# PAKISTANIAAT

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**With a cluster on *Lahore with Love***

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# Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies

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Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies
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**Dr. Shreerekha Pillai Subramanian** is Assistant Professor of Humanities at University of Houston –Clear Lake. Her teaching ranges across the humanities from literature and Women's Studies to Cross-Cultural Studies. She is the first recipient of the Marilyn Mieszkuc Professorship in Women's Studies (2008) at University of Houston-Clear Lake, and she is currently at work on her monograph, *Women Writing Violence: Community in the Contemporary Novel from the Americas and South Asia*. She has published articles on South Asian, African-American and Caribbean literature and media and she edited the anthology, *Home and the World: South Asia in Transition* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006).

**Dr. David Waterman** is Maître de conférences in English at the Université de La Rochelle, France, as well as a member of the research team CLIMAS (Cultures and Literatures of the English Speaking World) at the Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III, France.

## Table of Contents



**Cluster: *Lahore with Love***



**Refereed Articles**



**Reviews**

# Statements in Support of Fawzia Afzal-Khan's *Lahore with Love*

Fawzia Afzal-Khan's memoir, *Lahore With Love: Growing Up With Girlfriends Pakistani Style*, was published in March 2010 by Syracuse University Press. Those of us who read and assigned it for our classes were shocked to learn that Syracuse University Press had canceled the memoir shortly after its publication for fear of a lawsuit.

The book has now been published independently through Amazon.com. This republished volume will also include an appendix explaining the entire controversy.

To support the memoir and to protest against the cancelation decision made by the Syracuse University Press we sought statements of support from readers. Provided below (in the order they were received) are the statements of those who were kind enough to share their thoughts with us. We are grateful for your support.

(Note: Some of these statements were also published in Pakistaniaat Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010) This version includes the statements included in that issue and those received since then.

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**Margaux Fragoso**
**Sunday, Jun 12 20:42 PM**

"Lahore with Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends Pakistani Style" is like The Joy Luck Club meets David Copperfield meets Beloved. Horrors such as honor killing and suicide are counterbalanced by the playful, vivacious bonds between close girlfriends. Though this rich, panoramic memoir explores social injustices and the resulting personal tragedies that such oppressions engender, the book itself is neither depressing nor didactic. The witty young narrator deemed "Madame Sin" by her vibrant female companions vacillates between giddy colloquialisms and mature political observations and insights, seamlessly merging the thoughts and ideas of two distinct narrators—one a fresh-eyed girl and the other a fully grounded PhD-educated mother and teacher.
Chapters that succinctly capture the lives and personalities of the narrator's childhood companions also weave for the readers a thoughtful and abundant

portrait of the socially-minded narrator herself as well as her native Lahore. Some characters like "Sam" embody ideals of femininity and prettiness that tend to cross cultures, while the tough, abject sensuality and forthrightness of "Madina" challenge all cultural definitions of what it means to be a Muslim woman or a woman in any patriarchal culture. Structurally tight, poetic, funny, and completely lacking any sentimental impulses, it is nonetheless poignant— mostly because it resists the urge to be so.

**Nyla Ali Khan**
**University of Oklahoma, Norman**
**http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Nyla.A.Khan-1/ind**
**Wednesday, Jan 12 15:05 PM**

Fawzia Afzal-Khan engages in reflective action in her memoir to examine her own locations of privilege. Afzal-Khan tries to self-actualize and intervene in patriarchal national history by seeking in the interaction of modernity and communal memory not a vertical relationship producing totalized notions of nation, gender, class, race, ethnicity but intersectionalities between different cultural times, spaces, and ways of knowing the self in relation to the family, society, and the cosmos. She speaks from her location about the political realities that have woven the web of social relations she inhabits or has inhabited. Like feminist scholars Hazel Carby, Valeri Smith, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Barbara Smith, Afzal-Khan considers how race, nationality, class, religion, and gender intersect in the social construction of subjectivity. Fawzia Afzal-Khan's work gives the clarion call for an increasingly materially grounded, historically aware, and yet also theoretically sophisticated feminism. It must be read and widely disseminated.

**Junaid Ahmad, LUMS**
**PK**
**Sunday, Jan 9 21:48 PM**
I just heard about this travesty and I support mentor and colleague Fawzia's brilliant intervention here wholeheartedly. And I am totally appalled at this heavy-handedness of the publisher, which is just shameful.

But Fawzia's voice will not be silenced; neither she nor her supporters and fans will allow it!

**Dr. Sam Shihada**
**Southern Methdoist University**
**Wednesday, Jan 5 21:50 PM**
Dear Dr. Fawzia,
I just lend my strong support for Lahore With Love to be republished. Working on gender and cultural studies for years, I understand the important message conveyed in Lahore With Love which is" breaking silence , unveiling minds and speaking truth to power." . I must say that I feel so sad to know how freedom of speech is not respected through the the way Syracuse publishing house acted, in a way that gives support to dark forces which, in vain, try to gag the true voices of public intellectuals like Dr, Fawzia Khan, to please certain social and political structures. Finally, I would also like to sum up by quoting Edward Said and Nawal El Saadawi respectively in their defense of public intellectuals.
"Thank god , we have internet nowadays so the truth can spread in one second to millions of people .(lecture at UCLA 2003)
"The truth sometimes shocks, or shakes the tranquility of set ideas. But sometimes a good shake can awaken minds that rest in slumber, and open eyes to see what is really happening around them." ( Introduction to the Hidden Face of Eve.)

**Dr. Isam Shihada**
**Associate Professor of Gender Studies**
**Scholar in Residence , SMU, Dallas , Texas**
**Sehba Sarwar**
**Wednesday, Dec 22 21:46 PM**
I'm glad to know that you're going forward with re-publishing your memoir. Your story deserves to be published and read.

**Jim Nash**
**Bloomfield, NJ**
**Monday, Dec 6 20:37 PM**
Fawzia, I hope this ugly incident will result in your beautiful memoir becoming immensely popular. Jim

**Shreerekha Subramanian**
**University of Houston-Clear Lake**
**Saturday, Nov 27 18:45 PM**
Dear Fawzia,
What a gift it has been to spend time with you and know you at the latest NWSA (National Women's Studies Conference). Your determined and eloquent articulation of the book's heart inspired me to purchase one of the last available copies of Lahore with Love in its current form. I have decided to go ahead and assign it in my spring WMST seminar. It is a most gorgeous, powerful, and enlightening account of growing up "Pakistani Style" - I feel really fortunate to have had such a personal introduction to this text, you, and all the gifts you have to share with the world at NWSA. I was impressed with the multiplicity of voices inside you - the scholar, the poet, the playwright, the sufi singer, the academic, the critic, the interviewer, the feminist/activist - I think this dazzling array inside you is the very richness that proliferate the pages of this powerful memoir. Thank you! We support you!
Rekha

**Sajid Iqbal**
**Desk Editor, BBC World Service, London**
**http://www.bbcurdu.com**
**Saturday, Nov 27 15:43 PM**
I fully support Fawzia in getting the book re-published after a rather cowardly act by the Syracuse University Press which, in my view, amounts to gagging a writer and denying him the right of freedom of expression. Myself and many others in media were dismayed when the SUP had stopped the distribution of the book. I shall look forward to the publication of the book and hope that it will be received well by all those who have interest in Pakistan.

**Carole Stone**
**East Hampton, NY**
**Saturday, Nov 27 03:10 AM**

Dear Fawzia,
You have my complete support for the continued publication of your book.
As I wrote in its foreword, “We have this deeply layered, wondrous story.” It must be read.

**Richard Schechner**
**Professor, New York University**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 18:33 PM**

Dear Ms. Pfeiffer,

When I learned that you/Syracuse University Press, was going to withdraw pulled Fawzia Afzal-Khan's memoir, *Lahore With Love: Growing Up With Girl friends, Pakistani-Style* (2010), I was – to put it mildly – shocked. I was shocked by your disrespect for freedom of expression; I was shocked by the apparent cowardice of the Press in refusing to defend one of its authors under attack; I was shocked by the fact that without a thorough investigation of all the circumstances involved, you/The Press would take such an action.

I am personally and professionally concerned because as editor of TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies and as a University Professor at New York University's Department of Performance Studies, I know well Professor Afzal-Khan and her work. She is a Contributing editor to TDR and TDR has published her writing. I also know Lahore With Love. In my opinion it is an important, excellent book.

From discussions with Professor Afzal-Khan I know what the issues are from the Press's point of view: fear of a lawsuit brought by Madeeha Gauhar alleging slander from a piece of sardonic and parodic fiction that is part of Lahore With Love. Although I agree with Professor Afzal-Khan that character of Madina in Chapter 4 is not provably based on Ms. Gauhar; and I agree that the "portrayal is not offensive and damaging to her reputation," the question from my point of view is about whether or not a major university press will stand by its authors or not.

After all, you read and accepted Professor Afzal-Khan's manuscript; published her book; and were, I suppose, happy to find out that the book has been well received by both academics and scholars.

**Waseem Anwar**
**Dean, Forman Christian College, Lahore**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 18:28 PM**

Dear Fawzia,

You remember the launch ceremony of your book at Quaid-e-Azam Library in Lahore, where I moderated the event; this being part of the Special Seminar on Post-post-colonial Studies at Punjab University Lahore that I conducted with full support from all those interested in learning the local in connection with the global, or the post with reference to the colonial. And you also know how lovingly the Seminar became a SUCCESS, and how well received your book was. You then also visited the Punjab University on special invitation by the Chairperson, English Department to give your special talk on your book, the memoir. We, the Po-Co students at Lahore, started loving Lahore all the more after reading your book because it connects to us in soul and spirit.
We support your democratic voice that opens up opportunities for a constructive debate on issues that we mostly hush-up.

Sincerely and friendly,
Waseem Anwar, Dean of Humanities, Forman Christian College, Lahore

**Pervez Hoodbhoy**
**Quaid-e-Azam University**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 17:35 PM**

Hi Fawzia, Am glad to see your fighting spirit is strong. Be well. Pervez

**Shailaja Valdiya**
**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 17:04 PM**
I hope Syracuse University sends the right kind of social message by lifting its freeze on the publication of this obviously timely book about the lives of women in Pakistan. Universities are one of our last standing bastions of intellectual honesty, free speech, and social emancipation. Please let us not erode the historic foundations of this institution by preventing our academics from expressing their ideas with impunity.

**David Lee Keiser**
**New York City**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 14:54 PM**
Lahore with Love is not only manna for our minds, but water for our throats.
The memoir is beautiful, evocative, and singular.
Let us not bow in the face of petty antipathy or envy, and keep it in the forefront of university courses and bookstores.
Censorship is not only wrong and unconstitutional, but craven--surely in this supposed beacon of democracy a university press could show the way.
Surely, a school as resource-rich as Syracuse has staff on retainers for such publishing splinters.
Surely, we can see our way clearly. We need the oxygen!
Keep Lahore with Love in print and distribute it widely!!!!

In love and faith,
David Lee Keiser

**Kathleen Foster**
**Filmmaker and Photojournalist, New York**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 04:03 AM**
Now your important book which demolishes stereotypes about Pakistani women and gives a much needed complexity to Pakistan's political past and present will get the circulation it merits.

I will do my part to publicize it.

**Pramilavenkatswaran**
**New York**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 01:39 AM**
It takes courage to write at all. And it takes even more courage to write despite the threats. I would love to review your book.

**Edvige Giunta**
**New Jersey**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 01:13 AM**
Memoirists, and all writers, need to pay attention to what is happening to this remarkable memoir. It should be a source of concern for anyone who cares about intellectual and creative freedom. I applaud Fawzia Afzal-Khan for pushing forward and making sure her voice is heard.

**Margot Badran**
**Georgetown University**
**Tuesday, Nov 16 00:08 AM**
Fawzia I am delighted you are sailing forth with this wonderful book and not letting anyone stop it and in so doing defending freedom of speech for us all!

**Sivan Grunfeld**
**United States**
**Sunday, Nov 14 15:26 PM**
Fear is the first step in censorship. No book should be recalled for such a reason. Good luck.

**Zafar Rao**
**Abbottabad, Pakistan**
**Friday, Nov 12 16:18 PM**
Justification given by Alice Pfeiffer, Dir. of SU Press in an earlier post is a admirable to inform the readers about the reason behind the whole issue which says "a character in Lahore with Love very closely resembled, by name and description, an individual citizen in Pakistan".
Obviously there must be many more people in Pakistan with whom the character must be resembling because the book has been written in that background. To depict a society, a writer has to select/pick characters from that particular society. I am sure she could not, even if she wished to, choose a character from New York for her book written about Lahore.
I fully support the author and request SU Press to lift the ban on this book to afford the reading opportunity to all those who wish to benefit from her book.

**Swaralipi Nandi**
**Kent State University**
**Friday, Nov 12 15:43 PM**
I have been fortunate to post a review of the book and been appreciated by the author herself, for "getting the book at so many levels". Indeed the book itself is so intricately written that it will be unfair to call it just a memoir. It is at once the story of an evolving nation and its people, of a simple tale of friendships as well as the complexities of a metropolitan postcolonial critic. Her girlfriends thus cease to be reminiscences of actual persons, they embody the multiple facets of Pakistani womanhood. To ban the book for slandering real people is a gross misreading of the book itself--for it never claims to re-create those real people in the first place!
I strongly condemn this ban, not only as a believer of artistic license, but also because it overlooks the larger picture that the book so artfully creates.

**Bina Sharif/**
**New York City**
**Friday, Nov 12 03:08 AM**
Nothing should be banned especially books. Does any one who ban books understand the word,"IQRA" ?
"READ" "RECITE" Who will be able to read or recite if the word is not printed controversy or no controversy.
Imagine how powerful the written word is!
Every one is threatened by it. For God's sake it's 21st Century.

**Lubna Sheikh**
**California**
**Thursday, Nov 11 23:36 PM**
Enjoyed reading your memoir.
Thanks to Mad and Syracuse it has brought more publicity to your Great Book!

**Sarah White**
**University of North Texas**
**Thursday, Nov 11 17:09 PM**
I have been one of the lucky ones who were able to obtain a copy of Lahore With Love before Syracuse Press pulled it from the shelves. Not only is this book a wonderful read but I found it to be very politically informative for a sadly under-educated westerner such as myself. Fawzia Afzal-Khan supplies a feminist voice for thousands who cannot utter such sentiments for themselves while providing a testament to the integrality of the bonds that women forge as they come of age. The news of the decision to remove the book from publication deeply saddened me; the justifications for that action that the director of Syracuse Press has offered on this blog angers me. At the very opening of her text Fawzia Afzal-Khan offers the readers the explanation that no given character is any one person but a conglomerate of remembrances. The requirements to satisfy a libel suit include that the document in question be a false statement of fact about the defamed and must be understood to be of and concerning the "defamed" and intended to harm their reputation. Additionally, it is difficult to put stock into there being a strong basis for a libel/character defamation lawsuit in light that Ms. Afzal-Khan will apparently be able to recommence the publication efforts on her own; indicating that a legally valid cease-and desist order has not yet been produced. I appreciate Director Pfeiffer's attempt to shed some perspective on this situation but Syracuse's decision still reeks of cowardice.
Find this book and read it a million times over, it is worth the effort.

**George F Roberson**
**Amherst, Denver, Tangier**
**http://collaborativemedia.blogspot.com/**
**Thursday, Nov 11 16:22 PM**
This is an unfortunate set-back, but Fawzia is a pioneer who will not be stifled. Even as 'traditional' publishing withers (for a variety of reasons), voices like Fawzia's must rise from the ashes harnessing new methods: congratulations to Fawzia for finding ways forward through community and new media.

**Zahra Ali**
**Thursday, Nov 11 14:06 PM**
I am sad to hear about Fawzia Afzal-Khan's book being banned from the Syracuse press. It upsets me that I can't a get copy to read, but from what I have heard it is a great book. I hope that it becomes available again soon.

**Shakil Ahmed**
**Lahore**
**Thursday, Nov 11 06:58 AM**
I really enjoyed reading this book. It is certainly a good addition in a new style of writing a memoir. Actually Fawzia Khan is a rebel from the traditional way of thinking so she refelcts all her rebellious ideas in this masterpiece. I am reading this book repeatedly and increasing my knowledge about women issues as well.
Read it at all costs!

**Sarah Singh**
**New York**
**http://www.theskybelow.com**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 23:42 PM**

Isn't it the expected structure of a memoir to reflect one's experience/personal history? I look forward to giving "Lahore with Love" as gifts in the new year!

**Alice Pfeiffer, Dir. of SU Press**
**Syracuse University**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 19:48 PM**

I understand that the book Lahore with Love has been a topic of discussion on this blog. As Director of the SU Press, I want to offer some perspective on this topic.

Several months ago, the SU Press became aware that a character in Lahore with Love very closely resembled, by name and description, an individual citizen in Pakistan. Upon review, the Press found the representation of the character in the book was virtually identical to this citizen, and that the portrayal raised very serious concerns of libel and defamation of character.

The Press discussed these concerns with Dr. Afzal-Khan. She initially offered to revise the book, but later withdrew that offer. After ongoing discussions, both parties ultimately chose to end the contract, as often happens when authors and publishers have issues that cannot be resolved.

SU Press very much recognizes Dr. Afzal-Khan's right to publish her book and the effort she undertook in authoring it. Indeed, SU Press offered to transfer full rights to the book, without cost, to her should she wish to obtain a new publisher. It is our understanding that Dr. Afzal-Khan has done that, and we wish her well moving forward.

Sincerely,
Alice Pfeiffer
Director, SU Press

**Magid Shihade**
**Birzeit, Palestine**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:53 PM**

Of course, will support you on this. Just curious to know what the controversy/ legal case is about?

**Nawal El Saadawi**
**Cairo, Egypt**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:49 PM**

Please add my name to people supporting you.

**Robert JC Young**
**New York University**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:47 PM**
Coraggio Fawzia! As always, attempts to ban books only lead to their wider circulation.

**K. D. Verma**
**Editor, South Asian Review**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:45 PM**
You have my full support in your fight for freedom of expression. I am very puzzled by the untoward actions of those who want to suppress a writer's freedom. Undoubtedly, you have written a very good book and it has received excellent reviews.

**Amritjit Singh**
**Ohio University, United States**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:44 PM**

You have our full support and we hope the book will march to success despite this bump in the road.

**Khurram Khiraam Siddiqui**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:42 PM**

It's really disappointing to know about the behaviour of a press in the most developed country of the world. A book of memoir may contain many things which may cause displeasure to others but it does not lessen its literary worth and artisitic value. Once the press had published that book it should have stood by you. It will cause no harm to you as we all support you as an excellent and bold writer. we hope that you will continue writing with same strength and vitality.
Regards,

**Farida Saeed**
**New York**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:38 PM**
Please support Fawzia in defending her book. All of us here revere the value of free speech -- which is under threat for Fawzia's book!
(former President, Kinnaird College Old Girls association, USA NY chapter)

**Imran**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:36 PM**

Really sorry to hear about this really unfortunate and bizarre situation regarding your book Fawzia. We luckily have 3 signed copies of the book and really enjoyed it. I hope your publisher reconsiders their decision.
I read the article you had attached—a really super article. What has become of our lovely Pakistan. What a tragedy.

**Afshan Qureshi**
**NY**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 15:41 PM**
It's interesting what a smart way to get more attention and prominence too. It's too bad that if the person who is suing wanted to remain anonymous they should not have brought out the fact so publicly either and in this manner confirming that it definitely was them and so removing any shadow of doubt about who it could be as the whole world is not aware of it. Maybe Pakistani' and a few others. She could have utilized this book as a venue for stepping up the pressure to be able to perform in more places. Definitely sad it's from a person who take real live situations in drama form to get message across to the people via her theater format. Does this mean she will not take situations and recreate them in her shows; so someone who has gone thro exact situation would stand up and say she did it on them and therefore want to sue her?

I do say you should stand up to it andi n fact too bad that Syracuse finds her a threat to contend. On the other hand if she considers that she is a public figure and as such should be aware of consequences for having made that choice. Of all people she should encourage openness and freedom of speech in books as much as she wants freedom to show via theater.

I for one got the book via amazon and as painful as parts are to read it is definitely what the times were and are from transplanted Pakistanis from that era in Lahore as I knew it and lived it then.

**Marvin Carlson**
**Graduate Center, CUNY**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 14:27 PM**

I am astonished and saddened by the actions of the Syracuse University Press, which betray the basic obligations of university publishing houses and I hope Fawzia's important work will be quickly made available by from some more responsible source.

**Shemeem Abbas**
**SUNY/Purchase College**
**http://www.shemeem.com**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 14:21 PM**

Dear Fawzia:

I attended your reading of Lahore, With Love at the Hudson Valley Writers' Workshop. I loved the humor and will use the book for my courses at SUNY/ Purchase beginning spring 2011.
Shemeem Burney Abbas
Juanita and Joseph Leff Distinguished Professor
Department of Political Science
SUNY/Purchase

**Mahmood Mamdani**
**Columbia University**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 11:15 AM**
It is appalling that a university press would negate the results of its own peer review process in the face of external political pressure.

**Piya Chatterjee**
**Riverside, CA**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 05:03 AM**

What a bizarre, yet familiar, theatre of the absurd--desi-amriki-style. I am appalled at the way that Syracuse University Press buckled under this kind of crude blackmail, and extortion drama. What does this say about US academic publishers and their capacities--or incapacities--to stand up to such egregious and dangerous attacks on both academic and creative freedom? Something needs to be written about that. It is this kind of work--of longing and loss-- of stories that expose the sexual/gendered/religious and class hypocrisies of our societies that need to be told--to be shouted from the rooftops. I hope the book finds another publisher--and is read widely.

**Faegheh Shirazi**
**University of Texas at Austin**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 04:13 AM**

Last Spring Dr. Afzal Khan was a guest in my class reading a chapter from her book. I heard so many positive words from my students about what they heard.
I have read the book and I feel that if we talk about the freedom of speech it really has to be practiced and not to be hushed or halted if we hear things that we personally do not like. I hope this madness stops soon.

**Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**
**Harvard University**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 03:21 AM**
Of course we will support you, dear Fawzia. How horrendously you have been treated.

**Hasnain Khan**
**University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada**
**http://hasnainkhan.wordpress.com/**
**Wednesday, Nov 10 01:47 AM**
Immigrating to Canada as a twelve year old in 2000 was a shocking experience. The new culture wasn't to blame. Rather, the shock was due to the hypocrisy and the untruths peddled by the Pakistani public education system that now lay open before me. Reading was, is, and will remain my first love - since as long as I can remember! But even this obsession with reading did not reveal the truth to me so long as I remained enveloped by Zia's legacy in the Pakistani public school system, its textbooks, newspapers, and almost all other cultural products.
Having read the 'offending chapter,' I am confident that what Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan has written must be made available, at all costs. An entire generation's social and political beliefs and values are founded upon lies and deceit in Pakistan.
Preventing this book from being published and widely read would only add to the sanitization of history that has already occurred in Pakistan and with devastating impacts.

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# *Lahore with Love* Today: An Interview with Fawzia Afzal-Khan

## By Hillary Stringer

Fawzia Afzal-Khan is a University Distinguished Professor of English and the Director of Women and Gender Studies at Montclair State University in New Jersey. She has published poetry, plays, and books of literary and cultural criticism, including *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel* (Penn State University Press, 1993) and *A Critical Stage: The Role of Secular Alternative Theatre in Pakistan* (Seagull Press, 2005). Additionally, she is the editor of *Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim American Women Speak Out* (Interlink Books, 2005), and co-editor of *The PreOccupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Duke University Press, 2000). Her memoir, *Lahore with Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends, Pakistani Style*, was originally published by Syracuse University Press in 2010, and received rave reviews from both magazines and notable individuals such as Nawal el Saadawi, Bapsi Sidhwa, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Mandy Van Deven. The book addresses Pakistan's political, cultural, and social transformations over the past fifty years through the lens of Fawzia's experiences, exploring the ways in which her life as an international literary figure and activist both parallels and diverges from the lives of her girlfriends who remained in Pakistan. Then, Syracuse University Press dropped the book after an inadmissible threat of lawsuit was issued by one of the "characters" in the memoir. Fawzia has spoken about the controversy, both in an appendix to the new edition, published by Insanity Ink Publications (self-publication), and on her website (http:fawziaafzalkhan.webs.com). In the following interview with University of North Texas PhD Candidate Hillary Stringer, Dr. Afzal-Khan addresses the issues and questions raised by a text that is both global and local, personal and political, and discusses the injustice inherent in the suppression of her memoir and the current reception of the book today.

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**HS**: In several instances throughout *Lahore with Love*, you acknowledge your own "postcolonial" mindset as a girl encountering Western Literature, using these texts to both to explicate your experiences as you trace your youthful self making sense of the world and to provide instances where intertextuality colors your worldview itself. On page 50, for example, you compare Sufi to Gilbert Osmond in order to reveal how reading *Portrait of a Lady* enabled you to see Hajira's

precarious situation for exactly what it was. At the same time, you bluntly point out the problematic nature of looking at literature from the perspective of the Lord Macaulay's of the world: isolation from your own "native" or local artistic creations, something that you comment on when you describe the activist playwrights in the final section. Do you think that there can be universal "types" or situations that can and do help individuals find meaning in their own particulars, or do you feel like you would have reached the same conclusions as a girl if, for example, you had only been exposed to Pakistani texts?

**FAK**: Hmmm...interesting question. I think its difficult to imagine "what if" situations or a-historical ones...all I can say is that I am acutely aware of being a product of a particular sociocultural context of a specific time period, with influences of colonial vestiges coloring my worldview and sense of self. I am not comfortable with the notion of a-historical "universalism" in any guise, literary, philosophical etc. What I can say is that there are "constellations" (in the Benjaminian sense) of very different sets of events from different contexts which can nevertheless illuminate something useful about the human condition especially in moments of crisis.

**HS**: You have several female activists in this book—your own scholarship, Madina's plays, Madina's communist writer-mother from South Africa, and, briefly, Nawal El Saadawi—but you also discuss how Umm Hassan, in a way, seems not only the most driven but, chillingly, the most successfully "liberated" woman. Can the worldview that Umm Hassan espouses provide a type of independence for women? How is it possible that Umm Hassan is "allowed" more independence than other women in the book?

**FAK**: Yes, a troubling issue to think about. There may be something to the notion of "agency" afforded/enacted by women working within the cultures of orthodoxy and conservative Islamism in recent times within postcolonial Muslim societies—as suggested by theorists like Saba Mahmoud in her now-famous if controversial book, *The Politics of Piety*. It is such a discourse of "piety" that women like Umm Hassan have usurped for themselves and which allows them a "liberation" or independence which is nonetheless, heavily circumscribed and overdetermined by religion. Still, I would argue that the character of Madina in the book—as well as her Marxist mother—are very strong examples of "liberated" women; Madina, of course, being as bullheaded in her secular feminism as Umm Hassan is in her Islamist one.

**HS**: You often use Lahore's hot climate as a stand-in for the way that geography and location function in your psyche. In an age of increasing digitalization, do you think that the focus on the concrete, physical space of one's homeland has changed in some way? For example, do children who grow up with computers

conceptualize place differently? Or does everyone have the same "Madeline" triggers regardless?

**FAK**: Sadly, children growing up today have fewer of those "Madeline" triggers because they spend less time paying attention to the physicality of their location than, I think we of a pre-digital era did. Though of course there are children who don't have PCs or if they do, cannot access them all the time in certain spaces (like Pakistan) due to constant electricity failures/blackouts etc—which forces them to acknowledge the physical contours and realities of their "home" space in fairly visceral ways. So, I suppose it again boils down to where you live and what access you have to the digital realm. Overall though, youngsters the world over have a more connected, globalized sense of themselves vis a vis others in which the virtual spaces they inhabit sometimes appear more real, but less embodied, than the "actual" physical space and terrain they live in; I am thinking here also of the digital worlds of avatars, for example. This experience of disembodied geography and selfhood will surely alter the literary expression in years to come.

**HS**: If *Lahore with Love* was released now, in the aftermath of Osama Bin Laden's death, do you think that it would have a different reception in America? In Pakistan?

**FAK**: I think the book continues to be relevant, perhaps even more so, in the aftermath of OBL's death. It definitely is a book of the times, shedding important light (at least I like to think so) on a region of the world that has been at the center of our attention here in the US ever since 9/11 and continues to be so now. In Pakistan, I believe the reception was the same as it would be today—more focused on the "girlfriends" of the subtitle than on the light it sheds on a Pakistan that has vanished from sight. OBL's death and its unfolding—along with Salmaan Taseer's murder (he was the Governor of Punjab, the province I am from and of which Lahore is the capital city) and that of the sole Christian Minister of Minorities— underscore afresh the premise of nostalgia for that vanished secular past and promise of the Pakistan I am describing in my book.

**HS**: You open the introduction with a quote from Lauren Slater about the conditional nature of "truth"—or lack thereof—in memoir. Do you think that it is more important to try and convey "truth" when writing about unfamiliar people/places for a Western audience, or do you feel pressure to be a "representative" of Pakistani culture? It almost seems as if to do so can be seen as counterintuitive to the highly personalized and self-reflexive nature of memoir itself, since it is a genre that often focuses on personal experience.

**FAK**: I am a postmodernist when it comes to understanding "truth"—I believe its always about perception rather than a fixed absolute, and certainly memoir is kin to fiction in regards to the notion of truth, whether the truth presented is historical or personal. In fact, all we have in any kind of writing, however "objective" it may claim to be—are representations of truth-claims, highly mediated and never transparent. Thus, the notion that any one account or person can be "representative" of a complex agglomeration of people, of multilayered cultures, is nonsense.

**HS**: You mention that the United States contains many of its own repressive apparati despite its projected image as a land of free discourse. How do you think that the attempted censorship of your book (via the actions of Syracuse University Press) fits in with the complicated definition of "free speech" in America?
**FAK**: I'm glad you asked this question. My First Amendment rights as a US citizen were definitely not upheld by Syracuse University Press in the case of my memoir debacle. The Press caved at the merest hint of legal action—a threat that never materialized, a frivolous threat against which I had secured legal stay orders in Pakistan by employing my own counsel, thus freeing SUP to resume its publication of my book. It did not. I can only presume that academic presses like SUP pay lip service, nothing else, to the idea of free speech, and given the bad press Pakistan has been getting in the US regarding its status as a breeding ground of terrorists and extremists, the Editors at SUP perhaps felt frightened at the possibility that they might become victims of some sort of attack. Who knows. It was all very disappointing. As was the fact that the woman pushing to censor my book from Pakistan has spent her career defending Freedom of Speech there! The hypocrisy on both ends is mind-boggling.

**HS**: How is *Lahore with Love* doing as a self-published book, where is the book currently available for purchase, and what can we do to further support the distribution of your memoir?
**FAK**: *Lahore with Love* is doing quite well as a self-published book, and many faculty have begun teaching it which of course is the best way to keep the book alive and discussion-worthy. So, if faculty can be encouraged to put it on their syllabi for courses on Womens Studies, Postcolonial Literature, South Asian Literature etc., that would be super! Additionally, people can create a Facebook "I like this" mssg, encourage book groups they know to read and discuss it, and invite me to campuses and/or other venues to give readings. Also, reviews of the book would really help. This Special section that *Pakistaniaat* is doing about my book is great! More coverage like that in different journals would be wonderful.

The book can be purchased directly on amazon.com :
http://www.amazon.com/lahore-love-growing-girlfriends-pakistani-style/dp/1456462199
Or by going to this website:
https://www.createspace.com/3528735

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# Diasporic Memories, Dissident Memoirist

By Shreerekha Pillai Subramanian

> This ruthless and irreverent dismantling of the workings of discourse, thought, and existence, is therefore the work of a dissident. Such dissidence requires ceaseless analysis, vigilance and will to subversion, and therefore necessarily enters into complicity with other dissident practices in the modern Western world. (Kristeva and Moi 299)

I met Fawzia Afzal-Khan at the annual conference of National Women's Studies Association, an ideal site of intellectual exchange for dissident feminist academics in the United States. As a scholar, professor, academic, poet, singer, actress, critic, and memoirist, opinionated and equipped with a rich contralto and an unabashed head-turning laugh, she was a natural magnet for anyone interested in feminist struggles. I followed her to all her talks and finally sat around her in a circle on the floor of the book fair where she explained the complicated narrative within and around her memoir, *Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girlfriends, Pakistani-Style*. It is less a narrative about the self than a biography about others, her dear circle of girl-friends mostly from her days studying at the Convent of Jesus and Mary and subsequently, Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore, and has generated controversy. Afzal-Khan's memoir is neatly divided into five chapters with each chapter devoted to one friend so that the chapters are in equal part homage and eulogy for the loss of friendships. However, it is the final account of the one friend who is still alive, a friend rendered through the anonymity of name and enlivened in the sheen of fiction, that produces the ripple around the text, and finally leaves the memoirist without a press, and thus, outside the printing machine. As a feminist South Asianist, I am already intrigued. For the woman's voice is always too much and never enough.

The text and context are both punitive. Afzal-Khan narrates the lives of women and charts how epistemologies of discourse and power have disciplined and punished their bodies; in a larger sense, the text authored by her female pen is given due punishment on American printscapes. The narrative circles back upon itself in that Afzal-Khan is reminded of what she can or cannot say. Deeply aware of her own "Cassandra-like" positioning, she writes knowing the insufficiency of the medium because "No one listens; no one sees" (Afzal-Khan 5). This memoir, in charting the lives of a few women from Lahore, is also a bold attempt at

feminography and one of the numerous strokes against the reign of General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s, an era that marks the great struggle of women's rights and launches the forces of fundamentalist revisions of gender and social order in Pakistan. Afzal-Khan does fulfill the prototype of Kristeva's new type of intellectual, a dissident writing from the exile of home, memory, moorings and cultural belongings. Afzal-Khan, in cataloguing the lives of other women, brings to light their passions and fierce presence, and simultaneously, writing from the doubled exclusion of diaspora and raced/gendered other, dismantles "the workings of discourse, thought, and existence" (Kristeva and Moi 299). In making legible the silence of feminine subjectivity, she performs her own complicity with western liberal projects of feminism as well as her own authentic self as a Pakistani feminist writing "to" death. In a Benjaminian sense, then, Afzal-Khan is the true storyteller, not afraid of looking at death in the face. Different prepositions such as "from," "of," "in," "at," "against," "before," "after," "despite," and "through," just to mention an elementary list, can be substituted because Afzal-Khan, like Scheherazade, the universal feminist muse, writes to stave off death.

Fawzia Afzal-Khan is marked by the crime of retrospection and reflection, a literary anamnesis; her counterpart in the Abrahamic tradition is the wife of Lot, forever unnamed, who physically turns to look at the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and "she became a pillar of salt"(Oxford Annotated Bible, Gen. 19.26). In continuing with the 'unspeakability' of the transgressive female subject, the Qur'anic tradition "corrects" in order to inscribe the apotheosis of Prophet Lut, leaving behind his wife who is guilty of not sharing her husband's faith, and so it is ordained, "she will indeed be among those that stay behind"(Qur'an, 29.32). While Amina Wadud interprets this moment as "non-gender specific examples – in this case, of the individual responsibility towards belief" (Wadud 34), I posit that this shift of damnations from the Hebraic pillar of salt to the Islamic rain of sulphur, or "horror from heaven" (Qur'an, 29:34) is a productive tension yielding a composite image of the reflecting woman. Guilty of retrospection in the Judaic tradition, she is implicitly eviscerated from the Islamic scriptures for transgression of belief. Wadud, in neutralizing her gender, which goes along with the significant Muslim feminist tafsir of rendering both sex(es) equal when measured in front of God, elides the social politics of gender and its adherent nuances. Lot has the special relationship with Allah's messengers, not his wife, who remains unnamed in the Islamic Canon as well. Her presence does not extend enough to allow her to look back. Instead, she stays behind – condemned, and in Kristeva's order, unnameable, unrepresentable, void. Since both fates are arrested in place, one frozen in the process of leaving and the other, burnt at home, the dialectic

between this mirrored erasures of Lot's wife speaks volumes to the "unmentionable" and now, un-roofed memoir which seeks multiple simultaneities: to live and die, to leave and stay, to speak the silence, to utter the unnameable, and finally, to be woman and refuse to give in to the law of death.

Through this article, I explore the significance of Afzal-Khan's memoir in relation to three feminist theoretical positionalities: the psychoanalytical, the postcolonial, and the autobiographical. The article raises questions such as, 1) in what ways does the memoir disrupt phallic jouissance and threaten the sociality of community as configured most centrally through the account of Mad Medea? 2) how does feminist autobiography theory enrich Afzal-Khan's memoir which is a telling and witnessing of other lives? The text points to the blurring between 'self' and 'other' when position, privilege, location, language, and religion often change the loci of subject and object of desire. 3) Does the memoir invite criticism from subaltern theorists and/or postcolonial scholars from whom questions on the reductive and essentialist irreducibility of this text rise. Does the memoir reify normative western representations of their ally in a strange place (playing on Afzal-Khan's own opening which meditates on the strangeness of place from her vantage point). In what ways might this memoir contest the tired binaries of west and non-west by allowing for the singular voice of the memoirist and its attendant women to speak? The memoir then stands as a place of possibility where the voices urge a portrait of Lahore, Pakistan through female subjectivity that stands as metonym for the very fractures which break bridges. The text's own metanarrative emerges from a history of concurrent reproductions in the Pakistani episteme, from Ayesha Jalal's impersonation of Saadat Hasan Manto, a panoply of middle-eastern and Muslim women's speech acts, and the author's own earlier anthology which is a composite of all different disciplines, genres, and geographies, *Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out*. Above all else, this article writes from the desire to declare, despite its allegiance to the vocabulary of deconstructive feminism: the author, most certainly, is not dead.

**Disrupting the Phallogocentric**

Afzal-Khan's slender memoir belies its epic ambition; the memoir switches between story, poetry, ghazal, song, and eulogy. The memoir, in accounting for the friendships lost, lists the systematic method and madness with which patriarchy ravages the woman's body – murder, suicide, nervous breakdown, and finally, a shattering of friendship itself, a matter to which I return later. The memoirist's friend in college, a veritable powerhouse of art and popular culture who introduces her to Leonard Cohen and boasts parents who discuss "Eliot and Lawrence and Picasso"(38), is the one who marries for love, makes her choice in

a man who eschews bourgeois order and pursues in her marital union their dreams of "a classless society" (52). The very same Hajira, *urf* Haji, is the one who realizes in the failure of this relationship that she has made a mistake and leaves the family and friends to figure out the mystery of her distress in her suicide. Having invited her husband to witness a surprise, she shoots herself dead so that "they discover Hajira's lifeless body, lifeless, the gun still smoking in her right hand, blood oozing out of the right side of her temple, her mouth twisted in a sardonic smile" (58). Suicide remains the irreducible, beyond the pale of narrative or absolute articulability and thus, Afzal-Khan's exercise in bearing witness does require further examination. Here, feminist psychoanalytical theory becomes a useful way of seeing the erasure of female subjectivity as a disruption of the phallogocentric.

Renata Salecl provides an illuminating reading of the event of Odysseus and the Sirens in the Greek epic. She complicates this through Kafka's rewriting of the epic event. Wherein the Homeric event contends the sirens as embodiment of feminine jouissance that proves to be deadly to men and thus, is countered by the heroic *polytropos*, Odysseus by tying himself to his ship and covering his ears with beeswax, Kafka rewrites it to show the change in this moment. While Odysseus assumes that the sirens are singing and he is resisting, in actuality, they have fallen in love with him for his self-composure and confidence and do not sing. It is love-sickness that renders them mute and then dead. While it can be read as the Sirens caving in to Odysseus's masculine primacy and superior ardor, Salecl offers an alternative position: "the fact that the Sirens either became mute or died, proves that they did not compromise their *jouissance*"(Salecl 193). Odysseus neither notices the Sirens stretching out their arms and in turn, their gaze that swallows his, nor does he understand that he had survived a hollow test. The Sirens do not confess their love to him and beseech or importune him to become his *objet petit a*. Feminine *jouissance* is not something that can be articulated or understood fully. It is not something that takes the place of masculine *jouissance* but something that happens beyond it. It is neither expected nor transparent. Feminine *jouissance* is a trauma to the masculine order and thus, Circe requires Odysseus to retell it to Penelope and as with trauma, it is repeated. It can be summed as feminine subjectivity without subjecthood, or a state of penitent abjection. Salecl explains, "What the Sirens' silence offers is an exemplary case of subjectivization without accepting symbolic castration" (194). While the normative order that mirrors patriarchal ideologies of regulating women's bodies at all costs will find the "dead" woman guilty of having dared to "end" her own narrative without permission by god, state, or man, Haji's bullet to the head can be read as an "exemplary case of subjectivization without accepting

symbolic castration." Her husband's hypocrisy, depravity and cruelty, revealed to her through the institutional system of marital arrangements do not leave room for dialogue or communication. Further, I read her fatal self-mutilation as her way of making explicit patriarchal script that was always already writ large upon her body. Afzal-Khan's own imaginary adds, if we missed the point, Haji's sardonic smile to this final performance as speech which defies the phallogocentric order. This smile which possibly psychically cleaves Sufi to the ground is a synecdoche for feminine *jouissance* that nevertheless remains inscrutable.

The memoir-text also benefits from being read through the prism of dissidence offered by Julia Kristeva who categorizes resistance along three arcs: the political, the psychoanalytical, and the experimental. Women, always already distantiated by exile, are afraid of neither death nor law and their dissidence foregrounds all three. And thus, she remains fragmented, singular, unnameable. Feminine subjectivity then arises out of this repressed basis where pregnancy signifies the threshold but maternity its singular ethics. The woman remains both the guarantee and threat to the patriarchy in which she has been buried. Walter Benjamin's angel of history, Angelus Novus does figure into the specter of the female chronicler who looks back while moving forward, her feet buried in the present so that female creation has to be regarded through the lens of future anteriority. While Kristeva rightly reminds us of the female (auto)biography as the work of the exiled, Afzal-Khan's memoir exceeds the limits of the text by posting bouts of laughter at random and strange junctures. Speaking to the Bakhtinian theory of the novel, Afzal-Khan's text is saturated with the bawdy and carnivalesque, culminating in the Spanish landscape of the bullfight, and this is no careless misstep of the wandering itinerant writer but a writer who chooses to situate the Dionysian squarely within the geographical markers of Europe, and not its other. In her retrospections, Pakistan pre-Zia is organized around the luxuries of the petit bourgeois and post-Zia, a new world carefully principled around gender and social segregation, but ordered nonetheless. In relating the Shia mourning rituals in the public sphere to the carnality of bull fighting in Spain, the author imbricates European hegemony with the bacchanalia generally attributed to its other, and translates the familiar Sunni derogations into the larger theme of middle-class distaste for the carnivalesque of religion, "seven days of unabashed libidinal energy unleashed in honor of the fiesta of San Fermin, that ever-so-saintly bishop of Pamplona" (79). The authorial picaresque across the globe touches upon the vexed relationship between the pantheons of religious decorum and its own shadow, the bacchanalia inspired of the same institutions. As this truth rings out from streets in Pakistan to Spain, the humanism of Afzal-Khan's project is underlined in red once again.

Kristeva's directive that exile is a way of surviving in the face of the dead father can be complicated in the sense that for the exiled Pakistani woman, the fathers double in the diasporic journey from Pakistan to the United States, and writing is an oscillation between the silences learned under the Name of the Father. For the writer then, as Trinh T. Minh-ha explains, "identity is a product of articulation. It lies at the intersection of dwelling and traveling and is a claim of continuity within discontinuity (and vice-versa)" (Minh-ha 31). Writing from exile is a way of divesting from the privileges, banality, and mass institutions that dominate everyday of the modern. In Kristeva's expressions, true dissidence arises in representing the unrepresentable, or in a Lacanian sense, gesture at the real. Articulation occurs in the signs beyond the imaginary and the symbolic. It is in the fourth chapter, not so clearly about the friend or friendship or loss as such, but a messy entanglement of ruminations on home(s), travel, religious frenzy, sexual heat where the formula of the memoir is ruptured, the authorial denunciation encoded in the single line of recall about her old friend, Chambeli, "Haji and I are the only friends from school who make it to her wedding to a Sunni man, angrily shunned by her father…" (92). The entire chapter rests on the punitive regime of the Law of the Father that dooms its object, the woman, into erasure once a certain border has been crossed. For the border-crossing agent whose future rests upon the multitudes of pasts configured through the present, a future anteriority allows for the ambiguous layering of person and time in the final lines of poetry that conclude the chapter, "Imagining Forever/ being Mad about Me" (94). The lines, hinting at Bakri's lyricization for Fawzia, the college student, also suggests in its ambiguous texturing a selfhood of romance and further, time itself constituted under the proper appendage of "Forever" as being the unforgiving entity that remains disconsolate and irreconcilable. The memoir makes visible the difficulty of retrospection made sensible in the linearity of time.

Barbara Johnson charts the melancholia of the feminist writing self, records the fact of castration for the girl, and the internalization of illness, incompletion, and a splitting that makes visible the invisible in the western canon. In writing about Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Sigmund Freud, making of them all literary case studies, she notes:

> This is not to substitute a cliterocentric universe for a phallocentric one, but rather to take the clitoris, as Gayatri Spivak and Naomi Schor have both suggested, as a synecdoche for the possibility that the world could be articulated differently, that resistance is always the sign of a counter-story, that the "knife that cuts both ways" does so not because the stories are symmetrical but because they are not, because each of them is differently

> situated, serves different ends, and accounts for different things. There is no guarantee that the figures in a *truly* recursive figure would fit together at all. (Johnson 31)

The memoir here, emerging from the resistant feminist script of a non-western context, is not the simple substitution of centering the female, and thus, writing/righting the world. Instead, it is an attempt toward "the possibility that the world could be articulated differently" (Johnson 31) under the aegis of telling a counter-story, a counter-history to Zia's campaign to nullify the rights of women, or put more plainly, the lives of women. In fact, the recursiveness of these chapters that account of the losses suffered by the woman she, the author, knew, do not fit together neatly, nor do they necessarily signify sameness. The final chapter on the one living testament to this life spent trespassing and transgressing is a fellow activist, theatre artist, and feminist icon who literally speaks through the seams of the text back at the audience. In Afzal-Khan's memoir, it is not only the dead who speak. The living mouth back their rejection so that the text splits at its seams exposing its own extradiegetic gestures of constituting memory.

Mad Medea, her pseudonym for this chapter being Medina, is the friend who arises from the depth/death of text charging the press for slander. Medea, artistic, fiery, productive, prolific, just like our memoirist, is separated from her because Medea does not leave. However, if read through psychoanalysis, her gendered condition is already one of exile. This final chapter contains the mixture of genres and disciplines – history, journalism, poetry, memoir, gossip, and mostly, a settling of accounts. It reeks of the woman-to-woman competitiveness marking female complicity in classic patriarchy most aptly coined by Denize Kandiyoti as the "patriarchal bargain." We are made privy to her winning the most prestigious artistic title in Pakistan, and thus, routing us to her actual identity, as we are also made to realize the achievements and honors heaped on our memoirist. How does one account the difficult passages and in-roads and gullies of feminist awakenings and feminist friendships? What happens when these friendships go awry? Is it better to stay complicit in the familiar silencing of patriarchy or engage in the unabashed speech of uttering these difficult dialogues. The text here becomes a "knife that cuts both ways" (Johnson 31) and shows a mirror effect – the subject and object of her study are both similar, but they do not fit together at all. Like the authorial feminine subjectivity, the text also splits in two – the feminist binary, the self and the other, the native and the diasporic, the artist and the scholar, the sister and the stranger. And this time, we point the finger, not to regulating hand of the Father, but the seismic convulsions evident in transnational feminisms. The author is only guilty of naming the unnameable.

In Ranjana Khanna's invaluable imbrication of psychoanalysis with colonialism, she offers cautions to the transnational feminist. The memoirist's account here is vulnerable in its naked mirroring of a past rendered honest through its flattened gestures at its own margins – the poor, the working class, the African, the conservative, the religious. In the memoirist's world, the heavy-handed pejoratives mark the privilege of her world defined against the massive backdrop of those left out of its glowing canvas, and the text legitimates the problematic Khanna asks us to ponder: "An ethics that bases itself on a theory of desire is a problem; it is solipsistic because desire for subjective wholeness ultimately falls into a kind of idealism" (228). Where she moves towards spectrality which "demonstrates the weight of history as an ethical and psychical structure, an epistemic violence, a melancholia, a phantom or an "unjustifiable violation" (229) that can only be mitigated by a sense of justice that takes into regard the historical ruptures consequent of colonialism and psychosocial losses as prefigured by gender. Afzal-Khan writes with this knowingness and the text is implicated in the vexed ethics of diasporic memories, most palpably spelt out in the authorial 'double exile' from nation and print capital.

**Along the Transnational Feminist Axis**

Alice Munro's recent story, "Axis" published in the aftermath of updated critiques of Betty Frieden's *Feminine Mystique* brings to the surface questions critical to western feminist discourses. Whereas Munro's fictional voice speaks to the second wave that was yet to contend with the scholarship of women of color, coalition politics, anti-imperialist praxis (Mohanty) emblematized in the pithy encapsulation of a whole era, "When the great switch came in women's lives- when wives and mothers who had seemed content suddenly announced that it was not so …" (Munro 68), Afzal-Khan's memoir speaks to a non-western feminist reckoning with the losses of the period starting with the military dictatorship of General Muhammad Zia Al-Haq's reign, a period of military collaboration with religious fundamentalism and American dollar leads to the further regulation of women's bodies and lives under the name of nationalism and heteronormative politics of power. In many ways, the memoir traces the neat line of losses from the deaths and violence suffered by women all the while naming the feminists who spearhead the Women's Action Forum and fight the iniquities starting with the Safia Bibi and Khushi Muhammad cases. In fact, much of the text carefully sets order in the chaos of losses and nostalgia by slipping through the binary famously named by Mahmood Mamdani as the 'good Muslim' and 'bad Muslim' in his book by the same title, a binary that sets the stage for Iraqi invasion under the aim of "a regime change intended to liberate "good" Muslims from the

political yoke of "bad" ones … good Muslims are modern, secular, and Westernized, but bad Muslims are doctrinal, antimodern and virulent" (Mamdani 24) that exists alongside the historical amnesia that misremembers "the Islamization of the Pakistani state, under Zia, occurred under the protective American umbrella during the Cold War" (249). The difficulty of absolute speech is made most explicit in Minoo Moallem's difficulty in answering the question: are you a Muslim woman? Previous missions of civilizing are now translated as humanism and she concludes her reflection on the impossibility of plain speech: "I am faced with the impossibility of transgression since either I am required to submit to the "itinerary of silencing" by refusing to answer the question or to adopt a subject position that makes me "pass"(Moallem 55).

It might seem like an idealization here to claim that Afzal-Khan abilitates the subaltern, her friends now dead and beyond the realm of language and symbolic order, to speak. In a sense, this might agitate the theoretical gestures towards the complexities in subaltern representations which Spivak herself has been quite actively doing. Nalini Persram's meticulous critique of Spivak's meanderings around sovereign subjectivity is an urgent inroad to this discussion: "Representation, as Spivak observes, is not about representing "them" (*vertreten*) but about learning to represent (*darstellen*) ourselves"(Persram 84). Persram implicates postcolonial desire in the silencing of the subaltern; speech is possible, albeit interrupted by the authorial silence in moments when conversations come to a cease-fire. The authorial voice, given to poetry, ghazal, singing refrains in the middle of sentences, operatic sentimentality suffers the silence willingly performed by friends who have switched sides in the feminist camp. To the mother's prejudice that elevates Sunni over the Shia, the daughter's interrogation, "Why are you so full of hate, so prejudiced?" is what I really want to ask her, but she has risen from the table" (84) is never voiced. In the poem that follows this episode, the author unveils her mother's own adulterous love affair evidenced through a childhood memory. The feminine silence exists in simultaneity with the supplement, *jouissance* as evident through both the melancholic and the erotic. The mother's latent desires, left unwitnessed in her command, "you didn't see anything" (87) emerges through the completion of the daughter's memoir – logos stitched into eros in the beat of the thanatotic. The daughter does "see" and the memoir, a defiant gesture at self-expression, identity, assertion of the politics of exile and belonging, refuses to be easily categorized through genre or discipline or any other form of regulation. In the ways that the women in Afzal-Khan's life were once defiant, infecting the author with a lifelong sense of autonomy, the memoir is an unruly jumble of snapshots, recollections, anecdotes from then and now, a text that refuses to be regulated.

While none of the friends lost in this narrative are directly penalized by Zia's campaign against women because as is evident, the women who suffer the ravages of the state often were poor, illiterate and unable to afford legal counsel, the women in Afzal-Khan's circle pay a price to the ossification of classic patriarchy as it realigns itself through the Hudood ordinance passed in 1979. Sam's murder, Haji's suicide, Saira's nervous breakdown and Chambeli's alienation are all marked by the change in the air, and women of privilege often come from families whose power gives them impunity from the law, who are freer than the poor to punish their wives and daughters. Much scholarship has been devoted to this era of rising religious prescriptions in the Pakistani public sphere (Jamal; Jafar; Silva; Haq; Weiss; Hegland; Khan ""Zina" and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women"; Korson and Maskiell; Mumtaz) who attend carefully to the conditions on the ground post-Hudood and pre-2006 repeal of the Hudood. Shahnaz Khan offers a very astute analysis of the difficulty of reading fundamentalism and women's involvement in it calibrated between tropes of orientalism and secularism and western hegemony, and she does it by attending rigorously to Pakistani feminist movement (Khan "Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age"). Amina Jamal's work is critical in the way Muslim piety performed by women is read as acts of feminine subjectivity rather than "the site of a battle between fundamentalist men and elite women in Pakistan" (62) but it is to Shahnaz Khan I turn whose work with the women incarcerated under the Zina laws sheds greatest light on the manner, method, and significance behind the regulation of women's bodies in contemporary Pakistan.

> The notion of Pakistan, literally the land of the pure, evokes a desire for a national community of moral citizens. I argue that this morality is expressed in discourse suggesting the ideal citizen as a moral disembodied male. Women's narratives disrupt this ideal. Their accounts suggest a hidden side of the nation. Yet in their desire to present themselves as gharaloo (domesticated), they too desire to be part of the national narrative. As Pakistan narrates its past and present and tries to imagine its future, there is a struggle over ideology and particularly which interpretations of Islam will help construct the guiding force of the nation. (88)

Khan gathers powerful narratives in her interviews of women incarcerated for periods of days to years regarding their putative crime against the state which she finds to be less about the religious transgression of zina and more, familial desire to punish women who make autonomous choices or utilize their bodies for further economic gain, and if the women pose any resistance, they are tossed in front of

the slow machinery of state law. In actuality, once incarcerated, a woman of no economic means might have to wait for years for trial and meanwhile, her family gains the upper hand of having punished the "unruly" woman. In an article written the following year, Khan complicates her interviews with the women in the shelter, Darul-Aman, by bringing into relief larger structures of western hegemony, ideological state apparatuses and economic devastation that play into keeping the *Zina* laws in place: "Pakistani women, controlled by poverty and their families, may be controlled again by the orientalist gaze and co-opted into mystifying the oppression women in the West face" (Khan "Locating the Feminist Voice: The Debate on the Zina Ordinance" 663), and urges the transnationalist feminist to think of the condition of gender iniquity in Pakistan as continuous with the classic patriarchy in the western world as well, rather than as dichotomous or aberrant. In further highlighting how the cases of Saima Sarwar and Uzma Talpur, women of the upper class, who were killed and disappeared respectively, by their own families, she complicates the class question. The poor and working class women are punished through incarceration and the state shelter system while the upper class women whose families can afford to resist the long arm of the law can then administer the justice themselves.

Afzal-Khan's memoir speaks to the aporia "class" represents in women's lives for whom the bargain with patriarchy is what sets the self-destruction in motion. It is only at the ritual surrounding Sam's death that the author finds out her friend does not have a home of privilege like "the upper-middle-class enclaves of Gulberg, Cantonment, and Shah Jamal Colony" (22) but instead an urban home, unerringly quiet in mourning. Haji's landscape is one of privilege and ennui, the alienation of the elite while the rest are all bound to struggle such as Saira who has to scuttle between continents to satisfy her wandering husband and dictatorial mother-in-law. In a proleptic move to the late 1990s, the author recalls an event that stands as synecdoche for the memoir of losses here, the murder of a young woman who is on the run from her ex-abusive husband and family that refuses to abide by her divorce and desire to remarry a man of her choice. In front of the human rights lawyer and the author's cousin-aunt, Asma Jahangir, the young woman is murdered by her own uncle and mother. "The first gets Samia in her head; the second, in her heart; and the third, clean through her crotch" (32). Shahnaz Khan's call to continuous reading of western and non-western patriarchies emerges in that what Botting and Wilson note about the iconic American anti-feminist film, "Pretty Woman" since anti-feminist structures of the law render no justice to women's bodies because of "a libidinal economy of total servitude that demands the excision of every form of useless negativity that it cannot reaffirm and reinvest for profit" (184). The symbolism cannot be clearer – if the woman's

body disobeys, it is of no use to the patriarchal apparatus. For the autonomy exerted by her head, heart, and sexuality, she is killed while her murderers can excuse their sin under the utterance, "God's will is done," her father's declaration to his constituents in Peshawar. It is the very slippage between the name of the father and the no of the father. For her transgression in refusing to abide by her own commodification and concurrent subjection to the law of the father, she is excised from the legal script, her body terminated with extra-juridical impunity in the offices signifying the juridicality of the state. The irony should not be lost here. The familial has simply fastened the much slower juridical machinery of the state. The name of the father (kin) is coterminous with the law of the father (state).

**Autobiographical Assumptions and Biographical Detractions**

> If Islam and Christianity take the foreground, Judaism is present by implication. Nawal El Saadawi challenges the patriarchal tradition common to all three Abrahamic religions, but is not afraid to exploit it. After all, were it not for Allah, there would be no Bint Allah. (Malti-Douglas 117)

> A girl child is better than ten thousand boys;
> If she's far away she asks after her mother;
> If she's near she brings me her love
> And she gives me part of her food. (Tunisian lullaby in Fernea and Bezirgan 89)

> Oh God, inspire the men in our government to do right because their injustice to the nation has many repercussions on us. It seems that we have not received anything more than men receive except pain. This reverses the Quranic verse that says, 'One man's share shall equal two women's shares.' (al-Badiya 136)

Theorizing the autobiographical involves legitimizing and canonizing the unstable, genre-crossing, memory inspired, kin of fiction that the category becomes once subjected to autobiographical assumption of the 'female pen' (Showalter), as opposed to earlier phases of feminine or feminist. For the woman writer, like Scheherazade, writing is a way of forestalling death, resisting while abiding and gathering lives in the interstices of patriarchy. From the earlier feminist writing in the Arab world, as evidenced by al-Badiya's lament or the lullaby which sounds out the unconscious in folk song, women have always already been aware of their subjugation and thus, through modernity, as Shahnaz Khan reflects, seek to participate in the national narrative. Even where she is seemingly celebrated in the

lullaby, it calls attention to her labors without which the familial cannot function. Afzal-Khan's memoir adds to the already lengthy tradition of Arab, Muslim, and middle-eastern women writing about the self and subjectivity pushing against patriarchal subjugations. Yet the woman's body is fetishized even in celebrations in ways that elide agency and cohere along the axis of commodification – use, reuse, refuse. Often women are rendered within this libidinal economy as the contesting object rather than speaking subjects, reordered in Afzal-Khan's feminist poetics as "The places/And colors/In between" (135).

The female pen is not necessarily a gendered pen. In the memoir's need to elide or transgress gender norms as the writer traverses western and non-western spaces, Leigh Gilmore's conclusions drawn from Teresa de Lauretis's work remains useful, "the 'feminine subject' immersed in the ideology of gender is not the only gendered construction available to women" (Gilmore 20). The ideological underpinnings raised by Gilmore lead to questions of authority, self-representation, and legitimacy, the questions haunting the woman's text, and thus, it is almost ritualistic that the memoirist here ends on a note of doubt and humility "reading" in the women of faith an autonomy and agency that makes them less complicitous than "the accommodations to philandering husbands my saner, more secular-minded friends have had to make" (143). Liz Stanley, in putting the 'bio' back in autobiography outlines the blueprint of Afzal-Khan's textual ambitions most cogently while alerting us to the epistemological concerns of the type of feminography engaged by the autobiographer. Ultimately the memoir, nodding in the direction of women who have chosen to write their lives before, does so knowing the ontological precipice offered women who speak. Instead, Afzal-Khan psychologizes, rhapsodizes, ruminates, enjambs and questions, "Who am I? Why am I here?" (145) ending on a notion of ceaseless eternal motion. The conclusion where we are left astride the see-saw, reader subjectivity coming into play alongside the writer's childhood frolic, is one of motion, the childhood games a mere precursor to the life of wandering entailed in the diaspora for Fawzia Afzal-Khan.

In conclusion, it is helpful to bear in mind the hopes and realizations evinced in a recent conversation between Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak wherein Spivak introduces the term 'critical regionalism'. Such a system of thought begins where Derrida introduces the disconnection between birth and citizenship, a point Spivak unpacks, "… we can's make a clear-cut distinction between self-determination and nationalism, regionalism and nationalism. There must be a persistent critique that operates during and beyond the rational arrangements. This is the regionalist imperative-discontinuous with the politico-rational" (Butler and

Spivak 108). It is in the very sutures and ruptures of this diasporic journey of distantiation and negotiation with one's own socio-politics and gendered reconsiderations that Afzal-Khan anchors her autobiographics. We live in an age when everyone can have an opinion and bloviate like the talking heads on a podium and reach a vast audience. It is also much too easy to categorize each position into boxes that remain cemented and separate so that discursivity becomes military exercises in further alienation. Afzal-Khan, instead, seeks to speak on the subject of the city of her youth through an axis of critical regionalism that leaves the text in the contested terrain of strange friendships, intimacy and complicity leaving a trail of questions thicker than the text itself on sovereignty, nation, gender, and exile.

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# Inevitable Multiplicity of Subject Positions in Fawzia Afzal Khan's *Lahore with Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends, Pakistani-Style**

## By Nyla Ali Khan

In a conversation that I had with Professor P. S. Chauhan via e-mail, he pointed out that in the recent surge in American autobiography the urge to assert and celebrate the self is an inevitable response to the gradual obliteration of the self by the flattening forces of contemporary culture of the megalopolis. In that surge, Fawzia Afzal-Khan's tightly-woven, well-crafted, poetically exuberant, intellectually incisive memoir, *Lahore with Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends, Pakistani-Style*, is a delight to read. I particularly enjoyed reading Afzal-Khan's memoir because the narrator's location could have engendered the predicament of perceiving history and social and cultural praxes with an ahistorical cosmopolitanism, but the narrator steers clear of that danger by weaving the fragments of her memory to reconstruct history. In a narrative inflected by feminism, postcolonialism, and poststructuralism, Fawzia Afzal Khan, in her memoir, is increasingly concerned with the ideology of narrative texts. By deploying poststructuralist methodology in her works, Afzal-Khan attempts to relate form or technique to issues of social, cultural, and political ideology.

*Lahore with Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends, Pakistani Style* veers away from the formalism of narratology by serving certain interests and undermining others, expressing certain values and negating others, reconstructing certain power relations and challenging others. I borrow Susan Sniader Lancer's notion of both narrative structures and women's writing being constituted by the variables of race, gender, sexuality, education, marital status, social class, and nationality which generate complex conventions and relations of power ("Toward a Feminist Poetics of Narrative Voice." *Narrative/Theory*. By David H. Richter. New York: Longman Publishers, 1996:184).

This complexity of identities challenges stereotypes, alliances, and biases generated by hegemonic discourse. The narrative voice in Afzal-Khan's memoir engages questions of authority through employing the autodiegetic "I" to construct a credible voice and to mediate the voices of the other characters. This strategy enables the author to use narrative situations as textual mediums through which her own voice is channeled. Interestingly, Afzal-Khan combines the autodiegetic "I" with the authorial voice to transgress the conventional construction of the feminine. Within a narrative framework created by the interwovenness of postcolonialism and poststructuralism, the extension of

Afzal-Khan's fictional authority to nonfictional referents enables her to make fruitful incursions into a culture's political, social, literary, and intellectual paradigms. Afzal-Khan memoir sufficiently demonstrates that even the most general elements of narration are invested in a social and cultural ideology in which the narrating "I" is not separated from the female body, but, on the contrary, is gender specific.

For example, Afzal-Khan in her memoir, *Lahore with Love,* engages in more politically astute writing in order to underwrite the liaison of postcolonial and woman as the valorization of oppression, "elevating the racially female voice into a metaphor for 'the good'" (Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition." Critical Inquiry 18.4 (1992): 759). Afzal-Khan clearly rejects the traditional categories of narrator and character, enunciating subject and a subject of the statement, the author and the protagonist. Afzal-Khan creates the inevitable multiplicity of subject-positions for the purpose of liberating herself from colonial and neo-colonial mediations of female identity, which threaten to manipulate her subjectivity by a complex of signs and practices. She delightfully shares with the reader that, "My place is now also a place where I manipulate my Muslim womanhood to make my way up the U.S. academic ladder, reporting to increased acclaim the dire situation of Muslim women of Pakistan. My place is now a paradox of no-place, my home is now abroad, I have become exotic to myself, a stranger to my own (s)kin" (10).

In her work, Afzal-Khan endeavors to reinterpret the repressive frameworks that essentialize the identities of former colonial female subjects by negotiating the dominant discourse from within in order to construct their subjectivity. She engages in reflective action to examine her own locations of privilege. Afzal-Khan tries to self-actualize and intervene in patriarchal national history by seeking in the interaction of modernity and communal memory not a vertical relationship producing totalized notions of nation, gender, class, race, ethnicity but intersectionalities between different cultural times, spaces, and ways of knowing the self in relation to the family, society, and the cosmos. She speaks from her location about the political realities that have woven the web of social relations she inhabits or has inhabited. Afzal-Khan writes, "I have traveled to seek the 'different,' 'the exotic,' that always elusive space of greatness, of liberation, which is also the space of untruth, of deception. I have traveled far and wide, so wide as to put millions of miles and several continents between my mother country and myself. What has sustained me, kept me grounded through all the flying about I've done in the past three decades, has been the memories" (8).

Like feminist scholars Hazel Carby, Valeri Smith, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Barbara Smith, Afzal-Khan considers how race, nationality, class, religion, and gender intersect in the social construction of subjectivity. Fawzia Afzal-Khan's work gives the clarion call for an increasingly materially grounded, historically aware, and yet also theoretically sophisticated feminism. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out, Western feminists portray themselves as "educated, modern, as having control over their own

bodies and 'sexualities,' and the freedom to make their own decisions" ("Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes\ Torres. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991: 200). Post-independence subcontinental literature seems to ignore the "epistemic violence" involved in forging the postcolonial subject, in particular the female postcolonial subject (Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. London: Routledge, 1993: 234). The vision circulated by this literature creates the perception of an "authentic" consciousness. The narrator of *Lahore With Love*, who is well-educated, articulate, intellectually perceptive, upwardly mobile, disrupts this essentializing monolithic discourse. Her position makes the boundaries of cultural identity and linguistic identity permeable, engendering the creation of a counter-culture that is not always explicable in terms of an allegory of otherness (Suleri Goodyear, *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992: 4). This effect is achieved by the perception of the narrative as a site where multiple discourses intersperse with one another to create a polyvalent space. It is in this space that the material history of subject-constitution can be read via and in opposition to hegemonic structures.

The women who play significant roles in Afzal-Khan's narrative – Sam,Haji aka Shelley, Amena aka Hayley, Saira, Honey, Madina - have material existences. These women are portrayed as intelligent and articulate persons whose subjectivity cannot be split into simplistic binaries: literate-illiterate, urban-rural, affluent-impoverished, repressed-emancipated, domestic-professional. Afzal-Khan's women characters do not fit the mold of the gendered subaltern in the "third-world." Generic constructions of the "third-world woman" create an essentialist entity, whose unprivileged position of playing second fiddle to men in all situations imposes restrictions on her social, political, cultural, and intellectual mobility. The rabidity of this discourse further distorts political and social systems by minimizing the threat of cultural difference posed to the normative center. Such a discourse constructs paradigms that allow the compartmentalization of the "third-world." The narrator's recounting of political and social events establishes this discourse and the subjectivities it shapes as slippery and liable to change as the frameworks of their possibility also change. Afzal-Khan foregrounds the subject constitution of the women in her narrative as "distinct actualities" that avert the debilitating generic construction of "third-world" women. This female subject is not a monolithic "Other," but a heterogeneous figure whose richness and complexity cannot be compressed into pigeon-holes that are created either by pre-colonial indigenous discourse or neo-orientalist strategies.

The narrator's *sahelis* are vivacious, exuberant, sensual, remarkable young women eager to plunge into life. Unwittingly, their curiosity, infatuation with the grandiosity and loftiness of theatre and literature, their unsure and tentative baby steps into the mysterious realm of sexual intimacy, their implicit and explicit advocacy of a

space in which women could pave their own paths makes them anathema to the rigidly patriarchal, brutally masculine and militaristic culture of Pakistan. Afzal-Khan's *sahelis* are blossoming young women who have the chutzpah to make strategic life choices regarding education, livelihood, marriage, childbirth, sexuality, etc., which are critical for people to lead the sort of lives they want to lead and constitute life's defining parameters. But to their chagrin they find themselves constrained by the normative structures through which Pakistani society creates gender roles. Afzal-Khan mourns the erasure of selfhood that some of her friends experienced: "Sometimes I wonder who it is of us all who succumbed to the dizzying pull of that spiral into the abyss of a self that is permanently dis-eases in the otherness of outsiderdom" (144).

The increasing gender violence in Pakistan is replete with instances of daughters being iconicized as repositories of familial honor making it obligatory for the patriarch of the household to prevent that honor from being besmirched, even if that means ruthlessly murdering the daughter who has the "audacity" to choose her own partner; there are instances of politically empowered women being culturally disempowered and made to faithfully play the compliant wife who uncomplainingly bears the pain of her husband's many infidelities; there are other instances of ambitious and motivated young women who are reduced to intellectual penury by being made to take the back seat in deference to their husband's managerial decisions; the reduction of the victim of rape to a wily seductress by Zia's infamous Hudood Ordinance of 1979; the culpable objectification of women and the erosion of their selfhood legitimized by the Hudood Ordinance; the negation of a woman's powers of reason and intellect by the discrediting of her testimony in a court of law; there is an instance of a female vigilante group in Pakistan that makes a facile attempt to reconstruct historical and cultural discourses in order to inspire the kind of cultural nationalism that fundamentalist politics requires. This organization advocates the creation of a homogeneous culture devoid of the freedoms that the women of the subcontinent have traditionally enjoyed. Their draconian methods to enforce purdah, reinforce a patriarchal structure in which an unaccompanied woman is rendered vulnerable, and curtail the mobility of the technology savvy youth end up reinforcing the already well-entrenched hierarchy. To her credit, Afzal-Khan does not conflate Islamic epistemology with cultural praxes in Pakistan.

The narrator's politically and culturally constructed representation of her existence is manifested in her rendition of the coming of age of Pakistan. The indigenous elite of the Indian subcontinent engendered a nationalistic discourse which repositioned the postcolonial subject so that nation and nationalism became key concepts. The civil war in 1971 saw a further division of Pakistan and the creation of another geographical space: Bangladesh. Afzal-Khan mourns the terror spawned by that war in which rape was a weapon deployed to humiliate and degrade the "insurgent" Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan by the swashbuckling military of West Pakistan. After the gruesome partition of India in 1947, the establishment of Bangladesh as a nation-state caused another

indeterminacy in the determinant concept of "nation." The aftermath of 1971 was a period of political instability in Pakistan. The country witnessed a series of coup d'états, which were orchestrated by the army in order to install military dictatorships. The ardent nationalism of that era elicited the cohesive structure of an entrenched and centralized nation-state. Afzal-Khan is aware that the rhetoric of nationalism deployed to create a neat homogeneity can engender the politicization of identity in the form of fundamentalism, xenophobia, and a fanatical espousal of tradition. She observes that Pakistan is a paradox: "A place where the spaces I know most intimately are more secular than their counterparts in that paean to secularism, the US of A. And yet, a place where fanatical extremism, intolerance, and xenophobia have deep roots, sometimes pushing their way aboveground in the lease expected of spaces" (8). Afzal-Khan seems to resolve the ambivalence created by this political kaleidoscope, a space that slides geographically, linguistically, and ideologically by characterizing the sovereign subject as decentered. Afzal-Khan concludes that unlike her, her *sahelis*, "never had to contend with the ever-multiplying fissures of a selfhood fractured into so many roles, performances of identity I am doomed to rehearse and repeat ad nauseum as I shuttle back and forth, back and forth between here and there, America and Pakistan, my life as an academic, a scholar, a part girl, a mother, a daughter, a wife, a friend, a lover, an actorsingerpoetactivistmemoirist" (144-45).

I was raised in a secular Muslim home in we were encouraged to speak of the "liberation of women" and of a culturally syncretic society. I was taught that Islam provided women with social, political, and economic rights, however invisible those rights were in our society. It was instilled in me that Islam gave women property rights, the right to interrogate totalizing social and cultural institutions, the right to hold political office, the right to assert their agency in matters of social and political import, and the right to lead a dignified existence in which they could voice their opinions and desires. I was also educated in a Catholic school run by Irish missionaries, where my *sahelis* and I took especial delight in the innocuous trespasses of well-bred Convent girls. Forbidden fruit is especially delectable in a convent setting! I remember being blissfully unaware of the social injustices, political disenfranchisement, and economic inequities, and like Afzal-Khan and her *sahelis,* ". . . waiting for the bogeyman of nightmares, to snatch us and throw us into the vortex of life's complexities" (144). But I have learned that a lot of the time cultural praxes exist independently of religious epistemologies; I have witnessed the militarization of the sociocultural fabric of Kashmir; I watch with remorse the clamping down of intellectual freedoms in Kashmir and the growing influence of fanatical elements in that polity; I am saddened by the shutting down of dissenting voices; I mourn the erosion of women's activism in Kashmir by the reduction of their identities to grieving mother, martyr's mother, or rape victim; I grieve the relegation of sane voices in civil society to the background; I am pained by the scathed psyches of women suffering psychosomatic illness in conflict zones. I, too, shuttle back and forth

between America and Kashmir, my life as an academic, a scholar, a mother, a daughter, a wife, a friend, a writer-activist-public speaker. Like Afzal-Khan, I ask myself, "Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?" (145).

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# (Re)Reading Fawzia Afzal-Khan's *Lahore With Love*: Class and the Ethics of Memoir

By Dr. Ambreen Hai

> *Unfortunately, the positive attention [the book] was garnering upset a well-known theatre personality in Pakistan, who sent a letter threatening legal action against the publishers and myself for libel, unless the book were immediately removed from the market. … Without looking into the merits of her claims, and instead of standing by me, their author, Syracuse chose to cave in to her demands, on the basis of claims that by any reasonable judgement are both frivolous and unproveable (sic). … ORDER MY BOOK IF YOU BELIEVE IN FREE SPEECH!! Support my labor of love--which is how I see my memoir, a love-letter to a Pakistan that has sadly vanished… (emphasis in original)*

Thus, on her personal website, the postcolonial scholar Fawzia Afzal-Khan explains the reasons for Syracuse University Press's cancellation of her contract, just months after the publication in March 2010 of her memoir, *Lahore With Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends, Pakistani-Style*.[1] Her book, as the website also informs readers, will henceforth be self-published and sold via internet booksellers such as Amazon.com. To counter what she describes as a violation of her freedom of speech, she has made freely available on her website the entire "offending chapter" (the fifth in her book, entitled "Mad/medea") which apparently occasioned these difficulties (though Afzal-Khan also implies that her unnamed antagonist was more "jealous of the "positive attention" the book was receiving than "upset" by negative revelations about herself). This memoir of the author's middle-class girlhood in the 1960's and 70's in Lahore, Pakistan, as recollected from the perspective of a middle-aged American academic, comprises an introduction, an epilogue, and five chapters. Each chapter, with the exception of the fourth, revolves around a different female friend. The chapter "Mad/medea" is mostly concerned with a friend/rival turned Lahore theater luminary (re)named in the memoir as "Mad/medea," "Madina," or "Maddy."

Without knowing the real identity of this Pakistani "theatre personality" who threatened the press with a law-suit, or what may be her reasons for so doing, unfounded or otherwise, I would begin by noting that the urgent exhortation I quote above (a) somewhat coercively demands Afzal-Khan's readers' material support if they support "free speech" and civil liberties, and (b) attempts to cast

this undoubtedly startling event (both the action on the part of the publisher and the threats from the offended personage) somewhat exclusively in terms of silencing, censorship and abrogation of fundamental (writer's) rights, pushing upon readers a certain kind of reading of the book. I obviously cannot adjudicate or comment on the press' decision or on the merits of the offended person's claims. However in response to the journal *Pakistaniaat* Editor's call for a response to this event I would like, in this essay, to complicate the reading of this memoir directed by its writer above, and to propose some alternative ways of approaching this text. (I can note here only briefly the obvious irony that the threatened lawsuit and the press's response have hence brought this memoir more attention and readers than its own merits may otherwise have done.)

I will begin with a consideration of some of the questions raised by and for memoirists regarding memoir writing and the tension between the need to tell the truth as one sees it and the obligation to protect the privacy of others whose lives have intersected with one's own. With the help of some theorists of autobiography and life-writing who have recently troubled over the ethics of exposing friends and family, and of negotiating thorny issues of truth and betrayal, I will pose some questions that thereby guide my reading of the memoir *Lahore With Love* (henceforth *LWL*), though matters of aesthetics and form remain integral to my approach.[2] I will conclude by asking some other questions that emerge for me in relation to this problem of ethics and responsibility to others in memoir-writing. As myself a scholar and teacher of Anglophone postcolonial literature and autobiography, literary theory, gender and women's studies, and an American woman academic originally from Pakistan, I read this memoir with multiple sets of lenses, some of which include: an interest in a narrative of a life not dissimilar to my own (though I grew up in Karachi not Lahore), referencing scenes, experiences and concerns both deeply familiar and now distant; a comparative scholarly understanding of various other memoirs, particularly South Asian and American; and a theoretical framework in ethics provided by an early philosophical training.

In my understanding of ethics for the purposes of this essay I draw upon the work of recent scholars who have troubled over the relation between ethics and literature in a contemporary global context. Shameem Black notes, for instance: "As articulated in the recent revival of ethical criticism, ethics connotes not behavioral codes, dogma, or a singular idea of the good but instead illuminates how literary works grapple with problems that pervade a world of competing values" (3). For Black, literary "ethics" signals "the workings of an ethos of responsibility to one's object of inquiry, a responsibility opposed to hegemonic domination and representational violence" (3). Similarly, Gita Rajan

defines ethics in "our contemporary globalized frame [as] … conducting oneself responsibly in one's areas of interaction… [Ethics] spans that indeterminable space between communal responsibility and individual sovereignty with a spoken or silent injunction to act *correctly*" (125; emphasis in original). Both scholars suggest that ethics connotes responsibility towards others that involves acting justly, and literary ethics in particular is concerned with representational ethics, how a text negotiates the often conflicting claims of self and other.[3]

**I. Reading *Lahore with Love* Via Some Questions of Ethics from Autobiography Theory**

As theorists and scholars of autobiography as well as memoirists have long acknowledged, writing about one's own life necessarily involves writing about the lives of others with whom one's own has intersected. Our seemingly individual identities are *relational*, not autonomous or separable from others.[4] The degree to which one may then expose the privacy of others, in the process of excavating the layers of one's own life, becomes a tricky question. "Because we live our lives in relation to others, our privacies are largely shared, making it hard to demarcate the boundary where one life leaves off and another begins," writes Paul John Eakin, one of the pioneers of autobiography studies, in his introduction to his recent edited essay collection *The Ethics of Life-Writing* (8-9). In her contribution to that volume, Claudia Mills, American professor of philosophy and children's book author, reflects on the question of how to balance a (fiction or memoir) writer's need to tell the truth as s/he knows it, to "draw on" the "relationships with friends and family" that are her source (102) versus the obligation to avoid the "public betrayal of trust" and the violation of an individual's ability to control the information circulated about her (104, 111). In the same volume, American literary critic and memoirist Nancy K. Miller similarly asks, "What is the truth in the name of which I choose to betray another person by revealing intimate details about his life?" (157). Here I want to outline briefly the arguments of three critics in order to pose analogous questions for *Lahore With Love*, which I read not as an inanimate object, but as a textual act.

The ethical problem or "tension" that Mills investigates in her essay is succinctly put: "to be a friend is to stand to another in a relationship of trust, for the sake of one's friend; to be a writer is to stand ready to violate that trust for the sake of one's story" (105). How to resolve this? Are writers necessarily amoral opportunists who instrumentalize, even cannibalize, the lives of friends and family for the sake of fame or fortune? Mills discourages an easy affirmative to the last question by making the following propositions:

(1) There is nothing wrong with "deriving some external benefit for myself from my intimate relationships, so long as that benefit is not the dominant goal of the intimate relationship, and so long as I continue to value the loved one appropriately" (103-104)
(2) The telling of stories provides therapeutic benefits to the teller other than monetary gain because the sharing or processing of life experience enables us to deal with life's challenges better (106-110)
(3) The telling of stories is of benefit to others who read those stories and who are thereby enabled in their own lives in coping with similar challenges or in breaking silences around similar secrets (107, 111)

Using both a utilitarian and a Kantian approach, Mills concludes: "*our goal must be to achieve the great benefits of the sharing of stories while minimizing the costs to those whose stories are shared*" (111; my emphasis). She adds important provisos: that shared stories should not be "glib and shallow" or "sensational," but allow time for both telling and listening" (112); that she rejects "storytelling that violates professional codes of confidentiality, … [or that is] motivated by malice, … [or that] fails to exhibit appropriate care and respect for the stories" (111-14); and perhaps most surprisingly, that "bad people [do not] deserve the protections that good people do" (118).

Unfortunately, however, this opens up many more questions than it answers. Who would determine (and how) whether something is "glib and shallow," or adequately respectful of others, or if the writer continues to love the loved one "appropriately," or whether a writer's intentions (notoriously unknowable) are rooted in "malice"? Or whether those written about are in fact "good" or "bad" people? And what is to be done when there is a contestation of an author's revelations by those exposed? And most importantly, how can we measure the benefits to the storyteller and reader/audience against the costs to those exposed?

Mills' perspective is certainly useful in helping obviate easy judgments of a memoir like *Lahore With Love*. Like Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*, designed by its very structure to present the self as relational, *LWL* presents Fawzia's story as a composite of her female friends' stories: each chapter focuses on a particular friend whose experience, either witnessed or shared by Fawzia (known to her friends as "Madame Sin"), becomes formative of who Fawzia becomes.[5] To signal the importance of each friend and her story, each chapter is entitled with the friend's (pseudonymous) (nick)name--"Sam's Secret," "Hajira," "Saira," "Mad/media"--the only exception being the fourth chapter "Blood and Girls" which focuses on the narrator herself. Thus the effort to excavate the formation of

that self retrospectively, which is what the writing of this memoir is concerned with, an effort to recapture a past time and ethos, is therefore impossible without relating (in both senses of *relate*: to tell, and to connect or show connections to others) the stories of her school and college friends as inextricable from her own. The "benefits," then, (to use Mills' term) of writing and publishing this memoir accrue both to the *writer* (who can by so doing recreate her life, discovering with hindsight formative patterns, connections, or meanings that would then enable her own subsequent life), and to *readers*, both Pakistani and non-Pakistani (where the former can share and learn from experiences both similar and dissimilar to their own, and the latter can presumably acquire a more nuanced, non-stereotypical understanding of Pakistan and its people). At least those are some of the explicit goals of the memoir as articulated by the author: "And so I write this memoir, in hopes that by giving voice to a past, the future of a present [sic] need not be so blind, so deaf, so very dark. … It is through the writing of our shared herstories that I am finally learning the humility that could have saved that mythical flier [Icarus]. The question is, will it save me?" (Introduction to *LWL*, 5, 8). Or, as Afzal-Khan states in her acknowledgements: "I have crisscrossed these borders between East and West all my life, in the hopes of shattering stereotypes of the Other on both sides--to show that 'bad' and 'good' are relative terms" (xi-xii)

What, though, are the ethics and "costs" (to return to Mills' terms) of such writing, and how are they to be assessed or "minimized"? What are the costs, for instance, in the particular context of Pakistan, to women whose private and sexual lives are exposed without their permission? What responsibility does the writer bear towards those whom she represents in her memoir? One problem I would note here with Mills' philosophical discourse is its generality, its purported universality, its presumption that the "I" can apply to any "you," its failure to consider the specificities of gender, sexuality, class, and especially cultural contexts where different notions of trust and betrayal, cost and benefit may be operative.

By contrast, Nancy Miller's essay in both form and substance is more provisional and exploratory, more self-questioning and interrogative than declarative. Her conclusions, if they can be termed as such, are not universalistic and general aphorisms, but framed as specific to each situation. She makes two points that I find relevant here: (1) "Telling my story truthfully does not necessarily constitute a betrayal of the people who shared in it, even if in the telling I illuminate some of the darker moments from my point of view" (158); and (2) "When we expose the narratives of our lives to others through the forms of life-writing, do we not all become vulnerable subjects?" (159). The first point foregrounds the partiality of any truth-claims, reminding us that any story is

some*one's* story, that another might tell the same story differently, that no story should be read as claiming absolute or objective truth. This implies that telling one's version in some sense invites the possibility of others' versions, rather than overriding the other and therefore betraying him/her. To what extent this occurs in a particular memoir then, I would add, depends on *how* the story is told, and to what extent it opens up the possibility of other versions. Miller's second point, posed as a rhetorical question, takes the term "vulnerable subjects" (referring to memoirists who suffer from "grave and multiple medical disabilities" and who therefore arguably are more deserving of readers' care than memoirists who are healthy and possibly self-indulgent (159)), and turns it around: are we not all damaged, Miller suggests, psychically if not physically? I read this question moreover to mean both that writing about one's life is therapeutic in some way for the writer, and that it *makes* her vulnerable too, for it exposes the person writing to readers' judgments as much, if not more, than it exposes others.

In accordance with Miller's first point, we may read *Lahore With Love* as a similarly self-knowingly partial and subjective account, not as a claim to any complete truth. Indeed, it begins with such a disclaimer, with a quotation from Lauren Slater's memoir *Lying* on the "blurry line between novels and memoirs," and with an explicit acknowledgement from Afzal-Khan that her memoir unfolds the "layering of emotional and literal truths" (*LWL*, 1). At the same time, however, while acknowledging that fiction is often autobiographical and "memoirs have made-up scenes" (Slater, quoted in *LWL*, 1), I would add that it is necessary also to recall important differences between memoir and fiction. Through paratexts (titles, blurbs, prefaces, disclaimers) fiction announces its fictionality, and builds a different contract with its readers, asking for a suspension of disbelief, suggesting the truth of what *could* have happened rather than what *did* happen; whereas autobiography and memoir depend on what Philippe Lejeune has called "the autobiographical pact," the assurance through the author's signature that though events described are subject to the vagaries of memory and perspective, they do refer to real events, real people, and carry some literal truth (19-21). *LWL* may present its truths as filtered through the writer's perspective, but by its very form, the memoir also assures the reader that the events it describes really happened, and that the people it refers to really exist(ed). Furthermore, unlike other memoirs that include others' stories *in their own voices* (as for instance the Australian writer Sally Morgan's *My Place*, which includes the recorded stories of her aboriginal ancestors as told by them), *LWL* is told exclusively in one narrator's overriding voice. Thus, though it includes dialogue (as selected and reconstructed by the author for her own purposes), the admittedly

partial narrative of *LWL* does not allow in its very formal choices for other versions to contest the version the memoirist provides.

Miller's second point might help us see that Afzal-Khan surely knows that she makes herself vulnerable too, for example via such self-exposure as her confession of her betrayal of her friend Mad/medea in having sex with that friend's husband (111, 114). However, I would point out that an asymmetry remains between the representation of self and others, for as the writer, Afzal-Khan has control over what and how much she divulges about her self, and therefore can assess the risks to herself of the extent she *chooses* to make herself vulnerable, whereas others who are made vulnerable subjects of her narrative do not have that control.[6]

In a third essay in the same volume, writing about his writing about his deceased father's life (as it shadowed his own life) as "relational auto/biography" (128), the Australian literary critic Richard Freadman poses the same basic ethical question as Mills and Miller: "Writers have a right to write. But how far into the privacy of others does that right extend?" (123). He continues: "Self-revelation … does entail revelations about others. The moral issue is where to draw the line" (128). Like Freadman, my concern here too is with how writers may make ethical choices and how readers may evaluate them, not with how to adjudicate legal consequences. But Freadman's approach is distinctive because of its emphasis on specificities of *context*:

> There is, I believe, no single or general answer to that question. There are some rough guidelines, and philosophical analysis can help to discern and elaborate these; *but each case has to be taken on its own merits, has to be considered in context* and with respect to the rights, wishes, and feelings of those involved. (123-24; my emphasis)

After examining various notions of loyalty and trust such as "relativized trust" versus "blanket trust" as established in relationships between the writer and the subjects of auto/biographical narrative (131), Freadman concludes with an imagined scenario in which his deceased father returns to life for a day, and in which the writer-son asks the father's *permission* to publish what he has written (134-41). It is only after such considered and harrowing self-scrutiny, which effectively models the care of others that Mills recommends, and which involves negotiation, consultation and persuasion before the father gives his (imagined) permission, that Freadman gives himself permission to make public what he has written.

By extension, we might ask, what are the *contexts* of Afzal-Khan's writing of *LWL*? Does her memoir enact the same kind of responsibility towards or care

of the others whose stories it tells or on whose presence her own story depends? Certainly one context is Afzal-Khan's location in the American academy in 2009-2010, less than a decade after 9/11, writing as a Muslim woman and postcolonial scholar, addressing American readers, educating them about the complexities and varieties of Islamic cultures, histories, and gendered oppressions and privileges in a multi-dimensional Pakistan otherwise usually represented in dominant media almost exclusively in terms of its unfortunate links with terrorism and the Taliban. It is clearly of benefit to all to learn of opposition and resistance within Pakistan to the waves of Islamization that have bedeviled the nation in recent years, or of the struggles of (some) women against the curtailment of their rights, as well as of the freedoms and pleasures women of certain classes continue to enjoy despite these troubles.[7]

But another context is that of contemporary Lahore itself, and more broadly one that includes the networks of Lahori referents or subjects (both living and deceased) of this memoir, as well as its Pakistani readers in Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and elsewhere in the world. What differently understood cultural notions of trust, loyalty, betrayal or decorum may be operative here? What concerns about exposure or bodily references, what risks to those mentioned (even with changed names)? What permission, if any, does Afzal-Khan ask of her co-subjects before she publishes their intimate and often sexual secrets in less than flattering accounts of their characters? How do we know as readers if the writer is not motivated by sheer malice or the gratuitous pleasure of exposing others within a small community of Lahore socialites under the guise of telling one's own story? How *much* of others' stories should one appropriate to make one's own?

Although Afzal-Khan at no point in her memoir dwells on the issue of exposing others via her writing, nor does she describe herself seeking permission of those to whom she refers, interestingly, in the fourth chapter entitled "Saira" she stages a self-reflexive moment where Saira, the titular subject of that chapter, objects to an early version of the chapter because it mentions her breasts. It is spring 2001, the now forty-two-year old narrator is visiting Lahore, and is relaxing pleasurably in another friend Naumana's perfectly tended garden fragrant with flowers, sated with the sumptuous "sweet and savory delicacies" and "freshly squeezed … rich red" pomegranate juice rolled out on a trolley by a bearer (a domestic servant who combines the duties of a butler and footman) (62). At this party, placed in this context of upper-class female privilege and leisure buttressed by the work of an "army" of servants (62), arrives the narrator's old friend Saira:

> A long, lingering hug--which I can tell is making her uncomfortable--and a few sidelong glances reveal more than I want to see--a body grown slack and shapeless under the finest pure silk shalwar kameez rupees can buy. The breasts that had so held me in awe on the verge of adolescence have turned into overripe watermelons, jiggling uncomfortably at very move she makes; you can see them heave even behind the large silk dupatta she wears modestly draped across her bosom. (63)

This physical description is meant to indicate the depredations of the passage of time, to provide a contrast to the description of the twelve-year-old Saira with which the chapter opens:

> She came to the party with bells on her ankles. Tiny silver peas tinkled ever so slightly every time she moved with her creamy golden legs. We sensed rather than saw them behind the billowing cotton shalwar that draped but couldn't quite hide the curvy texture of her blossoming womanliness. (59)

It is perhaps to an earlier version of these two sexualized accounts of herself, one as nubile body in a context where girls are measured for their ripeness for marriage, and one as "overripe" fruit that is past its prime, having fulfilled the duties of wifehood and motherhood, that Saira objects, to Fawzia's reported surprise:

> Saira has seen an earlier version of my story of her, and has, according to Nomi, been offended by it. I am incredulous. Pleased, touched, flattered, those were the reactions I would have expected. But offended? By what? I turn to demand in genuine puzzlement, only to be met with a nervous giggle, most unlike the Saira I once knew. 'Well, Madame Sin [Fawzia], what's with all those shameless references to my legs and bosom hunh? I do have grown girls now, you know, marriageable age … and what if my twenty-year old son were to catch hold of that description? Tobah, tobah," she shudders, touching her ears with her fingers in that classic gesture forswearing unthinkable thoughts, while I sit back, dumb-struck by the thought that my artistic endeavors have been mistaken for pornography. (64)

The narrator's protestations of surprise emphasize the distance both friends have traveled: Fawzia as an Americanized academic has lost the ability to anticipate her friend's discomfort at the overtly sexual description of her young body (purportedly flattering in an American context), or to understand her discomfort

(in a current Pakistani context) at being sexualized both as the mother of grown daughters whose chastity must be assured in the Lahore marriage market, and as the mother of a grown son who for different reasons must not be allowed to think of his mother as remotely sexual. (We might note at the same time that Fawzia can sense that her "lingering" American-style hug between heterosexual women friends is making her Pakistani friend "uncomfortable" at the unaccustomed and prolonged physical intimacy in a cultural context that severely curtails physical contact even between women).

As Freadman notes, "our interpersonal modes of trust are heavily shaped by cultural factors: a pre-Freudian society might regard intimate sexual revelations about a biographical subject as a breach of trust, while a post-Freudian one might regard such disclosures as morally unexceptionable" (132). The issue here between Fawzia and Saira has to do with different culturally shaped understandings of what sexual revelations are appropriate to make, not because one is post- and the other pre-Freudian, but rather, because Saira knows (and Fawzia has forgotten) that in a Pakistani context, for a woman of any class to be represented and identified publically as a sexual being is itself legally and culturally deeply fraught. Whereas in an American post-Freudian context, all humans, even children, are understood to be sexual beings, in a Pakistani one where Shariah laws are in place, and sexuality for women connotes shame, no such understandings obtain. It is perhaps a failure to recognize fully this other context that has occasioned Afzal-Khan's memoir's troubles after publication. My point here is not to suggest that a writer like Afzal-Khan should not critique or expose the contradictions of her culture of origin, but rather to point out the need to trouble over and perhaps explain her decision to expose people from that other context where they bear different costs than the writer herself.

In her published version, though she reports this incident, Afzal-Khan makes no apparent concession to her friend's concerns. The chapter moves on very quickly to a denunciation (by the narrator) of the Islamization that has overtaken the country, and of the consequent "religious zealots" her erstwhile buddies have become (65). Sympathetic though we might be to Fawzia's horror (as indeed I am) at discovering that Saira and Naumana condone the legal injustices to women enacted under purported Islamic laws (67), we might still need to examine the significance of Afzal-Khan's juxtaposition of material here. To what extent did Fawzia/Afzal-Khan trouble over her friend's objections to that first draft? Why does she not tell us about how or why she decided to override those objections? Or, does the ensuing account of Saira's blind and prescriptive religiosity justify the narrator's dismissal of Saira's concern about how she is represented in the very context that makes her sexuality dangerous to her? The

chapter concludes with a retrospective account of Saira's arranged marriage at age eighteen to a callous and neglectful cousin and her subsequent nervous breakdown, designed purportedly to show how ill that supposedly religious society and culture treats the very women who uphold its dictates without question.

But it also includes Fawzia's memory of Saira's experience of her wedding night as recounted to her virginal female friends the day after: "She told us, quite unabashedly, that she realized she was madly in love with her husband when he made her hold on to the side of the bed and stick her tush in the air while he proceeded to do unnameable things from behind" (73). Is this what Saira was upset about in Fawzia's early draft? Or is this Fawzia's almost vengeful response to her former friend's response to that first draft, to add (or at least not excise) these sexual details after her encounter with Saira in March 2001? The salacious details apart, this reads to me as a somewhat contemptuous portrayal of a woman literally fucked over by a system she loves, a woman whose naïve faith in her marriage and religion the chapter shows to have been deeply misplaced. While justified in its indignation regarding the problems many women in Pakistan face, this portrayal nonetheless seems hardly sympathetic or respectful towards its human referent in the terms that Mills or Freadman, Black or Rajan propose as ethical. As readers we might support the writer's efforts to expose a deeply oppressive system, but we might also question why the exposé of that system must occur via ridicule of its victims.

By the same token, we might read Chapter Five, "Mad/medea," the so-called offending chapter, as similarly cavalier, even self-contradictory, in its account of the renamed friend. The chapter is ostensibly designed to show how a childhood friendship between the writer and "Madina" has developed into an adult relationship where both women do parallel work protesting and exposing the destruction of women's rights in Pakistan. Madina has founded a theater company in which she acts and directs "plays on every aspect of the grave situation unfolding in Pakistan," while Fawzia has both acted in some of those plays and "chronicle[d] them in [her] scholarly essays and poems" (118). However this putative female solidarity is stated, not shown, as if disregarding the fundamental writerly principle "show, don't tell." We read very little about either one's heroic resistance work and far more about two aspects of Mad/medea that may have aroused the real-life referent's ire: sexual revelations such as her gossiped about pre-marital pregnancy and abortion as a college student in 1978 (104); and her portrayal as a classist, obnoxious, volatile, physically and verbally abusive sexual rival. In a 32-page chapter, only three and half pages (which include both an account of one play and extensive quotations from a website) are given to the

notorious Hudood Ordinance passed under the martial-law regime of President Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980's which criminalized rape as adultery and sentenced women to lashing, stoning to death or prison for any extra- or pre-marital sexual act (115-118). (Arguably Afzal-Khan's sexual revelations about Mad/medea in fact could put the real person concerned at risk under these very laws.) The last two pages of the chapter are occupied by a brief mention of Afzal-Khan's book on Madina's theater work on "women's rights" and by Afzal-Khan's poem reflecting on the injustices that followed and that continue twenty years later under these unchanged profoundly discriminatory and misogynistic Shariah laws (123-25).

The remaining 26 pages of the chapter are devoted however to a somewhat haphazard account of Mad/medea's personal history that shifts dizzyingly back and forth between disjunct moments in the past and present. The chapter begins in a Swiss writer's retreat in July 2006 where the narrator is sexually aroused by the "kisses" of cherries and the warm breeze to remember another moment in Cairo, which in turn reminds her of a childhood experience picking Lahore cherries in Mad's garden (actually blood-red jamuns), which leads her to memories of a violent Madina associated with blood.[8] "And Mad always did look like (sic) she had blood on her mind; she was ready to beat the living daylights out of any man, woman … bigger or smaller--who dared say or do anything she perceived as taking advantage of her" (97). These tenuous triggers produce a narrative of Madina that begins with Madina in fact taking advantage of others weaker than herself: she abuses her class and gender privileges by obscenely cursing, condescending to, and then defrauding a poor rickshaw-driver of his rightful payment (99): alternately screams at her beautiful younger sister and vituperatively abuses her theatrical rivals (101-102); mocks and bullies her fellow-students and wheedles her way into gaining advantage with college professors (104-106). More surprisingly, without any explanation it includes a sudden scene of the narrator herself in bed with Mad's second husband, Bakri, a former college classmate and admirer of Fawzia's whom she had earlier scorned (111-114), and whom Mad has subsequently married and reportedly "turned mad" to the extent that he is inexplicably dead at age forty (118, 122). (Unlike her unrestrained exposure of others, even here, the narrator conceals the degree of her own culpability, leaving unclear whether her affair with Mad's husband took place before or after she herself was married.) Afzal-Khan's choice to name this man "Bakri," then, (which in Urdu means a female goat and suggests the bloody sacrifice of Bakr-Eid) hints at his having become a sacrifice, Jason-like, at Mad/medea's hands.

Regardless of how accurate this portrayal of Mad/medea may or may not be (for as a non-Lahori reader I have the benefit of *not* knowing her identity), I

think a more productive and relevant question for us to ask is: why do we as readers of Afzal-Khan's memoir need to know these details? What authorial purpose(s) does this account fulfill? Where is the "minimized cost" or responsibility to others precisely in a context where the writer makes us aware that women can be punished with their lives for unlicensed sexual acts? Moreover, how does this account affect our trust in and hence relationship with the author/narrator? It could be argued that Fawzia/Afzal-Khan needs to reveal all this in order to come to terms with who she has become, or with what she has done, or to explain by contrast how she became a different person than her friend and chose a different way (her American based scholarship and poetry versus her friend's Pakistan based theater) to protest the same conditions. But without any reflections on the significance of these revelations about another, or on the reasons for their inclusion (as Freadman provides for example, explaining that he explores the reasons for his father's insecurities and difficulties because they shadowed his own life), it is hard for us to make a case that they are included for valid reasons and not for sensationalism or gossip. Without the intimacy and intricate interwovenness of life-stories that exists in the relationships described by other memoirists who trouble over how much they reveal of others in revealing themselves (Freadman and his father, Miller and her ex-husband, Mills and her children), Afzal-Khan's relationship with Mad/medea seems more distant, built on intermittent acquaintanceship rather than emotional attachment, on sexual and perhaps professional rivalry rather than sustained connection. (Madina, unlike closer friends like Hajira or Saira, is not even mentioned in any other chapter of the memoir.) How then can we as readers avoid reading this account of Mad/medea as "glib and shallow" (to return to Mills' words), as inconsiderate at best and perhaps malicious at worst?

I would propose therefore that a key question to ask is the degree to which a memoirist earns her *reader's* trust, both by means of *what* she includes and *how* she includes it. A memoirist whose persona/narrator comes across as self-indulgent, self-promoting and inconsiderate of others is likely to lose credibility with her readers. My concern therefore is with both ethics and aesthetics, with the care evinced in the writing as well as care regarding others involved in the memoir. I will limit myself to three examples here.

First, why, does Afzal-Khan choose to insert the same love poem to herself three times (with very slight alteration) within the space of two chapters, a poem addressed to Fawzia that Afzal-Khan has presumably penned herself (93-94, 108-109, 112-113)? This poem consists of two speakers who in turn voice a question and reply, a supplication and response. In each version it begins with a male voice, which (as each subsequent version makes clear) is the voice of Bakri,

who desperately desires Fawzia his college-mate as his muse and beloved ("a dream come true/ Ghalib's saqi"), describing her in flattering physical terms: "With a toss of your head/ and a swing of your hips/ how you hiss, stomping off/ oh my love/ sweet young love" (93, 108, 112). In response, the female addressee (later identified as Fawzia) snaps, "I'd rather *be* Ghalib/ and not his damned saqi/Writing those poems/ yes inspiring those rhyme schemes" (93, 108, 113). Insisting that she would rather claim the "power" to write than to be powerless, silent and written about, Afzal-Khan thus dramatizes her own feminist rejection of amorous male poetic clichés. At the same time, that repeated slip into "I'd rather be/ … yes inspiring those rhyme schemes" suggests a contradictory lingering desire to remain the silent female muse as well, invoked and desired by the male poet. The contradiction undercuts the force of that purported feminism. Some readers may find that the repetition with slight differences in each version makes the relationship between Fawzia and Bakri slightly clearer as he pursues her beyond the bounds of college days in Lahore into adulterous temptations after both are married to others, and as she dwells with regret on his loss. However others might find the repetition faddish, meaningless and overdone, an alienating, bizarrely tasteless act of a writer flaunting her continued sexual desirability in her own memoir.

To take a second example, in the preceding or fourth chapter "Blood and Girls" Afzal-Khan alternates between bafflingly fragmentary recollections of two visits, one to watch bull-fighting in Spain, and the other to a working-class area of Lahore to watch the (by implication) similar spectacle of Shia men publicly flagellating themselves in the Moharram ritual of mourning. Again, while some readers might recognize here literary techniques that represent the stream of consciousness and the impressionistic seemingly random movements of memory, others might find the disorienting moves of the chapter simply affected, imitative, undisciplined and confusing. More importantly, the chapter provides an example of ideological self-contradiction that damages readerly trust. Describing again with unselfconscious pride her affluent circumstances, Afzal-Khan presents herself on the trip to Spain staying at a "rich sheikh's" "stunning villa atop a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean" (81), after being driven "efficiently" through the city of Pamplona by her cosmopolitan Pakistani friend Zara (79). But when her Spanish hostess deplores the "primitive custom" of bull-fighting in which "many [young boys] die each year," and Zara and other women present agree, the narrator's disagreement and desire to see the bull-fighting is expressed through a surprisingly sexist contempt: "grateful though I am to have [Zara's] road-skills at my disposal, I can't help thinking, what a bunch of--well, women, excuse me--I'm

surrounded with, now that I've discovered the machismo upon which my feminism is built" (81).

How can this self-proclaimed "feminism" co-exist with such contempt for women who express concern about a brutal bloodsport that involves the destruction of human and animal life? Moreover, how can a sentence that proclaims the narrator's "feminism" at the same time turn the term "women" into a derogatory epithet? Such a cooptation of the term feminism seems to me to remain self-contradictorily unable to see the gendered asymmetric value system that upholds "machismo" or a certain form of violently performed bloodthirsty masculinity as unquestionably superior to the putative weakness of women.

Third, such unfortunate lapses are compounded by frequent infelicities that suggest lack of care in the writing: grammatical or syntactical mistakes or factual inaccuracies that suggest at the very least poor editing. Twice, for example, Afzal-Khan describes the death by hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as occurring in September 1979 (4, 56), when in fact it took place in April 1979. Certainly, it could be argued, memoirists do get things wrong, for what they record is not truth but the vagaries of memory. This is the argument that Salman Rushdie makes about his narrator Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, who gets the date of Gandhi's assassination wrong. However Rushdie's point is precisely that this makes Saleem an unreliable narrator ("Errata," 22). Unlike novelists whose narrators are fictive characters, it is surely risky for a memoirist to suggest her own unreliability. At the very least, such mistakes suggest surprising carelessness regarding a crucial historic moment that traumatized the nation.

All of these examples accumulate to lead a reader to wonder about the care that has gone into the production of the published work. The apparent lack of care evinced in the writing then becomes linked to a loss of readers' trust in the writer, a loss of trust that extends to her lack of care in representations of others and her motivations for representing them in a memoir that is so absorbed by its self that it neglects respect and consideration towards the very others on whom the story of that relational self depends. My critique of this text is built therefore on both aesthetic and ethical grounds, for it has to do with the loss of trust that it provokes in us as readers. What I present here is therefore not a defense of or comment on the action taken by the press or the former friend, but a response to reading the memoir itself. Without knowing and without needing to know what was objected to by the actual person concerned, what we as disinterested readers can analyze are the modes by which a text enacts its own proclaimed purposes, and assess its degree of care or visible conflict with its own purported goals.

## II. "Lady, this conflict is about class": Some Other Questions about Memoirist Responsibility

I hope to have shown how a critical framework drawn from autobiographers and scholars who have troubled over the ethics of life-writing is illuminating for a reading of *Lahore With Love* (and the circumstances following its publication). In light of these questions I would like now to raise some related questions regarding the representation of less proximate and less privileged others in memoir writing.

All three of the memoirists or theorists I have consulted in the previous section explore the ethics of representing others who are very close in their relationship to the memoir writer: children or immediate family (Mills); ex-spouses and lovers (Miller); parents (Freadman). None of them however address the representation of individuals who exist as part of a broader circle of acquaintances, or who interact with but exist in more socially distant or removed circles from the memoirist. I would then extend to less proximate others the same question posed by Eakin regarding closer family and friends: "[W]hat are the consequences for those [others] whose lives [also] touched--and touch" the writer's (*How Our Lives,* 156)? My contention is not at all that those others should not be written about. Rather, as I suggest in my reading of the Mad/medea chapter, surely, even if not bound by as powerful a relationship of trust or intimacy as immediate family or friends, these others have claims on the memoirist to be represented within a similar structure of ethical consideration. I want to turn in this section to the different but related question of the representation of people of different or less privileged classes with whom the memoirist interacts or on whom she depends, and who also shape her identity and experiences, ranging from friends with lower class origins to servants who share domestic or other spaces and thereby occasion more incidental but nonetheless important intimacies or interactions.

Eakin makes an important point regarding the representation of proximate others in life-writing: "Because our lives never stand free of the lives of others, we are faced with our responsibility to those others whenever we write about ourselves. There is no escaping this responsibility…" (*How Our Lives*, 159). A memoirist's ethical *responsibility* (as distinct from questions of legalities such as libel or infringement on someone's ownership of their life-stories, or even the ethics of over-exposure) is then precisely the *consequence* of the relationality of human lives. My concern in this section then is somewhat different from the usual sort of question asked regarding the representation of members of the lower classes in fiction (whether a middle-class writer knows about or has the right to

represent the experiences of socially significant others, etc.).[9] More specifically, I want to ask, in life-narratives about the self where the act of writing is itself an act of self-enablement and self-fashioning, what use is made of those less privileged? How is the self elevated and at whose expense? What implicit trust (again) is violated when those who cannot read at all, or who cannot read in English, the language in which the memoir is written, appear insistently (without their permission or knowledge) in the narrative? What is a memoirist's obligation to broader or widening concentric circles of people who share space in her memoir? Does the same implicit trust obtain between them and the writer as between her and her closest family and friends? The question here then becomes not only one of exposure of privacy (though that remains a concern), but of responsibility, of *how* (not whether) one represents others.

Members of the lower classes are everywhere present as shaping presences in the fringes of the world that Afzal-Khan describes in her memoir. From the street vendors outside her elite convent school from whom Fawzia and her friends obtain forbidden treats, men comically described as "pathetic creatures" with "pouring sweat" or "enticing kohl-rimmed eyes" (15-16); to the trusted family servant, the old driver who is tricked and made fun of by Fawzia's friends, cavorting teenagers who abscond with the car (39); to the Pathan guard who, in possible collusion with honor-killers, or in thrall to his mundane bodily needs, fails to protect the terrified woman who is shot dead by her own uncle (32); to the silent cooks and bearers who produce and serve food and whose listening presence the adult Fawzia scorns because even if they understand her ribald English jokes, it makes no "difference" (64): these are representatives of the real workers whose labor enables many of the luxuries of the cocooned world the narrator fondly remembers. The question then is not whether they should or should not be included, but what *use* is made of their inclusion, and the extent to which the memoirist is self-conscious about how she breaches that social difference, how self-critical she is about how she elevates herself at their expense.

Clearly, there is some self-indictment on the part of the adult narrator of her younger uncaring or unaware past self, some self-implication in depicting spoilt teenagers who took pleasure in deriding a servant to get what they wanted (39). Or, in Chapter Two, college age Fawzia describes herself as feeling "strongly … about class oppression, … [and] the need to change the system" (46-47). But then only a few pages later she tries desperately to dissuade her closest friend Hajira from marrying a man from a lower-class background because "he is so very different, and … class background does matter…" (52). The adult narrator makes no attempt to distance herself from this view. In fact the unself-censored adult narrator describes her mother's college students (without retrospective

revision or caveat) as "stupid Urdu-medium lower-class girls who couldn't spell literature if their lives depended on it" (40).

Even if we attribute these inconsistencies to a past self, the narratival structure and presentation of Afzal-Khan's memoir manifests similar self-contradictions or class prejudice . The narratives of both the first two chapters, "Sam's Secret" and "Hajira," for instance, are structured to attribute sexism and murderous disregard for women (the reasons that both these friends die) to lower class culture. While drawing attention laudably to misogyny and heinous practices like honor killings, Afzal-Khan constructs causality and plot with the unfortunate consequence of making it appear as if those problems are exclusively the domain of lower class people. Sam, a friend from Convent school days, and a member of a lower-middle class family that she takes pains to conceal from her friends, becomes the victim of an honor killing when she is discovered to be involved in a romantic relationship unauthorized by her family. To the amazement of Fawzia and her friends with greater "class privilege," the murderers are Sam's lower-class brothers (29). Do upper class men in Lahore (we might ask) not punish their women for stepping outside culturally defined sexual parameters? Again, in the next chapter, the upper-class Hajira becomes so unhappy and depressed after her mistaken marriage to a purportedly hypocritical, callous opportunist from a lower-middle class family (after he gets her pregnant) that she shoots herself after six months of marriage (53-58). The narrator comments on her dead friend's husband: "How interesting that Sufi, Mister Communist himself, 'a man of principle' as Hajira had been led to believe …, who decried material comforts as signs of the decadent and morally corrupt bourgeois lifestyle of people of Hajira's family's social class, should have accepted so readily the comfortable goodies from the people he had denigrated and mocked," (55). She herself, she claims, saw through him at once: "he is no communist, he is after her money, her class pedigree" (50). Again, in this repeated pattern, the lower class male is cited as the source of deadly trouble for her youthful female friends.

This animus against members of classes lower than her own is acknowledged at some moments and unwitting in others. In the fourth chapter, for instance, on possibly the only occasion when a lower-class character is given a voice, Fawzia's mother's cook becomes the mouthpiece for lower-class ignorance and propaganda-fueled religious hatred. On a return visit to Lahore, the adult Fawzia is "stunned" to discover that both her mother and her cook believe that Shias are non-Muslims (82). "I almost scream at my mother and her cook." This moment that reveals to the adult Fawzia how "deep" the "rot … had set in within the fabric of Pakistani society" (82) becomes an occasion for contrastive self-elevation. "You two are simply parroting the extremist, hate-filled ideas circulated

by jihadi parties," (83) she reports herself announcing with unself-conscious superiority. While clearly implicating her mother as well as her cook in this portrayal of infectious prejudice (the mother is another figure who is not spared in this memoir, from denunciations of her ineffectuality as a college professor to hints of her marital infidelities (6, 86-87)), Afzal-Khan implies that while she expects better of her educated mother, the cook is an example of lower class stupidity that is only to be expected. The narrator's occasional representations of domestic servants thus accumulate to build a picture of working class or lower-middle class individuals who lack the intelligence, insight and moral rectitude that she claims for herself. In fact the *use* made of these lower-class figures is as foil or background, as negative contrasts to herself.

On one occasion Afzal-Khan acknowledges that upper class women like her Lahori friends and herself might not always have the upper hand in contesting the Pakistani patriarchal ethos that pervades every aspect of everyday life or in understanding some of the roots of the problems that bedevil their country. In describing her visit to interview the head of a militant Islamicist women's seminary in Islamabad, she notes: "Umm Hassan seems a stauncher women's libber, free of the yoke of husband and family, than any 'westernized' Pakistani woman I'd ever met--including myself" (141). As members of a lower middle class, these women are representatives of another Pakistan that Fawzia has not yet known. Afzal-Khan thus reports how her 2007 conversation with Umm Hassan and her students and teachers educated her on the split between the proverbial two nations within Pakistan, the rich and the poor, and hence the attraction of anti-western Islamicism for the latter (138). "Lady, this conflict is about class," Umm Hassan instructs Fawzia (141). And that's an important learning moment that Afzal-Khan includes in her memoir.

Yet we might wonder if that lesson is in fact fully learnt. The chapter certainly makes clear, and rightly so, that this poverty-driven Islamic feminist militancy of "Chicks with Flicks" who got "some of their anger right" (144) is in fact predominantly misguided and wrong, that Umm Hassan's seminary propagates misinformation, unthinking paranoia and self-righteousness, and that this female strength is united under a wrong cause (138-39). While not in disagreement with this assessment, I am troubled nevertheless by the snide *mode* of portrayal that mocks the lower-class women just for being underprivileged and lower-class. Unlike the "grey-green eyes" of Fawzia's Anglicized friend "Sherry" (136), Amina the zealot "hissed, her eyes glinting through her frames (presumably because she was too poor to afford contact lenses or expensive non-refractive lens spectacles) (139). Unlike the narrator, this student at the seminary "sporting a white hijab and thick reading glasses, zeroes in on [Fawzia] and begins talking

non-stop" (138). These details are as revealing about the observer as about the observed. Is the narrator's scorn and lack of respect for "Amina" due to Amina's misguided beliefs and under-educated style or to her belligerent poverty and appearance? What does this tell us about the memoirist and her ways of seeing? To return to Eakin's question, what are the consequences to Amina and those of her ilk (or class) of this kind of generic representation that is designed to circulate both in elite circles in Pakistan and in the U.S.?

## III. Conclusion

In a bizarre moment of self-revelation in her introduction, Afzal-Khan reports how she uses her American constructed identity as a woman of color instrumentally: "My place is now also a place where I manipulate my Muslim womanhood to make my way up the U.S. academic ladder, reporting to increased acclaim the dire situation of Muslim women in Pakistan" (10). As readers we might wonder both why she makes this startling confession and why she does what she purportedly confesses. A generous reading could argue that Afzal-Khan thus seeks to expose racist structures within the American academic system that disallow fair evaluation and opportunity and therefore induce such methods of self-advancement within it. However it could also be said that that is not her only choice; that other women academics of Pakistani origin have chosen to negotiate such systemic difficulties differently, without compromising their professional integrity.

Instead of taking this statement at face value and praising it as "honest confession," as one reviewer does,[10] we might instead interrogate its underlying assumptions. Why is it so important to go unquestioningly in only one prescribed direction (vertically up this "ladder"), and at what cost both to oneself and to others? What cost-benefit analysis produces both such a confession and the behavior to which it confesses? Is the reported concern for the "dire situation of women in Pakistan" then genuine or is it also a career move towards self-advancement? This might lead us then also to wonder if the memoir too is such a calculated mode of self-advancement, an act in which making use of others and reported concern for others may be precisely instrumental, and in which a careful weighing of ethical responsibilities may be regrettably absent.

Notes

[1] Fawzia Afzal-Khan is Professor of English and Director of Women's and Gender Studies at Montclair State University in New Jersey, USA. Born and raised in Lahore, Pakistan, she obtained her Bachelors in English and French from Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, and her Ph.D. from Tufts University in Massachusetts, USA. She is the author of *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel* (Penn State Press, 1993) and *A Critical Stage: The Role of Alternative Secular Theater in Pakistan* (Seagull Press, India, 2005), the editor of *Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out* (Interlink Books, 2005) and co-editor (with Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks) of *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, (Duke University Press, 2000).

[2] For a history of the technical distinctions between autobiography and memoir, see Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 2-4. For the purposes of this essay I will use the terms interchangeably, both respecting Afzal-Khan's choice to call her book a memoir (1) and drawing upon theories developed within the field of autobiography or life-writing studies.

[3] The question of ethics is relatively recent in autobiography studies. See for example, Smith and Watson's introduction to *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, which mentions it briefly as a subject for future theorizing.

[4] For a clear and thorough discussion, see Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories*, Chapter 2. In their introduction to *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, Smith and Watson discuss the theoretical and historical foundations for reading women's life-writing as relational (7-21). A stellar example of a Pakistani-English memoir that presents a woman's life (narrative) and identity as relational is Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989), with which *LWL* invites obvious comparison. It is beyond the scope of this essay to undertake such a comparison, though I would note here the obvious similarities and differences. Both Suleri and Afzal-Khan are postcolonial literary scholars in the American academy, both attended Kinnaird College for Women and both focus in their memoirs on their youthful lives in Lahore. Formally, like *LWL*, *Meatless Days* also interweaves past and present, and is structured chapter by chapter around various individuals formative in Suleri's life (though Suleri highlights parents, siblings, and a grandmother as well as her friends). *LWL* is however not as intricately wrought or linguistically dense or intellectually analytical as *Meatless Days*. Unlike Suleri's memoir, which eschews nostalgia or idealization, *LWL* tends to veer between diatribes about politics and patriarchy (deserved though they are) and nostalgia for the putative innocence of childhood and youth destroyed by the dual advent of military dictatorship and Islamization in 1980's Pakistan. For a brief account of scholarly approaches to Suleri's memoir, see Hai, "Sara Suleri."

[5] I will use the life-writing studies convention here of referring to the author of the memoir (the one who makes narratival choices) as Afzal-Khan, and to the subject of the memoir (the actor within the narrative of self) as Fawzia. It is useful also of course to remember the distinction in autobiography between the younger

(narrated) self versus the older (narrating) self (referred to here as the narrator), both of which are textual constructs.

[6] My point here is certainly not that memoirists should reveal all--of course they should use discretion in protecting themselves and others. Rather, my concern is with obviously visible gaps that disclose that something is being withheld and that therefore evoke readers' suspicion or distrust. In revising my own memoir-essay for instance ("Departures from Karachi Airport") I was advised by an experienced memoirist to be careful to give readers the impression that I was not holding something important back without in fact enacting complete disclosure (for in reality all writers of course do and must hold something back).

[7] Other contexts in which *LWL* belongs include of course the early 21st century culture of popular American television talk shows, sensational "reality TV" live confessions as well as the (arguably related) phenomenon of contemporary print memoirs that flood the market every year (See Eakin, *How Our Lives*, 157). Again, this American cultural context that encourages self-display and exhibition as well as exposure of others (though not without strong critiques; see Eakin, 151-59) is not at all the same as contemporary Pakistan where such disclosures can carry very different cultural and legal consequences. Yet another (generic) context includes the recent surge of memoirs by hyphenated American academics and Muslim women, especially from Iran. Examples of the former include Edward Said's *Out of Place* (1999), Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage* (2000), Henry Louis Gates' *Colored People* (1995) (though all these are more chronologically organized and considered than *LWL*); and of the latter most notably Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003), Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2003) and Firoozeh Dumas' *Funny in Farsi* (2003).

[8] Blood is a frequent motif in this text, ranging from Fawzia learning about menstruation (37-38) to violent deaths, to bull-fighting in Spain and self-immolation by Shias mourning during Moharram.

[9] For an excellent recent intervention in these debates, see Shameem Black, especially Chapters 1 and 2.

[10] See Nandi, 47.

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# The Hideous Beauty of Bird-Shaped Burns: Transnational Allegory and Feminist Rhetoric in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*

By Gohar Karim Khan

But wherever I lived, Karachi was the place I knew best and the place about which I wrote. I knew its subtexts, its geography, its manifestations of snobbery and patriarchy, its passions, its seasonal fruits and their different varieties. I knew the sound of the sunset…

–Kamila Shamsie, "Kamila Shamsie on leaving and returning to Karachi" *The Guardian*

Borderlands […] may feed growth and exploration or […] conceal a minefield.

–Margaret Higonnet, *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature*

[The novel] is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis […] that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity.

–Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

Pakistani women writers of Anglophone fiction are somewhat of a rare breed, even when compared to their neighbouring counterparts in India and Bangladesh. Though Bapsi Sidhwa, Feryal Ali Gauhar, Uzma Aslam Khan and Monica Ali are established names in contemporary international fiction in English, it is only very recently that women's writing has become a prominent presence in Pakistan. At the launch of *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, a collection of short stories by Pakistani women writers, Feryal Ali Gauhar (author of *The Scent of Wet Earth in August* and *No Place for Further Burials*, a novel about recent American intervention in Afghanistan) claimed, "In an increasingly insecure world, a (Pakistani) woman speaks of conflicts generated, engendered and perpetrated by men." Gauhar positioned creative writing as possibly "the only avenue of expression for many

women. Women who were courtesans discussed sexuality over the centuries, and strung words together to compose songs. But those who composed at home were not recognized. It is the positioning of women—performing is out of bounds for us, as it was for middle-class Indian women a hundred years ago. You cannot sing and dance without being noticed, but you can write quietly" (Gauhar 2005). The paucity of women writers stems most likely from the "dismally parochial and indiscriminatorily gendered systems of education, opportunity, modes of acculturation, and general devaluation of the arts," (Hai 386) hence making the work of existing Pakistani women writers even more valuable and momentous. In addition to their marginalised positions in terms of gender, the hybridised status from which most of Pakistan's female writers currently express themselves is also significant. Being suspended between diverse cultures and inhabiting the East and the West simultaneously, many Pakistani women writers profess their mode of writing to be a stabilizing and emancipating process, whereby geographies, histories, nations, races and genders are reconciled.

In the context of the positions and aspirations of Pakistani women writers as discussed above, in this paper I would like to focus predominantly on the work of the Pakistani-born writer Kamila Shamsie, in particular on her most recent novel *Burnt Shadows*. Reading the novel as a political and transnational allegory, along the lines of Fredric Jameson's "Third World Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism," I will locate alternative axes of globalisation, nationalism and feminism in Shamsie's writing. To begin with, I will assess Shamsie's own position in the category of what Ambreen Hai refers to as "border workers," establishing the multiplicity of her own existence, and its translation into a novel that transcends space, time and race. I then proceed to explore *Burnt Shadows* for its nationalistic rhetoric, arguing the case for its attempt to critically analyse the status of Pakistanis and Muslims in a post "9/11" world order, particularly within the contemporary discourses on terrorism, capitalism and Islamic fundamentalism. From here I proceed towards connecting the novel's alternative version of nationalism with the forces of feminism, via the novel's unusual and ubiquitous protagonist, Hiroko Tanaka. I argue that while Hiroko poses serious challenges to existing and normative power structures, her physical body serves as a manuscript upon which national and political upheavals are literally and metaphorically transcribed, reflecting the novel's demonstration of women's bodies as sites of conflict between nationalism and colonialism. Finally, I read the novel as an attempt at 'psychic healing'—a work that embraces nationalism transnationally, hence propounding an "imagined community" (Hicks xxiii-xxxi) that makes possible the existence of a kind of "horizontal comradeship," transcending national borderlands and cultural boundaries.

In her essay, "Global and Textual Webs in an Age of Transnational Capitalism; or, What Isn't New About Empire," Elleke Boehmer posits an active connection between "massive economic, political and technological transnationalism worldwide…and the internationalisation of literature and literary studies," suggesting that postcolonial writers travel widely and "furiously" across borders. They are hence empowered to blur these boundaries, creating an almost "anarchically fluid world order" (11). Shamsie, I would like to suggest in this context, has made a significant political contribution to the world in *Burnt Shadows*, and she has done so at a moment in time when Pakistanis and Muslims are in a particularly precarious position in the globe. In circumstances where the religion of Islam is becoming increasingly synonymous with violence and fundamentalism, Shamsie has intervened with an intricate psychological exploration of contemporary global politics. She has done this firstly by professing a deeply sensitive appreciation of the causes that underlie stereotyping against Muslims—being "westernised" in several ways herself, and living between England, America and Pakistan allows her this privileged "insiders" perspective. This sense of double belonging, sometimes categorized as an enabling homelessness, empowers Shamsie with the ability to ask questions as an insider and an outsider simultaneously. As a transnational intellectual involved in the process of "border work," Shamsie's endeavour is aptly defined as undertaken by one "who both belongs and unbelongs, who can offer crucial perspectival shifts, can have liberatory potential, because it can undo binaristic and hierarchical categories of opposition, offering useful critique and reconceptualization of either side of an opposition – be it cultural, political or intellectual" (Hai 381). Additionally, writing in a post "9/11" world which is currently gripped by the notion of America's "war against terror," Shamsie has explored the notions of terrorism and nationalism from a postcolonial angle, encouraging her readers to access these phenomena from alternative and unfamiliar positions. She uses her own diasporic "double vision" is used in *Burnt Shadows* to rescue and restore the image of Muslims in a contemporary global context I argue that it is an important example of the "empire writing back," made all the more powerful as it is written in the "centre" for the "centre." What we witness as critical readers is a subversive attempt at "negotiating the contradictions of cultural heterogeneity, modernity, nationalism, or diasporic identity," that pave the way to the construction of an anticolonial, liberationist nationalism that is not overly concerned with borders or national segregations (Hai 382).

Anglophone literature by writers of Pakistani origin (who are not necessarily residents in their original homelands any longer) inhabits a unique space, providing its inhabitants with a contact zone that balances nationalism with internationalism. This zone, or "interstitial space" as Homi Bhabha puts it, is absolutely crucial in the initiation of "new strategies of selfhood" and identity formation (Bhabha 1-2). It facilitates collaboration and contestation, agreement and dissent, and as Elleke Boehmer avers, provides a site of "potentially productive inbetweeness [between the first and third worlds]" (Empire 21). I wish to argue the case that third world intellectuals are additionally, and perhaps necessarily, also political interveners and commentators. Kamila Shamsie, for instance, is a regular writer of political articles in *The Guardian* and write on the significant global issues which concern South East Asia, Pakistan or Islam. In Pakistan, she is regarded as a powerful national voice and is assigned an ambassadorial status, irrespective of her in-continuous geographical relations with the nation. In, "Global and Textual Webs in an Age of Transnational Capitalism; or, What Isn't New about Empire" Elleke Boehmer is interested in a similar "contact zone of cultural and political exchange" where nationalisms lie not just within nations, but find their stimuli outside it, among other postcolonial nations that have similar agendas and experience analogous to liberation struggles. Boehmer's work becomes particularly relevant to my argument, especially her description of transnational intellectuals whom she calls "like-minded colonial nationalist 'pilgrims'", those who, failing to fall into the category of the colonial rulers or the colonized masses-- though they have more in common intellectually and culturally with the former--form a group quite unique to themselves. Impelled by the desire to at once embrace the globe and the nation, they "reach beyond cultural and geopolitical boundaries to discover ways of constituting a resistant selfhood" (Empire 20). Though Boehmer's discussion makes colonial leaders and intellectuals such as Jinnah, Gandhi and Platjee its focal point, I would like to suggest that a similar case could be made for the contemporary group of diasporic Pakistani writers of fiction in English. Not unlike Boehmer's group of colonial elites who inhabit an exclusive space owing to their middle-class status, educational background, geographical experience, fluency in European languages and intellectual leanings, this group of writers, too, find "themselves to be more at home in the colonizer's culture than in their indigenous environment" (Empire 20). Boehmer further explains:

> anti-colonial intelligentsias, poised between the cultural traditions of home on the one hand and of their education on the other, occupied a site of potentially productive inbetweenness where they might observe other resistance histories and political approaches in order to work out how themselves to proceed" (Empire 20-21).

This state of "productive inbetweenness," leads to a novel like *Burnt Shadows*, which not only subverts conventional notions of nationalism, capitalism, colonialism, feminism and terrorism, but also contains a "psychic healing' power." In the words of Trinh Minh-ha:

> The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside […and] she also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure[…]Whether she turns the inside out or the outside in she is like the two sides of a coin, the same impure, both-in-one insider/outsider. (Minh-ha, Trinh74-75)

United by a common philosophy and enterprise, that is, to protect and promote the rights and privileges of postcolonial nations, contemporary Pakistani writers of Anglophone fiction are confronted by a mammoth undertaking. *Burnt Shadows* is thus a political tour-de-force, a work that proposes alternative approaches to capitalist globalisation and to the traditional understanding of nationalism as a nation-specific phenomenon. In *Burnt Shadows,* Shamsie explores globalization from an unconventional axis and her global centres are deliberately unrestricted to the familiar metropolitan capitals such as London, Paris or New York. Transcending the norm, she alters these axes to access the globe via more unanticipated centres such as Tokyo, Kabul, Delhi, Istanbul and Karachi—all of which are part of strategically and politically vital landscapes on the world map. Shamsie is interested primarily in the nationalistic rhetoric that connects these otherwise very distinct and separate nations, in the process offering nationalism as a transnational phenomenon.

In a recent article about her relationship with the city of her birth and also her most powerful literary muse, Kamila Shamsie allows us to momentarily glimpse the tension in her mind about "home" and "away" (*Kamila Shamsie on Leaving and Returning to Karachi*, Guardian 2010). While her first four novels are all based mainly in Karachi (which she once saw as her safety zone of fiction) *Burnt Shadows* begins in Japan and ends somewhere between Afghanistan and New York. The obvious question "what's changed?" is interestingly not just the readers' reaction but also the author's, who suggests that in order to widen her fictional imagination she felt compelled to leave the city with which she feels so "intimately acquainted." She explains that "this geographical widening of [her] imagination was one of the most important factors in [her] decision to move to London three years ago—[she] was eager to alter [her] relationship to Karachi from part-time resident to visitor" (Guardian, 2010). But far from rendering her

"unmoored from [her] subject matter," this geographical furthering from her homeland has, if anything, reinforced her relationship with Karachi. In response to the irony and hypocrisy stereotypically associated with diasporic writers representing "homelands," Shamsie argues that this distancing from her country and the revisiting of it from abroad has enabled her to re-envision Pakistan in a manner never before possible: "I discovered a previously unknown pleasure: how to make a distant place feel intimate." In order to be intimately acquainted with a place, or to be able to "reach out of thousands of windows in the city, rub the air between [her] fingers and feel texture," Shamsie argues that a writer need not commit her physical presence to a particular country (Guardian 2010). It is the ability to step out of "home" and see things from a more nuanced perspective that gives a writer like Shamsie the power to assess and express her nationalistic concerns. That she chooses to work and write in metropolitan cities such as New York and London and that her linguistic mode is always English, I argue, have little to do with impeding this representational process. If anything, they give it a momentum.

As a novel, *Burnt Shadows* keenly engages with the themes of home, nations, diaspora and foreignness, poignantly bringing to light the loss of homelands, nations and families and calling into question the conventional signification of the familiar concepts such as identity and nationality. Central to the novel is its female protagonist, Hiroko Tanaka, and it is both with her and through her that readers of *Burnt Shadows* explore the vast periods and places covered in the story. We are introduced to Hiroko in the very beginning of the novel—she is a young Japanese woman who has always lived in and loved Nagasaki, the city of her birth and youth. Standing at the edge of a dangerous precipice, Hiroko shares the fear of losing home with thousands of fellow Japanese families who inhabit this city amidst the horrifying destruction of the Second World War. It is a world in which human lives hang by threads and where bomb shelters are as familiar as homes. Shamsie artistically paints the picture of a world where the earth was "more functional as a vegetable patch than a flower garden, just as factories were more functional than schools and boys were more functional as weapons than as humans" (*Burnt Shadows* 7). But then, on the morning of August 9th 1942, in a matter of seconds, Nagasaki is nothing more than a "diamond cutting open the earth, falling through to hell" (Shamsie 27). And thus, in the political corridors of the United States, the annihilation of an entire nation is planned, and upon orders by powerful leaders, executed. For Hiroko, this day marks the end of love and of home, and Shamsie treats the fragility of the concepts of home and identity as a crucial priority in the rest of the novel. The devastation of Nagasaki, from Hiroko's perspective, ends not only her home but on a personal note also her first love, Konrad-- the incident serving as a

permanent caution against attaching too many sentiments to nations and relationships and the pain of their loss being unrelenting. From both a feminist and nationalistic perspective, this scene of devastation is a crucial moment in the novel. For one thing, there are several references to the "blut and boden" nationalism of Europe and America which thrived at the expense of cities such as Nagasaki and Hiroshima, but additionally, this nationalism is described as a predominantly masculine sphere which leaves its indelible marks on Hiroko, in the form of the hideously compelling bird-shaped burns on her back. She bears the brunt of this monstrous and destructive form of nationalism for the rest of her life, and, perhaps even more significantly, is deprived of all sensation on her back where the burns are imprinted. This enforced numbness both literal and figurative, and the ironic painlessness that accompanies it, are important to bear in mind while following Hiroko through the rest the narrative about her life experiences. Ironically, this violence that Hiroko's body suffers is preceded almost immediately by a sensuous and evocative scene during which Hiroko, for the first time in her life, experiences glimpses of sexual pleasure associated with her body. She begins to understand the power of her physicality in arousing such pleasurable sensations, and to heighten their impact, clothes herself in her mother's cherished silk Kimono embroidered with two large and magnificent birds on its back. It is within minutes of this unique realisation of her physical body that her back is permanently numbed of any further physical sensation, metaphorically serving as a manuscript for the transcription of capitalist violence.

From Nagasaki Hiroko moves to Delhi, a city gripped by anticolonial sentiments and poised for freedom from the Raj, followed by Partition. Here, after meeting Sajjad, an Indian-Muslim friend who later becomes her husband, Hiroko is seen to embrace India wholeheartedly—culturally, linguistically and emotionally. Her atypical nationalistic perspectives and her desire to assimilate into an alien environment are depicted in stark contrast to the members of the Burton household, her hosts in India, led by the patriarchal figure, James Burton. In this predominantly masculinist society of colonial India, where women were consciously denied any voice or agency in colonial or anti-colonial discourse, (existing, as Shamsie demonstrates, in the world of the Delhi garden parties) Hiroko disrupts this unequal, yet hitherto unquestioned, balance of power.

Hiroko offers herself as a contemporary version of Kipling's Lalun—a fantastical and unique figure in the short story "On the City Wall," inhabiting a hybrid and borderless space and thereby enabling all cultures, religions, nations and races to intersect. Though in many ways starkly dissimilar—Lalun is an accomplished courtesan who attracts a variety of gentlemen to her door—they are

both symbolic figures offering spaces of contact and facilitating communication across borderlands. Very early on in the novel, we are introduced to Hiroko as the daughter of a "traitor"—a Japanese politician who fights with his life against the ideologies he loathes. Hiroko, we realize, doesn't only accept her father's beliefs and reputation but is also prepared to endanger her own life to protect his. Furthermore, living in the times when even a cursory association with a white European could be potentially life threatening in Nagasaki, Hiroko risks being in love with a German man, Konrad. Though the novel is set in Nagasaki only over the span of a few days, it is enough to establish Hiroko's love for her country and her attachment to Nagasaki. After the nuclear devastation, which also brings about the tragic end of her first love, Hiroko makes the decision to pursue Konrad's past and travels to India alone, an almost unimaginable thought at the time. Shamsie makes it clear to the reader, almost immediately, that Hiroko is a woman who defies norms and resists stereotypes, and this aspect of her personality becomes deeply pronounced in her associations with the Burtons, a sophisticated and highly educated English family living in India during the time of the "Empire." Hiroko's feminism is also unusual and unique like her: it revolves around a different, alternative axis, dispelling any traditional accusations of incompatibility between feminism and nationalism.

The reaction that James Burton fails to conceal on first his meeting with Hiroko is also an important statement about his perception of women as a gendered category that is woven in with his limited understanding and tolerance of difference, both in terms of gender and race. Their first meeting is a classic example of James's narrow-mindedness: at Hiroko's explanation of her travels from Tokyo to Bombay, and then further to Delhi, James's reaction is one of horror, followed by disbelief—"What alone?" Significantly, Hiroko is equipped with an almost intimidating practicality and she responds, "Yes. Why? Can't women travel alone in India?" (Shamsie 46). Both Elizabeth and James find themselves struggling, (Elizabeth to a much lesser extent) with this stereotypical image of "demure Japanese" women, brought up exclusively on the principles of tradition and domesticity. Instead, their first exposure to a Japanese woman is in the form of Hiroko, a woman who would "squeeze the sun in her fist if she ever got the chance; yes, and tilt her head back to swallow its liquid light" (Shamsie 46). What is significant about their first meeting in particular is the impact it has on James, who, with grim irony, offers a tame and sophisticated, "English" version of patriarchy. There is no doubt that the Burton household, similar to the British Raj, is a male-dominated one, and the role assigned to Elizabeth, though not overtly discriminatory, is clearly a passive one: "Elizabeth picked up her cup of tea from the windowsill and felt as though she posed herself for a portrait, The Colonial Wife Looks upon her Garden" (Shamsie 35). And this title of the

"colonial wife" is perhaps most befitting for Elizabeth, who has a voice but no agency and who though free and unchained on the surface is trapped in a most frustrating and unfulfilling bond of marriage from which she is feels unable to break free. She maintains, despite her better sense, the façade of a happy marriage in the face of weak and ineffective channels of communication with her husband. Linguistically, too, James denies agency to his wife; he speaks in terms of "allowing" and "not allowing" Elizabeth to do certain things, but interestingly, any attempts to do the same with Hiroko are instantly rebuffed.

James' reception and understanding of Hiroko are painfully limited. He finds himself "oddly perturbed by this woman who he couldn't place. Indians, Germans, the English, even Americans…he knew how to look at people and understand the contexts from which they sprang. But this Japanese woman in trousers. What on earth was she all about?" (Shamsie 46). The confusion and frustration he feels at encountering this woman, who exists and functions outside his realm of experience, significantly reveals him as a patriarchal colonial figure. He struggles to accept what he finds unfamiliar and is possessed with a fierce need to transform her—to make her more familiar, and hence more accessible and natural to him. There is arguably a political dimension to match this attitude, encapsulated in the clichéd notion of the "white man's burden," which is often reiterated in the novel, particularly in the form of Sajjad's approach towards the English. He questions James's "Englishness," which no extent of exposure to India has been able to blur: "Why have the English remained so English? Throughout India's history conquerors have come from elsewhere, and all of them—Turk, Arab, Hun, Mongol, Persian —become Indian. If—when this Pakistan happens, those Muslims who leave Delhi and Lucknow and Hyderabad to there, they will be leaving their homes." Bitterly, he adds, "But when the English leave, they'll be going home" (Shamsie 82).

It is significant that Elizabeth insists on Hiroko residing in the Burton home during her stay in India, a thought that in the first instance is unthinkable for James, who has immediately felt subordinated by this unexpected and unpredictable Japanese visitor. For Elizabeth however, Hiroko's entrance into the household has something of a symbolic value, as it initiates the realisation of her own power as a woman, accompanied by the courage to think outside her marriage. Her rebellions, which in the past were nothing more than imaginative excursions—"my imagined rebellions get more pathetic by the day" she earlier claims—take on a more tangible form and she begins to interrogate the reasons to keep her relations with James alive. She is reacquainted, via Hiroko who

unwittingly becomes something of a feminist muse in Elizabeth's life, to the question of her "wants," something she has not given thought to in several years:

> Want. She remembered that dimly. Somewhere. Want. At what point had her life become an accumulation of things she didn't want? She didn't want Henry to be away. She didn't want to be married to a man she no longer knew how to talk to….she didn't want to make James unhappy through her inability to become the woman he had thought she would turn into, given time and instruction" (Shamsie 100).

Elizabeth's hitherto latent feminism, activated by Hiroko's clarity of mind and personal ambition, also has a bearing on her nationalistic leanings. The reader is now informed that Elizabeth's passive acceptance of her wifely role in India also suppressed a desire to be German: "she didn't want to keep hidden the fact that at times during the war—and especially when Berlin was firebombed—she had felt entirely German" (Shamsie 83). This last revelation is particularly significant, aligning Elizabeth's interpretation of nationalism to that of Hiroko's transnational version of it. Of British origin, having a German step-parent and currently living in colonial India, it is interesting that Elizabeth should feel "entirely German" in the face of American and British capitalist politics. Among many others, one of the reasons for tension between Elizabeth and Sajjad stems precisely from this sense of a lost homeland that Elizabeth experiences: "Elizabeth wanted to catch Sajjad by the collar and shake him. I was made to leave Berlin when I was a little younger than him—I know the pain of it. What do you know about leaving, you whose family has lived in Delhi for centuries?" (Shamsie 83). It is on this theme predominantly that Hiroko and Elizabeth are united—on their love for their nations and the sense of loss accompanied with this attachment, followed closely by a sense of resentment against the ability of the greater global powers to orchestrate such destruction. Their spirits of nationalism, as it were, do not take flight until they physically leave their nations. Moreover, similar to her transnational version of nationalism, Hiroko's feminism, too, is a broad and encompassing one. Not only does she demonstrate her ability to transcend space, time, history and tragedy, she manages to exert a remarkable influence on Elizabeth, who belongs, ironically, to an ostensibly more liberal and advanced world than Hiroko.

Hiroko's assessment of her personal wants, especially in the context of nationalism, warrant further attention. She has never made any lofty claims to patriotism in the past and declares that she always intended to leave Nagasaki for the world, except she disclaims, "until you see a place you've known your whole life reduced to ash you don't realise how much we crave familiarity" (Shamsie 100). Hiroko's nationalism is, ironically enough, supplied by forces of violence outside Japan; she experiences a profound sense of national love and loyalty that

have been triggered by bitter anger and revenge. Only after leaving Nagasaki for Delhi does she sense her desire for Japan much more forcefully, "Do you see those flowers on the hillside Ilse? I want to know their names in Japanese. I want to hear Japanese…I want to look like the people around me…I want the doors to slide open instead of swinging open. I want all those things that never meant anything, that still wouldn't mean anything if I hadn't lost them. You see, I know that. I know that but it doesn't stop me from wanting them" (Shamsie 100) Home and nation then are fluid and dynamic concepts in *Burnt Shadows*, and the novel is interested in what life is like for the same people living in multiple locales, exploring the significance of topographic barriers that are subjective yet meaningful.

Languages, in both spoken and written forms, are intimately connected to the themes of nationalism and transnationalism in the novel. Shamsie considers the role of language in forming and sustaining identities, with a particular emphasis on the ability of the English language to serve as an adequate means of enunciating thoughts and feelings outside the English speaking world. There are indications in the novel that psychological and emotional expressions do not necessarily tally when articulated in different languages. It is of considerable significance that, professionally, Hiroko is a translator of languages since this fact already contributes a certain degree of transnationalism and globalism to her character, given that she enables and facilitates linguistic and cultural communication between nations. Beyond this, she also serves the role of what Robert Young calls "cultural translation," constantly negotiating between cultures and dissolving strangeness, as it were. Hiroko's job as a language translator is hence a symbol for her broader role as a figurative anthropologist, expanding conceptual boundaries and resisting "difference." Slipping from language to language with the ease and naturalness of a native speaker, Hiroko is equipped with an exceptionally powerful gift for learning languages and immersing herself into them. What is important is that her interest in languages transcends the practical aspects of linguistic acquisition, extending into a much more deeply seated appreciation for the relevant nation's literature, history and traditions. Significantly, too, we find that Hiroko is most at "home in the idea of foreignness." Hiroko thus embraces nationalism as a tool of "horizontal comradeship" that marks her stance different from the more normative perception of the concept. Throughout the novel, she is more inclined to align with nationalism in the sense of an "imagined community", a term that is elucidated by critics like Chandra Mohanty who expresses the urgency of transnational feminist alliances in a Eurocentric world. She advances the necessity of the formation of

communities to serve in "oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures" (Mohanty 7). One way of looking at it might be that it is not that Hiroko loves Japan less, but that she loves the value of freedom and harmony more, and in making this choice she is able to participate in resistance communities spread across the globe. It is this nationalistic spirit that aligns her to some extent with individuals such as Sajjad, Elizabeth and Abdullah, all of whom have experienced and understood the loss of homelands.

Remarkably, Hiroko does not allow language barriers or cultural differences, no matter how stark, to stand in the way of her relationship with nations or their people; she adapts to "foreignness" with incredible ease. Within days of making acquaintance with Sajjad, Hiroko is keen to know him in his own language as opposed to in English, which, being the language of the his colonial "master," would prevent her from acquiring genuine insight into the mind and heart of a true "Dilli" man like Sajjad. As their relationship unfolds in the novel, first as friends and later lovers, one realises increasingly the extent to which language influences sentiments and relationships. At a particularly poignant moment in the novel, we find that Hiroko shares a little of her love and grief for her previous love with Sajjad. Repeating to herself in whispers "Why didn't you stay?" and anguished by the guilt of having allowed Konrad to leave her just moments before the bomb, Hiroko exits Sajjad's world momentarily. She returns once again to that ominous morning of 9 August in Nagasaki. It is at this point that Sajjad intervenes:

> There is a phrase I have heard in English: to leave someone alone with their grief. Urdu has no equivalent phrase. It only understands the concept of gathering around and becoming "gham-khaur"—grief eaters—who take in a mourners sorrow. Would you like me to be English or Urdu right now? (Shamsie 77)

Hiroko's response to this invitation is significant: "This is an Urdu lesson, Sensi" (Shamsie 77). It is from this point in the novel, a juncture at which Hiroko and Sajjad truly embrace the same language, that the communication barriers between them truly collapse.

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, Hiroko's desire to acquire the Urdu language surmounts any previous requests made by the Burtons themselves, who have always been satisfied with knowing a "clutch of Urdu words to throw into the mix." To Hiroko, this disregard for language and the obsessional preoccupation with English is as abhorrent as it is inconceivable: "It was the oddest thing (she) had ever heard" (Shamsie 57). When Hiroko expresses an interest in learning the "language they speak here," James's dismissive response encapsulates the difference in their attitudes towards the nation they both

currently inhabit: "It's not necessary," James argues, "English serves you just fine." James continues to expose his selfish ignorance by assuring Hiroko, "The natives you'll meet here are the Oxbridge set and their wives or household staff like Lala Buksh, who can understand simple English" (Shamsie 57). Not merely does James bare his ignorance on the matter of language acquisition with such statements, he also reveals his patriarchal and parochial vision of nationalism, which offers a sharp foil against Hiroko's version of it.

Hiroko keeps travelling through the novel, physically, mentally and culturally adapting to new environments as she encounters them. The partition of India forces Sajjad to leave his beloved Delhi permanently, and settle with Hiroko first in Istanbul and later in Karachi, where he is mistaken to be an agent of terror and shot dead. Once again, we find that the unrelenting violence of nationalism severs yet another relationship in Hiroko's life—having lost Konrad to the atomic bomb she loses Sajjad to CIA operations in Pakistan. During this time we find that her son Raza becomes intimately involved in Afghan Mujahedeen operations in North Western Pakistan, as a final desperate attempt at seeking a tangible and pure identity for himself, plagued for too long by a deep sense of "un-belonging" in Karachi. It is only Hiroko, ironically, who perceives in her own words, the meaninglessness of "belonging to anything as contradictorily insubstantial and damaging as a nation" (Shamsie 204).

As we follow Hiroko ultimately, and somewhat ironically, to America we witness a final battle of national psychology that Hiroko becomes involved with, this time in relation to Kim, Harry's young American daughter with whom Hiroko lives. As the plot of the novel thickens and Hiroko requests Kim to transport Abdullah (currently an illegal migrant living in New York) to Canada, we find that nationalistic tensions build up on fundamental misunderstandings based on culture and religion. In the wake of the recent date of "9/11," the conversation that takes place between Kim and Abdullah on their car journey to Canada, where she is meant to facilitate his escape from the FBI, reveals the colossal misunderstandings and misperceptions that colour their views of each other. Abdullah is shy and awkward to share a small space with an American woman while Kim is judgmental and convinced of his culpability as a terrorist. She has agreed to transport him to Canada but after their conversation decides it safest to hand him over to the FBI once the border has been crossed.

Shamsie's approach to the subject of terror, especially in relation to Islam is a cautious one, whereby she attempts at accessing this phenomenon from more than one perspective. Kim is depicted as a "pure" American, and her nationalistic sentiments and views of the world outside America are governed by this status.

Abdullah's faith in Islam is staunch and blind, and his version of it is simplistic to the point of naiveté, exemplified by statements such as "Raza has a place in heaven [because Hiroko] converted to Islam. The one who converts another is guaranteed a place in heaven for himself and his children and grandchildren and so on down for seven generations[…]Even martyrs who die in jihad can't do so much for their family. It's written in the Quran" (Shamsie 346). This last sentence, which Abdullah evidently employs in order to validate the accuracy of his explanation is particularly significant, not just as proof of his personal approach to religion but also as it finally ignites Kim's incense and frustration. The conversation continues as follows:

"Have you read the Quran?"
"Of course I have."
"Have you read it in any language you understand?"
"I understand Islam," he said, tensing.
"I'll take that to mean a no. I've read it—in English. Believe me, the Quran says nothing of the sort. And frankly, what kind of heaven is heaven if you can find shortcuts into it? Seven generations?"
"Please do not speak to me this way."
"Tell me one thing. One thing. If an Afghan dies in the act of killing infidels in his country does he go straight to heaven?"
"If the people he kills come as invaders or occupiers, yes. He is shaheed. Martyr."
"He is a murderer. And your heaven is an abomination." (Shamsie 346)

As Kim releases this man into freedom, and as Abdullah walks into a restaurant filled with parents and children, Kim experiences a sharp sense of panic—"what had she done?" Fearing suddenly that she may have set lose a terrorist amidst the public she makes a phone call to the police, who then, we're subtly but firmly informed, "take care" of everything.

This episode, I believe, is significant for a number of reasons. For one thing, it has a symbolic and allegorical value, encapsulating the lack of empathy that exists in the contemporary world, for religions, cultures and even nations. In a world that likes to think of itself as "global," this is a sharp reminder of the remains of irreconcilable differences. Secondly, it highlights the role of Kim in the novel, as a highly educated, trained professional Engineer, but whose education poses some fundamental gaps. I believe that in portraying Kim, Shamsie expresses a great worry—one that addresses the impossibility of a situation where even someone as qualified and intelligent as Kim is not immune to a certain amount of bigotry. In offering a defence for her action to Hiroko, she further reveals her prejudice, "I'm sorry, but it wasn't Buddhists flying those

planes, there is no video footage of Jews celebrating the deaths of three thousand Americans, it wasn't a Catholic who shot my father. You think it makes me a bigot to recognise this?" (Shamsie 361). Hiroko's understanding of the world and history are shown to have altered at this point in the novel. Kim, who she has often seen as representative of the "American" psyche has aided this process. She captures her understanding of events, past and present, in just a few lines:

> In the big picture of the Second World War, what was seventy-five thousand more Japanese dead? Acceptable, that's what it was. In the big picture of threats to America, what is one Afghan? Expendable. Maybe he's guilty, maybe not. Kim, you are the kindest, most generous woman I know. But right now, because of you, I understood for the first time how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb. (Shamsie 362)

Towards the end of her life, having lived through "Hitler, Stalin, the Cold War, the British Empire, segregation, apartheid" and most importantly the atomic bomb, Hiroko knows that the world would survive even this most recent horror of terror. In the twilight of her life, however, she cannot help but question the fundamental inhumanity of the acts of terror and violence she has witnessed—directly and indirectly. Helplessly she declares, "I want the world to stop being such a terrible place" (Shamsie 292). When considered retrospectively, her life brings to mind the words of the Indian born feminist writer and poet, Meena Alexander, who when addressing her position as a marginalised individual from the perspectives of both gender and nationality wrote: "That's all I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrations. Uprooted so many times she can connect nothing with nothing […] Writing in search of a homeland" (qtd. in *Theorising Asian America* 139) However, there is an important distinction to bear in mind here: Hiroko, as a woman having experienced multiple migrations is not "cracked" by them, and who despite being uprooted several times in her life, remains consistently and transnationally connected to places, people and ideologies. Hiroko, I suggest, presents an alternative to "homeland" in the traditional sense of the term-- she is heroic and wise not despite the multiple homelands she inhabits but because of them.

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# More than Victims: Versions of Feminine Power in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

**By Jacquelynn M. Kleist**

The Partition of India in 1947 was accompanied by the migration of nearly ten million people between the newly defined borders of India and Pakistan. Accordingly, in much of Partition literature, it is not just the literal terrain of India that is cracked or divided, but members of the population as well. Writings about Partition often portray the massacre, mutilation, abduction, and rape of citizens' bodies, particularly female bodies. Manju Jaidka specifies that many writers of Partition literature chose to focus on the marginalization and victimization of women because they served as "symbols of the community to be subjugated; their bodies became sites of contested power" (48). As Jaidka points out, not only do women function as "objects of oppression" in Partition texts, but their utter disempowerment often becomes "the focal point of the narrative, highlighting the impact of history on the meek and powerless" (46). Correspondingly, Rosemary George observes that Partition texts routinely depict women as "communal sufferers, familial victims, and second-class citizens" (138), while men are more often portrayed as dominant and powerful. Because of this focus on female victimization, much of the writing about Partition reduces both men and women to "perfect binaries—rapists and raped, protectors and protected, villains and victims, buyers and bought, sellers and sold" (142). Moreover, in making violence against women the focal point, some Partition literature and the criticism it engenders allow "no space for either gender outside of these binaries" (143), thereby further entrenching limited gender roles through selective portrayal.

Accordingly, much of the criticism of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (originally published in 1991 as *Ice-Candy-Man*) has emphasized the victimization of women. In *Modern South Asian Literature in English,* Paul Brians declares that *Cracking India* is characterized by a "pattern of oppression that haunts all women in the novel, from highest to lowest" (107). Likewise, Manju Jaidka states that "the women sufferers in the story must find an escape route [and] bow to the dominant power, or else suffer" (49). While I acknowledge that the female characters in *Cracking India* experience oppression, I assert that they do not operate solely as victims; rather, Sidhwa's women possess distinct forms of power: Lenny, as the narrator, exhibits narrative agency, though her

moments of agency happen largely prior to Partition; Ayah, similarly, enjoys influence over the male community before Partition—though her authority is primarily based on her physical appeal—which gives Sidhwa an opportunity to comment on the temporal and limited nature of sexual power and physical attraction. Through the events of Partition, Ayah's power evaporates; she is kidnapped by a group of local men and forced into prostitution. However, the strongest—and most subversive—examples of feminine power in the novel stem from women who are able to completely step outside their traditional domestic roles and utilize their community connections as a source of influence. Both Lenny's mother and Godmother demonstrate the power gained through economic status—both women are upper-class and educated—and both proactively exert influence and make changes in the lives of those around them. Whereas Lenny and Ayah's comparatively temporary power is based on physical traits or childish willfulness, the power of Lenny's mother and Godmother is centered in their identity as influential and privileged community figures, and their ability to step outside their traditional feminine roles to enact deliberate change, working for the good of less fortunate women who have been damaged during Partition.

By appreciating the complexity of gendered power relations that Sidhwa portrays, we, as readers, gain a more comprehensive understanding not only of specific female character traits, but also of how *Cracking India*, like texts by female authors Quratulain Hyder, Amrita Pritam, and Jamila Hashmi, breaks free from the hegemony of patriarchal Partition narratives to provide a distinct female counter-narrative. More specifically, I agree with Ambreen Hai, who perceives *Cracking India* as a piece of "narratival border feminism that undoes binary oppositions" (390). By utilizing a female narrator, Sidhwa presents a uniquely gendered perspective of Partition. Moreover, Sidhwa's novel provides a comparatively inclusive view of the diverse feminine roles during Partition, roles in which the female characters are not entirely empowered nor entirely victimized. Thus, *Cracking India* is able to "describe, restore, and heal some of the damage done by…male neo-nationalistic discourse" (390), facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the various ways women were influenced by and responded to, Partition. Rather than simply perceiving Sidhwa's women as perpetual victims, worthy of being "pitied and patronized" (Hubel 111), I will examine how the female characters in *Cracking India* demonstrate not only survivorship, but also agency, using their familial and communal connections and unique perspective to affect change and bring healing. At several points in *Cracking India*, Lenny, her ayah, her mother, and her godmother are able to move beyond traditional female disempowerment to exercise autonomy and influence within their patriarchal society.

Lenny, the narrator, facilitates this sense of feminine agency through the novel's narrative structure, her own increasing awareness of social constructions, and her ability to utilize these constructions to advance her own purposes. Although Lenny is young, female, and physically disabled, all characteristics which traditionally signify disempowerment, her youth and gender give her a unique narrative angle. As Ambreen Hai observes, Lenny's narration creates a "double feminist lens…challenging the centrality and exclusivity of…masculinist master narratives" (390). As a female narrator, Lenny facilitates a more well-rounded perception both of the female characters and of the social systems which they were able to surmount.

Lenny's relationship with Ayah augments her understanding of gendered social norms. While observing the romantic playfulness of Ayah and Ice-Candy-Man in the park, Lenny remarks, "I learn…to detect the subtle exchange of signals and some of the complex rites by which Ayah's admirers coexist" (Sidhwa 29). After extensive observation, she is able to anticipate their interactions and successfully interfere. She explains, "Once in a while I pre-empt [Ice-Candy-Man's] big toe's romantic impulse and, catching it mid-crawl or mid-strike, twist it. It is a measure to keep the candy bribes coming" (29). Through her observations of Ayah's interactions with her suitors, Lenny specifies that she learns not only about the nature of individuals and the way to get what she wants from them, but also about the particular dynamics of their gendered interactions.

In addition to her unique perspective as a young, female narrator, Lenny demonstrates increasing agency by purposefully differentiating herself from social norms. As she learns of the constructed systems that define her society, Lenny makes conscious decisions to comply with or deviate from them. Just as she freely admits to utilizing "the manipulative power of my limp" (56) to win attention and candy, Lenny's narrative suggests that, after watching her parents, she learns to selectively utilize gender performance to achieve certain results. Though Lenny recognizes the dominance of her father, she also carefully observes the way her mother "handles" him, noting, "Mother's voice teeters between amusement and a wheedling whine. She is a virtuoso at juggling the range of her voice and achieving the exact balance with which to handle Father" (76). Lenny also reflects on the family's daily ritual of greeting her father when he returns home from work, acutely aware of how her mother monitors her father's reaction to her anecdotes, effectively redirecting the conversation to achieve a positive response. When her father expresses annoyance over tales of her brother's misbehavior, for example, Lenny reports how "switching the bulletin immediately, Mother recounts some observation of mine, as if I've spent the entire morning mouthing extraordinarily brilliant, saccharine sweet and fetchingly naïve remarks" (88). Armed with this awareness of what is expected of female family members, Lenny

can then choose to utilize these behaviors herself. She recalls, "when Mother pauses, on cue, I repeat any remarks I'm supposed to have made and ham up the performance with further innocently insightful observations" (88). After being called upon regularly to repeat or invent these kinds of remarks, Lenny is able to clearly recognize and articulate the strategy required in these interactions. Thus, Sidhwa emphasizes Lenny's growing awareness of how her use of discourse has the potential to be either aligned with or resistant to the expected feminine behaviors. In the aforementioned case, Lenny observes gendered social norms and chooses to comply.

In other situations, however, including her interactions with her male cousin, Lenny demonstrates agency by electing to deviate from traditional gender roles. Lenny and her cousin sometimes dabble in romance; they kiss, pursue each others' affections, and promise to marry. Yet, in their exchanges Lenny does not demonstrate the expected feminine behaviors of submission and compliance; rather, she is assertive and maintains an atypical degree of control. In contrast to her mother's routine indulgence of her father, Lenny does not feel obligated to cater to her cousin's preferences. Instead, she is forthright and direct, expressing her honest opinions and occasional disgust with his actions. When he tries to coax her into new sexual behaviors, she states, "I like Cousin. I've even thought of marrying him when we grow up, but this is a side of him I'm becoming aware of for the first time, and I don't like it" (172). Here, Lenny clearly evinces her knowledge of what is expected in romantic relationships—increasing intimacy and eventual marriage—but she decides she does not wish to engage in these actions. Subsequently, rather than submitting to masculine authority, Lenny exerts control over Cousin. "Bent on further pleasuring me, squashing his panting chest on my flattened bosom, Cousin gives me a soggy kiss. Poor Cousin. His sense of timing is all wrong….Pushing him back and holding him at arm's length, I say, 'If you don't tell me everything at once, I'll knee your balls'" (243). In this interaction, Lenny reverses the expected gender behaviors. Rather than being willingly dominated by the male, she chooses not to conform, telling Cousin that she is not interested, making her own preferences known, and threatening to further "insult" his masculinity if he does not respect her wishes. Her cousin, consequently, is placed in a subservient role and laments his lack of power over Lenny, whining, "She loves approximately half of Lahore…Why can't she love me?" (245). Lenny's willfulness and refusal to enact traditional feminine behavior have left Cousin longing for masculine control. Instead of functioning exclusively as a naïve and powerless female victim, Lenny demonstrates a powerful narrative voice and sense of awareness, recognizing, questioning, and selectively participating in social systems.

Although Ayah is physically victimized in the latter part of *Cracking India*, she also exudes a degree of control, able to uniquely influence the men around her. Much of Ayah's influence stems from her physical appeal; her natural beauty and sensuality attract men, creating an intriguing source of power (Brians 105). Lenny details how "stub-handed twisted beggars…drop their poses and stare at [Ayah] with hard, alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretenses to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies, and cyclists turn their heads as she passes" (Sidhwa 12). Men of all economic and social backgrounds are captivated by Ayah's appearance and sexual appeal. Her effect is not limited to Indian and Pakistani men; a British man is also intrigued by Ayah's "stunning looks" and "rolling bouncy walk that agitates the globules of her buttocks…and the half-spheres beneath her short sari-blouses" (13). Ayah's effect on men is so strong that Lenny compares it to "the tyranny magnets exercise over metals" (29), which "galvanizes men to mad sprints in the noon heat" (41). While strolling through the park, Lenny and Ayah are stopped by an officious "short, middle-aged, pointy eared" Englishman, who demands to know why "such a big girl" (12) is not yet walking by herself. Undeterred by Lenny's revelation of her leg brace, the Englishman insists on the benefits of exercise. Lenny explains their dismissive reaction: "Ayah and I hold our eyes away, effectively dampening his good-Samaritan exuberance…. [Eventually,] wagging his head and turning about, the Englishman quietly dissolves up the driveway from which he had so enthusiastically sprung." By the time he recovers his voice, Lenny and Ayah are already strolling away (12). In this scene, the British male, as a dominant member of patriarchal society, attempts to interfere, and is corrected and then disregarded by two marginalized female characters. Rather than the Englishman influencing the behavior of Lenny and Ayah, they change his course of action instead. Their indifference causes his enthusiasm to be "dampened," and he physically "turns about;" his spirited interference is reduced from "enthusiastic" to "quietly dissolving" (12). Lenny and Ayah's refusal to demonstrate traditional feminine submission effectively deflates the Englishman's masculine energy and dominance. In dismissing his suggestions and patriarchal authority over herself and her young charge, Ayah asserts her own feminine independence.

In addition to sexually attracting and inspiring men, Ayah holds her community of male admirers together, creating an oasis of cohesion in the midst of Partition hostilities. Like the statue of Queen Victoria which overlooks the park, Ayah successfully presides over "a spectrum of working-class males: cooks, gardeners, masseurs, traders, butchers, wrestlers, and Ice-Candy-Man" (Hai 398). Ayah's unique influence renders her able to bring together men of disparate occupations, ethnicities, and religious affiliations; she functions as "the magical goddess of racial harmony, the locus of convergent desire, the border terrain that

neutralizes…difference" (Hai 398). Even as religious and ethnic violence divides Lahore, Ayah's presence is unifying, calming, and safe; Lenny observes, "only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee, are, as always, unified around her" (Sidhwa 105). In addition to her naturally unifying influence, Ayah directly and consciously diffuses conflict. When the men in her social circle engage in divisive racialized attacks against the Hindu and Muslim communities, Ayah neutralizes the conversation. She threatens, "If all you talk of is nothing but this Hindu-Muslim business, I'll stop coming to the park" (101). This declaration prompts the men's immediate assurance: "For your sake, we won't bring it up again" (101). Lenny notes, "She, like Mother, is an oil pourer" (99), recognizing Ayah's choice to utilize her influence to inspire action, lessen conflict and bring peace. However, Ayah is eventually kidnapped and forced into sexual subservience, while Lenny, tricked by Ice-Candy-Man into revealing Ayah's presence to a group of local Muslims, sobs helplessly on the front porch.

Through Ayah, Sidhwa demonstrates awareness of the traditional feminine loss of power, and had the story ended at this point, with Lenny and Ayah's temporary influence completely negated, the novel would simply function as a traditional Partition novel, with the men as victors and the women as victims. However, Sidhwa's two strongest examples of feminine power are yet to come. Prior to Partition, Lenny's mother played the role of a dutiful wife, catering to her husband's every need, rubbing his feet when he returned from work and managing the household. During the events of Partition, however, Lenny's mother begins to subvert the patriarchal social order by rescuing and housing women. Directly ignoring the warnings of a male neighbor, who cautions the family to "stay neutral," Lenny's mother steps outside the role of traditional woman and of impartial Parsi community member to affect change in the lives of women who have been injured or abused. After women in their community are raped or forced into prostitution, Lenny's mother and aunts construct a refuge for these "fallen women" behind a neighboring house, attempting to restore the women to their families or to find housing and work for those who, seen as permanently shamed and defiled, cannot return home. Additionally, they smuggle gasoline to help their Hindu and Sikh friends cross the border safely to India (254). In rescuing these women, Lenny's mother has clearly moved beyond the traditional role of housewife to become a social activist. Rather than having her influence destroyed by Partition, like Ayah, the crisis of Partition provides an occasion for Lenny's mother to act and create positive change.

Even Lenny notices this difference in her mother. No longer content to remain home all day to supervise the housework and cater to her husband's demands, her mother now "develops a busy air of secrecy and preoccupation …. She shoots off in the Morris, after Father drudges off on his bicycle; and returns

late in the afternoon—and scoots out again" (182). Lenny's specific descriptions of her mother's and father's commutes emphasize the comparative energy and efficiency of her mother; her father "drudges" to work while her mother "shoots" and "scoots" in the family car, aggressively pursuing recovery efforts. These verbs exemplify the agency of Lenny's mother, adding to the autonomy she exhibits in assembling a community network of support and exerting a positive influence in the abducted women's lives. By highlighting the independent action and influence of Lenny's mother, Sidhwa demonstrates that all women did not sit by, helpless or indifferent, as their fellow females were ravaged. Rather, the complex character of Lenny's mother encompasses "the heroic role of women in leading the revolution against inequality, abuse, and social injustice, both for themselves and for the other exploited groups in society" (Sethi 133). Lenny's mother demonstrates agency by engaging in a crucial and life-saving act for the "fallen" women, affecting widespread and valuable change.

Finally, the unique power of Lenny's godmother is evident as she exerts the most notable feminine influence in the novel, traversing social boundaries and ultimately determining the futures of Ayah and Ice-Candy-Man. Lenny can sense Godmother's unique power and feels safe in her presence: "The home of her godmother is Lenny's haven…There she becomes borderless…she is free" (Gravley-Novello 85). In fact, Lenny describes her bond with her godmother as "stronger than the bond of motherhood. More satisfying than the ties between men and women" (Sidhwa 4). In privileging an exclusively female relationship, Lenny emphasizes the security and assurance connections to other women can provide. She recalls, "When I at last look into her shrewd, ancient eyes, I can tell…everything's going to be all right! (263). It is not only Lenny's empowering relationship with Godmother, but Godmother herself who constitutes feminine strength. Unlike many of the characters in the novel, and in direct contrast to Ayah, who loses the agency she had once possessed with the onset of Partition, "Lenny's godmother retains her power throughout the events surrounding Partition (Gravley-Novello 88), influencing multiple facets of society and eventually liberating Ayah and condemning Ice-Candy-Man.

Godmother's knowledge extends beyond the traditional feminine realm of the domestic to include a nearly omnipotent awareness of the events in her community. Lenny explains that this knowledge has been developed over time: "Over the years, Godmother has established a network of espionage with a reach of which even she is not aware....She has access to many ears. No one knows how many" (Sidhwa 223). Because Godmother "makes it her business to know everything about everybody" (239), she has developed connections in various levels of society. Thus, like Ayah, Godmother serves as an important link between different social groups, demonstrated when she invites "four students

from the King Edward Medical College dorms to tea. Their parents, who have at some point in time known either Godmother or one of her kin, have requested her to keep an occasional eye on them. Godmother invites them whenever her brother-in-law visits Lahore…to be in the company of a full-fledged doctor" (178). Lenny specifies, "Godmother is influential. Even Colonel Bharucha visits her. Neighbors of all faiths drop in to talk and to pay their respects" (223). Clearly, Godmother's facets of influence include the upper-class; her social interactions range from monitoring the progress of students at a prestigious medical college to maintaining connections with established doctors and military officers.

Godmother's all-encompassing awareness can also be credited to her own faculties of knowledge and perception. Lenny notes, "the day-to-day commonplaces of our lives unravel to her undercurrents that are lost to less perceptive humans. No baby—not even a kitten—is delivered within the sphere of her influence without her becoming instantly aware of its existence" (223). Correspondingly, Godmother is shocked when Slavesister mentions a new arrival, remarking suspiciously, "Somebody has a baby I don't know of ?" (151). As Lenny explains, Godmother's wealth of knowledge and skill is multi-faceted:

> [Godmother possesses a] reservoir of random knowledge, [including] knowledge of ancient lore and wisdom and herbal remedy. You cannot be near her without feeling her uncanny strength. People bring to her their joys and woes. Show her their sores and swollen joints. Distilling the right herbs, adroitly instilling the right word in the right ear, she secures wishes, smooths relationships, cures illnesses, battles wrongs, solaces grief and prevents mistakes. (223)

In this statement, Lenny details Godmother's adeptness in healing and comforting, her efforts to ensure justice and maintain peace. Godmother uses her unique range of influence to aid her friends and family.

In addition to being exceptionally informed and insightful, Godmother also has the power to exert influence; her feminine power lies not only in knowledge, but also in action. Lenny has ultimate confidence in Godmother's ability to affect or prevent change, stating, "She can move mountains from the paths of those she befriends, and erect mountainous barriers where she deems it necessary" (223). Godmother even facilitates Ranna's acceptance to a prestigious convent school, which Lenny refers to as "a minor miracle…as difficult as transposing him to a prosperous continent, and as beneficial, not only for him, it is said, but for seven succeeding generations of the Ranna progeny" (223). This demonstrates that Godmother possesses the power not only to change the current circumstances of individuals, but to influence their futures and those of their descendants, altering the overall trajectories of their lives.

Godmother's agency becomes particularly evident as she extricates Ayah from her physical and marital subjection to Ice-Candy-Man. In this extrication, Godmother repeatedly exerts authority over men, specifically Ice-Candy-Man; her verbal berating of Ice-Candy-Man exemplifies her superior position and influence. Godmother interrogates his abhorrent treatment of Ayah, demanding, "You permit her to be raped by butchers, drunks, and goondas and say she has come to no harm? ...What kind of man would allow his wife to dance like a performing monkey before other men?" (260). In her verbal attack of Ice-Candy-Man, Godmother calls into question not only his morality, but also his manhood, pointing out his failings as an honorable husband and as a masculine protector. In addition to highlighting Ice-Candy-Man's indifference in regards to Ayah's abuse, Godmother specifies his participation in Ayah's abduction and maltreatment. She demands, "Can't you bring yourself to say you played the drums when she danced? Counted money while drunks, peddlers, sahibs, and cutthroats used her like a sewer?" (262). She clarifies his hateful actions as both a moral disgrace and a marital failure, stating, "You have permitted your wife to be disgraced! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her womanhood!" (260). Godmother also emphasizes Ice-Candy-Man's failings not only as a husband and protector, but as a dutiful son as well, declaring, "You could have your own mother carried off if it suited you! You are a shameless badmash! Nimakharam! Faithless!... You're not a man, you're a low-born, two-bit evil little mouse…the son of pigs and pimps!" (261). Specifically negating his manhood, Godmother compares him to mice, pigs, and other distasteful animals. She concludes by reminding him of her influence, elaborating on the various punishments she can choose to have inflicted on him. She threatens, "I can have you lashed, you know. I can have you hung upside down in the Old Fort until you rot! … It's no good crying now. You'll be shown as little mercy as you showed her" (261). Ayah's blatant and debasing judgments of Ice-Candy-Man and her threats of physical punishment clearly demonstrate her authoritative position in their interactions.

In addition to her verbal dominance over Ice-Candy-Man, Godmother's body language reveals that she is clearly the more powerful party. Lenny observes, "Arching her back like a scorpion its tail, she closes in for the kill (260), and adds, "when I inhale I can smell the formidable power of her attack" (262). Accordingly, Ice-Candy-Man's physical reactions exemplify his vulnerability and subjection to Godmother's power. In response to her accusations, "Ice-candy-man's head jolts back as if it's been struck….[He is] visibly shaken. His hazel eyes dart frantically…for sympathy or a means of succor" (260). As Godmother itemizes the atrocities he has committed against Ayah, Ice-Candy-Man is physically humbled: "Struck by the naked power and fury of her attack, Ice-candy-man's body twitches. His head jerks forward and his long fingers gouge the

earth between his sandals….[He] shifts his eyes to the ground….Tears, and a long stand of mucus from his nose, drip into the fissures at his feet….His head hangs between his knees. His arms move helplessly, not knowing where to rest" (261). Eventually Ice-Candy-Man completely abandons his confident façade as "his eyes, red with the strain of containing his tears…flit to Godmother in mute appeal" (275). Instead of proclaiming his own merits and justifying his actions, Ice-Candy-Man is physically humbled, reduced to begging for Godmother's mercy: "Gliding forward on his haunches Ice-candy-man clasps her hands in both of his and places them on his bowed, penitent's head…[Yet] Godmother, in a coldly significant gesture withdraws her hands from Ice-candy-man's head. He remains like that, stranded…" (277). Godmother's feminine power over Ice-Candy-Man is evinced not only through her verbal dominance, but through her physical ascendancy and his corresponding physical subordination. In the face of her influence, Ice-Candy-Man can do no more than "hold a pathetic vigil for Ayah" (Rastegar 31). Through her social power and verbal accusations, Godmother has shattered Ice-Candy-Man's confidence, reducing him to "a deflated poet, a collapsed peddler" (Sidhwa 276) who slinks away, disappearing "across the Wagah border into India" (289).

In her verbal and physical dominance over Ice-Candy-Man, Godmother reverses traditional patriarchal power dynamics. Employing "a posse of policemen" (286) to execute her wishes, Godmother exerts control within—and, at times, above—the social realm of men. Through her appropriation of traditionally masculine authority, Godmother succeeds in successfully extricating Ayah from her marriage. Lenny specifies that Godmother's actions were not dependent on any masculine support; rather, she "singlehandedly engendered the social and moral climate of retribution and justice required to rehabilitate our fallen Ayah" (285). If Sidhwa's novel had ended with Ayah being dragged away to a life of misogynistic bondage, the message of the novel would have not have departed from the trajectory of most Partition literature. However, with the closing victory of Godmother over Ice-Candy-Man, the patriarchal binary of power is clearly subverted.

By situating Godmother's triumph at the end of the novel, Sidhwa makes a clear statement about the feasibility and particular facets of feminine power. For example, Ayah is eventually elevated from pure victim to speaking subject, and she verbally expresses her desire for escape to Godmother and is freed from the clutches of Ice-Candy-Man. However, her wish for freedom is only realized through Godmother's connections. Ayah's power, based primarily on her sexual appeal, is limited and transitory, while the power of Lenny's mother and Godmother, rooted in their social standing, financial security, and community connections, is much more entrenched. Both of these comparatively privileged

women are able to *maintain* agency, and more clearly *exert* agency, through the events of Partition. This tension between gender and class reveals how sexual violence is more often perpetrated on lower-income characters like Ayah, while the "typically bourgeois" (Rastegar 27) characters, including Lenny's mother and godmother, escape it. Sidhwa's middle and upper-class female characters are more clearly able to demonstrate agency and help those less fortunate, while lower-class women like Ayah function merely as passive receptors of the benevolent action undertaken on their behalf. This discrepancy allows Sidhwa to accentuate the specific disempowerment which results from belonging to both a subservient class and gender, therein providing a more realistic portrayal of the degree to which women in particular situations are able—or unable—to surmount social obstacles.

Though she is also disempowered, albeit due to her age rather than her ethnicity, as the narrative progresses Lenny is able to exert agency. Her agency is most clearly demonstrated through her decision not to enact revenge on Ice-Candy-Man, who loiters outside their gate every day, spouting lines of poetry and wailing for Ayah. Instead of being consumed by hate for Ice-Candy-Man because of his brutality, Lenny is able to realize that Ice-Candy-Man, who has lost all he once valued, should be pitied rather than resented. Lenny's agency comes from her ability to move forward, and rather than focusing her efforts on punishing Ice-Candy-Man, Lenny chooses a higher path.

In her female characters, Sidhwa has created a nuanced variety of feminine roles. She presents a clear progression of women, from Lenny and Ayah, who display selected instances of personal agency, to Lenny's mother and Godmother, who are able to act autonomously and exert increasing amounts of influence on surrounding individuals and circumstances, changing the lives of others as well as shaping their own.

By examining the female agency and empowerment that Sidhwa portrays, we, as readers, can appreciate how, although women's bodies are often fragmented and victimized in the largely patriarchal discourse of Partition literature, the novel's specific "adaptation of a marginal point of view" provides "an alternative to this discourse" (Bruschi 146). *Cracking India* offers a counter-history to the dominant national history of Partition, one which functions as "reconstitutive and salutary in the revision of national history and identity" (Hai 410). Rather than portraying women as exclusively victimized, Sidhwa provides a more nuanced depiction of the variety of ways women influenced—and were influenced by—the events of Partition. By examining the complex portrayals of women in *Cracking India* and other counter-narratives of Partition history, we are able to "redirect the gaze of the reader/researcher away from women's bodies and total victimization" and instead to create an awareness of how these narratives

"intervene in [the] totalizing discourses that have spoken, and continue to speak, for [women's] experiences" (Didur 13). Through narratives like *Cracking India,* women are able to reclaim their autonomy and express their own uniquely gendered—and equally valid—account of Partition history.

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# Role of the Majlis-i-Ahrar Islam-Hind in the Kashmir Movement of 1931

By Iqbal Chawla

## Introduction

Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam saw its birth in 1929 at Lahore with the following goals in mind: firstly, to uphold the anti-imperialist stance in India as a Muslim-run group and secondly, to provide support to and work closely with the moves and actions of the All-India Congress in the larger political arena. Maulana Azad, the highest-level Muslim functionary of the Congress, played a key-role in its formation.

The MAI had hardly been formed a year when the majority Muslim population of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which had been ruled by a dynasty of Hindu rajas, to whom it had been sold in 1846 by the British, erupted in agitation. Here it would be pertinent to point out that the territory of Jammu and Kashmir (henceforth, only "Kashmir"), which comprised two independent but neighboring territories of Jammu and Kashmir, was overwhelmingly a Muslim-majority state, but representatives of Kashmir were not even consulted before the British decided to sell the territory to its new Hindu rulers.

This Hindu ruling dynasty of Kashmir had ruled its Muslim-majority territories with harshness and cruelty since 1846, and had, as a deliberate policy, failed to carry out any meaningful changes for uplifting the lives and living standards of its subjects ever since it took over the reins of the two territories. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir, therefore, due to the rising frustration amongst its Muslim population, had reached an explosive point. This point happened to correspond perfectly with the formation of the MAI in distant Lahore, a totally unrelated event, in one of those unique historical coincidences, which was to leave its deep mark on the Indian national political scene in the times to come.

There is no doubt that the Kashmir issue exploded on the Indian national political scene with a fury and vengeance in 1931 and there were many factors responsible for this. The main ones included, as also pointed out above, a host of unresolved, long-lasting complaints of the Kashmiri people against their uncaring and exploitative rulers, the interest and involvement of the British government of India, and the role of the Kashmiri political leaders, which intensified the

Kashmiris' movement of 1931. Viewing the Kashmiri's agitation against their rulers as a red flag, the British in India decided to set up the Glancy Enquiry Commission, to sort out this problem. This commission produced a report detailing the problems with Hari Singh's administration as a consequence of which, the latter was forced to introduce social, economic, and political reforms in the territories under his rule.

A lot of historical literature exists about the role of various Muslim political parties in the Kashmiris' movement for independence before and after the creation of Pakistan, but an important phase of this movement, which took place in 1931, has generally been ignored.

This writer wants to shed some light on the movement of the Kashmiri people for their rights in 1931, as he feels that it is an oft-neglected area of the Indian political scene of that era and the writer wants to highlight the prominent role played by the MAI in this movement. Additionally, in spite of the fact that the literature available to the writer about the MAI's role in the movement is unclear about its stated goals for participating in the *Kashmiris*' struggle, the writer feels that it had two main goals in sight which prompted its participation: firstly, the motivation for helping the Kashmiri Muslims to secure their due rights and secondly, to prevent the *Ahmadiyas* from playing a leading role in the Kashmiri struggle, thereby securing a strong base amongst the Muslims of Kashmir.

**Foundation of MAI**

The Majlis-i-Ahrar-Islam-Hind was founded in December 1929, at the time of the Congress session of 1929-30, in Lahore, during which the Congress had adopted a resolution for the complete independence of India. Persuaded by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, some prominent *Ulema* (Muslim religious scholars) of India, mostly hailing from Punjab and led by Maulana Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Chaudhry Afzal Haq, Maulana Zafar'Ali Khan and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, established the Majlis-e-Ahrar Islam on 29 December 1929. (Mirza, 1975: 81-84) All the above-named leaders of the Majlis Ahrar had been very active in the Khilafat Movement. They had previously made important contributions to the Muslim cause in India in educational, religious and political fields. However, their differences began to appear with the other leaders of the Khilafat Movement like Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar following the presentation of the Nehru Report in 1928 (Aziz, 1977: 41-42).

The Central Khilafat Committee under the presidentship of Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar had condemned the Nehru Report as they considered it to be against the interests of the Indian Muslims, but the members of the Punjab chapter of the Khilafat Committee were in favour of accepting the Nehru Report. Although forming a part of that miniscule portion of the Muslims of India who were in favour of the acceptance of the Nehru Report, they probably supported the Nehru Report believing that since the joint electorates had not proved harmful for the Muslims of the Punjab, therefore there was no harm in supporting their introduction at the all-India level either. (Ahmed, 1967: 79-88) However, once they opted for support of the Nehru Report, they decided to quit the Central Khilafat Committee and set up their own political party. As referred to earlier, it is generally believed that the strong persuasions of die-hard Congress leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad played a big role in the formation of the MAI.

The MAI was formed with the following aims and objectives in mind:

1. To safeguard the religious, educational, economic and social interests of the Muslims by providing them proper political guidance.

2. To secure complete independence for India through peaceful means. (Mirza, 1975: 148-150).

However, Huttenback mentions the aims and objectives of the Ahrar and according to him, "Its manifesto supported Indian nationalism, secular democracy, representative institutions and communal harmony." (Huttenback, 2004: 140)

During the first two years of its existence MAI worked closely with the Congress. Its leaders had taken an active part in the 'Salt Movement' which was initiated by Gandhi in 1930. (Gopal, 1976: 224)

The explicit mind-set of most of the *Ulemas* of India at that time was that the British rule of India was a curse and that all the religious-social groups of Indian people should bury their differences and unites politically to force the British to leave. This approach strongly inclined the MAI towards the All India National Congress Party because the MAI believed that the Congress was against the continuation of the British rule in India whereas the Muslim League was allegedly a pro-British party that was not as outspoken as the Congress in its opposition to the British. Having declared in 1929-30 that it stood for the complete independence of India, Congress felt that a strong support by the

Muslim theologians would enhance its prestige amongst large groups of the Indian Muslims. Congress perceived that the *Ulemas* carried more weight in the Muslim community than the politicians, and MAI was founded with great support from Azad. MAI emerged as a party but remained under the Congress umbrella until its differences developed.[1] However, the Congress-Ahrar cooperation soon experienced changes that led to the emergence of the MAI as a separate politico-religious party.

The MAI leadership had been greatly disappointed by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931. Their main complaint centered on two points: firstly, they were not consulted before conclusion of the pact and secondly, their leaders failed to receive any political relief as most of the top Congress political prisoners were released following the pact while MAI's members remained locked up. Besides, the Congress, at this stage, contrary to its earlier pronouncements, seemed ready to cooperate with the British Government and was ready to set aside its demand for complete independence. The Ahrar Party, therefore, decided on a totally independent course of action and in this regard they convened its first conference in Lahore on 11 July 1931 (Mirza: 1975: 150). Ahrar also decided to take part in the ongoing Kashmir movement, to help Muslims of Kashmir to get their due rights.

**Kashmir Problem**

Kashmir was a princely state during the British rule in India from 1846-1947, under a Hindu Dogra ruler (Chitkara, 2003).[2] Kashmir was a lake that was drained by the sage Kasyapa, who settled Brahmans in the valley.[3] The Mahabharata refers to the Kashmiri people, "the Kashmiras", as Kashatriyas. Kashmir came

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[1]The Majlis might have contested the August 1930 election, but boycotted them as a result of its decision to participate in the INC-sponsored civil disobedience movement.

[2] Mr. Chitkara maintains that "The Mahraja was a Hindu, but that did not make it a Hindu state. The majority of the population was Muslim, but that did not necessary make it a Muslim state. In a state where various historical, cultural, and traditional influences have intermingled and produced a happy harmonious synthesis, the only way to keep it together is through secular democracy, with equal respect for all religions and appeasement to none, guarantee safeguards for the human and all its inhabitants, in particular the minorities." But he also admits that even in the twenty first century. But despite such safeguards regional and religious discrimination is written large in J&K.

[3] An ancient story also has some co-relation to the origin of the name "Kashmir". The Hindus believe that once upon a time the Kashmir was a great lake which was called the lake of Sati-Sar or the lake of the Sati (Hindu Goddess Durga).

under the Muslim rule[4] when Shah Mir ascended the throne under the name of Shams-ud-Din; his successors ruled until 1586, when the Mughal emperor Akbar conquered and annexed it. In 1752 Kashmir was conquered by Ahmad Shah Durrani and it remained part of the Kingdom of Afghanistan until Ranjit Singh subjugated it in 1819, starting the Sikh rule. Kashmir came into the British possession as a result of the defeat of the Sikhs in the First Sikh War of 1846,[5] and the British in turn sold it to Gulab Singh for a paltry sum of 7.5 million rupees. (Kapur, 1995: 56)[6] Gulab Singh entered into a treaty with the British Indian Government that recognized him as an independent ruler of Kashmir and Jammu. Gulab Singh died in 1857, but his successors, Ranbhir Singh (1857-1885), Pratab Singh (1885-1925) and Hari Singh (1925-1949), continued to rule Kashmir until the departure of the British from India.

The Muslims of Kashmir, who constituted approximately eighty percent of the population,[7] were extremely unhappy under the Hindu Dogra[8] rule, due to its pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim policies.[9] The Muslim population was deliberately kept illiterate in the urban areas while laboring under poverty and suffering from lowly economic conditions in villages." Even educated Muslims faced either unemployment or remained under-employed. Government jobs were given mostly to the Hindus, as they were considered more loyal to the government.[10] There was neither religious freedom nor freedom of expression, especially for the Muslims. According to Brig. Asif Haroon, "The murder of a Muslim would cost only rupees two, the slaughter of a cow was taken as a capital offence." (Haroon, 1995: 39) As they had been sold like a commodity, so they were governed like dumb cattle. (Jaffar, 1992: 82)

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[4] Mohammad Ishaq Khan, believes that it was not the sword but the teaching and teaching methods of the Muslim Mushaiks (Mystics) which brought about so great conversion of Hindus to Islam.

[5] The first reference of the transfer of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and Hazzara occurs in the clause of treaty f Lahore, signed on March 9, 1846, after the termination of the first Anglo-Sikh war.

[6] On March 16, 1846 the British sold out Kashmir to Gulab Singh against the payment of seventy-five lakhs of rupees through another treaty known as the Treaty of Amritsar.

[7] The population of the State was 3,648, 243 in 1931, but only 2, 905,578 in 1901. In the Vale itself there were 1,331, 771 of whom 1,256,274 Muslims, in 1931.

[8] The Dogras, called so from Gugra or Dungras and the Chibs

[9] Castes and sub-castes are the characteristics of the Hindu population in India including Kashmir. The high-caste Hindus were called Pundits or Brahmins by caste. The majority of them were found in Jammu Province.

[10] The discriminative policies of the Dogra rulers towards the Muslim can best be understood from the fact that out of 76 prime ministers from 1846 to 1946, not one was Muslim. Out of the thirteen battalions of the state army, there was only one Muslim battalion..

The government, instead of remaining impartial, showed no sympathy with the Muslim grievances and complaints. There was no contact between the government and the governed and no suitable opportunity was provided to the people for proper representation of their problems. Although outwardly calm, the masses were waiting for a proper occasion for expression of their suppressed angry feelings about the misgovernment by their Hindu ruler.

Khilafat Movement (1919-1922) had provided Muslims an opportunity on the one hand, to express their religious passion and on the other, to display their intense dislike for the autocratic governance by the Hindu Dogra rulers. The Kashmiri ruler of that time, Maharaja Pratab Singh, had, however, suppressed this movement immediately for it could have exposed the weaknesses of the government and at the same time proved a catalyst for forging unity in the rank and file of the Muslims. (Kaul, 1990: 17-18)

The Khilafat Movement was followed by another crisis in the Kashmir valley when the workers of the State Silk Factory went on strike in 1924. This time the Maharajah's government, however, wasted no time in accepting the workers' demands, although they were mostly Muslims, because the British government in India had already taken notice of the misery of the people and the then viceroy, Lord Reading, had also cared enough to visit Kashmir. (Chaudhry, 1990: 123-24)

During his visit, the Viceroy met important Kashmiri leaders who apprised him in detail of their sufferings. In their memorandum, they demanded that a constituent assembly of elected representatives be established in Kashmir. They also requested that they be given appropriate representation in both the public and private sectors. As mentioned earlier, Maharaja Hari Singh had announced some reforms in this connection, but these reforms fell far short of redressing the sufferings of the common man. As a result, the people continued to seethe in anger against the government.

Educated Kashmiris who had not received jobs commensurate with their education nor proper representation in the government services were far more frustrated than their common, illiterate brethren. At this time, Sheikh Abdullah, along with a few other educated Kashmiris, formed a party by the name, Reading Room Party (Hereafter RRP), with the aim of publishing articles reflecting upon the conditions of the people of Kashmir, in publications outside of the state, to gain support for their cause in other parts of the country. (Ibrahim, 1990: 31)

The party leaders of the RRP used to discuss the political issues of the state and disseminate their views secretly amongst the people, which led to a greater level of political awareness amongst the population. Besides Sheikh

Abdullah's party, there were many other political associations of Kashmiris as well as non-Kashmiris, both in and outside Kashmir, that were trying to generate feelings of nationalism among the Kashmiris. Allama lqbal, who lived in Punjab, besides other prominent Kashmiris, was prominent [Comment to author: maybe consider changing the word "prominent" here to "outspoken in voicing his concern….", so that you do not have prominent twice in the same sentence. It's not incorrect, but I would change, just so the sentence reads better] in showing his concern for the problems of the Kashmiri Muslims (Affaki, 1990: 123-24). Others included Mirwaiz-i-Kashmir and Muhammad Yousaf Shah, who was a religious as well as political leader of Kashmir and always openly spoke against the government's policies. An eminent non-Muslim, Albion Bannerjee, an Indian Christian, who had been serving as the Senior Member of the Council of State of Jammu, a seat that was soon to be given the title of the Prime Minister, resigned in March 1929, in protest against the state government's policies of discrimination against the Muslims. Thus at the end of 1920's, political circumstances in Kashmir were heading in a direction that could result in great upheaval.

**Kashmir Movement of 1931**

Finally, an episode that took place in Kashmir in 1931 prompted the Muslims to organize a movement against the Dogra rule in Kashmir. There had been many complaints by the Muslims against the official religious policy of the government. The Muslims of Kashmir state had not reacted strongly against these complaints as nothing serious was done against the fundamental principles of their religion. During the 1920's, Hindu extremist leaders like Shurdhanad, Madan Mohan Malviya and Dr. Moonje, launched Shuddhi and Sangathan movements aimed at reconverting those Muslims that they claimed had once been Hindus. This fundamentalist approach to religion on their part led to Hindu-Muslim riots in India and Kashmir.

The bulk of the Hindu population had generally been very tolerant (there was a cross-community sense of *Kashmiriyat)* but Hindu officials of the Dogra government not only encouraged expression of Hindu extremism against the Muslims, but time and again became an integral part of it. It was reported that Hindus had demolished a mosque in Riasi with the approval of the Dogra government of the Jammu province. It also came to be believed that Dogra authorities had stopped *imams* from delivering Friday sermons in the mosques. Babu Khem Chand, a sub-inspector of police, stopped Imam from delivering *Khutba* on *Eid-ul Azha* prayer on 15 April 1931. He thought it would be a political speech against the Dogra government. These fundamentalists had also

disrespected the Holy Book of Islam (Quran) and a few times. Sacred pages of the Holy Book had been found discarded in public washrooms. On 15 June 1931, the Holy Quran was profaned in the central jail in Jammu. It was reported that one Hindu landlord, at Oudhampur, in Jammu embraced Islam and the area revenue officer, who happened to be a Hindu, confiscated his property for that reason. (Malik, 1982, 157-163) When in June 1931, it was reported that government officials in Jammu province had forbidden Muslims from worshipping and they had also been disrespectful to the Quran, it made people extremely angry throughout Kashmir, particularly in Srinagar.

Against these outrageous acts by the officials, there was general discontent and anger among the Muslims, whose leaders made fiery speeches in the mosques and also organized public meetings to register their protest. Two important parties, the Young Men's Muslim Association of Jammu and the RRP of Srinagar became very active and launched a joint movement against the government. The government failed to exhibit its serious concern for Muslim complaints and did not bother to take any remedial action (Bose, 2003: 19).

Failure of the peaceful methods forced the Muslims to resort to other means. On 21 June I931, at one such meeting, Muslim leaders suggested violence to teach a lesson to the enemies of Islam. Abdul Qadeer[11] recommended the use of violence against the Hindu government of the State, which had threatened the existence of Islam in its territory. He was arrested on 25 June for delivering a seditious speech, and this act by the government caused an increase in religious vehemence amongst the Muslims in the State (Hussain, 1992: xvi).

Abdul Qadeer was put on trial at the Session Court, Srinagar, in July 1931. His trial created such an enthusiasm among the Muslims, who came in thousands to witness the court proceedings, that the government felt that the trial, posed a serious threat, not only to the peace of the city, but also to the peaceful proceedings of the court. Therefore, the court proceedings had to be moved to the Srinagar Central Jail, a more secure place. The trial of Abdul Qadeer reopened on 13 July. Once again, Muslims gathered in thousands to protest what they claimed was an illegal trial. Their demand that they should be allowed to hear the proceedings in the jail was turned down by the authorities. When people tried to break into the prison, the situation turned serious, as the trial could not proceed under such conditions. Consequently, police decided to disperse the crowd. This

[11] Abdul Qadir, a cook by profession, came with his British official from the NWFP province, was a religious person and delivered speech which was regarded by the officials as seditious and he was put behind the bars. His trial put oil on the fire and thus anti-Dogra activities got momentum as thousands of Kashmiri Muslims wanted to witness the trial proceedings.

dispersion resulted in agitation, and protesters threw stones at the police and some even broke into the jail itself. The police opened fire on the protestors, killing twenty-three people and wounding hundreds. (Bazaz, 1976: 142)

Zahur ul Hq has commented that, "The fact surfaced as never before that oppressed people of the State were Muslims and the Oppressor, the Hindu Dogra,"(Zahur ul Haq, 1991: 22). It had created anti-Hindu feelings among the Muslims. The Kashmiri Muslims got enraged and attacked Hindu settlements killing a few Hindus and looting their property (Lal, 1995: 44). The civil government failed to control the affairs and for that reason, the army had to take over the responsibility for restoration of peace and order in Kashmir.[12] The government ordered the arrest of politicians such as Sheikh Abdullah and Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas. Rabbani observes, "Their arrest and imprisonment paralyzed the life in Srinagar, Streets were deserted, schools and colleges were closed."[13] Prime Minister G.E C. Wakefield was dismissed from his post on the charge that he was responsible for engineering all these anti-government activities. Raja Krishan Kaul, a Hindu landlord, was made Prime Minister of Kashmir, to deal with the new situation in the territory.

**Role of the Ahrar in the Kashmir Movement of 1931**

The Kashmir movement, which started in July 1931, continued until February 1932. The movement occurred in four periods: in July 1931, when Police opened fire and killed many Muslims; in September when some serious rioting took place in the Kashmir valley; in November and changing into "rioting" that engulfed Jammu; and in January 1932, a civil disobedience movement[14] broke out and engrossed Mirpur, Rajouri and Bhimber, in the Jammu Province. The brutal act of the Hindu authorities on 13 July stoked the religious fervour of Muslims in and outside Kashmir. Mohammad Ishaq Khan has recorded, "13 July was a historic day in the annals of Srinagar. The 'dumb-driven cattle' raised the standard of revolt. The people never cowed again by punitive police action. Even the women

[12]Raabbani recalls that Sheikh Abdullah was arrested on 14 July and put behind the bars along with his companions in the Dogra army barrack of Badmi Bagh under the orders of Sutherland, Police Commissioner.

[13] After 13 July incident, reign of terror was unleashed. The city of Srinagar, (the towns, Anantnag, Baramulla, Sopore) were handed over to the Dogra army and spearmen on horses. Every passer by in the street had to sat 'Maharaj bahadur Ki Jai' at the gun point. Every resident in the city had to stitch on his shoulder symbol of Dogra flag indicating loyalty to the dynasty.

[14] In November 1931Sardar Gaquhar Rahmn, one of the leaders of Kashmir, asked the Muslims not to pay land revenue to the Government that created a spirit of defiance among the Muslim peasantry. Mirpur, Kotli and Rajoaori witnessed the acute form of civil disobedience where law and order situation deteriorated.

joined the struggle and to them belongs the honor of facing cavalry charges in Srinagar's Maisuma bazaar" (Khan, 1999: 193). Subsequently, Muslim protests against this brutal act of the government took place in Kashmir and throughout India as well.

The Ahrar party played a significant role in creating awareness among the Muslims in Kashmir State, and the British India and the British Government about the mistreatment of the Dogra ruler of the Muslims in Kashmir. Ahrar party leaders indulged in talks with the Dogra ruler and the Kashmir authorities to resolve issues through dialogue. After failing through peaceful means, the Ahar party adopted physical force and thus started demonstrations, strikes, agitations, and finally the civil disobedience movement was launched to achieve the party's goals.

Sanjay Prakash Sharma recorded that, "One of the first things done by Sheikh Mohammad Abdulla on his assuming the reins of administration of the Jammu and Kashmir was to declare July 13, as the official "Martyrs' Day" 19 all over the State" (Sharma, 2004: 19).

Thus July 13 was declared as the Martyrs' Day; and it was decided to observe 14 August as the Kashmir Day [Comment to author: the last half of this sentence is awkward. I would consider changing this phrase to: "and 14 August was proclaimed Kashmir Day."(Lamb, 1991: 88). On the appointed day there were meetings all over India---in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Simla and other places. Protest rallies were held throughout Kashmir. Fifty thousand people gathered near Jamia Mosque, Srinagar, to protest, despite an official embargo to the protest. The protest marked the official beginning of a struggle of the Muslims of Kashmir for independence from the Hindu domination. Majlis-i-Ahrar seized the opportunity and tried to play an important role in solving the problems of the Kashmiri Muslims.

The Ahrar, which felt betrayed by the Congress, needed some opportunity to show its strength and commitment to the cause of the Muslims. It had played an important part in a movement against Mr. Watekar, a British principal of the Engineering College of Lahore, who had used blasphemous words against Islam and the Holy Prophet during his lecture in a class. Ahrar started an organized movement against that principal, who was forced to apologize (Mirza, 1970: 148). Joseph writes that, "According to some sources their activity in this case was largely due to the fact that they felt they had been compromised themselves in Punjab by attempting to collaborate with the Indian National Congress, and

wished now to regain their popularity by such organized assistance to the Kashmir and Jammu Muslims"(Korbel, 2005: 19).

Sir Mian Fazl-i-Hussain, an outstanding Muslim leader of the Punjab, convened a meeting of the prominent leaders of the province at Simla, on 25 July 1931, to discuss the complaints of the Muslims of Kashmir. The leaders decided to establish a Kashmir Committee, to find the facts about the sufferings of the Muslims of Kashmir and to recommend some solution to their problems. The committee also wanted to bring the serious conditions of the Muslims of Kashmir to the attention of the Indian Government. The Committee was composed of Allama Iqbal, Maulana Syed Habib, Maulana Muhammad Ismael Ghazanavi, and Mirza Bashir-ud-din, etc. Mirza Bashir-ud-din became the committee's president and Abdul Rahim was its general secretary. Alistar Lamb has observed:

> A scarce week after the killings outside the Srinager Central Gaol a Kashmir Committee was formed in British India by leading Muslims including that distinguished Kashmiri Sir Muhammad Iqbal who was strongly supported by the head of the Ahmadiya community at Qadian, Mirza basher Ahmed. Its aim was to alert the Government of India to the situation in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and to secure appointment of an impartial Commission of Enquiry into the background of the crisis. It also resolved henceforth, in the memory of martyrs of 13 July, there should be observed a special Kashmir Day, for which fateful date 14 August was selected. (Lamb, 1994: 90)

The Ahrar leaders did not endorse the constitution of this Kashmir Committee and decided to establish their own party. In fact, they were against Mirza Bashir-ud-Din, who was chief of the Ahmadiya sect. The Ahrar, considering the people belonging to the Ahmadiya sect to be non-Muslims, felt that they had no right to speak for the Muslim community. Secondly, Ahrar leaders considered Ahmadiyas to be planted by the British, and therefore, they felt that Ahmadiya would serve the interests of the British in Kashmir. They also feared that the Ahmadiyas might establish an Ahmadiya state with the aid of the British in Kashmir. According to the Ahrar sources, the Ahrar leaders discussed this matter with Allama Iqbal, who allowed them to launch their separate committee, to solve the problems of the Kashmiri Muslims. Therefore, the Ahrar decided to establish a Kashmir Committee in order to discover the facts about sufferings of the Muslims of Kashmir and to recommend some solution to their problems. After accepting this task, the Ahrar called the meeting of its Working Committee on 18 August 1931 at Lahore. During that meeting, Ahrar passed the following resolution:

1. MAI does not perceive Kashmir agitation as a Muslim versus Hindu problem. However, the conditions of the farmers and labourers of Kashmir are as bad as in other parts of India; therefore, the MAI would welcome the cooperation of those parties who were desirous of solving the problems of the oppressed anywhere, irrespective of their religious feelings.

2. Ahrar has neither any intention of overthrowing the Maharaja's rule nor of establishing a Muslim rule in the state.

3. It is the considered opinion of the Ahrar that the British Government of India is encouraging the agitation in Kashmir for its vested interests.

4. An inquiry committee under the chairmanship of Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar is being set up to investigate the crisis in Kashmir. It will also work out the means to redress sufferings of the Muslims in Kashmir.

5. A Kashmir-week will be celebrated from August 19-25 throughout India.

6. Following the celebration of the Kashmir Week, the inquiry committee will visit Kashmir. If the Kashmir authorities do not give permission to the committee to enter into Kashmir or do not cooperate with it, a civil-disobedience movement against the Kashmir government will be initiated.

Therefore, the Kashmir Committee established by the Ahrar, a separate body set from Mian Fazli-Husain, observed Kashmir Day throughout Punjab. Similarly, the other Kashmir committee under Mirza Bashir also observed Kashmir Day in the same province. The Kashmir Movement of 1931 had made the Ahrar very popular and an important political force in the Punjab. During the first Ahrar Conference held in Lahore on 11 July 1931, Ahrar leaders created a resolution condemning the Kashmiri Hindu officials who had stopped the Muslims from performing their religious duties. The Ahrar party demanded from Maharaja Hari Singh, permission for responsible parties, including MAI, to inquire into the matter and also punish those officials who were responsible for these happenings.

Activities of the MAI for motivating the Muslims of India towards taking an active part in the Kashmir problem greatly expanded after this development. The MAI's activities for motivating the Muslims of India to take action in the Kashmir problem greatly increased after the Ahrar Conference. It was decided that a delegation of the MAI should be sent to Kashmir to inquire about the

incident of 13 July and also to find out about the sufferings of the Muslims of Kashmir. The Ahrar delegation was to leave for Kashmir on 2 September 1931 with Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, who had been made its leader, whereas Chaudhry Afzalhaq, Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad, and Rana Aftab were to accompany him as its members. In the meantime, an agreement between the Maharaja and the political activists of Kashmir, like Sheikh Abdullah and Mirwaiz Yousaf Ali Shah, had been concluded on August 28. The political prisoners were released and the government also promised to fulfill almost all the demands of the leaders. The Ahrar leaders were not happy with the terms of the agreement and preferred to witness the condition of the Muslims of Kashmir by themselves. The "Ahrar deputation" left for Kashmir on 2 September 1931 from Lahore. As the delegation traveled towards Kashmir, the Muslims of the Punjab expressed their deep concern for the Muslims of the Kashmir. The delegation received an unprecedented welcome from the people of the Punjab, all the way from Lahore to Gujranwala. People displayed immense concern about the condition of the Kashmiri Muslims and also endorsed the decision of the Ahrar to visit Kashmir and inquire about the conditions existing there.

The Dogra government decided to extend official hospitality to the Ahrar leaders, lest their visit result in some serious repercussions in Kashmir politics. The Prime Minister of Kashmir, Krishan Kaul, sent his representative to Sialkot to have a word with the Ahrar leaders. Consequently, an agreement was reached between Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar and the Governor of Jammu, who was also the DIG of Kashmir. It was decided that the Ahrar delegation would be permitted to visit Kashmir under the following conditions:

1. No agitation or protest will be made in the Kashmir State

2. The investigation will be impartial.

3. Ahrar leaders will be royal guests.

The Ahrar leaders accepted these terms in the party's Working Committee's session held in Sialkot on 3 September. The Ahrar delegation reached Jammu the next day and was accorded warm welcome by Kashmiri Muslims and the delegation informed them of the reasons for its visit. Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar told them that they had come to help restore peace and order in Kashmir and to solve problems of the Kashmiri Muslims. He asked the Muslims to register their complaints against the government in the State guesthouse, where the government officials resided. Very few people, however, registered their complaints in Jammu. On 7 September, the delegation went to Srinagar. In

Srinagar, the welcome accorded to the delegation by the people, was quite contrary to the delegation's expectations, because not a single figure of importance in the city came to welcome it. Political leaders of Kashmir considered the delegation an intrusion by an alien political party, into their state politics. The Kashmirir leaders also maintained that the Srinagar agreement between the Kashmiri leaders and the Maharaja, whom they considered oppressor, had already been concluded. Some even expressed their doubts about the sincerity of the Ahrar party's aims, as the Ahrar delegation had preferred to become guests of Maharaja instead of the Kashmiri people. Anyhow, the delegation waited on Maharaja Hari Singh and the Prime Minister Hari Krishan Kaul and discussed various matters. After some time, the Ahrar delegation realized that they were not getting the proper response from the Kashmiri Muslims, so they wrapped up their stay and returned home. The Ahrar leaders had mixed opinions about the failure of their visit to Kashmir. Firstly, they held those Kashmiri leaders responsible who had made a weak agreement with the Kashmir government on 30 August, and thus had betrayed their nation. Secondly, they found Kashmiri leaders divided into groups and every group contained people with different aims. Thirdly, British Government had its own interests in Kashmir, due to the changing international scenario, especially due to Russian interests in the region. The Ahrar leaders felt that the British had designs to tighten its grip on Kashmir by destabilizing the Kashmir government. Last, but not the least, they held the Ahmadiya community of Kashmir and India responsible for their failed effort, believing the failure was perpetrated against the Ahrar delegation by declaring them Maharaja's agents. ( Mirza, 1975: 190).

Whatever the real reason for its failure, the Ahrar decided to work independently of Kashmiri political parties and to initiate a civil disobedience movement against the Dogra government. In November 1931, Sardar Gauhar Rahman, one of the representatives of the Muslim leaders of Jammu, had launched the civil disobedience movement, which was welcome by the local peasantry, who were illiterate as well hard hit by the heavy government taxes. They stopped paying land revenue. The Kashmir in the south was linked with the Punjab districts of Jehlum, Gujrat, Sialkot and Gurdaspur (Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1993). Huttenback has recorded the activities of the Ahrar Party in these words:

> At the same time, Jathas from the Punjab increasingly crossed the borders of Kashmir. They were under the leadership, it was asserted, of Mazhar Ali, head of the Majlis-i-Ahrar-Islam-Hind, a political organization founded in the Punjab on the ruins of the Khilafat movement. Its

> manifesto supported Indian nationalism, secular democracy, representative institutions and communal harmony. This benign and harmless group was characterized by the Punjab government as the most dangerous body to have taken part in the agitation in the province (Huttenback, 2004: 140)

The Ahrar party had started sending volunteers (*Jathas*) from Punjab to help their coreligionist to get their due share in the Kashmir State, (Sharma, 2004: 58-60) but Ahrar Party gained popularity and strength with the due course of time in the province of Punjab. During the civil disobedient movement, their aid to the Kahsmiri freedom fighters created anarchy in the state, particularly south of Kashmir.[15]

Within a week of its initiation, the Ahrar civil disobedience movement had caused a law and order situation to emerge in both the Punjab and Kashmir. In January and February, volunteers, who had turned up in thousands, had made assaults on the military and police. It was alleged that they also damaged the properties of non-Muslims. Virtual anarchy ensued in the area south…). Grover has pointed out that "from the 7th of January onwards on the end of the month: practically the whole are comprising the Tehsils of Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimber and Rajouri and *leaqa* of Poonch was under the mob rule". Owing to the difficulty of communications and the scarcity of transport faculties, it took some time before military assistance could reach to effected areas from Jammu. Meanwhile, insurgents, who belonged to war-like communities and many of whom were armed, harried the entire area, burning the houses of non-Muslims, destroying their places of worship and making forced conversions, etc.

The situation in Kashmir had been out of control for some time now and Krishna Kaul, Prime Minister, had failed to deal effectively with it. He was, therefore, removed from his post and replaced in February 1932 by a British Lieutenant Colonel, E. J. D. Calvin, who was successful in restoring some peace in Kashmir.(Huttenback, 2004: 142) The Dogra ruler requested, under the provisions of Article 9 of the Anglo-Kashmir Treaty of 1846, that the British Government in India lend the military support to deal with the internal situation of Kashmir.(Huttenback, 2004: 141) Thus, with the assistance of the British government and Indian army, peace was brought to Kashmir, including in the most effected areas of Mirpur, Bhimber, Kotli, etc.

[15] Against the Raja of Poonch enormous uprising occurred and the ruler had to shut himself in the local fort for several days to escape annihilation.

The British not only passed anti-*Jatha* Ordinance to restrict Ahrar's activities in the Punjab but also decided to provide military assistance to the Dogra ruler of Kashmir, to crush movement in the Kashmir state. No wonder Ahrar condemned the invitation extended by the Kashmir government to the British army into its state; it maintained that such a move would strengthen the British imperialism in India and would weaken the grip of the Dogra ruler in the internal matters of the state.

Resultantly, the Dogra Maharaja constituted the Glancy Commission on 13 November 1931, to investigate the problems in Kashmir and to suggest a remedy for their ills. The Ahrar was against this move and so criticized it strongly. Meanwhile the meeting of the Kashmir Committee of the Punjab took place in Lahore under the presidentship of Sir Fazl-Hussain. Mirza Bashir-ud-din and other members of the second Kashmir Committee did welcome the findings of the Glancy commission but the Ahrar party decided to continue its movement.

By February 1932, Ahrar's activities in Kashmir came to an end. British government in India had imposed restrictions on political activities. The Ahrar also suffered from this ban. Meanwhile, the Maharaja of Kashmir, on the recommendation of the Glancy Commission, had announced certain reforms in Kashmir and a wave of optimism had spread amongst the Kashmiris and consequently they had become bit less interested in extra-constitutional activities. The Ahrar leaders had been arrested and were in prison in Punjab, Kashmir and other provinces. At this stage, the Ahrar party also began to realize that they had played their role long enough for the cause of the Kashmir State

**Repercussions**

The civil disobedience movement of MAI created awareness amongst the Muslims of India about the problems of the Kashmiri Muslims. The MAI sent Muslims from almost every nook and corner of the province of the Punjab, who in tens of thousands in organized groups (*Jatha*), slipped through the open plains between Punjab and Jammu via Sialko, a bordering area with the Kashmiri state (Montmorency, 1942: 73-74). In fact, the MAI found that thousands of volunteer groups *(Jathas)* presented themselves for entering Kashmir, to force the government there to introduce reforms, including the establishment of a legislative assembly elected by the people. Gawash has observed, "Thus, in spite of the fact that His highness Government came to an understanding with the local leaders who consented to top agitation on receiving certain assurances, the Ahrar party in the Punjab, foiled in the attempt to alive the agitation the State, started

sending *Jathas* through the Punjab into the State territories in order to embarrass the Government." (Grover, 1995: 46 )

MAI adopted an independent, non-cooperative policy, for putting pressure on the government of Kashmir and tried to bypass the established political leadership of the Kashmir state. As a result, the struggle of the Ahrar for political freedom of the Kashmiri Muslims remained isolated. Nonetheless, the government of Kashmir was fearful of Ahrar's street power and extended warm welcome to its delegations and time and again invited its leaders to talk about the Kashmir problem.

Kashmir government was forced to invite the British army to control the internal administration and security of Kashmir. It was also obliged to appoint a British Prime Minister in place of its Hindu Prime Minister, Krishan Kaul. Additionally, it requested the Punjab government to deal with the illegal entry of the Ahrar volunteers into Kashmir. The Punjab government introduced some reforms in this connection and Unionist- Ahrar conflict began after its efforts to control Ahrar's illegal activities.

Kashmir government felt insecure not only due to the political awareness of the Kashmiri Muslims but also from external involvement of the Muslim leaders, particularly from the Ahrar leaders. Maharaja Hari Singh was forced to introduce social, economic and political reforms to meet the demands of the Muslim leaders. Therefore, the Kashmir government established a legislative assembly in which a fair amount of representation was given to the Muslims. Bazaz has rightly observed that:

> The 1931 rebellion was a grand success as most of the demands had to be conceded by the unwilling Dogra ruler. The proprietorship of the land lost in Mughal days was restored, the confiscated mosques were handed back to the Muslims, freedoms of expression and association with certain limitations were granted and a Legislative Assembly was established though the majority of its members were nominated by the Maharaja; more opportunities were afforded to the Muslims to enter State services. (Bazaz, 1976: 53)

As a result of the Ahrar's activities on behalf of the Kashmiri Muslims, the interest and the involvement of the British government in the Kashmir affairs increased significantly. The British government tightened its grip on the Kashmir State by sending its army units to Kashmir. British thus could, ostensibly, also

check the Russian influence in the northern border of India. On one hand, it forced the Kashmiri government to introduce more discipline into its administration and on the other, "The British Government immediately banned the entry of the Ahrar volunteers into the State and took stern action against the Muslim elements which had supported the Muslim agitation in Kashmir."(Kaul, 1990: 30) The Kashmir government also set up an inquiry committee to recommend reforms for Kashmir. The Glancy commission was instituted in this regard and the commission suggested some social, economic and political reforms, which subsequently were introduced by the Kashmir government.

Political consciousness, once developed in Kashmir, continued to flourish. The movement gave birth to great leaders such as Sheik Abdullah, Ghulam Abbas, Mirvaiz Yousaf Ali Shah and others who worked for the religious and political liberation of the Kashmiri Muslims in times to come. All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference emerged from the ashes of the Kashmir movement of 1931.

MAI apparently gained nothing in Kashmir from this movement. It failed to get an important place in Kashmir's political and religious circles. It also failed to establish a strong presence of the Ahrar party in Kashmir. Probably, Kashmir's political and religious circles always remained suspicious of Ahrar's support or help so they refrained from helping Ahrar emerge as a forceful political party in Kashmir.

Despite all these bitter realities, the Ahrar party had played a vital part in generating political awakening in Kashmiri people. It enlightened people and the Government of India about the Kashmir problem. Thereafter, the Kashmir problem emerged as the problem of the Muslims of India and the Hindu Maharaja could no longer pursue its openly anti-Muslim policy but was rather compelled to introduce some reforms to satisfy the Muslims. It put a brake on the activities of the Ahmadiya sect in Kashmir. In fact, Ahrar- Ahmadiya conflict came forth after this movement. Although the Ahrar could not benefit a great deal from its services for the cause of Kashmir, in Kashmir it did, however, emerge as a powerful and influential political party of India, particularly in Punjab.

**Conclusion**

The condition of the Muslims in Kashmir had, by the early 1930s, reached such a point that it could have resulted in political upheavals on a wide scale. Various events of an explosive nature, such as the arrest and trial of Abdul Qadeer and the

government's violent reaction to it, had created a tinder-box like situation amongst the Muslims in that territory, especially in and around Srinagar.

In the history of the Muslims' struggle for their rights in Kashmir, such events gave rise to such prominent leaders in Kashmir history as Sheikh Abdullah, Ghulam Abbas and Mirwaiz Yousaf Ali Shah, all of whom rendered significant services to the Kashmiri- Muslim cause and later emerged as great and undisputed leaders of the Muslims in Kashmir.

MAI, which was established in December 1929, had initially adopted a pro-Congress stance but later parted ways with it (though for a very short time) and entered the arena of the internal politics of the Kashmir state by openly siding with the Kashmiris' struggle for freedom soon after the 13 July 1931 tragedy. Thereafter, they played quite a prominent role in the struggle.

The MAI differed from the Kashmir committee that was established by Mian Fazl-i-Hussain, by sticking to their belief that the Ahmadiyas might benefit from the agitation in Kashmir and could attempt to, in cooperation with the British, turn Kashmir into an Ahmadiya state. Further, the MAI also maintained that the British government of India was behind the protests, to get a hold on the affairs of the territory of the Maharaja. Therefore, it wanted to help the Muslims of Kashmir in their just cause without dethroning the Hindu ruler.

The MAI resorted to a disobedience movement even after the Kashmiri leaders had entered into a pact with the Kashmir government and had postponed their agitation in favor of reforms, as suggested by the Kashmir government. Their important role in the history of the Kashmir movement of 1931, therefore, was a sterling achievement for the rights of the Kashmiri people and the most important one in the history of that party.

However, before the paper is concluded, two important points need to be considered with regard to the history of the MAI:

Firstly, the entry of the MAI on the side of the Kashmiri people turned that issue from being simply a provincial matter into a political issue of an all-India nature, thus prompting the administration of British India to step in, take notice, and, therefore, attempt to bring about positive changes in their condition. Secondly, the MAI raised the possibility of Kashmir eventually being turned into an Ahmadi-governed state, a group they considered as heretics.

Whereas the MAI soon gave up its agitation regarding the rights of the Kashmiri people, it persisted, however, in pursuing its religious agenda. In fact, they steadfastly pursued that agenda even after the creation of Pakistan and were actively involved in the declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims, in 1974, during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's regime.

In a nutshell, the movement in Kashmir reflected the genuine grievances of the Muslims of Kashmir because it was the Kashmiris themselves, who had started the movement. The MAI entered the political fray in Kashmir, not because they were against the Dogra rule or the Hindus in general, but because they felt compelled to protect the rights of the Muslims in general. The biggest compulsion for their participation in the Kashmir tussle was their fear that the Ahmadiyas would take over the reins of power in Kashmir. Although the MAI's entry on the side of the Kashmiris also brought the British into the overall picture to protect the Dogra rule, the Dogra rule itself was not the real target of the MAI.

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# Review, Akbar Ahmed's *Suspended Somewhere Between*

## Reviewed By Shadab Zeest Hashmi

Akbar Ahmed. *Suspended Somewhere Between* (A Book Of Verse). PM Press, 2011. 144 pages. ISBN 978-1604864854.

In Akbar Ahmed's "Suspended Somewhere Between," the poems themselves seem to assume suspended shapes, moments hanging in the wide expanse of history that the author draws inspiration from. Not only are these poems suspended in time but between disparate cultures, between faith and intellect, between the personal and the public, ideational and palpable, between the sacred and secular, between love, hate and understanding. That Akbar Ahmed, who is considered by the BBC as "the world's leading authority on contemporary Islam," should choose to publish a book of poems, says a lot about his spiritual approach to the complex subject matter that has occupied him as a scholar for nearly half a century.

If read purely for poetic merit, this work would fall short on many accounts as the author's intent (as elaborated in his preface) is not to write an ambitious work of poetry but rather to chronicle the moments of his life that have shaped his deeper understanding of historical dynamics. The power of this work is in its large-spirited acceptance of everything— the noble, the questionable, the profound, the grotesque and strange around him and within him. This gesture of seeking higher wisdom in things scared or profane, and acknowledging the powerful sweep of compassion has a Sufi flavor and is supremely exemplified in the poem "*Walking the Streets with the Dahta:"*

> The cane-waving policeman/smiles at me/and takes care to reply in his English/but the Dahta is unequivocal in his care/and perhaps the false beggar/returns from him richer.

Ahmed's declaration that he has never edited his poems ought to serve as a guide as to what kind of reader would glean the most from this work. These poems are not crafted with the often ruthlessly precise artistic chisel of a seasoned poet, rather, these are moments of inspiration caught raw, and recorded promptly by an extremely precise thinker. His judicious spirit enables Ahmed to present things as they are or as they were, without as much as a scratch of the chisel. Even

the more personal poems (some of which border on being sentimental) from his young days are left untouched because editing these would inflict a sort of censorship and concealment of his younger self, which, to the reader's benefit, Ahmed is bold enough to embrace. The value for the reader here is to appreciate the influences and the evolution of this great thinker of our times, unhindered by cosmetic revisions.

The poems in this collection are centered on themes ranging from the spiritual to the political, personal to the historical and are written in various tonal registers. Because the book spans the author's entire life and is unrevised, the style swings significantly from poem to poem. The work's uneven literary quality becomes a lesser concern when one considers its incredible breadth and depth. Well-written lines such as: "Strings of spittle hang/at your mouth, you,/drooling, helpless/clutching wildly at air/your tiny body—just six months old—cannot move or obey your will/only your eyes lucidly convey and pierce me with love" (*For Umar, With Love*) more than make up for weaker ones such as "In robust days and ill health/In failure and in wealth/Through the highs and lows/ you always took for me the blows" (*For Zeenat, Princess of my Heart*).

The awkward redundancy in "On the western front frowned the eagle/ mighty Caesar in imperial regalia regal," (*I, Saracen*) is compensated by the chilling lyrical narrative of *The Meeting*: " a snake—the deadly village viper/it stood stock-still by the prayer-mat/ " or by breathtaking poems such as *Spring Thoughts in Farghana*, which are striking in their immediacy despite the distance of history: "The pipe and the kettledrum/have sung the warrior to his sleep;/the mourners wail their way/back to the village/ High above, the mountains which stretch/like a young man's ambition in springtime, an iced drizzle starts to speak…" Here is where we see the true gems of this collection.

"Suspended Somewhere Between" does a remarkable job of exploring dualities and even multiplicities of the self, of the loneliness and the longing for identity that has anguished the Pakistani soul since its inception. Akbar Ahmed's voice is a vital contribution to the world of contemporary letters and he has aptly been called "a national treasure."

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# Review, *Muhadarat-e-Sîrat*

## Reviewed by Dr. Muhammad Junaid Nadvi

*Muhadarat-e-Sîrat*. Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi. Lahore: Al-Faisal Nashiran, 2nd ed., 2008. 768 pages. ISBN: 969-503-514-2.

The rationale behind the emergence of the discipline of Sîrah indicates the faith, affection and compliance by the Muslims to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This institution, which started in the first century of Hijrah, has produced a rich, multicoloured literature of Sîrah in various languages, which portrays the spiritual, ethical, social, economic and political aspects of Muhammad's contribution to humanity.

*Muhadarat-e-Sîrat* is a paradigm of the aforementioned rationale. It is the product of wide-ranging, comprehensive, scholarly Urdu lectures of Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi (1950-2010) on different aspects of Sîrah, delivered during 2006, in the "Islamic Research Institute," International Islamic University, Islamabad. This volume offers an excellent overview to understand Sîrah as well as classic texts of Sîrah. The wide-ranging and eclectic collection of sources is a particular strength of this volume. Examples from Islamic and non-Islamic history, reference of books, geographical names, explanation and relevance to the subject is the quality of this volume. The observations and suggestions given in these lectures are inspirational for Sîrah-writing in the 21st century. A unique feature of this volume is the presentation of new-modules for Sîrah-writing in the major disciplines of social sciences, i.e. Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, and History. Sub-topics like Theology, Spirituality, Psychology, Jurisprudence, Folk, Literature and Geography, are also appealing for the researchers of Sîrah. A Question and Answer session at the end of each lecture is a motivating source for exploring new vistas of Sîrah. In fact, this volume is a valuable contribution to the discipline of Sîrah-sciences (*'Ulûm-e- Sîrat*).

The book contains a preface; twelve parts (divided into eighteen topics/lectures); questions and answers at the end of each presentation. The main

titles of the book are: Need & Importance of Sîrah-Study; Sîrah & Sîrah-Sciences: An Introduction & Study; Discipline of Sîrah: Establishment, Evolution, Compilation & Expansion; Methodological Approaches to Sîrah-writing; Eminent Sîrah-writers & their Traits; State of Madînah: Constitution & System; State of Madînah: Sociology & Economics; Kalamiyyaat of Sîrah; Juristical Sîrah; Study of Sîrah in Sub-Continent; Study of Sîrah in Modern Period; Study of Sîrah: Future Prospects (pp. i-x).

Lecture one, *The Need & Importance of Sîrah-Study,* highlights the evolution, approaches, methodology and contributions to the discipline of Sîrah. It elaborates the need and importance of Sîrah-study for Muslims and non-Muslims, based on distinct reasons. It divides Sîrah-study for Muslims into three levels: public, literate, and specialists (pp.11-52).

Lecture two, *Sîrah & Sîrah Sciences: An Introduction & Study,* presents the definition, subject matter of significant topics, sources of Sîrah, and their comprehensiveness with examples from the Prophetic period. Topics discussed are Medicational Sîrah; Folk Sîrah; Educational Sîrah; Spiritual Sîrah; Literary Sîrah; Panegyrical Sîrah; Sociological Sîrah; Psychological Sîrah; Logical Sîrah; Geographical Sîrah; Sources of Sîrah (pp. 67-121).

Lecture three, *Institution of Sîrah: Establishment, Evolution, Compilation & Expansion,* provides a comprehensive picture of the evolution and preservation; contributions of personalities, Muhaddithîn, Sîrah-writers and scholars (pp. 135-180).

Lecture four, *Methodological Approaches to Sîrah-Writing,* visualizes different methodological approaches to Sîrah-writing i.e. Narrated-Sîrah, based on authentic narrations of experts; Chronological-Sîrah; Compiled-Sîrah, based on different sources; Juristic-Sîrah; Theological- Sîrah (‘Ilm al-Kalām); Literary-Sîrah (prose & poetry); Dialogical-Sîrah (interfaith dialogue) (pp. 195-237).

Lecture five, *Eminent Sîrah-Writers & their Traits,* emphasizes the contributions of four classical Sîrah-writers who are the pioneers of the discipline of Sîrah i.e. Muhammad bin Ishāq (d.151 AH), Muhammad bin ‘Umar Wāqidî (d.107AH), Muhammad bin Sa‘d (d.130 AH), and ‘Abd al-Malik bin Hishām (d.218 AH) (pp. 257-300).

Lecture six, *State of Madînah: Constitution & System,* informs about the literature which emerged in several languages from 1950 to 2000 on Sîrah to

understand the constitutional and legislative institutions, and ethics of governance in Madînah. Pre-Islamic tribal system of governance is discussed, and the need and importance of political power in Islam is stressed (pp. 319-360).

Lecture seven, *State of Madnah: Sociology & Economics,* highlights the important features of the state of Madînah from a socio-economic perspective. In this context, many examples from Sîrah are reported (pp. 393-431).

Lecture eight, *Kalāmiyyāt of Sîrah,* asserts a profound and intuitive relationship of Islamic Theology with Sîrah. Sîrah-Theology could not be comprehended without studying *'Ilm al-Kalām* because several incidents of Sîrah hold theological perceptions. Themes by examples from Sîrah discussed under this topic are: actuality, need, and responsibilities of Prophethood; actuality, need, and types of revelation; other sources of knowledge; finality and actuality of Prophethood; attributes and blessings of the Prophet; reality of God's word and creation of Qur'ān; miracles and ascension of the Prophet; innocence of Prophets; glad-tidings and proofs of Prophethood (pp. 465-507).

Lecture nine, *Juristical Sîrah,* underlines the deep relationship of jurisprudence (Fiqh) with Sîrah, which cannot be perceived without a profound understanding of Qur'ān and Sunnah. It informs that *'Ilm al-Kalām* in the past was known as Fiqh. In the 20th century, a new approach to the study of Sîrah called *Fiqh al-Sîrah* has also emerged. *Fiqh al-Sîrah* can be divided into three parts (1) principle & rules, (2) interpretation of the incidents of Sîrah relevant to jurisprudence, (3) sayings of the Prophet, divided by the jurists in three categories i.e. revelation, general talk, and words relevant to jurisprudence (pp. 531-570).

Lecture ten, *Study of Sîrah in Sub-Continent,* reports the marvelous contributions of the Muslims of the sub-continent to Sîrah, in the past two centuries. Since the dawn of Islam in this area, no significant work on Sîrah is given. The focus of the work in the past 1100 years was mostly on jurisprudence, literature, rationality, hadîth, and exegesis (pp. 585-629).

Lecture eleven, *Study of Sîrah in Modern Period,* presents a comprehensive outlook of new works on Sîrah which surfaced in the Muslim and non-Muslim world during the 20th century. It reports new-dimensions of Sîrah-works done by Muslim scholars, and the constructive and distorted Sîrah-works of the orientalists (pp. 645-691).

Lecture twelve, *Study of Sîrah: Future Prospects,* gives an admirable opportunity and guideline for future research on Sîrah. The need for separate work on the new dimensions of Sîrah is stressed for the common man, literate public, subject specialists, and doubtful intellects. Conscious of liabilities to Sîrah, and response to the Western attitude towards Sîrah by Muslims, have also been stressed (pp. 707-750).

One problem with such kinds of literary work is the amount of repetition, especially about the core concepts, principles, and its history in practice. For the next edition of this book, proofreading of Urdu, English words, sentences, geographical places and historical names, page numbering, transliteration, and re-arrangement of sub-topics is recommended.

Overall, the book is well organized. It provides an insight into the subject matter of Sîrah, identifies a range of Sîrah concepts, and shows that new Sîrah concepts could coexist alongside older ones. Those seeking an overview of Sîrah terminologies, themes, and concepts as they emerged in this work will find much of value here, especially historians and Sîrah-writers.

Concluding remarks of these Lectures are: (1) Sîrah is one of the fundamental institutions of Islam and its major portion is completely secure. (2) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) created a nation *(Ummah)* and preserved it by forming the exemplary state of Madînah. (3) The Muslim nation continuously prevails to this day on its basics, with its frailty. (4) Muslims have never ignored the reserves and sources of Sîrah and Sunnah throughout their entire history (pp. 707-711).

*(Note: The Book Review editor regrets that, due to some minor software incompatibility, not all diacritical marks have appeared as the author would have liked.)*

# *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*: Special Issue on Pakistan, Edited by Muneeza Shamsie

## Reviewed by David Waterman

*Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. Volume 47, Number 2 (May 2011). Special Issue: "Beyond Geography: Literature, Politics and Violence in Pakistan." Guest Editor: Muneeza Shamsie. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group. Pages 119-254. ISSN: 1744-9855.

In the absence of official narratives regarding Pakistan's traumatic history – especially Partition and the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war – the current generation of Pakistani writers proposes to fill those gaps where there has been only silence. Muneeza Shamsie has (once again) masterfully assembled a diverse assortment of these writers and scholars in the most recent *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, a special issue divided into six parts: articles, interviews, memoirs, fiction, poetry and reviews. Contemporary Pakistani writing in English is nothing if not politically engaged and historically informed, attracting much critical acclaim and scholarly attention, nurtured by a "Pakistani imagination" which is not only pre- and post-colonial, but "linked to the wider Islamic world" as well (Shamsie 119).

Five scholarly articles account for the first half of the *Journal*. Claire Chambers takes a comparative approach, placing Pakistani literature in English within a larger Muslim context, to include writing from Greater Asia, the Middle East and East Africa, not to mention the European diaspora, concluding "The intertextual referencing of a long history of Muslim artistic work refigures the category 'Muslim' as a springboard rather than a constricting box" (131). Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is examined by Peter Morey, who argues that Hamid's novel represents a deterritorialization of literature, "which forces readers to think about what lies behind the totalizing categories of East and West, 'Them and Us' and so on – those categories continuously insisted upon in 'war on terror' discourse" (138). Incidentally, Peter Morey has recently published, with Amina Yaqin, the highly commendable "Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9 / 11." Bruce King then presents a survey of Kamila Shamsie's novels, and their underlying theme linking family with national

culture; despite the variations between and among Shamsie's five novels to date, she is, King insists, "always a writer of political fiction" (149). Shamsie's *Kartography* is the focus of Caroline Herbert's article, and her analysis coincides with King's, bringing politics into the family and the nation, in this case the lingering effects of Partition and especially the 1971 war; Herbert suggests that two non-narrative forms, Urdu lyric poetry and mapping, combine to form what she calls "lyric mapping" as a means of negotiating traumatic experience many years after the fact (159). The final article is devoted to what Ananya Jahanara Kabir calls "deep topographies" in Uzma Aslam Khan's recent novels, *Trespassing* (2003) and *The Geometry of God* (2008); she argues that Pakistan owes its cultural sense of identity less to Islamic heritage than to its pre-Islamic past (174), what in *Geometry* is called "ancient land, ancient water" in reference to Gandhara / Indus civilizations pre-dating Islam (see Kabir 175). Although taking up only a bit more than sixty pages, these five articles, taken together, make for an excellent overview of some of the best of current Pakistani writers and their political / historical fiction which is receiving much well-deserved critical attention.

Two interviews follow up the scholarly articles, one with Mohammed Hanif and the second with Moniza Alvi. The author of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* recounts to Iman Qureshi the difficulties he had when writing his novel, difficulties which were finally resolved as he learned to separate the rules of journalism from the rules of fiction writing (186-187). Given the novel's setting in the Pakistan army, the interview then goes into the question of gender relations in contemporary society; Hanif understands perfectly the key word 'relations:' "Pakistan's men are not only drowning in testosterone, but they're taking women down with them" (189). Religion too comes up, as it must, when discussing Pakistan, and its current role within the political framework, especially the overwhelming power wielded by groups who are in the minority in terms of electoral credibility; Hanif reveals himself as compulsively optimistic regarding the future in such a context (191). Muneeza Shamsie explores dualities with the poet Moniza Alvi, beginning with the kind of duality that Kamila Shamsie has elsewhere called the "sociological fact" of middle and upper-class Pakistanis who are also part British (or part American). Alvi conveys her long-distance influence from Pakistan, resulting in the poem "Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan," and

goes on to mention how her first "Pakistani" writings were in fact completed before she had ever been there (195). Alvi's more recent poems have treated the themes of post-traumatic stress disorder and Greek mythology.

Aamer Hussein writes a similar memoir of duality, growing up as he did in two languages, English and Urdu, and his resistance to being classified as a "living bridge" between the two in his English-language writing (203). Robin Yassin-Kassab's memoir describes his search to find the "true face" of Pakistan, concluding that Pakistan has not yet "found the institutions to represent it," still waiting for its moment of self-realization (209). "Tribal law, tribal lawlessness: A New Yorker reminisces about her family's ancestral village in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa," by Humera Afridi, presents a before-and-after picture of village life, especially the climate of fear and violence in the wake of 9/11 and the Afghan war, an incomplete tattoo serving as the memory link between then and now.

Irshad Abdul Kadir's short story, "Clifton Bridge," is a Dickensian tale of artful dodgers, yet more frightening as children are snatched and sold to become unwitting organ donors, lives saved and lost in this milieu of abject poverty. "Wild Thing" by Sidrah Haque is the touching tale of a provincial old woman, riding the bus to see her son and, for the first time, his new wife; her enthusiasm and impatience make her forget propriety in ways that endear her to readers.

Poetry lovers will find much of interest in the current issue of the *Journal*. Adrian A. Husain begins with "Elegy," dedicated to Benazir Bhutto, then follows up with two works highlighting memory, "Iron Trunk" and "Iris." "Conjunctions (Mostly)" is Dohra Ahmad's playful tribute to language, while Ilona Yusuf contributes a longer and darker political / historical work, "Swat." Moeen Faruqui's "Winter Visit" speaks of the shadows of ancestors, and his "Photographs in evening papers" mourns the victims of ethnic riots in Karachi. "Daylight" dissects the fine line between 'new' and 'news,' while "Misplacing," both by Sadaf Halai, seeks treasure where there is no X to mark the spot. Salman Tarik Kureshi's "Death of a Leading Citizen" regrets how the passions of the "overarching mind, spirit […] had been stilled in a derelict body" (238). Shadab Zeest Hashmi's three poems move from colonialism in "Gunga Din's Revenge" to mourning a lost child, "She breaks her fast with a pinch of salt," ending with

"Bilingual," wordplay in the butcher's shop. "Christmas Eve" completes the poetry section, Shireen Z. Haroun treating of things there and not there.

Several book reviews round out the volume, two by Bruce King, *In other rooms, other wonders* by Daniyal Mueenuddin and *The geometry of God* by Uzma Aslam Khan, two as well by Muneeza Shamsie, Masood Raja's *Constructing Pakistan: foundational texts and the rise of Muslim national identity 1857-1947* and Cara Cilano's *National identities in Pakistan: the 1971 war in contemporary Pakistani fiction*. Humaira Saeed reviews *Making words matter: the agency of colonial and postcolonial literature* by Ambreen Hai, followed by Kavita Daiya's *Violent belongings: Partition, gender and national culture in postcolonial India*, assessed by Nirmala Menon. Lizzy Attree examines Ranka Primorac's *African city textualities,* and Lucy Collins then reviews *Ireland and postcolonial studies: theory, discourse, utopia* by Eoin Flannery, followed up by Jennifer Lawn's critique of Christian Stachurski's *Reading Pakeha? Fiction and identity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, and finally Om Prakash Dwivedi presents *Thinner than a hair* by Adnan Mahmutovic.

This special "Pakistan" issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* is remarkable in many ways, not least the quality of writing and research which is presented, as well as the creative genius of the fiction writers and poets. The diverse range of form, from scholarly articles to memoirs and interviews, prose and poetry, is sure to please not only confirmed South Asia scholars but a more general readership as well, especially readers who seek fictional representations which have something to say about the world we live in. Guest Editor Muneeza Shamsie has succeeded brilliantly, as we've come to expect, in foregrounding the very best of current research and creativity; under Shamsie's guidance, the concrete, everyday concerns of ordinary human beings never lose their place at the center of discussions – too often abstract – of politics and violence.

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# Review, *Two and a Half Words*, or How to Write Truly Pakistani Fiction

## Reviewed by Masood Ashraf Raja

Zaidi, Abbas. *Two and a Half Words and Other Stories*. Lahore: Classic Publishers, 2011.

Those of us who labor at the juncture of our primary culture and the demands and obligations of living a diasporic life often lose sight of the fact that the mere act of inhabiting the metropolitan space has its attendant ramifications not the least of which is the unconscious investment in the demands and pressures of the metropolitan market itself. In such a scenario, the woks that we produce are overwritten by the expectations of a metropolitan audience as well as the mandates of metropolitan publishing industry.

In this act of metropolitan cooptation of our most intimate thoughts about our culture, the outcome is often the sort of stories that, at the end of the day, privilege the metropolitan expectations. This was quite obvious in the recent issue of *Granta* on Pakistani stories: after reading it one wondered whether or not it is possible for Pakistani writers writing in English to escape the very stereotypes that mobilize the metropolitan perceptions of Pakistan. Abbas Zaidi's stories, in a way, offer a native counter-response to this appropriation of native voices by the metropolitan publishing industry. The stories in this wonderful collection are not necessarily nativist, but they do represent experiences of characters who might be partially determined by a postnational globalized culture, but who also remain, at some level, quintessentially Pakistani. There is also a judicious mix of realistic tropes and magic realism: The magic realism, however, does not seem gratuitous but rather adds to the narrative drive and suspense of the stories and makes perfect sense within that logic.

The collection starts with a story set in Multan—in the Saraiki heartland of Pakistan—and through the main characters and the introspective voice of our young narrator we not only learn the hidden secret about the sexual identity of the landlord but also the tensions involved in inter-Sectarian relationships. These relationships, however, are not offered as large binary structures but rather as elements of political rhetoric mobilized to buttress the elite claims to power. On the popular level—in the lives of the tenants—we find a cross sectarian solidarity: the rent enforcer happens to be an Ahmadi and has no problem with Shia tenants as long as they do not get him in trouble. This is Pakistani life caught within that

liminal space and time: in the times of neoliberal capital and spatially located on the edges of a major city where the old zamindari system is being replaced by modern system of ownership. The students and workers living in Mr. Riaz Chaudhry's building teach us about the strategies of coping and possibilities of lateral solidarities in the absence of a socialistic state.

"Two and a half words" the title story, retells the history of a house located in the old Lahore: while the male characters in the story lament the losses suffered at the hands of a magical, evil woman, the reader understands that the true hero in the story is the woman/apparition who had been wronged and who had avenged herself by destroying the lives of her oppressors and gone on to visit her wrath on all others who sympathized with her oppressors. This is a story that needs more than a cursory knowledge of Lahore or Pakistani culture: a story such as this forces us to acknowledge that not all stories can be reduced and understood with the tools of western theory and that it is imperative on the critics to read the story with the assumptions and aspirations of its settings in order to make sense of it.

Some of the stories in the collection are also set abroad: this abroad, however, is not the metropolitan west but that liminal space of modern capital: places like Borneo, not the west but still places that use, employ and sometimes exploit Pakistani labor. The last story is another enigmatic narrative of Pakistani community—mostly male—in a small town in Borneo and is told from the point of view of a fresh arrival who gets incorporated in the politics of this mini diaspora. The story also is a good example of the sheer sexism and sexual desires of all men as they think and talk about the only female character, Iqbal begum: A successful woman who earns her living and treats her husband as the appendage that he is. In its interesting climax we also learn that the husband-wife dynamics are not only about the binaries of reversed gender roles but also about the sexuality of the husband himself.

On the whole, one finds in this collection, stories of young men obsessed with death, reporters playing their seedy role in the suicide bombing industry, corrupt landlords, perverted sexualities, and unjust power dynamics with a slight difference from the traditional fair offered in the west: these stories are written from within and the narrator/ author is deeply invested in these stories. The stories, therefore, come across to us not as arch or playful criticism of Pakistan offered from a safe perch in the west but as stories about a land and its people: critical, heart-breaking, and often cruel but all tempered with love.

As a writer Abbas Zaidi himself is in that liminal space--he teaches at a technical college in Darussalam, Brunei-- between the home and the new frontier of high capital and his stories also inhabit this space. This is a collection of stories worthy of our attention, our praise, and, most of all, our support. Abbas Zaidi has

given us a loving, complex, and original portrayal of Pakistan: we must open our hearts and minds to receive this gift.