with politics.

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[4] Walt Whitman (1819-1892) the American poet, essayist and journalist. His poem 'Passage to India' was published in the collection *Leaves of Grass* (1855).
Milton Meltzer writes "'Passage to India," a nine-section poem is his hymn to the modern age. It places the poet as partner to scientist and engineer, moving toward a time when human conflict will disappear and spiritual unity will be achieved. Walt himself thought this poem was his best postwar work: 'There's more of me, the essential ultimate me, in that than in any of the poems'" in Milton Meltzer, *Walt Whitman: A Biography* (2002) (Connecticut: Twenty-First Century Books, 2002), 134.
[5] Fragments of a draft for *A Passage to India*, Manuscript by E.M. Forster held by King's College Cambridge.
https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/fragments-of-a-draft-for-a-passage-to-india
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[6]Sunil Kumar Sarker writes 'Forster himself has more than once explicitly confirmed, namely that 'the book is not really about politics, though it is the political aspect of it that caught the general public and made it sell. It's about something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky, about the horror lurking in the Marabar Caves and the release symbolized by the birth of Krishna. It is—or rather desires to—philosophic and poetic—"'" in Sunil Kumar Sarker, *E.M. Forster's A Passage to India* (2007) (New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2007), 188.

In an interview in 1994, Rama Rau showed an acute awareness of the decline of her public image. Recounting to Antoinette Burton her introduction to a lady at a cocktail party, Rama Rau reports that the lady asks '"Santha Rama Rau? Didn't you *used* to be famous?"'.[7] It perhaps comes as no surprise then, that when an anthology of South Asian writing was published, *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* (1997)*, Rama Rau did not feature in the collection. The omission of her work is poignant as a re-reading of her work reveals how she is a pre-cursor in a literary tradition that would become more celebrated in later years through the work of 'major' postcolonial writers and scholars. The compilation of lists attracts critical attention to, and scrutiny of, how a writer is determined as 'major'. This is relevant when we consider the popularity of the writer in her own historical context and the fading of her written work from popular culture in her later life. Antoinette Burton emphasises the point by stating '[t]oday, Santha Rama Rau scarcely registers as even a minor diasporic writer, let alone as a major postcolonial figure, whether in India or in the United States'.[8]

Where she was once regarded as a prominent voice representing South Asian culture, also a problematic feature (discussed later), Rama Rau it seems has been superseded by other writers, whose works have generated interest and commanded attention upon publication on varying scales.[9] However, it is significant that even though opinions are divided on the critical reception of

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[7] Antoinette Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau* (2007) (Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 2 (emphasis added).
[8] Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau*, 2.
Review extracts of Rama Rau's work in 1961 and 2007:
The blurb to *Gifts of Passage* (1961) states 'Santha Rama Rau has become one of the most beloved writers of her day. "I have a suspicion," wrote Pamela Frankau (for the Book Society) of her *View to the Southeast,* "that she is the best writer of travel literature in our time".
[9] For example, commercially successful novels such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981)*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997).
Huggan writes in the preface to *The Postcolonial Exotic* of the authors that 'they have [also] succeeded in sustaining a *critique* of exoticism in their work. This critique is located in each case in forms of cultivated exhibitionism: the deliberately exaggerated hawking of Oriental(ist) wares by a narcissistic narrator (Rushdie); the consciously melodramatic combination of Indian romance and political intrigue (Seth); the overwrought staging of a tragic tale of illicit cross-caste love (Roy) (Huggan, xi).

particular works, some voices are permitted the necessary space to disseminate whilst others become muted, more so over time. Rama Rau's writing is perhaps one such case and for this particular reason it is a worthwhile exercise to examine her writing from a postcolonial perspective with a consideration of terms such as hybridity and transnational identity, concepts not typically associated with Rama Rau and her body of work. The concept of image in the memoir is a significant part of her experiences, and how gender in particular contributes to constructed images, in this instance of the South Asian female posited against a dominant colonial and patriarchal structuring of society. Rama Rau was indeed subject to a level of essentialism, even if this is celebratory, as a writer and reputable voice of South Asia. In a contemporary review of her work, Rama Rau is described as a writer with "a Western mind [and] an Indian heart".[10] The exoticism that Rama Rau came to be associated with is a familiar trope of colonial discourse promulgating binaries between coloniser/masculine and colonised/feminine and made prominent through postcolonial discourse in foundational texts such as Said's *Orientalism*. The cover art that appeared on Rama Rau's novels can be described as promoting such forms of Orientalist attitudes with sensual exoticised backdrops in the poses of both the author and the characters that she creates.[11] For example the cover image of Rama Rau's novel *The Adventuress* (1971) in Fig. 13 shows a picture of a glamorous-looking woman of South Asian origin dressed in a European style dress with a pashmina (or shawl) draped over her shoulders.

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[10] Review of Santha Rama Rau's *Remember the House* (1956)*, New York Herald Tribune,* The Howard Gotleib Archival Research Center, Boston, typescript collection of quotes, box 3, (also cited in Burton, 6).
[11] Santha Rama Rau, *The Adventuress* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1971).
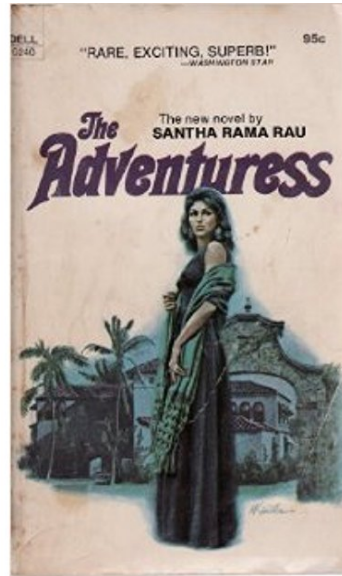
Fig. 13: Santha Rama Rau, *The Adventuress* (1971)

The pashmina is of note as it was a product of the Indian textiles industry crafted from cashmere wool to create a luxury product which was discovered by Europeans at the beginning of the nineteenth century who adapted the design to suit European taste.[12] The pashmina, which is the Persian word for wool, translates as 'soft gold', comes from the undercoat of a Himalayan mountain goat called the Changthangi. The fibre was woven into shawls and blankets, and was used to keep warm against the climate of the mountainous region of Kashmir where it was first woven. The figure on the book cover wears the pashmina in a European style, styled as an accessory to her European attire, which is apt as the article of clothing was appropriated and commodified by the West as an item of luxury in the early nineteenth century.[13] The small detail of the pashmina is symptomatic of the way in which Rama Rau herself, like other writers, was subject to a form of the 'postcolonial exotic marketing the margins' that Huggan explores in his study as discussed in the introduction of the thesis. Although the cover art of Rama Rau's novel depicts a woman from the East, she has been presented to the West in identifiable dress which is suggestive of some familiarity with the West. This possibly adds to her allure, in that although she is foreign she is

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[12] Robert R. Frank, *Silk Mohair, Cashmere and Other Luxury Fibres* (2001) (Cambridge: Woodhead Publishing, 2001).
[13] Frank, 142.

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also familiar. The resulting Orientalism is orchestrated and digestible in its crafted mystique, and offered for the consumption of western or Eurocentric readership.

Rana Kabbani in her study *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myth of Orient* (1986)*,* looks at the construction of the image of 'Eastern' women as fictitious figures of overt sexuality and objects of desire for the western heterosexual male, a figure constructed from imagery of the 'Oriental' woman in genres such as travel writing.[14] This particular paradigm is useful when locating Rama Rau's literary presence during her own lifetime, at a time when India was still under the grasp of colonialism and to an acceptance of cultural appropriation. The concept of image and the notion of performing identity is thus central to Rama Rau's work, an idea she examines in her autobiographical story 'By Any Other Name' (1961) where Rama Rau writes about the unsettling experience of attending an Anglo-Indian day school. Rama Rau and her sister Premila are renamed by the headmistress Pamela and Cynthia due to the headmistress' inability to pronounce the names Santha and Premila. She writes of her experience: 'That first day at school is still, when I think of it, a remarkable one. At that age, if one's name is changed, one develops a curious form of dual personality. I remember having a certain detached and disbelieving concern in the actions of "Cynthia," but certainly no responsibility'.[15] The event would be a formative moment for the young and impressionable Santha, then aged five and a half years old. The idea of dual identity, or personas for differing contexts, is apparent when examining Rama Rau and how she was

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[14] Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (1986) (London: Saqi Books, 2008).

[15] Santha Rama Rau, 'By Any Other Name', *Gifts of Passage* (1961) (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961), 6-12.
Santha Rama Rau was born Vasanthi Rama Rau and altered this at an early stage as all her published work is under the name Santha Rama Rau. This raises an interesting speculation about whether this was an attempt at Anglicisation or whether she wanted a separate authorial identity.
Santha Rama Rau - The Open University Database
http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/santha-rama-rau
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

both a personification of India in the West, and yet quite distinctly seen as a European or Anglicised Indian by indigenous Indians.[16]

The adolescent Santha writes in her memoir 'I wasn't a "real Indian". The truth faced me at every turn' (*HI*, 67). Upon her return, Santha describes India as 'too foreign, too inexplicable by my Western standards ; I couldn't fit in anywhere, with my upbringing' (*HI*, 67). The irony is that the 'Western' portrayal of her was as *authentically* 'Indian' and representative of the Orient, as the success of her work in the West illustrates. Contrary to this perception, her thoughts reveal that Santha felt inauthentic with regard to her Indian heritage. However, it was her physical appearance and her dress that determined, to an extent, the public perception of her, even if these are ill judged by her own admittance. In India, Santha is at times chided for her western attributes, whereas in other parts of the world she is seen foremost as Indian and markedly so. In one instance, Santha visits the slums wearing a 'chiffon sari and silk brocade blouse' illustrating her lack of knowledge and misjudgment of the appropriateness of her clothes for the environment that she finds herself in (*HI*, 121). With hindsight Santha realises her naivety, and also ignorance, in wearing the finest materials to the most deprived communities highlighting the contentious issues she inwardly toils with regard to her own image. Santha herself describes her feelings of being an outsider to Indian culture, musing 'while I knew Chaucer backwards I had not the faintest knowledge of Indian literature, history or art' (*HI*, 60). Although the western world might view her as equipped to represent the East, the East would not necessarily agree with the sentiment and this proves problematic for Santha.

As discussed in the introduction, hybridity as a form of cultural identity developed through ambivalence is central to Homi Bhabha's *The Location of*

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[16] I use the term 'Anglicised Indian' as Santha details how her identity has been forged as a result of her time spent in Europe and how this has negatively affected her affinity with Indians as an outsider.

Culture.[17]   This section of the analysis of *Home to India* incorporates Bhabha's observations with regard to hybridity as a feature emanating from the encounter between European and non-European cultures.   However, although Rama Rau's identity can be described as hybridised, it is layered with further complexities in its balance of cultural influences.   In *Home to India,* Rama Rau takes into consideration the effect that travel, education and social mobility have on indigenous identity and the differences in perspectives that emanate both from within the individual and from an onlooker.   One way Rama Rau can be seen to explore this is by framing the concept of identity as partially defined by visual appearance and the connotations of specific patterns of dressing.   Clothes are shown to be a manifestation of a psychology that is motivated by history, politics and social change, where the evolution in the psychology of dress comes to reflect evolving landscapes.

Authenticity and the postcolonial canon

From a postcolonial perspective, Rama Rau's memoir identifies themes and debates that are commonly aligned with the work of academics such as Said, Spivak and Bhabha as outlined in the introduction of this thesis.   Although she does not use the word 'Orientalism', 'Santha Rama Rau elaborates a taxonomy of common misapprehensions about India that anticipated the critical purchase of that now famous term'.[18]   It is the sense of anticipation in light of the context, but also hindsight, that a contemporary context invites an examination of her work from a 'post-postcolonial' perspective.   Re-reading Rama Rau's writing with an appreciation of contemporary history may offer an alternative perspective that situates her work in an expanding canon of South Asian writers commenting on the colonial and postcolonial experience. The earlier reference, in the introduction, to the philosopher Charles Taylor drew on his definition of authenticity with regard to ethics and being true to oneself.[19]   In terms of authenticity in the narrative voice, re-reading *Home to India* and its relative marginality, reveals the possibility of a fresh perspective

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[17] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994) (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
[18] Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau*, 4.
[19] Taylor, 15.

drawn out from Rama Rau's descriptions of her experiences as a young Indian woman with a European education, in British India, in the final stages of empire. A particular passage from *Home to India* captures the challenge that women, notably those from a lower social class, face:

> The women I saw appeared on the whole subdued and without a great deal of fight in them. They were tremendously grateful for what was given to them, but they seemed to have the feeling that these whims of the rich could never last long. They appeared in a negative way, to realise their double fight : for emancipation, and for the right to bring about emancipation themselves (*HI*, 122).

Rama Rau's perception of the 'double fight' anticipates postcolonial concerns about female identity. Double colonisation through enforced patriarchy and colonisation recognises the shared similarities in structure of the two paradigms and the effect this has on women of (former) colonies.[20] The fact that Rama Rau had these insights, and yet has little credit attributed to her work, urges a renewed perspective on her work alongside later literary discourse from acclaimed writers such as Rushdie, whose contribution to the development of the postcolonial canon, in contrast, is widely acknowledged. Furthermore, an analysis of Rama Rau's written work from a contemporary perspective may perhaps even authenticate her status as a serious writer rather than as a 'lite' travel writer. In this respect Rama Rau is commenting on a particular moment in history from a specific viewpoint, and although this writing is part of a wider network of associations, it is not as self-conscious, when juxtaposed with the work of writers such as Mulk Raj Anand who highlight an awareness of their own context and immerse themselves in the mood of a specific collective such as the modernist writers of Bloomsbury.[21]

Rama Rau's writing style can be described as realist, and in a sense conservative, reflecting both her western education and western readership. In

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[20] Petersen and Rutherford (1986).
[21] *Mulk Raj Anand Shaping the Indian Modern* (2005), Annapurna Garimella (ed.) (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2005). Garimella writes in the introduction 'The need to historicize and build a utopian vision were for Anand always mediated and buttressed by his modernist faith in the efficacy of the "artist hero" (Garimella, 22).

contrast to the modernist Mulk Raj Anand, Rama Rau describes and explains India to her reader whereas Anand writes without translating Indian phrases or providing a glossary of terms, in itself a bold and 'modern' statement that the East does not have to explain itself to the West. Rama Rau is perhaps not an 'intentional' writer in the sense that she is trying to break new ground, through a particular mode of writing, as Anand was. The status he earned within the modernist canon was consolidated by his participation in the Bloomsbury Group.[22] E.M. Forster writes of Anand: '*Untouchable* could only have been written by an Indian, and by an Indian who observed from the outside. No European, however sympathetic, could have created the character of Bakha, because he would not have known enough about his troubles.'[23] Forster speaks of Anand as exemplary of 'authentic' Indian culture given his insights and the fact that he does not feel the need to explain his use of language in the literature he produces. A closer inspection of Anand's biography however reveals both a European education and a close affiliation with other writers of the Bloomsbury Group, illuminating the extent to which Anand capitalised on his heritage. Anand's experiences and the privileges available to him were arguably at odds with Forster's viewpoint, which Anand himself admitted in *Apology for Heroism* (1946) where he states 'I grew up a very superficial ill educated young man without any bearings'.[24] As such Anand's writing can be seen as performative of his heritage and his work serves a political purpose, by drawing attention to India's problematic social structure (and the treatment suffered by the lower caste) when arguing the case for reform. However, in *Home to India*, Rama Rau writes her memoir arguably without such an agenda and an adolescent worldview emanates from the book. The genre of the memoir, a form of life-writing, also dictates to an extent the mode of narration. Rama Rau appears *not* to be promoting a form of authentic Indian identity, but is rather immersed in a process of wanting to discover her own

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[22] See Mulk Raj Anand's *Conversations in Bloomsbury* (1981) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). In this book Anand recalls conversations with prominent writers and intellectuals such as E.M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Clive Bell, C.E.M. Joad, T.S. Eliot and others.
[23] Preface by E.M. Forster to Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935) (London: Penguin Group, 1940), vi-vii.
[24] Mulk Raj Anand, *Apology for Heroism* (1946) (London: The Trinity Press, 1946), 14.

identity. By comparison, Anand's representation of Bakha, the untouchable sweeper, although holding sway as Forster notes, also comes under scrutiny for how the western educated diasporic South Asian writer comes to represent the East, through an anti-colonial or latterly as post-colonial narrative.

Most notably, Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* dominates the postcolonial canon through 'official' literary recognition, and more specifically because of his use of the magical realist style.[25] On the topic of magical realism, Huggan writes that it has 'become a commodified, increasingly formulaic aesthetic through which the histories of diverse cultures are effectively levelled out', noting in the context of *Midnight's Children* that 'the charge of "trivialisation" that has occasionally been levelled at the novel suggests an ideological aversion to the manipulation of history for the purposes of commercial gain'.[26] What is unique to Rama Rau is that although the two writers were working in different contexts, Rama Rau is conscious that her portrayal of India may be inaccurate as she herself believes and, as quoted earlier and repeated by Rama Rau in the memoir, she 'wasn't a "real Indian"' (*HI*, 67). The young Santha details how India felt 'too foreign, too inexplicable by her Western standards' (*HI*, 67) but that this is a feeling that changes as she spends more time in the country. Santha however, is aware that she is in a monumental and transitionary phase in the history of India. 'After all, I was a part of a great Indian struggle for Independence, and I found, to my surprise, that I resented being considered a rather ignorant outsider by the politically minded students' (*HI*, 67). It is evident that Santha wants to be part of the movement for change and whilst the memoir is a reflection of a certain time in her life, this particular journey, or return to a homeland, is formative to the development of her identity. Such thoughts described by Rama Rau indicate that she too framed her individual experiences in a larger historical narrative so that what emerges is a sense of finding her own place, or position, within the larger forces of history. In this

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[25] The novel was awarded the Booker Prize in 1981. It also won the Booker of Bookers in 1993 and again in 2008 to celebrate the 25th and 40th anniversary of the Booker Prize.

[26] Huggan, 71-72.

respect, Rama Rau's memoir shares similar preoccupations with works both of her own time and of novels with a wider reach such as *Midnight's Children.* The notion of 'being authentic' carries with it inherent tensions and, in a sense, is a universal concern which affects all modes of representation. After the colonial encounter, there can be no return to an authentic culture even if one existed in the first place, and participation in the processes to 'decolonise the mind' is fraught with debates about whether return is possible, as the introduction to the thesis has noted. Indeed, the notion that there ever has been an 'authentic' pre-colonial culture is questionable as evidenced by Rushdie's ruminations on home in 'Imaginary Homelands', and as a closer inspection of Rama Rau's writing and ideas reveals. Whilst Santha may not have felt like a 'real Indian' hinting at a hybridised element to her identity, this itself may perversely be authentic 'Indian' as colonialism in India, and more personally her education has created an identity which, albeit hybrid, is authentic at that particular time.

Whilst the notion of authenticity is intrinsically problematic, an analysis of Rama Rau's works also allows for comparisons to be drawn in the respective oeuvres of Rama Rau and Rushdie. Although the comparison is drawing on two different contexts, both writers acknowledge cultural markers within their work indicating their shared history at specific points in South Asian history. Both writers acknowledge the significance of food in Indian culture and the importance this has on cultural identity. Rama Rau's *Time-Life* cookbook, amongst her literary output, exemplifies her interest in food and cooking and although she does not pre-empt the chutney metaphor that Rushdie made famous in *Midnight's Children,* a connection forms from select work by Rama Rau and Rushdie's preoccupation with food in his novel. Rama Rau stated of ancient food traditions that 'India has produced one of the most varied and imaginative vegetarian cuisines of the world' in response to the long tradition of vegetarian cooking in parts of South Asia.[27] Huggan employs the term 'bogus authenticity' in his consideration of literary work that delivers a

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[27] Zarina M. Hock, *Home Cooking of India: Recipes from the Indian Cultural Society of Urbana-Champaign* (2012) (Champaign, Illinois: Martin Graphics and Printing Services, 2012), 9.

portrayal of India in line with a form of exoticism and commodification of culture. 'Historical facts are disregarded, that is, other than those that can be manipulated or reinvented to meet the ideological requirements of the mainstream consumer culture'.[28] Huggan states that writers such as Rushdie and Arundhati Roy might be seen to employ a form of '*strategic* exoticism designed to trap the unwary reader into complicity with the Orientalisms of which the novel so hauntingly relates'.[29] Therefore, a re-examination of Rama Rau's writing and the specific context in which her work was produced, in an era before the height of postcolonial discourse and the work of novelists like Rushdie, Roy and Seth presents an apt opportunity for enhancing postcolonial scholarship.

In *Home to India,* Rama Rau makes a passing comment on the tradition attached to the ways in which family meals are prepared and the significance this has for her elders like her grandmother's generation, a strict vegetarian herself, where 'according to Hindu conventions, even the presence of meat or fish in the same kitchen in which the rest of the food was cooked defiled that food' (*HI*, 25). Rama Rau's reference to food and heritage purveys a level of innocence and is observational, rather than being a more direct metaphor for cultural history, tradition and ideas of modernity. The changing attitudes to the types of food consumed between the generations is part of a larger polemic within society and how this comes to manifest itself through dietary changes and their correlation with developing outlooks. The episode illustrates that as a result of travel and education, the gap between Santha and her grandmother widens although Santha has an Indian heritage. Her transnational experiences place her in an in-between space, where she represents an amalgamation of two cultures that are culturally posited as binaries. Somewhat fittingly, Santha keeps a diary of her summer in Kashmir 'entitled romantically, *Journey into Limbo'* (*HI*, 73) (emphasis original) indicating the liminal space that she has entered as a result of her social status as an upwardly mobile Indian with a European education that results in exchange with the West. Bhabha articulates this form of hybridity stating:

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[28] Huggan, 71.
[29] Huggan, 77 (emphasis original).

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.[30]

In Santha's case her engagement with outsider cultures is affiliative in the sense that it is a move which allows her to connect, and to an extent integrate, in a new environment. However, this type of evolution is also a moment of transformation and contributes to the way in which she views her grandmother's traditional values with food preparation and consumption.

Home to India is primarily a narrative of Rama Rau's adolescent years in India during World War Two. Santha and her older sister Premila return to Bombay, now Mumbai, with their mother when their diplomat father is stationed in South Africa. It is her mother who decides to leave Africa, as Rama Rau notes in the opening pages, when her mother sees a notice reading "'Indians, natives and dogs are not allowed," [at which point] her patience suddenly evaporated' (*HI,* 8). The episode is revelatory in showing that, because of its prejudice, South Africa is not the place that their mother wants to raise her young children. However, the trip to India also brings its own tribulations in relation to how the family's Anglo-Indian identity fits in, or rather works with, the evolving political and social landscape of India pre-Independence. *Home to India,* whilst a memoir documenting Rama Rau's late teens, can also be read retrospectively as observations of the situation that Santha encounters at a crucial point in the nation's history. From this particular perspective, Rama Rau's writing can be seen to explore what constitutes an authentic Indian identity and if indeed this is realisable. Given that *Home to India* is a memoir, the young Santha seems to be toiling with the concept by drawing attention to shifting notions of Indian modernity couched in her own biography.

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[30] Bhabha, 3.

<u>Biography and family networks</u>

Santha Rama Rau came from an elite family background with nationalist interests. Her father, Benegal Rama Rau served as the first Indian ambassador to the United States after 1945. Her mother Dhanvanthi Rama Rau had feminist commitments that included vocally promoting the benefits of birth control at a time when this was not the norm.[31] Rama Rau's parents were part of a generation of highly mobile elites and their inner circle included Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru and in *Home to India*, she describes occasions where dinner guests include Gandhi and Nehru. Rama Rau also writes about her stay at Tagore's ashram Shanti-Niketan and an encounter that she recalls with Tagore when he questions her desire to '"*understand* India". He emphasized the word with slight mockery' (*HI*, 142) (emphasis original). As Huggan points out, 'authenticity always runs the risk of sliding into narcissism or solipsism, with an "authentic" way of life being valued for little more than its own, or its owner's, sake'.[32] The conversation with Tagore, which takes place in the penultimate chapter, is a seminal moment in the narrative and the adolescent Santha returns home and initiates her quest to 'understand India' which she believes requires her to leave India and return when she has learned the '"mechanics of democracy" in a real democracy', the 'chief reason for going to America' (*HI*, 149). Tagore's speech suggests his advocacy of ideas relating to universalism, and captures a school of philosophical thought that promotes connectedness between people and cultures. As a result, Santha describes how Tagore was perceived as 'borrowing' from the West in his own teachings and encourages a form of integration between the East and the West:

> Guruji [Tagore] has been accused of borrowing from the West
> in his work. Artistic conservatism prompts such a remark, and
> this is something we are trying to break down. Imitation we

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[31] Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, *An Inheritance: Memoirs* (1977) (London: William Heinemann Ltd 1978).
[32] Huggan, 157.

deplore. But the kind of borrowing that leads to a richer, integrated art—that we encourage (*HI*, 144).

Tagore was later described by Said as a 'postcolonial intellectual' and was affiliated with the reformist movement in the Bengal Renaissance which was concerned with modern thinking outside a 'Western' sphere. The Bengal Renaissance will be returned to in chapter three when examining the sought after changes in Indian society, in parallel with western practices, in an analysis of *Sunlight on a Broken Column*.[33]

As Patrick Colm Hogan points out 'Tagore could envision a universalism that is vehemently opposed to ethnic or racial or religious or other particularism— indeed a systematic politics of Otherness'.[34] Santha's recollection of her conversation with Tagore indicates her surprise at Tagore's engagement with a constant reappraisal of what social progression entails:

> "Shanti-Niketan," Tagore was saying, "our haven of peace. Twenty-five years ago it seemed to me that to establish this centre, to fill it with our Indian youth studying and creating Indian patterns and Indian arts, would be the limit of my ambition. In those days we still needed to assert our identity. I felt that to do it through our arts we would attain more than self-definition. We would establish our inextricable connection with other peoples, other cultures, other struggles for freedom. In art there is universality" (*HI*, 141).

Tagore implies that changes are underway in India and that their successful realisation depends on changing focuses and seeking fresh challenges not on asserting identity. Rather than concentrate on difference and how Indians can

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[33] 'Tagore was part of the Bengal Renaissance movement which was a socio-cultural movement that was both retrospective in an appreciation of India's past as well as forward looking and conscious of the impact that western modernism could have on social reform in South Asia' in Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (1994) (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 41.
See Pulak Naranyan Dhar, 'Bengal Renaissance: A Study in Social Contradictions', *Social Scientist,* 15.1 (1987), 26-45.
See also Sibnath Sastri, Roper Lethbridge (trans.), *Ramtanu Lahiri, Brahman and Reformer: A History of the Renaissance in Bengal* (1907) (Ulan Press, 2012).
[34] *Rabindranath Tagore: Universality and Tradition* (2003), Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (eds.) (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 22.

showcase their unique artistic talent, Tagore implies that unity between different cultures should be encouraged. Hogan states that 'Tagore could not even accept a nationalism that pitted Indian against European. For the very centre of *sãdhãranadharma* is its universalism' the term deriving from the Hindu belief of inclusivity and equality through worship and spirituality as practiced at Tagore's ashram.[35]

The notion of art as a universal space and as a place that Tagore has arrived at twenty-five years after opening his ashram suggests the phases of his own spiritual development. In his later years and drawing from his earlier experiences, Tagore has reached a stage where his own teachings are undergoing a change in direction. Tagore suggests to Santha that in the desire for modernity and progression, foundational principles can be overlooked and reiterates this to those in his presence. Later to be described as a modernist thinker, Tagore implies that looking forward simultaneously means looking backward. Eluned Summers-Bremner describes the contradictions as: '*modernism* is the name for the modern as a retrospective movement'.[36] Modernity in this regard poses as the overlap of both progression and regression. Tagore's mocking response to Santha's desire to 'understand India' indicates the naivety that he sees apparent in Santha's belief that India can be understood or deciphered in a rational manner that views the nation as a system of codes.

Coming of age and 'understanding India'

When Santha first returns to India with her sister and mother, the land seems foreign to them. Indeed, during the car journey to their grandmother's house 'the Indian bazaar sections of the city were surprisingly like the glamorous Orient of the Hollywood movies' (*HI*, 8). The suggestion is that Santha has preconceived ideas of what India may be like from western cinematic portrayals and she admits this to be accurate upon her arrival. However,

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[35] Hogan, 16.

[36] Eluned Summers-Bremner, 'Unreal City and Dream Deferred: Psychogeographies of Modernism in T.S. Eliot and Langston Hughes' in *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (2005), Laura Doyle and Laura Winkel (eds.) (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press: 2005), 263.

Santha also seems to appreciate that her experience of India seems somewhat inauthentic in the sense that she is a visitor in her own country and this is something she wants to change. Those around Rama Rau also draw attention to the idea of her being a tourist rather than a fellow countryman. 'Do you always want to see India through the eyes of a visitor?' (*HI,* 16) she is asked by her grandmother. A later conversation with her grandmother illustrates her developing maturity over the course of time that she has spent in India:

> I looked at her solemnly, eager to *understand* India. Perhaps I seemed a little ridiculous for her, for she said, "You young people are always romantic and scornful and somehow cynical. You are never realistic. When you travel across this country, keep it in your mind that Indians eat and sleep and work like other people. Indians, too, are selfish and generous and, at times inspired" (*HI,* 27).

Her grandmother's speech draws attention to Santha's shortcomings. Her grandmother recognises that Santha too is culpable of homogenising the country and its people with a broad stroke in her attempt in trying to 'understand India'. Although Santha's intentions are benevolent, the action reflects Orientalist attitudes or a form of 'Orientalism', and her grandmother warns her of such a trajectory. However, the fact that Rama Rau relays her grandmother's wisdom upon reflection in her memoir acknowledges that her earlier observations were naïve in hindsight and the memoir is testament to her own intellectual and emotional development. Her grandmother's teachings are a starting point in coming to terms with understanding the heterogeneous nature of her heritage, one that is unique even amongst her fellow countrymen.

Initially the figure of Santha's grandmother, as a figurehead of tradition, represents a form of 'authentic' female Indian identity for the adolescent Santha. Her grandmother from a distance 'looked imposing' and 'deceptively submissive expression' (*HI,* 7) is unconvincing as her grandmother holds the position of family matriarch. However, as the stay in India lengthens, Santha begins to realise that her grandmother is also affected by the changing landscape of India, and even though she is resistant to change, she

nevertheless contemplates the transitions occurring in society, and how her position, and indeed how her authority, is declining. As Santha's understanding of India deepens, she realises that even the indigenous people such as her grandmother, are witness to, as well as part of, an upheaval that alters their own status in their country of origin. In both of their own lifetimes a restructuring of society is gaining increasing momentum and directly affects their own day to day existences:[37]

> I thought of my grandmother and her autocratic refusal to accept the new ways, and wondered if she would not be a more secure person if she shared the villager's point of view. She was weak because of her need to surround herself artificially with the standards of her girlhood (*HI*, 86).

The passage highlights the way Santha is becoming more attuned to the rapid changes taking place in India where whole sections of society, like those belonging to her grandmother's generation, are becoming marginalised and out of touch in their own homeland because of their resistance to change within their immediate circles. Santha's thoughts also reveal India's connectedness to the wider world and in particular shares concerns with the modernist writers of Europe who looked to the past for a wholeness endangered by modernity, T.S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* (1922) for example, as discussed in chapter one.[38] Although certain traditions and ways of life are gradually being departed from as a result of increasing modernisation through industrialisation and urban growth, Santha begins to appreciate that this is

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[37] 'Comparative stratification studies, for example, have tended to use a reified conception of the Indian caste system as an approximation of the ideal type of traditional stratification: a system in which rigidly ascribed and closed status groups whose subordinate and subordinate relationships are legitimized by a comprehensive sacred ideology block social mobility and change. Much of that image has always been correct. But we are now beginning to recognize that earlier interpretations based on sacred texts took too literally their descriptions of social organization and assumed too readily the social validity of their legitimizing values. These texts' Brahmanic ideology in fact masked considerable mobility and social change' in Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition, Political Development in India* (1967) (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 5.

[38] Boehmer states Eliot 'assembled shards of disparate rituals and religious systems in the belief that these formed part of a lost but more meaningful cultural whole' in Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 128.

happening across continents, and that both Europe and Asia are affected by modernity. It is explicitly stated by Santha that modernity is not exclusive to the West and Europe and the realisation is proving educational for Santha. As she muses in the memoir:

> This India, in common with every other part of the world, was changing. Everything was in process, and into this movement the individual Indian had to find his place. We were on our way back to grandmother's home in Bombay, and for a short time at least we would live in that strange, out-dated island of life which she preserved around her. When we had first arrived she had represented for me all that was Indian, but now for the first time I was beginning to see that she was as much a stranger to her changing country as I was. The speed had been too rapid for her ; in an effort to preserve the security of her childhood she could only cling rigidly to the old conventions and the framework of a dying society (*HI*, 92).

Santha admits that her perception of India was flawed and that the effects of modernity reverberate in India as equally as they do elsewhere in the world. Modernity affects all aspects of living and this is especially potent for Indian politics. As a young woman, Santha is in the adolescent (and human) process of trying to carve out her individual identity as an Indian with a progressive outlook with a view to influencing and even shaping the national political narrative going forward.

Politics and female image

Upon the family's return to India, Santha notes the wide infiltration of politics across the social spectrum. She writes that 'to the Indian, politics are what the weather is to an Englishman' (*HI*, 23) in a reference to politics as daily conversational discourse. Santha suggests that political consciousness is embedded in the Indian psyche, to everyone from the cook who will happily be out of pocket to prepare a meal for a Nehru (*HI*, 118) to women who quietly go about tackling political agendas with little or no recognition, or who like Santha's grandmother become politically engaged, a point which Santha's mother draws attention to, '"in her own inimitable way your grandmother makes a personal—or rather a social—issue of it." "I thought she was supposed to be so detached from politics"' replies Santha (*HI*, 18).

Although Santha makes references to prominent figures such as Nehru and Gandhi, she is in fact surrounded by female figures who are politically and socially engaged. The presence of women as role models (in the absence of male authority) is formative for Santha and the future that she envisions. Through different female members of her family, Santha is exposed to varying approaches to womanhood. These range from her stoical grandmother clinging to tradition when all around her there is major change, 'to look at her and the way in which she lived you would never suspect that the conditions which made her standards valid were vanishing in India', to her own mother who 'defied two of the most rigid social conventions of the time before she was twenty-six. She earned a living by lecturing in English Literature in a Madras College ; and at twenty-five she was the first Kashmiri girl to marry outside her community' (*HI*, 21, 22). Santha is also exposed to Kitty, her Uncle's European wife who has made a life for herself in a foreign country. It is Santha's grandmother who plays a seminal role in transforming Kitty, under whose guidance 'Kitty *became* Indian' (*HI*, 35) (emphasis original). Her grandmother 're-model[s]' Kitty, who learns how to speak fluent Hindustani and whose European clothes 'mysteriously disappeared […] and in their place she found new saris […] Indian jewellery' and Indian cosmetics (*HI*, 35). However, Kitty too is complicit in this transformation: 'Kitty allowed herself to be moulded with admirable grace, and now, like all the other members of the family who do not live in the family home, she keeps up a pretence of conforming to the old rules in my grandmother's presence' (*HI*, 35). Kitty alters her behaviour when she is living with the extended family in Bombay, an alteration achieved partly through a style of dress representing Indian culture. However, Santha realises the performative element of Kitty's willingness to be 'moulded', to maintain family harmony without compromising her life in Delhi which is 'far from that of a conventional Hindu woman' (*HI*, 35, 36). As such Kitty negotiates the terms of her individual identity, depending on the setting and social expectations and achieves a happy medium. Kitty's alternating behaviour is 'socially instituted' and Kitty achieves this by constructing her identity by using a form emotional intelligence that is culturally cohesive. Butler elaborates on this

type of comprehension when considering the notion of identity and gender constructions.[39] Butler writes:

> To what extent is "identity" a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity? In other words, the "coherence" and "continuity" of "the person" are not logical or analytical features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility.[40]

As the example of her aunt illustrates, Santha believes that Kitty manages to mix both European and Indian culture successfully from her observations. The life that Kitty builds for herself in India illustrates a coming together of two cultures and represents a hybrid element in the construction of her character. Santha notes that 'Kitty's meal, like her house, was a mixture of East and West' (*HI*, 33). Although Kitty manages to interweave two cultures in her own life, Santha notes whilst 'Kitty had chosen only Indian materials' for the soft furnishings of her home, 'the furniture itself was European' (*HI*, 33). A closer examination of Kitty's home indicates Kitty's Indian tastes may be superficial and do not extend to those items that are not as readily replaced, such as furniture. However, the 'Indianness' that Kitty represents is superficial and easily discarded like 'slip covers, curtains and bedspreads' that she decorates the house with (*HI*, 33). Whilst Kitty, along with her husband, is shown to have a keen interest in politics and is 'inextricably involved' in 'current social and political events in India', this also appears as a style of living for Kitty as the wife of a man with close ties to political figures from the 'Congress Party leader' to the 'Viceroy' (*HI*, 36). Being involved in the politics of the country is not exclusive to an educated European woman such as Kitty but is more widespread and involves women from a broader social scale.

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[39] Butler, 23.
[40] Butler, 23.

The memoir draws attention to the more extensive political work that women were involving themselves with, work that did not necessarily lead to their recognition as pioneers or driving forces for change:

> India's great women's movements […] adult literacy, child welfare, housing, slum clearance, unemployment, malnutrition, and seemingly every other social and social political problem […] they were made up of informed, professionally hard working women, dramatically different from the retiring, domestic creatures foreigners pictured Indian women to be (*HI*, 58).

It is the men that are seen to have an official voice and women's suffrage is yet to be granted in South Asia, Santha learns of her mother's role as a political activist which receives little if any official recognition. Whilst it transpires that politics permeates all aspects of life in India, and it is the womenfolk driving the many initiatives such as adult literacy, child welfare, slum clearance, reducing unemployment and improving nutrition that Rama Rau refers to, the strictures of patriarchy prevent due credit. Santha describes the wide range of issues that women like her mother are intimately involved in to initiate reform which is in stark contrast to the domestic image of a South Asian woman as a passive submissive creature. However, Rama Rau points out that the work that women like her mother and Kitty carry out is afforded by their enhanced social status noting that 'work, like Mother's that demanded any initiative or any consuming interest needed also an ability to live off one's family more or less indefinitely' (*HI*, 116). The comment reminds the reader of the essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) where Woolf draws on the luxuries afforded to women with the financial means to instigate change. Woolf writes 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction' suggesting that in order for women to think creatively they need financial support to enable them the space and means required for activities that are seen as luxuries.[41] Woolf writes that '[i]ntellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends on intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning

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[41] Woolf, 3.

of time'.[42]   Woolf's essay demonstrates the challenges of patriarchy and gender constructions and provides an apt reminder of how the ambition to challenge patriarchy is widespread and an ambition that Santha also recognises in Indian or eastern culture.

As women belonging to the upper social class, Santha and her sister are expected to behave according to the conventions of society's elite. For Santha and Premila this role requires appropriate manners in the correct social circles and presenting oneself in the correct modes of dress. This particular aspect of feminine identity is shown to be a preoccupation in the text for the younger Santha and also a concern that lingers for Rama Rau in her later years as she becomes widely known as a 'popular expert on India', in America. In the memoir, Santha recalls her friend and peer, Nalini, who has created an identity or portrays a type of character that Santha admires and draws inspiration from:

> Nalini seemed to be exactly what I would have liked to make myself. With an English training behind her, she was using the talents she had developed there—her organizing ability her knowledge of the planning and working of a people's theatre—here in India with evident success.
> She was so completely Indian. Her clothes, her hair-style, her lack of cosmetics, her brilliant jewellery, her talk, her plans, all were obviously accepted by her Indian friends as sincere and admirable. But then she equally had to contribute a great deal of knowledge and experience of the kind that India wanted.
> The next time we saw Nalini she had remembered my request to see some of her writing, which was about villages and millworkers. I wondered how it felt to be able to write about India and the Indian people with such authority (*HI*, 131).

Santha's view of Nalini, who is not dissimilar to Kitty to an extent, understands how Nalini has combined two cultures, which Said later articulated in relation to how the 'White Man' behaved in the colonies. Said writes:

> Being a White Man was therefore an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a

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[42] Woolf, 97.

certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even certain things and not others. It meant specific judgements, evaluations and gestures. It was a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend.[43]

Santha views Nalini as inspirational in her ability to embrace an upbringing consisting of both eastern and western influences, without seemingly having to compromise either, and this gives her an air of authority. Santha's young and inexperienced views are somewhat limited, when we think of how her own image came to be described with 'problematic visibility' in reference to her status as a South Asian women under the public gaze and the terms by which her persona is permitted to develop.[44] Although Santha may look at Nalini with admiration, Nalini herself is in part a colonial construct, and whereas she can be viewed as achieving a sense of harmony in her split cultural affiliation, some scepticism can also be levelled at the way in which Nalini is viewed, a point that Bhabha notes in his ideas on mimicry. In the passage below Bhabha refers to Macaulay's 'Minute on Education' (1835) in which he argues that:

> The absurd extravagance of Macaulay's 'Minute' (1835) […] makes a mockery of Oriental learning until faced with the challenge of conceiving a 'reformed' colonial subject. Then, the great tradition of European humanism seems capable only of ironizing itself.[45]

Bhabha refers to Macaulay's 'Minute' (introduced in chapter one) in relation to the British desire to produce 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'.[46] Bhabha however adds that this kind of imposed education is incomplete in its mimesis and rather produces something that is *other* to English identification. Bhabha

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[43] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978) (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2003), 227.
[44] Nandini Bhattacharya, *Reading the Splendid Body: Gender and Consumerism in Eighteenth-Century British Writing on India* (1998) (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 13.
[45] Bhabha, 124.
[46] Macaulay in Greenblatt, 1612.

writes that 'the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English.[47]

Nalini represents the conflicting ways in which women can be received in society, both from a colonial and colonised perspective. The coloniser will view Nalini as Anglicised and subject to exploitation for colonial gains. The colonised however views Nalini as having gained 'authority' so that she may speak to the indigenous 'Indians'. As such the hybridity that Nalini represents is also a form of colonial authority – one that is ambivalent in its classification and one which the colonised may willingly be subjected to in order to elevate their own status and validate colonial authority. Whilst Rama Rau achieved this sense of 'colonial authority' herself as a result of her success in the West, Burton points out that 'simply by entering the public sphere as an Indian woman, Santha Rama Rau was subject to fetishisation. Rama Rau was an emblem of the Orient herself: that whether she was speaking of India or not, she was already speaking "as India," with all the gendered connotations (primitiveness, exoticism, sexual availability) which that locative position entailed'.[48] The young Santha is optimistic in her view that constructing individual identity is a personal process and the way in which she came to be regarded as a writer in later years belies the early optimism of a memoir written by a relatively inexperienced and young twenty-two year old.

In the memoir, Santha observes the way in which Kitty and Nalini have constructed their respective identities combining different cultural practices and at this stage she is full of praise for their transitions. However, as previously noted, Rama Rau's own life experiences highlight how her Indo-American identity was subject to a form of exoticism and at times commoditised in popular culture. The particular timing of her publications is also a contributing factor to the exoticised image that the writer was party to; India was in its postcolonial infancy and attracted a consumerist American society with an appetite for Orientalist representations of India. India may now be free of the British but the moment was an opportunity for neoimperial

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[47] Bhabha, 125 (emphasis original).
[48] Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau*, 6.

appropriation and the re-emergence of a familiar cycle. Rama Rau's intentions may have been to represent India as a cosmopolitan site moving away from stereotypical views of India as primitive and provincial. [49] However, it is her readership that would interpret the text, and subsequently the author herself, in the manner that Barthes argued in 'The Death of the Author' (1967), as first introduced in the introduction of this thesis.[50] More widely, public figures are also 'read' in a manner in a similar vein to the written text. Barthes states the 'reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'.[51] As well as her own public persona, and that of the female characters that she portrays, the South Asian image is highlighted as problematic because of the levels of homogenisation it falls prey to under the western gaze. The young Rama Rau in her memoir believes that both Kitty and Nalini exert a level of control in the way in which they represent themselves in a combination of the two cultures to which they are affiliated. In the memoir both Kitty and Nalini adapt their image to suit a particular moment, and by doing so exert a level of control in a given situation. An example of this might also be deduced from the photographs of Princess Sudhira (Figs. 7 and 8) which show her in both Indian and European dress as a way to incorporate facets of her identity. However, *Home to India* is fundamentally a recollection of Santha's thoughts and memories and operates in contrast to Rama Rau's later lived experiences which cannot be aligned with the idealism of her early memoir.

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[49] 'What do I mean, or for that matter, understand by the word 'cosmopolitan'? The primary sense that is operational in India is, as I've pointed out elsewhere, a constitutional one: it is related to a government guarantee that heterogeneous faiths, communities, and cultures might cohabit peacefully, even vibrantly, within a visible space, usually, the city – in the nation' in Amit Chaudhuri, 'The alien face of Cosmopolitanism' in *The Indian Postcolonial: A Critical Reader* (2010), Elleke Boehmer and Rosinka Chaudhuri (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2010), 287.

[50] Barthes refers to the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, as 'doubtless the first to see and foresee in its full extent the necessity of substituting language itself for the man who hitherto was supposed to own it; for Mallarmé, as for us, it is language which speaks, not the author: to write is to reach' in Roland Barthes, Stephen Heath (trans.), 'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text* (1977) (London: Fontana, 1977), 142-148, 143).

[51] Barthes, 143.

Modernity in India

During her stay in India as an adolescent, Santha is in the process of mapping out a future and a resolution is reached by the end when Santha decides she will need to leave India and return when she feels better equipped to engage in the project to rebuild the nation. Santha finds herself in a transitory phase caught between the India of her grandmother's generation and the India that women like her mother are helping to forge. However, as her mother points out, this is neither an easy nor a straightforward task as modernity does not entail a disregard for history or convention. Indian modernity, in a similar vein to the European concept of modernity, as raised in chapter one, is problematic to define in terms of specificity but is rather thought of as a reaction to that which has preceded it. In this case, the European modernist movement in art and literature is thought of in terms of a reaction to the prominence of science and technology in modernity's industrial growth in Europe. Dipesh Chakrabarty toils with the concept of Indian modernity and describes it as what it is '*Not*'.[52] Chakrabarty writes that Indian modernity is '*Not bourgeois, not capitalist, not liberal,* and so on—these have been our predominant ways of summing up Indian modernity. "Incomplete modernity" or an "incomplete bourgeois revolution"'.[53] Santha's mother also articulates that modernity is not about abandoning the past or learning exclusively from the West. In a description of her mother, Santha hints that whilst her mother advocated greater women's freedoms (in the campaign for birth control) she is also keen to hold onto traditions that are inherited, such as dressing patterns. Santha recalls '[m]y mother is an exciting person to travel with. She always wears a sari and is tremendously fond of brilliant colours' (*HI*, 8). Whilst her mother points out that they can learn from the West, that does not entail appropriating 'everything Western' (*HI*, 95), a point which her choice of dress reflects. For Santha's mother, modernity seems to be more about an acknowledgment and understanding of both indigenous and European values and subsequently applying a considered judgement on how best to proceed in

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[52] Dipesh Chakrabarty, with a foreword by Homi K. Bhabha, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the wake of Subaltern Studies* (2002) (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
[53] (Chakrabarty, xxii).

order to address existing injustices in society. Dhanvanthi Rama Rau's contribution to India's reformist attitudes reverberate with the concerns of movements such as the Bengal Renaissance, as introduced in chapter one and discussed in more detail in chapter three, indicate the broader influences of Tagore's particular brand of philosophy on the Rama Rau family.

Santha believes that through travel she will learn 'the mechanics of democracy' (*HI*, 149) as a longer-term benefit to society. Santha implies that she too needs educating, and indeed *is being* educated during her time in India. However, this is unexpectedly resourced by 'the servants, the railway porters and the Kashmiri carpet workers' (*HI*, 92), for Santha the country is finally beginning to become alive because she is learning about it 'from people and not from textbooks and teachers' (*HI*, 92). Whilst Santha admits that she can learn from her western education and from the qualities identified in Kitty and Nalini, she is also aware of the flaws in European and western cultural representations of women. On the subject of child marriages, Santha is surprised to learn that her grandmother had her own marriage arranged when a child herself. According to her grandmother's own testament, this was not unusual or viewed as a cruel practice but had its own logic and modes of behaviour that did not necessarily endanger young girls. Her grandmother was ceremoniously betrothed at the age of nine, but 'the real marriage took place seven years later' (*HI*, 19). However, it is through inaccuracies and sensationalist writing that a negative perception of Indian society in relation to the treatment of women is fostered. Santha's grandmother points this out to her; 'I was profoundly shocked. Child marriages in books was one thing, but such a barbarous thing in my own family was quite another. Apparently I, too, had been influenced by the sensational inaccuracies that have been put out about India in books like Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*' (*HI*, 19).[54] The

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[54] 'The frank give-and takes of the Indian Legislature between Indian and Indian, deal with facts. But it is instructive to observe the robes that those facts can wear when arrayed by a poet for foreign consideration. Rabindranath Tagore, in a recent essay on "The Indian Ideal of Marriage", explains child-marriage as a flower of the sublimated spirit, a conquest over sexuality and materialism won by exalted intellect for the eugenic uplift of the race. His explanation, however, logically implies the assumption, simply, that Indian women must be securely bound and delivered before

more that Santha examines the role of the Hindu wife the more she learns of the contrast between her European education, including Mayo's Eurocentric assumptions about the treatment of Indian women, and the education her grandmother is, in effect, supplying her with.[55] Santha's grandmother gives her an account of a woman's status in the home:

> Consequently the bride must learn to cook, sew, clean, bring up children (and there are always several in the house on whom she can practise), run the family life, advise those younger than herself, keep the accounts of the household and keep a careful check on the finances of each individual member of the family (*HI*, 20).

As Santha learns more about her grandmother's history and her own Indian heritage, Santha realises that rather than occupying the victim status that is so often portrayed, women have a vital role in the running of a household, and this has much wider implications socially and politically. The role of agriculture during her grandmother's generation meant that for economic reasons the extended family stayed together in order to protect their share of the familial property:

> As the system took root and grew, somehow the women seem to have taken charge. Their province—and this is true to a wide extent even today—was the home, and they were dictators. The wife of the oldest man in the house held and dispensed all the money in the household. Anything that any member earned was given to her, and she drew from each according to his capacity and gave to each according to his need. So although she had no legal rights, she could, if she wanted, have absolute control over the members of her own family (*HI*, 21).

Santha's observations addresses the perception of the South Asian female and how she comes to be viewed from a European perspective. In Indian society women are seen to have significant authority within a family structure through

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their womanhood is upon them, if they are to be kept in hand' in Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (1927) (Letchworth: Garden City Press Ltd, 1930), 46.
[55] *Mother India* (1957), directed by Mehboob Khan, counters Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* and the negative portrayals of Indian culture and traditions. The story is of a woman, Radha, and the trials she faces and eventually overcomes, which challenges Mayo's representation of the Indian woman and the lowly status she holds in indigenous society.

taking care of both the domestic chores as well as (indirectly) taking care of the household finances. However, Santha also realises that there is a shortfall in society in the way that gender imbalances mean that women do not receive the deserved acknowledgement for the amount they contribute to society as a whole from the marital home - 'their province'. As Santha's mother points out, there is much to be done in terms of reform and women are valuable assets in the initiative to improve conditions in India. "'You two don't realise that these days no Indian woman can afford to waste her talents. If Hannah were a millionaire she would still keep on working. Her experience is too valuable a commodity to be wasted"' (*HI*, 63), she tells both her daughters. Santha's mother is an exemplar of the mindset advocating Indian's reform and growth as an independent nation and she was elected as president of the All-India Women's Conference in December 1946. Dhanvanthi writes: 'During my term as A.I.W.C., I had a chance to see a great deal of the work already successfully established by the various branches. I traveled all over India, wherever women's group were engaged in anything connected with the emancipation of women'.[56] In describing her own mother, Santha's grandmother, Dhanvanthi writes about the progressive ideas that she had in spite of the family's conservative values. 'She saw that, among her contemporaries, women clung to old traditions out of fear. They became the custodians of ancient practices, both religious and social, not only from pride in their heritage, but also from terror that their own security, the stability of their society, would be threatened by Western ideas'.[57] Santha's own mother remains a custodian of certain traditional values; she is conservative in her appearance and dress but counters this with her radical outlook which has been perpetuated by her own mother's liberal ideas in believing in the education of girls and boys equally, 'why should daughters and sons not have equal opportunities of education and enlightenment?' Dhanvanthi recalls of her own mother in the memoir.[58] In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf writes '[F]or we think back through our mothers if we are women' stating that the 'weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to

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[56] Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, 225.
[57] Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, 34.
[58] Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, 34.

lift anything substantial from him successfully'.[59] In her mother's later years, Santha Rama Rau encouraged her to write a memoir, and *An Inheritance* was published in 1978. Although this is a reversal of Woolf's description it nonetheless highlights the encouragement of a female literary tradition. As we shall see in the work of, and influences on, Attia Hosain and Kamila Shamsie, both writers also had maternal influences in the literary heritage of their family. Hosain and Shamsie are also related (aunt and niece), and the influence that Hosain had on Shamsie will be detailed more fully in chapter six in an exploration of Shamsie's fiction and the development of the transnational novel.

Santha's mother has the foresight to recognise the need to move with the times and notably the effect that industrialism in India is having on the agricultural communities of her parents' generation leading to the desire for the younger generation to move away from agriculture and towards industry. '"As Industrialism here gets under way," Mother said, "more and more Indians will move to the cities"' (*HI*, 28). Growing industrialisation and urbanisation would also have an impact on the social hierarchies in the caste systems and agricultural traditions. When Santha questions how the lowest caste – the untouchables - will be affected, her mother points out how the untouchables evolved as a 'barrier against disease' (*HI*, 28). Santha's mother informs her how hard she is working to change the social injustice of the caste system and the role that Gandhi has in the cause. '"You should know that Gandhiji"—the ending signifies affectionate respect—"has taken up their cause and has re-named them the Harijans', or the Chosen of God"' (*HI*, 29). Santha's mother is ardent in her views that education and privilege be put to practical and substantive use, rather than function as a decorative adornment for women – a conviction that comes across in both her own memoir and her daughter's memoir.

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[59] Woolf, 69.

Indian history and Indian identity

Santha's description of her mother's words and actions show that Santha looks up to her mother as a role model for women in Indian society. Whilst Santha's mother is sensitive to Indian culture and teaches her daughters to be respectful of their grandmother's values, even though they seem outdated to the girls, she also promotes changes that would ease some of the pressure that the rigidity of the class structure has on daily life in India. However, Santha's mother is not so awed by the appeals of modernity that she has forgotten India's longer history that pre-dates British rule, and she therefore aims to strike a balance between the two. She speaks of the religious tolerances that Indians historically believed in, and lived by, during the Mughal Empire:

> "We have", she pointed out, "a far longer history of unity and tolerance than any of the Western countries. More than two hundred years B.C. we had a great emperor Ashoka, who united India and preserved religious freedom for all his subjects.[60] That's why many of us find it hard to believe that what we are given to understand about the present religious unrest in India is either entirely true or particularly deep-seated. At the time Akbar ruled about seventeen hundred years later, we had tolerance, unity and freedom too. Fatepur Sikri proves some of those things, and our own records—which you never learned about, and which I had read only after I left school—show that Indians have always valued those qualities. Whenever we are given the chance we do act as a nation to institute a unified government" (*HI*, 100).

Santha's recollection of her mother's speech illustrates South Asia's longer regional history with its constituent provinces of multi-faith and tolerance. This account of the past contradicts the official versions of history that India has 'deep seated' anxieties between different religious groups. In 'An Economist Looks at Pakistan', Radha Kamal Mukerjee writes of South Asian history:

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[60] Ashoka Maurya was the Indian Emperor of the Maurya Dynasty who ruled a large majority of the Indian subcontinent from around 269 to 232 BC. Ashoka converted to Buddhism. His view was that holding Buddhist belief as a doctrine 'could serve as a cultural foundation for political purity' in Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contracts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (1993) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 46.

> For the people of Bengal that have had the same political vicissitudes and cultural traditions through the centuries, the principle of History would not permit a separation between Hindu-and Muslim-majority districts largely because Muslim population growth has been due to conversion in the last century. Previously to that conversion was largely the result of famine, agricultural serfdom and abandonment of villages. Bengal's political history has throughout shown great amity between Hindus and Muslims, with Muslim rulers employing Hindu generals and Dewans, and Hindu rulers employing Muslim generals. In certain periods this social harmony played no small part in protecting the province from Mughal aggression or European and Mughal piracy. [61]

Santha's mother implies that official versions of history are 'learned about' whilst other perspectives become obscured to suit a particular ideology, that supports a colonial strategy of 'divide and rule'. The practice of 'divide and rule' was employed in colonial India by the British to serve their own purposes. Shashi Tharoor examines the practice more closely in *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (2017), Tharoor writing 'the facts are clear: large-scale conflicts between Hindus and Muslims (religiously defined) only began under colonial rule' and 'the project of divide et impera would reach its culmination in the horrors of Partition'.[62] Tharoor argues that many kinds of social strife were labelled as religious as a result of the colonial assumptions that religion was the fundamental division in Indian society and that we be more sceptical about the existence of definitive Muslim or Hindu identities prior to British colonialism.[63]

The publication date of Rama Rau's memoir is significant – 1945 saw the end of the Second World War and the ferment for Independence.[64] This directly

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[61] Radha Kamal Mukerjee 'An Economist Looks at Pakistan' in *Inventing Boundaries* (2000), Mushirul Hasan (ed.) (Oxford, New York and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 97-112, 99-100.

[62] Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (2017) (London: Hurst and Company, 2017), 114, 123.

[63] Tharoor, 114.

[64] 'When the Second World War came to an end in 1945, Britain's capacity to hold on to India and its will to do so – tested by the Quit India movement in 1942, by the rebellions of the Indian National Army and the navy, by spiraling unrest in India and above all by the costs of the war – had been broken beyond repair. A Labour government under Attlee decided to get out of India as soon as possible. At a stroke, this decision transformed the political landscape in India. Yesterday's critics, in

affects Santha's life and her immediate environment and the influences of her mother's political views are formative of Santha's own maturity. Even though the terminology is not yet in place, Santha describes the evolution of her hybrid identity and as noted earlier describes how she felt, in her repeated use of the phrase 'real Indian', that the 'truth faced me at every turn' (*HI*, 57, 67). However, Santha also exhibits her awareness that the way she is seen in society is even more complicated than a combination of her Indian and western upbringing suggests. Santha contemplates a sense of artificiality in her own existence. While Santha may not *feel* like a 'real Indian' there is also the matter of the family members' lives as westerners are in some respects similarly inauthentic and performed with surface resemblances. She writes '[w]e were allowed to live our lives superficially like western girls, but we could never evade the underlying restrictions' (*HI*, 117), hinting at the way that the versions of history and tradition that have been passed down will undoubtedly affect the family's present status. The understanding that Santha suggests she has gained from her experiences in India relate to how individuals perform a role in a given social structure. Santha suggests that she too is in a process of understanding and negotiating her own identity and that whilst her dress and modes of behaviour appear superficial they are nonetheless powerful markers that have a significant place in the structuring of society. Santha describes how she and her sister live their life 'superficially like Western girls' implying that observed from a distance their integration into the West is achieved. However, the 'underlying restrictions' create a tension between the image the sisters present and the expectations that govern their lives aside from this surface representation. Santha's affinity with a male relative, Mohan, illustrates the in-between space that she inhabits and indicates how the phenomenon of hybridity and the discontents left in its wake have a longer history than postcoloniality which Avtar Brah describes as '"hybridity" [which also] signals the threat of "contamination" to those who

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particular the Congress, were seen by London as today's friends, the most plausible successors to whom Britain's Indian empire could be handed over. As for Jinnah and the League, which had risen phoenix-like during the war to claim to be the sole voice of Muslim India and a convenient counterweight to Congress, in the changed circumstances of the post-war world, became a grave inconvenience in negotiating a swift transfer of power in India' in Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India 1947 – 1967* (2007) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13.

espouse an essentialist notion of pure and authentic origins'.[65]   The appearances of hybridity are still however important to survival in society as Santha shows in her description of her cousin, Mohan. He dresses in what seems like unnatural attire during his employment at the Postal Department in wartime:

> Mohan went off, looking trim and European in his working clothes. When he got home no doubt he would change into the casual Indian clothes he liked—a cotton loin-cloth and a long shirt, with open sandals for the feet. Like me, he had still to find a satisfactory compromise between two ways of life (*HI*, 135).

The fact that Mohan reverts to wearing the 'cotton loin-cloth', the article of clothing that Gandhi would eventually adopt in his renunciation of material items, is significant (Fig.14).   In wearing his loincloth, Mohan is metaphorically 'clocking off' after being in service to the British. Wearing the loincloth may unconsciously demonstrate his political affiliation to Gandhian rhetoric, and be a symbolic retaliation against practices of colonialism, that include the imposition of European clothing. Gandhi would write of his decision to wear the loincloth:

> My dress, which is described in the newspapers as a loincloth, is criticized, made fun of. I am asked why I wear it. Some seem to resent me wearing it . . . . But I am here on a great special mission and my loincloth . . . is the dress of my principals, the people of India. Into my keeping a sacred trust has been put. . . . I must therefore wear the symbol of my mission.[66]

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[65] Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes, *Hybridity and its Discontents Politics, Science, Culture* (2000) (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.
[66] *Daily Herald* 28 Sept. 1931; Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi vol. 48: 79-80 (in Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 75-76).

Fig. 14: Gandhi in London (1931)[67]

Santha describes a kinship between herself and Mohan through the daily trials they face. Their dressing habits also represent ways in which colonialism formulated rules about what was acceptable in society, in accordance with British standards and British influences, so that dress became a uniform that was adopted in certain circumstances. What is apparent is that hybridity is experienced within different realms of individual identity, and in effect both Santha and Mohan practice negotiating particular environments as they present themselves. The act of defining oneself singularly, and within a specific frame of reference, is not possible in colonial India, rather there is participation in constant adaptations, as both eastern and western culture prevail any given time. For both Santha and Mohan, the domestic sphere as representation of the East is paralleled with outside space as the domain of the coloniser.

From a postcolonial perspective, *Home to India* as a colonial text highlights the challenges that Rama Rau faces as an adolescent because of her social class and occupation of different types of spaces ranging from colonial to indigenous environments. The young Santha seems determined to achieve an authenticity of identity and seems startled by the reality of the instability of

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[67] In Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (1975) (London: William Collins, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 2017), facing 294.

authenticity when actually in India. Even though Santha may feel inauthentic in terms of what constitutes a 'real Indian' she may in fact *be* authentic without appreciating the fact that colonialism and interaction with non-Indian culture irreversibly changes what it means to be a 'real Indian'. The hybridity that Santha develops is testament to her identity as a colonised subject and is authentic in its own right. Santha's depiction of her grandmother, and her ever-present toils, shows negotiation between tradition and progression to be a prevalent, universal feature and this affects her grandmother inasmuch as it affects Santha. However, Santha only begins to appreciate the burden of continuous adaptation once she immerses herself into her environment on her return '*Home*' and treats the place as an organism, so that India 'lives and breathes' as a physiological entity.

Rama Rau's memoir is a 'coming of age' narrative in which maturity entails an acknowledgement that any notion of an authentic stable identity is a fiction constructed to suit a specific ideology and that this construction is aided by the adoption of dressing patterns that serve as a metaphor to convey a particular social and political stance. The narrative of the memoir charts a landscape undergoing major political and cultural changes and, through her writing, Rama Rau illustrates how individual image becomes, through modes of dress, a reflection of a social system in transition. Dressing patterns in this respect operate as a means to examine society at specific historical junctures, in particular the tension between the longer history of South Asia as posited against the desire for modernity. These include perspectives of an older generation, from those represented by Santha's grandmother, to that of Santha's own mother's experiences with Indian origins and global exposure and, finally, to European diasporic women such as aunt Kitty who adopt India as their home and yet only superficially accommodate the cultural values of the host homeland. Ultimately, this highlights the heterogeneous nature of female identity and experience, especially across the generations. Santha's reflections on her mother's sari choices, and on her being 'tremendously fond of brilliant colours' (*HI*, 8), suggest that she herself, the daughter, is not *yet* self-assured enough to wear the sari, as a metaphor for an Indian identity, as boldly as her mother. Her desire to feel 'real' or authentic persists. For each

of the women, the performative element to identity, to which dress is a contributor, is significant in how they are perceived within both inner circles and a wider cultural context in which dress marks the development of identity, notably female identity.

Chapter three

Global Sentiments: Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961)

<center>II</center>

> Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
> In death's dream Kingdom
> These do not appear:
> There, the eyes are
> Sunlight on a Broken Column
> There, is a tree swinging
> And voices are
> In the wind's singing
> More distant and more solemn
> Than a fading star

> 'The Hollow Men' by T.S. Eliot (1925)

In *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) (*Sunlight*) Attia Hosain examines feminine identity within a historical period that included the efforts to end the practice of purdah by Bengal Renaissance practitioners who, were, themselves influenced by colonialists. Thus, the novel can be viewed as a statement about an emerging feminine identity; a strategy for 'decolonisation' based on a negation of the principles of gender control and patriarchy. Hosain outlines new possibilities in education, the potential for choices in marriage and articulates new vistas for women, albeit for those of a certain social status. This chapter will examine how even when faced with limitations, women still challenged patriarchal authority through subversive strategies such as 'sly eroticism', a term which Hosain employs to describe one character's actions in presenting herself in society. The narrative of *Sunlight,* whilst charting a young girl's story to maturity, is also a tale of gender politics, individual ethics and a striving for Indian modernity posited against its patriarchal structures. Controversially, the novel also raises debates about the extent to which colonialism in India instigated opportunities for indigenous reforms. Hosain develops a nuanced approach to the British influence in India and the implications this had for the subaltern woman.

More than twenty years after it was first published, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* came to prominence when it was published by Virago as a Modern Classic in 1988. Although first published by Chatto and Windus in 1961 and introduced to an international readership, it would be two decades later that the novel would come to acclaim, and in retrospect can be seen to be a precursor to the works of writers like Edward Said and Salman Rushdie.[1] The fact that *Sunlight* was a somewhat forgotten text until its revival as a 'Modern Classic' is insightful of the novel's dramatic components. *Sunlight* tells a story of India as it becomes 'modern', when it is granted its independence from British rule. Juxtaposed with independence is the implementation of the first Partition, resulting in unprecedented bloodshed and precipitating conflicts that would affect generations to come. Narrated from a female perspective and written by a woman, *Sunlight* is a feminist text and retrospectively focuses on the early phase of India's modern history. The text can also be read in relation to contemporary understandings of literary modernism and the extent to which European literature influenced Hosain's writing.

Hosain is the great aunt of Kamila Shamsie, the writer whose novel *Burnt Shadows* is examined in the last chapter of this thesis as a transnational anti-nationalist narrative of migratory experience. In *Sunlight*, the practice of female seclusion, purdah and inhabiting 'women only' parts of the house in the zenana, is a central focus and the narrative draws attention to the impending withdrawal of such practices. Hosain's own family genealogy provides an insight into the consequences of Hosain's own experiences, and the legacy of her own travails, the experiences of her contemporaries and the work of writers such as Shamsie, her niece.

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[1] 'The republication of Attia Hosain's work would elicit and allow for a multiplicity of other critical readings and positionings, most of which came at the turn of the millennium and in the years that followed. Her location as a diasporic writer whose career began in England in the middle of the twentieth century and continued there in semi-exile, would bring new generations of commentators to recognise her contribution to the field of what was newly termed, postcolonial literature' in
Attia Hosain, selected and edited by Aamer Hussein *with* Shama Habibullah, *Distant Traveller* (2013) (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013), 226.

For Hosain to have her work published by Chatto and Windus was a proud moment, recalls her daughter, Shama Habibullah, especially at a time when it was more difficult for women to have their work published.[2] To further contextualise her achievements, Hosain was also older than other notable Indian women writers of her generation such as Santha Rama Rau. For Hosain however, writing was a private project and in a letter to her niece, Muneeza Shamsie, she wrote:

> What is inside one's mind, one's heart and soul, which makes one wish to write? I cannot answer – but there it always was – that other dimension that seemed to set me apart when I was very young, and reality was merely a part of, or merely a shadow of, the world inside my head. I was not quite like everyone else and I can see how hard it was for others to follow the process of my thoughts and actions (*DT*, 5-6).

Hosain's only other publication was a collection of short stories, *Phoenix Fled*, published in 1953. Her daughter recalls the discovery of her journals, letters and notes and how the facts and fictions of her musings became indistinguishable from each other. This is also the case in her novel *Sunlight,* which is partly biographical and is based on some of Hosain's own experiences. As Hosain's daughter writes:

> My mother kept a journal from the early 1930s, and letters and notes before them, of her life in India and afterwards in England, until her death 1998 […]. The journals were more than diaries. There were descriptions, observations, notes, the ingredients of stories she had begun to write, essays and journalist's reports – acute observations of her surroundings. The stories became indistinguishable from her journals; they melded together (Habibullah in *DT*, 1).

In *Sunlight,* 'that other dimension' and the feeling of being 'not quite like everyone else' that Hosain refers to can be traced in the fictional character of Laila through both the outer and inner turmoil that she faces. Hosain describes her own desires to write of 'the world that exists inside my head', and this also applies to the fictional character of Laila and how she deals with

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[2] Writers such as Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), Raja Rao (1908-2006) and R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) had all successfully published by 1961.

the strictures of her inherited identity. There is a sense of difference and outsiderness that Laila experiences when she goes against conventions in pursuing romantic relations with a boy deemed her social inferior. Although the text is perhaps not quite a *bildungsroman*, there are elements that follow the *bildungsroman's* emphasis on growth, maturity, and significantly, the changes that occur over the passage of time. The word *bildungsroman*, is of German origin, and associated with European literary tradition so it is of note that Hosain adopts a European framework and *Sunlight* can certainly be read as a novel of education. Hosain's first person narrator, Laila, presents the viewpoint of a young Muslim woman in India, on the cusp of adulthood. Hosain's protagonist shares Hosain's own upbringing in the sense that both negotiated expectations a woman of upper class status was expected to meet. As this analysis of the novel will show, the novel is engaged with the social politics of its era, notably from a woman's perspective and takes as its focus the role of a young Muslim woman in Indian society. Through the characterisation of the main protagonist Laila, Hosain brings into focus a society that is institutionalised, governed by feudal laws, and patriarchal in structure. Laila directly challenges all the above through her marriage to Ameer, marrying him mainly for love.

The narrative is set in the 1920s and 1930s, but written later for publication in 1961. In the intervening period Hosain travelled to four countries, needing 'silence and solitude to write' (*DT*, 15). The composition of the novel in terms of periodisation and setting draws speculation on the contemplative nature of the story as the protagonist Laila transitions from adolescence to adulthood. By way of contrast, the writing of Santha Rama Rau and her memoir *Home to India* was published when Rama Rau was twenty-two years old. Hosain is significantly older (forty-seven years old) when *Sunlight* is first published and by virtue of her age has the benefit of life experiences that inform her narrative. In this regard, *Sunlight* retrospectively looks back at a period of history, a particular context that was in the midst of social upheaval, both politically and culturally, and is written in the style of a memoir and in this respect shares similarities with *Home to India*.

In a passage from the opening section of the final part of the novel, Laila documents the changes in India and hints at the objectivity she believes she has arrived at after a period of time, absence and developing maturity. Laila contrasts the emotional excesses of her youth with a clearer vision that is less marked by emotion and thus seemingly more objective:

> I returned with them to find time had changed me towards Hasanpur. As my circumscribed world opened out slowly, books I had read, people I met affected my feelings towards it, undermining them with a sense of guilt.
> I saw poverty and squalor, disease and the waste of human beings whereas before I had looked at them, unseeing, through a screen of emotions.[3]

The reflective narration examines the impact of British occupation in India and the multiple impacts of colonisation. With the increased momentum of nationalist movements, Laila finds that she becomes embroiled in their agendas with mixed effects. Laila is part of a feudal system and inherits her social status by birth. She also receives a European education and devours European literature through her love of books; 'books which had taught me to think of human dignity' (*SBC*, 45). The culmination of Indian Independence from the British, in 1947, is thus shown to have behind it a complex history that is perhaps not as straightforward as Said's identification of East/West binaries, in *Orientalism* (1978), would suggest. In effect, Laila *does not* present colonisation as the central limitation to her own development, but rather Hosain presents Laila's inquisitive nature in order to question the feudal society that she originates from and this is perpetuated by her love of reading English literature, a love she shares with Hosain herself. 'According to Hosain's daughter, her mother's personal collection included authors ranging from Dickens and Brontë to one of Cornelia Sorabji's publications'.[4] Hosain is also quoted as having stated "'I read any books I could lay my hands on, and as my father had a good library I grew up on English classics unsupervised"' (*DT*, 5).

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[3] Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) (London: Penguin Group, 1992), 173.
[4] Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive* (2003) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 109.

Mulk Raj Anand wrote "A Profile" (1978) on Hosain which was also published a year later as the preface to the first Indian edition in 1979.[5] A modernist and member of the Bloomsbury Group himself, Anand wanted Hosain's writing to be more than autobiography and his profile attempts to place her within a canon of modernist writers.[6] For Anand, moving beyond biography illustrated maturity and legitimised the status of a novelist. The genre of the narrative is one that is open to debate and Burton states that there will be 'some for whom Hosain's choice of the novel signals a Westernized sensibility that throws the "Indianness" of the arguments she makes therein into doubt. As much as I regret the quest for authenticity that engagement with such concerns valorizes, they do raise the questions that help to historicize Hosain's project'.[7] The novel, it has been argued, 'as a literary form has almost as long a history in India as it does in its putative "home," Britain. Not only were those "Indian" forms *not* derivative, "the novel" itself must be understood as a profoundly colonial commodity: not produced first in Britain, but, to be more historically accurate, in and through the colonial encounter'.[8] Meenakshi Mukerjee writes that 'Indian English novelists displayed their acquaintance with the classics of western literature more readily than did Indian language novelists, parading this knowledge as validation, as it were, of their status in the eyes of the putative reader'.[9]

Anand opens the profile by speaking of his first introduction to Hosain:

> Out of the purdah part of the household, screened by a big Kashmiri walnut carved screen, emerged the profile of a young woman—apparently to see who was in the living room.

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[5] Mulk Raj Anand, "Attia Hosain: A Profile", in Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1979) (Delhi: Gulab Vazirani for Arnold-Heinemann, 1979).
[6] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 117.
[7] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 117.
[8] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, 116.
For arguments supporting the idea that the novel is a colonial commodity see:
Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India* (1985) (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[9] Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (2000) (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18.

Sajjad Zaheer and myself were seated on a green velvet settee in the living room of Ishaat Habibullah, the son of a big *taluqdari* family, who was Bunne's [Zaheer's] classfellow in Oxford.
"Attia, come and meet Mulk, just come from London . . . and Bunnebhai is here!"
Tentative at first, then brightening, the young woman came in with her right palm uplifted in the polite salaam of the Oudh aristocracy. I exclaimed: Surely an 18th century Mughal picture of the time Bahu Begum!"[10]

As Antoinette Burton points out 'it is hard not to see him casting her here as the quintessential secluded Muslim lady emerging before his (and our) eyes from the purdah part of the household—appearing first not just in profile but, quite literally as a purdahnashin in miniature'.[11] It is implied that *Sunlight* was written in part as a response to Anand's encouragement and his endorsement of Hosain's writing in comparing her to Virginia Woolf and *Sunlight* to Forster's *Howards End* (1910).[12] *Sunlight* and *Howards End* share similar preoccupations about social conventions and codes of conduct across the classes. Burton writes 'each of these was dependent on the Attia-as-purdahnashin who opened the "profile": the emancipated purdah lady who got inside the modernist novel and made it her own'.[13] Whilst purdah is a central motif in the novel and the presence of it lingers, it is also clear that purdah does not dominate the narrative, nor does it hinder the narrative, so that in a sense the concept of purdah is being written out of the text. Laila describes the declining practice of purdah indirectly when she comments on the large number of parties hosted in India as she takes note that the 'only person who rarely entertained in his home was the Raja of Amirpur because purdah was very strictly observed in his household, and he did not think it seemly to invite men and women there together' (*SBC*, 202). Rather than write about the practice of purdah, the narrative reflects a societal shift in its focuses on those

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[10] Mulk Raj Anand, *Attia Hosain – "A Profile"* (also quoted in Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, 119).

[11] Burton, *Dwelling in the* Archive, 119-120. The term 'purdahnashin' refers to a woman who observes purdah.

[12] Burton, *Dwelling in the* Archive, 120. E.M. Forster's turn of the century novel *Howards End* (1910) examines society and relations across the classes and the interactions of three families from across the social hierarchies in place in England at the beginning of the 20th century.

[13] Burton, *Dwelling in the* Archive, 120.

experiences outside of purdah. Emancipation from the practice enables greater freedoms in women's education and the expression of female sexuality, as an analysis of the characters Sita and Mrs Lal later in the chapter will show. In one scene Laila draws comparisons between herself, her school friend Sita, who returns from Europe, and the socialite Mrs Lal. Both Sita and Mrs Lal do not observe purdah whereas Laila and Nadira (another school friend) are themselves in an in-between phase. Laila notes that their 'controlled freedom made both Nadira and me secretly envious of Sita who, ostensibly cared for no conventions but those she wished to accept. In the company of men, while we were selfconscious, she asserted her femininity— though she did not exploit it like Mrs Lal' (*SBC*, 202).

Whilst purdah has been a dominant feature of Laila's life, the death of her grandfather, Baba Jan, ends the restriction and a new order begins. As noted earlier, the narrative in *Sunlight* can be seen as primarily concerned with mapping change and the passage of time. Part One retells the narrative of Baba Jan's impending death and Part Two describes Laila's life in the family home '*Ashiana'*, meaning 'the nest'. The processes of change are a major focus of the novel when we consider the second section of the novel, Parts Three and Four, which detail the reflections of living with the choices of her youth and later appreciation of the consequences of these choices. As Jasbir Jain has written of the novel, '*Ashiana* in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* serves as a microcosm of the world at large with not only its womenfolk in purdah but its retinue of servants who represent the community at large'.[14]

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[14] Jasbir Jain, *Attia Hosain* (2001) (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), 143.

Fig. 15: Attia Hosain on her wedding day (1933)[15]

Fig. 15 shows a profile of Attia Hosain in her wedding sari. Although she is not veiled, her sari rests on her head and creates an impression of alluring modesty. Hosain's lowered eyes exemplify the demure conduct expected of women on the occasion of their marriage. Historically, brides in both Muslim and Hindu cultures display an overt sobriety that is performative and in keeping with patriarchal dictates.[16]

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[15] *Profile of Attia Hosain*
https://vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=47382
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[16] '[T]here is no clear-cut definition of what is good behaviour except that [the bride-to-be] should not have been heard too much or *heard about too much* before she gets married. Once married, the demure wives open their mouth and can, at times, become formidable' in Subhadra Mitra Channa, *Gender in South Asia: Social Imagination and Constructed Realities* (2013) (Cambridge and Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Fig. 16: Attia Hosain with Mulk Raj Anand (1940)[17]

In the opening pages of Part Three Laila reflects on her grandfather's death and the time after the event:

> My life changed. It had been restricted by invisible barriers almost as effectively as the physically restricted lives of my aunts in the zenana. A window had opened here, a door there, a curtain had been drawn aside ; but outside lay a world narrowed by one's field of vision. After my grandfather's death more windows had opened, a little wider perhaps, but the world still lay outside while I created my own round myself. (*SBC,* 173).

Laila's musing draws on the 'invisible barriers' that exist in her life and these are opaque in contrast to the visible barriers of purdah and zenana confinement. The zenana refers to the part of the house reserved for women in both Hindu and Muslim households in South Asia and can be traced back to Mughal court life and the observation of purdah practice.[18] Laila seems to

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[17] *Attia Hosain with Mulk Raj Anand*
https://vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=47915
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[18] Frieda Hauswirth, *Purdah: The Status of Indian Women from Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century* (1932) (London and New York: Kegan Paul Limited, 2006).

imply that the wider world is zenana-like for young girls like herself, one where restrictions and limitations apply. In an early extract, Laila describes an exchange with Mrs Martin, her childhood governess, and how inadvertently she confines Laila within an Orientalist trope of the pretty Indian girl in native clothes, whilst referring to her as 'Lily', Mrs Martin's anglicised version of Laila, 'the alien name she had given me' (*SBC*, 46). This episode recalls Santha Rama Rau's experience of being called 'Cynthia' by a headmistress in 'By Any Other Name' as detailed in chapter two of this thesis.[19] The exchange foreshadows the confinement that Laila experiences not only in living a secluded life, both in purdah and by occupying the zenana living space, but also in a colonised country:

> "In a moment, Mrs Martin. I have to put away these *dopattas* or the sun will spoil them."
> "Ah yes, we mustn't allow these lovely, lovely colours to fade, must we? Such pretty clothes, so much more becoming to Indian girls than dresses. I am glad you wear them now, Lily dear, though I do remember the little frocks I had made for you, but you look so much prettier now" (*SBC*, 47).

Fig. 16 shows a photograph of Hosain with Mulk Raj Anand, and although not stated, maybe taken outside India. In this photograph, Hosain is wearing a sari with a European styled jacket on top. She does not wear a veil and her hair is cut in a shorter style. The photograph brings to mind Laila's predicaments in the patriarchal regimes of India and the liberation that Europe may offer for women like Laila to dress and live their lives outside of the restrictions of purdah and zenana. In the wider context, Laila's own predicaments are an allegory of the condition of India and of the social construction of identity. The changes affecting women during this period, as highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, are also reflected in a memoir by a contemporary social activist, Shudha Mazumdar (1899-1994). Geraldine Forbes writes that:

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[19] Santha Rama Rau, 'By Any Other Name', *Gifts of Passage* (1961) (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961).

Shudha experienced first-hand the changes that were affecting middle-class Indian women. Female education, the end of seclusion, the integration of women into political activities, women's activities in both social work and social reform, women's entry into respectable professional roles, birth control, dress reform, and increased age of marriage, nuclear families, and companionate marriages were all contributing to what journalists at the time called "the new woman".[20]

Sunlight and the practice of purdah

The term purdah is Persian in origin. Purdah can be defined as a curtain or veiling and is both a religious and social practice of female seclusion. Purdah, although associated with Islam, is a term that can be applied to different social and cultural spaces that women occupy. Jasbir Jain and Amina Amin write that purdah is 'based on the principle of inequality (not necessarily difference) and establishes itself on the dual strategy of control and exclusion'.[21] The conventions of purdah are therefore not limited to South Asia, but are more widespread and can be found in societies where there are underlying forms of inequality, social control and female subordination. This is also aided by the particular interpretations of the ancient scriptures, the *Qur'an* and *Manusmriti*, which come to dictate gender expectations in society. This perhaps marks an inevitable return to Barthes' argument in 'The Death of the Author' as the meaning of religious texts resides, in the reader, as discussed in the introduction of the thesis.[22] The concept of purdah as a social differentiator is present throughout *Sunlight* and although dressing in a particular manner is

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[20] Shudha Mazumdar, *Memoirs of an Indian Woman* (1989), Geraldine Forbes (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2015), xv.

[21] *Margins of Erasure: Purdah in the Subcontinental Novel in English* (1995), Jasbir Jain and Amina Amin (eds.) (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1995), 2.

[22] The following examples are taken from translations of the *Qur'an* and *Manusmriti* respectively. There is no explicit mention of dressing patterns but rather what is conveyed is the interpretative scope of the texts which, it should be noted, are themselves translations.

'O Children of Adam, we have revealed to you garments to conceal your shame, and finery, but the garment of restraint from evil, that is the best' *The Qur'an* (2017), Jane McAuliffe (ed.) (New York and London: Norton, 2017) (7.26), 79.

'In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent' (5.148) in *Manusmriti* Sanskrit text with English Translation

https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bz1OumJznV7ucmwyelNvQy1CcUU/edit

[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

Roland Barthes, Stephen Heath (trans.), 'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text* (1977) (London: Fontana, 1977), 142-148.

only one facet of keeping purdah, the term relates more widely to the social status of women. One of the suggestions to modernise India lay in the proposal to eradicate the purdah system, led by the forefather of the Bengal Renaissance, Rama Mohan Roy. Whether consciously or not, the presence of dress in the novel functions as a manifestation of the socio-politics of India prior to Partition.

As we have seen, in terms of South Asian history, dress is part of a construction that contributes to a collective homogenised understanding of the 'East'. Anita Desai employs dress imagery to describe Hosain's novel and stories, stating that to 'read them is like wrapping oneself up in one's mother's wedding sari, lifting the family jewels out of a faded box and admiring their glitter, inhaling the musky perfume of old silks in a camphor chest' (*SBC,* v-vi). Desai's choice of imagery suggests a romanticised approach to Hosain's writing. Dress and the image of the South Asian female have a habit of connecting, even tangentially, as Desai's description demonstrates. As this chapter will detail, dress is also linked to class and social status and in some cases is an expression of female assertiveness, as Mushtari Bai the ex-courtesan in *Sunlight* illustrates, in her accumulation of fine dresses. At the outset, Mushtari Bai wears 'rich garments heavy with gold embroidery ; and the diamonds she wore shone with a brilliance' (*SBC*, 65), but she later renounces luxury as a way to purge herself: '[s]he wore a crumpled Khaddar sari and her thin grey hair was pulled back and tied with a bit of string' (*SBC,* 63). There is a sense of dignity that Mushtari Bai achieves in her old age. Her wearing a sari of the Khaddar material is of significance as Khaddar was a handspun, handwoven fabric that was versatile both for summer and winter climes and was manufactured mainly from cotton. Also of significance is that wearing Khadi was promoted by Gandhi, in the drive for *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency), in his Nationalist agenda as previously mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. To wear the domestically produced Khaddar fabric was a political statement that supported the nationalist sentiment and sought to

undermine the segregation of Indians through the 'divide and rule' principle that British colonialism administered first in Bengal in 1905.[23]

Mushtari Bai's redemption, 'she had turned to God to expiate the sins of her life' (*SBC*, 66), casts her in a morally superior frame such as is attributed to the Radha figure in Mother India (1957) and brings to the fore the constructed and highly politicised identity of the subaltern woman.[24] The analysis of Mushtari Bai's appearance in the narrative is suggestive of the feminist discourse that the novel gives rise to. Mushtari Bai's story is not atypically romantic. In her youth, and at a base level, she becomes a product for male consumption in the role she performs as a courtesan, a role that she cannot fulfill when she falls ill and loses her voice and her vice. Mushtari Bai is a product of her environment, not that of British rule but rather of the indigenous patriarchal society in which women are governed by a social structure determined by wealth, caste and social status. Mushtari Bai is therefore emblematic of India's social infrastructure and the hypocrisies within. However, Mushtari Bai's transformation is also indicative of the South Asian female achieving a change in social status in spite of historical tribulations. 'After the illness which had robbed her of her voice, she had turned to God to expiate the sins of her life' (*SBC*, 66). Mushtari Bai gives away her wealth and becomes a 'wandering mendicant' (*SBC*, 66) demonstrating her renouncement of worldly possessions and her embodiment of the high moral values of the South Asian female which films such as Khan's 'Mother India' presented in response to Mayo's *Mother India*. Such

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[23] As a reaction against Partition there was a boycott of British textiles and foreign-made cloth after Lord Curzon's government partitioned Bengal in 1905 dividing the largely Muslim eastern areas from the largely Hindu areas.
See 'chapter 3: Political and Social Movements: 1905-1917' in Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (1983) (London: Macmillan Press, 1983).
Sumit Sarker examines details of The *Swadeshi* Movement in Bengal and trends that facilitated resistance, 'a corresponding evolution of new forms: *swadeshi*, boycott, and passive resistance' (Sarker, 3).
[24] 'Actually, women—however few and exceptional—did begin to shape public opinion by writing about their lifeworlds from within the domestic seclusion. Educated at home by fathers or husbands, and benefiting from the growth of print culture and vernacular prose that made writing easier for them, they published their views on women's entitlements, or the lack thereof, often with remarkable criticality' in *Women and Social Reform in Modern India, A Reader* (2007), Sumit Sarker and Tanika Sarker (eds.) (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), 4.

character creations are illustrative of the discourse around female identities from both colonial and colonised perspectives and how these were countered in the arts with new supposedly positive, but perhaps ultimately equally suspect constructions.

<u>Attia Hosain and feminist scholarship.</u>

Although Hosain is well known in South Asia, she has (like Rama Rau) fallen into a degree of obscurity in the West. However, the international journal *Wasafiri* joined in the celebration of Hosain's centenary which was marked by the publication of a new collection of Hosain's fiction drawn from previously unpublished archival material that she bequeathed to her children.[25] The publication is significant in recognising Hosain's contribution to Indian-English Literature and the endurance of her work. Hosain's novel *Sunlight* has been characterised as a 'female *bildungsroman*, a Partition novel, and a chronicle of a turbulent and changing time. It is all these and more' (Hussein in *DT*, 220). As a 'Partition novel', *Sunlight* is nestled between the work of writers such as Mulk Raj Anand and Salman Rushdie in the tradition of the Indian novel in English. Each of the writers can be seen to be contributing to a transformative phase in the history of the Indian English novel. In its early stages, the Indian English novel articulated a nationalist agenda in conjunction with Gandhi's efforts to impose harmony against the brutal inception of the first Partition in 1947. The most recent of these developmental phases can perhaps be attributed to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and the award-winning status that Roy's publication achieved when it won the Booker Prize in 1997. Hosain's own novel is positioned, at the very least chronologically, in-between these notable stages in India's postcoloniality. The publication of *Sunlight*, in the wider context, places it in the period of second-wave feminism broadening the scope of women's issues in relation to sexuality and gender inequalities as epitomised in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and the oft quoted '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a

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[25] *Celebrating Attia Hosain 1913-1998*
https://www.wasafiri.org/article/celebrating-attia-hosain-1913-1998/
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

woman'.[26] *Sunlight* brings to the fore the presence of both imperialism and patriarchy as experienced by women as the novel focuses on the female experience, the house and home and the [declining] legacy of patriarchal dominance. As Burton summarises: 'the novel is, in short, a historical argument about the impossibility of dwelling comfortably at home in the wake of the unspeakable violence of the past'.[27]

Hosain is noted to have said that she read 'any books I could lay my hands on' and her father owned an extensive library that Hosain had 'unsupervised' access to (Desai in *PF*, xi).[28] The fact that the title *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is taken from T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Hollow Men' and given that Hosain wrote that 'I suppose I thought [of both] titles as symbolic, trying to find some hope in situations that were tragic to me in their wider context' highlights that the novel encourages a reading that is grander than a small localised history of a family (*DT*, 11).[29] As Susheila Nasta writes 'it creates an imaginative space where memory, however partial, is able to fill and transform the dualistic faultlines of received versions of history, and language becomes the subversive vehicle of translation itself'.[30] *Phoenix Fled* (1953) is a selection of short stories and as *Sunlight on a Broken Column* gains its title from Eliot, *Phoenix Fled* derives from a Shakespeare poem 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' published in 1601 in Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*.[31] Hosain's

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[26] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), H.M. Parshley (trans.) (London: Vintage, 1997), 295.

[27] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 106.

[28] Attia Hosain, *Phoenix Fled* (1953) (London: Virago Press, 1988).

[29] Susheila Nasta writes that 'the title *Sunlight on a Broken Column* can be seen as an image not only of *Western* fracture and metropolitan dislocation, but as a formal means to knit together the disjunctures of a colonial country and feudal community in transition at a specific moment in history, the time of Independence and Partition in Lucknow, a moment which witnessed the uneasy alliances, juxtapositions and discontinuities of both old and new, tradition(s) and modernity(ies)' in Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (2002) (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 33.

[30] Nasta, 33.

[31] Stanley Wells, *A Dictionary of Shakespeare* (1998) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
One of the interpretations of the poem is thought to be about the death of ideal love.
'Hence the anthem doth commence:
Love and constancy is dead
Phoenix and the turtle fled

comments suggest the wider literary field permeates her work in terms of her literary representation of grander narratives of politics and society. Hosain also wrote for *The Statesman, The Pioneer* and *The Free Press Journal* which were leading English newspapers in Calcutta, Britain's imperial capital, further evidence of her engagement with political discourse and involvement with forums at her disposal to publicly show her support and efforts for social reform.

Hosain became involved with the All-India Progressive Writer's Association which included writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali and Sajjad Zaheer, and as already mentioned Anand in the preface to the 1979 Indian edition of *Sunlight* attempts to place Hosain within the canon of other Modernist authors of the period, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and E.M. Forster (Forster's work engaging in debates about modern life rather than being Modernist in terms of style and diction).[32] Hosain also attended the All India Women's Conference and was influenced by the political stance of Sarojini Naidu, "'my own ideal of womanhood from childhood'" (*DT*, 6), the first female President of the India National Congress.[33]

Attia Hosain – a short biography and family history

Detailing Hosain's biography places her work in the contexts of both contemporary literary and political movements and facilitates an understanding of her position within modernist thought. The term modernism evokes ideas of stylistic European development. Textual analysis of *Sunlight*,

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In a mutual flame from hence' in *Oxford Anthology of Literature of Renaissance England* (1973), John Holander, Frank Kermode (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 424.

[32] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, 117.

[33] Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) was an activist for India's Independence and also referred to as the Nightingale of India. In 1916, whilst in England she met Mahatma Gandhi, a meeting which initiated her interest in India's Independence. In 1925, she was elected as the first female President of the India National Congress. Naidu became the first woman Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow.

'The Indian woman of to-day is once more awake and profoundly alive to her splendid destiny as the guardian and interpreter of the Triune Vision of national life—the Vision of Love, the Vision of Faith, the Vision of Patriotism' in Sarojini Naidu's foreword to *The Broken Wing; Songs of Love, Death and Destiny, 1915-1916* (1917) (London: Forgotten Books, 2012).

however, illustrates how the movement reached beyond Europe in its influence on Indian modernity.[34] Hosain's narrator in *Sunlight*, Laila, observes an Indian contemporary, Perin, and identifies her cosmopolitanism, derived from a European education, modernist interest in ancient civilisations, and a bourgeoning nationalism:

> When Perin Wadia had returned from her expensive school in Switzerland her conscious cosmopolitanism had blossomed into the even more conscious nationalism which was fashionable towards the end of the war.
> European and American aesthetes and intellectuals and the "smart set" of Bombay and Delhi had discovered the art and culture of ancient India simultaneously.
> It appeared at times that neo-Indians wore their nationalism like a mask and their Indianness like fancy dress.
> Perin Wadia like others of her group, had transposed the Ajanta look into the twentieth century in the manner of the dress and coiffeur, though she spoke of ancient culture in European idioms (*SBC*, 276).

Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the modernity project was coopted by both colonialist and nationalist practitioners but in markedly different ways.[35] For ideological purposes the British establishment viewed Indians as backward and modernity was the project by which they could attain western enlightenment. In Britain it should be noted, however, Eliot, Woolf and Joyce, through modernist artistic innovation challenged the certainties of the nineteenth century and in fragmented stream of consciousness, articulated their ambivalence about modernity. In India, in a very different move, Gandhi argued that it was the lower classes that captured the essence of modernity effectively and secured the position for 'social[ist] revolution'. What emerges

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[34] 'So while intermodernism might initially function as modernism's other in academic practice, it has the *potential* to be the concept or space that inserts itself between modernism and its many structuring opposition, reshaping the ways we think about relations between elite and common, experimental and popular, urban and rural, masculine and feminine, abstract and realistic, colonial and colonised' in *Intermodernism* (2009), Kristin Bluemel (ed.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3 (emphasis original).
[35] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?' *Representations,* no. 37, (1992), 1-26.

is that the broader concept of modernity may be aligned with progressive ideas for society and a traditional order but this is itself heterogeneous in nature, even on a micro level. The crux of modernity may lie in the challenge (and the chaos this entails) which is made to the establishment and this varies not only from one context to another but also within a particular context. As has already been noted in reference to ideas of Indian modernity, Chakrabarty thinks of the project as 'incomplete' and what modernity is '*Not*' in his book *Habitations of Modernity* (2002). In an earlier article published in 1992, Chakrabarty writes:

> In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, generations of elite Indian nationalists found their subject positions, as nationalists, within this transition narrative that, at various times and depending on one's ideology, hung the tapestry of "Indian history" between the two poles of the homologous sets of oppositions, despotic/constitutional, medieval/modern, feudal/capitalist. Within this shared narrative shared between imperialist and nationalist imaginations, the "Indian" was always a figure of lack. There was always, in other words, room in this story for characters who embodied, on behalf of the native, the theme of "inadequacy" or "failure".[36]

It is in light of Chakrabarty's observations that I examine Hosain's own history and how she may have employed her own (at times conflicting) status, in that she is of high social standing *but* also a woman in a patriarchal society, to contribute to a modern India. Attia Hosain was born in 1913 into a wealthy *taluqdar* (landowning) family of the Awadh province of Lucknow in northern India. Both her class status as a *taluqdar* and the place of her birth can be seen as factors that influence her intellectual development. The repeated references in *Sunlight* to the family status of *taluqdars* indicates the prominence of the position, as to be landowning connoted the privilege of power, as well as political prerogative. The following dialogue between two members of Laila's family illustrates the preoccupation with preservation of these inherited 'rights' and the challenges the inheritance faced at a particular point in history:

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[36] Chakrabarty, 6.

> "In the final analysis, what you are facing is the struggle for power by the bourgeoisie […]". "[…] We *Taluqdars* have ancient rights and privileges, given by a special charter, which we have to safeguard" (*SBC*, 231).

It is useful to understand the significance of the *taluqdar* status in the context of political affiliation and the construction of Hosain's narrative. Michael Fisher describes the *taluqdar* position:

> Each landlord formed a political centre of his own, locally based world. Each held court and employed symbols such as a throne of his own and courtiers who made his court in some ways a microcosm of the Mughal and Awadh courts. […] Local roots and their strong links to the villages under their control gave these landlords a strong and stable base from which to compete with the provincial and imperial administrations for access to local resources.[37]

Hosain's place of birth, the city of Lucknow, was the hub of literary culture and politics and provided a centre for the Indian intelligentsia. Her father, Shahid Hosain Kidwai, was part of this intelligentsia and studied at Christ College, Cambridge. He subsequently became an active member in twentieth-century political and nationalist movements and was part of a generation of progressive thinkers who were legally and politically well connected. Shahid Hosain Kidwai did not expect his daughters to wear the burqa, although purdah was observed to an extent and 'the family car did have silk curtains on the windows'.[38] In an interview, Hosain recalls the partial purdah she observed growing up:

> We were not in purdah in the sense that we were wearing burqas when we went out but we had a confined kind of life. People who came to visit us in the house were the sons of friends of relations but that was it because my remarkable mother herself never went anywhere.[39]

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[37] Michael Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British and the Mughals* (1987) (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), 4.

[38] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, 109.

[39] Omar Khan interviews Attia Hosain –Literary Estate of Attia Hosain
http://www.harappa.com/attia/attiahosain.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

As a progressive man of his generation, Shahid Hosain Kidwai considered the education of girls to be seminal for the development of the wider familial cultural capital. Education would enhance marital prospects and the ability to be upwardly mobile. Hosain's mother, Begum Nisar Fatima, was also from an intellectually elite family and was educated in Urdu and Persian traditions. Begum Nisar Fatima was the founder of an institute for women's education and welfare, Talimgah Niswan.[40] Hosain was sent to La Martinière School for Girls in Lucknow – described as one of the many 'Indo European' palaces of the colonial city of Lucknow, 'a template for the hybridized lifestyle'.[41] Hosain went on to become the first woman from a *taluqdari* family to graduate from Isabella Thoburn College in 1933. Although her father died when she was eleven, his influence on her was considerable and lasting. Shahid Hosain Kidwai also arranged private tuition for Hosain to be taught Urdu and Arabic at home 'and encouraged her to never lose touch with her ancestral village'.[42] Hosain's expansive education and fluency in both European and South Asian culture was significant in her own intellectual development and release from the restrictions which dominated women's lives in a society steeped in historical practices that fostered the subjugated status of women. Jill Didur writes that *Sunlight* 'has been celebrated as offering a window into the feudal *taluqdari* lifestyle in late colonial India' as India transitioned from a colonial to a postcolonial state. [43] The irony is that after the end of colonisation, a new conflict emerged with a ferocity that few could have anticipated, and religious divides ended up altering the course of history for large sections of society, including Hosain and her family.

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[40] *Attia Hosain* - The Open University Database
http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/attia-hosain
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[41] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 108.
[42] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 108.
[43] Jill Didur, 'A Heart Divided: Education, Romance, and the Domestic Sphere in Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken* Column', *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory* (2006) (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 94-124, 96.

Hosain's marriage to Ali Bahadur Habibullah, the son of Mohammed Habibullah, who was formerly the Vice Chancellor of Lucknow University, is described by Shama Habibullah:

> Her marriage of choice may have seemed an act which provoked outrage even within her own family but it was not an act of defiance. Ali Bahadur 'Sonny' Habibullah and his two brothers had been sent to school in England as boys. She had corresponded with Sonny from the age of fourteen and idealised, not least because of the window to other worlds that he seemed to offer (*DT*, 4-5).

In *Sunlight*, Laila's romantic liaison with Ameer is met with similar scrutiny: '"Love?" in a very superior, shocked manner, eye-brows lifted, nostrils quivering, "Love ? No one in decent families talks of love"' (*SBC*, 180) remarks Aunt Saira, the mother of one of Laila's friends. As in Hosain's own life, to marry for love is to be stigmatised by a feudal society. In both the circumstances of her own life, as well as the lives of characters in of the novel, romance in marriage is deemed unsuitable by an older generation and marriage is thought of as a strategic alliance that feeds into wider nationalist concerns. Didur comments:

> Although historically tradition and modernity have been figured as opposites in the dominant discourse of the Muslim community in colonial north India, Hosain's novel, with its attention to the politics of women's education and marriage, suggests this is a false dichotomy used to manage elite, patriarchal, and ethnic interests competing for ascendency during the nationalist movement and after.[44]

In a society governed by the feudal system and enforced by a patriarchal regime, it is the lack of personal choice that results in the rebellion of a younger generation, be that against living in purdah, by choosing a spouse or developing national affiliation after the first Partition. In 1947, Hosain left India for Britain and avoided having to make a definitive nationalist choice. As a Muslim, the move to Pakistan would seem 'natural'. After Partition and the creation of two countries along arbitrary lines, Hosain referred to England

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[44] Didur, 95.

as inhabiting 'a proverbial room in the attic', in the personal essay 'Deep Roots' first published in 2000 posthumously (*DT*, 21).[45] Hosain recalls her decision to forego the binaries of national choice:

> My mind could not accept the division of India, nor could I have belief in the logistics and legalities which subsumed ideals of freedom and independence […] Above all, Britain was the neutral area where I could still meet those from whom we were divided by borders of nationality and an artificially nurtured hostility. Family separated from family, friend from friend (*DT*, 21).

In Britain, Hosain began to work for the BBC as a broadcaster, from 1949 in the Eastern Service of the Indian Section, presenting a women's programme in Urdu. Hosain chose to remain in Britain describing it as 'the country which had not just given me physical refuge but had an ideology of human rights and civil liberties' (*DT*, 21).

As Nasta has pointed out, in commenting on *Sunlight* and *Phoenix Fled,* the 'works address a moment in history when as she has said: "together with the raising of flags and [Independence] celebrations came the enforced migrations of more millions than ever before, of massacres and infinite loss"'.[46] Living in London did not lessen the anguish, but it avoided the difficult choice of national affiliation'.[47] Although, Hosain had escaped the physical geography of conflict, the brutality of Partition resonates in *Sunlight* and frames Laila's experiences from girl to womanhood.

The weight of history in *Sunlight*

In *Sunlight*, Hosain examines the social and political upheavals resulting from British occupation in India and from one perspective the sense of loss and nostalgia attached to a fading era. There is also a sense of foreboding about

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[45] 'Deep Roots, New Language' was first published in *Voices of the Crossing: The Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa* (2000), Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan (eds.) (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000).
[46] Attia Hosain, 'Deep Roots', *DT*, 21.
[47] Nasta, 35

the outcome of Independence and the first Partition, which would rage on and change the course of South Asian history irreversibly:

> "Independence will have been attained, not only for one country, but two. There will be a new Muslim country born—Pakistan. We must think not in terms of India now, but India and Pakistan."
> Nadira drew a sharp breath, and her eyes shone. I envied the joy of her triumphant vision.
> "The important question is—what will be the relationship between these—er—separated Siamese twins?" (*SBC*, 285).

The reference to India and Pakistan as 'Siamese twins' also resonates in Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography* (2002) which will be discussed later in chapter six of this thesis in an examination of the conflict of the civil war in Pakistan in 1971 and its implications for future generations. In *Kartography* the narrative focuses on the relationship between Raheen and Karim, in allegorical characterisations that represent the conflict between East and West Pakistan during the liberation war to create Bangladesh as an independent state. Shamsie writes '[t]he two figures outside stood up and stepped out of their outlines, leaving behind a pair of snow angels, the wing of one overlapping with the wing of the other. Siamese twin angels' (*K*, 130). Melancholic overtones are evident in both *Kartography* and *Sunlight* as the realities of Partition set in. Although *Sunlight* and *Kartography* are published nearly fifty years apart, both stories lament India's fragmentation, to a degree, and highlight the persisting memory of Partition in the Indian psyche. The partitioning of India was, and still is, viewed as a catastrophic infliction of brutality enacted on a single nation that had a longer history of unity than it did of conflict. Seventy years on, this is still the case as Independence celebrations are also marred by the memories of the bloody violence that the displacement of millions brought about in the largest enforced mass migration in history. Such is the magnitude of the trauma, that coming to terms with South Asia's turbulent history and its cumulative disintegration is still a pressing concern that manifests itself in the arts and postcolonial literature itself. [48] For Hosain, although she did not stay in India and directly witness

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[48] *70 Years On: Partition Stories* (2017)

the horrors of Partition, she did make the conscious choice to leave her homeland as the alternative would have been to move to the newly formed Islamic state of Pakistan. As Mulk Raj Anand would comment on in his preface to *Sunlight,* 'it is likely that the nostalgia for home may have urged the novel on' (Anand, preface, *SBC,* xi).[49] The novel can also be seen as concerned with the female experience and the process of how femininity develops as a result of the space and the conditions that women are raised in and are subjected to. As Nasta states of Hosain's preoccupations in, and ambitions for, *Sunlight,* it is 'a chronicle of the unresolved spaces of memory'.[50] In *Sunlight* there are two central motifs relating to space and condition, that of the zenana (women's quarters) and the practice of purdah (female seclusion).

Hosain's novel can perhaps be described as a condition of India novel, examined from a gendered perspective as indigenous women's roles were part of the narrative in the patriarchal anti-colonial nationalist movement. More specifically, the novel examines the role of women in South Asian society and how the domestic setting intersects with the political arena. The transitions take into account the positive or aspirational cultural influences that

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05b5fdg
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
*India's Partition: The Forgotten Story (*2017)
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0595jtw
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
Fatima Bhutto, *Viceroy's House* Review (2017)
https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/mar/03/fatima-bhutto-viceroys-house-watched-servile-pantomime-and-wept
Fatima Bhutto writes: 'Divide and rule, a staple of British colonial administration is given no credence […] Mirroring the fractures of modern nationalism wrought by India's partition, Chadha seems to take pleasure in laying the bloodshed and brutality of 1947 at the feet of two particular villains: Muslims and Jinnah'
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
Gurinder Chadha, *Viceroy's House film blog* (2017)
https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2017/mar/03/gurinder-chadha-defends-viceroys-house-film-fatima-bhutto
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
Gurinder Chadha responds Fatima Bhutto by stating: 'My film does not ignore the freedom struggle […] It does not ignore the colonial policy of divide and rule, but challenges it. Above all it does not show the Muslim community as sole perpetrators of violence.
[49] also in Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 116.
[50] Nasta, 35.

colonisation brought about, and how parts of this were indeed embraced, such as the opportunity to travel, which increased the flows of communication between the East and the West. From this perspective, Hosain can also be seen to represent the individual opportunities that colonisation opened up. For Laila, this is underpinned by access to European education and the impact that European literature has on her own development which is simultaneously a positive influence on, and hindrance to her marriageability. As Laila is told by Zahra at one point "'Do you know what is wrong with you, Laila? All those books you read. You just talk like a book now, with no sense of reality'" (*SBC*, 30). Although Laila and Zahra are peers they have markedly different outlooks in terms of marriage and education. For Zahra, marriage and respectability is the epitome of ambition as the daughters of wealthy landowners. Their differing outlooks question the future for a woman of *taluqdar* status, marriage versus education and independence, and is illustrative of further divisions within an already divisive structure.

Female identity – marriage, education, respectability and rebellion

Structured in four parts, each individual section of *Sunlight* consists of a change in, or developmental phase of, Laila's life. In Part One, it is the imminent death of her grandfather which looms over the ancestral home and Laila's future. In this early section Laila draws distinctions between the different types of women that she interacts with and articulates the numerous challenges that a woman may face. What becomes evident is that the moral respectability women command is central to their status. In *Sunlight,* Hosain creates characters who range across the social spectrum from Laila and Zahra, upper class Muslim girls, to Nandi and Saliman the housemaids, and even an ex-courtesan in the sage Mushtari Bai, as a contrast to the 'type' of woman she was in her youth. The pairing of oppositional characteristics within a particular 'type' of female is perhaps indicative of Hosain's stance on the homogenisation that the South Asian woman is subjected to. The contrasting portrayals of similar 'types', and also how individuals themselves undergo development (as in the case of Mushtari Bai), makes a point about how misleading it is for women to be branded with a sameness that denies them

difference. Hosain accentuates this point by drawing on the differences between Laila and her cousin Zahra, who are superficially similar.

For the adolescent Laila, a choice between marriage or education as a focus of achievement is seemingly an overarching concern in their youth. Whilst Laila is shown to be keen on intellectual development, her cousin Zahra would rather preoccupy herself with matrimonial prospects:

> "I am sure Zahra will do as her elders decide. She has not had the benefit of a mem-sahib's education ; though I am glad to see certain abhorrent signs of it have been removed, and [Laila] your young mem-sahib has given up walking around dressed like a native Christian" (*SBC*, 23).

In this instance, Zahra is spoken of in a complimentary manner in that she is seen as a custodian of tradition and cultural values. In contrast, Laila is referred to mockingly as a 'mem-sahib', a foreigner of status living in India. The cutting remark is punctuated with a compliment of sorts as Laila is praised for reverting back to traditional dress while her former European dress is described in derogatory terms. The exchange which takes place between the two sisters Aunt Abida, who defends Laila to an extent, and Aunt Majida, who champions Zahra's budding worldview, again reinforces the idea of individuality and heterogeneity amongst women. The dialogue between the two sisters highlights how *even* siblings had contrasting ideas and that the archetype of the subaltern female with homogenised views is a myth, as the Aunts illustrate, and can be traced across generations and is thus not a modern phenomenon.

As the narrative in *Sunlight* develops*,* ideas of fixed or stable female identity only becomes more conspicuous by its absence. Dressing, for women, makes a multiplicity of statements, as well as being an indicator of class and social status. More subtly, a style of dressing is shown to be a public statement of worldliness, as well as sophistication, as the character of Mrs Wadia illustrates both in her own appearance and in the way in which she reacts to indigenous

dressing patterns, implying their inferior status in contrast to European textiles and design:

> At times Mrs Wadia appeared a moulting eagle, at others a well-groomed vulture. Her perfumes, and shoes and lace and linen and silver came from the most expensive shops in Paris and London. She went to Europe every year, was prouder of Western culture than those who were born into it, and more critical of Eastern culture than those outside it.
> When my aunt sent for me I had not changed, and the thought of Mrs Wadia's critical eyes deepening every crease on my cotton sari made me resentful in anticipation […].
> She wore tight pyjamas of green and gold striped brocade, a green silk waistcoat over her shirt and pale lemon *dopatta* dotted with tiny golden stars, and edged with gold. Her bright clothes and elaborate jewellery were incongruous with her age, but there was a well-bred air of dignity about her.
> My aunt smiled and said, "Begum Sahiba, this is my niece Laila, "at the same time looking disapprovingly at my coarse hand-spun sari. "She has just come back from College," she added, explaining my appearance (*SBC*, 129-130).

Laila's aunt attempts to justify Laila's appearance by implying that it is her college education that dictates her dressing style and the type of fabric she wears (which was the case in the development of the shalwar kameez). It is suggested that Laila's choice of a 'coarse hand-spun sari' is deliberate and perhaps even politically informed as it is in line with the *Swadeshi* movement.

However, whilst education is seen as elevating the status of women, it is not explicitly presented as an alternative pathway or as the binary opposite to marriage. Rather, a view that emerges from *Sunlight* is that education is a supplement to female status and that the respectability of women depends largely on upward social mobility achieved through strategic marriage alliances, and education simply an enhancement of marriageability. It is not just the men that hold this belief but women have internalised views on marriage as the intra-generational exchanges between Laila and Zahra demonstrate. "'The only cure for Nandi is to get her married quickly'" (*SBC*, 29) is Zahra's solution to a scandal concerning the housemaid. Laila challenges Zahra's opinions by responding ironically; "'[t]he cure for a good girl is to get her married quickly ; the cure for a bad girl is to get her married

quickly. Do you think of anything but getting married quickly?"' (*SBC*, 29). For Zahra marriage is a means of enabling female honour. She chides Laila for her thoughts on marriage and love, "'Maybe you'll marry someone for love like an Englishwoman'" (*SBC*, 30). Anthony Giddens in his book *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992) states that romantic love introduced the idea of a narrative for an individual's life and that the rise of romantic love also coincided with the emergence of the novel.[51] Romantic love was associated with freedom and marrying for love implies an emancipation from the construct to which Zahra adheres. Hosain wrote in 'Deep Roots' that the 'very different attitude to marriage from the western one follows as a *natural* consequence from the attitude to love and the relationship of the sexes' (*DT*, 25) (emphasis added). However, this itself is arguably a misunderstanding of the role of marriage under the guise of romance in Victorian Britain history that Giddens identifies. Hosain's comment also reinforces the myths that European literary classics perpetuated in relation to the institution of marriage throughout history and prompts a consideration of whether the phenomenon of love in marriage is 'natural'.

In Part Two, Zahra returns a married woman and Laila notes the way in which she has changed or, rather, adapted:

> Zahra had changed very much in her appearance, speech and mannerisms. I knew she had not changed within herself. She was now *playing* the part of the perfect modern wife as she had once played the part of a dutiful purdah girl. Her present sophistication was as suited to her role as her past modesty had been. Just as she had once said her prayers five times a day, she now attended social functions morning, afternoon and evening (*SBC*, 140) (emphasis added).

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[51] 'Ideals of romantic love have long affected the aspirations of women more than those of men, although of course men have not been uninfluenced by them. The ethos of romantic love has had a double impact upon women's situation. On the one hand it has helped to put women 'in their place' – the home. On the other hand, however, romantic love can be seen as an active, and radical, engagement with the 'maleness' of modern society. Romantic love presumes that a durable emotional tie can be established with the other on the basis of qualities intrinsic to that tie itself. It is the harbinger of the pure relationship, although it also stands in tension with it' in Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (1992) (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 2.

Laila sees that Zahra *performs* a suitable identity and this is a strategy that she takes 'shelter in' to aid her navigation of a successful course through life. Although it seems that she has settled into her new role with relative ease, Zahra takes direction from her husband Naseer as a 'married woman' (*SBC*, 141). When a childhood friend comments that Zahra has changed much, she replies 'naturally' (*SBC*, 141), and although her reply is mundane on one level, it is apt in the sense that it raises the questions about whether these changes are 'natural' or, in fact, imposed by social expectations and convention:

> "You have changed too."
> "Naturally," she laughed. "I'm not a girl any more. I'm a married woman."
> "Yes, naturally" (*SBC*, 143).

The narrative initiates a debate about how female identity develops and what is indeed 'natural' and the extent to which this apparent naturalness is coercive within a social structure, reminding the reader of de Beauvoir's arguments in *The Second Sex*. Whilst the exchange reflects polite society conversation it is also imbued with the irony of shifts in behaviour towards Zahra after marriage. Zahra seeks her husband's approval before deciding which sari to wear to a cocktail party. Naseer gives her very precise instructions which Zahra obediently complies with:

> "Shall I wear the blue and silver tissue sari with the silver Benares border, or the French brocade with the gold embroidery? I've worn most of the others before."
> "The gold one will be the most suitable," Naseer said, pursing his lips thoughtfully (*SBC*, 144).

Zahra's seeking of Naseer's approval implies his authority and gives an insight into the dynamics of their relationship. More widely it indicates the pervasiveness of patriarchal social structures as Zahra's interaction with Naseer is not exceptional. In *Sunlight,* Hosain presents the prevalence of marriage in society and the role that marriage plays in attaining respectability in women's lives. Laila and her friend Nadira muse on this point and Nadira

sparks controversy in the presence of an older generation of women when she declares that 'marriages had moved away from the Islamic ideal and were like prison sentences without benefit of a trial' (*SBC*, 132), suggesting that as a result of societal shifts the institution of marriage is deteriorating. Nadira implies that marriages are moving away from religion, as a positive ideal, and are being viewed increasingly in terms of social mobility.

Nadira and Laila are both 'educated at the same college' and Nadira's reaction to marriage attracts attention as a consequence of her college education (*SBC*, 132). The outcome of a European education is the inculcation of European and enlightenment ideals in the indigenous mindsets so that a younger generation are trained to think in line with their western counterparts. Hosain presents conflicting sides of the argument in relation to women's education and gender biases as can be seen in Uncle Hamid's attitudes which are in contrast with those of his wife, Aunt Saira. Ironically, Aunt Saira's viewpoint is the more surprising as she argues that women's education is ultimately for the benefit of men and a prospective husband, where education confers status, a useful negotiating tool in the preliminary discussions of a marriage proposal:

> "I have always believed in the education of girls ; it is the duty of parents and guardians to give them the kind of education that will best fit them for their responsibilities in this changing world." He paused, lit a match and puffed rapidly at his pipe.
> Aunt Saira said, "Young men want their wives to be educated enough to meet their friends and to entertain. Nowadays they lay down all sorts of conditions" (*SBC*, 110).

Laila is portrayed to be naïve about the uses of education and what it can afford the individual. When asked by her friend, Nita Chatterjee, what Laila intends to do once she has completed her studies, Laila responds with a vagueness which frustrates Nita. "'How typical of your class! You think a degree is a piece of jewellery, an additional ornament to be listed in your dowry'" (*SBC*, 125). For Nita, education is to "'help me earn a living'" (*SBC*, 125) and Laila herself observes that Nita has a 'puritanical obsession against feminine vanity' (*SBC*, 124). Nita seems fuelled with ambition. "'Children in politics, that is what terrorists are, heroic but misguided. To fight British

imperialism we have to be organised and disciplined, and use the kinds of weapons that will not misfire'" (*SBC*, 124). Tension exists between the two friends, as a girl with Laila's social status can access education as a western sensibility and her family wealth is like 'cotton wool against life' (*SBC*, 125). Laila is somewhat feeble in comparison to Nita; '"Rubbish ! I believe my education will make me a better human being'" (*SBC*, 125) being her response to Nita's impassioned outburst.

Whilst Nita is driven by her social circumstances and political ambitions 'to fight British imperialism' (*SBC*, 124), Laila, perhaps as a result of her enhanced social class, views education as a means to venture out into the world whereas Nita sees education as weaponry in the retaliation against imperialism. Both girls experience a conflict of interest with regard to the effect that education has on their identities. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Fanon describes the combative equation of images and perceptions. 'In the collective unconscious black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality'.[52] Fanon states that knowledge of European tradition through literature is seen to enable the 'colour to be forgotten':[53]

> Moral consciousness implies a kind of scission, a fracture of consciousness into a bright and an opposing black part. In order to achieve morality, it is essential that the black, the dark, the Negro vanish from consciousness. Hence a Negro is forever in combat with his own image.[54]

In *Sunlight*, combatting one's own image recurs and prompts a consideration as to whether 'colour can be forgotten' as the following analysis of Laila's childhood friend Sita reveals. Laila and her peers appear to engage with the concept of image in terms of their education and what this has enabled in how their individual identities develop in different ways.

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[52] Fanon, 149.
[53] Fanon, 150.
[54] Fanon, 150.

Sunlight, subversion and 'sly eroticism'

The female presence is *Sunlight* is prominent and, as already stated, the novel is interspersed with characters that range across the social hierarchy which facilitates the illustration of a broad range of female characters and their unique characteristics. One such character is Sita who is described as having changed after her travels to England, both in appearance and through a decline of the Nationalist beliefs she held prior to going away. However, rather than Laila take offence at the changes reflecting an abandonment of particular cultural values, Laila and her friends too, display feelings of resentment that Sita has ventured outside of India and this has exoticised her: "'It's all a question of make-up and clothes and opportunities'" (*SBC*, 184). The girls mutually agree that Sita "'has not been smothered like we are'" (*SBC*, 184), which gives rise to their feelings of resentment directed at those who have the means to travel to Europe. When Sita returns from England she seems to have transformed. As Nadira comments of Sita, she "'used to be quite plain. England has changed her'" (*SBC*, 184). Furthermore, it seems Laila is most troubled by Sita's transformation and this invokes a self-reflection: "'[s]he seems to have become alive'" (*SBC*, 184), Laila concludes wistfully. Even though Sita wears traditional Indian dress, she is described by her friends as inauthentic and compliant with a European version of Indian femininity: '[h]er tight blouse was the scarlet of a parrot's beak, and as green as its feathers was the sari of hand woven silk' (*SBC*, 184). The fact that Sita is compared to a parrot is notable; parrots are generally noted to live in tropical regions and exude a sense of the exotic (as depicted in European culture). The parrot is also of a bird of intellectual ability and some have the ability to imitate human voices. The comparison of Sita to a parrot is telling of how she transforms as a result of the interaction that she has with the West, in a parrot fashion, and the ambivalences that surround her altered hybrid image. Sita seems both Indian and European in appearance. Bhabha's theories on mimicry and the 'double articulation' are effective in describing the way in which Sita is viewed by her group of friends.[55] Bhabha writes:

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[55] Bhabha, 122.

> [C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.* Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence;* in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.[56]

It is the West that sensualises a 'plain' girl like Sita, and Sita for her part plays into the *pro forma* of an Indian woman from a European and Oriental perspective upon her return to India. As Nadira comments, travelling to England has made Sita '"the European's *idea* of a colourful Indian"' (*SBC*, 184) (emphasis original). Sita's Indianness seems to have been accentuated as an Indian woman in England and perhaps even encourages a form of fetishism of her indigenous culture. Significantly, the changes in Sita's appearance exude a sense of control – her sexuality is more overt than that of her group of friends who are in awe of her transformation and this generates a sense of her own authority amongst her friends as Sita 'expected and accepted attention while we were embarrassed by it' (*SBC*, 203). How Europeans react to her is not stated explicitly, however Sita's altered and arguably egotistical behaviour after she returns is indicative of her changing worldview and the power that her father's wealth affords in the development of a transnational identity that has no specific allegiances and although ambivalent is perhaps not inauthentic. Sita's travels pronounce her hybridity and even though the other girls may not agree, Sita's character is arguably an authentic version of herself given her experiences and to pretend to be otherwise would be inauthentic. Sita's treatment of her friends makes her seem obnoxious: '"How interesting to hear you talk in this manner ! How delightfully youthful ! It is such a long time since abstract problems of right and wrong worried me."' (*SBC*, 186). Travel and the shield of wealth contribute to Sita's ignorance of India's real political turmoil and her dismissal of them as 'abstract problems'. Sita's disengagement from politics also indicate an expression of her femininity – and the freedoms that she is at liberty to enjoy as a result of her privileged economic status.

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[56] Bhabha, 122.

My attention is drawn to Hosain's use of the term 'sly eroticism' in reference to another female character, who illustrates how the archetype of Indian femininity, exemplified in modesty and the practice of purdah, can be subverted in order to express female sexuality and sensuality as expressed through her dress:

> Mrs Lal dramatised her entry as usual by arriving late but not last. She paused at the top of the steps, her sari modestly covering her head yet revealing the tight curves and flowing lines of her body, her head tilted, her long neck arched, her lips faintly smiling, her half-closed eyes suggesting a *sly eroticism'* (*SBC*, 183) (emphasis added).

Sita's experiences in England and her experiences have changed her physical appearance, but also weakened her political mindset. Sita's own recollection of her Nationalist affiliation is thought of as immature and school-girlish. After her travels, Sita thinks in terms of a global and cosmopolitan identity, albeit one that is self-centred:

> "You have changed a lot Sita. You used to be quite an idealist. Do you remember how we fought at school because one of the Anglo-Indian girls abused Gandhiji? We were such nationalists that we bought hideous saris with the national flag printed around the borders when your uncle went to jail."
> "I am still a nationalist, my dear Laila." Sita's voice still had an edge of mockery. "My father's otherwise tight purse strings are always open for the nationalist cause. I wear nothing but Indian silks, and I believe in reviving our ancient art and culture" (*SBC*, 186).

Later in *Sunlight*, we learn that Sita agrees to a marriage arranged by her parents. Even though she loves another man, she chooses not to expose her feelings and be the subject of judgement, but agrees to the 'luxurious incarceration' (*SBC*, 166) of marriage endured by another girl who also agrees to a similar fate. 'I was taken aback by Sita's sudden transformation. She was once again what she had appeared to be, self-assured, bright and brittle, so that I wondered if I had imagined all that had just happened' (*SBC*, 217). Sita is quick to revert back to her performed self after a momentary lapse in which she speaks of her true feelings and Laila is surprised at Sita's reversion

to polite social norms. During this passage Mrs Lal also enters the narrative and Laila begins to understand the levels of performance that women around her endure in order to navigate their existences. Laila notes of a drunk Mrs Lal, '[a]nother mask removed ; first Sita and now this seemingly invulnerable woman !' (*SBC*, 217). The narrative of *Sunlight* repeatedly focuses on the turmoil of individual women amidst social politics and the dramas that play out within immediate circles and the wider resonance these have for broader social reform.

Politics and modernist thought in *Sunlight*

Whilst *Sunlight* is a narrative that reflects a transitional period in the political history of India it is also a novel that is primarily set in the domestic space as has been noted by Burton. Hosain's novel takes its place in a female modernist tradition that includes Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and Elizabeth Bowen's memoir *Bowen's Court* (1942).[57] Burton writes: 'Hosain for her part casts her historical encounter with partition as the *biography of a house* because it enabled her to revisit a world that was lost, and possibly too because it allowed her to domesticate the modernist novel on her own terms'.[58] The novel opens with removal from an interior space, notably the area that is reserved for women of the household, the zenana. 'The day my aunt Abida moved from the zenana into the guest-room off the corridor that led to the men's wing of the house, within call of her father's house we knew Baba Jan had not much longer to live' (*SBC*, 14). The fact that Aunt Abida is moving out of the private space suggests disavowal of the zenana was one challenge amongst the wider challenges that were evident in India during the 1920s and 1930s. As Burton points out, in a comment on Cornelia Sorabji, the zenana had become highly politicised during this period 'not merely as a site of social and cultural reform but as archival evidence of "authentic" India at the level of colonial and nationalist politics as well'.[59]

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[57] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 117.

[58] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 117 (emphasis original).

[59] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 14-15.
Cornelia Sorabji (1866–1954) was a pioneering Indian writer in English. Sorabji was also India's first female barrister and the first woman to sit the Law exams in the country. She studied Law at Somerville College, Oxford (1889-93) and was

The word zenana which, like purdah, is also Persian in origin has a literal meaning, 'of the women', and is repeatedly referred to in *Sunlight* as a means of drawing attention to historically feminised space. The zenana refers to the internal part of a house that is reserved for the women of the house. Hauswirth describes how purdah 'turned the zenana into the exclusive dwelling-place of women [with] far reaching effects'.[60] The zenana can be traced back to the Mughals where the space was for women of high status and rank which 'inculcated in their minds the deep conviction that freedom of movement outside the house would lower their standing and place them on a common level with low-castes'.[61] In addition, the division of the house between men and women had ramifications for both sexes. The segregation of the sexes meant that women withdrew from participating in the social life of the community but there was an overemphasis on sex as a means of pleasing the husband.[62] 'Women under these conditions transferred what would have been a normal interest in home decoration entirely upon bodily adornment. The possession of beautiful saris, and more particularly of jewellery, became and still is, a veritable obsession with Indian women'.[63] In *Sunlight,* the zenana space being vacated suggests Hosain's own preoccupations with the living space and the effect this has on gender relations and ideas of femininity. Vacating the zenana in this sense is the first emancipatory step towards reform.

Burton writes that although 'the zenana (a spatial location) and purdah (a social practice) are not one and the same, the so-called erosion of purdah was seen as conclusive evidence of the capacity to govern the house in ways that might presage national self-rule. Meanwhile, over the course of the 1920s the zenana became a site of programmatic medical, scientific, and educational

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connected to the Association of University Women in India, a Bengal Branch of the national Council of Women in India, Bengal League of Social Service for Women and the Federation of University women. Her first published novel was *Love and Life Beyond the Purdah* (1901).

[60] Hauswirth, 94.
[61] Hauswirth, 94.
[62] Hauswirth, 94.
[63] Hauswirth, 95.

intervention, mostly in a service of a male modernizing and nationalist project—though it continued to be appropriated by female reformers in and outside India as well'.[64] Vacating the zenana indicates a preoccupation with the outdated nature of the space and 'actively framed the "domestic" discourses of nationalism, imperialism, and feminism in these decades and thereby helped to guarantee the heightened archival value of house and home by making them evidence of both a disappearing past *and* a promising "progressive" future'.[65] By removing oneself from the zenana a woman was actively declaring the inadequacy and diminishment of the space.

In one scene Laila describes the intellectual pursuits of her circle of friends and the effect that education had on their outlook on life:

> The five of us spent as much time together as was possible. When we were not arguing we were dissecting and questioning life, with the fear and the courage, the doubts and the certainty of inexperienced, questioning youth. Our world was bounded by our books, and the voices that spoke to us through them were of great men, profound thinkers, philosophers and poets (*SBC*, 128).

Burton points out the impact that texts such as Mayo's *Mother India* had 'on the imperial public sphere of the 1920s and 1930s', in particular by drawing out social issues such as child-marriages.[66] It is also worth considering the impact that feminism as a social movement in the West would have had on Hosain's development of Laila's character. When Laila describes the 'profound thinkers' and 'philosophers', figures such as Mary Wollstonecraft and her seminal work in the history of feminism *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) are key contributors to her bourgeoning ideas about feminist literary theory and are in contrast to the politicised space that the zenana signifies. In addition, the memoirs of the aforementioned Cornelia Sorabji examine the space of the zenana and its centrality as the heart

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[64] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 10-11.
[65] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 15 (emphasis original).
[66] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive,* 11.

of the home. Laila contrasts the literary world she and her friends inhabits with her 'real world' and how the real emancipations achieved in the West are still a theoretical discussion in her own (eastern) environment:[67]

> I used to forget that the world was in reality very different, and the voices that controlled it had once been of those of Baba Jan, Aunt Abida, Ustaniji, and now belonged to Uncle Hamid, Aunt Saira, and their friends. Always I lived in two worlds, and I grew to resent the "real" world. (*SBC*, 128).

For Laila, it seems that feminist ideas are part of another world, one which at this stage of her life is not within reach so that although women have vacated the zenana, their world remains a gilded cage nonetheless. For Laila, the move out of the zenana and coming out of purdah seems insufficient. Rather, it is travel that facilitates coming out of a metaphorical purdah and an embedded mindset, such as the girls note of Sita after she returns to India after a period of time in England in the below passage, as introduced in an earlier section of this chapter:

> Our controlled freedom made both Nadira and me secretly envious of Sita who, ostensibly cared for no conventions but those she wished to accept. In the company of men, while we were selfconscious, she asserted her femininity—though she did not exploit it like Mrs Lal. She expected and accepted attention while we were embarrassed by it (*SBC*, 202-3).

Sita's behaviour is admired by Laila and Nadira as it displays a level of control that she exerts and uses to her advantage. Travel and exposure to the wider world has awakened Sita to her own prowess as an Indian woman. Sita is the object of desire for men of both European and South Asian origin:

> They varied in type from the bearded English poets searching for the 'Soul of the East'—who antagonized the English community by wearing Indian clothes and eating with his fingers—to the young subaltern with fierce moustaches, cultivated English drawl, hearty phrases and cavalry stance who

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[67] Cornelia Sorabji's memoirs *India Calling* (1934) and *India Recalled* (1936) examine zenana as a key component of the home.

was as near a copy of his senior Sandhurst-trained officers as they were of their English prototypes (*SBC*, 203).

Sita's charm attracts the attention of men of many 'type[s]' who vary in their social background. However, it is Kemal who is the man of her 'real' affections and who is 'studiously indifferent' to her by being 'so attentive to Mrs Lal' (*SBC*, 203) in Sita's presence. This implies that only Kemal, amongst the men, is not fooled by Sita's performance and, in order to distinguish himself, makes a concerted effort by *not* responding to Sita's antics. As already mentioned, Sita does not settle for romantic love in marriage and instead marries in keeping with her parents' approval. Laila observes that Mrs Lal is the only woman who is a rival to Sita (*SBC*, 203), in flirtations with members of the opposite sex. Sita and Mrs Lal exert their femininity strategically. They use charm and exploit their sexuality to set themselves apart from other women within their group and to bolster their own egos.

The Bengal Renaissance and the practice of purdah

The Bengal Renaissance represents a period in South Asian history of 'awakening' precipitated by British Rule. Arguably it finds its first manifestation and movement in the work of Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), a social reformer who founded the Brahmo Sabha movement in 1828, a socio-religious reformist movement that protested against the social evils of Indian culture such as the practice of sati (widow burning), polygamy, child marriage and the purdah system.[68] Ram Mohan Roy's interaction with the British highlighted that it was the case that South Asian traditions were often not seen as acceptable by western standards. In the effort to legitimise cultural traditions and override the moral superiority that British officials claimed over India, the supporters of the Bengal Renaissance nominated areas that would benefit from reform.

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[68] Subrata Dasgupta, *The Bengal Renaissance* (2007) (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2012).

Although Laila does not live her life in strict purdah, it still governs her life to an extent and *Sunlight* examines the concept more broadly as a social rather than as a religious practice. Purdah is a defined way of life as well as a broader framework that blends into a kaleidoscope of attributes that is cultivated in South Asia for women from different cultures and religions. One particular scene from the novel illustrates the place of purdah in society and how purdah itself was becoming an outdated mode of female representation:

> After he had become successful they moved from their small house in a socially inferior part of the city, to a large house on the Mall. Begum Waheed came out of purdah and began to call herself 'Begum', and sent Nadira to a convent (*SBC*, 125-6).[69]

In *Sunlight,* Hosain links the notion of declining purdah practice to the level of education a woman has received. The more educated she becomes, the less likely she is to be inclined to abide by the restrictions that purdah demands. Furthermore, Hosain shows that the professional success of a husband encourages the coming out of purdah of his wife. Education and success equips Nadira's parents with the confidence to reject the restrictions of purdah practice and validate the choices they make:

> "She does not observe purdah?"
> "We observe the spirit of the Quranic injunction by limiting freedom within the bounds of modesty."
> Mrs Wadia said with a note of patronage, "We Parsees do not believe in purdah. After all a purdah upbringing is no insurance against immorality" (*SBC*, 132).

Over a hundred years later, after the Bengal Renaissance was initiated, we can see how Tagore's contribution to the Bengal Renaissance proliferated, and how the issue of morality came to be pitched against the tradition of purdah from a social and intellectual perspective in India's bid to become modern. Laila's non-practice is defended, in the first instance, from a Muslim viewpoint and secondly from neither Muslim or Hindu but from a member of

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[69] *Begum* is the title given to a Muslim woman of high rank. In South Asia, *Begum* has been adapted for colloquial use as an honorific surname to address a married or widowed woman.

the Parsee community. The Parsee heritage is interesting because over the centuries since the first Zoroastrians, followers in India of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, arrived in India, the Parsees have integrated themselves into Indian society while simultaneously maintaining or developing their own distinct customs and traditions (and thus ethnic identity). This in turn has given the Parsee community a rather peculiar standing: they are Indians in terms of national affiliation, language and history, but not typically Indian in terms of cultural, behavioral and religious practices.[70]

Laila's interactions illustrate the ways in which she needs to be seen to comply with traditional feminine decorum for fear of offending traditionalists like Begum Waheed whose line of thinking is nationalistic rather than religious. When Laila does convey her feelings, she is mocked by both Begum Waheed and Mrs Wadia: '"What strange ideas she has […]. She may become a Socialist"' (*SBC*, 133). Laila muses: 'I felt I lived in two worlds ; an observer in an outside world, and solitary in my own—except when I was with the friends I had made at College. Then the blurred, confusing double image came near to being one' (*SBC*, 124).

As Jasbir Jain and Amina Amin point out in their study on purdah, 'it has many subtle forms and dress is the most superficial and the most visible of these' and ideologically 'purdah is the oldest form of colonisation, of domination and control'.[71] To live outside of purdah is to begin a process of decolonisation. Laila lives her life both in and outside of purdah and can consequently map the changes on both sides and understand what each represents. A full decade before the publication of *Sunlight,* Hosain had publicly criticised purdah as '"the greatest hindrance to the political development of Indian women"'.[72] The perceptions of purdah though are not

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[70] 'They were also required to dress their females in the Indian fashion to wear armour and to perform the marriage ceremonies' in Dosabhoy Framjee, *The Parsees: Their History, Manners, Customs, and Religion* (1858) (London: Forgotten Books, 2015), 14.

[71] Jain and Amin, 2.

[72] Attia Hosain, "Seclusion of Women," in *Our Cause: A Symposium by Indian Women* (1938), Shyam Kumari Nehru (ed.) (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1938) (also in *Documenting First Wave Feminisms: Volume 1: Transnational Collaborations and*

as straightforward as Begum Waheed's views demonstrate. Women like Begum Waheed, do not advocate the disavowing of traditions or eradication of purdah practices altogether. Rather, she is of the opinion that purdah needs to be taken more seriously and contingencies made for ladies in purdah. Keeping purdah, in her opinion, is not regressive but rather a practice that should be accommodated:

> Begum Waheed was not prepared to let the argument drift into irrelevancies. She seemed more than ever like a pouter pigeon with the voice of a belligerent hen. "Purdah women must have a park, whether ladies have clubs or not" (*SBC*, 131).

Begum Waheed implies a rejection of modernity's gender integration and eradication of the purdah system in favour of a progressive maintenance of tradition and even reinforcement of inherited cultural values. Begum Waheed illustrates the manner in which she is *not* partaking in British cultural integration and the scenes that are being played out in social functions. The following passage exemplifies the intercultural exchange resulting from British presence in India:

> Above the hum of voices came the sound of the band playing selections from light opera on the terrace. The hall brimmed with light and colour and movement. Men in *achkans* of brocade and silk, and delicately embroidered finely-woven wool, their heads covered with turbans of tissue and fine silk or coloured caps, men who had stepped out of ancient paintings in their ancestral court dresses carrying swords and daggers with jewelled belts, stood and talked to others in the severe black and white formality of European dress. English women elaborately gowned and groomed, deeply *décolletée* with bare shoulders and backs, outnumbered the handful of Indian women, wives of officials and *Taluqdars* who were out of purdah. They sat with their heads covered lending deep splashes of colour to scattered points in the room (*SBC*, 150).

The scene describes both men and women in both European and South Asian fine dress, and draws out the coexistence of two cultures, but also significantly the departure from purdah practice in modes of South Asian dress under

Crosscurrents, Maureen Moynagh with Nancy Forestell (eds.) (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

British rule. The detail of dress in Hosain's narrative contributes to conveying the overall mood of India pre-Partition, in that Muslim, Hindu and the British could be, and were, tolerant of each other's dress in social settings. Whilst the above passage depicts a relatively harmonious gathering, the political tensions are implied by the number of British women who 'outnumbered the handful of Indian women' implying the authority of the British over Indians and that it was only a select few that would be invited to society events.

As noted earlier, Desai describes Hosain's writing as 'rich and ornate as a piece of brocade, or embroidery, resembling the sari she describes in the short story '"Time is unredeemable": "deep red Benares net with large gold flowers scattered all over it and formalised in two rows along the edge of the border"' (*SBC*, x). Whilst *Sunlight* provides a glimpse into the past, an aspect of Hosain's novel which Desai's introduction celebrates, the text also demonstrates the challenges of the era, that the ideological construction of the sari and its representation in culture is to an extent romanticised. In the recollections of Kamlaben Patel, a social worker who was stationed in Lahore between 1947 and 1952, Patel hints at how inflammatory a sari was in Pakistan after Partition: 'I was instructed to go with the superintendent of police wearing a salwar kameez. *No sari, under any circumstances*'. [73]

Hosain's foresight in examining the tensions in India's modernity project perhaps elevates her status as a modernist. The historian Mushirul Hasan describes *Sunlight* as a 'historical' novel in its representation of the 'political ferment that split middle class and landowning families along ideological lines'.[74] As Burton writes, Hosain is not a subaltern figure but a diasporic writer, '[n]ot as subaltern figures but as the educated, diasporic subjects they were—not, in other words, as self-evidently resistant actors but as particular examples of the cosmopolitan woman writer who can tell us much about "the complex interaction of local and colonial structures" in the context of the

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[73] Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (1998) (New Delhi and New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 75.
[74] Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims Since Independence* (1997) (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 62 (emphasis added).

bourgeois Indian modern'.[75]   Edward Said's foreword for Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak is perhaps also applicable to Hosain and reflective of her own contribution to the literary canon. Said writes:

> As an alternative discourse then, the work of Subaltern scholars can be seen as an analogue of all those recent attempts in the West and throughout the rest of the world to articulate the hidden or suppressed accounts of numerous groups – women, minorities, disadvantaged or dispossessed groups, refugees, exiles, etc. […]
> Theirs is no history of ideas, no calmly olympian narrative of events, no disengaged objective recital of facts. It is rather sharply contestary, an attempt to wrest control of the Indian past from its scribes and curators in the present, since, as we shall see, much of the past continues into the present. And if there can be no actual taking of power in the writing of history, there can at least be a demystifying exposure of what material interests are at stake, what ideology and methods are employed, what parties advanced, which deferred, displaced, defeated.[76]

Hosain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is an antecedent in terms of its anticipation of the postcolonial theoretical and literary concerns subsequently expressed in Said's *Orientalism* and Rushdie's Booker prizewinning novel *Midnight's Children.* Hosain's engagement with the practice of purdah and with the arguments put forward for its decline, which themselves raise issues around codes of women's dress, enable reflection on the development of indigenous female identity under patriarchal regimes whilst simultaneously accommodating those aspects of colonialism deemed beneficial for the position of women. Hosain's nuanced approach to the British presence in India exceeds the expectations of a colonial narrative from the subject position of the colonised. Laila's experiences and her observations of those around her demonstrate how European influence had emancipatory potential for indigenous women. Sita and Perin Wadia gain confidence from European travel and such interaction with the West subsequently manifests itself in cosmopolitan dressing habits.   Through the metaphor of dress, Hosain

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[75] Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive*, 17.
[76] *Selected Subaltern Studies* (1988), Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.), Foreword by Edward W. Said (India and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) vi –vii.

broaches the complex relationship that colonialism fostered for South Asians in their changing perceptions and outlooks. Characters such as Mrs Lal subvert ideas of modest dressing in order to express a sexuality that traditional patriarchal dictates may have otherwise suppressed. In entering the public space, Mrs Lal subtly, through a 'sly eroticism', adapts her dress to challenge ideas directly relating to gender expectations and to facilitate her prowess as a modern South Asian woman.

Chapter four

Centre-Periphery Transgressions: Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003)

This chapter focuses on the subaltern woman's journeying in a hierarchical structure that marks her vulnerability in terms of patriarchal dictates, colonialism, and diasporic experiences. A newly formed nation, Bangladesh in 1971, continues to bear the trauma of a birth and the relatively recent memory of its creation resonates in postcolonial South Asian literature. This chapter will consider Monica Ali's fictional representation of diasporic Bangladeshi community in London and focuses in particular on the character Nazneen in *Brick Lane*. Employed initially as a garment pieceworker in London, Nazneen comes to achieve economic and emotional emancipation through diasporic creative entrepreneurship.[1] John McLeod writes in *Postcolonial London* (2004) that:

> Since the end of the Second World War, the urban and human geography has been irreversibly altered as a consequence of patterns of migration from countries with a history of colonialism, so that today a number of London's neighbourhoods are known primarily in terms of the "overseas" population they have nurtured [and] the lives, struggles, disappointments, achievements, conflicts and creations of such peoples in the city since the 1950s.[2]

It is the tension between 'disappointments, achievements, conflicts and creations' that *Brick Lane* draws out in a narrative that refuses a conflation of diaspora and diasporic identity in migration history. Whilst the title of Ali's novel refers to a particular geographical location in London, *Brick Lane* can also be read as a novel of identity that follows in the literary tradition of the *bildungsroman* as the protagonist's life experiences and realisation of her own agency are charted. This chapter will also explore the tensions that arise within communities, and between generations, for whom the memory of

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[1] See John Smith, 'The Globalisation of Production and the struggle for Workers' Unity: Lessons from Bangladesh' in *Polarizing Development: Alternatives to Neoliberalism and the Crisis* (2014), Lucia Pradella and Thomas Marois (ed.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 51-61.
[2] John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (2004) (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.

Britain's imperial past creates divides and diverts attentions away from matters that are closer to home and to personal lives. The novel can also be seen to reflect the individual failures and successes of diasporic identity through its representation of, and multiple associations with, dress and textiles based on traditions of masculinity and gender.

Early reception of _Brick Lane_

Brick Lane (2003) received mixed reviews on publication. The book performed well in terms of sales and attention received in nominations for literary awards.[3] Ali's novel was nominated for the Booker Prize, and she was named on the _Granta_ List of Best of Young British Novelists in 2003. Ali however, also attracted critical scrutiny of her portrayal of a community that she had little engagement with, or understanding of. For those critical of Ali, _Brick Lane_ and its subsequent film adaptation promulgated a negative image of the urban community.[4] In writing a novel about a particular diasporic community with a memorable title, _Brick Lane_, Ali has in some respects fallen prey to a burden of representation. This chapter attempts to negotiate those stark portrayals of Ali as either a prizewinning author or community traitor in a nuanced reappraisal which moves beyond perceptions of the gendered conflicts pertinent in South Asian and, more specifically, Bangladeshi communities.

In an article for the _Guardian_ in 2003, Ali spoke of the more negative reactions to her debut novel. 'In an audience [recently] at the Bengali World Literature Centre in the East End, a woman invited me to take a test. "How can you know what it is like to be a Bengali mother," she protested, "when you don't even speak _our_ language? Come on, speak to us in Bangla"'

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[3] Figures cited as early as 2005 by Nielson BookScan, whose statistics are based on sales through UK bookshops, supermarkets, online retailers, museums, and newspapers, showed that _Brick Lane_ had sold an estimated 695,920 copies and grossed over £4.9m in the United Kingdom, in Ruth Maxey, '"Representative" of British Asian Fiction? The Critical Reception of Monica Ali's _Brick Lane_' in _British Asian Fiction Framing the Contemporary_ (2008), Neil Murphy and Wai Chew Sim (eds.) (Amherst and New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 235.
[4] _Brick Lane_, dir. by Sarah Gavron (2007).

(emphasis added).[5]   Ali goes on to state that an author does not need 'permission' to write about a community, and elaborates on the unique position of the outsider:

> How can I write about a community to which I do not truly belong? Perhaps the answer is I can write about it because I do not truly belong. Growing up with an English mother and a Bengali father means never being an insider. Standing neither behind a closed door, not in the thick of things, but rather in the shadow of the doorway, is a good place from which to observe.[6]

Ali suggests that her peripheral status places her in an advantageous position to construct a narrative that is primarily fictional. It is questionable whether the 'insider' voice is one that is prepared, or indeed equipped, to come to the fore in order to present an 'authentic' representation of a community or section of society. Ali perhaps ought *not* to have to justify her perspective as one that is peripheral or even the 'voice' that is 'speaking for' a particular community. Ali has found herself 'positioned' by her critics. Stuart Hall states that we 'write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always in context, *positioned*' (emphasis original) and in Ali's case her English roots draw attention to the possibility she lacks an affinity with a community in a fictionalised novel.[7] It is inevitable that the filming of the adaptation would also meet with hostility from the communities that live in and around the area of Brick Lane.[8] A young Asian man who stepped forward at a protest aimed at impeding filming had the courage to ask if anyone had *actually* read the book. His question was met with fury, enough to initiate an outbreak of violence. Dr Hasanat Husain, the particular individual responsible for the protest, and one of its organisers, delivered a short speech in which he took it upon himself to explain the

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[5] Monica Ali, *Where I'm coming from* (2003)
http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/17/artsfeatures.fiction
[Accessed 23/01/2018]
[6] *The Guardian*, 17/06/2003.
[7] Stuart Hall, 'Culture, Identity and Diaspora' in *Identity: Community, Difference* (1990), Jonathon Rutherford (ed.) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222.
[8] Mario Cacciottolo, *Brick Lane protestors hurt over 'lies'* (2006).
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5229872.stm
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

feelings of local inhabitants regarding the reception of Ali's novel. A spokesperson for the community, represented by some 120 local residents and beyond, who were 'mostly middle-aged Bangladeshis, all men save for two women', Dr Husain stated "'A book has been written, that has greatly offended the hard-working, industrious Bangladeshi community. This hard-working community has been offended by lies, slander and cynicism. There should be a limit to what you can write or say'" (the speech is reminiscent of the opinions of the character Chanu in the novel). As reported by Mario Cacciottolo, the 'noticeable' lack of women, 'almost no women directly involved in the march' arguably contradicts the protestations regarding representation and indicates the levels of hypocrisy in community spokespersons. Dr Husain's response to the absence of his own wife in that she "'had wanted to come, but at the moment I have guests'", bears the same prejudices that are being challenged. What is worth drawing attention to though is the lack of women at the protest and more acutely the 'spoken for' in the manner which Spivak details in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. Ironically, whilst Ali is challenged for 'speaking for' Bengali women, it is the same patriarchal objectors that persist in 'speaking for' the women.

The burden of representation and critical reception of *Brick Lane*

Reading *Brick Lane* more than a decade after its publication allows for a more considered and arguably subdued reading of the novel, without *some* of the burden of representation imposed on the work of fiction. In this later reading of the narrative and in my own analysis this chapter focuses on the contentions of the protagonist Nazneen as she battles with her beliefs about fate and freewill. As Ruth Maxey notes of *Brick Lane*, whatever 'one's opinion of the text, however, its early critical reception demonstrates that the burden of representation remains firmly in place and that novels such as *Brick Lane* suffer unfairly from the expectation this generates'.[9] Maxey's view that texts such as Ali's, that initiate opposing responses between "'White critics" and "South Asian commentators'" suggests that this is still a young and evolving body of literature in which individual works are made to appear

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[9] Maxey, 234.

representative and can end up creating a disproportionate level of debate'[10]. This chapter will also focus on the relationships in *Brick Lane* between spouses, lovers and more broadly between generations within the diasporic community. As an identity novel, the novel also experiments with perceived stereotypes in relation to patriarchal structures and constructions of diasporic identities in both genders. In the narrative Chanu makes two prominent purchases, a computer for himself and a sewing machine for Nazneen. 'They put the computer on the dining table and the sewing machine next to it' gesturing towards the perceived components of masculinity and femininity.[11] Whilst Nazneen's acquisition represents an older tradition of textiles, Chanu's computer reflects the advances of technology and access to the wider world. However, Nazneen and Chanu's trajectories from this point contrast in terms of success and failure, 'disappointments [and] achievements'.[12] The addition of the computer does not help Chanu in the way that he had hoped and this leads to his resigned state by the end of the novel. "'They went to make money. They never left home. Mentally. Just taking money out. And that is what I'm doing now'" declares Chanu towards the end of the narrative as he decides that he can see no positive future in England (*BL*, 177).

It is only after publication of the text that certain editorial decisions came to light, which arguably influenced its critical reception and also provides an opportunity to examine the novel in light of its marketing at the time of publication. The title *Brick Lane* overtly suggests that the narrative is about a particular community in a specific location in London, which we now know to be factually incorrect. The intended title for the book *Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, was changed to *Brick Lane* by the British publishers, Doubleday. Marianne Velmans, publishing director, defended the decision when it resulted in a standoff with the American publishers who did not like the new title because American readers would not be familiar with London geography. Velmans said "'*Brick Lane* has lots of relevant connotations, whereas *Seven*

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[10] Maxey, 232.
[11] Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (2003) (London and New York: Doubleday Publishing, 2003), 157.
[12] McLeod, 4.

Seas and Thirteen Rivers would be more appropriate for a book about the subcontinent'".[13]   Velmans acknowledged that "'[t]he story starts in Bangladesh, but most of it is about the experience of immigrant communities in Britain'".[14]   However, *Brick Lane* is also the story of Hasina, Nazneen's sister, told in epistolary form, through a series of letters, translated by Nazneen. Hasina writes to Nazneen "'Once there was a prince who lived in far off land seven seas and thirteen rivers away". That is how I think of you' (*BL*, 19). Hasina adopts a phrase from a collection of Bengali children's folk and fairy tales called Thakur Ma-er Jhuli meaning stories from my grandmother (*BL*, 19).[15] 'Telling fairy tales has been considered a "domestic art" at least since Plato in the *Georgias* referred to the "old wives tales" told by nurses to amuse and to frighten children'. [16] The fact that Hasina frames her sister's story around a fairy tale implies the narrative may also be a morality tale as is the case with traditional fairy stories.   Hasina has a romanticised understanding of Nazneen's life in London; from Hasina's distant perspective, and in contrast to her own experience, Nazneen is the embodiment of success.   In this respect, the novel charts the contrasting experiences of the two siblings, brought about at a fundamental level by the spaces they inhabit, but equally, although not as visibly determined, by individual beliefs.

Fate - early belief and later transcendence

Nazneen compares herself and her sister Hasina in the early sections of the novel, noting where she had thought the differences between their individual outlooks lie. Nazneen appears to have held a fatalistic outlook in life but this

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[13] David Smith, 'It's Brick lane by any other Name' (2003), *The Guardian,* 14/09/2003
http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/sep/14/bookerprize2003.usa
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[14] Ruth Maxey writes: 'Her demarcation of the tight parameters of Bangladeshi East London thus recalls Islam's *The Mapmakers of Spitalfields,* rather than the work of either Rushdie or Kureishi, which engages with wider British Muslim and British Asian constituencies, and the world of Brick Lane is delimited in a geographical sense as much as a social, religious, or economic one' (Maxey, 223).
[15] The phrase is a common feature of storytelling in many languages including Bengali.
[16] *The Classic Fairy Tales* (1999), Maria Tatar (ed.) (New York and London: Norton, 1999), x.

shifts through the course of her life experiences. The story of her birth when her mother decides against medical treatment is an event that is repeatedly recounted to the young Nazneen. Her mother had cradled the newborn and declared "'we must not stand in the way of Fate. 'Whatever happens, I accept it. And my daughter must not waste any energy fighting against Fate. That way, she will be stronger'" (*BL*, 9). Such fatalistic belief is paramount in Nazneen's formative years, but at the age of thirty-four Nazneen finds that she can no longer accept 'Fate' as a final prognosis. In contrast, Nazneen describes Hasina as someone who 'kicked against fate' and this had 'worried her' (*BL*, 16). However, the dependency on fate to dictate the terms of either her or her sister's life is discarded by Nazneen, as she acknowledges an individual's authority to dictate life experiences, even if the surface representation suggests otherwise. As such even, within the constraints of marginality, as a Bengali woman and non-English speaking immigrant, she can take charge of her own life. When Nazneen laments Hasina's kicking against fate she goes on to state 'if you really looked into it, thought about it more deeply, how could you be sure that Hasina was not simply following her fate?' (*BL*, 16). Here, it seems as though Nazneen cannot distinguish between fate and freewill so that Hasina's spirited nature is fated to her and that 'no matter how you struggle against it, perhaps Hasina was fated to run away with Malek' (*BL*, 16). However, the course of events in the novel is illustrative of how Nazneen learns to live by her own agency and implies a rebirth of the character which is significantly of her own making and on her own terms.

The influence of Naila Kabeer's sociological study of Bangladeshi garment workers in London and Dhaka is an important source for *Brick Lane* and Ali directly acknowledges Kabeer in the paratext as a source of inspiration in the book.[17] In the novel, Ali incorporates detailed descriptions of the clothes that

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[17] Naila Kabeer, *The Power to Choose* (2000) (London and New York: Verso, 2000). As part of her academic study Naila Kabeer conducts interviews with female garment workers and translates these into English. Kabeer's documenting of female lives in close communities are incorporated in Ali's portrayal of the London community in which her narrative is set.
'I am deeply grateful to Naila Kabeer, from whose study of Bangladeshi garment workers in London and Dhaka (*The Power to Choose*) I drew inspiration. Thank you to Naila for her comments on the manuscript, and also for lunch' (Ali, 415).

the characters wear and the numerous types of dress that individual characters contemplate wearing, as this chapter details. In addition, Nazneen herself becomes a garment worker (in London) whilst her sister Hasina, also works in a garment factory (in Dhaka). Significantly, the independence of employment is also the process which facilitates Nazneen's extra-marital relationship with Karim, the go-between from her home to the factory. In this respect Kabeer's study can be juxtaposed with the sisters' experiences in the garment industry and in a sense their separate trajectories. This draws out two strands of the concept of dress and its metaphorical resonance in *Brick Lane*. Firstly, the value attached to dressing in a particular manner in relation to constructing identity, and secondly the effect of being employed in an industry that draws in disenfranchised women. In spite of these tribulations the experience is transformative in ways which are not anticipated in a neoimperial, neoliberal model. Kabeer writes about 'women's ability to exercise agency and make choices in Bangladesh are not circumscribed by economics alone, but by their social vulnerability'.[18] Kabeer refers to the patriarchal structures in society, which make 'agency' potentially even more difficult to exercise. In her study, Kabeer writes of women in paid employment as a minority but as 'pioneers of new social possibilities'.[19] She notes of social transformation that it does not occur as a 'single discrete moment of rupture with the past, but as a gradual diffusion of new possibilities' which is expressed in the actions of the character Nazneen. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen's and Hasina's life experiences reflect a gradual change, rather than change that occurs in a single defining moment. When Nazneen first arrives in London and becomes lost in the city, she navigates her way home after approaching a stranger for directions. Although this may seem a minor incident, for Nazneen it is revelatory. In the exchange, she realises that she had been both 'understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something' (*BL*, 48). The incident is a significant step for Nazneen as it allows her to visualise the concept of independence and that 'little' 'something[s]' are formative of grander changes. During the outing, Nazneen observes a woman dressed in a long red coat 'the colour of a bride's sari' […] 'Her clothes were rich. Solid. They

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[18] Kabeer, 191-192.
[19] Kabeer, 191-192.

were her armour and her ringed fingers weapons. Nazneen pulled at her cardigan. She was cold' (*BL*, 45). In this early interaction with her new surroundings, it dawns on Nazneen that she belongs to an underclass in England when she describes the woman's dress as 'rich' in comparison to her 'cardigan'. Her sari is unsuited to the English climate and makes her feel both insecure and inferior to the woman that she encounters. Later at home, as she discards her rain-soaked sari, Nazneen describes that it lay in the bath like a 'sleeping pink python' (*BL*, 49). The analogy of her dress, and thus a facet of her identity, to a sleeping reptile is symbolic of her own emergent power as she begins to realise the potential within her.

Brick Lane is focalised through a retrospective narrative and, although this is not through first-person narration, the narrative is from Nazneen's point of view. The novel has two directions, in that firstly the narrative is contemplative in tone and offers the opportunity for Nazneen to reflect on her life and the emotional maturity that she arrives at by the end of the novel. Secondly, and leading on from the first point, the narrative brings to light the misconceptions that Nazneen had on notions of fate and the novel can be read as a critique of fatalistic belief. Ali cites both the writer Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) and the philosopher Heraclitus (535-475 BC) in the two epigraphs of the novel:

> Sternly, remorselessly, fate guides each of us; only at the beginning, when we're absorbed in details, in all sorts of nonsense, in ourselves, are we unaware of its harsh hand (Turgenev in *BL* 6).

> A man's character is his fate (Heraclitus in *BL*, 6).

Michael Gorra in his review of *Brick Lane* in the *New York Times* writes that Ali's book raises timeless questions: 'Do we, can we, control our lives? That question propels Ali's book, in a way that keeps us reducing it to a simple matter of "East" versus "West"'.[20]

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[20] Michael Gorra, *East Enders* (2003)
http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/07/books/east-enders.html

In the course of the novel Nazneen comes to terms with knowing that she has actively participated in her life choices, more than she may have previously admitted to herself, rather than submit to life experiences as being predestined. As a result, the importance of fate as being held responsible for individual lives suggests a form of cowardice in taking responsibility for one's own actions. For Nazneen, this realisation is both an awakening and an acceptance of decisions that she had made, and understanding that this has been achieved consciously. This information is disclosed early on in the narration:

> What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principal ruled her life. It was mantra fettle and challenge. So that when, at the age of thirty-four, after she had been given three children and had one taken away, when she had a futile husband and had been fated a young and demanding lover, when for the first time she could not wait for the future to be revealed but had to make it for herself, *she was as startled by her own agency as an infant who waves a clenched fist and strikes itself upon the eye* (*BL*, 11) (emphasis added).

The passage indicates a retrospective of her life and the 'principals [that] ruled her life' until aged thirty-four when this fundamental belief is departed from and she is 'startled by her own agency'.

Nazneen is described by Chanu, her husband, in the early phases of their marriage as "'an unspoilt girl. From the village'" (*BL*, 16). Chanu's description constructs a pastoral image of Nazneen as virtuous and unworldly. However, as the narrative develops, the plot reveals that Nazneen's character is not as straightforward as the reader, and Chanu, may initially had been led to believe. Through her actions, which are at times presented as minor details, Nazneen reveals a cunning that belies her surface simplicity and this is a way for her to manipulate Chanu. Her particular approach can be seen to relate to

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[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

Spivak's notion of 'strategically taking shelter in an essentialism'.[21] Her actions illustrate how the relationship she constructs with Chanu is *not* one that reflects the archetypal perception of a patriarchal structure where the husband asserts control over his wife, and who in turn accepts this as the norm, but rather a more complex relationship whereby Nazneen asserts far more authority than may be superficially apparent. As has been shown, Ali came under the scrutiny of East End residents in representations of characters and the community. The portrayal of Nazneen is antagonistic given the character's infidelity in a community where 'honour' and 'shame' court controversy even when represented in the arts.

Taslima Nasrin's *Shame* (1993) is a novel that deals with the controversial subject of rape and is set in the context of the religious struggle between Hindu and Muslim faiths in Bangladesh.[22] *Shame* sold over 50,000 copies, but was eventually banned and caused a furore amongst Islamic fundamentalists. The author was exiled in 1994 after death threats and a bounty for her death was offered by the religious group Council of Islamic Soldiers. It is only as recently as 2013 that the testimony of women from the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971 have been translated into English in *Rising from the Ashes, Women's Narratives of 1971* (2001).[23] Sexual violence and mass rape as a weapon of war was employed by both Pakistani and Bangladeshi armies, and has arguably resulted in female sexuality being more closely guarded, and closeted, by those who stand as guardians of the South

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[21] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Text's and a Critique of Imperialism' in *"Race," Writing and Difference* (1986), Henry Louis Gates, Jr (ed.) (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 263-280, 263.

[22] Taslima Nasrin, Tutul Gupta (trans.), *Shame* (*Lajja*) (1993) (London: Penguin Group, 1994).

[23] *Rising from the Ashes Women's Narratives of 1971* (2013), Shaheen Akhtar, Suraiya Begum, Meghna Guhathakurta, Hameeda Hossain and Sultana Kamal (eds.), Nias Zaman (trans.) (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2013).

The book is a collection of the experiences of twenty-two women during the war of Independence in 1971. 'The barbarity of the Pakistani Army has marked every part of their lives but even after the war their struggles for survival, for recognition and claims for justice are an important part of the national history' (blurb).

'Although there had been many references to rape and other forms of war crimes in the press and public pronouncements, women survivors had found little space to record their stories, to share their trauma, and even to locate themselves in the national narratives' (Foreword).

Asian woman. Chapter six of this thesis returns to this particular type of atrocity in the violence that women were subjected during the civil war in an examination of Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography* (2002). In its wake, the trauma and later memory of mass sexual violence has arguably denied the Bangladeshi woman a positive and healthy sexual identity. I tentatively offer the argument as a possible explanation for the hostile reception of *Brick Lane* within the Bangladeshi community which, as per the mentioned reports, primarily comprised of disaffected men.

Aside from her sexual transgression, Nazneen is not always a likeable character and at times it is hard not to feel a little sorry for Chanu, especially when his actions have benevolent intent. However, the fact that Chanu is Nazneen's only sexual partner, coupled with the fact that she was never attracted to him physically, she describes her first impressions of him as having 'a face like a frog' (*BL*, 12), draws further attention to her sexual, and indeed human, need to desire and be desired. The characterisation of Nazneen however is important in terms of offering multi-dimensional characters who negotiate their surroundings in order to survive in the early phases of migrating and then thriving as diasporic individuals. Through fictional representation, Ali demonstrates the complexity of her protagonist from different perspectives. Nazneen in some respects can be perceived as a 'victim' and yet is also flawed as her infidelity demonstrates. Nazneen asserts her authority in the marriage so that the outcome is more nuanced than Nazneen simply leaving Chanu – a dominant patriarchal force, even though this itself seems caricatured. The relationship between Nazneen and Chanu is one that evolves over time and demonstrates the transitory stages of their marriage, during the course of which a more deep and sincere bond develops – one which exposes the relationship with Karim as flighty and significantly, as a mere a stage of Nazneen's maturity.

First-generation migrant experience

It is the subtle relationship with Chanu that reflects the generational struggle within the nuclear family given the age gap between Nazneen and Chanu. As husband and father, Chanu's status places him as the head of the family and

Nazneen helps sustain this position for him. Even though she does not sexually desire Chanu, there is a sense of a deepening affection that develops later on in their married life as shown when 'she put her hand inside his and in his sleep he gripped it' (*BL*, 225). Nazneen's outward compliance to Chanu's wishes operates as a strategy that helps maintain the preservation of a traditional family structure.

In an early scene of their married life together Chanu tells Nazneen "'I don't stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck." She carried on with her chores' (*BL*, 35). Ali's description of Nazneen's physical actions in response to Chanu's statement is tempered with irony. The image of Nazneen subserviently carrying 'on with her chores' in conjunction with Chanu's speech only further draws to attention whether Nazneen would be choosing to carry out chores if she were 'doing' exactly what she wanted. However, whilst Nazneen appears obedient and passive in response to Chanu's treatment of her, she is vengeful as she goes about her work. 'The razor slipped when she cut his corns. His files got mixed up when she tidied. All her chores, peasants in his princely kingdom, rebelled in turn. Small insurrections, designed to destroy the state from within' (*BL*, 50). During the early years of their marriage, although Nazneen may seem resigned to her subservient station, her actions demonstrate the quieter ways in which she navigates their daily lives to achieve her objectives. Nazneen uses her first pregnancy as a way to change the too soft mattress. 'If she wanted something, she asked her husband. But she deferred to him. Like this: "The bed is so soft. Does it make your back ache?"' until the conversation eventually leads to Chanu insisting they buy a new mattress. (*BL*, 40). Nazneen takes advantage of her circumstances and uses her pregnancy in order to rouse Chanu's guilt in caring for his wife. Here Nazneen draws out the intricacies within their relationship and the process by which Chanu maintains his masculinity in relation to gender roles. In the early days of their marriage she does not want to appear too assertive, reminding us of the case study of Hansaben in chapter one and her initial move in wearing a cardigan. In order to curate her image as the 'good Bengali wife' and Chanu's as head of their household, she toys

with his emotions to ascertain control and gain authority within their relationship.

As the narrative develops, Nazneen's relationship with Chanu is shown to be multi-dimensional, one where facades are upheld and shifts in the balance of power within their relationship occur. The passage of time reveals how enduring (pragma) love develops so that Nazneen and Chanu, in lieu of erotic love, reach a point of understanding, empathy and mutual respect for the other. The depictions of Chanu portray him as self-important and overbearing at times, but also loving and exuberant in family affairs. For example, when Chanu organises a family outing to see the tourist-sights in London, he buys shorts with multiple pockets to house his 'compass, guidebook, binoculars, bottled water, maps and two types of disposable camera' (*BL*, 239). Chanu is shown to have his own aspirations, disappointments and feelings of failure so that the self-importance he portrays is also a weakness. Chanu spends much of his time championing his education, the literature degree from Dhaka University, and makes efforts to distinguish himself from his fellow neighbours in their community. Chanu's character bears some of the more apparent tensions that exist between Bangladeshis (much like any other country or nation and regional divides within), and the result of differences between the regions that impact on the interaction within the wider community. Chanu is from the capital city Dhaka, whereas the majority of the London Bangladeshi population he speaks of are from the more rural areas surrounding the Sylhet district – in his opinion '"rats"' '"who have jumped ship"'(*BL*, 21), based on historical accounts of the type of immigrants who settled in the areas surrounding Brick lane.[24] Chanu detests the way he believes he is viewed in society as a result of what is perceived to be overwhelming immigration. He also has his own prejudices against the Sylheti diaspora: '"And you see, to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan. But these people are peasants.

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[24] Bengali immigrants came to the area throughout the nineteenth century – sailors (lascars) who manned British trading vessels and had the lowliest jobs who 'jumped ship' and stayed in Shadwell known as 'The Black Hole of East London' to the Victorian press, in Sukhdev Sandhu, 'Come hungry, leave edgy', *London Review of Books*, 25.19 (2003), 10-13.

Uneducated. Illiterate. Close-minded. Without ambition'" (*BL*, 21). Chanu's frustration is palpable, being grouped with a section of society that he believes to be his social inferior and representative of an underbelly in London, of which he is seen to be a part of in the eyes of the host country. These people, from which he distinguishes himself, are carrying out "'menial jobs […] doing donkey work'" (*BL*, 21), and from his viewpoint ought not to be grouped with educated superior city folk such as himself, Bangladeshi expatriates from the capital city of Dhaka. As the years pass, and the promotion is not achieved, Chanu's stature and his level of self-belief decrease to the point that he resigns himself to performing a job similar to the inferior jobs performed by the Sylhetis he despises.

Whilst Chanu is portrayed in places as prejudiced, this reveals itself to be part of an overall character trait that means he is equally derogatory about his own countrymen and members of other migrant communities. Chanu speaks of another passenger on a bus in harsh terms: "'[t]hey were bred for it. Slavery'" (*BL*, 80), demonstrating Chanu's propensity to make sweeping statements about all groups and that he is at least equal in his prejudices. Possibly attributable to his own experience as a first-generation migrant, Chanu begins with high aspirations and ambition but faces failures and shortcomings as time lapses in the host country, leading to an overall frustration and resentment towards the wider global diaspora. Although Chanu's character is constructed to represent patriarchy and prejudice, it is difficult not to empathise with his need to be treated as an individual, when his own hopes and desires are dashed. As the novel progresses, and Nazneen tries to develop a bond with Karim beyond physical desire, she herself begins to identify similarities between the two men, who are a generation apart and who at first seemed to be complete opposites in character. Where Chanu once quoted from the literary canon, 'Chaucer or Dickens or Hardy' (*BL*, 29), Karim begins to quote from the hadith – religious teachings of the prophet Muhammad and his companions in Islam. Nazneen's gradual realisation that the two men have more in common than she had initially thought is brought to light with humour and poignancy. When Nazneen notices that the lining of Karim's jacket 'was of the same material as the gusset of Chanu's underpants'

(*BL*, 235), Ali indicates that in spite of superficial differences between Chanu and Karim through age, maturity and physical attraction, they both represent a form of concealed control over her. Ali adopts undergarments as a metaphor to highlight that behind superficial differences, both Chanu and Karim represent forms of patriarchy, and perhaps it is Karim rather than Chanu, who is the more controlling of the two men in his covert attempts to lure her towards religion through hadith knowledge: 'was she to believe that he had found this hadith at random' (*BL*, 288). Nazneen is suspicious when Karim attempts to show her religious teachings. Chanu's controlling nature is a mere 'gusset' compared to the expanse of 'lining' in Karim's jacket and perhaps even serves as a warning to Nazneen of what a future with Karim may involve.

Second-generation migrant experience

Karim himself undergoes significant changes during the course of his relationship with Nazneen. Karim is initially alluring in his apparent naivety, but his growing interest in politics in the wake of the events of 9/11 sees a transformation take place and a darker side to his personality develop. 'Now that he had a sleeker phone he seemed unable to take calls from his father. The gold chain around his neck had grown fatter' (*BL*, 217). Nazneen's observation suggests that she is beginning to distance herself from Karim as she notices changes in his demeanor that begin with his altered attitudes, ranging from the treatment towards his father to his evolving political views following 9/11.

Over time, Nazneen begins to appreciate the capricious nature of her relationship with Karim and how the relationship operated as a transitory stage for the development of both their individual identities and that Karim himself is caught up in the process of finding his own place in the world. It becomes clearer to her that Karim had found a mother figure in Nazneen that in turn suggests both the desire for, and simultaneously the lack of, a maternal influence in his life and adds an Oedipal dimension to his character. When Karim comments on her sari, it is because the fabric reminds him of a sari owned by his mother: '[s]ame material I mean' (*BL*, 175) he tells her. The

realisation falls on her that just as she has used Karim to fulfill her longings, Karim had constructed an image of Nazneen to satisfy his own needs. Nazneen comes to muse: 'How did Karim see her? The real thing, he said. She was his real thing. A Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her' (*BL*, 380). The relationship, seen from this perspective, suggests that he too enters the relationship as a way to understand his own sense of being, and thus create a space in which he feels that he belongs, an 'idea of home'. Through his relationship with Nazneen, Karim achieves this within the confines of an intimate environment, but this proves to be fleeting as Karim begins to realise the limitations of their encounters for his own future.

Nazneen does not change her style of dress after the events of 9/11, but Karim does so in a response to a post 9/11 outlook: 'Karim had a new style' (*BL*, 312). Karim discards his gold chain, jeans, shirts and trainers for Panjabi-pyjama and a skullcap, sleeveless fleece and big boots (*BL*, 312). In this new attire, Karim 'looked like he could be on his way to a mosque; or to a fight' (*BL*, 339). Ali's description of Karim could be construed negatively as representative of a homogenised image of Muslim youth culture and highlights how her descriptions come under scrutiny for stereotyping.[25] In the aftermath of 9/11, Karim finds that he has a renewed sense of purpose. Nazneen notices how the cataclysmic event has contrasting effects on Karim and Chanu. 'If knowledge was food then while Karim grew strong on his intake, Chanu became only bloated, bilious and pained' (*BL*, 314). While Chanu makes plans to leave behind the various disappointments he has endured, Karim becomes more adamant and sure of his position in the community and represents a development in second-generation migrant identity where political conflict is the *raison d'être* in the individual lives of certain sections of society. Karim is spurred on to create a leadership role for himself in his community as a way to assert his presence in representing 'his

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[25] '[T]he stereotyping of Muslims take place in repeated acts of representation by politicians, the press and media, and even those claiming to speak on their behalf' in Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (2011) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

people'. 'Think global but act local, he said. Official messages of support would be dispatched to the appropriate ummahs around the world – Oldham, Iraq and elsewhere' (*BL*, 238). Whilst Karim may believe that he is carrying out important public duties, his grand speech, on closer inspection, is amateurish and it transpires that he is attempting to join a conversation that he has little knowledge of. By 'think[ing] global', he implies both awareness and connectedness to world events and suggests a direct response as if the events in New York had occurred in his neighborhood. Karim wants to be seen as an 'official' spokesperson and conveys overall incompetence when he speaks of the 'world'. He strings together a sentence by aligning a small northern city in England and an entire country in another continent in a farcical speech that demonstrates his naivety as community spokesperson. Karim's antics raise debates about whether conflict rouses a situation where individuals are driven by their egos at the cost of a wider community. A small minority can end up speaking for a majority, in this case the displaced youth. As a result, a small minority ends up 'speaking for' the larger and moderated views of a majority, a point that has also arisen in the reception of *Brick Lane*.

Karim's reaction arguably reflects a rise in fundamentalist attitudes as a response to the change in attitudes towards Islam in particular its youth culture, and how in turn these are framed in popular culture.[26] As Morey and Yaqin note, the 'body of the Muslim as it appears in these representations, veiled, bearded, or praying is made to carry connotations far beyond the intrinsic significance of such externals and rituals'.[27] As in his relationship with Nazneen, his devotion to religion may well reflect the anxiety he feels about his situation himself in his society so that a sense of belonging is achieved, rather than devotion to a particular cause or indeed commitment to

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[26] For example, novels such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) in which the protagonist Changez narrates his own experiences of prejudice and misrepresentation in the aftermath of 9/11. However, these themes can also be seen to predate 9/11 as evident in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* (1995). Kureishi's novel is set in 1989 on a university campus and illustrates the undercurrent of social and political tensions arising from fundamentalist interpretations of Islam and competing liberal ideas.

[27] Morey, 3.

an individual. Both Nazneen and the events of 9/11 are catalysts and set in motion actions related to ideas of Karim's selfhood.

Brick Lane as a novel of identity

Brick Lane is a novel that is about more than Nazneen's awakening through sexual fulfillment. Nazneen's maturity is derived from more than being released from the grip of patriarchy or from her sexual awakening. Given her experiences as Chanu's wife, a mother, and as Karim's lover, Nazneen begins to appreciate the complexities of her own history as it continually adapts in active processing and negotiation of the surroundings she is immersed in. After the relationship with Karim dissipates, a more meaningful relationship with Chanu develops. The outcome results in a marital separation but reconciliation as parents to their two daughters Shahana and Bibi. Nazneen discovers that for 'the first time she felt that he was not so different. At his core, he was the same as her' (*BL*, 98). Even though Nazneen and Chanu's relationship as husband and wife fail their affinity and mutual understanding leads to harmony.

As the mother of daughters, Nazneen finds herself in a compromised situation at times. From a young age Nazneen is instructed by her own mother to repress her inquisitive nature: 'If god wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men' (*BL*, 64). Nazneen's upbringing comprised of being told by her mother that questioning was not a feminine trait and ought to be left to the men. Nazneen's memory of her own mother is shown to be ambiguous and when Nazneen dreams about her mother, these are confused and Nazneen's dreams become nightmares. 'They went closer and they saw the way the head hung down. It was certain now. It would not fly away' (*BL*, 181). Rather than the dreams lamenting loss, the nightmares suggest issues that are left unresolved from her childhood. Hasina writes to Nazneen about the discovery of their mother's body who was wearing her best sari when she is found in the store hut, suggesting suicide (*BL*, 363-364). As a mother herself, Nazneen finds herself caught between continuing in the tradition of her own mother, whose troubled existence possibly led to suicide, or by challenging that same tradition to avert a similar fate for her daughters by

addressing the gender inequalities of her inherited culture. Either way, Nazneen appears to believe that she is more than a compliant version of a South Asian woman, both from her own indigenous culture and the way in which she thinks she is perceived in England. Nazneen must therefore decide whether to uphold the values of her own childhood or break with tradition to enable a radical transformation of her own life, and change her daughters' lives. The radical move would mark a departure from the culture of her homeland and the essentialised image of the subaltern woman from a European perspective as 'brown women in saris who cooked rice and raised their children and obeyed their husbands' (*BL*, 325) and who thus needed rescuing from the grips of patriarchy.

The significance of dress to identity

In the novel, changing patterns of dressing represent changing fashions, generational struggles and cultural shifts, as illustrated by Shahana's attempts to dress in contrast to Chanu's expectations. The conflict between father and daughter, however, also represents archetypal teenage rebellion, so that when Chanu notices Shahana's uniform hitched up 'so that it bloused over the belt and rode up her thigh' (*BL*, 171), the scene is reminiscent of a commonplace conflict between teenagers and their parents. When 'without changing her expression she began to inch it slowly downwards' (*BL*, 171), Shahana acknowledges that she has been caught out and does not challenge the matter. Nazneen's friend Razia, of an older generation, gradually discards her South Asian style of dressing for more western items of clothing to please herself rather than comply with how others in her community think she should dress. For Razia, it appears that dress is about being comfortable in herself and as Nazneen observes that, it was 'the sari that looked strange on her' (*BL*, 20). Nazneen thinks that 'Razia would look better in overalls. Overalls would match her big shoes' (*BL*, 38). For Razia, whose circumstances are in some respects not too dissimilar to that of a younger generation (as found in Shahana's predicament), clothes represent choice – and having the freedom to choose how to dress rather than it being prescribed by authority figures like Chanu, who can act as arbiters of cultural traditions. However, Razia points out the hypocrisy of altering dress as a means of achieving harmony between

groups of people and highlights the futility of the gesture in itself. Razia describes the ways in which she feels that she is discriminated against, regardless of the clothes she wears: "'Fusion Fashions," said Razia, reading out the name [...]. "Look how much these English are paying for their kameez. And at the same time they are looking down onto me'" (*BL*, 328). Gertrud Lehnert and Gabriele Mentges in *Fusion Fashion: Culture Beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism* (2013) write that:

> "Fusion Culture", in our understanding, designates multiple ways of transnational contacts and exchange, narrations, of making selections from foreign cultures – an open process without ever coming to an end. Fusion culture is comparable to Homi Bhabha's concept of "third space", but "fusion culture" seemed more appropriate with regard to fashion. [28]

Razia indicates the way South Asian dress is appropriated by western culture, but rather than bridge the gap between two ways of dressing and indeed two cultures, differences remain and this becomes problematic when a further hierarchical structure is devised. Therefore, although dressing patterns can superficially appear to harmonise cultures through hybrid forms of dress, clothes in themselves do not alleviate difference. Rather, it may be the case that they create further complexities to 'structures of representation' where a particular way of dressing does not in itself represent an archetype as portrayed in popular culture as the appropriation of the union jack displays.[29]

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[28] Gertrud Lehnert and Gabriele Mentges, *Fusion Fashion: Culture Beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism* (2013) (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 12.
Homi Bhabha writes 'it is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity', Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994) (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 54-55.
[29] For example, the clothing retailer Monsoon, according to its marketing strategy aims to bring 'vibrant, colourful, hand-crafted artisan clothes from faraway places to the markets of London'
Identity and Values
http://uk.monsoon.co.uk/uk/content/heritage#who-we-are
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
Monsoon are also invested in Ethical trading and the company prides itself on a code of conduct http://uk.monsoon.co.uk/view/content/code-of-conduct

[30] One particular item of Razia's clothing, a sweatshirt emblazoned with the Union Jack, in her view *still* marks her as an outsider: "'They are even happy to spit on their own flag, as long as I am inside it. What is wrong with them? What is wrong?'" (*BL*, 328). Razia believes that the same people portray her to be 'inauthentically' British, given her description of the reactions of the 'English' towards her dress. Lehnert and Mentges write that '[f]ashion is used as a means for cultural inclusion and exclusion. Western fashion has long claimed an aesthetic, technical as well as moral/ethical superiority over the non-western sartorial otherness'.[31] Razia describes how she still feels unaccepted in society, in spite of the clothes that she wears and that there is a deeper 'wrong' that lies in the conflict. The 'wrong' maybe one that is rooted in colonial practices and fashion is one such area where deep-seated issues resurface, where Bhabha's concept of 'mimicry' is useful in describing the processes that come into play through the influence of dress as a result of colonialism and settling diasporas. The preoccupation with clothes characters draws out the wider connotations of dress in terms of defining identity. In dressing characters in particular types of clothing, Ali hints at the complexities in projecting identities and that at times dress cannot accurately convey our identity. Even though Ali paints a somewhat comedic portrait of Razia by describing her dressing patterns, for instance a sari worn with big shoes, the characterisation challenges a particular stereotype of the way in which a woman of South Asian origin is perceived to dress and how deviation from a particular aesthetic is received in society.

When Razia wears her sari, the outward signage of the South Asian woman, with heavy-duty shoes, associated with masculinity, manual labour and even a different climate, she inadvertently constructs a look that challenges both the remnants of Victorian classification systems and also contradicts the

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[30] Morey, 3.

[31] Lehnert, 11.

In August 2013 Monica Ali was named as one of the twelve new faces of Marks & Spencer advertising campaign. Steven Sharp, creative director at M&S stated: 'The British have a history of being creative and pioneering and these women represent just that. As industry leaders in their field, they make a significant difference that has seen them break boundaries, challenge stereotypes and create visionary artistic work'. http://www.thebookseller.com/news/monica-ali-becomes-face-marks-spencer.html

descriptions of the Oriental female of Said's preliminary arguments made in *Orientalism*.[32] The Victorian period was renowned as the era of scientific reasoning and evolutionary biology which bourgeoned after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) with its emphasis on natural selection and classification in codified systems. As Tarlo notes in her study this is a problematic mindset that can be traced back to the Victorian period. Tarlo argues that the need to classify was 'characteristic of a whole framework through which Victorian intellectuals codified information about the world around them [...] and it is no coincidence that many of the early ethnographies on Indian dress were collated by men, like Colonel Dalton, heavily involved in the colonial administration'.[33]

Textiles, industry and identity

In *Brick Lane*, the textile industry serves a more practical purpose and for Nazneen is a direct and practical way to tackle the family's financial difficulties that arise when Chanu succumbs to a scheme run by the loan shark, Mrs Islam. Mrs Islam threatens both Nazneen and Chanu but it is Nazneen whose entrepreneurship takes the family out of debt illustrating her resourcefulness and ability to contribute to the family's welfare in ways that take her beyond her domestic duties. Nazneen's employment in the clothing industry not only earns her economic empowerment but also helps her understand her own ability and agency in ways that overturn the fatalistic belief of her youth. Ironically, it is the clothes that she wears that are shown to have less of an impact upon her abilities, implied by Ali in the final scene of the novel where Nazneen is skating, implausibly, in her sari, her diasporic gendered narrative of social mobility successfully realised. Razia in the concluding sentence of the novel tells Nazneen that "'This is England [...] You can do whatever you like'" (*BL*, 413). Although the ending may seem a little over optimistic, it provides the conclusion of the novel with a lasting

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[32] 'Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, *imagery*, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial style' (emphasis added), Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978) (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2003)*,* 2.
[33] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 3.

image which is at least hopeful, and implies the possibilities awakened in Nazneen's future.

The clothes that Nazneen wears are shown to be less significant than the actual fabric that she stitches into different types of garments. Nazneen's emancipation is in this sense brought about by her skill as a seamstress, rather than her being restricted by the sari that she wears as part of her daily uniform. Not only does Nazneen achieve economic emancipation and self-sufficiency, she also gains in emotional intelligence and evolves in the way in which she views Chanu. Both Karim and Chanu's role in her own development reflects Nazneen's kinship with male presences in her life rather than a more straightforward struggle with patriarchal figures. Chanu is instrumental to the freedom that employment brings, albeit as a means to enable their collective freedom, and through Karim, Nazneen discovers entrepreneurship as well as an understanding of her sexual self. As such, the male characters of *Brick Lane* are shown to play a role in Nazneen's future and aid her in some ways, even if they also stand to gain from Nazneen, rather than frame her through the trope of the subjugated subaltern woman.

Whilst for Nazneen, employment enables her to forge a prosperous life in Britain, for Chanu, his own failures lead him to the point where he feels that his future lies in returning 'home'. The contrasting experiences of Chanu and Nazneen raise the question of the male/female dynamics of the diasporic experience and prompts a consideration of whether women are perhaps better placed to realise their individual potential in Britain where gender inequalities are less severe than in their indigenous homeland. Chanu tells his friend, Dr Azad, 'to go forward you must first look back. We are taking some stock of the glorious British Empire' (*BL*, 205). Chanu describes more general feelings of resentment held by South Asians about the treatment they received as colonised people and articulates ways to compensate for the memory of the historical trauma they are burdened with as postcolonial subjects. "'They bequeathed us law and democracy. That's what they think. And never a word of the truth – that they beggared us, that they brought Bengal to its knees'" (*BL*, 205-206). Chanu becomes prone to what Dr Azad, describes as "'Going

Home Syndrome'" (*BL*, 24) and after failing to realise his own ambitions Chanu makes 'going home' his new purpose. He delivers a speech to his family to let them know of his plans for their futures:

> "As you are all aware, we have decided – as a family – to return home. Your mother is doing everything possible to facilitate our dream through the old and honourable craft of tailoring. And don't forget it was we who invented all these weaves of cloth – muslin and damask and every damn thing" (*BL*, 171).

Chanu understands that the colonisers plundered South Asia during the period of the British Empire in India and that he is now re-enacting imperialist behaviour in England. "'You see, when the English went to our country, they did not go to stay. They went to make money. They never left home. Mentally. Just taking money out. And that is what I'm doing now. What else can you do?'" (*BL*, 177). However, whilst Chanu believes he has reached a certain conclusion about life in England, Nazneen, to the contrary, does not plan on 'taking money out', but views entrepreneurship as a way to secure her future in England. As Stephen Morton argues in a chapter for a forthcoming book, *Muslims, Trust and Multiculturalism: New Directions*, 'the novel raises wider questions about the ways in which neoliberal discourses of self-management, personal responsibility, and the entrepreneurial cut across the gendered international division of labour between the core and the periphery'.[34] Although Morton focuses on the relationship between the two sisters, Nazneen and Hasina, as core and periphery, this argument can perhaps be extended to the inherited gendered conflicts that exist between Nazneen and Chanu, conflicts inherited from South Asian culture where a woman's status is doubly colonised. In choosing to stay in England, Nazneen is both removing herself from Chanu and creating an opportunity to enable a neoliberal state of being.

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[34] Stephen Morton 'Multicultural Neoliberalism, Global Textiles, and the Making of the Indebted Female Entrepreneur in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane'* in *Muslims, Trust and Multiculturalism: New Directions*, Amina Yaqin, Peter Morey, and Asmaa Soliman (eds.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2018).

By stitching together fabric and creating garments, Nazneen begins to see possibility in her life. The more engrossed she becomes in her life in London, the harder Nazneen finds it to envisage her village life in Bangladesh. It is only in her dreams that the village comes alive for her and she can reimagine her childhood. After one such dream, Nazneen wakes in the middle of the night and takes comfort in sewing. Nazneen tries on one of the sequined vests and fantasises about Karim, but is also quick to realise that Karim is a fantasy. When she opens her eyes she sees 'that the sequins were cheap' (*BL*, 181), reminding her that Karim is a flight of fancy like the vest she wore, fleetingly pleasurable. Just as Nazneen had held the role of fate in such high esteem, she appears to have a similar approach to clothes: 'For a glorious moment it was clear that clothes, not fate that made her life. And if the moment had lasted she would have ripped off the sari and torn it to shreds' (*BL*, 230). However, as with fate, Nazneen realises that dress can only dictate the terms of an individual's life to a limited extent, and ultimately if fate and dress are held accountable for defining identity, this implies a level of resignation. What changing patterns of dress represents is rather a changing social and political landscape, and in *Brick Lane*, Ali highlights how this is not only limited to women - especially in the Islamic faith where clothing can be seen to articulate or even substitute faith.[35]

Nazneen describes girls in burqas as 'two small black tents' recognising the girls' voices from a previous meeting who had 'wore hijab' then, 'had upgraded to burkhas' now (*BL*, 231). Their observations highlight that after the events of 9/11, the image of Muslims fell prey to 'certain reductive tropes', 'the bearded Muslim fanatic, the oppressed veiled woman'.[36] Chanu and Nazneen experience attention in their surroundings following world events, but they do not appear to alter their own images and continue to be

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[35] Tarlo writes on clothes 'they might reflect on the possible social, political, ethical and aesthetic effects of particular clothing choices. This involves consideration of not only the impact different clothes have on their wearers but also what sort of public intervention they make in a multicultural urban environment' (Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 2).

[36] Morey, 2.

more concerned, primarily with their own personal circumstances. Karim, however, appropriates the events of 9/11 to define his own identity.[37]

Even though it is Chanu who leaves London at the close of the narrative, his character emerges as the most assured of Ali's protagonists. Chanu is portrayed as the more sophisticated and worldly when contrasted with Karim, not merely because of age but because his character also develops a philosophical dimension:

> "I will tell you something. All these people who look down onto us do not know what I am going to tell you. I have it here in black and white.' He waved his book. 'Who was it who saved the work of Plato and Aristotle for the West during the Dark Ages? Us. It was us. Muslims. We saved the work so that your so-called St Thomas could claim it for his own discovery. That is the standard of our scholarship and that is the standard of their gratitude" (*BL*, 177).

Chanu refers to contemporary London and displays what he sees as the failures of postcoloniality and existing tensions between the diaspora and (British) indigenous communities. Chanu views himself as too weathered to stay and continue the struggle for his generation, whereas Nazneen, who is younger than her husband, is on an upward trajectory and has the capacity for fight that Chanu lacks. Nazneen is amongst the group of women who set up a clothing venture when they see an opportunity in the market, as a way to support themselves financially. The ending of *Brick Lane* thus incorporates a postmodern business plan in which the women appropriate contemporary fashion for South Asian clothing. In his study, Morton expands upon an argument of entrepreneurship and suggests that 'the economic sub-text of Nazneen's narrative of education and social mobility in *Brick Lane* and the entrepreneurial rhetoric of women's empowerment in narratives of

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[37] 'But are clothes the precise markers of status, region, sexuality, class, ethnicity and gender [that she seems to believe?] In any form of encounter, especially cross-cultural engagements, dress is likely to be interpreted more obtusely than directly. The lived and subjective experience of dress, its embodied messages and its aesthetics form a more complicated material social practice than a language system', Margaret Maynard, *Dress and Globalisation* (2004) (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 3.

microcredit' correlating Nazneen's experiences to that of Grameen Bank. The initiative was to lend money to the poorest in rural Bangladesh and was founded by Muhammad Yunus who also won the Nobel Peace prize in 2006, as recognition for his humanitarian efforts, to create economic and social development for the poorest in society.

Ali seemingly, and perhaps idealistically, suggests that migrant identity is one that can be steered in whichever direction an individual desires and Nazneen represents emancipation from the restricting constructions of the South Asian female. The image of Nazneen skating is therefore also an explicit metaphor for her neoliberal success as a gendered diasporic subject. Nazneen's experiences reflect phases of the evolutionary stages of the migrant experience. The narrative of *Brick Lane* highlights that whilst the past aids the construction of a present state of being, it does not necessarily need to define the present or indeed overshadow the future. In some respects, we are masters of our own destiny and that 'fate is a man's character' to paraphrase the words of Heraclitus. Karim, who is of a younger generation still, is shown to be at yet another stage, as Nazneen muses: 'Karim did not have his place in the world. That was why he defended it' (*BL*, 375). Karim's experiences are ones that Nazneen cannot fully appreciate, in spite of the intimacy, and indicates the subjective heterogenic nature of individuals and their experiences. *Brick Lane* highlights the ongoing difficulties of inter-generations to empathise across a spectrum of multi-generations, and how this becomes a source of conflict within communities when views begin to differ. More specifically, it highlights the heterogeneity of individuals amongst diasporic communities against a wider context that may have a tendency to homogenise the diasporic community with a broad stroke. Although Nazneen, Chanu and Karim's lives intersect for a period, ultimately only they can navigate their own lives. In this light, Nazneen's daughter Shahana is set to continue a tradition of uncertainty.

In *Brick Lane* Ali implies that dressing habits alone cannot accurately construct and convey individual identity and this is reflected in her depiction of Nazneen's experiences. The cultural iconography of the sari provides a

female aesthetic for Bengali women such as Nazneen. Her narrative arc, however, challenges what is meant to be Nazneen's 'fate' given the historical trauma endured and its repercussions for the identity of women from the Bengali region of South Asia. In this respect, the sari operates as a metaphor for female subjugation, but Ali's description of 'brown women in saris who cooked rice and raised their children and obeyed their husbands' (*BL*, 325) is eventually challenged. By the close of the narrative, Ali demonstrates the ambitious possibilities of Nazneen's character to counter received perceptions of the restricted agency of the subaltern woman. Using history to her advantage rather than being a casualty of it, Nazneen's employment in the textiles industry is a means of asserting a form of gendered agency. Whilst the argument can be made that Nazneen is "merely" a garment factory worker, with all the connotations of inequality that such employment brings, one can also argue that this is relatively progressive and, furthermore, empowering.

Chapter five

Divisions in Diaspora: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)

This chapter considers the darker aspects of the South Asian diasporic experience. Migration may be considered as 'a liberating region' and provide an opportunity to break away from stifling traditions, as the character Nazneen in *Brick Lane* demonstrates.[1] However, diasporic identity can also be marked by a sense of loss and trauma at removal, even if by choice, from one's homeland. Leaving the indigenous homeland can in some instances bring to the surface South Asia's own shortcomings as well as the legacies of a colonialism that cultivated divisions, based on religion through the strategic exploitation of perceived weaknesses of the colonised. Even after the end of imperialism in India, the religious divisions between Hindu and Muslim communities had become ingrained and continue to permeate the lives of post-independent generations as is evident in the novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) (*Maps*). The irony is that rather than taking comfort and strength from the community as a source of cohesion, the community can turn on itself and tensions that existed in a previous homeland can be transferred to the present time and trigger disproportionate responses.

Diaspora and competing memories

Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* focuses on a close-knit Pakistani community faced with the dichotomy of negotiating the past with its weight of history and cultural tradition, the trials and tribulations of diasporic identity, and competing memories of historical trauma that the end of colonisation perpetuated. *Maps* is also the story of a marriage and the various phases of a couple's, husband Shamas and wife Kaukab, relationship. The setting of *Maps* is a northern town in England and populated by many first-generation migrants from South Asia who settled in England after Indian Independence in 1947, as was historically the case during the first Partition when millions of people became displaced and Britain offered a place of

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[1] Bill Ashcroft, 'Globalization, Transnation and Utopia' in *Locating Transnational Ideals* (2010), Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (eds.) (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 22.

refuge. The desire for independent national identities and the tensions that are contained in the conflicts between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh feature prominently in *Maps* which is set in 1997 – fifty years after the end of the British Empire and so the narrative also constitutes a moment of reflection. For first generation migrants, the memories of Partitions 1947 and 1971, are first hand and the violence of the period permeates their personal histories.

Aslam has spoken of how his writing is his 'way of exploring my own life and the workings of my own consciousness' and *Maps* took the writer eleven years to complete.[2] The identity of the fictional northern town is ambiguous in the early pages of the novel and is described using popularised images of South Asia: '[o]n the shore the winds rush from every direction during the winter months to twist themselves around the body like a sari'.[3] The image of the wind coupled with clothing of South Asian origin implies the 'twist' or entanglement of two cultures and marks how fabric and dress will become recurrent motifs in the novel. The interweaving of landscape and dress brings into focus visions or perceptions of the Indian Subcontinent and hints at how space comes to be recognisable and identified by inhabitants who affiliate themselves with particular spaces. The use of figurative imagery, the sari, places the article of clothing as a pronounced emblem of the East and re-inscribes Orientalist constructions.

Diaspora, and the transitions it entails, whereby individuals join communities in their attempts to relocate after leaving an original homeland is a major focus in the novel and is shown to affect both the first and second-generation protagonists, albeit in different ways. Whilst the broader concept of diaspora shares a preoccupation with spatial locations, the narrative of *Maps* conversely draws on the challenges of past memories and experiences that manifest themselves in individuals and this seems at times unconnected to diasporic travel but is instead an aspect of the human condition. As such,

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[2] Marianne Brace, *Nadeem Aslam: A question of honour* (2004)
http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/nadeem-aslam-a-question-of-honour-731732.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[3] Nadeem Aslam, *Maps for Lost* Lovers (2004) (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 4.

whilst the narrative focuses on community it also examines the aspect of loneliness in a community and how this can at times be self-imposed through religious practice. This results in a discourse between the larger forces of history and individual experiences of patriarchy, as well as an exposition of the ingenuity in negotiating such challenges. For example, dressing strategically can provoke emotions such as desire or nostalgia in others. Nostalgia as experienced by diasporic communities produces a multiplicity of emotions which Aslam examines, creating insularities and divisions in communities.

The concept of diaspora is enigmatic as the term can be interpreted variably depending on the historical context that applies to the subject described as diasporic. McLeod writes:

> It is tempting to think of diaspora peoples as migrant peoples, and indeed many people living in diasporas certainly are. However, *generational differences* are important here.[4]

In his preface to the second edition to *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (2008), Robin Cohen reflects on how the prototypical definition of diaspora has been expanded:

> I suddenly thought how migration scholars were increasingly using gardening terms like "uprooting", "scattering", "transplanting" and the then newly-fashionable word "hybridity". My interest mounted when I found that "diaspora" was derived from the Greek word "*speiro*" ("to sow" or "to disperse"). Could refashioning the old idea of diaspora provide a means to understand new and revived forms of transnational and transtatal movements? How were these mapping onto, and changing, the accepted ways of understanding global migration, emerging identities, complex oscillating flows and unexpected patterns of settlement and integration?[5]

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[4] McLeod, 207 (emphasis original).
[5] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997) (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), xiv.
In *The Black Atlantic* (1993) Paul Gilroy posits the 'Black Atlantic' as a counterculture of modernity. The Black Atlantic is not specifically, African, American, Caribbean or British but is constituted of multiple cultures and transcends the ties of ethnicity and nationalisms. Gilroy's contribution to cultural studies is

Cohen argues that diaspora studies has gone through four phases. The first theorisation (1960s and 1970s) denotes diaspora as a scattering arising from a cataclysmic event that traumatised a whole group, such as the Jewish and their experience of the holocaust. The second phase (1980s and onwards) of diaspora studies was included as a metaphorical designation for a more varied cluster of diasporas, collective narratives and different relationships to homelands and the host country. The third phase (mid 1990s) was influenced by postmodern readings and social constructionist critiques. Postmodernists argued that identities had become deterritorialised and constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way; accordingly, concepts of diaspora had to be radically reordered in response to this complexity. The current and fourth phase has seen a consolidation and a return to ideas of home and homeland in a reaffirmation of core elements in the concept of diaspora.[6]

In *Maps* diaspora, and its reverberations in society, are subjected to an examination of their resonance within community and its individual identities that constitute the community. In this respect, the narrative of *Maps* is broader in its scope in comparison to that of *Brick Lane* and resonates with Cohen's description of the fourth phase of diaspora studies that sees a return to ideas of home and homeland as central. For example, the novel draws attention to how diasporic perspectives evoke a sense of the minority or marginalised figures, in reference to a centre-periphery model which Said describes as 'a powerful series of political and ultimately ideological realities […]. No one can escape dealing with, if not the East/West division, then the North/South one, the have/have-not one, the imperialist/anti-imperialist one, the white/coloured one'.[7] Aslam examines how a community interacts with shared past memories from different perspectives, and the consequences of trying to hold onto and abide by rules that held sway in previous homelands,

useful in developing a wider understanding of how identities may develop as a result of diasporic movements.

[6] Cohen, 1-2.

[7] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978) (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2003), 327.

drawing particular attention to generational conflicts that occur as a result of varying distances of time from acts of violence and psychological trauma. Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996) describes how the concept of diaspora has an imagined aspect and for Brah this 'delineates a field of identifications where "imagined communities" are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory'.[8] As such the term diaspora is less fixed in meaning and becomes a psychological, rather than a physical, relocation. Jonathan Sell in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing* (2012) perceives the concept of diaspora as a 'cognitive frame within which immigrants and migrants may attempt to order their experiences and from which they express them; as such diaspora is intrinsically discursive'.[9]

Diaspora and its dispersion thus refers to people who have been displaced from a place of origin and, in the context of the Indian subcontinent, the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan resulted in one of the largest population movements in recorded history with migration of an estimated fourteen million people.[10] Although Partition was a cause for celebration for South Asians living in London it was catastrophic in the Indian sub-continent where 'such a momentous process produced strains and stresses in the newly decolonized states' of unprecedented violence resulting in extreme acts of violation and mass murder. [11] Esoteric by nature and as a result difficult to define, diaspora, like theological concepts is fluid and subject to interpretation and understanding of historical events in a given context.

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[8] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 196.
[9] *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing* (2012), Jonathan P.A Sell (ed.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10.
[10] India Office Records, Asian and African Studies Reading Room, British Library. http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/index.html [Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[11] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Rupture in South Asia', *The State of the World's Refugees* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59.

Aslam examines the effect that differing interpretations of events, past and present, have on the diasporic community and on individuals stifled by internal community constructs which develop as a result of memories of the past. From a distant and seemingly objective perspective, the individuals living within the diasporic community may arbitrarily have greater similarities than differences given their varied indigenous backgrounds. Aslam, however, portrays layers of conflict ranging from tensions within the community, both of different religious beliefs and also interpretations of a particular faith, to conflict within a nuclear family and inter-generational struggles to, finally, individual inner conflict which creates a sense of entrapment formed by the fear of breaking away from convention. Such a perspective presents a bleak outlook and the novel highlights the negative aspects of traditions within a diasporic community steeped in its own indigenous history. As such, the novel is representative of the apparent insularity and lack of assimilation in such communities, showing its debilitating effect in characters such as Kaukab.

Aslam himself is the product of a family displaced by political conflict in Pakistan, directly affected by President Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorial regime. Born in Pakistan, Aslam came to England in 1980, two years after Zia had deposed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and made concerted efforts to unite and develop Pakistan through 'enforced adherence to a stricter and more puritanical form of Islam mixed with Pakistani nationalism'.[12]   Aslam's communist father fled Pakistan for England in the midst of the political turmoil that was changing the country through enforced Islamisation of the state. The family settled in Yorkshire and his father, who had been a poet and producer in Pakistan, worked as a bin man in England, their middle-class status in Pakistan being sacrificed in order to survive in England. However, Aslam speaks of his home in England where he was raised as imbued with 'a feeling for the life of the mind' as the family home was full of books and pictures that were cut from magazines.[13] Aslam's recollections of his

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[12] Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan, A Hard Country* (2011) (London and New York: Penguin Group, 2011), 23.
[13] Marianne Brace, *Nadeem Aslam: A question of honour* (2004)

childhood suggest the early encouragement of thinking beyond his immediate environment and an appreciation of the merits of literary and cultural engagement. It also implies the influence and encouragement he received from his own family, particularly his father, to develop his own literary talents.

The narrative of *Maps* takes place over one year in a community awaiting the truth about the doomed lovers Jugnu and Chanda, and struggling to accept relationships that exceed the boundaries of convention. The community created in the novel is based on Aslam's experiences of growing up in England after his family migrated from Pakistan. '"I'm from a working-class family and I've always lived in these places", says Aslam'.[14] Through a central story arc concerned with uncovering the mystery of Jugnu and Chanda's disappearance five months previously, the story of the lovers acts as a catalyst to expose flaws within the community and particular individuals, as well as draw attention to underlying tensions that the disappearance brings to the surface. Jugnu and Chanda's story, although an intimate story of two lovers, can also be read as a political narrative. The fate of lovers and the community reaction can be seen to reference events from South Asian social and political history so that larger scale conflict manifests itself in individual narratives. Aslam himself states that from his perspective 'all writing is political – even non-political writing is political. Coming from Pakistan, and belonging to the Islamic world. I can't not be aware of how politics affects our daily lives, how it is not just dry legislations and laws and statements. It's visceral'.[15] Aslam's statement implies how his fiction is political and that fiction is inextricably tied to history and politics. Political circumstances are closely connected to the trajectory of individual lives and experiences, and dressing too is a political gesture revelatory of psychological, social, political

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http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/nadeem-aslam-a-question-of-honour-731732.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[14] *Independent,* 10/06/2004.
[15] Nadeem Aslam and Sunil Sethi, 'A Conversation with Nadeem Aslam', *India International Centre Quarterly*, 35.3/4 (2008), 348-361.

and economic status, evident in the narrative through various descriptions of characters and their dress.

The 'Desert of Loneliness' - ambiguous beginnings

The title *Maps for Lost Lovers* is indicative of the central preoccupation of the novel: the notion of loss and consideration of the effectiveness of 'maps' or means of negotiating or navigating particular situations which arise in the narrative. Chris Weedon writes that the 'major themes of the text – religion, rigidified cultural norms, gender and generational conflict – combine to show how first-generation working-class experience in Britain is shaped by a strong sense of loss of homeland, family and community, legacies of both Partitions and subsequent inter-communal conflict, as well as British racism.' [16] Whilst 'British racism' is arguably a part of the reality of diasporic experience, my own reading of the novel will focus more closely on the community within the diaspora and tensions between South Asians, both first generation migrants and the second generation diaspora. More broadly, the title may allude to South Asia in its postcoloniality and its disintegration from a single nation to the disparate three. In this interpretation of the title, the '*Lovers*' are the nations of India and Pakistan (which included Bangladesh until 1971) who require a '*Map*' to negotiate a way back to unity after the brutality brought about by the Partitions in South Asian history.

The deployment of the sari as imagery in the early stages of the novel may even encourage the reader to think of a subcontinental setting. What becomes increasingly apparent is the evolving landscape and the way different groups inhabit a particular space over time so that 'on one side is the hundred-year-old Parish Church of St Eustace […] And on the other side of the street is the mosque. The crescent faces the cross squarely across the narrow side-street' (*MLL*, 9). The image suggests how different faiths exist in close proximity to each other, but can become obscured or '*Lost*' in the diasporic effort to re-establish community in a new environment. This prompts a new debate as to whether the desire to re-establish a community propels conflict rather than

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[16] Chris Weedon, 'Tropes of Diasporic Life in the work of Nadeem Aslam' in Sell, 20-38, 24.

promote harmony. Although at one particular time the space where the Parish Church stood would have been largely inhabited by a Christian community, the movement of people as a result of social and political changes impacts upon the landscape so that a mosque signifies the change to the landscape as a result of an event, or series of events, that took place somewhere else in the world.[17] As Etienne Balibar points out on the subject of borders, 'it is undergoing a profound change in meaning'.[18] Balibar goes on to argue that:

> The borders of new sociopolitical entities, in which an attempt is being made to preserve all the functions of the sovereignty of the state, are no longer entirely situated at the outer limit of the territories; they are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled—for example, in cosmopolitan cities. But it is also one of my hypotheses that the zones called peripheral, where secular and religious cultures confront one another, where differences in economic prosperity become more pronounced and strained, constitute the melting pot for the formation of a people (*demos*), without which there is no citizenship (*politeia*) in the sense that this term has acquired since antiquity in the democratic tradition.[19]

In *Maps* the town itself is continually changing as a result of the arrival of various nationalities and the adoption of names that have been acquired from the indigenous countries of the settlers. However, as Aslam writes of the fictional town, the 'various nationalities of the Subcontinent have changed the names according to the specific country they themselves are from – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan. Only one name has been accepted by every group, remaining unchanged. It's the name of the town itself. Dasht-e-

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[17] An example of this is Fournier Street in London E1 which leads to Brick Lane. The Methodist church first established in 1743 was converted into a synagogue in the late nineteenth century and then later converted to a mosque during the 1970s illustrating how the area evolved in response to the changing religious affiliations of the community.
In *Brick Lane,* the Bangladeshi inhabitants are part of this shifting diaspora. The mosque was established as a result of the needs of migrant Bangladeshis that heavily populated the area having come to Britain from the Sylhet region, a historical detail that forms part of the narrative context in *Brick Lane*.
[18] Etienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (2004), James Swenson (trans.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.
[19] Balibar, 1-2.

Tanhaii. The Wilderness of Solitude. The Desert of Loneliness' (*MLL*, 29).[20]
It is the concept of 'Loneliness' that is ironically a unifier, so that even though
inhabitants may believe they have more differences from, than similarities to,
their neighbours, the feeling of displacement, even though not acknowledged,
is a commonality experienced by the 'various nationalities of the
Subcontinent' (*MLL*, 29). It is the feeling of loss and loneliness that fuels the
antagonism that exists in the community and is transferred into the varying
interpretations of religious beliefs. When the disappearance is finally
resolved, it is revealed that it was in fact feelings of loneliness, precipitated by
a betrayal, that instigated the murders. Until that point, the narration implies
religious differences are behind the mysterious disappearance, rather than any
other factors such as personal animosity. Religion is thus a strategy to divert
attention and it accentuates feelings of displacement. In some cases, as Aslam
shows in the character of Kaukab, vulnerable individuals are isolated as a
result of being imprisoned by religion and particular interpretations of faith.

Religion as a cultural framework

There are multiple ways in which conflict manifests itself in the community
and is then manifested in religion. Firstly, the co-existence of different
religious faiths provides points of distinction, in particular between Islam and
Hinduism. As we shall see in Shamas' father's life a turn of events results in
him practicing both Hinduism and Islam. Secondly, and arguably more
compellingly, conflict can arise when religious interpretations differ, as Aslam
illustrates in his depiction of Islam. Aziz Al-Azmeh writes on inventions of
Islam in *Islams and Modernities* (1993) that:[21]

> Thus Islamic "culture" takes on the aspect of a psychodrama
> and the serious business of inventing a culture begins, primarily
> by the conjuration and proclamation of tokens (stigmata to

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[20] The name of the town seems to be an allusion to Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the title of which has been the subject of much debate. One interpretation of the title's meaning relates to its reference to the interiority of darkness inherent in the human condition. Marlow, however, infers that it is London that is the location of darkness: "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth" in Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) Paul B. Armstrong (ed.) (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 5.

[21] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (1993) (London: Verso, 2009), 7.

others) of exoticism, particularly ones which give a pronounced visual edge to the boundaries of exclusion/inclusion. Basic and most plastic amongst these are dressing up, and exhibitionist piety, with dramaturgical direction.[22]

In *Maps* the interpretation of Islam is brought into sharp focus when events such as the fatal assault on a girl is justified as religious cleansing and her 'criminally stupid parents' allow the attack based on the reassurances of a 'monstrous holy man' (*MLL*, 196). The murder of Jugnu and Chanda is yet another example of religion and its interpretation which can be used to justify murder as an act of honour. Eventually the hypocrisy of the murderer (Chanda's brother) is exposed when it is revealed that he is on a rampage having been spurned by his own Sikh lover.

Although Jugnu and Chanda's disappearance is a crucial moment in the novel, as already mentioned, it is the relationship between Shamas and Kaukab that comes to the fore in the unfolding of the story and it is their perspective that the narration focuses upon. Now that their three children are themselves adults, Shamas and Kaukab's relationship is re-evaluated, in an allusion to the novel's title. The couple struggle to adapt to the transition of their children into adults in different ways. Kaukab retreats into herself whilst Shamas busies himself with community roles. Their children's generation have different outlooks to their parents and this can be seen in their daughter's divorcing of an abusive husband, and their son's openness about his homosexuality, behaviour that compromises Shamas' position as Director of the Community Relations Council: 'Shamas is the person the neighbourhood turns to when unable to negotiate the white world on its own' (*MLL*, 15). Shamas' contribution to the community is illustrative of his efforts to act as the bridge between the residents of Dasht-e-Tanhaii and to the 'white' other

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[22] S. Sayyid who refers to Al-Azmeh in his own arguments on the construction of Islam writes '[i]t is a fabrication which is derivative and therefore inauthentic […] when Islamists articulate their identities, they do so by using materials and resources which are not intrinsic to anything that could be remotely called Islamic culture. Despite the claims of the Islamists, Al-Azmeh seems to reject the idea that there is an authentic Islam' in S. Sayyid, 'Bad Faith: anti-essentialism, universalism and Islamism' in Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes, *Hybridity and Its Discontents* (2000) (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 258.

world. Shamas is the more reasonable partner in the marriage and he is open to different cultures in comparison to his wife Kaukab who is shown to be intensely close minded and dismissive of any belief that deviates from her own strict interpretation of Islam. It is Kaukab, rather than Shamas, who is keen to abide by a strict interpretation, in particular of, her role as a Muslim woman. It is very clear that there is a breakdown in the relationship and that Shamas and Kaukab remain a couple because of cultural traditions rather than individual desire. As Shamas muses, he 'hasn't had a conversation with someone about the matters that interest him for a very long time. Talking with Kaukab is, for both of them, frequently another way of being alone, the conversation highlighting the separate loneliness of each' (*MLL*, 156). The fact that Shamas and Kaukab are still together in form, and in spite of the loneliness they feel within their marriage, brings into focus the restrictions of a cultural, rather than religious, framework, that dictates their lives to a greater extent.

Kaukab is a god-fearing woman who has, over time, alienated her own children as a result of her disapproval of their chosen paths. Kaukab is harsh in her treatment of her children and it becomes clear that aided by Shamas' patriarchal status, she manipulatives their daughter Mah-Jabin. She repeatedly tells her daughter 'your father will be angry, oh your father will be upset: Mah-Jabin had grown up hearing these sentences, Kaukab trying to obtain legitimacy for her own decisions by invoking his name. She *wanted* him to be angry, she *needed* him to be angry. She had cast him in the role of the head of the household and he had to act accordingly' (*MLL*, 111) (emphasis original). Kaukab's behaviour suggests that she believes that women should behave in a specific way and that she will go to great lengths to preserve ideals, even if this means projecting her own status as inferior to Shamas. In fact, the family is governed by Kaukab's matriarchy rather than Shamas' enforcement of patriarchy. Kaukab believes the family home is a sanctuary from the outside world and that there is 'so much outside the house that may not be brought into the house, and the mother is quick to construe any voicing of opinion or expression of independent thought by the girl as a direct challenge to her authority' (*MLL*, 93). Kaukab's views are rooted in a

paralysing fear of alternatives which lay outside the paradigm that she has lived her life by. 'It had taken her decades to rebuild the happiness she had lost when she moved to England: she had built it around her children, and yes, around Jugnu, but she had never realised how loosely woven a thing it was, how easily torn' (*MLL*, 296). As the narrative progresses, it becomes much clearer that although her practices are fundamentally questionable and her children suffer as a result of her close-mindedness, Kaukab believes that she is acting in their best interests and this is a redeeming feature of her actions.

Patriarchal traditions and elements of matriarchy

Kaukab hints early on in the narrative that Shamas has been violent to her in the past and this fuels a negative impression of Shamas' character. Kaukab herself was also brought up under the strict rule of her mother and discloses that she 'hadn't seen a man up close without there being the gauze of her *burqa* between him and her since the age of twelve – she had been made to wear it because it was well known that certain men marked out beautiful girl-children and then waited for years for them to grow up. Her vigilant mother lifted the stamp of every letter that came into the house to make sure no clandestine message was being passed' (*MLL*, 65-66). So it is perhaps unsurprising that Kaukab develops a disproportionate level of chasteness in her character. Kaukab is a product of the Pakistani nationalist culture that fostered the subjugated status of women under a dictatorship. However, Shamas is presented as a reasonable man, and his actions largely support this. It is only by learning of Shamas' perspective, his own admittance of why he inflicted the violence on Kaukab, that we see the extent of her adherence to her beliefs. Ujala their youngest child, is born during the fasting month of Ramadan and Kaukab believes that:

> [H]e was a blessed child destined to be an especially pious Muslim: he was one of those rare boys who are born without a foreskin, the Muslims believing that such children have been marked by Allah for an exemplary virtuous existence in the world (*MLL*, 139).

Kaukab believes that her newborn is holy and that she and the baby can both keep fast together. Even as Ujala's health starts deteriorating, Kaukab refuses to feed the baby during the daylight hours in keeping with the rules of fasting and by any reasonable standard Kaukab fails in her duties to look after her newborn. It is only when Shamas discovers why their child is growing weaker, that he physically vents his frustration. Shamas forces Kaukab to feed Ujala by tearing her kameez 'with both hands to reveal a soaked brassiere which he pulled at here and there until one of the cups ripped open and spilled its load like weights in a sling' (*MLL*, 141). When Kaukab realises that she will have to give in to Shamas she struggles to get to the sink to wash her hands as she 'had been cutting up chillies earlier and didn't want to touch her baby with those hands' (*MLL*, 142). The episode highlights two points. Firstly, it shows how religious belief and the idea of devotion has skewed Kaukab's logic and reason to such an extent that she is prepared to make the baby suffer. Secondly, the episode also illustrates that Kaukab dearly loves her child and would not intentionally harm the baby as washing her hands to wash away the chilli demonstrates. The event also shows that Kaukab chooses to remember the event as the time when Shamas had been violent to her and she had been the subject of domestic violence. Shamas apologises to Kaukab months later but she refuses to return the sentiment and instead 'burns the wedding dress onto which she had embroidered his verses years ago' (*MLL*, 142). The verses of poetry were exchanged in a secret courtship conducted before their marriage and are a poignant reminder of a love story which has become 'lost'. Kaukab is a stubborn woman who fails to register that she herself was abusing Ujala by not feeding him. Kaukab's mental state is distorted as a result of practicing Islam in its more literal and fundamentalist interpretation.

In his depiction of Shamas and Kaukab's relationship Aslam highlights Kaukab's authority in their relationship and this is significant as both are from a culture that has tradition of patriarchal dominance, exemplified by the implementation of The Hudood Ordinances as part of the Islamisation of

Pakistan under President Zia.[23] However, as the narrative unfolds, the reader learns of their shared romance before their wedding and how the rendezvous of their youth would have been against Kaukab's own tolerances in later years. Kaukab's magazine subscription to the aptly named '*Veil*' (published in Pakistan) is discussed amongst her children who have conflicting view on the contents of the magazine:

> "It doesn't do any harm," Mah-Jabin whispers: she had seen the distaste on his face when he picked up the magazine full of orthodox rants and strictures, apocalyptic visions and prophecies…
> "It makes her happy."
> "I don't think it does. I have never seen more misery and guilt on her face than when she has just finished reading something printed in there. It's turned her into a selfish monster. *She* is the reason why father won't openly condemn the idiocies of Islam. He thought it would hurt her. She and her like don't do any harm? She has harmed every one of us. She won't allow reason to enter this house" […]. For millions of people, religion was often another torture in addition to the fact that their lives were not what they should be (*MLL*, 302).

Kaukab's commitment to the version of Islam that *Veil* prescribes is shown to have had a detrimental effect on her family and yet Kaukab is deluded enough to think that her faith works in the interests of the family. The magazine regulates Kaukab's actions and, in some respects, takes away Kaukab's own authority. It becomes difficult to empathise with Kaukab's character after learning of the blunders she makes as a parent on the advice of a holy man. She poisons Ujala in a bid to try and get him to behave according to her beliefs on the advice of a holy person, and she arranges Mah-Jabin's marriage to a violent man and then encourages her to return to the abusive husband. However, the narrative also illustrates that Kaukab, as the daughter of a cleric, is part of a tradition, and this has instilled certain values and expectations.

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[23] The Zina Hudood Ordinance of 1979 severely weakened rights of women, making them direct victims of Zia's fundamentalist politics.
Imran Rahat writes 'during recent decades the women of Pakistan have been most vulnerable and convenient targets of social, domestic and sexual violence' in Imran Rahat, 'Legal Injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and Its Implication for Women', *Journal of Internal Women's Studies,* 7.2 (2005), 78-100, 78.

Kaukab and Shamas left Pakistan in order to create a better life for their children in England. Pakistan is described as a 'country that's poor because the whites stole all its wealth, beginning with the Koh-i-Noor diamond' (*MLL*, 46), which reminds us of Chanu's laments in *Brick Lane* that '"when the English went to our country, they did not go to stay. They went to make money"' (*BL*, 177). Pakistan, like Bangladesh, is viewed as 'poorer' as a result of having endured colonial rule, so that when inhabitants flee from the displacement that Partition creates as diasporic subjects they are at a disadvantage because of the trauma they have endured. Once in England, Kaukab realises that the town in which they settle in is not so different in character to the village she had left behind. As in Pakistan reputation is paramount for individual identities, in the English towns and cities where indigenous cultures congregate, Kaukab is just as fearful of tarnishing the family reputation as she would have in Pakistan. Although very different in terms of exterior environment, the communities of Pakistan and Britain share an interiority that govern existence.

The events that take place in *Maps*, from the murder of Jugnu and Chanda to the exorcism of the teenage girl, illustrate how the town recreates the social structures of Pakistan, and, more widely, South Asia. The fear of shame in Pakistani communities also plagues the English town's inhabitants, as they remain emotionally attached to a previous home and are governed by the same values that held sway in their pasts. The effort to reconstruct a home means re-implementing conventions relating to female honour and re-invigorating what is perceived to be an authentic past. Kaukab is afraid of scandal and how the community around her reacts to her family and its divorces, homosexuality and infidelities. Kaukab's narrow-mindedness illustrates that although she may have relocated in terms of geography, her mindset has remained static, and the place that she now inhabits is a microcosm of an environment left behind. The retention of the past, however, comes to have little to do with reality and is more in keeping with the imagined conceptualisations of home Rushdie described in his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' as discussed in the introduction of this thesis. Dasht-e-Tanhaii is described as an environment that has the power to destroy individuals with the

impossible standards it sets: 'The neighbourhood is a place of Byzantine intrigue and emotional espionage, where when two people stop to talk on the street their tongues are like the two halves of a scissor coming together, cutting reputations and good names to shreds' (*MLL*, 176). The paralysing anxieties about the damage to reputation takes form as '[s]hame, guilt and fear' that are 'like padlocks hanging from mouths' (*MLL*, 45) bringing to mind William Blake's 'mind-forg'd manacles'.[24] The community re-enacts travails that plagued Pakistan without considering that the homeland left behind will have changed.

Remedy and cultural plurality

Kaukab's anxieties can be attributed to a woman of her age, social class and upbringing. As a first-generation migrant who has experienced the tensions of colonialism in India, nationalism and subsequent partitions, it perhaps comes as no surprise that Kaukab is 'full of apprehension concerning the white race and uncomfortable with people of another Subcontinental religion or grouping' (*MLL*, 32). The 'apprehension', then does not stop with the 'white' community as it would appear that any deviation from familiarity causes Kaukab, and others sharing her views, to become anxious and fearful of difference. In *Maps*, Aslam examines how fear of difference is enmeshed with South Asia's postcolonial history and stretches back to seminal events in Indian history. During the period in which India was a single nation, the different religious groups, 'Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had forgotten their differences and rioted together' (*MLL*, 51) in the common cause to end British rule in India. The infamous massacre at Amritsar in 1919 marked a turning point in India's modern history and in the relationship between the British and Indians. It was also the event which spurred on the nationalist movement and Gandhi's political course of action.[25] In *Maps*, Aslam evaluates the success of

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[24] 'London' by William Blake in *Songs of Experience* (1794) in William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 150.

[25] 'In the Punjab city of Amritsar, the general commanding the local garrison, Reginald Dyer, took it upon himself on 13 April 1919 to disperse by force an illegal, though peaceable, crowd together in the enclosed Jallianwalla Bagh. Drawing up his Gurkah troops at the entrance, he fired until some 370 trapped protestors lay dead and over 1000 wounded' in Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise*

Indian postcoloniality, the subsequent Partition of Pakistan and the civil war of 1971 in which Bangladesh gained its independence. Admittedly, it is problematic to consider postcoloniality in the stark terms of success or failure, but a speculative view highlights how the quest for national identity based on religion, as in the first Partition, was the cause of devastating human suffering. As the divisions within Aslam's fictional town show, there is an ongoing partitioning that increasingly isolates inhabitants in its denial of cultural plurality. Individuals like Kaukab, who are the first-hand witnesses of the quest for independent nationhood based on religious biases, bear the negative consequences of South Asia's burgeoning nationalisms. Cordula Lemke, in an examination of 'Laws of Purity' in *Maps*, focuses on Kaukab's confinement 'by the small radius of her movements and activities, which is reduced to two or three streets, and by the importance she attaches to her house as a bulwark against all kinds of enemy forces'.[26] Kaukab cordons off her life but a close analysis of her actions is also telling of her anxieties that have more to do concerning her own sense of self-worth in comparison with those outside her immediate social circle, which the dinner with Jugnu's white lover illustrates. Kaukab anticipates the woman's arrival by preparing an elaborate dinner, choosing the clothing she would wear and applying cosmetics 'for the first time in ten years' (*MLL*, 35) and although outwardly she is scathing of what the woman represents, there is a sense of awe that her presence awakens in Kaukab. Kaukab takes note of what her guest is wearing: 'a lilac blouse of shimmering silk that Kaukab couldn't resist the urge to finger just for the pleasure of it – it looked like a fabric known in Pakistan as *Aab-e-Ravan,* the Flowing Water' (*MLL*, 37). Kaukab also notices that 'the white woman's legs were bare below the knee-length skirt (made, incidentally, of a checked fabric that reminded Kaukab of *Bulbul Chasm*, the

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History of Modern India (2001) (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 168.

See also William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (2006) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

Dalrymple emphasises the role of religion and his study explores the internal divisions along political religious lines amongst the rebels.

[26] Cordula Lemke, 'Racism in the Diaspora: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*' in *Multi-ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts* (2008), Lars Eckstein, Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Christopher Reinfandt (eds.) (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 171-183, 172.

eye of the Songbird)' (*MLL*, 37). The fact that the two women wear different styles of clothing, yet share the same tastes in fabric, is symbolic of a stirring of unity between Kaukab and the 'white woman'. Shamas himself notes that the women share similar opinions 'she's just said something which I've heard you say' (*MLL*, 38) he tells his wife.

If Kaukab is full of 'apprehension concerning the white race' she also dwells on her earlier thoughts of '*Hell as other people*' (*MLL*, 32) (emphasis original). Kaukab later begins to doubt herself, 'surely no one – no people, no civilisation – would think other people were Hell. What else was there but other people?' (*MLL*, 33). Kaukab's attitudes towards others superficially represent her as a prejudiced woman. However, her self-doubt suggests that her prejudice is a means to protect herself from her inner anxieties about rejection in another community. Arjun Appadurai points out:

> Neighbourhoods are ideally stages for their own self-reproduction, a process that is fundamentally opposed to the imaginary of the nation state, where neighborhoods are designed to be instances and exemplars of a generalizable mode of belonging to a wider territorial imaginary.[27]

However, as the multiple levels of conflict in *Maps* show, Kaukab and others within the community are part of *multiple* 'imaginar[ies] of the nation state' as although they are members of the South Asian diaspora, the place of origin was also a place of competing nations and competing Independence. As well as exploring the culture clashes within communities, Aslam examines the diasporic desire to define identity in relation to the country of origin. Anxieties that existed in a previous homeland resurface in the host homeland. Kaukab's urgency to identify herself as different to the white woman is also identifiable in her relationship with other South Asian nationalities – Indians and Bangladeshis are *not* Pakistani and for Kaukab are visibly conspicuous in their differences. In Urdu and Persian, Pakistan (originally spelt as Pakstan) means Land of the Pure and was coined by Choudhry Rahmat Ali (1897-

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[27] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions in Globalization* (1996) (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 191.

1951) a nationalist activist and author of the Pakistan Declaration, the pamphlet 'Now or Never; Are we to Live or Perish Forever' (1933). The concept of purity, inherent in Pakistan's founding, may also explain Kaukab's mindset and maintenance of the ideology on which the country, her homeland, was established.[28] For Kaukab, Pakistani identity is a form of purity and anything outside this paradigm is treated with suspicion.

Issues of trust within the community are evident as its members attempt to understand who, or cannot, be trusted. There are no clear reasons for feelings of distrust as they seem to be based purely on *obvious* differences between indigenous nationalities created by India's partitioning. Kaukab reveals nonsensical prejudices that become hierarchical as she is caught up in a constant process of navigating her way through life, weighing up the differences that she will be prepared to tolerate in a given situation. For example, on a bus that is 'so crowded so she had to sit next to the white woman who had burnt her Muslim husband's Koran, but when a few stops later a seat next to a Gujarati woman became vacant, she had moved' (*MLL*, 61). The fact that Kaukab moves when a seat becomes vacant draws attentions to the gradations of her prejudice. When she sits next to a 'Gujarati woman' this shows how she still sustains prejudice but that by sitting next to the latter woman she has in her opinion 'moved up'. This particular perspective is applicable to the treatment of Bangladeshis who rouse suspicion and, because of the conflict originating in South Asia are assumed to be devious (which Shamsie, in *Kartography*, shows as the result of conflict between competing South Asian nationalisms). A prejudice that originates in South Asia is transferred to Britain. The following passage is illustrative of the weight of history and the prejudices that resonate within the community:

> Although they were given the information casually and in
> passing they had both wondered whether there was a malicious

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[28] The concept of purity was part of the nationalist propaganda in West Pakistan against people of the Bengal in East Pakistan and Jinnah set out an ethnic concept of the nation which people of the Bengal did not match up to.
See Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (1984) (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

intent: this was a taxi firm run by Bangladeshis, and they were a treacherous and wicked people, having broken away from Pakistan to found their own country, the treachery and betrayal of their race going back even further to the time in the eighteenth century when just before the battle of Plassey, Mir Jafar, the commander-in-chief of Saraj-ud-daullah, had signed a secret pact with the Englishman Robert Clive, and ensured him a victory over the good Siraj, a victory that marked the beginning of the British Raj in India and the beginning of the end of the Muslim rule. Yes, every time there was news of a cyclone devastating Bangladesh, killing hundreds – sometimes thousands – of people in one fell swoop, the brothers at the shop would hear several of their Pakistani customers mutter under their breath that it was Allah visiting his vengeance on the damned Bangladeshis for first helping to put an end to Muslim rule in India, and then, in 1971, breaking away from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (*MLL*, 349-350).

As the narration illustrates, these are prejudices that pre-date 1947 and that can be found in historical accounts from precolonial rule. Conflict has been, and continues to be, a facet of community life. In a fabric shop, the conflict within the community is subtly drawn out and distinctions made between dress and nationalism:

> *If Allah let the dwellers of Paradise engage in trade, I should choose to trade in fabrics, for that was Abu Bakar the Sincere's profession* – reads the sign nailed to the wall above the fabric counter to the left of the sister-in-law, a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Here there are shelves loaded with bolts of cloth with a long counter under them and the floor is littered with sequins and glitter-dust that have come off the fabrics, swept by the feet into galaxies and milky ways. Colours and prints go in and out like the seasons in this part of the shop. Two scissors hang from the strings like a pair of dead birds, upside-down, drained of blood. Rolls of cloth – each forty-five inches tall – lean against the counter, the loose edges of the material trailing, like a queue of very thin and very tolerant women wearing saris (*MLL*, 212) (emphasis original).

The description of the 'rolls of cloth' which are likened to 'thin and tolerant women wearing saris', predominantly and historically worn in Bengal, is a subtle allusion to the experiences of women from Bengal. This personification of the fabric hints at the slaughter of innocent women during the civil war in Pakistan where East Pakistani women were systematically

raped on the official orders of the Pakistani Army, as highlighted by the collected experiences of women during the fight for independence in 1971 in *Rising from the Ashes* (2013). Female honour and shame was previously drawn on in relation to the diasporic Bangladeshi community upon publication of *Brick Lane.* Female honour is reoccurring and a prominent feature in the identity construction of the South Asian female, a point that *Brick Lane* and *Maps* illustrate.

Memory, landscape and imagination

Maps employs the imagery of a natural landscape rather than that of an urban setting, and in particular shows how community does not necessarily revolve around urban growth and changes. By comparison, *Brick Lane* explores how the urban setting evolves as a result of diasporic travel and can as such be described as an 'urban novel'. Weedon argues how particularly striking Aslam's use of nature imagery is, in that it 'allows both for beauty to emerge in the context of deprivation and oppression and for the exploration of both differences and continuities between the former lives – now lost – in Pakistan and life in England'.[29] Aslam also refers to clothes and fabric to draw attention to the desire for order in the present environment and demonstrate how dress links to nature and the human instinct for survival. The use of the natural landscape in *Maps* brings into focus how the modernity experienced by the settling diaspora is offset by primeval constructs as a means to negotiate the new environment.[30] Dressing patterns and the uses of fabric to different effects is an extension of managing and indeed manipulating affections. Shamas' lover Suraya 'plans to use the colour of her veil as a segue into talking about her homesickness in Pakistan – aligning herself with his daughter in an effort to deepen his fondness. She had looked through her wardrobe carefully to find something that was the colour of bluebells, something that would lead to the necessary transition in the conversation' (*MLL*, 210). Whilst the novel details how characters such as Suraya use

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[29] Weedon in Sell, 35.

[30] The descriptions of the lake or the '*Safeena*' is described as having 'the subdued glow of antique skin […]. The scent from the pine trees saturates the web- soft air. The solid world seems to have dissolved, leaving behind only light and atmosphere – a world made from almost nothing' (*MLL*, 149).

dressing as a strategy to achieve their goals, reminding us of the character Mrs Lal in *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Aslam demonstrates how clothing has a history in defining, or at least allowing individuals to exhibit, facets of identity.

Shamas' father's childhood curiosity about 'white women' and their clothes results in his memory loss after he is caught up in the violence taking place in Amritsar in 1919. Shamas' father had wanted to find out whether the white women had tails as '[i]n the India of the Raj, the clothes the white women wore were an announcement that they weren't going native [...] making the natives wonder about the nature of the secret concealed under the yards of fabric, a belief spread across the Subcontinent that white women had tails' (*MLL*, 48). The fact that Shamas' religious lineage can be traced back to an event that altered the course of his life highlights scepticism towards organised religion and this opinion is evident throughout the novel. The novel is scathing of religion and its idiosyncrasies and Shamas' adoption of his Muslim identity is shown to be a mere accident of birth as he could equally have practiced Hinduism had it not been for that fateful day when his father had lost his memory having been caught up in the riots; 'among the many things the white people stole from the Subcontinent was that ten-year-old boy's memory, back in 1919' (*MLL*, 47). It is also worth noting that the protest of 1919 was effectively a response to India's colonisation and highlights the human cost of resistance to colonialism.

Nadia Butt in her essay 'Between Orthodoxy and Modernity' writes that the struggle between orthodox Islam and modernity leads to inhuman and irrational social practices. She argues that there is an 'urgent need to translate traditional concepts of Islam into the global landscape of modernity so that the growing gulf between orthodoxy and social change can be bridged'.[31] Butt's arguments highlight different forms of racism but, as she points out in her reference to *Maps*, the novel 'places emphasis on the forms of "internal

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[31] Nadia Butt, 'Between Orthodoxy and Modernity: Mapping the Transcultural Predicaments of Pakistani Immigrants in Multi-Ethnic Britain in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) in Eckstein et al, 153-169.

racism" on the basis of religion and nationality, which have their roots in the partition of India in 1947 between Hindus and Muslims. Ironically, this had more fatal implications than "the white racism".[32] Butt states that the conflict within the community has a traceable history and that when the South Asian diaspora settle in England they do not think of it as a fresh start that can accommodate difference, but rather the same anxieties are transferred to a new setting which comes to resemble, at least in part, the past history of the inhabitants. Butt also deduces that the Pakistani immigrants in *Maps* 'like to imagine their migration to England as "temporary accommodation in a country never thought of as home – the period in England was the equivalent of earthly suffering, the return one day to Pakistan entry into paradise" (*MLL*, 96)'.[33] However, it is also feasible to suggest that the desire to return is also a fiction that accords with how migrants *ought* to view the homeland. In one passage Shamas asks Kaukab if she will return to Pakistan, to which she gives a muddled response which betrays her outward allegiance to Pakistan:

> "Have you given any more thought to a visit to Pakistan?"
> "We'll go for a visit of course, but I refuse to settle there permanently even though there is nothing I would like better. There is nothing on this planet that I loathe more than this country but I won't go to live in Pakistan as long as my children are here…
> "I won't move to Pakistan. What would my life be then? My children in England, me in Pakistan, my soul in Arabia and my heart-…wherever *Jugnu* and *Chanda* are" (*MLL*, 146) (emphasis added).

Kaukab's reliability is brought into question as she justifies remaining in England as being for the sake of her children and inadvertently speaks fondly of her daughter who lives in America, "'I must tell you about Mah-Jabin. She's sitting over there in America as we speak wearing immodest western clothes, no doubt'" (*MLL*, 60, 237). Kaukab is speaking to Suraya and there is no urgent need to tell Suraya about her daughter, other than pride. The negative comment about the type of dress can be read as playful rather than serious and Kaukab could indeed leave out the details of her daughter

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[32] Butt in Eckstein, 161.
[33] Butt in Eckstein, 163.

altogether if she chose. However, Kaukab notes Suraya's appearance and speaks in admiration of the way in which Suraya has dressed herself. "'[…] she's in America, her long hair cut short like a boy, wearing jeans and skirts. Why can't she wear our own clothes, like you, for example – the very personification of Eastern beauty - ?'" (*MLL*, 239) Kaukab states in earnest appreciation of Suraya's appearance.[34] At this point Kaukab does not realise that Suraya's 'personification of Eastern beauty' is a subversive strategy and that she has very deliberately curated a particular image in order to lure Shamas and, latterly, Kaukab. Suraya, partly through her appearance and the sense of nostalgia it stirs in Kaukab, has worked her way into the family home and won Kaukab over through her portrayal of the East. Kaukab, for her part, is trustful of this image as it is one that is identifiable as 'home' and supposedly relatable, not realising that Suraya is the *other* woman her husband betrays her with. Suraya is charming and modest, and channels an air of innocence (aided through her dress), to which both Shamas and Kaukab succumb.

On their first meeting, Suraya deliberately uses her veil to seduce Shamas: 'And now a piece of red cloth with a silken sheen, giving off a pronounced honeysuckle scent as though it had been used to swab up spillage from the perfume flask, floats across his vision, about to fall into the water'. (*MLL*, 135). Shamas' reaction is imbued with sexual connotations '[h]e's suddenly lighter, his muscles relieved, the fingers holding nothing but the scarf which has butterfly blue lozenges along its crenulated edges' (*MLL*, 135). 'Touching her scarf, she says, "Thank you for this. The wind kept it just out of my reach as I ran after it; but Allah had planted you in my path to help me'" (*MLL*, 136). Suraya manipulates the course of events and she takes advantage of the natural elements, her dress and her religion to secure Shamas' attraction to her. Suraya performs the clichéd role of the helpless heroine, in need of rescuing from the elemental force of the wind, a force bringing the couple

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[34] In some cultures, cutting one's hair is seen as a sign of rebelliousness, whilst the lengthening of it has contrasting connotations such as virtuousness.
 See Patrick Olivelle, 'Hair and society: social significance of hair in South Asian traditions', in *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures* (1998), Alf Hiltebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (eds.) (Albany: State of New York Press, 1998), 11-50.

together in a manner that stages the meeting as god willed, *inshallah*, in the Islamic turn of phrase. By using the name of 'Allah' Suraya hints that the meeting is somehow predestined and therefore the subsequent events are justified through religious ordination, even if morally reprehensible. This is a role that Suraya actively constructs and is playing out by whatever means she has to hand, and her dress is part of the strategy. If misusing religious beliefs furthers her plan of action, then Suraya is prepared to use religion to her advantage by employing the system rather than challenging it. However, Suraya's use of the veil illustrates that rather than take away authority – the veil, although employed mischievously, empowers Suraya. The veil allows her to assert her sexuality and announce her arrival and is in stark contrast to the ideals perpetuated in Kaukab's *Veil* magazine which have a debilitating effect on Kaukab.

Intersection of nature and dress

Dress and nature are also shown to intersect and, in one particular image, the Cinnabar moth is used to describe the way 'Pakistani and Indian women dress: the upper body is covered with the *Kameez*-shirt which is made of fabric printed with designs – flowers, geometric shapes – while the *shalwar*- trousers single out one of the main colours of the *kameez*' (*MLL*, 222). The moth, which is brightly coloured and has black wings with red patches, is an apt choice, especially when we consider how Aslam portrays female characters in the novel. Although they are part of a patriarchal structure, Aslam reveals female assertions of authority that are not always obvious at first glance. Although Kaukab achieves authority in more overt ways than Suraya, the novel generally reveals the concealed ways with which individual desires can be achieved. Dressing patterns are, in a reductionist manner, a means to an end.

Suraya is an attractive young woman who has been divorced by her husband in a drunken rage and she preys on Shamas in order to discover whether

marriage would be possible as a way back to her first husband.[35] Suraya too is a victim of the circumstances of her first marriage and is herself in a desperate situation which has resulted in her being separated from her child. Suraya's *silken* veil is also symbolic as the textile is formed using a natural protein fibre produced by insect larvae, such as the Cinnabar caterpillar. The linking of females with insects and Suraya's strategies align her actions with the natural world's operations for survival. Her adopted methods are borne out of a natural instinct to survive and to care for her child, as an animal in the wild would protect their offspring. As her actions demonstrate, she needs to employ her feminine charms as a way to navigate her way back to her first husband, and more importantly, her child. Suraya is aware of how unjust the laws of her religion are and yet she attempts to abide by them in order to be reunited with her young son. Her awareness illustrates the apparent misogyny found in Shariah law. However, Suraya is on her own mission and, when the injustice of the trials she faces enter her mind, she does her best to withdraw from her thoughts:

> *Allah is not being equally compassionate towards the poor woman who is having to go through another marriage through no fault of her own* is a thought that has occasionally crossed Suraya's mind, along with *It's as though Allah forgot there were women in the world when he made some of his laws, thinking only for men* – but she has banished these thoughts as all good Muslims must (*MLL*, 150) (emphasis original).

Shamas himself comes to view Suraya as a complicated character, 'cloaked in a complex veil the way a single flower can produce as many as a hundred chemical compounds' (*MLL*, 228). Shamas worries about the effect that Suraya leaving his life will have and that he 'will be alone with the Cinnabar moth dressed like a woman from the Subcontinent' (*MLL*, 229). Shamas' thoughts imply that he views his wife as the Cinnabar moth figure in his life,

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[35] Under Shariah Law the husband can divorce his wife by pronouncing the phrase '*Talāq*' three times. 'The divorced wife is forthwith rendered unlawful to him, and he cannot remarry her, unless the wife marries first another person by a valid and binding contract, is divorced by this person, after a bona fide consummation of the marriage, and completes the period of '*iddah* consequent upon such repudiation' in Abdur Rahman I. Doi (trans.), *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* (1984) (London: TaHa Publishers Ltd, 1997), 178.

that she will eventually be the cause of his demise. The moths, when they are at the caterpillar stage of their lifecycle, are known to be cannibalistic and this mirrors the way in which Suraya will also treat Kaukab; she will destroy her. Suraya is aware of Shamas' married status from the outset but pursues him nonetheless. Consumed by his feeling for Suraya, Shamas comes to think of a lonely existence with Kaukab, after Suraya ends the affair, on account of his own principles to not marry more than once. Polygamy is permitted under Shariah law and Suraya had been planning on this as a way back to her first husband.[36] Although Shamas is lonely and Suraya had filled a void in his life, morally he seems to acknowledge that his treatment of Kaukab, if he were to marry Suraya, would be wrong even though the argument that Islam permits multiple marriages for men is at his disposal.

Dress in performing identity

As stated, Suraya repeatedly uses the veil made of silken fabric, the personification of modesty in Islam, to lure Shamas. Suraya is described as wearing silk on a number of occasions, 'he spots her, shadowy in olive-green silk' (*MLL*, 189). The use of silk again invokes the order of the natural world and all it produces. Suraya 'takes the edge of the veil and covers her head in a gesture of infinite grace, handling the fine material gently - one of those actions that reveals a person's unspoken attitude to things; the thin sun-flecked fabric settles on her hair in a wonderfully slow yellow wave' (*MLL*, 136). For Suraya, the veil represents her virility and when she is in Shamas' presence, her veil is subversive in its role. What is meant to symbolise modesty and religious piety is used to achieve the opposite, as the veil tempts and succeeds in getting Shamas to cross moral and religious boundaries. Although Suraya, like Kaukab, is portrayed at times as manipulative, *Maps* highlights how the community of Dasht-e-Tanhaii conditions women to

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[36] Polygamy is referred to in *The Qur'an* '[a]nd if you fear that you will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if you fear that you cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hand possess.* Thus it is more likely that you will not do injustice' in *The Qur'an*, Jane McAuliffe (ed.) (New York and London: Norton, 2017) (4.3), 43.
*Typically understood as referring to female slaves made to serve as concubines.

believe in their own inferiority, more so when an event or action brings into question the respectability of a woman.

When Chanda returns to England after two failed marriages in Pakistan, her brothers and father ask her to consider wearing the burqa. 'The men said they felt awkward and ashamed when they were with their friends on a street corner and she went by' (*MLL*, 342) preferring her to display the 'exhibitionist piety' that Al-Azmeh describes on the 'conjuration' of the religion.[37]   In asking Chanda to wear the burqa, the male members of her family seemingly want her to be less visible, which has little to do with preserving her modesty and more to do with limiting the gossip about her, as she goes about undetected.   Again, the narrative suggests that rather than the burqa being used as a garment to shield and protect Chanda, it is for the benefit of concealing patriarchal cowardice, by which her past misfortune is viewed as a blemish on male reputations.   The act of persuading Chanda to wear the item of religious clothing has little to do with Islam but is appropriated and misused to exert male prejudices and is a blight upon the article of clothing. The burqa does not have to be a concrete manifestation of patriarchal oppression if Chanda chooses to wear it of her own accord.[38]   However, Chanda's father and her brothers cannot handle the community reaction and she is deemed scandalous.   The pressures that Chanda faces are steeped in the interpretation of social norms rather than religious doctrine.

Aslam has stated that his portrayal of the working-class community is informed by his own upbringing.   In such communities, women may act duplicitously as a means of survival in environments that are driven by fear

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[37] Al-Azmeh, 7.

[38] Veiling has a long and complex history and Chanda's father and brothers assertions negate the complexities around veiling and simplify the act to one concerned with honour and shame in society.

El Gundi writes in his introduction, 'I came to realize during the course of my research on the subject that veiling is a rich and nuanced phenomenon, a language that communicates social and cultural messages, a practice that has been present in tangible form since ancient times, a symbol ideologically fundamental to the Christian, and particularly the Catholic, vision of womanhood and piety, and a vehicle for resistance in Islamic societies' in Fadwa El Gundi, *Veil, Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (1999) (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishing, 2003), xii.

and shame. On the one hand, women are taught to be 'women' through forms of dress and modes of behaviour. Suraya's circumstances provide some insight into this and her frustration at the injustices of the system she finds herself in. 'Earrings, necklaces, ribbons, perfume, lipstick. The young girls were learning to be women, to be false, teaching themselves to be figures in men's dreams and fantasies' (*MLL*, 202). On the other hand, women themselves subvert this performance and can manipulate it, as Suraya does, as a means an end, which at times skews their outlook as is evident in Kaukab's characterisation. Kaukab convinces herself that she acts in order to benefit her family so that her stay in England is a selfless act to be closer to her children, 'she would remain in hated England because her children are here' (*MLL*, 60). Kaukab, however, dismisses the political and social landscape as anything other than 'pious and devout' compared to the 'decadent and corrupt West' (*MLL*, 63), and yet wants to remain, although she has little contact with the children and her daughter Mah-Jabin lives in America. It seems to be the case that Kaukab is not yet ready to accept the brutal history of her beloved Pakistan and will transfer the rejection of her 'own' country to the country that she migrated to.

The culmination of events that leads to Kaukab's penultimate suicide attempt and finally Shamas' death from apparent suicide brings into question the desire of each character to end their lives and indicates their own sense of failure. It also raises the issue of whether members of the diaspora, like Kaukab and Shamas, are 'programmed' to fail when they resign themselves to rules that leave them unfulfilled as individuals. Kaukab holds on to idealised memories and virtues of Pakistan at the cost of alienating both her husband and her children. Shamas, although not as persistent as Kaukab in implementing moral order, accepts a sexless marriage and eventually forfeits a sexual relationship with Suraya in order to be faithful to Kaukab. Kaukab and Shamas, in their own ways, can both be seen to reject notions of hybridity and engagement with the present and this contributes to their downfall. Hybridity in this context is understood in broader terms of cultural hybridity where tolerance, acceptance and open-mindedness promote the longevity of individuals' existence. When their grandson of mixed heritage is discussed by

a third party, he is described as 'the little boy [who] is 'half Pakistani and half…er…er…er…human' (*MLL*, 10) which reflects the strangeness of being defined as hybrid, as one half of this and another half of the other. Aslam implies that there is a need to bridge the gulf between cultures and that art is the medium that can assist in this complex task.

The narrator states that '[a]ll great artists know that part of their task is to light up the distance between two human beings' (*MLL*, 13) and in *Maps* the character Charag, the eldest son of Kaukab and Shamas, can be seen as exemplifying a hybrid identity and 'he uses his art to celebrate the community'.[39] Shamas, too, believes that his son is 'maturing as an artist and becoming aware of his responsibility as an artist' (*MLL*, 319). Charag's project will involve assembling studio photographs taken of immigrants from the first generation onwards to showcase their presence in society, and Charag acts as a mediator between two cultures, British and Pakistani. Charag questions the authority of religion and the painting of himself with an uncircumcised penis, called *The Uncut Self Portrait*, brings this particular debate to the fore. As he articulates, '[w]hat I am trying to say is that it was the first act of violence done to me in the name of a religion or social system. And I wonder if anyone has the right to do it. We should all question such acts' (*MLL*, 320). For Charag, the questioning is reasonable and justified, but perhaps his shortcomings lie in a lack of empathy for his parent's generation as the ruptures in tradition, heritage and culture they experience are arguably greater than his own, and calls into question an entire mindset of existence which, McLeod emphasises, entails recognising '*generational differences*'.[40] Kaukab realises this when she laments that 'not everyone has the freedom to walk away from a life' (*MLL*, 115), that the gap between the generations is as fraught as the gap between cultures. Intergenerational conflict may surpass the conflicts constructed from differences between races and religions.

The debilitating effects of racialised and religious thinking on diasporic identities is a recurring theme which this thesis has drawn out. In *Maps*

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[39] Lemke in Eckstein, 181.
[40] McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 207.

Aslam attempts, through the metaphor of dress, to articulate an identity which takes into account South Asia's fragmentation and the nationalist ideologies that were formulated under the Islamisation of Pakistan. More specifically, Aslam articulates the element of 'exhibitionist piety' that dressing entails and which is indicative of the role of performance and strategy in the development of dressing patterns.[41] Thus, the particulars of dress and the psychological state that manifests itself through the way in which an individual is clothed has varying outcomes. For Kaukab, the effort to accommodate constructed nationalist and religious fundamentalisms is all consuming and she internalises her subordination as a woman, despite the absence of an immediate patriarchal threat. By comparison, Suraya overcomes the challenges in her life through skillful and determined manipulation of dress in ways that outwardly comply with conventions of modesty. She recognises the limitations of her indigenous cultural landscape and yet, by abiding by its restrictions, she turns prescribed modest forms of dress to her advantage and into opportunities for sexual empowerment. Through a focus on nature the narrative asserts the human desire for survival whereby dress is an extension of the human need to shield oneself from destructive external forces that threaten existence.

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[41] Al-Azmeh, 7.

Chapter six

Memory and Transnational Utopias: Kamila Shamsie's fiction

This chapter examines Kamila Shamsie's novels, tracing features of her oeuvre and considering the wider resonance of Shamsie's writing in a neocolonial neoliberal and global environment. Shamsie centres her narratives around major historical conflicts and the effect these have on individual lives. She illustrates how the politics of hierarchical structures alter the course of global and family histories. Through the medium of fiction, Shamsie is openly engaged with politics and the present, negative, reverberations of past conflict and memories. In describing Shamsie as a transnational writer, I am mindful of Shamsie's place in a postcolonial familial literary tradition. Shamsie moves beyond the postcolonial concerns of an earlier generation as she enters a 'liberating region of representational undecideability' in an optimistic vision for world literature.[1]

Diasporic literature – longer histories and family networks

Kamila Shamsie may be described as representative of a new wave of contemporary female diasporic South Asian writers that occupy a transnational space in terms of how their work is received globally. In 2013 she appeared in Granta's selection of *20 Best of Young British Novelists* which is an achievement of note given that at the time Shamsie was not yet a British citizen, *and yet* an exception was made for her. Such an example is telling of the critical reception her work has received, recognised both in Pakistan and in the global north.[2] Shamsie's writing, in relation to the development of the Anglophone South Asian novel by writers such as Rushdie and Roy, has been described as '*expand[ing] the space created for them by their forebears*' (emphasis original) so that her writing, alongside other writers such as Monica

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[1] Bill Ashcroft, 'Globalization, Transnation and Utopia' in *Locating Transnational Ideals* (2010), Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (eds.) (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 22.

[2] Shamsie's first novel *In the City by the Sea* (1998) was shortlisted for the Mail on Sunday/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. He second novel *Salt and Saffron* was amongst the list of writers on 'Orange's 21 writers for the 21st Century'. In 1999 Shamsie received the Prime Minister's Award for Literature in Pakistan. Her fifth novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009) was shortlisted for the 2009 Orange Prize for Fiction.

Ali, engages in an inter-regional dialogue with South Asian history after 1947.[3] In Shamsie's fifth novel, *Burnt Shadows* (2009), Shamsie transcends national paradigms, setting the novel outside of the South Asian context of her earlier works, and occupying a more transnational space, as cultivated in the protagonist Hiroko Tanaka and the various geographic encounters that mark her own life history. Shamsie's subsequent works of fiction after the publication of *Burnt Shadows* have a wide historical and geographical scope that make them representative of a world literature rather than a South Asian tradition. Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* (2014) is also broad in its sweep of history following a young woman from London, Vivian Rose Spencer, who travels to Peshawar in 1915 at the outbreak of the First World War. Vivian is an archaeologist and the narrative covers the travels of Scylax, the fifth century BCE explorer, as well as Pashtun men at home in Peshawar, at war in Flanders and at the site of struggle for Indian Independence. Shamsie's most recent book, *Home Fire* (2017), is also expansive in its range and is based loosely on Sophocles' *Antigone*. In a review of *Home Fire* for *The Guardian*, Natalie Haynes writes that: 'if Sophocles' play had a simple message, it is that older generations do not always know better than their children, and that religious duty trumps our obligations to civil society'.[4] As this thesis has progressed, generational divides, as well as religious divides, have been shown to create conflicts in a range of contexts. This is indicative of the human condition to repeat past failures, even with hindsight knowledge of the shortcomings of history. As such, Shamsie's fiction can be read in terms of a philosophical perspective and as reinforcing the lesson that society ought to learn from the past. The reference to an ancient past in Greek mythology in

[3] Ruvani Ranasinha, *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalisation* (2016) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33.
Ranasinha states that the 'dominance of India in postcolonial fiction is due in part to the spate of fiction on India that followed in the wake of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981): a set of mostly male authors dominated the 1980s and 1990s. They signalled the fracturing of India's Nehruvian consensus from the Emergency of 1975. This new group of women writers responds in part to the ramifications of this splintering within the rest of the subcontinent' (Ranasinha, 9).
[4] Natalie Haynes, *Home Fire* (2017)
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/10/home-fire-kamila-shamsie-review
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

Home Fire highlights conflicts prevalent in society which are timeless in spite of our knowledge of the past.

Shamsie herself has spoken about the writing process and led a workshop titled "Writing the Unfamiliar", an idea that resonates in her own work, notably *Burnt Shadows*, and the earlier novel *Kartography*, which presents an overlay of history and cultures.[5] Shamsie herself divides her time between Britain, Pakistan and the US and has homes in all three countries. Of her experience of gaining British citizenship, she has stated "'I had thought dual citizenship would feel like a gain, not a loss. Instead, as I took my seat in the chamber I found myself reflecting on what it means to be from a country in which acquiring a second passport is regarded across the board as reason for celebration'".[6]

Shamsie belongs to an affluent family of the Pakistani elite in which her own literary aspirations were encouraged. She thus avoided the limitations of mainstream Pakistani society and its consolidation of patriarchal structures under, the state Islamisation discussed in the previous chapter.[7] Born in Karachi in 1973, Shamsie was first educated there and then in New York where she completed a BA in Creative Writing at Hamilton College. Shamsie also completed the MFA Program for Poets and Writers from Massachusetts University. Shamsie had writing ambitions from a very young age and it was whilst she was still at college that she wrote and published her first novel, *In the City by the Sea* (1998). She has since authored six novels as well as one

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[5] Kamila Shamsie, *Royal Society of Literature: Writing the Unfamiliar* (2015)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmGujlpu0gk
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

[6] Kamila Shamsie, *Kamila Shamsie on applying for British Citizenship: 'I never felt safe'* (2014)
http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/mar/04/author-kamila-shamsie-british-citizen-indefinite-leave-to-remain
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

[7] 'General Zia declared Pakistan to be an Islamic state. He reversed Ayub's measures limiting the role of Islam in the state, and greatly extended the formal Islamizing measures which Bhutto had adopted in a (vain) attempt to appeal to the Islamist parties. However, Zia conceived his Islamization programme as top-down, and almost entirely in terms of strengthening state power through an increase in the disciplinary aspects of Shariah Law' (Lieven, 77).

non-fiction text, *Offence: The Muslim Case* (2009). [8] Shamsie is also a regular media commentator and radio broadcaster and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.[9]

Shamsie comes from a family who had firsthand experiences of the violent traumatic course of South Asian history. In a country that is typically portrayed in media imagery as patriarchal and oppressive, Shamsie's status as a female writer challenges a homogenised image of the Pakistani female as subjugated. As Lieven writes of his visits to Pakistani cities:

> Something that one takes away from visits to the lower and lower middle classes in Pakistan's cities is the singularly repulsive nature of the semi-Western, semi-modern new culture these cities are liable to breed, especially concerning the treatment of women – a mixture of Western licentiousness with local brutality, crudity and chauvinism. This culture threatens women with the worst of all worlds, in which they are exposed to exacerbated male lust without the protections afforded by traditional culture, and in which their children are exposed to a range of new dangers and temptations. This is why the support of women forms such an important background to many of the Islamist leaders with whom I have spoken (that is, not the Taleban) have stressed an Islamic women's education programme as a core part of their programme.[10]

Writing in *The Guardian,* Shamsie herself has highlighted the influence that her mother, the journalist and editor, Muneeza Shamsie, as well as both her grandmother and grandaunt, the writers Jahanara Habibullah and Attia Hosain, have had on her success. Shamsie writes: 'while I grew up in the

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[8] Kamila Shamsie's novels are:
In the City by the Sea (1998) (London: Granta Publications, 2004).
Salt and Saffron (2000) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001).
Kartography (2002) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003).
Broken Verses (2005) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).
Burnt Shadows (2009) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009).
A God in Every Stone (2014) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).
Home Fire (2017) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).
[9] Shamsie also writes for *The Guardian, The New Statesman, Index on Censorship* and *Prospect* magazine.
British Council Literature, Kamila Shamsie
https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/kamila-shamsie
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[10] Lieven, 131.

harsh world of a misogynist military government in 1980s Pakistan - where women's freedom was severely threatened - my familial legacy enabled me to imagine, without pressure or expectation, a life centred around writing'.[11]

The influence of family members and their presence in the literary world was inspirational for the young Shamsie:

> I grew up with a curious mix of awareness and ignorance about this literary line. I certainly knew that my great-aunt, Attia Hosain (or "B" as everyone knew her), was a writer who had published two books by Chatto. As someone who wanted to be a fiction writer from a very early age, and whose first and default language was English, I remember pulling B's novels off my mother's bookshelf and marvelling that a relation should have achieved my dream – publication by a house at the centre of English Literature.[12]

In Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, discussed in chapter three, Shamsie's grandaunt examines the decline of purdah practice in relation to the status of women in Indian society. *Sunlight* is engaged with the social politics of its era and the gendered role of women in India in the 1920s and 1930s, a period, for Ruvani Ranasinha, that gave rise to 'alternative gendered emerging national narratives' suggesting the pioneering nature of Hosain's earlier novel. Shamsie also describes her great-grandmother, Inam Habibullah, as 'one of a number of Indian women of her generation with a keen spirit of reform'.[13]

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[11] Kamila Shamsie, *A Long Loving Literary Line* (2009).
http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/may/01/kamila-shamsie-books-fiction-women
[Accessed 23/01/2018]
[12] *The Guardian* 1/05/2009.
Chatto and Windus was a leading publisher from the Victorian era founded in 1855 by John Camden Hotten and also became an important platform for South Asian Anglophone writers. Chatto and Windus' interest in publishing South Asian writers appears to date from its acquisition of Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press (founded in 1917) in 1947, who were also closely connected to authors such as Mulk Raj Anand. Cecil Day Lewis, one of Hogarth's prize authors, became an editor at Chatto and edited Attia Hosain's novels. See Ruvani Ranasinha, *South Asian Writers in Twentieth-Century in Britain: Culture in Translation* (2007) (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), 23.
Oliver Warner, *Chatto and Windus: A Brief Account of the Firm's Origin, History and Development* (1973) (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).
[13] Ranasinha, 33.

Inam Habibullah eschewed the veiled and segregated life of purdah after she was married. Inam Habibullah also became the first president of the women's subcommittee of the All-India Muslim League. Part of her efforts within the organisation were to insist on drawing Muslim women out of purdah and into the world of politics, a move that outraged many of the men within the Muslim League.[14]

Such family history with its powerful female members points to the significance of female empowerment in the resistance of a culture that encourages domesticity in its female population. However, the literary lineage which Shamsie can lay claim to is also enabled by the social mobility that female members of her family were afforded by their enhanced economic status. Ranasinha, in *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Writers* (2016), makes the point that Shamsie is a member of a new generation of female writers whose literary status is linked to the personal privilege enabled by her family history.[15]

<u>Macro history and world literature</u>

Shamsie is part of a generation of writers who, as a result of their education and travel, are at ease with postcoloniality in its lived and theoretical senses.[16] Understanding of postcolonial feminist theoretical discourse is an aspect that Shamsie weaves into her fictional narratives, most notably in her earlier work. The narratives explore diverse topics that range from warfare to stories of individual love. Her writing is political and her novels set individual stories against a historical, political context. In an interview for *The Guardian*, Shamsie states '[w]herever in the world you go, you're living in the world's

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[14] Ranasinha, 33.
[15] Ranasinha notes that Shamsie as well as the writer Anita Desai 'self-consciously scrutinise the elite comprador class to which they inescapably belong' (Ranasinha, 8).
[16] Shamsie read widely as a young adult. Amongst the writers she read are Toni Morrison, Michael Ondaatje, Italo Calvino, Grace Paley.
Michele Filgate, *The Kamila Shamsie Interview*
http://quarterlyconversation.com/kamila-shamsie-burnt-shadows-interview
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

oldest and most pervasive empire, which is the empire of patriarchy'.[17] Shamsie recalls time and again critical references to her books as 'romances', and thus implies her irritation at being described as a 'romantic' writer. 'Male writers such as […] Nadeem Aslam will write novels which have romances at their centre but the books are never, ever, ever, referred to as romances'.[18] As Ranasinha indicates in her own study, Shamsie belongs to a newer generation of diasporic South Asian women writers who represent a 'new constellation of diasporic South Asian Anglophone women fiction writers' who Ranasinha argues, 'have been overshadowed by the attention paid to their male precursors who first came to the fore in the 1980s and 1990s'.[19] As Ranasinha states, this generation of writers 'exemplify a new literary category that signals the inadequacy of postcolonial models of 'writing back' to a former colonial centre and of cultural imperialism'.[20] Shamsie, then, is representative of a more profound shift in postcolonial literature, 'not the globalisation of fiction in English, but rather a *fiction of globalisation,* a "world literature"'.[21] Writing about diasporic fiction generally, Roger Bromley states that:

> Emphasis is placed upon cultures of encounter and the possibility of belonging simultaneously, mentally, psychologically and experimentally to a diversity of cultures. An attempt is made to theorize culture in ways which are not primarily national, and to explore identity in ways which do not bind it to nationality. This is partly done by using a concept which is becoming increasingly central to contemporary cultural studies: that of diasporic studies.[22]

Shamsie's portrayal of historical conflict and the workings of memory in individual stories work towards a transformation of the social landscape and

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[17] Natalie Hanman, *Kamila Shamsie: Where is the American writer writing about America in Pakistan? There is a deep lack of reckoning* (2014)
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/apr/11/kamila-shamsie-america-pakistan-interview
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[18] Natalie Hanman, *Kamila Shamsie: Where is the American writer writing about America in Pakistan? There is a deep lack of reckoning* (2014).
[19] Ranasinha, 7.
[20] Ranasinha, 14.
[21] Ranasinha, 14.
[22] Roger Bromley, *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions* (2000) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 7.

representations of home. She adopts recurring narrative tropes in examining historical conflict, the concept of memory and ideas of home. Whilst notions of conflict carry negative connotations, Shamsie draws a degree of optimism from its effects. She repeatedly adopts conflict as a catalyst to shape a narrative and as a means to examine contemporary effects of ensuing political conflicts after British colonialism in South Asia, and how this in turn comes to manifest itself with notions of identity and selfhood, which her novels, notably *Kartography,* explore in detail. Shamsie also considers the construction of memory as a narrative created to suit a given context for both the individual and a community.

Shamsie's novels have recurring themes that provide insight into her worldview and philosophy. Each of the narratives represent a family saga which relates, in varying degrees, to South Asia's postcolonial history. In documenting the past from the different perspectives of her characters, the ambivalence and subjective nature of memory becomes a narrative trope. The characters of her novels are portrayed as negotiating individual identity where conflict and memory of the past are shown to have a defining effect on identity, both for the individual and for the communities formed as a result of implemented borders. Shamsie's fiction demonstrates a preoccupation with history and traumatic events that have altered the social landscape, both in the immediate aftermath of an event and also over an extended period of time where the past continues to affect an evolving context. Her interest in the past underpins the notion that history reverberates irrespective of the time that has lapsed since an event. Political turmoil and in particular the resulting conflict associated with the Second World War, the end of the British Empire in India, Indian Partition in 1947, the Independence of East Pakistan to create Bangladesh, and the post 9/11 landscape, are all catalysts in her novels. Historical conflict is used to explore the significance of memory in a given context and how the legacy of conflict is subject to continual adaptations. Through her fiction, Shamsie considers whether the notion of 'home' is restricted to a geographical site, in an age where the effects of globalisation are increasingly visible as a result of technological advances. The concept of 'home' emerges as being intangible, a feeling or an emotion, rather than a

traditional view of home as occupying a certain physical space. This is suggestive of how ideas of home alter as a result of increased mobility, and prompts a consideration of how this impacts upon individual and group (community) identity. Through these motifs, Shamsie promulgates an optimistic vision of the migrant experience; one where past conflict and memories do not necessarily hinder individual or community development.

Shamsie's fiction can be read as conventional popular fiction, but also as a critically engaged social commentary on the effects of postcolonialism and the latter emergence of transnational identities. Firstly, as popular fiction, each narrative charts the development of protagonists as they learn to negotiate the environment in which they live and follows a pattern that resembles the *bildungsroman* structure in which each of Shamsie's protagonists mature over the course of the narrative. Secondly, Shamsie's novels are overtly engaged with theoretical discourse. It is notably her first and second novels that highlight a conscious knowledge and understanding of postcolonial discourse to a reader with an interest in postcolonial study. This is exemplified in her second novel *Salt and Saffron* (2000) in which Shamsie directly refers to the work of Frantz Fanon, a reference worked into the dialogue of her characters to indicate an awareness of their own contexts in terms of postcolonial debate, and the effectiveness of the work of theorists to alter perceptions and influence individual outlook. Aliya, her protagonist, states to a college friend Celeste that 'your neo-imperialism anticipates my post-colonialism', drawing attention to the developments of ongoing debates in scholarship (*SS*, 159). The effect is such that whilst her fiction can be read as 'popular', Shamsie also uses the medium as a means for theoretical discussion and consequently blurs the boundaries between fictional narrative and critical theory in order to reveal the process of storytelling as suggestive of a dialectical treatment of how history is recorded. From one perspective, Shamsie can be seen to make postcolonial theory a part of everyday experience through the medium of narrative, illustrating how the particular discourse is more than *just* theory; it is also significantly a reality, as her novel *Kartography* details, in its intersection of romantic love and political division in the wake of the civil war of 1971 between East and West Pakistan.

History and 'intimate epics'[23]

Whilst Karachi emerges as a key locale in her work, Shamsie creates characters who embrace the effects of globalisation in their lives. The impact of history on personal lives is revealed as Shamsie draws on a legacy of historical conflict that has its roots beyond colonial practices and focuses on experiences after the colonial encounter, in as much as an original trauma, as the character of Hiroko demonstrates. Shamsie highlights how life after a major historical conflict is not necessarily defined by conflict alone. For Shamsie, conflict is a point of reference; the consequential effects are the story. As she would write in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) of Hiroko, who had survived the Nagasaki bombing, 'the story of Hiroko Ashraf's youth was not the story of the bomb, but the voyage after it' (*BS*, 223). Hiroko moves beyond being defined as *hibakusha*, a victim of the Nagasaki bombing.

The fact that the Nagasaki bombing is the chosen event, rather than the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, suggests that Shamsie is interested in articulating experience through narrating memories from the perspective of subjects that have been overlooked in the writing of global history. Emphasising the imbalance in what history records, Hiroko describes a history book belonging to her son Raza, which contains 'a full page about Hiroshima, with a paragraph appended about Nagasaki' (*BS*, 178). The detail refers to the ways in which historical events are subject to imbalanced attention and how they take their place in a hierarchical structure of trauma when represented in culture.

In the opening chapter of *Burnt Shadows,* Shamsie's description of Hiroko is that of a young girl on the cusp of womanhood. Shamsie details Hiroko discarding one type of garment for another as a symbolic representation of her transition to womanhood:

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[23] Ranasinha, *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction,* 9.

> She undresses quickly, removing the hated grey monpe and shirt
> that was once a gleaming white and is now just the colour of too
> many washes. Then she continues, removing every scrap of
> clothing. Something strange is happening inside her body
> which she doesn't understand, but she knows she wants it to go
> on happening. Without care for underclothes, she slips one arm
> into the sleeve of the kimono, the silk electric against her skin
> (*BS*, 22).

The scene depicting Hiroko's undressing, in a sense from girl to woman, also lends itself to the title 'Burnt Shadows' as a reference to the history that Hiroko will bear onto herself hereafter.[24] The love affair with Konrad and the intimate direction this takes suggests a pivotal moment in Hiroko's life of sexual awakening. Hiroko's clothes and the conformity they represent, are replaced by the silk kimono and the feelings that Konrad has aroused in her. In the next moment, her life is forever changed by the nuclear bomb, which kills Konrad amongst its catastrophic devastation, and is literally inscribed by the imprint of the kimono, tattoo like, scorched on Hiroko's back. The episode is based on actual facts of the atomic bombing as John Hersey describes in his study *Hiroshima* (1946), and which Shamsie herself had read.[25] In this respect, Shamsie alludes to clothing and dress as a metaphor for stories that are constructed from major events in history. In one scene from *Burnt Shadows,* James Burton replies to his wife on Sajjad's keenness to inherit his master's shirts: 'Discarded clothes as metaphor for the end of Empire. That's an interesting one. I don't care how he looks at my shirt so long as he allows me to choose the moment at which it becomes his' (*BS*, 35). The remark suggests the intricacies surrounding British colonisation and impending independence for India. The passage seemingly refers to the last Viceroy of India, Louis Mountbatten 1ˢᵗ Earl Mountbatten of Burma, who had

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[24] Kamila Shamsie discussing *Burnt Shadows*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcK07vOcV7k&t=136s
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[25] John Hersey writes that 'the burns had made patterns – of undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had had on their kimonos' in John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946) (London: Penguin Group, 2001), 39-40.

the mandate for the transfer of power from British colonial rule which Fig.17 documents.[26]
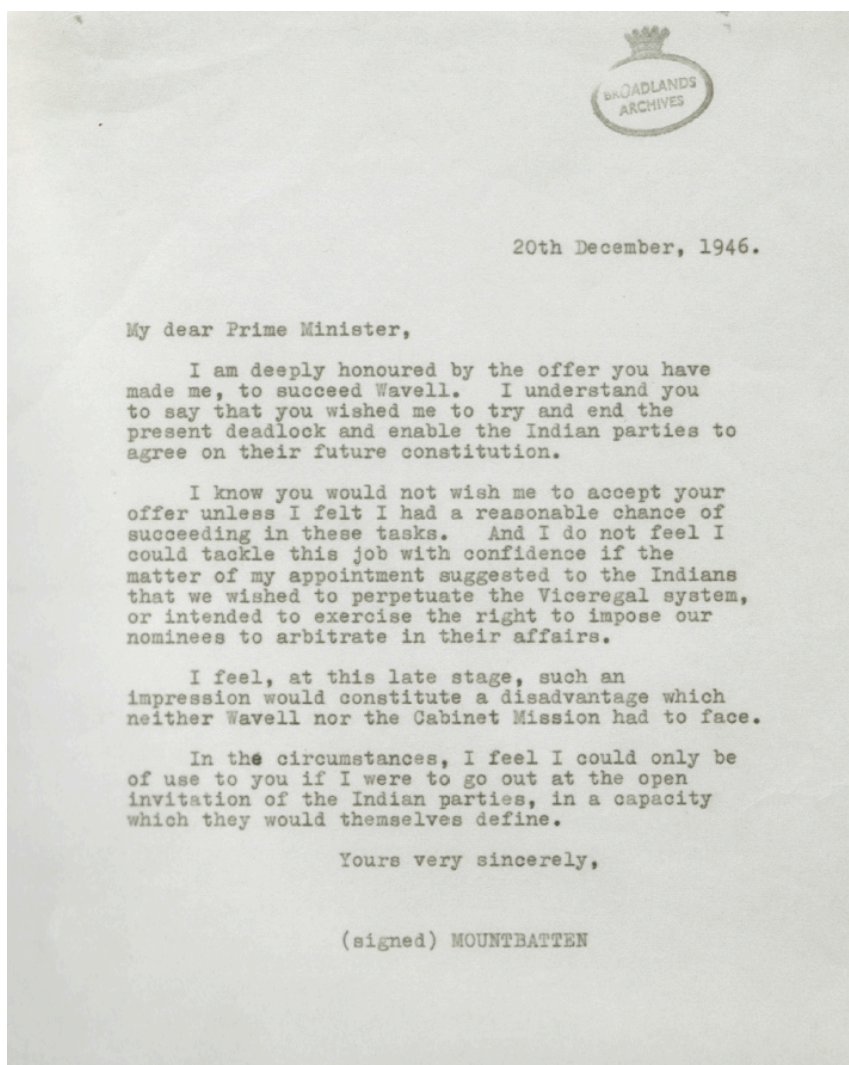

20th December, 1946.

My dear Prime Minister,

I am deeply honoured by the offer you have made me, to succeed Wavell. I understand you to say that you wished me to try and end the present deadlock and enable the Indian parties to agree on their future constitution.

I know you would not wish me to accept your offer unless I felt I had a reasonable chance of succeeding in these tasks. And I do not feel I could tackle this job with confidence if the matter of my appointment suggested to the Indians that we wished to perpetuate the Viceregal system, or intended to exercise the right to impose our nominees to arbitrate in their affairs.

I feel, at this late stage, such an impression would constitute a disadvantage which neither Wavell nor the Cabinet Mission had to face.

In the circumstances, I feel I could only be of use to you if I were to go out at the open invitation of the Indian parties, in a capacity which they would themselves define.

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) MOUNTBATTEN

Fig. 17: Letter from Mountbatten to Prime Minister Clement Attlee (1946)[27]

In their research into Britain granting India its independence, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre in *Freedom at Midnight* (1975) write that the 'nationalist movement with which he [Mountbatten] would have to deal if he went to India was the oldest and most unusual of all. In a quarter of a century of inspired agitation and protest, its leadership had forced history's greatest empire to the decision Atlee's party had taken: let Britain leave India in good

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[26] Pamela Mountbatten, *India Remembered* (2007), foreword by India Hicks (London: Pavilion Books, 2007).
[27] Mountbatten, 15.

time rather than be driven out by the forces of history and armed rebellion'.[28] Removing articles of clothing is portrayed as a symbolic gesture in reaction to a wider societal concern and maintaining a level of control in India's independence and subsequent partitioning. As such, even Hiroko's intimate moments after the encounter with Konrad have much broader resonance in the recording of history:

> Hiroko leans out of the window, forgetting she is almost entirely naked. Something is wrong with her eyes. They see perfectly until the bottom of the slope and then they cannot see. Instead they are inventing sights. Fire and smoke and, through the smoke, nothing. Through the smoke, land that looks the way her back feels where it has no feeling. She touches the something else on her back. Her fingers can feel her back but her back cannot feel her fingers. Charred silk, seared flesh. How is this possible? Urakami Valley has become her flesh. Her flesh has become Urakami Valley. She runs her thumb over what was once skin. It is bumped and raw, lifeless' (*BS*, 27).

In a sense, it is the removal of her clothing, voluntarily in the first instance and forcibly in the next, which implies Hiroko's rebirth. After the cataclysmic event, Hiroko is no longer at home in her indigenous homeland and thus begins her journey as a citizen of the world. Political conflicts from recent history are woven into each of Shamsie's fictional narratives. However, it is through the workings of individual memories that Shamsie articulates the effects of history and the multifaceted legacy of conflict. The juxtaposing of historical fact and memory invokes a retrospective and contemplative nature to the narratives. The effect is such that Shamsie's fiction acquires a philosophical dimension that transcends the plot of the novel.

Richard Terdiman's description of memory illustrates its dual aspect and is particularly useful in relation to how Shamsie adopts memory as a method by which the past can be reconstructed for present and possibly future

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[28] Collins and Lapierre, 6.

development. Terdiman describes memory thus: 'Memory is the past made present'.[29] This is elaborated by Michael Rothberg:

> The notion of "making present" has two important corollaries: first, that memory is a contemporary phenomenon, something that while concerned with the past, happens in the present; and second that memory is a form of work, working through labor or action.[30]

Shamsie's handling of memory illustrates Terdiman's observation that memory is fundamentally situated in the present; it is a link to the past, but is constructed in the present and (re)frames the past, perhaps to suit the present. Shamsie's narratives employ the trope as a way to voice a marginalised perspective on a historical event. The character Sajjad ironically states that 'my history is your picnic ground' (*BS,* 81), drawing further attention to the way in which events are remembered from different perspectives and how Sajjad's history becomes a tale to regale for another, while for Sajjad the memory of his nation's history has a greater significance than colonialist recollection. The positing of binaries is reminiscent of Edward Said's original arguments in *Orientalism*, as initially drawn on in the introduction of this thesis, where Said argues that the West creates a binary between itself and the East or Orient. Shamsie's narrative seems to imply that the same model of West and East is seen to emerge in India after Independence and subsequently in Partition. The impetus is that the 'centre-periphery' model is not exclusive to Europe and the rest of the world. This can be seen in both the Partition in 1947 and in 1971: Indians are placed in contrast to Pakistanis, and subsequently Bangladeshis are contrasted to Pakistanis, upon religious and cultural grounds where previously, in colonial India, a single nation had existed, albeit with regional and cultural differences. In *Kartography*, a dinner guest at Karim's house, crudely and a touch comically, states: 'In 1947, East and West Pakistan were created, providing a pair of testicles for the phallus of India' (*K*, 22), a remark that indicates an image of India's positioning and its centrality post-Independence at the cost of marginalisation

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[29] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (1993) (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
[30] Rothberg, 4.

of East and West Pakistan.[31] As the dinner guest comments, India becomes the key player whilst East and West Pakistan are marginalised, as supporting acts. Representations of Pakistan recreate a structure of 'centre' located in India, with Pakistan (and later, Bangladesh) as peripheral in contrast to the postcolonial status of India. Shamsie displays a continuing preoccupation with this by looking to the narrative memoirs of communities that are subject to ongoing marginalisation.

The marginalisation that results is, however, more complicated than India being seen in 'phallic' terms in relation to Pakistan. In reality, amongst the key figures of political administration lay deeply personal relationships as well as the personal lives which would affect their politics.[32] Nehru and Jinnah were at odds with each other whereas Gandhi and Nehru were friends: 'Gandhi had been in a sense, Nehru's *guru*' and between them 'a fascinating father-son relation grew up, animated by all the tensions, affections and repressed guilt such a friendship implied.[33] Nehru and Mountbatten were also very good friends: 'they both loved to talk and expanded in each other's company'.[34] Gandhi, of course, did not want to divide India and his relationship with Nehru changed: '[t]he son was ready to leave his father's house for the new world he saw beyond its gates'.[35] The entangled relationships highlight a fundamental fact of individuals and how the political is perhaps always personal. At a base level, individuals desire the right to assert their own identity and will make concerted efforts towards its construction. This is exemplified to a degree, arguably in a superficial

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[31] Jinnah's role as the leader of the Muslim League and his involvement in the division of India into two independent sovereign states, India and Pakistan.
See Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan* (1954) (Oxford: Oxford University Press Pakistan, 2006).

[32] Jinnah suffered from ill health and was diagnosed with terminal tuberculosis. However, 'he was not going to let his rendezvous with death cheat him of his other rendezvous with history. With extraordinary courage, with an intense and consuming zeal that sent his life's candle guttering out in a last harsh burst of flame, Jinnah lunged for his lifetime's goal. "Speed" Jinnah told Mountbatten in their first discussions of India's future, was "the essence of the contract". And so, too, had it become the essence of Mohammed Ali Jinnah's own contract with destiny' (Collins and Lapierre, 139-140).

[33] Collins and Lapierre, 107, 108.

[34] Collins and Lapierre, 108.

[35] Collins and Lapierre, 108.

manner, through the adopted dress of each of the three key figures in India's postcolonial history, Gandhi adopting the loincloth as discussed earlier, and in the garments worn by Jinnah and Nehru on formal occasions. Personal dressing reflects political allegiances and, in the case of Nehru and Jinnah, has become iconoclastic. Nehru developed his own style and the Nehru jacket was named after him, a hip length tailored coat with a mandarin collar, its front modelled on the *achkan*. The Nehru jacket is in fact shorter in length than the garment that Nehru would wear, but is still referred to as the Nehru jacket in homage to India's first prime minister after Independence. Jinnah, too, would have the qaraqul (sheep fur) hat named as the Jinnah cap after him, and is now part of the national dress of Pakistan. Both the jacket and cap survive as national apparel – an apt illustration of how ideological symbols often originate from a personal style and are adopted to represent political affiliation.

Fig. 18: Nehru, in a portrait gifted to Pamela Mountbatten (1948)[36]
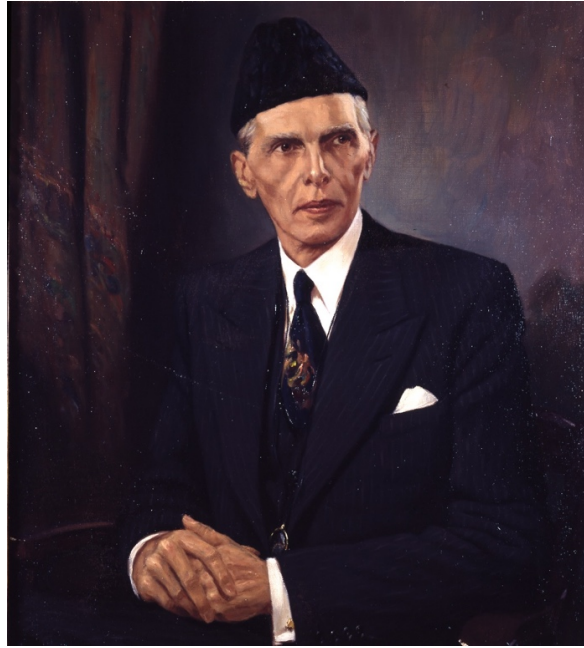
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[36] Mountbatten, 71.

Fig. 19: Jinnah, in a portrait in Lincoln's Inn (1965)[37]

Characterisation - conflict and allegory

In *Kartography,* Shamsie contextualises the narrative to demonstrate the personal conflicts from the political landscape during the period of upheaval of 1971. Maheen is Bengali and Zafar is Pakistani and their relationship comes under scrutiny for its cross-cultural nature during a period of heightened tension.[38] For the couple, the social conflict proves to be too great a challenge to overcome leading to the 'fiancé swap' with Ali and Yasmin, their mutual friends who are also Bengali and Pakistani respectively. Zafar's 'racist' remark '[…] "Think of it as a civic duty. I'll be diluting her Bengali blood line"' (*K*, 232) becomes the act which Zafar, rather than Maheen, cannot forgive himself for.[39] The narrative of *Kartography*, spanning two

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[37] Portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn http://lincolnsinn.co.uk/index.php/2-uncategorised/696-april-2016-jinnah [Accessed on 23/01/2018]

[38] As Collins and Lapierre note of Hindu-Muslim relations prior to the Partition of 1947, the 'two communities mixed socially, attending each other's feasts, sharing the poor implements with which they worked. There intermingling tended to end there. Intermarriage was almost unknown' (Collins and Lapierre, 29).   The same can equally be said of the interaction of Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities; both intermingled to a degree but intermarriage was rare.

[39] During the 1971 Bangladesh war for Independence there was a systematic campaign of genocidal rape of Bangladeshi women by members of the Pakistani military and supporting Islamist militias. In West Pakistan, a fatwa was declared openly supporting the rape of Bengali women by the Pakistani Army in a move that

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generations, illustrates how the past can determine the present for subsequent generations. However, and contradictorily to an extent, whilst the influence of the past is of significance to the present, the present in *Kartography* is shown to supersede past conflict and resume what may be termed a 'fated' order. This recalls the character Nazneen in *Brick Lane* and her preoccupation with the idea of fate, and which she challenges through the course of the narrative. Shamsie's portrayal of Karim and Raheen, the children of Maheen and Zafar, draws upon ideas of predestination or fate so the strength of Karim and Raheen's childhood bond can weather future tensions that arise as a result of Karim's travels and the perception of conflict from the position of indigene and diaspora. It is the second-generation of characters that seek to integrate the changes brought about through technological advancement, and live their lives through modern means of travel and communication, a move which entails cultural shifts and at times causes tensions both with contemporaries and with an older generation when outlooks begin to differ. Shamsie focuses her narratives around traumatic historical events and draws attention to the ways in which the past is documented and the extent of belief in a specific construction of the past.

Whilst Shamsie adopts conflict as a catalyst for narrative, she also examines the role of destiny. An example is evident in the conversation between Karim and Raheen and the way in which they view their own existences as being co-dependent. When Karim tells Raheen, 'you know, if I wasn't me, you wouldn't be you' (*K*, 4), the inference is that the pair are somehow intrinsically bound. The connection between the two is shown by Shamsie to have a mystical element by which they finish off each other's sentences and speak in anagrams, highlighting the spiritual connection they share. This closeness can also be said to have an allegorical quality, intimating common roots in South Asian history. In the same conversation, Raheen replies '[n]o matter where I begin, that line finds its way into my narrative so very early on,

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was strategically designed to forcibly assimilate Bengalis culturally who were seen as weaker than their counterparts in the West. See Yasmin Saikia, *Women, War and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971* (2011) (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011).

and forces linearity to give way to a ramble of hindsight' (*K*, 4). When Raheen speaks of 'the line', Shamsie is alluding to the understanding that exists between the two, so that the 'linearity' she describes is enforced by the context. However, whilst this may be effective for a time, an opposing 'linearity' also exists, one that may look like a 'ramble', but in fact represents the understanding that Karim and Raheen share, *in spite of* logic and reason. Shamsie thus implies that two types of 'linearity' exist, the first representing the material world and influenced by the social landscape. However, it is the second form of 'linearity' that also interests Shamsie, as illustrated in the relationship that Karim and Raheen share. This latter form relies on bonds that exist irrespective of the outer world and are, on the face of it, inexplicable. From an allegorical perspective, the bond can be seen to represent the early modern history of the Indian subcontinent in the Mughal Empire – long before India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were created – and the splitting of what was once a zenith Empire in terms of how much land the rule covered.[40] Shamsie, however, may be hinting that the ancient bond, although perhaps less prominent after Partition, exists and the affinity between the nations making up South Asia are inextricably entwined and will persist regardless of imposed borders of 'linearity'.

Whilst political conflict can mar individual relationships, Shamsie shows the fluid nature of political conflict and how 'linearity' and harmony between individuals is a more powerful force than historical conflict, as Raheen and Karim seem destined for one another. Above all, in *Kartography*, Shamsie shows the subtle connections between the historical context and conflict – in particular how conflict can redefine social boundaries and cause loss and separation. Conflict, whilst resulting in a change to the status quo, can nonetheless bring individuals together. Raheen's mother tells her of the parallels that can be drawn upon between social history and personal history. Raheen is told that: 'History is never obliging enough to replay itself in all

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[40] The Mughal Empire, which extended over large parts of the Indian subcontinent and Afghanistan, was one of the largest centralised states in pre-modern world history. See John Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (1993) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

details. Not personal history, not political history. But we can learn how to rise above the mistakes of the past, and that we haven't done. As a country we haven't. Not in the slightest' (*K*, 319).

How consequences are dealt with in the aftermath of conflict is explored in detail in *Kartography* through the character of Karim. Karim's decision to become a cartographer of Karachi can be seen as operating as a broader metaphor in which space and history are reconfigured. Karim's absence from Karachi does not diminish his childhood desire to map Karachi – an exercise that is shown to cause tensions through contrasting ways of mapping, between those who are in the city and those who observe from a distance. Karim's two maps illustrate the development that occurs over time and the way in which proximity and distance influences how Karim plots the maps. In the first, hand-drawn, map, Karim's effort is a personal memoir detailing his time in Pakistan and the memories that Karachi holds for both himself and Raheen (*K*, 112). The separation or 'partition' between Karim and Raheen in this first map embodies the personal history shared by them. He scrawls onto the map '(at the squash court I told you ~~we~~ I'd be leaving Karachi by August […])' (*K*, 112). Karim's parenthesis (and deletion of 'we') is telling of the emotion that his leaving Karachi entailed and the element of loss that the separation brought for them both. When Karim left Karachi so, in a sense, did Raheen, as the place became a space where Karim, and their friendship, *was not* present. The physical distance imposed between Karim and Raheen fosters increasing feelings of resentment between the friends. Broader still, Shamsie's portrayal of Karim and Raheen can also be viewed as representative the effects that the civil war had on the inhabitants of East and West Pakistan and the lack of communication and empathy for former neighbours, instigated by Partition. Yasmin Khan writes that 'perhaps hundreds of thousands did not hear the news for many weeks afterwards. For some, the butchery and forced relocation of the summer months of 1947 may have been the first they knew about the creation of two new states'.[41] The miscommunication between Karim and Raheen can be seen as representative

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[41] Khan, 1.

of the way in which Pakistan and the newly formed Bangladesh would interact after the fragmentation. Rushdie describes the process of fragmented memories thus:

> [T]he partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities.[42]

After Partition, those previously considered countrymen and -women would become foreigners in what was once their homeland, where geographical location poignantly reflected political affiliation. Caroline Herbert, in her study of Shamsie's engagement with the post-Partition period, writes that Karim's map 'articulates some of the complexities of Pakistan's post-Partition history and subjectivities in order to critique the nationalist notion of being at home. For Karim, it is not (only) Partition that has put the self in motion, but 1971 and its resurfacing memory in the 1980s'.[43] Karim and Raheen grow to differ in the ways in which they deal with the effects of the civil war. Karim's reflections from a distance and his concerns when he learns of the ethnic riots of 1988 are contrasted with the way in which Raheen describes the period in her letters to him. Raheen's silence on the subject suggests to Karim that Raheen lives in an enclosed compound of the privileged and that the effects of conflict are removed through social class, an aspect that is acknowledged by Raheen herself to an extent; 'privilege erased the day-to-day struggles of ethnic politics' (*K*, 175) she admits. Raheen, however, still retaliates against Karim judging her. She writes in reply:

> Those of us who still live here don't have the luxury of being compassionate from a distance. We go on with our lives because we like the façade of maintaining a kind of sanity. When we laugh that's defiance. So don't tell me about the graves you mark on that map (*K*, 133).

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[42] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (1991) (London: Granta, 2010), 12.
[43] Caroline Herbert, 'Lyric maps and the legacies of 1971 in Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography'*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.2 (2011), 159-172, 166.

Karim's overt actions of marking graves on the second map illustrates an awareness, even though he is physically distant, of the loss of lives during the period. In comparison, Raheen's nonchalant response for those suffering in her homeland is in stark contrast to Karim's engagement with events portrayed in the media. In a letter dated 8 January 1989, Raheen writes of the 'fun' she is having in the '[b]est winter ever!' at the height of the chaos. Raheen mocks him, referring to him as 'Mr Reuters', where his affinity with Karachi as part of the second-generation diaspora renders him even more of an outsider, like the news agency itself, with a peripheral interest in events (*K*, 132). Karim's distanced observations are interpreted as superficial by Raheen, in comparison with her experiences from the 'centre' and perhaps more authentic than a constructed narrative that Karim consumes. The tensions that geographical distance creates in their friendship is also noted by Nayar who writes that a 'sense of cultural (be)longing is most emphasized in diasporic authors, where the distance from the spatial 'home/land' seems to energize them to engage with their family, tradition and culture', as Karim demonstrates as the cartographer and author/illustrator of a landscape.[44] Raheen's response to Karim highlights a growing scrutiny found in global culture through technological mediums where 'disconnected' people believe they are experiencing an event by having access to social media and the exchange of information.[45] The conflict that develops between Raheen and Karim as a result of their different experiences reveals the limitations of global culture carries and its conspicuous spread of 'news'. Raheen's words demonstrate the frustration that indigenous inhabitants may experience when their personal lives are imagined and an external narrative is constructed, illustrated by Raheen of Karim, whose views evolve differently to hers.

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[44] Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism* (2010) (London and New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2010), 147.

[45] '[W]e are living in a paradoxical (but not unprecedented) historical moment in which, on the one hand, migration, the media, and global capitalism are producing subjects whose identities and cultural interests are increasingly appropriated and adapted from a westernized pool of images, fashion, foods, and music, and, on the other hand, older historical forces related to longstanding territorial, ethnic and religious disputes continue to fuel nationalist aspirations and identities' in Paul Jay, *Global Matters* (2010) (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 118.

Global culture and its limitations

Karim's maps show the tendency to define and redefine the physical landscape in the wake of a conflict as a means to control emotion. Karim's second (digital) map is a landmark view of the Karachi landscape and no longer retains the intimate and personal history, shared with Raheen, of the first (hand drawn) map. The empathy of Karim from a distance is arguably more pronounced, although the personal element is less distinct in his later map which is more accurate in terms of a technical depiction. Consequently, Karim's mapping is more objective, but at the cost of a sense of personal attachment to the geographical space. Karim, however, adds to the map by handwriting questions that query how affiliated Raheen is with Karachi, in a tone that seems accusatory and described by Raheen as 'both a rebuke and a challenge' (*K*, 179). Herbert writes that 'Karim's interactive internet map stages a dialogue between narrative and non-narrative modes that opens a space for difference and non-identification'.[46] The second map exposes the tensions that cloud the friendship. Raheen writes to him; 'That map is what marks you as an expat and not as a Karachiite. People here don't talk in street names. And you never did either' (*K*, 133). Raheen's reaction implies a betrayal by Karim and confirms him as an outsider, making observations from a marginalised position that, in Raheen's view, lacks authenticity.

The pairing of binaries (the local and the outsider) is illustrative of Shamsie's interest in postcolonial perspectives. In *In the City by the Sea*, Shamsie alludes to the military dictatorship of President Zia (1978-88) from the perspective of the eleven-year old Hasan whose narrative voice exudes a wisdom beyond his years. The novel is seemingly informed by Bhabha's scholarship in the use of specific vocabulary and resonates with postcolonial studies. Hasan's father, whose interest in etymology is prominent throughout, observes Hasan wearing a traditional kurta top with jeans. He tells him that "'if you will persist in this mismatch you should at least be prepared to back it up with a five minute oral report on the advantages of being hybridized'" (*CS*,

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[46] Herbert, 171.

131).   In a more direct approach still, Hasan distills the discussion from clothes to identity: "'Oh, you mean internal or external hybridity?'" (*CS*, 132).

Shamsie's use of the term hybridity, though in relation to clothing, resonates with Bhabha's theoretical perspective and his argument that cultural production 'need[s] to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences' and is most productive through ambivalence found in concepts such as hybridity.[47]   Shamsie's focus on etymology and hybrid forms (even in dress) highlights a concern with ideas on origin and development: "'What's the etymology of "etymology"?' "[…] From the Greek *etymos* meaning "true", which comes from the Latin *esse* meaning "to be"', replies Hasan's father to Uncle Latif (*CS*, 66).   The enthusiasm for etymologies and locating origin in language is a motif that runs concurrently through the novel.   In reference to the quotation, Uncle Latif remarks that the interest in words and the origination of their 'true' meaning explains why Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is Hasan's father's favourite literary character.   Hamlet's oft quoted phrase 'To be, or not to be' from his soliloquy engages in a questioning of life and death as he contemplates suicide.[48] Shamsie's narratives arguably revel in the utopian possibilities of the imagination and the ability to look beyond the past and memory in an attempt to be beneficiaries of history and celebrate in the redemptive qualities of conflict.

Politics of patriarchy – representations of gender

In *In the City by the Sea*, Shamsie refers to dress and types of clothing in the context of the forging of identity.   Hasan's mother is shown to have an interest in fabric and women's fashions: 'where did you get this lovely material?' (*CS*, 13), she asks Hasan's paternal aunt in one scene.   In fact, Hasan himself

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[47] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994) (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.
[48] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997) Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katherine Eisaman Maus (eds.) (New York and London, Norton, 2008), Act 3, Scene 1, line 58, 1696-1784, 1733.

admires his mother's beauty and her clothing as the following passage illustrates:

> The men were disappointments as usual – a dark suited bunch, lightly smattered with *shalwar kameezes* made formal by the addition of waistcoats with high collars. At least Aba's silk cravat acquired him some distinction, though he had only worn it at Ami's insistence. So much for the men. But the women! *Saris, peshwazes, sheraras,* sleeveless *kameezes* and some garbs that even Zehra couldn't name. It was no surprise that Ami preferred painting women, Hasan thought. But he wondered even if Ami's palette was capable of reproducing all the colours arrayed on the lawn.
> "Your mother's the most beautiful woman here," Zehra said. She stood on her tip-toes though she had outgrown the balcony railing some years ago. Hasan nodded. Ami had surveyed herself earlier in the evening and laughed that she would look like a crow among Birds of Paradise, but as she waved at the balcony Hasan found himself standing a little taller and moving his face into the light so that anyone who looked up, would know he was her son.
> She was wearing something new. "*Angarkha,*" Zehra said. "Originally a man's coat, but you lot didn't appreciate it enough so we adapted it." Ami's *angarkha,* worn over a *shalwar,* was black and fell to mid-calf. Gold paisleys bordered by gold piping made a dramatic hem and played off against the gold and emerald choker around Ami's throat. She had brushed her hair off her face and her cheekbones challenged gravity (*CS*, 60).

Through the descriptions of clothing, Shamsie adopts the application of dress as a metaphor of the wider challenges of the particular context of Zia's leadership and the Hudood Ordinances. The relationship between Hasan and his parents is shown to be contrary to the rigid political dictates of the time. His lawyer father is shown to be sympathetic to the difficult position that women are faced with during this period and his mother is described as artistic and intelligent. Whilst his father interrogates the decision to wear a 'kurta', a hybrid article of clothing of a shirt and a dress, his mother wears the 'angarkha', adapted from a man's coat. Unlike her husband, she does not seek an 'oral report', but rather expresses her emotions through the art and dressing. Through the characterisation of Hasan's parents, Shamsie highlights the wider tensions between the genders, even though Hasan's parents do not display the same conflicts in their marriage. Both mother and father

interrogate the notion of hybridity, albeit one through discourse (father) and the other through actions (mother), and display a concern with the outward manifestations of hybridity or a fusion of two cultures.

Hybridity represents a crossover or mixing of older forms to produce an alteration to a pre-existing form, resulting in varying degrees of ambivalence. Hybridity may conversely also suggest a contamination that weakens an existing and perhaps 'purer' form, contributing towards a structure in which one culture is the more prevalent in the hybrid or syncretic model – an arbitrary representation of two forms. The dialogue that Shamsie writes for her characters allows for an exploration of the concept, to illustrate how hybridity affects the subjects that comingle two or more traditional forms to create a form of newness and show where problems can arise. The 'something new' that is created, then, is only made possible because of a past or older form, indicative of the significance of how the past is remembered for the purposes of the present context and as a tool of redemption. In addition to postcolonial theory, Shamsie's novel, and in particular the contrast between mother and father, draws attention to gender inequalities against the political backdrop of the time. However, the relationship between his mother and father is presented as harmonious; Hasan's father acknowledges the difficulties that women face and the kinds of treatment they are subjected to and tells her jokingly "'[y]ou're to serve tea, and ask how else you might be of assistance, keeping in mind your female limitations. Ow! Ouch! Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!'" (*CS*, 4), to which she retaliates in jest.

Shamsie's novels emphasise plot and resolution, perhaps driven by their nature as popular fiction. Historical events, and the ensuing repercussions of trauma, are shown as containing constructive elements that can benefit a society in the longer term. Arguably, the approach to conflict is also under scrutiny for simplifying atrocities and the scale of their devastation. As Simon Gikandi has noted of Appadurai and Bhabha, and the particular direction of their insights, 'globalization appeals to advocates of hybridity […] because it seems to harmonise the universe and in the process, it seems to open up to a multiplicity of cultural relationships unheard of in the age of

empire'.[49]   However, as Gikandi points out, the 'celebratory view of globalization, which is particularly more pronounced in postcolonial studies […] is constantly haunted by another form of globalization, one defined by a sense of crisis within the postcolony itself'.[50]   Hiroko refers to the world as 'just the neighbourhood' (*BS*, 250), and how the events in one city reverberate around the world, as exemplified by the terrorist attack of 9/11.   Gikandi refers to the failures of nationalism and how 'citizens of postcolony are more likely to seek their global identity by invoking the very logic of Enlightenment that postcolonial theory was meant to deconstruct'.[51]   Gikandi's observations draw attention to the contradictions that emerge in Shamsie's writing; that she can only write from a particular perspective as a result of colonialism and enlightenment ideals enabled through western or European scholarship, and so her exploration of local narratives are made possible because of her ability to experience different cultures, of both her homeland and her host countries, a point that Ranasinha has also drawn upon in her own study, as mentioned previously.[52]   As such, the creative output of her own experiences owes some amount to a community or structure that in the past had been the domain of the 'coloniser'.

Transnational philosophy – the role of memory

Through her fiction Shamsie pays attention to the influence that technological advances have had on impressions of 'home' and how this affects identity. The increased mobility enabled through increasingly visible globalisation challenges the notion of being at home and raises a philosophical issue that looks to individual identity and selfhood to describe a psychological construct that amounts to 'home' as a place of familiarity and ease.   *Burnt Shadows* is perhaps Shamsie's most self-consciously 'transnational' novel where ideas of locality are in a sense dispelled.   In one regard, in *Burnt Shadows* Shamsie moves beyond the postcolonial theoretical anchors that are apparent in the

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[49] Simon Gikandi, 'Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality' in *Literature and Globalization* (2011), Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh (eds.) (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011), 109-120, 110.
[50] Gikandi in Connell and Marsh, 110.
[51] Gikandi in Connell and Marsh, 110.
[52] Ranasinha, 8.

first four novels. As such, the task of close textual analysis of *Burnt Shadows* by reference to postcolonial theory is a more challenging task as the novel is broad in its historical scope and the resonance of each period is woven into Hiroko's experiences. As Hiroko moves from one country to another, in Nagasaki, Delhi, Pakistan and New York, her clothing is not of any real note and perhaps indicative of her global citizenship. A review of the novel describes the characters as 'lead[ing] global lives even before globalization became a buzzword; their ethnicity, language and nationality are mere accidents of birth'.[53] *Burnt Shadows* is indicative of the philosophical element in Shamsie's fiction in its consideration of whether the effects of conflict are actually positive. Does travel and exposure to different cultures (which may be initiated by a conflict) become an effective way to achieve wisdom? Through the characterisation of Hiroko, Shamsie illustrates how turmoil can be constructive, conflict multi-faceted and a catalyst for change and human development.

Shamsie highlights how the identity of an individual and connection to home are linked to context – but is not always clear-cut. In *Burnt Shadows,* Shamsie's exploration of individual identity is suggestive of even greater ambivalences with regard to her consideration of how individual characters define their identity, and queries whether identity is linked to certain spaces. As a child, Henry Burton writes to his parents from his boarding school in England of how 'he wanted to be home in India' (*BS*, 57). The idea of 'home' in her novels does not appear to necessarily entail a return to a homeland, even though her characters often return in a literal sense. Rather, home can be seen as the 'structure of feeling' described by Arjun Appadurai in relation to the production of locality in a given space.[54]

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[53] Salil Tripathi, *Burnt Shadows Review* (2009)
http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/burnt-shadows-by-kamila-shamsie-5452565.html
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]
[54] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions in Globalization* (1996) (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 181.

As stated previously, it is Shamsie's earlier novels that have a more overt engagement with postcolonial discourse. This is exemplified in *In the City by the Sea* in which Shamsie also draws out both the perils and subversive qualities of memory. Hasan's childhood experiences indicate how memories 'create' a past as a point of reference, so, for example, the smell of pine cones is significant for Hasan who comes to associate it with his uncle, Salman Mamoo. However, there are two distinct smells that represent pine cones; firstly from the actual pine cones that land in Salman Mamoo's garden and, secondly, the smell of pine cones engineered into a spray-can by the entrepreneur family friend, Uncle Latif, who manufactures pine-scented air-freshener. Shamsie's use of pine cones is analogous to the dualities that come to represent an object or an event and highlights the way in which a subject may be appropriated under the guise of representation (*CS*, 8). The qualities of an organic smell emitted naturally is comparable to a replicated artificial smell, a reproduction that seeks to emulate and even enhance the original through 'its excess and difference'.[55] However, as Hasan notes, the experiences are totally different so that '[i]n truth, the air freshener resembled the real smell of pine cones only in so far as the sweet, oval shaped or circular, rich brown in colour, dripping with syrup, soft but not mushy, delicious hot or cold could resemble the *actual* eating of a *gulab jamun* (*CS*, 8) (first emphasis added). Hasan's observations appear to draw on Bhabha's theoretical perspective which posits that 'the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference'.[56] Shamsie implies that the act of observing the outward appearances of the sweetmeat she describes is not a substitute to 'actual' taste and experience. Through the pine cone metaphor Shamsie alludes to issues of authenticity and subsequent collective recollections of an event that attempt to capture the essence or 'mimic' a past event – an exercise which Bhabha implies highlights differences.[57] In this manner, Shamsie's fiction takes a didactic direction in that the aesthetics of

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[55] '[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite'* (Bhabha, 122) (emphasis original).
[56] Bhabha, 122.
[57] Bhabha, 122.

her narratives are constructed in a manner that combines a personal story with overarching political and postcolonial concerns. Shamsie suggests that the histories are collectively remembered and produced for mass consumption and, through metaphors such as the air-freshener, she implies that history is possibly an openly artificial attempt to recreate an original, and as such is inherently inauthentic in comparison to an original version of an event. The question of authenticity points to deeper enquiries – truth and origin and the validity of beliefs.

Consequently, in Shamsie's novels the role of memory is shown to be 'suspect' through 'distortions of memory'.[58] Hasan's father observes the selective nature of memory, suggesting to Salman Mamoo that 'you would like to return home and find everything unchanged, except the things you didn't like when you left' (*CS*, 20). As Hasan's father points out, memory is an attachment to a fragmented image of the past that is subjectively created in order to serve the conscience of a particular person or group. The quotation is suggestive of the way in which the desire to preserve parts of the past is revered, as well as trying to erase 'the things' that serve better to be forgotten. However, for Hasan the processes of memory also form part of his education. 'Looking into memory, Hasan thought. Looking into wisdom' (*CS*, 122).

Similarly, in *Broken Verses* (2005), Shamsie implies how storytelling can be an important means of creating versions of history:

> It's true, of course, that I'm just creating another version of my mother's life, and Omi's, and mine. But if, in the end, the ways in which we apprehend the world are merely synonymous with the stories in which we feel most comfortable, then this is the story I am willing to claim for my world. And one I'm determined to spread (*BV*, 335).

Shamsie explores the level of complicity an individual has in creating a version of history in order to suit the individual. The assertion that 'imaginary truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect', brings a challenge to how an

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[58] Rushdie, 10.

event is remembered, when 'distortions of memory' are acknowledged, irrespective of intention.[59] The omissions of memory highlight the possibly inevitable risk of inauthenticity when constructing versions of history based on memories that arise from a specific perspective and context.

Shamsie also notes the further complexities of memory when distance is created by the passage of time in second and third hand accounts of history and is illustrative of the continual and evolutionary nature of history and its adaptation. Aasmaani, the central character in *Broken Verses*, comes to realise the fictitious nature of what she had held to be true:

> I had created a story to avoid facing the painful truth. That they, too, were creating a story would not occur to them – if enough people believe a thing, belief becomes indistinguishable from truth (*BV*, 99).

Aasmaani's interior monologues highlight a level of scepticism towards official and 'agenda set' versions of histories, thoughts that are reflective of a postmodern approach to history that critically questions the perspective and context of a narrative. However, for Aasmaani, the realisation dawns that the idea of an essential or fixed character is an artificial construct that fits into 'the development of a storyline' (*BV*, 99), or, as Spivak describes, '"strategically" take shelter in an essentialism', where events of an individual's life form part of a wider narrative, a concept which becomes problematic after a period of time, as the social landscape evolves.[60]

Shamsie's exploration of the continual and ongoing adaptations of the past, enabled through the storytelling process, shows the capacity of the imagination to create a perception of history that is, in essence, an illusion. The psychological deceits that create multiple versions of history hint at the broader way in which character is itself invented:

[59] Rushdie, 11.
[60] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Text's and a Critique of Imperialism' in *"Race," Writing and Difference* (1986), Henry Louis Gates, Jr (ed.) (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 263-280, 263.

> We don't dare consider that the internal voice which makes us uneasy is a voice that whispers: there is no such thing as fixed character, there is only our need to join the dots into a single picture.
> Anything that doesn't fit the picture, we just forget about, or reimagine (*BV*, 142).

From one perspective, Shamsie illustrates again how the larger forces derived from the political and social landscape affect individual lives. However, undermining this notion to an extent, Shamsie also illustrates how individuals bear the inner strength to overcome the larger forces of history. Shamsie illustrates how humans can overcome their present turmoil by relying on individual memory as a source of hope. When Hasan's uncle is imprisoned, he covers the walls of his prison cell with poetry, 'wisps of memory' that make his time more bearable so that 'when he was done, his carpet of memories covered the prison floor completely and he sank his feet into it and wriggled his toes' (*CS*, 113). Shamsie describes how even dire environments can become sanctuaries when memory works positively and progressively.

The significance of memory in narrating history and helping forge identity, whether individual or a collective identity in Shamsie's novels, can be seen to have a twofold effect: firstly, as a means to bring to the surface the importance of individual memory against a collective historicised account and, secondly and contradictorily, Shamsie does not allow her characters to be impeded by memory. Whilst memory forms a significant part of an understanding of the past, Shamsie also suggests that being tied to memory can also hinder the individual. Shamsie may be suggesting that memory, while an important facet in understanding the present, is also a process of negotiation and should not be seminal in how futures are mapped. As this exploration of the significance of memory develops through her fiction, memory becomes a complex part of individual identity, through its nostalgic attachment to the past as well as a desire to be emancipated from memory. In *Broken Verses,* Aasmaani muses that she 'wanted to be washed clean of all memory. I wanted to be embalmed. All juices all fluids removed' (*BV*, 198) in order to define herself as an individual on her own terms rather than through the memory and legacy of her family's history.

This chapter has highlighted, through an examination of Shamsie's fiction, the deleterious effect that nationalist sentiments have on individual identity. Her metaphorical use of dress resonates with the view that clothes convey much about 'the individual and where they place themselves in their world'.[61] At its most extreme, Shamsie has employed the title *Burnt Shadows* to emphasise the catastrophic physical and emotional scarring of individual and national identity brought about by the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki in 1945. It is the removal of clothing, both literally and metaphorically, which instigates both changes in dressing patterns and the ways in which identity is defined. For Hiroko, this is enforced as historical events, the dropping of the bombs on Japan, are of such magnitude that rebirth is her only choice in the face of such trauma. Of significance here is the character Henry Burton's comment that '[d]iscarded clothes' act 'as metaphor for the end of empire' where, once again, it is the removal of clothing which allows for shifting identities (*BS*, 35). Henry states how he does not mind Sajjad inheriting his shirts as long as he can decide when this exchange of ownership takes place, the implication being that the colonising classes are invariably determined to dictate the terms of their departure. Specific patterns of dressing are thus reflective of both global and national power structures, be that between the colonial administrators and their colonised subjects during empire, or between the genders in the drive to construct nationalist ideologies in the post independent era.

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[61] Alexandra Shulman, see Appendix.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This thesis has examined diasporic identities during and post colonisation in South Asia and focused on how dressing patterns can operate as a metaphor for the societal changes taking place. Through a consideration of a range of writers and their works, it became clear that the influence of colonialism had important ramifications for identity, notably 'authentic' identity. This thesis has demonstrated that all patterns of dress involve constructions of identity that attempt conceptualisations of what is 'authentic', but are usually inflected by gender, history and ideological positions and may relate to colonial and postcolonial experiences. What emerges is that constructions of identity do not relate to 'authenticity' in straightforward ways. However, authenticity may still be achieved even if this entails an ambivalent process. The desire to recreate an 'authentic' way of being may be what is, in a sense, 'inauthentic'.

The theoretical context of the introduction provides a framework to help situate texts as reflective of the history, politics and sociology of colonial, postcolonial and diasporic identities. Whilst the introduction focused on a survey of existing critical thought, this was later mapped onto a chronological examination of fiction from the period leading up to Indian independence in 1947 to the present day. The selection of texts, in conjunction with cultural studies, has added to a variety of perspectives in how dressing patterns have reflected mixed responses to the British presence in India and its legacy. In terms of gender, this can also be seen to have created a divide within indigenous practices and, to return to Spivak and her idea that 'white men are saving brown women from brown men' in relation to the practice of sati (widow burning) in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988). Arguably, India's subjugation can also be linked to a patriarchal dominance over the country during British colonialism through propaganda and literature which perpetuated the myth of a gendered country that both Mayo's *Mother India* and Khan's film of the same name contributed to, in different ways, in the creation of the subordinate status of the subaltern.

By establishing the progression of a theoretical context in the postcolonial field with the publication of Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), the synthesis between theory and fiction encourages the interrogation of history and ideology. The charting of theoretical perspectives provides insight into the ways in which postcolonial studies is developing as a field through the progression of time, memory and generations. In doing so, the term 'postcolonial' is under scrutiny and terms such as transnational, neoliberal and diaspora are broadening the field for postcolonial studies and challenging the binary constructs of the coloniser and colonised and the fictions and historicisms this has involved.

The concept of diaspora in relation to migration has affected the ways in which a text is critiqued so that what has emerged is that generational divides can be just as divisive, if not more so, than displacement. New communications technology, which we are experiencing globally, is contributing to the ways in which identities are both experienced and received with regards to terms such as transnational and diasporic affinities and which is starkly exemplified in one passage from *Burnt Shadows*. Hiroko's son, Raza, at the end of the narrative (which forms the prologue) is shackled and stripped naked. 'When he is dressed again, he suspects, he will be wearing an orange jumpsuit' […] *How did it come to this*, he wonders'.[1] The journey for Raza, and in each of the narratives explored during the course of this study, has been physical, psychological and emotional and raises timeless questions of *raison d'être* and '*Who* or *What* am I'?

The problematic concept of authenticity and the desire to achieve it is perhaps inherently doomed and, rather like concepts such as the 'transnation' and 'borderlessness', is to be thought of in terms of its utopian virtues. What has emerged is that dressing patterns involve attempts to negotiate authentic individual and community identity. Each of the chapters has contributed to an overall perspective on how dressing patterns, and more broadly the metaphor

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[1] *Burnt Shadows* (2009) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 1 (emphasis original).

of dress, aids the construction of identity. Dress is an important component in the construction of national identities, either strategically and willfully or by imposed rules, which was discussed in chapters two to five (in the analysis of *Home to India, Sunlight on a Broken Column, Brick Lane,* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*). However, what also emerges, in Shamsie's fiction, is an anti-nationalist stance and utopian ideal where dressing patterns perhaps are less politically influenced.

Throughout the thesis, individual chapters, through a focus on specific contexts, have charted concerns of a particular period. Chapter one illustrates the cross-cultural exchange that derived from the colonial encounter and argued that both coloniser and colonised made gains to greater and lesser degrees. Without suggesting that colonialism in India is to be revered, there is also an argument to be made for the colonial influences as facilitating greater women's freedoms through movements such as the Bengal Renaissance, which itself was influenced by colonial interactions. This brought out the social injustices that women were subjected to through advocating the demise of practices such as purdah (which included how women were dressing), as well as sati, polygamy and child marriages, and is viewed as a positive move for challenging the inequalities of patriarchal regimes. However, whilst patriarchy is challenged by a younger generation, there is also some empathy to be had for an older generation, which I initially drew upon in the example of how Hansaben challenges her father-in-law who is at an intersection between older traditions and the modernity that a younger generation seek; a transition which for him is difficult. The challenges of an older generation are a recurrent motif in the literature surveyed. Santha's grandmother in *Home to India*, Laila's grandfather in *Sunlight*, Chanu in *Brick Lane* and Kaukab in *Maps* were all, in one way or another, caught at a crossroads between their own and subsequent generations. In each of the examples, one of the ways in which tradition was challenged was through changes in dressing patterns to reflect modernity and contemporary concerns.

Dress has arguably always been linked to political manifestations, but this became only more pronounced when the British ruled India and gained a

stronghold over the textile industry through the East India company. This has also been reflected in nineteenth century literature where Indian textiles reflect wealth and prosperity as can be seen in Gaskell's *North and South*. Fittingly, whilst Gaskell's novel details the disparities in England in the nineteenth-century, a similar argument can be made for colonialism in India in the East/West dichotomy. The binaries that were created however were, in Adam Geczy's words, 'a fallacy […] for the sake of their own self-image and illusion of autonomy'.[2] For indigenous Indians, the appropriation of certain types of dress came to reflect the political conflicts that were taking hold in the country and the attempts being made to enforce the partitioning of India which the British had propelled through their 'divide and rule' principle as part of the colonial administration. The nineteenth century was also as an era of classification and, in dressing patterns, this was articulated in order to establish hierarchies between the British and Indians in the colonies. Whilst the legislative Act Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835) advocated the education of Indians, this too had repercussions which would lead to power imbalances and a deterioration in both colonial and patriarchal authority which Sartre, Fanon and, later, Spivak and Bhabha observed. In parallel to this was the developments in women's clothing and the influence that European tastes had on the 'feminist' agenda in India. Although there was growing resistance to colonialism at the same time as arguments were being made for two independent states of India and Pakistan, for women's dressing patterns, a European influence aided their own cause against patriarchy. The adoption of items such as the blouse and petticoat demonstrate items of dress that were British imports and yet adopted and standardised to be worn with the sari. If women were dressed modestly (according to British, and latterly Indian, standards) then they could be more visible in society outside of the home, even if only to accompany male figures in society, in tentative steps towards their emancipation.

In *Home to India* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, both Santha and the character Laila are privileged in the sense that they are from the higher strata

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[2] Adam Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism, Dress Textiles and Culture from the 17th to the 21st Century* (2013) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 2.

of society with access to a European education which has expanded their horizons. In her memoir, Santha Rama Rau conveys a sense of alienation when she feels that home is *not* in India having had been exposed to other cultures that she, in some respects, identifies with more readily than with her inherited culture. In particular, chapter two examined the concept of authenticity and Santha's desire to feel like a 'real Indian', although her privileged social status shielded her from the realities that those lower down the social order faced. As a young woman, Santha's own influences consisted of strong women; her maternal grandmother, her own mother, a pioneer in her own right, as well as leading figures of the day such as Tagore. Tagore challenged Santha's preoccupation with wanting to '*understand* India', a seminal moment in shaping her own evolving worldview.[3]

Part of the reason to include Rama Rau and Hosain in my selection of literature is that their works have fallen into relative obscurity and to revive them adds to the wealth of Anglo-Indian writers and their contributions to the expanding canon of world literature. The criticism that Rama Rau faces is that the particular kind of literature that she was producing was for a predominantly western readership and as such implicates her in the exploitation of the East. Rama Rau is noted to have said that "'[t]he East is a career'", indicating her awareness of her status as a writer of South Asian origin.[4] Both Rama Rau and Hosain had careers in the West at a time when South Asian women's writing in Britain were rare, and both had attachments to India as a single nation. For Rama Rau and Hosain, European literature was fundamental to their intellectual development, which Laila describes as 'books which had taught me to think of human dignity', and aspirations for modernity.[5]

The analysis of *Sunlight on a Broken Column* shares similar concerns to *Home to India* as the novel invokes resonating global sentiments such as the

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[3] Santha Rama Rau, *Home to India* (1945) (New York: Harper, 1945), 27.
[4] Antoinette Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau* (2007) (Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 151.
[5] Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) (London: Penguin Group, 1992), 45.

challenge to patriarchy, and ideas of the modern. Movements such as the Bengal Renaissance, and its link to European ideas of modernity, became more influential as highlighted by these chapters. Whilst terms such as hybridity and transnational identity were yet to be conceptualised, both works drew out the global networks which were already in place before the existence of new technologies which have undeniably contributed to the visibility of globalisation. Both Rama Rau and Hosain can be situated in colonial India and although the texts could be compared in terms of their delineations of experiences based on religious and cultural divisions within India, both Santha and the character Laila share similar concerns in that they are caught up in a system that is in transition. In addition, both girls are under further pressure because of the generational divides in their own families and nationalist fervor, firstly for an Independent India and subsequently the first Partition. In some respects, Rama Rau's and Hosain's experiences, as well as that of the character Laila, are comparable with regard to India's modernity, in that they encompass the *bildungsroman* tradition for a modern Indian woman, a move that entailed liberation and conflict simultaneously; from social strictures which curtailed women's freedoms to challenges against the patriarchal order of society.

Chapters four and five shifted forwards in time and focused on the lives of first generation migrants living in England, towards the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty first centuries, in diasporic narratives of foreignness. In each of the texts, this had contrasting results. Whilst the character Nazneen in *Brick Lane* could be seen as an exemplar of a successful diasporic identity by the close of the novel, the same is not true for suicidal Kaukab in *Maps for Lost Lovers*. In particular, *Maps for Lost Lovers* draws on the murkier side of migrant experience and the deferred conflict that had transferred itself from one community in South Asia to another microcosmic community formed in England. At times, the distinctions become blurred; the revival of conflicts from the indigenous country perversely reinvigorates the lost sense of home in a space initially considered foreign. The same fears and anxieties are transferred regardless of geographical situs, and ultimately the narratives are individual stories of struggle and survival. This argument is

offered in relation to the reception of *Brick Lane* in the Bangladeshi community and the memory of the sexual violence enacted as a weapon of the civil war in the lead up to 1971. This trauma has arguably resulted in the suppression of a positive sexual identity for women as a form of protection against the past. Part of this protection could also be said to lie in the articulating of ideas about female modesty through dress and visibility. Conversely, ideas of modesty could also be subverted through ways in which women dressed themselves, as we have seen in textual examples such as Sita and Mrs Lal in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and Suraya in *Maps for Lost Lovers.* What is conveyed is that the notion of dress and dressing patterns is linked to the political landscape, historical trauma and gender relations within communities.

The final chapter of this thesis focused on the writer Kamila Shamsie and the concept of the transnational anti-nationalist narrative focalised from the multiple viewpoints of race, gender and generation. Shamsie's fiction employs conflict as a trope to explore human experiences and how larger scale conflicts always carry individual casualties. A philosophical dimension is apparent in Shamsie's fiction in her examination of conflict, memory and ideas of redemption. As previously noted, Shamsie has stated, '[w]herever in the world you go, you're living in the world's oldest and most pervasive empire, which is the empire of patriarchy', so that when we consider diasporic identities, our attention quickly turns to gender and how dressing patterns come to reflect the ideologies of patriarchy and resistance.[6]

The dissemination of historical ways of dressing takes into consideration the overwhelming challenges posed by inherited cultures and the burden of tradition, which includes the legacy of colonialism. This can be located in the way in which dressing patterns have developed for the diaspora across generations and their varying first-hand experiences and recollections of the

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[6] Natalie Hanman, *Kamila Shamsie: Where is the American writer writing about America in Pakistan? There is a deep lack of reckoning* (2014)
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/apr/11/kamila-shamsie-america-pakistan-interview
[Accessed on 23/01/2018]

past. This study has shown that history continues to evolve in a heterogeneous way even though the temptation may be to gloss it as homogeneous. Perhaps we cannot be 'postcolonial' as colonialism has affected the way in which society has, and continues to evolve. However, the strength lies in embracing the past, which may include the horrors of colonialism and partition history in South Asia. The English language is in some respects, albeit problematically, universal in its reach, and the course of history has undoubtedly contributed to the prominence of the English language and subsequently aspects of its culture in both social and political traditions. In dress, this has also followed patterns of intersection as is apparent in both men and women's dressing in South Asia and in diasporic communities. What develops is a syncretic culture that is constituted from the interactions of groups in society and this sets a tone for future generations. Part of the symbiosis would be an acknowledgement that authenticity itself is a concept that is subject to constant evolution and that it takes place momentarily. The analysis of the primary texts has drawn out a common feature - that the writers studied were, and are, influenced by the European canon to a degree and that rather than trying to distinguish a separate category, we perhaps think of literature and, South Asian dress, in global terms.

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[1] The first date after the title refers to when a text was first published and the second date refers to the edition used.

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Appendix

Alexandra Shulman correspondence

Charlotte Pearson <Charlotte.Pearson@condenast.co.uk>

Thu 4/13/2017 2:54 PM

Inbox

To:

Yasmin Begum;

Dear Yasmin Begum,

I normally don't feel it's appropriate to give quotes for individual theses however here is one if you wish to use it:

"There is no quicker or more visible way to send a message about the person we are than in how we dress. Whether that be to show inclusion, rebellion, to stand out or to demonstrate status, clothes say a great deal about the individual and where they place themselves in their world."

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Shulman

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