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Walls as Transcultural Structures: Space and Place in Anglophone Narratives of Lahore

A thesis
by
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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the award of the degree of PhD in English at the University of Auckland, New Zealand (2015)
‘Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fear … everything conceals something else’

(Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*)
Abstract

This research examines walls as transcultural structures of space and place in Anglophone narratives of Lahore. Lahore is the capital city of Pakistan’s largest province, Punjab. Writings on Lahore deal with the tropes of walls in various ways, showing these to be physical, social, political, cultural and even linguistic.

Walls can be seen as a metaphor for the partition of India. India was divided into the present India and Pakistan in 1947. Writings on Lahore portray the effects of this momentous event upon the people of the region. Taking up Saadat Hasan Manto’s Urdu short story ‘Toba Tek Singh’ (1955), Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1988) this section examines how these writers have shown walls in various forms. Walls are seen in the form of physical displacement of people who had to migrate from one place to the other and their nostalgic remembrance of their hometowns and cities. Walls also become veils, standing as an image for the silence that accompanied the trauma of personal and collective loss, especially suffered by women who were kidnapped or raped during the riots of the Partition. This section of the research shows that Partition literature of Lahore reflects walls as hegemonic structures of division and segregation as well as frontiers of shelter and protection.

Walls and veils go together: both work on the dynamics of control, isolation and invisibility. Taking up Louise Brown’s *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* (2005) and Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* (2000) this section of the thesis examines the operation of walls and veils in the lives of the women of Lahore, whether these women are the prostitutes of the brothel quarters or members of the elite class of the city. I argue in this section that women are bound by the constricting walls of social norms and patriarchal traditions. Working in conjunction with walls and veils is the medium of the gaze, which not only controls, checks and monitors its subjects but also attempts to render them invisible, thus zeroing down their very identity. This section addresses marginalised and stigmatised communities such as prostitutes and transvestites, who constitute other, more far-reaching connotations of walls, veils and borders.

In the Lahore writings walls do not always function as structures of division, control and segregation; they can also be seen as points of transcendence or convergence. This section studies Rudyard Kipling’s ‘On the City Wall’, Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Haroon K. Ullah’s *The Bargain from the Bazaar* (2014). Through careful readings of these literary texts, I link the structure of walls with the act of translation. Linking translation and walls, my research concludes that while walls have symbolic values and contain both positive and negative connotations, they also, in their very structure, articulate our need to recognize differences and to accept them as part of the wider diversity of the world. In the current global conflict following the 9/11 attacks one cannot entirely do away with walls. We need, therefore, not to remove walls but to allow for a translation or bridging of cultural and religious differences.

The key concepts of partition, gender and identity form the core of this research. This research thus examines the inter-related connotations of walls, veils, space, place and the body, and aims to meet the need for an extensive study of literary representations of walls as both dividing and connecting factors.
Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Mark Amsler who has persevered with me through the long years of my research, guiding me, correcting my work, giving his advice, listening to my ideas with phenomenal patience, and being there whenever I got stuck in a blind alley. His grasp over the linguistic intricacies of my work and his insight into the themes and ideas of my research have taught me far more than my academic achievements can ever display.

Deepest gratitude and warmest thanks to my co-supervisor, Dr. Stephen Turner, for reading my work, commenting upon it, unfolding within it questions and aspects that had eluded me, and giving suggestions which have been in themselves points of learning as well as routes to knowledge.

I am grateful to the members of academic staff of the university who have supported and guided me throughout my research: Lisa Samuels, Ruth Diver, Erin Steiner and other officials of the university who have stood by me during the winding road of my PhD.

I thank the University of Auckland for offering me the opportunity to work on my PhD research, and holding facilities that encourage and support a thorough probing into the subject. I am deeply impressed by the university library, its almost inexhaustible store of literary material, its network of academic resources, and its commendable inter-loan services, which have literally brought the entire world to my threshold.

Lastly, I am grateful to my husband, Shahid, and my daughters, Sophia and Saniya who have patiently braved the tossing boat of my research with me, and whose smiles and love have led me on whenever the arduous journey of study had drained the sap of my energies. My sisters who encouraged me and cheered me up whenever I was down, and the loving memory of my dear parents, who have been with me through thick and thin, in spirit if not in person.
To Sophia, Saniya and Shahid
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**Introduction: Lahore: Imaginative Locale**

The introduction has three parts. The first part surveys the city of Lahore and its walls as well as the major writings on Lahore. The second part discusses the trope of walls addressed in the Lahore writings in various ways, including: (a) as a metaphor for the Partition of India,¹ (b) as veils, and (c) as points of transcendence. The third part of the introduction surveys the scholarship on literary representations of walls and borders in Lahore and sets out the critical focus of the present research.

**Part I. Lahore and its walls**

Lahore is the social and administrative capital of Pakistan’s largest province, the Punjab. Spanning over one thousand square kilometres and having a population of more than ten million people (Demographia World Urban Areas, 2015, p. 20) Lahore is one of the thirty-five largest cities of the world and the second biggest city of Pakistan after Karachi. Lahore is also the cultural centre of the province and remains the hub of artistic and literary activities. Lahore has often been called the city of gardens as it contains many buildings and gardens that date back to the Mughal era (1526-1857), including the Badshahi Mosque, Lahore Fort, Shalimar Gardens and the tombs of Emperor Jahangir (1569-1627) and his wife, Empress Nur Jahan (1577-1645). Upon visiting Lahore one is impressed by the magnificence of the Mughal architecture, but one is also struck by the dust, noise and people. Lahore is loved by its inhabitants. There is a famous saying in Urdu: ‘Lahore, Lahore hei’, which means that Lahore is Lahore; it cannot be compared to any other place.

Many writings represent the city of Lahore, ranging from fiction to non-fiction. While studying the writings on Lahore one sees that most literary representations of the city contain a significant image: walls. Walls are portrayed in many ways in Lahore writings: as tangible and intangible; as negative as well as positive; as agents of division as well as frontiers of shelter and protection; as veils which conceal the reality from the onlooker; as points where opposites meet. Contemporary literary representations of walls in Lahore writings address the trope of walls in all these aspects. While Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) deploy walls as a metaphor for the Partition of India, Rudyard Kipling’s stories ‘On the City Wall’ and ‘The Story of Din Muhammad’ along with

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¹ I have used the word ‘Partition’ with a capital ‘P’ to refer to the division of India in 1947.

In the final analysis, one can say that writings on Lahore deploy walls both as hegemonic structures and divisions and as bulwarks of protection. The wall has long been physically present in the historical setting of Lahore. The city once had a protective wall around it, built in the Mughal era during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1542-1605). The British destroyed this wall soon after they annexed the Punjab in 1849, although sections of it still remain (*New World Encyclopaedia*, para 7). The writings discussed here advocate neither a complete removal of walls nor their absolute acceptance. Rather, they attempt to recognize and accept religious and cultural diversity among different communities. As Changez, the narrator of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, says to his American listener in Lahore’s Anarkali bazaar, ‘It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all under-cover assassins’ (Hamid, 2007, p 183).

![Figure 1. Remains of the City Wall](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Walled_City_of_Lahore)
Originally, the city wall of Lahore had twelve gates and one smaller opening, making a total of thirteen passages to the city. The names of these gates are Akbari Gate, Bhati Gate, Delhi Gate, Kashmiri Gate, Lohari Gate, Masti Gate, Mochi Gate, Roshnai Gate, Shahalmi Gate, Sheranwala Gate, Texali Gate, Yaki Gate, and the smaller opening, Mori Gate. Most of these gates have been destroyed, especially during the British rule that ended with the Partition of India in 1947; for example, Shahalmi Gate was razed to the ground during the riots of the Partition, while Akbari Gate was demolished for repairs by the British but was never rebuilt (New World Encyclopaedia, para 8). Today only six out of these thirteen gates survive, though they are also in dire need of repairs. The best preserved gate is Roshnai Gate close to the Lahore fort. The city wall was also destroyed by the British in an attempt to de-fortify the city in 1849. Today only sections of the old wall remain, especially in those places close to the surviving gates.

Figure 2. Map showing the wall and twelve gates of Lahore’s walled city

It is thought that the wall around Lahore originally consisted of mud, and was built as a protective structure by Malik Ayaz, a general of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi who invaded Lahore in the eleventh century. The defensive mud wall was rebuilt with bricks by Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century. Though the mud wall, also often called the inner wall, has

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3 Figure 2. Map showing the wall and twelve gates of Lahore’s walled city. Retrieved from http://www.artofanderson.com/www-lahore-map/
long disappeared, the outer brick wall built by Akbar still remains at certain places. The city of Lahore originally lay within the circumference of this wall.

Figure 3. Map of the Walled City of Lahore

Majid Sheikh, in his research on the origins of the walled city of Lahore, finds that the earliest mention of the walls of Lahore is found in a historical document about Lahore which appears to be the oldest written authentic document of the pre-Islamic era. This document was written by an anonymous writer in 982 AD, and was called ‘Hudud-i-Alam’ which can be translated as ‘limits of the world’. The text refers to the mud wall being built even earlier than the times of Malik Ayaz (Sheikh, 2004, para 7). This document, translated by Vladimir Minorsky into English and published in Lahore in 1927, now is archived in the British Museum (Sheikh, 2004, para 7). Hudud-i-Alam refers to the presence of mud walls around Lahore:

It is important that we have an idea of what Lahore looked like before the Muslim invaders came to this city. The writings in Hudud-i-Alam clearly demarcate the outer walls of the city. On one side is the western wall that runs along where today we have the Bazaar Hakeeman. If you have been to

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4 Figure. 3. Map of the Walled City of Lahore. File:OldCityM.jpg. Retrieved from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/File:OldCityM.jpg
the old walled city, you will notice that all streets that turn off eastwards are all on an incline.

(Sheikh, 2004, para 10)

Historians such as Haroon Khalid (2010), Majid Sheikh (2004), and John Keay (2000) as well as archival evidence such as *Imperial Gazetteer of India* and *Official Web Portal of City District Government, Lahore* show that Lahore’s history can be traced back to almost 2000 BCE. According to oral tradition, Lahore’s original name was Luv-Awar. In Hindu mythology the city was said to have been founded by god Rama, and named after his son Loh, and so it was called Loh-Awar or the fort of Loh. There is still a temple of Loh at the back of Lahore Fort. According to the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, Lord Rama had two sons, Loh and Kusha. When Lord Rama banished his pregnant wife, Sita, from the kingdom of Ayodiah due to the malicious gossip of the people, she took refuge in the ashram of a sage named Valmiki. The twin sons, Loh and Kusha, were born to Sita in the ashram of Valmiki. When, after many conflicts and a battle, Loh and Kusha were reunited with their father and made rulers, Rama founded the cities of Lahore and Kasur for his sons. Like Lahore, Kasur is also an old city in the province of Punjab in Pakistan. Thus we see that even in the mythological background to the city of Lahore, there are references to social walls, for instance in Lord Rama’s decision to banish his loyal wife, Sita, due to the suspicion of some of his subjects about Sita’s chastity after she was kidnapped by Ravan, while the phrase ‘Lakshman rekha’ (the line drawn by Lakshman) refers to the ethical limit allowed for any action (see Chakravarti, 1985; Abraham, 2001)\(^5\). In Indian and Pakistani culture the walls of social norms, especially for women, hold strong. Though not referring directly to Hindu mythology, many writings on Lahore address the subject of social walls. Anita M. Weiss examines the living conditions of women in the walled city of Lahore and points out that in spite of the city wall having been demolished, older ‘social’ walls still remain very strong:

Conditions under which women live in the Walled City, where there is both a symbolic and practical divide in the way space is used by men and women, frame perceptions and expectations of the allocation of gendered space in many working class areas of Lahore. In most instances, prevailing gendered

\(^5\) *Ramayana*, one of the two great Hindu epics, continues to have a powerful hold over the imagination of all Indians, male and female. In a pivotal scene in the epic, Lakshman, the brother of Ram, draws a line (*Lakshman rekha*) on the earth with his arrow — the line is intended to protect Sita from the dangers of the forest. For Indians, the line symbolises the limits of Sita’s confinement and also the idealised confinement of the chaste Indian woman, who must cast herself in the Sita mould’ (Abraham, 2001, p.136).
norms and values remain an integral part of life as families move into less
crowded housing in the new communities.

(Weiss, 1998, p. 72)

Weiss further points out that in spite of the fact that Lahore’s walls have disappeared over the
years, the dynamics of the walls still hold true in the walled city of Lahore: ‘Though most of
the wall no longer exists, continuous waves of buildings virtually recreating the wall remain,
enabling the maintenance of a symbolic demarcation of identity between the Walled City and
the outside’ (Weiss, 1998, p. 75). The walled city remains walled, even though its physical
walls are no longer there.

As far as Lahore’s known history of almost two thousand years is concerned, the city
has undergone phases of prosperity, capture, pillage and rebuilding. Briefly, the significant
events in the recorded history of the city include its flourishing under the Hindu Rajput rule
from 600 to 900 CE; its capture and pillage by Mahmood Ghaznavi in 1021, with an era of
rebuilding under his governor, Malik Ayaz; its destruction by the Mongols in 1241; its
capture by the Mughal emperor, Babur, in 1524, followed by an era of administrative stability
and architectural magnificence, especially under Emperor Akbar (1542-1605); its prosperity
under the Sikh leader, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1839); its relative stability under the
British government, and its inclusion in Pakistan at the Partition of India in 1947. Since the
Partition, Lahore has greatly expanded to cater to the needs of its increasing population, as it
has become the administrative centre of the province.

References to the history of Lahore as well as to its walls and gates can be seen in
various writings on Lahore. For example, Rudyard Kipling’s short stories carry frequent
references to the walled city of Lahore. In ‘The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows’ Kipling refers
to a gate in the walled city of Lahore:

It lies between the Coppersmith’s Gully and the pipe-stem sellers’ quarter,
within a hundred yards, too, as the crow flies, of the Mosque of Wazir Khan.
I don’t mind telling any one this much, but I defy him to find the Gate,
however well he might think he knows the City. You might even go through
the very gully it stands in a hundred times, and be none the wiser. We used
to call the gully ‘The Gully of the Black Smoke,’ but its native name is
altogether different of course.

(Kipling, Plain Tales, p. 201)
Kipling’s reference here is probably to Lohari Gate, as the Urdu word ‘Lohar’ means ironsmith. Kipling’s other stories also portray the city of Lahore and the image of walls, whether these walls are tangible or intangible. In his story ‘In the House of Suddhoo’ the darkness of the house and the gullibility of old Suddhoo, who is being tricked by the crafty seal cutter, shows the presence of a barrier between a clear understanding of things and a blind faith in the occult. In ‘The City of Dreadful Night’ the wall of darkness envelopes the city and makes the people sleeping on the roadside seem like corpses, while in ‘Beyond the Pale’ the fifteen year-old Bisesa, lives in an alley where ‘the walls on either side of the Gully are without windows’, since men do not ‘approve of their women-folk looking into the world’ (Kipling, Plain Tales, p. 127). Kipling’s other Lahore works, like ‘On the City Wall’ and ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’ depict walls as an ideal part of the architecture.

Even Kipling’s autobiography Something of Myself contains an incident of how he, as a child, attempted to create a framework of walls that would be set defensively against the outside world. In Something of Myself Kipling writes about the time when he was in the boarding house in Southsea and confined to the basement as a form of punishment:

When my father sent me a Robinson Crusoe with steel engravings I set up in business alone as a trader with savages (the wreck parts of the tale never much interested me), in a mildew basement room where I stood my solitary confinements. My apparatus was a coconut shell strung on a red cord, a tin trunk, and a piece of packing-case which kept off any other world. Thus fenced about, everything inside the fence was quite real.

(Kipling, Something of Myself, p. 38)

Replaying the ship-wrecked Robinson Crusoe and building a house where he barricades himself inside a square, Kipling was not only using his literary imagination but was also trying to re-create the sheltered haven of warmth and protection he had lost in the India of his childhood.
Part II. Connotations of Walls in Lahore writings

a) Walls and the Partition of India

One of the most significant aspects of walls in Lahore writings is as an image or figure for the Partition of India. Clearly, the Partition was a major event in the history of the two countries. In response to the decision of the British rulers of India to divide the country along religious lines large populations were forcibly displaced. Although figures vary, a rough estimate indicates that 12.5 million people—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—left their homes and travelled across the border, Hindus and Sikhs moving from what would be Pakistan to India, and Muslims going from India to Pakistan. Most historians, including Stanley Wolpert, Yasmin Khan and John Keay, see the Partition as bringing about widespread destruction and misery to the people of the region. Most affected was the province of Punjab, which was literally torn into two pieces. In the wake of the agony caused by lost homes, death, sudden change in life circumstances, and divided families, the psychological effects of Partition upon the minds of the people were devastating.

Figure 4. The Wagah Border between India and Pakistan near Lahore

Literary representations of Lahore in the context of Partition deploy the trope of walls in both positive and negative ways. Notable examples of Partition literature include Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1965), Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* (1974),

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6 Figure 4. The Wagah Border between India and Pakistan near Lahore. Retrieved from http://www.deccanchronicle.com/141102/world-neighbours/article/30-killed-120-injured-blast-near-wagah-border-lahore
Chaman Nihal’s *Azadi* (1975), *Ravi Paar and Other Stories* (2000) by Gulzar, *Midnight’s Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie, and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) by Amitav Ghosh. These writings show how the Partition created an unbridgeable gulf between people and also led to a long-lasting store of memories, nostalgic, traumatic, and poetic, for those who were affected by the geographical and socio-political upheaval and divisions that followed. As Bapsi Sidhwa writes about the Partition of India:

> Hysteria mounted when the fertile, hot lands of the Punjab were suddenly ripped into two territories — Hindu and Muslim, India and Pakistan. Until the last moment no one was sure how the land would be divided. Lahore, which everyone expected to go to India because so many wealthy Hindus lived in it, went instead to Pakistan. Jullundur, a Sikh stronghold, was allocated to India. Now that it was decided that they would leave, the British were in a hurry to wind up. [...] The earth is not easy to carve up. India required a deft and sensitive surgeon, but the British, steeped in domestic preoccupation, hastily and carelessly butchered it. They were not deliberately mischievous — only cruelly negligent! A million Indians died. The earth sealed its clumsy new boundaries in blood as town by town, farm by farm, the border was defined.

*(Sidhwa, *The Bride*, p. 14)*

Over time, the representation of walls in the context of the Partition underwent a change. While the writings on Lahore that emerged in the years immediately following the Partition portray walls as barricades of shelter and protection, literature written after 1980, including Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and *The Bride* (1983), represent walls as structures of division and segregation. *Ice-Candy-Man* specifically treats walls as a symbol for the Partition. The opening of the novel shows the pervasive presence of the wall:

> My world is compressed. Warris Road, lined with rain gutters, lies between Queens Road and Jail Road: both wide, clean, orderly streets at the affluent fringes of Lahore.

> Rounding the right-hand corner of Warris Road and continuing on Jail Road is the hushed Salvation Army wall. Set high, at eight-foot intervals, are the wall’s dingy eyes. My child’s mind is blocked by the gloom emanating from the wire-mesh screening the oblong ventilation slits. I feel such sadness for
the dumb creature I imagine lurking behind the wall. I know it is dumb because I have listened to its silence, my ear to the wall.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 1)

Personified in Sidhwa’s novel, the wall becomes a sign of cultural dominance and political control. The image of the wall, in various forms, recurs throughout the novel, such as the wall of silence that prevents women from giving voice to their ordeals during the Partition. Literary representations of walls as a metaphor for the Partition are discussed in more detail in chapters 1 and 2 below.

b) **Walls and Veils**

Walls and veils are closely related in Lahore writings. The veil or the purdah (literally, ‘curtain’ or ‘veil’) is observed by women in many societies of the world for religious or cultural reasons, most prominently among Muslims. The veil, like the wall, elicits both positive and negative responses from the onlookers. Veils stand as walls and serve to hide the woman’s body from sight. As served by the veil, the gaze becomes a masculine form of control and the woman’s body becomes the monitored subject. This representation of walls as veils is discussed in the second section of this thesis in an analysis of Louise Brown’s creative nonfiction narrative *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* (2005) and Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* (2000). In a conservative society such as that found in the walled city of Lahore, the free movement of women is mostly restricted as soon as a girl reaches adulthood, sometimes even earlier. She seldom goes out of doors, and passes most of her life within the four walls of her house, relying upon her male relatives, such as brothers and sons, to run errands. In such a restricted mode of life most women remain at home and do household chores. In many cases even the education of girls is discontinued because of the difficulty of escorting them to and from school. As Brown, Hamid and Weiss all show in different narrative discourses, social circumstances act as the outer force, enclosing and segregating the ‘weaker’ sections of the population, especially women.

In *The Dancing Girls of Lahore*, the gaze or the look acts as an agent of male control. The following passage depicts a quarrel between Maha, a woman of the brothel, and her husband Adnan:
The tension in the room is unbearable. I lie next to Nisha watching insects crawl into the holes in the plaster of the wall. Maha and Adnan are in the middle of a vile row. Maha is accused of looking at another man staying in one of the other rooms. He’s a musician, quite young and only moderately attractive, and he has very little money. I can’t imagine Maha would be interested in him. She is supposed to have looked at him from our room as he lay in the courtyard smoking with the other men. Adnan thinks it’s an unforgivable betrayal: she didn’t keep her eyes in purdah [veil].

“You are kharab”—a spoiled, rotten woman—Adnan declares so loudly that the whole house will hear.

Maha is distraught. She’s been crying for hours and pleading, “I wasn’t looking at him. I promise. I swear I didn’t look at him.”

(Brown, 2005, p. 116)

Where the gaze of the more powerful person, Adnan, acts as an agent of control, the gaze of the weaker person, Maha, is seen as the main threat to the bondage of seclusion, and appears to transgress the limits of her space. In a sense, Maha’s supposed gaze is perceived to be more powerful and hence more threatening to established order. Later on, when Maha, Adnan and the narrator are sitting in the same railway carriage as the young man whom Maha is accused of watching, Maha doesn’t know how to act: ‘She doesn’t know where to look’ (Brown, 2005, p. 119). Finally, in order to escape the situation, Maha decides to tie a sheet of cloth as a partitioning wall across their part of the train carriage: ‘we tie sheets and shawls to the luggage racks. They swing with the movement of the train and blow about in the wind from the open windows, but here in the seclusion of our sheets we are safe: no one can see us and we cannot see anyone else’ (Brown, 2005, p. 119). For women like Maha, the very act of seeing becomes a transgression and is positioned by male-dominated society as an attempt to cross the walls of patriarchal authority.

Combining the ideas of segregation, spectatorship, and representation we see how veils, like walls, become physical manifestations of deep-laid power structures. The suburb, such as that of the brothel where Maha lives, is a place beyond the pale of respectable society. It can be looked at but cannot look back. The power imbalance between the centre of authority and the marginalised sections of the society shows that physical space itself becomes a contested domain and is represented as such. In her sociological study Walls Within Walls: Life
Histories of Working Women in the Old City of Lahore (2002) Anita M. Weiss shows how purdah (veil) becomes a major force in the lives of the women of the walled city, since it not only constrains the free movements of women, both physically and mentally, but also becomes a visible sign of the women’s subjugated status in a patriarchal social order. She literally wears her oppression.

Most Lahore women are bound by norms of respectability and by social and familial customs. One woman, Maryam, lives with her husband of twenty-two years and six children in a small house in the walled city: ‘Towards the end of kuccha, Maryam lives with her family in one dark room, dusty and unhygienic, with a tiny area beside the room for cooking. The room hasn’t been cleaned or whitewashed for a long time. The only ventilation is via the front door, covered by a curtain (Weiss, 2002, p. 27). As Weiss says about the life and mental condition of Maryam:

Maryam has no expectations for her future. […] While we went a number of times to speak with Maryam, we were unable to record her story in detail. Either due to poor health, no education, or being distracted or talking about tangential matters, Maryam was unable to articulate the major details of her life to us, and was only able to talk about things in the present. From our meetings with other women in similar socioeconomic positions, Maryam’s inability to tell her story seems to be representative. They do not conceive of a lifestyle other than the one they have, and in living in the present they try to forget the painful past and not think of what the future holds.

(Weiss, 2002, p. 28)

Weiss’s research shows how these women have, in some strange way, lost contact with reality; they have lost the capacity to live beyond the immediate, mundane routine of their lives. In this case study the lives of these Lahore women seem to be squashed within the clausrophobic walls of their houses, and their loss of the capacity to dream, remember, hope or fantasise shows how a certain veil of oblivion has fallen on their imaginative capability. Their inability to articulate their lives becomes a sign of the mental stress that is the result of their oppressive circumstances. As Weiss’s words suggest, the most powerful marker of the women’s inability to speak comes in the form of their loss of memory. Living entirely in the present, they seem to detach themselves from their surroundings. In her inability to talk about her life the woman reveals how the circumstances of her life cannot be described through
words. The walls of silence and muteness, like amnesia, become the most telling phenomena of the dominating male order, manifesting what words cannot express.

Perhaps the most evocative expression of the miseries of the women of Lahore, in particular the prostitutes, comes in the form of art, and paintings in particular. Lahore’s brothel is one of the most viciously maligned neighbourhoods of the walled city. The living conditions of the prostitutes of Lahore and their incapacity to give voice to their sufferings are represented by the one man who has the most personal experience of the cruelty of social barriers in Pakistani society: Iqbal Hussain. A famous painter of Lahore, Hussain was the son of a prostitute and one of the few people who have managed to come out of this stigmatised suburb and lead a respectable life in Pakistan’s deeply conservative society. Hussain’s paintings mostly portray the plight of the women of Lahore’s brothel. Because of his talent as an artist Iqbal became a renowned painter and a teacher at Lahore’s prestigious National College of Arts.

![Figure 5. ‘Hadood Ordinance’ by Iqbal Hussain](http://www.thesouthasian.com/art_gallery/iqbal_hussain.htm)

Figure 5. ‘Hadood Ordinance’ by Iqbal Hussain

The painting titled ‘Hadood Ordinance’ shows the many-faceted operation of walls in the lives of women. In the painting Hussain shows the violence suffered by many women at the hands of men in Pakistani society. The title of the painting, ‘Hadood Ordinance’, is a highly ironic comment regarding the presence of walls and barriers in the lives of the women of Pakistan. ‘Hadood’ is an Urdu word, plural of ‘hadd’, meaning ‘limits’ or ‘boundaries’. Hadood Ordinance is an infamous part of the Pakistani law which was introduced into the constitution by the military dictator, General Zia ul Haq, in 1984 as part of his process of
Islamisation. The Hadood Ordinance is notorious for being unjust to women. One of the sections of the ordinance says that if a woman is raped she has to produce four witnesses in order to implicate the culprit. The difficulty of producing four credible witnesses (which is often the case) leads to the woman herself being charged with adultery. In the painting, the violent stance of the man suggests the intention of rape, and thus represents the barriers against women seeking justice within the constraints of the Hadood Ordinance.

c) Walls as Transcendence

In Lahore writings walls do not always function negatively as structures of division, control and segregation. They can also mark points of transcendence or convergence. The wall itself performs the dual function of dividing space — walls divide a house, lines chalk out the map, boundaries demarcate space — and marking, acknowledging, celebrating and transcending difference. The wall divides space but itself is located on both sides of the space that it divides. The wall literally touches the space on either side; it is part of two worlds. For example, the wall of our bodies is our skin, which is the outermost limit of ourselves. It is where, to borrow Lacan’s phrase, the ‘I’ ends and the ‘not I’ begins (Lacan, 1949), a recognition that emerges within the person's self-consciousness. In its capacity as a wall, our skin realises the difference between the inside and the outside. It is both a subjective part of our bodies and the objective, more public part of us.

Likewise, our eyes can also function as a wall. As organs of sight they receive stimuli from the outer world, but are also, at the same time, themselves objects of sight. When looking into the mirror, our eyes become both gazer and gazed at. The mirror is a unique agent, juxtaposing the inside and the outside, the subjective and the objective. In looking in the mirror at one’s own eyes one realises the wall of our existence that allows the eye to see as well as to be seen. Gazing at one’s own eyes, like hearing one’s own voice, we are able to transcend the spatial-temporal barrier. In other words, when we hear ourselves speaking (as in a microphone or recording) or when we look at our own eyes in the mirror, we enter into a plurality of identities, and see and hear ourselves as other people do. We become both producers and receivers of spatial and temporal sensory messages.

In their capacity of performing the twofold function of becoming part of two worlds at the same time, walls can act as points of convergence or transcendence, wherein they paradoxically divide space but also unite it. Lahore writings show the transcendental quality of the wall, or in simpler terms, the un-wall-ness of a wall. Here I consider three examples
from Lahore writings that show the wall as a meeting point of opposites. The first example is the figure of the transvestite or eunuch in Louise Brown’s creative nonfiction narrative *The Dancing Girls of Lahore*. In its capacity to partake of two worlds, the world of men and that of women, the figure of the eunuch defies the binaries of gendered identities. As Asha Achuthan writes in her essay ‘Darmiyaan … search for an in-between’ (2010), the transvestite occupies the middle ground between the two genders. According to Achuthan, apart from the physical attributes the transvestite shares with both men and women, the eunuch inhabits an identity that defies gendered opposites:

The inner sense of ‘being’ that the words male or female are supposed to convey, along with the word identity when clubbed with gender, suggest an ‘internal coherence’ in these categories that not only precludes mixing or overlap, but is also somewhat already there, *a priori*, present before the Law.


Inhabiting the in-between state, the eunuch acquires the attributes of a wall that occupies shared ground but itself stands as a point of division. In *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* the eunuch, Tasneem, is located as the meeting point between the two genders: ‘Khusra [eunuch] behavior is a caricature of feminine conduct that extracts the most useful things from the woman’s world and leaves out the rest. Most importantly, they don’t observe the restrictions placed upon women’s conduct’ (Brown, 2005, p. 51). Tasneem is not required to observe *purdah*, and she can also easily roam the streets, actions not openly allowed to most women of the walled city. In the figure of Tasneem, we see how the social differences between men and women are transcended, or perhaps just held in abeyance, as Tasneem stands on the threshold between the two genders.

The second example of how walls can become points of transcendence in Lahore writings comes from the stories of Rudyard Kipling. Kipling’s ‘On the City Wall’ conveys the same phenomenon of transcending differences, though here the wall articulates cultural and religious differences. The story concerns Lalun, a courtesan of Lahore, whose house is situated on the remains of what used to be Lahore’s city wall. Lalun’s house is the eclectic centre of a plurality of ideologies, the meeting point of opposites. It is a place where people of different religions and nationalities meet. Thus we see that ‘On the City Wall’ is more than just a tale about violence and national loyalties: it is also about walls and the experience of
living on the tight-rope of cultural and ethnic differences. This idea is reinforced by the illustration accompanying Kipling’s story by William Strang (1859-1921) (Figure 6):

![Figure 6. Rudyard Kipling’s ‘On the City Wall’ by William Strang](http://art.famsf.org/william-strang/city-wall-plate-12-book-series-thirty-etchings-%E2%80%A6-illustrating-subjects-writings)

The drawing shows the image of a woman sitting on the edge of the window, corresponding to the setting of the story where Lalun’s house becomes a meeting point of people of different religions:

In the long hot nights of latter April and May all the City seemed to assemble in Lalun's little white room to smoke and to talk. Shiah of the grimmest and most uncompromising persuasion; Sufis who had lost all belief in the Prophet and retained but little in God; wandering Hindu priests passing southward on their way to the Central India fairs and other affairs; Pundits in black gowns, with spectacles on their noses and undigested wisdom in their insides; bearded headmen of the wards; Sikhs with all the details of the latest ecclesiastical scandal in the Golden Temple; red-eyed priests from beyond the Border, looking like trapped wolves and talking like ravens; M.A.’s of the University, very superior and very voluble — all these people and more also you might find in the white room.

(Kipling, ‘On the City Wall’, para. 12)

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Cultural and religious differences are transcended in Lalun’s house and, as Strang’s drawing shows, the women's life becomes an existence that is literally on the wall.

The events of the story themselves allude to unchanging affiliations; Wali Dad, in spite of his disillusionment with religion, jumps into the Muharram procession with religious zeal, while Lalun helps Khem Singh to escape under the pretext that he is a persecuted Muslim. The narrator muses how he ‘had become Lalun’s Vazier after all’ (Kipling, ‘On the City Wall’, para. 92). Vizier here means prime minister, the government figure between the king and his subjects; in the capacity of the Vizier, the narrator becomes the middle man between Lalun and the escaping prisoner. The transcendental strain in the story is also present in its narrative technique. The narrator of the story is partly ignorant of the reality behind the scheme of things, and admits to having realised them later in the course of events. This split between the voices of the narrator and the author is an idea that is picked up in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis alongside a discussion of Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist.

The third example of how walls are represented as points of transcendence in Lahore writings comes from Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist. The novel is about the barriers of cultural differences that come between communities after the 9/11 attacks. The narrator, Changez, explains to his American listener while seated in a tea café in Lahore’s Anarkali bazaar, how much life in New York changed after the September 11, 2001 attacks. Changez is a figure of the translated man, someone who realizes the need to transcend the walls of cultural differences. A subtle parallel can be drawn between Changez’s attempt to transcend the walls of differences and actual walls in some cities, such as Berlin. The Berlin Wall that stood as a major line of separation and political difference between East and West was demolished in 1989, and as the wall disappeared, so did many of the political and social divisions in Germany. Looking at the image below, which shows Berliners celebrating the fall of the Berlin wall, I see a parallel between physical walls being scaled and the intangible walls of cultural differences being transcended.
In his blog ‘The Funambulist’, Leopold Lambert comments: ‘on November 11 1989, Berliners did not just cross their wall; they expressed its obsolescence by residing for a moment on its thirty-centimeter edge. That is the symbol embodied by the funambulist (tight rope walker), who walks the line, and therefore subverts it, impervious to the legal system of either side’ (Lambert, 2014, ‘Legal Theory’ para. 4). This transcendental control which both marks and supersedes division is manifested not only in the very act of climbing up the wall but also by standing or sitting on top of it. In Changez’s attempt to transcend the wall of cultural differences there is, as in the Berliners’ act of scaling the wall of Berlin, an effort to overcome differences between human beings.

**Part III. Existing scholarship on representations of walls in Lahore writings**

In spite of the fact that historically and geographically Lahore occupies an important place in the region, existing scholarship has not produced a comprehensive critical engagement with the subject. Given the historical, social, geographical and political importance of Lahore in both geopolitics and the global imagination, there is a surprisingly small amount of research on the subject.

In *Lahore: Topophilia of Space and Place* (2011), and in her article ‘Lahore: The City of Dreadful Night’ (2010), Anna Suvorova discusses certain literary and artistic
representations of Lahore, including some of Kipling’s Lahore works. However, Suvorova is more concerned with the entire field of representation of Lahore, including films and photographs, and provides a detailed study of Lahore’s Mughal architecture. Though Suvorova offers an insightful study of Kipling’s short stories, especially ‘The City of Dreadful Night’, and discusses the ideas of topophilia (love of place) and topophobia (fear of place) in her introduction, her overall concern is not with Lahore’s walls. However, Suvorova’s analysis does open up space for further interpretations of Kipling’s writings on Lahore, and forms an important point of reference for writings on Lahore, as discussed in chapters 1 and 5 of this thesis.

*City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* by Bapsi Sidhwa is another work that focuses on the literary representations of Lahore. Sidhwa’s book brings together most of the major writings on Lahore. However, rather than being a critical analysis *City of Sin and Splendour* is an anthology of extracts or entire articles and stories by various writers who have represented Lahore in their works. Sidhwa’s work does not critically engage with these literary representations in the way that the present thesis does. Nevertheless, the volume remains an interesting collection of literature on Lahore, and includes extracts from Sidhwa's own books *Ice-Candy-Man* and *The American Brat*.

A number of scholars have examined the red light district of Lahore. *Taboo: The Hidden Culture of a Red Light Area* (2002) by Fouzia Saeed is an important contribution to existing scholarship on Lahore’s walls. Like Brown's work, Saeed’s work is based on her research on Lahore’s brothel and the living conditions within this deeply stigmatised community. *Taboo* reveals Saeed’s personal experience visiting the brothel of Lahore, the Heera Mandi, and provides an analysis of the socio-economic factors that contribute to the sex trade. Saeed’s work shows the first-hand experience of a Pakistani woman visiting the notorious suburb and seeing other women facing the challenges of surviving in a fiercely patriarchal society. A study parallel to Saeed’s work is Mayank Austin Soofi’s *Nobody Can Love You More: Life in Delhi’s Red Light District* (2013), which depicts the brothel of Delhi in India. Both works show that although the overall financial and emotional challenges faced by the women of the brothel are the same, the disparity between Delhi and Lahore, predominantly due to differences within Hindu and Muslim societies, respectively, produces relative differences in the atmospheres of the two brothels. The prostitutes in Soofi’s narrative seem to be more empowered than the women of Heera Mandi, partly because in the Islamic society of Lahore adultery by women is a highly serious offence. Also relevant in this
regard is Rukhsana Tak’s 2003 doctoral dissertation, entitled ‘Prostitution and the law in Pakistan: a case study of Lahore's Hira Mandi’. Tak considers the relationship between prostitution and the law in Pakistan and focuses on constitutional and religious responses to individual and sexual freedom in an Islamic country. In spite of their overlapping interests regarding prostitution, neither of these works addresses literary representations as the present research does. In this regard Nahim Jabbar’s ‘Symbology and Subaltern Resistance in Hira Mandi Mohalla’ (2011) is a useful and innovative study of the cultural practices of Lahore’s brothel. Jabbar critically analyses certain sections of Brown’s The Dancing Girls of Lahore. However, despite offering an interesting analysis of the practices and representation of Lahore’s brothel, certain points of which are discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, Jabbar’s analysis emphasises the idea of representation in general alongside cultural and ethnic practices and does not include the entire field of the literary representations of the walls of Lahore.

Walls Within Walls: Life Histories of Working Women in the Old City of Lahore (2002) by Anita M. Weiss (mentioned earlier) studies the conditions of the lives of women within the walled city. Weiss gives us a faithful ethnographic account of the thoughts, lives and problems of the women who struggle to make a livelihood in this neighbourhood. Weiss’s work is based on interviews and case studies of real women of the walled city. Her research includes talking to these women, studying their life histories, surveying their surroundings and statistical analyses of the living conditions in Lahore’s walled city. Weiss’s work remains unparalleled as a study of the women of Lahore and is supplemented by her essay, ‘The gendered division of space and access in working class areas of Lahore’ (1998), which throws further light on Lahore’s subcultures and the city walls. Weiss’ discussion of living people provides us with a material context for other literary texts.

Fariha Chaudhary's doctoral dissertation ‘Hiding and Seeking Identity: The Female Figure in the Novels of Pakistani Female Writers in English: A Feminist Approach’ (2013) sheds light upon the role of women in major novels in Pakistan, including the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa. Chaudhary’s work involves a feminist reading of the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Qaisra Shahraz, both writers in English, alongside the works of Umera Ahmed, an Urdu woman novelist in Pakistan. Chaudhary’s work revolves around the identity and representation of women in the patriarchal society of Pakistan, but does not refer directly to literature that focuses upon walls in Lahore.
With regard to the traumatic experiences of women during the Partition of India, Ananya Jahanara Kabir’s 2005 article ‘Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women’s Novels on the Partition of India’ discusses the Partition narratives of Bapsi Sidhwa and Krishna Sobti. Kabir shows that in the writings of both Sidhwa and Sobti there is a twofold movement of remembering and forgetting, which suggests a ‘self-imposed authorial task of negotiating between traumatic recall and narrative commemoration’ (Kabir, 2005, p. 177). The matter of forgetting and remembering is also discussed by Veena Das in her article ‘Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain’ (1996). Deepika Bahiri’s essay ‘Telling Tales: Women and the Trauma of Partition in Sidhwa’s Cracking India’ (2006) analyses Sidhwa’s treatment of the sufferings of women during the Partition. Bahiri shows that in spite of the efforts of creative writers trying to give voice to these women, there are limits to literary representations of indescribable suffering.

A number of scholars discuss the relations between architecture and gender in ways relevant to this thesis. Antoinette Burton’s Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India (2003) discusses the works of women writers, including Attia Hosain, especially with reference to architecture and houses. Burton shows how walls and houses become parts of the memory that shapes one’s approach to a place. Anthony Vidler’s article ‘The Building in Pain: The Body and Architecture in Post-modern Culture’ (1990) also contains detailed discussion of the entwining of architecture and the human body. Claire Pajaczkowska’s ‘Urban memory/suburban oblivion’ in History and Amnesia in the Modern City edited by Mark Crinson (2005) shows the workings of walls in various cultures, such as England’s housing colonies.

Narratives of and reflections on the Partition are numerous. A few especially relevant to this are mentioned here. Mushirul Hasan’s India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom (1997) is a collection of works and memoirs by writers who have written about the Partition. Hasan’s introduction is highly insightful and his views correspond to the works that his collection contains, which include Manto’s ‘Khol Do’, Rajinder Singh Bedi’s ‘Lajwanti’, Vishnu Prabhatkar’s ‘My Native Land’ and Fikr Taunsvi’s ‘The Wagah Canal’. Stephen Alter’s travelogue Amritsar to Lahore: A Journey across the India/Pakistan Border (2000) is an admirable account of a traveller’s experience of moving across the borders and cities of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Though Alter assigns only one chapter to his visit to Lahore, his views about borders and walls add useful information to any study about cultural and
physical barriers. However, except for passing references to a few writers such as John Milton, Alter’s interest is in direct and personal experience of the region rather than in literary representations.

Despite a general neglect of the literature of Lahore by scholars of South Asian literature, there are some noted exceptions. Claire Chambers’ article ‘The Heart, Stomach and Backbone of Pakistan: Lahore in the Novels by Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid’ (2014) is about the representation of Lahore in the novels of two diasporic writers on Lahore, namely Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid. Chambers discusses certain issues that are also addressed in the present research, such as the nostalgia of exile and the sentimental remembering of a city like Lahore by the people who had been forced to flee it during the Partition. Chambers draws on the work of Edward Soja and Michel Foucault with regard to the literary representations of Lahore. Chambers highlights the limited attention given to writings on Lahore in comparison to works that portray cities like Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. As Chambers shows, even Karachi, another major city in Pakistan, receives more attention than Lahore in literary study, partly because major contemporary writers in Pakistani literature in English, such as Kamila Shamsi, hail from and write about Karachi. The question of the limited attention given to Lahore among international and local literary circles is also addressed by Shahid Imtiaz in his essay ‘Amorphous Lahore: Questions of Location, Culture, Fiction and Reality’ (2014), which concerns the role of ‘amorphousness’ as being partly responsible for Lahore’s extremely rich, yet neglected literary tradition. In explaining the term ‘amorphous’, Imtiaz refers to the historical and geographical significance of the city, which he then juxtaposes with fictional representations of Lahore.

Within the framework of existing research on Lahore, its walls and their literary representations, this thesis focuses on how the representations of walls in Lahore writings reflect on and critique social, cultural and political barriers. The thesis examines how the literary texts of Lahore deploy walls as a motif in representing the social and political atmosphere of the city. It also discusses the personal responses of writers to the changes taking place around them. Lahore’s social geography is represented in literary writings through the various metaphorical connotations of walls, such as social segregation, gender bias, and ethnic and religious discrimination. Literature performs the function of not only representing but also of transporting the stories of Lahore from the minds and lives of its inhabitants to an international readership. The key concepts of partition, veils, gender, and identity form the core of this research.
Through careful readings of the literary texts, I also link the structure of walls with the act of translation. Linking translation and walls, my research concludes that while walls have symbolic values and contain both positive and negative connotations, they also, in their very structure, articulate our need to recognize differences and to accept them as part of the wider diversity of the world. Even in a globally connected and migrating world, we cannot entirely do away with sociocultural walls. We need, therefore, not necessarily to remove walls but to allow for a translation of cultural and religious differences. In this regard I refer to Deborah Baker’s *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (2011), a biography of Maryam Jameelah, an American Jewish woman who converted to Islam and then lived in Lahore for the rest of her life. Joining the trope of walls with the act of translation, I argue that literature fulfils and emphasises the need for recognition and acceptance of differences. This thesis also shows the effects of architecture upon the modern person and, vice versa, people’s nostalgic ties to a place, resulting in a sense of collectivity and belongingness. It also addresses marginalised and stigmatised communities such as prostitutes and transvestites, who constitute other, more far-reaching connotations of walls, veils and borders, not only within Lahore. This thesis therefore examines the inter-related connotations of walls and literary representations of Lahore and contributes a critically and historically informed study of literary representations of walls in the writings on Lahore as both dividing and connecting people together.
Section I: Walls and the Partition of India
Chapter 1

Lahore and the Nostalgia of Exile

This chapter analyses the metaphor of the wall in the form of the Partition of India in 1947. After the British withdrew from India and divided the country into two halves, India and Pakistan, more than 12.5 million people (mostly Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) migrated across the newly created line of division. Lahore had a mixed population of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, but was allotted to Pakistan. Partition literature of the time reveals the trauma of displacement and the nostalgia of exile. The chapter is divided into three parts: the first part gives an account of the Partition and the creation of the border between the two countries. The second part examines writings on Lahore that address the sudden tearing apart of the territory, and the nostalgic remembrance of Lahore by those who were forced to leave their beloved city. The third part discusses an Urdu short story ‘Toba Tek Singh’ (1955) by Saadat Hasan Manto in connection with Partition and walls.

1.1. The Line

On 14 August 1947, India was divided into the present-day India and Pakistan. The Muslim majority areas went to Pakistan, while the Hindu and Sikh majority areas remained in India. The decision to divide India was taken three months earlier, on 3 June 1947. The partitioning line that divided the two countries and which ran through India’s populous cities, towns and villages was drawn just weeks before the announced date of the Partition. Land is not easy to carve up. Unlike houses and rooms where one can easily construct walls, communities cannot be so easily divided. Centuries of a common past, a collective sense of belongingness and a deep-seated love for the place stand in the way of any attempt to separate places and people according to super-regional diktat.
Historians, including Stanley Wolpert, John Keay and Yasmin Khan, have written about the devastating effects of the Partition of India. Wolpert, in particular, lambasts the British Viceroy of India at the time, Lord Mountbatten, and holds him directly responsible for the hurried and unplanned division of the country that led to the unprecedented migration of over twelve million people and the deaths of another one million between June and August 1947. In *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (2006), Wolpert criticises Mountbatten for rushing through the Partition of India with unbelievable speed, passing the job of demarcating the boundary between India and Pakistan to Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a man ‘who had never before set foot on Indian soil’ (Wolpert 2006, p. 157). Wolpert also criticises Mountbatten for deliberately holding back the announcement of the boundaries until the exact day of Britain’s withdrawal from India so as to absolve the British government from the responsibility of the bloodshed that was sure to follow. As Wolpert writes:

Barrister Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who had never before set foot on Indian soil, was chosen to chair both commissions [for dividing Punjab and Bengal]. He would fly out to undertake in a month work that should have taken at least a year to do properly. Once his job was done, Radcliffe left India, never to return again, fearing both sides would try to kill him.

(Wolpert 2006, p. 157)

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10 Figure 8. Map of India and Pakistan, showing the Partition of India in 1947. Retrieved from http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/03/peacocks-at-sunset/
The 3rd June 1947 announcement of the decision to partition India met with mixed response among the general public. Some celebrated the idea of a separate nation-state while others favoured remaining a single country. Rumours of how the country would be divided were rife: how would the financial assets be distributed, how would the armed forces be divided, how would the irrigation system be separated and, most importantly, which cities and villages would come into India and which into Pakistan? The governor of the Punjab, Evan Jenkins, wrote that there was ‘a complete absence of enthusiasm for the partition plan—nobody seemed pleased’ (Wolpert, 2006, p. 158). In this regard, historians Glassman, Swatos and Denison write: ‘Though they were smart enough to withdraw from Ireland, India, the Middle East, and Africa, the English purposefully and calculatedly left behind situations that would disrupt and weaken their former colonies. The British policy of “Divide and Conquer” was extended to their withdrawal’ (Glassman, Swatos & Denison, 2004, p. 362). Furthermore, the Muslim League, representing Muslims of India, and the Congress, representing Hindus, had accepted the Partition plan for widely differing reasons: the League thought that Jinnah had secured a separate country for Muslims, while the Congress thought that having pushed the Muslims into a corner they would be able to destroy them before long (Wolpert, 2006, p. 158).

What these leaders failed to realise was the wide-scale massacres, lootings and abductions that were about to be committed on the streets of India, especially in the Punjab. The former British colony was literally split into two, as religious identity became the deciding factor in driving out people of the ‘opposite’ religion. Yet Lord Mountbatten and his aides remained indifferent. Yasmin Khan writes in The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan (2007) that when journalists asked Mountbatten about the details of the Partition plan after the 3 June announcement of the Partition the Viceroy was asked a number of questions about the division of assets and liabilities between the two countries. Yet ‘only one [journalist] thought to ask what would, in retrospect, turn out to be the most vital question of all. “Do you foresee any mass transfer of population?” “Personally I don’t see it” the Viceroy replied’ (Khan, 2007, p. 100). The Viceroy’s reply reveals his complete ignorance of the hazards lurking in the hastily drawn Partition plan. The fuzzy thinking on this critical question, writes Khan, ‘was the fatal flaw in the Partition plan’ (Khan, 2007, p. 100). The trickling of refugees across borders in both directions soon became a regular flow, and skirmishes turned into violent confrontations. Rumours of violence on people belonging to one religion set off a chain of retaliations in other cities. Trains and buses carrying
refugees were intercepted and their passengers brutally murdered. In her photographs of the Partition of India, Margaret Bourke-White captures the most heart-rending scenes of the Partition: neighbours being separated, children hanging on to their weary parents as caravans trudge across unknown terrains, boys gazing back wistfully at their homes for the last time (Figures 9a-b-c).\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Figure 9 (a) Caravans of migrating refugees.}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Figure 9 (b) An aged couple with their four grandchildren, abandoned on a roadside.}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{11} Figures 9a, 9b, 9c. Mushirul Hasan, ‘The Fear And Loathing: New narrative vigour and fresh insights into a theme that's been reduced to a static tale of suffering’. Retrieved from http://www.outlookindia.com/article/The-Fear-And-Loathing/234772
More disturbing images show dead bodies being piled upon each other by community workers, corpses strewn across the streets, dead men staring blankly in the void. When published in *Life* magazine, these images ‘sent shock waves across the world’ (Kapoor 2006, p. i). Bourke-White herself kept adding her personal thoughts at the time of taking these photographs. While taking a photograph of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League and one of the most forceful advocates of the Partition, Bourke-White’s description of Jinnah shows how the butchery on the streets had affected those who had, though unwittingly, brought it about:

I was shocked at Jinnah’s changed appearance—the unsteady step—listless eyes, the white-knuckled, nervously clenched hands. As I went ahead with my pictures, Miss Fatima, with sisterly solicitude, slipped up before each shot and tried gently to uncurl the desperately clenched hands.

(Bourke-White, as cited by Kapoor 2006 [1947] p. xv)

Meanwhile, the common people stood petrified at the choice between migrating to an unknown country and remaining where they were. Nobody knew where the boundary lines would actually fall. Penderel Moon writes that he advised his ‘unduly sanguine’ Hindu friends in West Punjab to leave as quickly as they could: ‘One of them took the hint and expressed gratitude to me afterwards. The rest clung obstinately to their ancestral homes and in the end escaped with little more than their lives’ (Moon, cited in Khan 2007, pp 101-2).
Migration thus resulted from two factors: speculations about the Boundary Commission’s demarcation of the border between the two countries, and the brutality on the streets as enraged mobs killed people in order to oust them from their side of the border. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims killed each other, raped each other’s women, slaughtered each other’s children. Amritsar and Lahore, the two cities that lay on either side of the dividing line, separated from each other by just fifty kilometres (see Figure 4), burnt and bled. Rumours of retaliation by rival groups reached each city. Hindus and Sikhs were driven from Lahore by mobs of Muslims as news spread of similar treatment of Muslims at Amritsar at the hands of Hindus and Sikhs. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the Congress, though generally supporting the Partition, was stunned by the killings on the streets.

In an urgent letter to Mountbatten in June 1947 Nehru wrote:

I am distressed … about what is happening in Lahore … where fires are raging and consuming hundreds of houses. It is reported that 100 houses were burnt down last night and this morning. During the previous two days about 250 houses were set fire to and burnt. At this rate the city of Lahore will be just a heap of ashes. … the human aspect of this is appalling to contemplate. Amritsar is already a city of ruins, and Lahore is likely to be in a much worse state very soon. … My mother came from Lahore and part of my childhood was spent there. … Human beings have an amazing capacity to … bear calamity after calamity; but it is very difficult to have to bear something which can apparently be avoided.

(Nehru, as cited in Wolpert, 2006, pp. 159-160)

Mountbatten met Nehru no less than two days after receiving this ‘urgent’ letter, which the Viceroy’s secretary termed ‘a long rigmarole about the Punjab’ (Wolpert, 2006, p. 160). Still unmoved, Mountbatten did not slow down the speed of implementing the Partition plan:

Trying to keep his staff moving at top speed, Mountbatten met with them [Nehru and Jinnah] that evening to review a long paper the India office had prepared titled ‘The Administrative Consequences of Partition’. It was a uniquely daunting list, reflecting an impossible undertaking never before attempted at so swift a pace in recorded history, the ‘divorce’ in ten weeks of a continent of 400 million people.
Nor did Mountbatten disclose the exact demarcation of the boundary until the very day the first regiment of the British imperial forces departed from India, on 15 August, 1947. Until that day, most people of united India did not know for sure where the dividing line would exactly fall and whether their home towns or villages would be on the Indian or the Pakistani side of the border. ‘The national boundaries between India and Pakistan’, writes Yasmin Khan, ‘were ready on 12 August but were deliberately held back for five days, despite the requests of administrators coping with panicked border regions who implored the government of advance warning of where the boundary lines would fall (“even a few hours would be better than none” pleaded Evan Jenkins [the Governor of Punjab] to Mountbatten). Nobody in India knew where the borders would lie on Independence Day itself; rumours, hints and suggestions flew around’ (Khan, 2007, pp 124-5).

The result of this haste was disastrous. When the boundary line was finally announced on 17 August 1947, everyone was left aghast. The irrationality of the hurriedly drawn line that decided the fate of millions of innocent people was glaring:

The line zigzagged precariously across agricultural land, cut off communities from their sacred pilgrimage sites, paid no heed to railway lines or the integrity of forests, divorced industrial plants from the agricultural hinterlands where raw materials, such as jute, were grown.

(Khan, 2007, p.126)

Nor did the Boundary Commission take into account any considerations other than religious lines: Delhi and Lucknow, the cultural and historical capitals of the Muslims, went to India, while Nankana Sahib, one of the most important pilgrimage sites for the Sikhs, went to Pakistan:

The Sikhs had demanded that the line of Partition, whilst dividing the majority non-Muslim East Panjab \(^{12}\) from the majority Muslim West Panjab, make exceptions for sites and shrines important by virtue of religious and historical associations. Thus, for instance, Lahore, Ranjit Singh’s erstwhile capital, should not simply be allocated to Pakistan because its population

\(^{12}\) Keay uses the alternate spellings (Panjab) for Punjab.
was predominantly Muslim. In fact the Boundary Commission made no such allowances. Demography alone was decisive; Lahore went to Pakistan.

(Keay, 2000, pp 507-8)

The suddenness of the division proved too much for many people; Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs fled in terror from their homes and neighbourhoods, where they had lived side by side for centuries. Wolpert writes that in ‘June 1947 some 300,000 Hindus and Sikhs lived in Lahore. By August 19 fewer than 10,000 remained; and by August 30, fewer than one thousand. Endless caravans of Hindu-Sikh refugees moved out of that smoking pyre of death, trekking west to try and reach the new border at Wagah’ (Wolpert, 2006, p. 173). Many fled on just a few hours’ notice, never to return again.

1.2. **Longing for Lahore**

Near Lahore’s Anarkali bazaar lies the tomb of Anarkali, the beautiful courtesan of the court of Emperor Akbar (1542-1605). Inscribed on the grave in the tomb is a Persian couplet which, when translated into English reads:

> Could I behold the face of my beloved once more,  
> I would thank God until the day of resurrection  
>

*Signed: Saleem, the distraught*

These words, probably addressed by Prince Salim (later Emperor Jahangir) to his beloved Anarkali, express his grief at her death. A similar sentiment of loss and anquish can perhaps be attributed to those forced by the Partition to leave their beloved city against their will. The similarity between Saleem’s distraught lamentation and the anguish of those who had to leave their homes is not hard to discern. Both show the grief caused by irreparable loss, whether of persons or places. As Glenn Bowman observes, ‘displaced peoples’ compulsive memorialisation of the past has been likened to the neurotic reactions of family members who cannot accept the loss of a loved one’ (Bowman, 1993, pp 83-84). Hindus and Sikhs longed for their Lahore, as Muslims yearned for Delhi, Amritsar, Lucknow and Bombay. As journalist A. Hameed writes in his article ‘The 1947 Exodus from Lahore’ (2006): ‘The links between Lahore and the Hindu community were strong, deep and highly emotional. The loss of Lahore to Pakistan was something that those who were forced to leave their beloved city feel to this day’ (Hameed, 2006, para. 3). Hameed quotes Gopal Mittal, one of Lahore’s Hindus:
The Hindus of Lahore just could not believe their ears when the radio announced that Lahore would become a part of Pakistan. An attempt was made even to have the city partitioned like Berlin, with the area stretching from Shah Alami to Krishen Nagar becoming the Indian part of the divided city. That of course was not possible; the die had been cast. In Gowalmandi, a Hindu family left its matriarch behind because she just refused to go. All she would say between sobs would be, ‘I am never going to leave Lahore. They were saying to me, “Granny come with us to India” but I told them I would never leave Lahore. Never.’

(cited in Hameed, 2006, para. 5)

Hameed also narrates an incident once told him by Sufi Tabussum, another famous Urdu writer:

I was recently [in 1953] in Delhi and I went to look up an old student of mine but it was her daughter who came to meet me. She told me that her mother had died two months earlier. I remarked that when she left Lahore in 1947, she was in such good health. ‘She never overcame her sense of loss because she loved Lahore and missed it terribly. Her life kind of ended when she left Lahore. She wasn’t much interested in anything any longer and she would not even eat much. She would keep talking about Lahore and sighing: “It could never ever have occurred to the Hindus of Lahore that a day would come when they would have to leave their city.”’

(cited in Hameed 1996, para. 4)

Many nostalgic writings on Lahore come from the pens of those who had to wrench themselves away from their beloved city. Gopal Mittal’s autobiography is titled *Lahore ka jo zikar kiya* (When Lahore is Mentioned); the autobiography of Som Anand, another Hindu who had to leave Lahore at Partition, is titled *Lahore: Portrait of a Lost City* (Vanguard, 1998); Pran Nevile writes about the city he had to leave in his book *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey*; Amrita Pritam writes down the sentiments of women during the Partition in her Punjabi poem ‘Ajj Akhan Waris Shah Noon’ (‘Today I ask Waris Shah’).13 Khushwant

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13 Waris Shah was a Punjabi poet (1722-1798). He wrote the famous poem *Heer* which tells the love story of a Punjabi girl named Heer who fell in love with a boy named Ranjha. In her poem ‘Ajj Akhan Waris Shah Noon’
Singh’s ‘Last Days in Lahore’ gives an account of how he left the city in the midst of riots and bloodshed, while Krishan Chandra, remembering Lahore, wrote in a letter a few days before his death in 1977: ‘Lahore is a place where I was born, where I was educated, where I started my literary career, where I achieved fame. For people of my generation it is difficult to forget Lahore. It shines in our heart like a jewel — like the fragrance of our soul’ (cited in Ishtiaq Ahmed, 2007, para. 4). Vishnu Prabhakar’s short story ‘My Native Land’ tells the tale of a Hindu man who, even after the Partition, keeps visiting Lahore disguised as a Muslim, and is one day recognised as a Hindu and killed. Krishna Sobti writes, ‘When I think of Lahore, I go back to the days of my youth just before Partition. Life then was so romantic, slow, deep and beautiful. Really they were good times, they were great times’ (Sobti, 1997, p. 78). Muslims have been equally passionate about the city: Ashfaq Ahmed’s collection of short stories in Urdu is titled *Uchay Burj Lahore Day (Tall are the Minarets of Lahore)*; A. Hameed writes a column in an Urdu daily under the title *Lahore Lahore Aye* (‘Lahore is Lahore’); Faiz Ahmed Faiz calls Lahore ‘my city of many lights’. In the foreword to Anna Suvorova’s *Lahore: Topophilia of Space and Place*, Carl W. Ernst narrates the incident of a Muslim pilgrim who went to Mecca to perform Haj:

As the story goes, an inhabitant of Lahore went to Mecca on pilgrimage, and accomplished the usual ritual with great satisfaction and delight. On completing the pilgrimage, he addressed the Almighty in prayer, saying, ‘God! Your city is indeed wonderful and I am very happy to have visited but, in the end, Lahore is Lahore’.

(Ensrt, p. xi)

Lahore was not the only city whose loss was mourned by its departing inhabitants. The Muslims of India had equal yearnings for their beloved cities when they were informed that they would have to move to Pakistan. In *India Partitioned: The Other Side of Freedom*, Mushirul Hasan writes about Muslim writers like Begum Shaista Ikramullah, Intizar Husain—whom Hasan calls ‘the most perceptive creative writer of Pakistan’ (Hasan, 1997, p. 32)—and Ahmed Ali and Saadat Hasan Manto, who were forced to leave their beloved cities of Delhi and Bombay and migrate to Pakistan (Hasan 1997, pp 35-36). Referring to the loss of Delhi at the Partition, Begum Shaista Ikramullah writes that she ‘never even dreamt that she would have to leave the city which she loved in its every mood’ (cited in Mushirul Hasan

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Amrita Pritam addresses Waris Shah and asks him how he would have responded to the plight of thousands of women who suffered during Partition, when he had dedicated his entire poem to the ordeal of one girl.
Ahmed Ali’s love for Delhi is seen in his novel *Twilight in Delhi*, which contains vivid descriptions of the Muslim culture of the nineteenth-century cultural capital: ‘Ali identified himself with the civilization of Delhi that came into being through the mingling of two different cultures, Hindu and Muslim’ (Hasan, 1997, p. 37). Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the greatest short story writers in Urdu, recounts the trauma of displacement in his short stories, including ‘Toba Tek Singh’, discussed later in this chapter. The story brings forth the entrenched love for place, the insanity of the Partition, and the throes of losing one’s homeland.

Love of a place is not easy to explain or to represent. People migrate from one place to the other, settle in another country, even pass their whole lives as expatriates and exiles but still cannot remove the love of their homeland from their hearts, which keeps clinging to them as ‘a child to their mother’s gown’ writes Kipling (‘To the City of Bombay’). Wherein lies the love of place in a person’s life? To answer this question we turn to writings that show the nostalgic love of a place as well as some theoretical explanations for love of place. Anna Suvorova defines topophilia, love of a place, as the ‘effective bond between people and places’ (Suvorova, 2011, p. 2), and considers it as an experience layered with memories and a sense of belongingness. Suvorova shows how topophilia is ‘a palimpsest in the post-modern sense of the word — a certain ‘text’ that is written over other ‘texts’ of material and spiritual culture’ (Suvorova, 2011, p. 2). In a palimpsest the latter texts overwrite the earlier ones, resulting in ‘overlapping inter-textual meanings’ (Suvorova, 2011, p. 2). Thus, just as a text ‘gets a history’ and ‘acquires memory’ through its re-assimilation, love of place is also built on layers of memory and mental reconstructions of earlier experiences. Taking Husserl’s phenomenology as point of reference, Suvorova explains that love of a place is closely linked to Husserl’s later concept of Lebenswelt (lifeworld), which is ‘the foundation of the meaning of all human knowledge and is closely connected to the concept of topophilia’ (Suvorova, 2011, p. 4).

In the Partition literature of Lahore we find this very recognition of the sudden loss of a collectively lived past. In Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), for example, the narrative imagines a fictive village named Mano Majra in which Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have lived peacefully together for centuries:

Mano Majra is a tiny place. It has only three brick buildings, one of which is the home of the money lender Lala Ram Lal. The other two are the Sikh
temple and the mosque. The three brick buildings enclose a triangular common with a large peepul tree in the middle. The rest of the village is a cluster of flat-roofed mud huts and low walled courtyards which front on narrow lanes that radiate from the centre. Soon the lanes dwindle into footpaths and get lost in the surrounding fields.

(Singh, 2006 [1956], p. 3)

Mano Majra is situated close to the railway lines. Trains ply the route between Delhi and Lahore, arrive and leave at specific times and the sound of their coming and going becomes a part of the daily routine of the people of Mano Majra. They wake up according to the train’s hootings, they perform their daily chores by its arrival, and they eat, sleep and relax to the sound of the rumbling of its engine. The train that comes before day-break hoots a couple of times and Mano Majra springs to life. By the time the mid-morning train comes at half-past ten the entire village has settled to its daily work. With the midday express Mano Majra stops to rest, and men, women and children engage in their respective activities of play and relaxation. With the evening passenger train from Lahore the work of the day is wound down and men, women and children gather on their rooftops to eat their dinner and sleep there:

Sitting on their charpoys, they eat their supper of vegetables and chapattis and sip hot creamy milk out of large copper tumblers and idle away the time until the signal for sleep. When the goods train steams in, they say to each other, ‘There is the goods train.’ It is like saying Goodnight. The mullah again calls the faithful to prayer by shouting at the top of his voice, ‘God is great.’ The faithful nod their amens from their rooftops. The Sikh priest murmurs the evening prayer to a semicircle of drowsy old men and women. Crows caw softly from the keekar trees. Little bats go flitting about in the dusk and large ones soar with slow graceful sweeps. The goods train takes a long time at the station, with the engine running up and down the sidings exchanging wagons. By the time it leaves, the children are asleep. The older people wait for the rumble over the bridge to lull them to slumber. Then life in Mano Majra is stilled, save for the dogs barking at the trains that pass in the night.

It has always been so, until the summer of 1947.

(Khushwant Singh, 2006 [1956], pp 08-9)
The description of village life and the peaceful settings and homely routine that inform the communal living at Mano Majra mark this fictive village as what Henri Lefebvre calls ‘appropriated space’:

Peasant houses and villages speak: they recount, though in a mumbled and somewhat confused way, the lives of those who built and inhabited them. An igloo, an Oriental straw hut or a Japanese house is every bit as expressive as a Norman or Provencal dwelling. Dwelling-space may be that of a group (of a family, often a very large one) or that of a community (albeit one divided into castes or classes which tend to break it up). Private space is distinct from, but always connected with, public space. In the best of circumstances, the outside space of the community is dominated, while the indoor space of family life is appropriated.

(Lefebvre, 1991 [1974], pp 165-166)

Lefebvre further explains that ‘appropriation is not effected by an immobile group, be it a family, a village or a town; time plays a part in the process, and indeed appropriation cannot be understood apart from the rhythms of time and of life’ (Lefebvre p. 166). It is this appropriated space that, like the Lebenswelt and the palimpsest described by Suvorova earlier, is shared by the peaceful villagers of Mano Majra.

Sadly, the Partition ruptures these social bonds in Mano Majra, as for millions of people of India and Pakistan. One night, in August 1947, a train comes at an odd hour and stops at the station. Instead of the familiar locomotion of the loading and unloading of passengers and goods there is an eerie silence. The passenger train has come from Lahore. In spite of being a passenger train, it has brutally turned into a ‘goods train’ (a cruel play upon the earlier exchange of ‘Good Night’ by the villagers): its luggage is not living passengers but dead bodies. The train had been intercepted by a mob and all the passengers slaughtered. In the novel suddenly the memory of years of peaceful communal living among Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims turns into a nightmare of changing affiliations. The train that was so consonant with the surrounding village environment now acts as the herald of disaster and bloodshed. The familiar Lebenswelt of the peaceful village life turns into an unfamiliar and hostile world. The villagers are asked by the railway authorities to provide as much wood and kerosene oil
as they can. Everyone knows that these are needed for cremating the dead bodies as best as they can:

   The village was stilled in a deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan.

   That evening, for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh’s sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God.

   (Khushwant Singh, 2006 [1956], pp 127-28)

   In the Partition of India, as in the changed fictional village of Mano Majra, the misery of leaving a familiar homeland reveals the despondency of space being dominated, where earlier the local space was appropriated. What was mourned was not only the loss of homeland but also the sudden brutalising and estrangement of a previously familiar landscape. The nostalgia of exile felt by the people of India and Pakistan involved not only the loss of their home cities and villages but also the loss of the era of intercommunal living. All that vanished with the Partition of India. Their homeland, like their homes, had suddenly changed. As Gaston Bachelard comments:

   When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of reverie, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the maternal paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live. […] For the moment, I should like to point out the original fullness of the house’s being. Our daydreams carry us back to it. And the poet well knows that the house holds childhood motionless “in its arms”.

   (Bachelard, 1994 [1957], p. 7)

   Cities and villages, like childhood memories of one’s home, can convey a sense of both belongingness and ownership, but those positive senses of agency and community can be snatched away when we are deprived of their protective spheres, the beloved places and memories. In fact, when left without the protective, maternal Lebenswelt of memories, dreams and imagination, the love of the place can turn into its opposite: topophobia (fear of a place), and the surrounding place is looked at with hostility and anger (Suvorova, 2011, p. 7). This is also what happened during the Partition. Those who had to leave their beloved cities,
villages, or neighbourhoods and go and live in an entirely strange land felt anger and alienation at being forced to leave their familiar surroundings. As an eye witness to the killings in Bengal laments:

The part of Bengal which had been my home was no longer my home. It was a foreign land and it was not very safe in those difficult days. […] I was more angry than sorry and vowed never to enter the country and see the people who tore me away from my home. The underlying feeling was that we were being driven from our own country. Bengalis are first and foremost Bengalis—then Indians. We were angry with both Nehru and Jinnah for not handling the situation properly.

(cited in Hasan, 1997, p. 30)

Love of place is also reflected in the structure of a dwelling: its walls and roof, its doorways and windows, its rooms and courtyard. These concrete structures act as protective spheres that offer a maternal protection by containing the individual within their arms. It is interesting to note here that in certain circumstances the idea of the wall becomes synonymous not only with division and hatred but also with protection and shelter. The unseen and unwanted structure of the border between the two countries represented the chaos of the void, which is countered by the idea of shelter and protection denoted by the house as an enclosed, safe and familiar place. The long-familiar neighbourhood, as seen in Train to Pakistan and other writings about the nostalgic remembrance of a lost world, thus becomes for the individual a place that is a Lebenswelt, a life-world which contains within it familiarity and trust: ‘The Lebenswelt is the domain of the ‘immediately obvious’ that is known to all, and of the ‘circle of certainties’ that are treated with long-established trust’ (Suvorova, 2011, p. 4). The inhabitants of Lahore, Delhi, Lucknow, Bengal, Bombay, Gujarat and countless other cities had decades and centuries of communal living behind them. To dispossess them of the heritage of a common past was to take away their very life sap. No wonder many people died after the Partition, not from angry mobs but by grieving for their lost homes. A. Hameed writes:

Although more than a generation has passed, younger members of those families remain proud of their links with Lahore and although most of them have never even seen Lahore, it occupies a special place in their hearts. Some of these younger people who manage to visit Lahore go looking for the
houses where their parents and grandparents used to live and get very sad when they recall how their elders left the world carrying with them an unfulfilled desire to return to the city which was once their much-loved home. “My father died longing for Lahore,” one of them told me.

(Hameed, 2006, para. 3)

1.3. Between the walls: Saadat Hasan Manto’s ‘Toba Tek Singh’ (1955)

The short story ‘Toba Tek Singh’ (1955) by Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) shows the dilemma of the Partition as it affected a particular subgroup of the society. The story was originally written in Urdu. Manto is considered one of the best short story writers in Urdu. Many of his stories have been translated into English and other languages, such as Hindi and Punjabi. He published his short stories on Partition in a volume titled ‘Siyah Hashia’ (‘Black Margins’). Manto himself left his beloved Bombay and moved to Lahore after the Partition.

‘Toba Tek Singh’ is the story of the inmates of a mental asylum in Lahore. According to the narrator, after the Partition of India the governments of the two countries decided that, like the rest of the population, the mental patients should also be exchanged between the two countries. Hindu and Sikh patient would be moved from Pakistan to India and the Muslim patients would be shifted from India to Pakistan. Thus the story begins:

Two or three years after the 1947 Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange their lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. […] It was difficult to say whether the proposal made any sense or not. However, the decision had been taken at the topmost level on both sides.

(Manto, ‘Toba Tek Singh’, para. 1)

The narrator’s evaluative comment immediately suggests the senselessness lying at the core of the idea of such an exchange and hints at the insanity of the entire Partition itself. The decision to separate the mental patients by their religion was taken ‘at the topmost level’, as also in the case of the Partition, and the theme of insanity and the inhumane treatment of people who would be affected by the decision ppears at the very outset of the narrative. Soon the date for the exchange of lunatics was decided upon and the exchange of Muslim, Hindu
and Sikh patients was arranged. Exceptions would be made if patients had their families in the region, but since, on the Pakistani side of the border, there was practically no Hindu or Sikh family left, all the Hindu and Sikh patients had to be transferred to India. The venue of the exchange would be the Wagah border near Lahore.

The narrator of ‘Toba Tek Singh’ observes that nobody can say how the news of the exchange was received in India but in the mental asylum at Lahore it created quite a furore. The mental patients did not quite know what the Partition was or why they suddenly happened to be in a new country when they had not physically moved from where they were. Everyone tried to explain the situation in different ways: ‘A Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the fiery Urdu daily Zamindar, when asked what Pakistan was, reflected for a while and then replied, “Don't you know? A place in India known for manufacturing cut-throat razors”.’

Apparently satisfied, the friend asked no more questions’ (Manto, para. 3). The mental patients also had no clue what Partition was all about and which cities had gone to India and which to Pakistan. They only had a very vague idea of what was happening in the country:

All that these inmates knew was that there was a man by the name of Quaid-e-Azam who had set up a separate state for Muslims, called Pakistan. But they had no idea where Pakistan was. That was why they were all at a loss whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, how come that only a short while ago they were in India? How could they be in India a short while ago and now suddenly in Pakistan?

(Manto, para. 6)

The narrative aptly conveys the logic, or rather illogic, of the Partition through the innocent surmises of the mental patients. The questions which the people of the country had been asking during the entire chaos of the Partition are boiled down to these simple and straightforward conjectures. Like the innocent villager whom Kuldip Nayar recalls as having come to Lahore to meet a Hindu lawyer after the Partition, the innocent folk of the two

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14 The original Urdu text contains the word ‘ustra’ which is Urdu for ‘razor’. Thus when the patient replies that Pakistan is a place where razors are manufactured, he is innocently marking the phonological similarity between ‘Pakistan’ and ‘ustra’, thereby giving a humorous touch to his explanation. This point is missed in the English translation, since English ‘razor’ and ‘Pakistan’ have no obvious phonetic or semantic similarity to each other. A better option for the translator would have been to have let the word ‘ustra’ remain in its Urdu form, followed by its English equivalent in brackets.
countries could not really grasp the implications of the division of the country: ‘One day I ran into a Muslim villager who had come to Lahore all the way from Sargodha looking for my grandfather, a well-known criminal lawyer,’ Kuldip Nayar recalls: ‘Poor chap he didn’t realise that Partition had taken place and that the Hindus had left. It just shows how long it took for the implications of Partition to sink in’ (cited in Khan, 2007, p. 125).

Most of the patients in Manto’s story are left dumbfounded at the entire mind-boggling occurrence of the Partition:

Those who tried to explain themselves got bogged down in another enigma: Sialkot, which used to be in India, now was in Pakistan. At this rate, it seemed as if Lahore, which was now in Pakistan, would slide over to India. Perhaps the whole of India might become Pakistan. It was all so confusing! And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely disappear from the face of the earth one day?

(Manto, para.12)

However, one particular patient is most concerned about the distribution of territory between the two countries. His name is Bhishan Singh, and he came from a well-settled family in Punjab. Fifteen years earlier his family had committed him to the mental asylum, and he has been here ever since. Bhishan Singh has strange habits. If the older patients at the asylum are to be believed, he had not slept for fifteen years. In fact, he had not even lain down. His legs are swollen on account of his being kept standing for so many years. At the most he just reclines against a tree and rests. He does not have any idea of time or day, but when his family members would come to visit him he would know of their arrival in advance, as if by instinct. On that day he would take a bath and clean himself and then wait for the visit:

The hair on the Sikh lunatic’s head had thinned and his beard had matted, making him look wild and ferocious. But he was a harmless creature. In fifteen years he had not even once had a row with anyone. The older employees of the asylum knew that he had been a well-to-do fellow who had owned considerable land in Toba Tek Singh. Then he had suddenly gone mad. His family had brought him to the asylum in chains and left him there.
They came to meet him once a month but ever since the communal riots had begun, his relatives had stopped visiting him.

(Manto, para. 13)

In the asylum Bhishan Singh is more commonly known by the name Toba Tek Singh because he keeps asking where Toba Tek Singh is. In the confusion about the division of places, cities and countries, Bhishan is unsure whether Toba Tek Singh is in India or in Pakistan. He keeps asking everyone where Toba Tek Singh is, but no one is able to answer his query:

One of the lunatics had declared himself God. One day Bishan Singh asked him where Toba Tek Singh was. As was his habit the man greeted Bishan Singh's question with a loud laugh and then said, ‘It's neither in India nor in Pakistan. In fact, it is nowhere because till now I have not taken any decision about its location.’

Bishan begged the man who called himself God to pass the necessary orders and solve the problem. But ‘God’ seemed to be very busy in other matters. At last Bishan Singh's patience ran out and he cried out: ‘Uper the gur gur the annexe the mung the dal of wahay Guruji da Khalsa and wahay Guruji ki fateh. Jo boley so nihal sat sri akal.’

What he wanted to say was: ‘You don't answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have surely helped me out.’

(Manto, paragraphs 17-19)

The line Bhishan keeps repeating is in fact a comic mixture of English, Urdu and Punjabi words: ‘Uper the ghur ghur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung de dal of the laltain’. This sentence comprised of English, Urdu and Punjabi words is almost impossible to translate fully into English. The result will almost certainly be a nonsensical phrase: ‘above the rumbling the annexe, the ignorant, the split beans, of the lantern’. It is interesting that Bhishan Singh uses the word ‘the’ both in the English language, in which ‘the’ is an article, and in Punjabi in which a similar sounding word ‘de’ stands for the preposition ‘of’. The

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15 Toba Tek Singh is a district in Punjab, Pakistan. Manto calls it ‘a small town in the Punjab which was his [Bhishan Singh’s] home’ (Manto, para. 5).
utterance’s multiple uses of ‘the’/‘de’ to convey the meaning of both article and preposition make the sentence further confusing.

Through this nonsensical speech Manto’s narrative shows how language is incapable of fully representing the workings of the mind, and inadequate to expressing the physical and emotional alienation of displaced people. Through the figure of Bhishan Singh, his incoherent gibberish and his unbelievable act of not sleeping for fifteen years, Manto reveals to the reader the insanity that is needed to comprehend and articulate the bigger, more monstrous insanity of the Partition. What Bhishan Singh repeats in his insanity is actually the very sentiments of the silent majority who, in the words of Mushirul Hasan, were ‘uprooted from home and field and driven by sheer fear of death to seek safety across a line they had neither drawn nor desired’ (Hasan, 1997, p. 28). The dilemma of this line, ‘neither drawn nor desired’, can only be expressed through the use of Bhishan Singh’s non-language.

But the utterance is functional, as Bhishan Singh keeps changing the last section of his mixed speech according to the situation. When an acquaintance of his family, Fazal Din, comes to visit him Bhishan Singh does not seem too willing to meet him. In spite of the man’s news about Bhishan Singh’s family’s departure for India, the patient does not seem much interested in the news:

Then he added "Here, I've brought some plums for you."

Bishan Singh took the gift from Fazal Din and handed it to the guard.
“Where is Toba Tek Singh?” he asked.

“Where? Why, it is where it has always been.”

“In India or Pakistan?”

“In India. No, in Pakistan.”

Without saying another word, Bishan Singh walked away, muttering ‘*Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhyana the mung the dal of the Pakistan and India dur fittey moun.*’

(Manto, para. 22)

Like Lucky’s speech in *Waiting for Godot*, Bhishan Singh’s mixed utterance carries little sense, or perhaps too much sense. Bhishan Singh’s insanity, and the larger insanity of the
Partition, is reflected in the use of non-language that almost becomes, what Karline McLain calls, a ‘private language’:

The psychotic rejects communication and inter-subjectivity, and this renunciation of language leads the psychotic to live in an eternal present. In the place of the common language, the psychotic establishes a “private language” or an antilanguage. Words borrowed from the common lexicon receive new meanings, which the psychotic keeps individual: it is not simply a matter of varying the meaning of words, but of preventing words from effecting an automatic transmission of this meaning

(McLain, p. 153)

McLain shows how children’s acquisition of language comes along with their wider understanding of time and their sense of past and future. Unable to articulate a coherent speech, Bhishan Singh is trying to invert the spatial-temporal order, to enter into that timeless world where he would be reunited with his coveted hometown, Toba Tek Singh:

At last the day for exchanging the patients arrives, and all the insane people of the asylum are brought to the border. They are taken out of their buses to be handed over to the officials across the border. This proves to be quite a difficult task. Manto’s description of ways in which the mental patients react to the whole process of the exchange is very poignant:

Getting the lunatics out of the trucks and handing them over to the opposite side proved to be a tough job. Some refused to get down from the trucks. Those who could be persuaded to do so began to run in all directions. Some were stark naked. As soon as they were dressed they tore off their clothes again. They swore, they sang, they fought with each other. Others wept. Female lunatics, who were also being exchanged, were even noisier. It was pure bedlam. Their teeth chattered in the bitter cold.

(Manto, para. 25)

On the face of it this section of the narrative seems to be a simple description of the mental patients’ exchange arranged and carried out by the officials at the borders. However, the entire scene reenacts ominously the chaos of the Partition. The weeping and frantic
running of the lunatics, their tearing of their clothes, their refusal to leave, their singing, their swearing, and above all their weeping is all a replay of the anguish of displacement at the Partition. With grim humour Manto's narrative re-presents the tragedy of the Partition: the killings, the lootings, the arson and the rape. Nor are the conditions of fictionalised nature any more benevolent. It was sweltering hot in August 1947; it is bitter cold in Manto’s story. The extremities of the weather are not incidental. When land is split, and men, women and children, like villages and houses, are torn apart, weather can hardly remain humane. The predicament of this forced displacement is all the more poigniant when seen in the context of mental imbalance: how can one be driven out of one’s home without being literally driven mad: ‘Most of the inmates appeared to be dead set against the entire operation. They simply could not understand why they were being forcibly removed to a strange place’ [emphasis added] (Manto, para. 26). Here, Manto’s narrative surpasses commonplace diegesis. Had he tried to direct the scene in a drama, the cries and screams would have fallen far short of the actual shrieks of women being raped, men being killed, children being slaughtered. No poetry, painting, film or documentary could have captured the heart-rending pandemonium described here, a clamour that is so evenly poised between the tragic and the farcical.

Manto shows that the drama of the Partition had turned the country into a theatre of the absurd where everything is topsy-turvy; the insanity of these patients directly correlates with the bizarre atmosphere of insane brutality and confusion that prevailed during the Partition. As Daniyal Mueenuddin writes in his introduction to Manto’s collection of short stories, Mottled Dawn: ‘Manto draws our attention to the, literally, millions of little tragedies that together composed the whole tragedy of Partition’ (Mueenuddin, 2011, xiii). It is no coincidence, then, that in writing his own epitaph Manto had, with his customary grim humour, compared himself to God, each vying to be better able to spin the yarn of human tragedies:

Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto and with him lie all the secrets and mysteries of the art of short story writing. Under tons of earth he lies, still wondering who among the two is the greater short story writer: he or God.

(Manto’s self-composed epitaph)

Bhishan Singh remains a figure of the border, a prefigurative liminal character in the narrative. One by one the inmates of the mental asylum are registered by the officials and turned over to the officials of the other country. Then it is Bhishan Singh’s turn:
When Bishan Singh's turn came to give his personal details to be recorded in the register, he asked the official “Where's Toba Tek Singh? In India or Pakistan?”

The officer laughed loudly, ‘In Pakistan, of course.’

Hearing that Bishan Singh turned and ran back to join his companions. The Pakistani guards caught hold of him and tried to push him across the line to India. Bishan Singh wouldn't move. ‘This is Toba Tek Singh,’ he announced. ‘Uper the gur gur the annexe the be dhyana mung the dal of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan.’

(Manto, para. 27)

Bhishan Singh runs and stands in the space between the two borders, between the two rows of barbed wires that make up the wall separating the two countries. The officials try to force him to cross the border and go to India but fail to do so. They even try to convince him that Toba Tek Singh is actually in India, or soon it would be, but to no avail. No amount of persuasion, cajoling or forcing can budge Bhishan Singh. At last the officials leave him where he is for the time being and turn to exchange the other patients. The night passes on. As morning approaches Bhishan Singh’s quest for his Toba Tek Singh finally comes to an end:

Just before sunrise, Bhishan Singh, the man who had stood on his legs for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from the two sides rushed towards him, he collapsed to the ground.

There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

(Manto, para. 30)

Here the story ends, and with it ends Bhishan Singh’s search for Toba Tek Singh. The final phrase ‘lay Toba Tek Singh’ can refer to the man nicknamed 'Toba Tek Singh' stretched out on the ground and also to the piece of ground itself, which has become for him Toba Tek Singh, where he had most wanted to be. McLain notes an even deeper ambiguity in the story’s ending:
The ending is even more ambiguous . . ., in that it does not clearly state that Bishan Singh has died, and hence the possibility exists for multiple interpretations of this ending. And perhaps this ambiguity is intentional, meant to complement the liminal position that Toba Tek Singh (a.k.a. Bhishan Singh) is in at the end of the story—both man and place, located at the border between India and Pakistan, and perhaps also somewhere between life and death.

(McLain, p. 155)

Like McLain, I read the story’s ending as radically ambiguous. Yet this is the very point that Manto is trying to make: it does not matter whether Bhishan Singh dies or not. Though the description of him lying prostrate does suggest that he meets his death, the narrative leaves his ending deliberately underspecified. Playing God once again, Manto leaves Bhishan Singh where he is, just as millions had been left by the British to languish away from their homes when, to borrow Thomas Hardy’s phrase, the president of immortals had ended his sport with them. Bhishan Singh deserves no better treatment. With the ending of the story and the setting aside of the book, the writer and the reader, in fact literature itself, gives up the responsibility for representing an ordeal that can only be lived through, never expressed in words.

Yet the story is not just about Bhishan Singh; it is also about Toba Tek Singh, the lost homeland that could not be found on either side of the hastily sketched Radcliffe Line. It could be neither in India nor in Pakistan, because it was a home, not a mark on the map. That cherished space of communal living had vanished from the face of the earth, never to be retrieved. That is why it is found in that no man’s land which has no name: the only place where it could have been found. Bhishan Singh’s search for Toba Tek Singh as an almost fabled homeland poignantly represents the unsure premises upon which the edifice of belongingness stands. Resisting his exile, Bhishan Singh prefers the middle ground between the two borders instead of being forced to go to either of the two countries. The cruelty of his displacement could be voiced only through his gibberish, his last heart-rending scream or his ultimate silence.

‘Toba Tek Singh’ is not just ‘about’ the Partition and the anguish of displacement. The narrative also enacts displacement in the context of mental disorder. The narrative is also about walls, and the space of shelter within enclosed walls. Like the thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who yearned for their Lahore, Delhi or Lucknow, Bhishan Singh too
frantically searches for his lost Toba Tek Singh; he finds it, too, not on the maps of Radcliffe’s making nor in the promised land of political speeches, but in the narrow space between the walls of the border. As Leopold Lambert writes, ‘Every border has a thickness; and in that thickness is a state of exception’ (Lambert, 2014, ‘Legal Theory’). Bhishan Singh’s insanity allows him to find this state of exception. Millions of his compatriots were not so lucky.
Chapter 2


The plight of women who suffered during the riots and mass migration at the time of the Partition has mostly remained hidden behind walls of silence. In this chapter I discuss Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), set in Lahore of 1947, and examine how walls function in the narrative as metaphors for silence and how architectural structures reflect the tearing apart of territory. This chapter is divided into three parts: the first part gives an overview of the ordeals of women and their inability to articulate their experiences; the second part examines *Ice-Candy-Man* as a representative text that addresses walls in the context of the Partition; the third part compares the representation of walls in various examples of Partition literature.

2.1. Voicing their Silence

The bloodshed and the killings of the Partition left their marks on men, women and children, but most of all on the bodies of women. Thousands of women of all three major religions — Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs — were abducted, raped, mutilated and/or killed. A rough estimate shows that more than 75,000 women were kidnapped, raped or killed during the Partition of 1947. Although most often excesses were conducted by men of other religions, sometimes the culprits were men of the same religion, even the same community and area. In this chapter I discuss *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sindhwa (b. 1938) and examine how the Partition of the country is represented by a writer who, as a young girl, had witnessed the violence on women at that time and then wrote about these happenings in a historical novel some four decades later. Sidhwa lived in Lahore during part of her childhood and early youth, and her novels contain a strong autobiographical element.\(^\text{16}\) I critically

\(^{16}\) Bapsi Sidhwa lived a significant part of her early life in Lahore. Sidhwa’s family shifted to Lahore from Karachi when she was just five years old. She lived in that city until she married at the age of nineteen. Sidhwa’s family was Parsi so did not have to move out of Lahore at the Partition. Like the narrator, Lenny, in *Ice-Candy-Man*, Sidhwa was also affected by polio in her childhood. Like her, too, Sidhwa witnessed the anarchy of the Partition as a young girl, and witnessed the killings and lootings in Lahore during the Partition.
discuss how in *Ice-Candy-Man* Sidhwa represents the walls of the Partition and the splitting of the country through images of the tearing apart of both architecture and the human body.

In spite of it being the cruellest chapter of the Partition, the sufferings of women during the violence of 1947 is also the element of the event that is least talked about. Most women have remained quiet about their suffering, some have assumed ignorance of any such happening, while a few have just refused to talk. Their realisation that language cannot express the anguish they had to go through has made them discard any attempt to voice their thoughts and feelings. The fates of these abducted, raped and tortured women have been as whimsical as the circumstances of their torments. Some abducted women were never recovered at all, some were forced to convert and marry their abductors, while still others were sold off by one buyer to another, like cheap wares. Many women had their bodies inscribed with the religious or nationalist insignia of their abductors; others had their foreheads tattooed with phrases announcing their violators as their husbands or owners. Their breasts were chopped off, their genitals inscribed with nationalist phrases like ‘Jai Hind’ (Victory to India) or ‘Pakistan Zindabad’ (Long live Pakistan), and they were tortured in ways that often led to their deaths. Those who escaped this horrifying barbarity and were later recovered were mostly rejected by their own families as being ‘dishonoured’; others who were accepted had to live with the pain and haunting memories of their past. Many, in resignation, had no one to turn to and so decided to stay with their abductors, thus living with the memory of their humiliation every instant of their lives.

After the Partition, when the governments of both countries set up rehabilitation centres for the recovery of these abducted women, the problem also arose as to how to deal with the children these women had borne as a result of being raped: where would these children go? At these centres some women who had become pregnant went through abortion, while those who had given birth were offered the choice of either taking their children with them back to their original families or leaving them behind in the care of orphanages — both options holding equally grim and heart-breaking prospects. In *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998) Urvashi Butalia writes:

In 1988, a woman’s journal, *Manushi*, published a review of a Gujarati book, *Mool Suta Ukhde* (Torn from the Roots). The book was a sort of memoir and documentary account by a woman called Kamlaben Patel, of her work with abducted and raped women at Partition. The story Kamlaben told was shattering. Nearly 75,000 women, she recounted, had been raped and
abducted on both sides of the border at Partition. This figure would probably have been higher if Kashmir had been taken into account—perhaps close to 100,000. Apart from the rapes, other, specific kinds of violence had been visited on women. Many were paraded naked in the streets, several had their breasts cut off, their bodies were tattooed with marks of the ‘other’ religion; in a bid to defile the so-called ‘purity’ of the race, women were forced to have sex with men of the other religion, many were impregnated. They bore children, often only to have them taken away forcibly.

(Butalia, 1998, p. 100)

There have been many efforts to trace the histories of some of these abused women and write down their experiences or interview them. Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin and Urvashi Butalia have edited and authored a number of books that present the sufferings of women during the Partition. Urvashi Butalia’s The Other Side of Silence is a series of interviews and talks with women who had been subjected to the violence of the event. No Woman’s land: Women from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh write on the Partition of India (2004) edited by Ritu Menon, is a collection of essays that discuss the repercussions of the violence inflicted upon women during the Partition. Veena Das writes in ‘Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain’ that the silence of women about their suffering during the Partition lies in stark contrast to the rituals of mourning exercised at someone’s death, where women articulate their wailings with cries and bodily gestures of lamentations, while it is the men who remain mute (Das, 1996, pp. 81). For Gyanendra Pandey, the very word ‘Partition’ itself stands for violence. In Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India (2001), Pandey dwells upon the need to articulate the horrors of the Partition: ‘Partition was violence, a cataclysm, a world (or worlds) torn apart’ [italics in the original] (Pandey, 2001, p. 7). Sudhir Kakar, a psychoanalyst, writes in The Colours of Violence: Cultural identities, religion, and conflict (1996) that sexual violence is a direct product of the social acceptance of non-sexual violence in emotionally charged societies such as those of South Asia: ‘There is now empirical evidence to suggest that the greater the legitimation of violence in some approved areas of life, the more is the likelihood that force will also be used in other spheres where it may not be approved’ (Kakar, 1996, p. 38). Kakar further points out that the use of sexual violence such as rape is born out of the general social acceptance of non-sexual violence such as the use of force or murder to defend one’s land or family: ‘there is a strong association between the level of nonsexual violence and rape, rape being partly a spillover from cultural norms condoning violent
behaviour in other areas of life’ (Kakar, 1996, p. 38). As Madhuparna Mitra writes in ‘Contextualising Ayah’s abduction: Patterns of Violence against Women in Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*’ (2008): ‘There is substantial evidence that many instances of religious violence were orchestrated by politically organized groups; however, there is also plenty of evidence that some of the violence was also “spontaneous,” where individuals, incited into group-think, perpetrated opportunistic acts of aggression, sometimes unleashing escalating cycles of retribution’ (M. Mitra, 2008, p. 24).

The Partition ruptured language as much as lives on the ground. Bede Scott observes that in most cases the speech of women in recounting their traumatic experiences had long pauses and reflected their difficulty in bringing themselves to voice their thoughts: ‘in the vast majority of cases the traumatised women were reluctant to discuss their experiences, and even the testimonies we do have are punctuated with elliptical silences’ (Scott, 2009, p. 36). Shail Maryam observes that the traumatic events of the Partition were only articulated by participants in ‘short, abbreviated, condensed descriptions’, a process that denotes a complete ‘rupture of language’ (Maryam, 1996, p. 151). These researchers realise the extent of physical and mental torment that these women had to go through and how that trauma made them incapable of expressing their ordeals in words. Therefore, most of them just resorted to silence as the only mode of existence in which they could pass their remaining days.

*Ice-Candy-Man* (1988; later published in 1991 under the title *Cracking India*) depicts the violence of the Partition from the perspective of a young girl, Lenny, who is the narrator of the novel. Lenny is an eight-year-old (five-year old, at the start of the novel) disabled girl, her right foot hobbled by polio. Due to her physical disability she mostly remains confined to her pram and is almost always escorted by her Hindu Ayah, named Shanta. Ayah, literally meaning nanny or governess, is an eighteen-year old girl, dark-skinned and plump, and her youth and sexuality attract many men towards her. One of these men is the ice candy man, the vendor of lollies, who frequents the neighbourhood. Ice-candy man is a Muslim.

When the Hindu-Muslim riots break out in Lahore during the Partition, the Ice-candy man allows Ayah to be abducted by a mob of Muslim men. Like thousands of other women Ayah suffers: she is abducted, raped, and later turned into a prostitute by the Ice-candy man, who then forcibly converts her into a Muslim and marries her. Ayah’s body is violated and her spirit is shattered.
Lenny witnesses these happenings along with seeing the city and the country being literally ripped apart by wide-scale violence. In her restricted condition Lenny watches the rapidly changing world of Lahore, the silently leaving neighbours, the new occupants in familiar houses, the wailings of women, and the frenzied cries and shouts of mobs who kill, abduct or violate any person of a different religion in a fit of revenge. Lenny sees and hears many cases of the rape, torture and killing of scores of women, and is aware of the division of the country and the relocation of the masses. At the end of the novel Ayah is recovered by the government agencies and is sent back to Amritsar. Lenny’s foot becomes better and she is able to walk as the city, too, returns to its feet and totters back to normalcy. Some semblance of calm is restored to burning and bleeding Lahore, yet the memory of the bloodshed of Partition continues to remain for those who were affected by it.

2.2. **Speaking Walls and Silent Bodies in *Ice-Candy-Man***

*Ice-Candy-Man* narrativises the dialectic between silence and the power to speak. The struggle to articulate is present throughout the text of the novel. The opening and closing poetic epigraphs dwell upon the negative presence of silence and the need for articulating one’s feelings. The two extracts of poetry, each occurring in the beginning of the opening and the ending chapters, are taken from the poetry of the Urdu and Persian poet Allama Iqbal (1877-1938). The novel opens with the verse in which the poet laments his silent suffering:

Shall I hear the lament of the nightingale, submissively lending my ear?
Am I the rose to suffer its cry in silence year after year?
The fire of verse gives me courage and bids me no more to be faint.
With dust in my mouth, I am abject: to God I make my complaint.
Sometimes You favour our rivals then sometimes with us You are free,
I am sorry to say it so boldly. You are no less fickle than we.


The verse occurring at the beginning of the last chapter also shows the poet’s yearning for the power to speak:

Give me the (mystic) wine that burns all veils,
The wine by which life’s secret is revealed,
The wine whose essence is eternity,
The wine which opens mysteries concealed.
Lift up the curtain, give me power to talk.
And make the sparrow struggle with the hawk.


These extracts show how the poet laments his inability to speak and yearns for the power to talk. The poet also asks for the ‘curtain’ to be lifted from the secrets of life. The juxtaposition of the lifting of a blinding screen and the desire to talk implies a mask of inhibitions and constraints which has denied the speaker the ability to say anything. In the first line of the second epigraph, the poet also wants a wine that would burn ‘all veils’. The reference here is not only to the spiritual experience that would open up divine mysteries to the speaker, but also to the ability to express these experiences in words. Therefore, while language is the strongest form of expression it is also the one most liable to break, bend, or fall short of the capacity to grasp the enormity of a traumatic experience. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, in ‘Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women’s Novels on the Partition of India’ (2005), writes that quotations from Iqbal’s poetry in *Ice-Candy-Man* refer to Sidhwa’s own development as an author:

These epigraphs chart Sidhwa’s own development from the submissive nightingale and silently suffering rose to the heroically struggling sparrow. But what does the struggle between the sparrow and the hawk represent? I read it as the struggle between the discourses that surround the event of partition with silence and as the novelist’s attempts to break that silence through her narrative.

(Kabir, 2005, p. 183)

While Kabir interprets the sparrow as a symbol for the writer herself and a reference to Sidhwa’s development as an author, the sparrow can also be seen as an image for language, and the problem of trying to grapple with the monstrous experience of the Partition sufferings (the hawk). Howsoever strong the ambition of the sparrow might be it cannot, under normal circumstances, overcome the hawk; in the same way, language or words cannot encompass the extent of the suffering, anguish and humiliation suffered by the women who were victims of the Partition. In line with Kabir, Gyanendra Pandey sees the discourses of the Partition as offering only a partial or fragmentary view of the enormity of an experience: ‘the historian
needs to struggle to recover “marginal” voices and memories, forgotten dreams and signs of resistance, if history is to be anything more than a celebratory account of the march of certain victorious concepts and powers like the nation-state, bureaucratic rationalism, capitalism, science and progress’ (Pandey, 1994, p. 214). In the context of the attempt to recover these marginal voices, Urvashi Butalia ponders the capacity for language itself to articulate traumatic experience:

And words are, after all, all we have. One of the things that I found in the course of my interviews and research was that people struggled to describe what they had been through at Partition, and often ended up by saying what they had seen was indescribable.

(Butalia, 1998, p. 271)

In the only partially fictionalised world of *Ice-Candy-Man*, as in Butalia’s interviews, the silence of women who have been raped and humiliated suggests not just an inability to speak, but also the depressing realisation of the very pointlessness of articulating what one has gone through. That is why the women who suffer most in the novel are the ones who, even when given a chance, speak the least. Ayah mostly speaks in short sentences or dreamy phrases, punctuated with sighs, pauses or gestures, while Hamida, another woman who had been abducted by Sikhs and later recovered by government agencies, also mostly wails and cries: ‘What can a sorrowing woman do but wail?’ (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 213). When Lenny herself realises she had unwittingly revealed Ayah’s hideout to the Ice-candy man, she naively tries to punish herself by poking her tongue with a tooth brush until it bleeds:

Ice-candy-man is crouched before me. ‘Don’t be scared, Lenny baby,’ he says. ‘I’m here.’ And putting his arms around me he whispers, so that only I can hear: ‘I’ll protect Ayah with my life! You know I will … I know she’s here. Where is she?’

And dredging from some foul truthful depth in me a fragment of overheard conversation that I had not registered at the time, I say: ‘On the roof—or in one of the godowns…’

Ice-candy-man’s face undergoes a subtle change before my eyes, and as he slowly uncoiled his lank frame into an upright position, I know I have betrayed Ayah.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 182)
Lenny immediately realises that her own tongue has let her down. Where Lenny’s speech gives Ayah away, Ayah is unable to speak for herself. When she is discovered by the mob and dragged out of the house, the expression on her face shows her silenced terror:

They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet — that want to move backwards — are forced forwards instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child’s screamless mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulder, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seams shows. A sleeve tears under her arms.

… The last thing I noticed was Ayah, her mouth slack and piteously gaping, her dishevelled hair flying into her kidnappers’ faces, staring at us as if she wanted to leave behind her wide-open and terrified eyes.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, pp 183-4)

When next the narrative presents Ayah, after the godmother and Lenny’s mother succeed in finding her, she is living in the vicinity of Lahore’s Heera Mandi as a prostitute and the Ice-candy man’s wife. She has changed greatly. Wearing the heavy dress of a Muslim bride and loaded with paint and perfume she is like an inanimate doll — until she speaks:

Ayah’s face, with its demurely lowered lids and tinsel dust, blooms like a dusky rose in Godmother’s hands. The rouge and glitter highlight the sweet contours of her features. She looks achingly lovely: as when she gazed at Masseur and inwardly glowed. But the illusion is dispelled the moment she opens her eyes—not timorously like a bride, but frenziedly, starkly—and says: ‘I want to go to my family.’ Her voice is harsh, gruff: *as if someone has mutilated her vocal cords.*

[emphasis added] (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 261)

The abrupt sentence and the gruff tone show how both voice and words are ineffectual and insufficient for Ayah. Speech is not only denied to her, but also mutilated. It is not without reason that when finally Ayah is recovered and sent to the rehabilitation centre near Lenny’s house, her very name ‘Ayah’ becomes a jingle that rhymes with ‘hai’, the sound of weeping women. In the scene where Lenny chants Ayah’s name and the refuge women respond with their cries of mourning, the entire atmosphere turns the women’s muted silence into a timeless lamentation. Sidhwa creates a picture where the speech of women resonates with the name of Ayah; the mutilated vocal cords of these abused women can only reverberate in
moans, and the primeval breast-beating gesture and hysterical sighing becomes the only language available to these fallen women:

And I chant: ‘Ayah! Ayah! Ayah! Ayah!’ until my heart pounds with the chant and the children on the roof picking up shout with all their heart: ‘Ayah! Ayah! Ayah! Ayah!’ and our chant flows into the pulse of the women below, and the women on the roof, and they beat their breasts and cry: ‘Hai! Hai! Hai! Hai!’ reflecting the history of their cumulative sorrows and the sorrows of their Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Rajput great-grandmothers who burnt themselves alive rather than surrender their honour to the invading hordes besieging their ancestral fortresses.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, pp. 273-274)

The fact that language is not only muted but also mutilated becomes one of the gravest consequences of the Partition. Speech becomes interchangeable with wailing, names with sounds, chants with sobs — ‘Ayah, Ayah, Ayah,’ ‘Hai, Hai, Hai’— shows the fragile ground upon which the entire edifice of language stands, and how tragically close intelligent speech can be to incoherent moaning.

Whereas speech is denied to women in the world of *Ice-Candy-Man*, it is made articulate through architecture: walls, ceilings, courtyards have eyes, tongues, even hands. In a bid to show how the tearing apart of land and bodies cannot be spoken of in the language of everyday speech but is nonetheless still possible to articulate, Sidhwa endows architecture with the power to speak. Houses and walls start acting like living things. Living people assume a deathly silence, while concrete walls become their mouthpieces. In the very opening description of the novel Lenny describes the part of Lahore where she lives:

My world is compressed. Warris Road, lined with rain gutters, lies between Queens Road and Jail Road: both wide, clean, orderly streets at the affluent fringes of Lahore.

Rounding the right-hand corner of Warris Road and continuing on Jail Road is the hushed Salvation Army wall. *Set high, at eight-foot intervals, are the wall’s dingy eyes. My child’s mind is blocked by the gloom emanating from the wire-mesh screening the oblong ventilation slits. I feel such sadness for*
the dumb creature I imagine lurking behind the wall. *I know it is dumb because I have listened to its silence, my ear to the wall.*

[emphasis added] (Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 1)

In the opening section of the novel the narrator Lenny tells the readers about the Salvation Army wall which remains opaque and stoic. It is not just a wall but an eight-foot structure that monitors its surroundings with dingy eyes. With its wire-meshed screen that lies across the ventilation slits and its high, unbridgeable structure, the wall looks very much like a torture cell. The opacity of the wall and its lurking, monitoring eyes give a sinister presence to the bricked structure. The dumbness of the living creature imagined to be lurking on the other side of the wall shows how the wall has literally subjugated the living presence within its parameters. Close to Lenny’s house is the Centre for Rehabilitation of Recovered Women, which houses the refugee women who had been kidnapped at the Partition and then later recovered by government agencies.

At first Lenny thinks that it is a women’s jail. When Lenny, her brother and cousin go to their rooftop and try to peer into the courtyard of the Centre they see the pallid and expressionless faces of the women there:

> And on a Sunday afternoon—it is already October—we sneak up the stairs and, minding the holes in the roof, tiptoe to look into the enclosed courtyard. Our servants’ quarters’ roof runs in a continuous line of clay to their roof, demarcated only by a foot-high brick wall.

> We assume it’s a women’s jail, even though they look innocent enough—village women washing clothes, crossing the courtyard with water canisters, chaffing wheat and drying raw mangoes for pickling. There is very little chatter among the women. Just apathetic movements to and fro.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 189)

The lack of chatter and the apathetic movements of these refugee women reveal them to be helpless, captured creatures. Here the link between architecture and women gains an added connotation: they are actually in ‘a jail’, fettered by the shackles of society that rejects them as ‘fallen’ women. In her innocence Lenny cannot really understand what is meant by a fallen woman, or why the refugee women are held in that jail-like house. When she meets one of...
these women, Hamida, who is hired to take care of Lenny after Ayah is abducted, the young girl asks:

‘Why were you in the jail?’ I ask at last.

‘It isn’t a jail, Lenny baby … It’s a camp for fallen women.’

‘What are fallen women?’

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 214)

The real meaning of ‘fallen’ women still eludes Lenny, so she asks her Godmother:

‘What’s a fallen woman?’ I ask Godmother.

‘A woman who falls off an aeroplane.’

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man* p. 215)

Eventually, Lenny develops some idea of what is meant by a ‘fallen’ woman, yet not without again referring to it in terms of guilt and violation:

‘Hamida was kidnapped by the Sikhs,’ says Godmother seriously. On serious matters I can always trust her to level with me. ‘She was taken away to Amritsar. Once that happens, sometimes, the husband—or his family—won’t take her back.’

‘Why? It isn’t her fault she was kidnapped!’

‘Some folks feel that way—they can’t stand their women being touched by other men.’

It’s monstrously unfair: but Godmother’s tone is accepting. I think of what Himat-Ali-alias-Hari once told me when I reached to lift a tiny sparrow that had tumbled from its nest on our veranda.

‘Let it be,’ he’d stopped me. ‘The mother will take care of it. If our hands touch it, the other sparrows will peck it to death.’

‘Even the mother?’ I asked.

‘Even the mother!’ he’d said.

It doesn’t make sense—but if that’s how it is, it is.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, pp 215-16)

A woman’s acceptance in her family depends upon her being ‘untouched’, just as the birds won’t accept their mate if the creature has been touched by humans. The similarity of
Hamida’s situation to the condition of the poor birds is brought out with its full poignancy. The body becomes the sign of purity or impurity, the skin becomes the boundary of the self, the wall becomes the reflector of the interior. Here walls and the body come together, both standing as signs of the reality inside. Women like Hamida who have been touched or violated by other men cannot go back to their families: their walls have been transgressed and their interiors invaded by outsiders. Being unable to fortify their bodies against the invaders, these fallen women have now to pass their lives in the jails of society.

Lenny’s growing awareness of the vulnerability and abuse of the women’s bodies is juxtaposed with her increasing realisation of her own femininity, signified by her breasts. Breasts are a significant part of a girl’s realisation of her womanhood: ‘she felt a growing bulge beneath her breasts’. Yet this realisation is also related to her awareness of the violence meted out to women, such as the brutal cutting off of women’s breasts during the vengeful attacks upon them. From the very outset of the novel we see a recurring mention of woman’s breasts. The awareness of breasts as objects of vulnerability comes to Lenny alongside her natural observation of her mother’s and godmother’s breasts. Lenny links breasts to the woman’s world, watching her mother’s breasts that ‘she has inherited from a succession of bountifully endowed Parsee grandmothers’ (p. 10). She sees Ayah’s ‘half-spheres beneath her short sari-blouses’ (p. 3), and when Ayah takes Lenny for a walk in her pram, her youthful body, despite being draped in the sari, attracts the leering eyes of the passers-by. From the very outset of the novel, Sidhwa draws attention to Ayah’s attractive body and to her breasts:

Ayah is chocolate-brown and short. Everything about her is eighteen years old and round and plump. Even her face. Full-blown cheeks, pouting mouth and smooth forehead curve to form a circle with her head. Her hair is pulled back in a tight knot.

And, as if her looks were not stunning enough, she has a rolling bouncy walk that agitates the globules of her buttocks under her cheap colourful saris and the half-spheres beneath her short sari-blouses.

(Sidhwa, Ice-Candy-Man, p. 3)

Deepika Bahiri believes that this description registers Ayah as ‘an object of desire and fetish’ (Bahiri, 2006, p. 222). Bahiri writes that the narrator, Lenny, draws our attention to Ayah ‘as a target identified early for perverse desire and subsequently for punishment’ (Bahiri, 2006, p. 222). What Sidhwa is trying to convey through the elaborate description of Ayah is how
the woman’s body itself becomes part of the discourse of Partition. As Veena Das observes, ‘the violence of the Partition was unique in the metamorphosis it achieved between the idea of appropriating a territory as nation and appropriating the body of the women as territory’ (Das, 1996, pp. 82-83). As the novel proceeds, images of women’s breasts become loaded with references to violence. Breasts become the most vulnerable part of the woman’s body, being at the same time a symbol of her sexuality, objects of her maternal capability as organs of lactation and a part of her personal and private space. Overpowering the woman’s body, raping her, then cutting off her breasts not only are barbaric forms of torture but also express a sadistic desire to control her body and, by extension, lost territory.

One very lurid reminder of the women’s bodies and their vulnerability in Ice-Candy-Man comes in the form of the news that a train full of Muslims had been intercepted and torched, with almost all its passengers slaughtered. The women on the train were taken away by the mob. Later on gunny bags full of the breasts of women were found. The brutality of the proceedings is told by the Ice-candy man, who had been waiting for his relatives, including his sisters, who were meant to be coming from India:

‘A train from Gurdaspur has just come in,’ he announces, panting. ‘Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women’s breasts!’ Ice-candy-man’s grip on the handelbars is so tight that his knuckles bulge whitely in the pale light. … What I’ve heard is unbearable. I don’t want to believe it. For a grisly instant I see Mother’s detached breasts: soft, pendulous, their beige nipples spreading. I shake my head to focus on Ice-candy-man. He appears to have grown shades darker, and his face is all dried up and shrivelled-looking. I can see that beneath his shock he is grieving.

(Sidhwa, Ice-Candy-Man, p. 149)

A few pages later the reference comes again to the gunny-bags full of women’s breasts. Ice-candy-man, much affected by the incident, is now boiling for revenge on the Hindus and Sikhs. In a moment of wrath he says:

‘I’ll tell you to your face—I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from Gurdaspur … that night I went mad, I tell you. I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I’d known all my life! I hated their guts … I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they
cut off the Muslim women … The penises!’

(Sidhwa, Ice-Candy-Man, p. 156)

When breasts become the grisly contents of a sack, their status as organs of sexuality and motherhood is taken away. In the narrative, breasts and penises become physical objects and tools of revenge, the one for the other. The presence of penises and breasts as organs of procreation and lactation becomes muddled with their vulnerability as tokens of brutal revenge.

While parts of the human body become alienated, separate physical objects, or instrumentalised as revenge tools, architecture starts assuming life-like attributes, sometimes threatening. In the eyes of Lenny, walls and human beings become almost interchangeable entities. Soon after the abduction of Ayah, Lenny imagines that the ceiling itself is acquiring the shape of a hand: the hand of Ayah’s slain lover, Masseur:

I lie with my eyes open, staring at the shadows that have begun to haunt my room. The twenty-foot-high ceiling recedes and the pale light that blurs the ventilators creeps in, assuming the angry shapes of swirling phantom babies, of gaping wounds forming deformed crescents—and of Masseur’s slender, skilful fingers searching the nightroom for Ayah.

(Sidhwa, Ice-Candy-Man, p. 212)

Lenny imagines the presence of Masseur’s hands looking for Ayah and realises how the entire room becomes an uncanny presence. As in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short story ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ (1892) here, too, the narrator sees the room being filled with phantom shapes that start to assume human forms. While in Gilman’s story the design on the yellow wallpaper itself starts to assume the figure of a creeping woman, in Ice-Candy-Man Lenny’s mind sees the light from the ventilators assuming the shape of wounds, babies, and the fingers of the dead Masseur. As Jane, the narrator of Gilman’s story, ultimately sees herself in the image of a woman behind bars, Lenny imagines her room being filled with ghostly figures. Each narrator sees the room as becoming a part of herself as well as remaining an external, somewhat threatening structure.

Lenny not only sees wounds and dead bodies but also dismemberment in the world around her. Masseur’s hands and fingers move around the space. At one point in the novel
she refers to a recurring nightmare of dismemberment. Here the image is of a child, herself, being dismembered:

I recall another childhood nightmare from the past. Children lie in a warehouse. Mother and Ayah move about solicitously. The atmosphere is businesslike and relaxed. Godmother sits by my bed smiling indulgently as men in uniforms quietly slice off a child’s arm here, a leg there. She strokes my head as they dismember me. I feel no pain. Only an abysmal sense of loss — a chilling horror that no one is concerned by what’s happening.

[emphasis added] (Sidhwa, Ice-Candy-Man, p. 22)

Slicing off body parts becomes the prevalent custom, and the chilling sense of apathy that surrounds the proceedings makes Lenny see many eerie connotations of ‘partition’. What is common between the Salvation Army wall, the swirling phantoms in Lenny’s room and the warehouse of her nightmare are the quietness and silence with which architecture seems to be dictating and dominating human beings, and the sense of apathy and indifference that accompanies the process of dismemberment — ‘no one is concerned by what’s happening’.

Perhaps nowhere in the novel is architecture so malevolent as in the story that Hamida tells to Lenny. A king is once told by a fortune teller that his son, the prince, would be killed by a tiger when the prince turns sixteen. In desperation the king ordered all the tigers in his kingdom to be killed. By the time the prince turned sixteen there was not even a trace of a tiger in the entire kingdom. Still the king was apprehensive of the fortune-teller’s prediction during the year of the prince’s sixteenth birthday. One day the prince fell asleep in the darbar (court):

The darbar was almost over when the prince awakened from a terrifying dream. His frightened eyes opened on a finely wrought hunting scene painted on the ceiling. Royal huntsmen, spears poised in varying attitudes of attack, surrounded a fierce tiger, bare-fanged and richly striped. Suddenly the prince screamed and cried: ‘Oh! The Tiger! The Tiger! He’s got me!’ He fell back and writhing in agony died.

In the pandemonium that followed, the king’s eyes quickly traced the path of the son’s congealed stare: and, horrified, he saw the lifelike glow on the rich
pelt dim, and the tiger’s shining eyes revert to yellow paint.

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 224)

Despite the king’s efforts, the engraved tiger on the ceiling had become life-like and killed the prince. Architecture becomes a living creature, and concrete structures like walls and ceiling acquire the attributes of living beings. These living creatures are rarely benevolent; the ceiling with its painted scene is murderous, the wall has dingy eyes, the warehouse is ‘businesslike’ and the courtyard is enclosed and guarded like a jail. Places acquire a life of their own and add to the malevolence of the violent times.

Where dismemberment becomes the mark of the times, the city of Lahore itself seems to be torn apart. Lahore’s roads and streets are turned into a slaughterhouse, as in the narrative section devoted to an awful day of riots during Partition. A horrified Lenny and an aghast Ayah watch people being killed by the raging sectarian mob. At this point Lahore itself becomes a battleground, its various suburbs nominated and converted into Hindu, Muslim and Sikh strongholds:

And instead the skyline of the old walled city ablaze, and people splattering each other with blood! And Ice-candy-man hustling Ayah and me up the steps of his tenement in Bhatti Gate, saying: ‘Wait till you see Shalmi [the Shah Alam Gate] burn!’ And pointing out landmarks from the crowded tenement roof: ‘That’s Delhi Gate … There’s Lahori Gate … There’s Mochi Darwaza …’ […] ‘It’s a Muslim *mohalla,*’ he continues in an effort to dispel his rancour. ‘We’ve got wind that the Hindus of Shalmi plan to attack it—push the Muslims across the river. The Hindus and Sikhs think they’ll take Lahore. But we’ll surprise them yet!’

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, p. 134)

From the rooftop the Ice-candy man comments on the gruesome hunt going on in the streets, as he lets the two young women watch the killings from the safety of his rooftop. Lahore’s suburbs are literally being owned and demarcated according to one’s own identity. Dismemberment becomes the manner of seeing things, and mutilation becomes a frequent reference. From the innocent story of the mouse with seven tails, which are one by one chopped off (p. 7) to the horrifying description of a Muslim mob in Lahore lynching innocent individuals, the novel is full of references to mutilation and disintegration. The narrative
shows the gruesome ways in which the mob slaughters innocent people. At one point Lenny sees a little child pierced by a spear, which is then waved by the savage mob:

A naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders is waved like a flag: her screamless mouth agape she is staring straight up at me. A crimson fury blinds me. I want to dive into the bestial creature, clawing entrails, plucking eyes, tearing limbs, gouging hearts, smashing brains: but the creature has too many stony hearts, too many sightless eyes, deaf ears, mindless brains and tons of entwined entrails...

(Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, pp. 134-5)

The mob has a non-human quality. It is like a moving river with an insatiable thirst for blood, a volatile energy of its own: ‘The terrible procession, like a sluggish river, flows beneath us. Every short while a group of men, like a whirling eddy, stalls—and like the widening circles of a treacherous eddy dissolving in the mainstream, leaves in its centre the pulpy flotsam of a mangled body’ (p. 135). When another Hindu man is lynched (p. 135), Lenny, after reaching home, takes out her dolls and tears apart their legs, sobbing at the brutality she had just witnessed. Her dolls substitute for human beings, and her rage finds expression in tearing apart the legs and bodies of her dolls. Is she reenacting the massacre or expressing her new rage against the mob? Her innocence has been robbed, and in her sobbing replay of the violent orgy she has witnessed on the streets of Lahore she fiercely denies the difference between things and people. She can now relate the attributes of life in non-living things (dolls) and sees living people as forming an inhuman, almost monstrous energy (the blood-thirsty river of men). Even though Lenny gets better towards the end of the novel and the plaster of her leg comes off, her mind remains scarred with indelible memories of the violence and suffering she had witnessed around her.

Near the end of the novel, silence again prevails, but now it is the eerie silence of resignation, the disturbing, exhausted quiet after the storm. Ayah is recovered and sent back to her family in Amritsar. The Ice-candy man also disappears, possibly going to India after the Ayah. We are not told if Ayah is accepted by her family or not, or whether the Ice-candy man, in some way, recompenses for his sins. Perhaps this is the very point that Sidhwa is trying to make: it does not matter what happened to Ayah after she leaves; her life, and the lives of thousands of women like her, their days and nights, their unseen tears and unheard sobs, remain silently buried in the folds of time and history.
2.3. Representing Walls in the Partition Literature: a Comparative Analysis

In this and the previous chapter I have examined how writers have addressed the trope of walls in Lahore’s Partition literature, mostly in anglophone texts. Representing walls, both physical and metaphorical, in the Partition literature is not an easy task. How can one write about the loss of home and neighbourhood, the transgression of personal space, the violation of the body, and the estrangement of loved relations? And in which language? Like home and family, language is also part of that affiliation which results from years of a shared past. In the portrayal of walls in the Partition literature two significant factors shape its representational status: firstly, most of the literature that emerged in the years immediately following the Partition was written in the local languages; secondly, the trope of walls functioned more as offering prospects of shelter and protection rather than acting as structures of division. Both these aspects of the Partition literature changed after 1981.

I take 1981 as a turning point in the Partition literary tradition because this was the year when Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) was published and internationally celebrated. Rushdie’s novel ignited a growing movement to establish a canon of Partition literature in English. The 1980s are also significant as the decade followed two wars between India and Pakistan (1965 and 1971). Pakistani writing plays a significant role in locating the representation of walls in Partition literature, as it became a subcategory in the Anglophone canon. Let us examine these two points, of language choice and of the representation of walls in Partition literature, one by one.

Partition literature in the years immediately following the division of India was mainly written in Urdu, Hindi, or the regional languages of India and Pakistan, such as Bengali, Gujarati and Punjabi. While writers’ preference for the local languages over English can be said to arise out of an acute sense of nationalism or regionalism, it is important to recognise that writers and thinkers turned to their local languages as the most natural and spontaneous medium for expressing the atrocities that had been committed around them. Witnessing such horrifying anarchy, they resorted to their own mother tongues for sustenance. Though a number of Partition writings did appear in the English language after 1947, most notably Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1955), Mumtaz Shah Nawaz’s *The Heart Divided* (1957) and Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), it was not until much later, after the 1980s’, that Pakistani writers preferred to compose in English.
language. Paromita Deb points out in her essay ‘Religion, partition, identity and diaspora: a study of Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man’ (2011) that while one does not find many works in English, ‘there is a rich body of fictional work in the other popular sub-continental languages, especially those used by the victims of Partition, Punjabi, […] Hindi, Urdu and Bengali’ (Deb, 2011, p. 216). Deb further points out that ‘Quite surprisingly, we do not find substantial writing about Partition of India in 1947. Few survivor accounts of Partition are available in English. This can be linked to their refusal to speak loss, or, their inability to distance themselves from the brutality and objectively speak or write their experience’ (Deb, 2011, pp. 215-216).

Another major reason these writers have preferred to write about Partition in local languages over English can be laid to the complexities, psychological and political, of using a nonnative or at least non-home language. Writing in a foreign or second language can require a more laborious intellectual effort which could only be indulged in when time had partly healed the wounds of the spirit. Writing about Partition much later, writers could look back at 1947 with the psychological distance necessary for a more stylised expression and a more metaphorical, even allegorical, approach. Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981), Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man (1988), and Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines (1988), to mention just a few works, weave together historical references, autobiographical accounts, and myths with frequent uses of symbolism, allegory and magical realism. Rushdie’s use of metaphors such as the perforated sheet and the English pun on ‘hole’ and ‘whole’, Sidhwa’s personification of walls as dingy-eyed structures, and Ghosh’s zigzagging between past and present, mark their texts as literary and sometimes ground-breaking experiments in trauma representation.

However, compared to these later works, earlier Partition literature from the pens of those writing in the midst of the anarchy of Partition, such as Manto, Taunsvi, Chughtai or even Khushwant Singh, rarely resorts to any elaborate uses of literary devices. Their writings

are simple, stark and direct. They are not self-consciously ‘literary’, as if the historical material cannot accept such representation. For instance, in *Train to Pakistan* Singh satirises the very phenomenon of metaphorising when he relates how Nehru’s famous ‘Tryst with destiny’ speech, delivered on the eve of the Partition, became the herald of bloodshed and tragic loss for the common folk of India. Even in more overtly satirical pieces, such as the prose of Fikr Taunsvi, the style of writing is sometimes humorous and at other times jokingly equivocal, but does not contain many pithy discussions or metaphoric or allegorical expressions, perhaps because such intellectual and explicit literary discourse could hardly be resorted to in times of an intimate realisation of great personal and collective loss. Writing about Fikr Taunsvi, K.K. Khullar observes that Taunsvi never wished anyone a Happy New Year, but a ‘Less Unhappy New Year’ (Khullar, 1999, para 3). Khullar stresses that Taunsvi deserves a wider readership: ‘What Taunsvi needs is a translator’. Similarly, Asmat Chughtai’s *Tehri Lakeer* (*The Crooked Line*) abounds with the author’s personal innuendos and opinionated statements, yet still the language is not lavishly displayed but frugally spent. As we have already seen, Manto’s writing is simple yet powerful.

Manto’s short story ‘Khol Do’, translated in English as ‘Open it’ (1950), is the story of a teenaged girl, Sakina, who becomes separated from her father, Sirajuddin, on their way from Amritsar to Lahore during the Partition. Sirajuddin keeps searching for his daughter, and when finally he finds her in a semi-dead state, he takes her to a doctor to see if she is alive or not. The simple phrase ‘Khol Do’, is used by the doctor at the end of the story, when he is examining Sakina, who is presumed to be dead. Looking at Sakina, the doctor says ‘khol do’ (open it), referring to the window which he wants to be opened due to the stifling heat. However, this simple phrase draws a stunning and traumatised response from the girl. In her semi-unconscious state she automatically opens the cords of her trousers and lowers her *shalwar* (pants). While the girl’s father, old Sirajuddin, shouts in joy at seeing that his daughter is alive, the doctor realises the traumatic experience of sexual abuse that she must have gone through:

The doctor looked at the body on the stretcher. He checked its pulse and said to Sirajuddin, “The window, open it!” (‘*khirkhi khol do*’)

At the sound of the words, Sakina's corpse moved. Her dead hands undid her salwar [trouser] and lowered it. Old Sirajuddin cried with happiness, “She's alive, my daughter's alive!”

The doctor was drenched from head to toe in sweat.
Here the story ends. Even with his simple and sparing use of language, minimal description and abrupt ending, Manto’s stories can literally move his readers to tears. The Urdu literature of Partition exemplifies how sometimes deep emotions, heart-felt anguish and unthinkable experience can be understood and conveyed not by elaborate literary devices and cleverly constructed plots but by that simplicity of expression which can, at times, say a lot by just leaving certain things unsaid.

Like language choice, the perception and representation of walls has also undergone a shift over the years, mainly because of changes in the political atmosphere of the two countries. We see a significant change in the approach to the metaphor of walls and barriers in the Partition literature that was produced in the years shortly after the Partition and that which was written much later. Again taking the 1980s as a turning point, we see that the trope of walls acquires a more hegemonic connotation in Partition writing. For example, in Manto’s ‘Toba Tek Singh’ (1955), discussed in the previous chapter, the space between the barbed wires of the border becomes a distorted homeland for the mentally unbalanced Bhishan Singh. The walls of the border become his home, his Toba Tek Singh. In a time of uncertainty and displacement and the awareness of the whole country being split, these writers see the homely structures of houses, walls and fences as embodiments of shelter and safety. In contrast to the cruelty, absurdity, and irrationality of the ‘Wall’ (the Partition), Manto sees the ‘walls’ (such as of houses) becoming sacred, humane and protective. Like the city with its protective wall, the house holds off the chaos of the external world. As Suvorova tells us:

Like the home, the city is opposed to the open place—the boundless, unstructured, and ‘undomesticated’ space that is the symbol of chaos. … The city is a place that gives the individual shelter, protection, and safety in the space of topophobia. The individual needs the city to overcome his horror of the void. A city is made up of walls, roofs, vaults, and towers that protect us from the onslaught of jungles and deserts. Cities are built on borders, protect borders, and always remain metaphysical frontiers.

(Suvorova, 2011, p. 7)

This two-fold representation of walls in literary writings can also be seen in the works of Rudyard Kipling. Rudyard Kipling’s works address the trope of walls as both structures of
shelter and embodiments of hostility. Kipling was removed from the haven of his Indian abode at the age of six and sent to a foster home in England so that he and his younger sister, Trix, could study there. However, this sudden change of ‘home’ left an indelible mark on his young mind, and one which can be seen in many of his writings. Especially in his short stories one can see walls as embodiments of shelter and care (eg. ‘The Story of Din Mohammad’, ‘Without the Benefit of Clergy’, ‘On the City Wall’ and ‘Beyond the Pale’). Kipling uses the image of darkness as a metaphor for walls, as darkness too stands as an in-between state between two extremes, bright light and jet blackness. This textual use of walls to occupy a middle ground in Kipling's narratives will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. In spite of belonging to an earlier era, Kipling’s writings influence and shape the ways in which walls can and have been seen by later writers in South Asia.

How can the same trope, walls, be perceived so differently in two different points in time when representing the Partition? It cannot be denied that the idea of the wall has undergone a change in perception and representation during the decades after the Partition. This change could be due to the historical contexts and conditions in which a certain text has been written. Since 1947 both India and Pakistan have been engaged in a tug of war with each other, either in the frequent incidences of border skirmishes or through expressions of hate and rivalry in media and films. The two nations have turned from lost siblings to querulous neighbours. The post-1980 hostility in the representation of walls can be seen in the way the Wagah border has been perceived. Wagah, situated on the Grand Trunk Road, is the only road border between India and Pakistan and is close to the cities of Lahore and Amritsar. It was through this route that hundreds of thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims crossed over to the other side during the Partition.

Where the border was once seen just as a demarcating line between the two territories, it is now celebrated as a mark of separatist nationalism. In fact, we can say the Wagah border defines Pakistan and, to a large extent, Indian nationalism today.
Memories of a common past have faded from the collective consciousness of these two peoples, as more than half a century has elapsed since the Partition and the generation that witnessed the Partition is gradually passing away. Bodh Prakash, in *Writing Partition: Aesthetics and Ideology in Hindi and Urdu Literature* (2009), points out that after the two wars of 1965 and 1971 the political atmosphere around the two countries has hardened into separatist and hate-oriented tendencies towards each other. Literature is not aloof to any change in the socio-political atmosphere of the region. But neither does it necessarily and strictly correlate with those conditions. Rather, literary writing mediates historical conditions and aesthetic form, a fact that can clearly be seen in the literary representations of walls in the Partition literature.

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Section II: Walls and Veils
Chapter 3

Walls and Veils in Louise Brown’s *The Dancing Girls of Lahore (2005)*

This chapter about walls and veils is organised in three parts. The first part discusses Lahore’s brothel, called the Heera Mandi, and introduces Louise Brown’s *The Dancing Girls of Lahore (2005)*. The second part addresses the subject of veils in Brown's ethnographically-informed creative nonfiction narrative, with reference to the plight of the inhabitants of the brothel. The third part examines the interplay of religion, law and society in the lives of the prostitutes of Lahore.

*The Dancing Girls of Lahore: Selling Love and Saving Dreams in Pakistan’s Ancient Pleasure District (2005)* by Louise Brown is an elaborate ethnographic narrative about the women and men of Lahore’s brothel. The people of the brothel include prostitutes, pimps, eunuchs, children, old women, sweepers and hawkers, and the narrator herself as a fully embedded ‘observer’, if not participant, in the district. *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* combines historical narrative with creative non-fiction techniques. Brown tells the story of her visits to the brothel quarters from April 2000 to December 2004, and her association with one particular family there, that of a prostitute she calls Maha. In narrating the story of Maha and her family Brown represents the norms, rituals and common practices of this ancient pleasure district of Lahore.

Walls and veils function in several important ways in the narrative and in the urban social world the narrative depicts. The veil, or the *purdah*, takes on significant meanings in the lives of the prostitutes, especially as a marker of respectability that helps the prostitutes as they attempt to resist the intense social stigma attached to their profession in the conservative Islamic society of Lahore. Also active in the dynamics of the veil is its role as a wall, as a piece of cloth that functions as a mask which at once conceals the wearer from the onlooker and frustrates the gaze that attempts to penetrate into its inner space. Like the wall, the veil is both a structure of division and an intermediary that touches both sides of the divide. In its capacity as an in-between agent the veil, like the wall, comes to be closely associated with the representation of another category in the brothel that defies the binaries of gendered
identities: that of the eunuch or the *hijra*.20 In their attempts at affiliating with one gender while retaining the attributes of the other, the *hijras* of Heera Mandi nevertheless maintain their heterosexual tendencies as pliable consorts to either sex, while they also occasionally capitalise upon their ambiguous gender identities by literally acting as pimps and go-betweens. Extending the metaphor of the in-between state to the linguistic arena, this chapter also addresses how the transvestite literally acts as a translator between the social attributes attached to male and female roles in society.

*The Dancing Girls of Lahore* is a work of creative non-fiction, where the author has recorded her experiences with and observations of Maha, her family and other members of the Heera Mandi. Yet the text also uses recognisable techniques of fiction: clear plot, characters, dialogue and conflict. Brown uses these novelistic techniques to portray a segment of the society which has more often been depicted in filmed documentaries and interviews or portrayed through romantic fiction. Brown’s work is remarkable because it brings together fictional narrative techniques with ethnographic non-fiction. In this and Chapter 6, I will compare Brown's narrative with other novels and creative nonfiction texts by Weiss, Mohsin Hamid, and Haroon K. Ullah. The point to be noted here is that while creative or novelistic non-fiction gives readers an over-view of a place, narrative fiction is more likely to foreground for us the social and cultural struggles for discursive space that mark such urban places and South Asian women’s lives.

1.1. Heera Mandi

The brothel of Lahore is called ‘Heera Mandi’ (literally, ‘diamond market’), and is situated inside the walled city of Lahore. The word heera (diamond) in the title of this neighbourhood refers not to any high-flown epithet directed to its inhabitants, as is commonly believed, but to Heera Singh (1816-1844), who was the prime minister of the Sikh kingdom of Lahore from 1843 to 1844. Heera Singh was one of the favourite ministers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the maharaja named the brothel of Lahore after him. The brothel is also referred to by other titles, ‘Shahi Mohallah’ (royal neighbourhood) and ‘red-light district’. Heera Mandi is a place that is at once notorious and celebrated for its historic footings. It has been located in its present site within the walled city of Lahore since the times of the Mughals in the sixteenth century, or perhaps even earlier. The brothel was frequented by men from the royal army. That is why the brothel is close to Lahore Fort and is entered through

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20 *Hijra* and *khusra* are Urdu words for 'eunuch' or 'transvestite'.

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the most preserved of the twelve gates in the city, Roshnai Gate (Gate of Lights), named so because it was illuminated at night for the passage of the men from the royal family and army. The urban juxtaposition of Lahore Fort, Roshnai Gate and Shahi Mohallah reveals a clear chain of associations and movement from one place to the other, in accordance with the operations that these places and their occupants served. Shahi Mohalla has been the house of the most famous of courtesans and the epicentre of artistic skills such as music, singing and dancing. Even today, some courtesans and prostitutes there sing and dance well, and one can witness singing and dancing sessions, though the majority of the prostitutes find sustenance not so much by musical activities as through the sex trade.

Heera Mandi has been represented by writers and artists alike. Many writings featuring Lahore contain references to this section of the city. As we have seen, Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man includes a section where Ayah is sent to the Heera Mandi of Lahore. Mohsin Hamid’s Moth Smoke records a visit to the place by the narrator, Daru, and Mumtaz who interviews a prostitute there. Rudyard Kipling’s Kim alludes to the place, and Som Anand’s Lahore: Portrait of a Lost City represents it as part of the cityscape. Recent research on the Heera Mandi includes Fouzia Saeed’s Taboo: The Hidden Culture of a Red Light Area (2002), Louise Brown’s essay ‘Performance, Status and Hybridity in a Pakistani Red-Light District: The Cultural Production of the Courtesan’ (2007) and Anita M. Weiss’s Walls Within Walls: Life Histories of Working Women in the Old City of Lahore (2002). Nahim Jabbar examines the culture of the Heera Mandi in ‘Symbology and Subaltern Resistance in Hira Mandi Mohalla’ (2011) and shows how the prostitutes’ religious fervour serves to counter their stigmatised status in the society. D’Ison’s Hira Mandi (2011) is an account of life in the Heera Mandi, as is Aneela Shuja’s doctoral dissertation ‘Under the Pomegranate Tree’ (2013). Shuja presents the experiences of a young girl’s encounter with the world of Lahore’s Heera Mandi and then her attempts to escape that life, partly by retracing her footsteps back to her hometown. Rukhsana Tak’s doctoral dissertation ‘Prostitution and the law in Pakistan: a case study of Lahore’s Hira Mandi’ (2003) examines the relationship between prostitution and the law in Pakistan, focussing upon the intricacies of the constitutional and religious responses to the parameters of individual and sexual freedom in an Islamic country like Pakistan. Taking Lahore’s Heera Mandi as a case study, Tak analyses the social, religious and legal issues within the sex trade in Pakistan. Treena Orchard’s review of Brown’s The Dancing Girls of Lahore states that Brown’s text connects

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21 Heera Mandi is spelled ‘Hira Mandi’ by Weiss, D’Ison and Tak.
‘the forces that combine to reshape traditional forms of prostitution in this setting, including the loss of official forms of patronage, the rise of other kinds of entertainment (i.e. cinema, Internet pornography, and foreign dancing tours), and the reconfiguration of global market economies’ (Orchard, 2010, p. 2). William Grimes, in his review of Brown’s book, argues that the narrative shows the changing culture of the Heera Mandi:

The old neighborhood, with its crumbling buildings, is on its last legs now. The fabled courtesans of Heera Mandi, once sought out by princes and emperors, are a distant memory, their role much reduced, like the geishas of Japan. Today's client is more likely to be a fat businessman flashing a Rolex and driving a Range Rover. The women, hastily trained, dance to music booming from a tape deck if they dance at all. Some are barely into their teens.

(Grimes, 2005, para 2)

Grimes further writes that Brown’s The Dancing Girls of Lahore is ‘both chilling and heart-warming, on a neighborhood where all the rules seem to be changing except the ones that keep Pakistani women in a state of abject servitude’ (Grimes, 2005, para 3).

Brown's The Dancing Girls of Lahore shows Heera Mandi to be a strange place, a point of stigma and notoriety for the women of the brothel and also a place of relative freedom and control for them. As courtesans, artists and even prostitutes, the women of Heera Mandi have lives that are very different from the lives of the women of other parts of Lahore, and indeed the rest of Pakistani society. The prostitutes live in miserable, squalid conditions and are often forced to enter the sex trade in order to support themselves and their children. Most of the children are born from sex with various men and stand almost no chance of leading any better or more respectable lives than their mothers. The girls are destined to follow in the footsteps of their mothers, since in Pakistan’s conservative society not many men would agree to marry the daughter of a prostitute. Marriages do often take place between the women of the brothel and their clients, yet most of these men already have their own ‘normal’ families and marry the prostitute either as a temporary infatuation or in order to possess her and ward off her other clients. Such marriages are mostly doomed from the outset. As soon as the man gets tired of his new wife he sends her packing back to her ignominious origins. Although the children born of such liaisons are born in wedlock, they share the fate and sufferings of their mothers. They remain silent witnesses of their mother
trying to cope between setting up the business again to support them, and yearning for her brief glimpse of the lost paradise of a home and family. Financial hardships, personal dilemma, a stigmatised existence, fading beauty, aging, and the realisation of dwindling customers turn these women into erratic, irritable, and malicious individuals, perhaps more sinned against than sinning.

In *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* Brown narrates the true story of the life and struggles of a prostitute called Maha (the names of Maha, her children and most other characters in the text have been changed to protect their privacy), and her wavering efforts to offer her children a better future. The story of Maha and her children, and of those around them, allows us to look into the miserable and oppressive living conditions in the Heera Mandi of Lahore, as well as to gain insight into the dynamics of power operating in the lives of prostitutes in particular and Pakistani women in general.

One touching aspect of Brown’s study is the depiction of the state of the children in the Heera Mandi. These children, often the issue of the brothel, are mostly unwanted and unattended, and many follow in the footsteps of their mothers. If the child is a girl she is destined to become a prostitute, and if the child is a boy he will become a pimp, loaf around, or take to drugs. They turn from bubbly, innocent and playful persons to precocious and artful coquettes or street urchins and oglers. Nor are these children welcomed by their mothers; Maha’s own children are clearly a burden upon her:

Maha lives with her five children in an apartment on the second floor of a house lining the big, open courtyard. … She’s lovely, with a natural poise, and her long thick hair is hennaed to a dark, glossy red. She’s plump but still graceful, and her dancing is superb. Ten years ago, before the pounds piled on, she must have been astonishingly beautiful. Now she’s in her midthirties and the mother of too many babies. Her children are delightful but they’ve been a disaster for Maha’s career: they’ve not done her figure or her finances any favors.

(Brown, 2005, p. 13)

Among her children the eldest daughter, Nisha, is a weak, quiet fourteen year old suffering from TB. The second daughter, Nena, twelve, is prettier and best suited to be Maha’s successor. The third daughter, Ariba, eleven, is the most neglected of all, plain looking and a
pickpocket. The youngest two, a son and a girl, are toddlers born from Maha’s last marriage to Adnan. Brown muses over the prospects and opportunities open for these girls:

I can’t imagine that these girls will make successful prostitutes. Their fate, though, has been sealed from birth. They are barely literate. They don’t go to school. In fact, they don’t go anywhere. They spend their lives in these two dark rooms in the corner of the courtyard, tripping down the spiral staircase, hovering around the entrance to the alleyway, and occasionally going in a rickshaw to the bazaar to buy food and clothes. That is the extent of their world.

(Brown, 2005, p. 18)

For most girls in Lahore’s society the only chance to improve their social status is marriage, but for the daughters of a prostitute this option is almost non-existent. They can only enter the trade of their mothers. Brown says further: ‘As Maha so often reminds me, the daughter of a dancing girl always becomes a dancing girl. They pass the occupation and the stigma from one generation to the next like a segment of DNA’ (Brown, 2005, p. 18).

While the prostitutes of the Heera Mandi grapple with various economic and social challenges, they are also, at a certain level, independent in their own way. They are not strictly bound by the laws of purdah to lead lives of seclusion as are most other girls of respectable middle-class families. Nor are they, for good or bad, destined to become domestic slaves as virtuous housewives. In their own capacity as courtesans, artists and sex workers, they struggle to scrape together a saving that will last them for the remainder of their lives. They also groom a daughter or female heir to carry on the work of singing, dancing and sex. Therefore, in an entirely unique rationale of its own, the matriarchal world of the Heera Mandi defies the world of the men, the very men for whose indulgence the neighbourhood was originally founded.

1.2. Walls and Veils in Anita. M. Weiss and Louise Brown

In The Dancing Girls of Lahore the world of the Heera Mandi depicted bears comparison with Anita M. Weiss’s broader account of the lives of women in the walled city

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22 I am here reminded of the Urdu verse by the eighteenth-century Indian poet, Mirza Ghalib: ‘Aik chakar hei meray paon mein, zanjir nahin’, which can be translated as ‘My feet are bound by a vicious cycle, not by any chain’.
of Lahore, *Walls Within Walls: Life Histories of Working Women in the Old City of Lahore* (2002). Weiss interviewed and talked to many women belonging to the lower-middle class society of the walled city of Lahore. The women both Weiss and Brown present live within the same vicinity, that is, the walled city of Lahore, but Brown’s women are dancing girls and prostitutes who live in the brothel, while Weiss’s women are ordinary lower-middle class housewives who support their families by doing various kinds of work at home. Reading these two works side by side one sees the complex power structures operating within the lives of prostitutes in particular and women in general in Pakistan. These power structures are apparent in the literal and figurative workings of veils and walls in the lives of these women.

In the introduction to her research Weiss makes a brief reference to the Shahi Mohalla. She notes the stigmatising notoriety assigned to this part of the city and its inhabitants, something which keeps Weiss from including the prostitutes within her identified area of research. In spite of her interest in researching the lives of all the women of the walled city, whether ordinary housewives or women of the brothel, Weiss decided not to include the women of the brothel. She justifies her omission by pointing out that the brothel is an intensely stigmatised part of the city and that visiting the area would jeopardise the friendship and trust she has gained with the ordinary housewives. Even her local assistants refuse to go there:

However, the part of the Walled City housed on the other side of Roshni Gate is an area which my survey did not cover as it includes the infamous *kucha* Hira Mandi, known for dancing and prostitution. We decided that although Hira Mandi is an important historical and commercial part of the Walled City (housing a well-known high school in Dhiyan Singh’s haveli), the life circumstances of women resident there differ dramatically from those elsewhere in the Walled City.

(Weiss, 2002, pp 14-15)

Weiss’ belief that the life circumstances of the women of the two parts of the same suburb ‘differ dramatically’ clearly shows the difference in the social responses to these women: while the ordinary housewives suffer from the same financial hardships that are faced by women of the brothel, they enjoy the social capital of respectability and family support which sustains them during their hardships. The prostitutes of Heera Mandi, on the other hand, have
no form of social respectability or communal support while they grapple with various economic and personal challenges. Weiss adds:

Furthermore, we determined that given the prevailing mores and values, conducting a survey and interviewing women in this area would threaten our research: none of my Pakistani research assistants would venture into the area, and my own respectability and the degree of freedom I enjoyed to mix with women in the Walled City would be compromised if it became known that I frequented the area.

(Weiss, 2002, p. 15)

The difference in social response to the women of the brothel and the ordinary housewives is also seen in the way in which the architecture of the two vicinities differs. There is a marked difference in the structure of the buildings from the point in the walled city where the brothel begins. The windows suddenly become wider and more open and the balconies become more extended and visible to the public. These windows and balconies are called jharokas, and one can see many instances of these in the architecture of old Lahore. The jharokas at the Shahi Mohallah differ significantly from anywhere else in the walled city. The structure of these windows allows less privacy for the occupants of these houses, and their width and openness permit outsiders to easily view the interior of the houses. Elsewhere in the walled city the windows are close-set, narrow and more private. Weiss writes:

Even from Hira Mandi’s architecture, observers know they are in an entirely different social domain and locality: every house has a wide jharoka complete with an open balcony framing onto a wide street below, just above the ground floor. Men can easily look up and view the “wares” for sale in the evening; the place is shuttered closed during the day, except for the few craftsmen making tablas and sitars in their shops to accompany the dancing which takes place at night. No other kucha had such consistent patterns of open balconies. Everywhere else, living space is private, and where there is a balcony or jharoka at all, it will frame into a private area, traditionally inhabited by kin (or fictive kin) in Muslim areas, or biradari members in Hindu ones.

(Weiss, 2002, p. 15)
Within the space of a few hundred feet the urban architecture changes, indicating the different socio-economic considerations that these buildings are designed to meet.

The doors and windows of the Heera Mandi are also unique in themselves. Most of the windows or *jhrokas* of the Shahi Mohalla are curtained by bamboo blinds designed to serve as partitioning walls, partially screening the occupant from the sight of someone in the street, yet allowing the breeze to waft through. These bamboo blinds are very common in India and Pakistan, due to the extremely hot weather, and work as replacements for doors. Yet in the domain of the Heera Mandi these blinds also act as part of the professional apparatus of the sex trade. The semi-opacity of the bamboo blinds performs the function of partial veiling, which, at times tends not to screen but to enhance the lure of the women indoors, as these blinds are neither entirely opaque nor wholly transparent. The people on one side of the blind are semi-visible to the onlookers on the other side. The curtain or blind allows the sight of blurred outlines of figures on the other side of the screen while also restricting the outsider’s gaze from a complete view.

![Bamboo curtains, commonly used in the Heera Mandi](http://globetravelblog.com/visit-heera-mandi-famous-shahi-mohalla-in-lahore-pakistan)

Figure 12. Bamboo curtains, commonly used in the Heera Mandi

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In these images we can grasp how the women of Weiss’s research and the women of Brown’s study differ from each other. While the windows in the Heera Mandi are screened with semi-visible bamboo blinds, the windows and other outlets of Weiss’ women’s houses are guarded with hard, latched doors, which are mostly kept closed.

![Figure 13 (a) and 13 (b) showing the balconies and windows in the walled city](https://indologygoa.wordpress.com/tag/heera-mandi/)

These different forms of curtaining doors and windows, one semi-permeable, the other protective and solid, show how the women of the brothel and the ordinary housewives have different approaches towards seclusion, veiling and social stigma.

The women in both communities observe veils, though to varying degrees and for different purposes. The veil strongly affects the lives of the women of Pakistan. The veil is a part of the clothing used by the majority of the women in Pakistan, though now many women belonging to well-off families in big cities have to a large extent discarded it. The veil can either be a long and loose clothing called burkah or burqa that covers the whole body from the head to the feet, or a chador, which is a long shawl that covers the upper part of the woman’s body including her head. While the chador can act as a facial veil, a head scarf or just a wide stole, the burqa essentially covers the entire body of the woman, including her head and face.

24 Figure 13 (a). Lahore’s Heera Mandi. Retrieved from [https://indologygoa.wordpress.com/tag/heera-mandi/](https://indologygoa.wordpress.com/tag/heera-mandi/);
Figure 13 (b) [https://www.flickr.com/photos/michaelfoleyphotography/sets/72157601464898381/detail/?page=3](https://www.flickr.com/photos/michaelfoleyphotography/sets/72157601464898381/detail/?page=3)
The women in Weiss’s research observe the veil or the purdah quite strictly. Almost all the women interviewed by Weiss mention their ages when they started observing the purdah, which meant not only covering their heads, bodies and faces, but also staying at home and avoiding public appearance. In other words, adopting the veil as a mode of dress also means adopting a social veil.

Walls figure prominently in this elaborate construction of social, sexual and gender difference in the Islamic culture of Lahore. As Brown explains:

_Dupattas_, chadors, and burqas are part of observing purdah, which means “curtain,” and is the real or symbolic divide between the sexes. … Separating the sexes is essential to prevent fornication and maintain social order. Men and women have to live in separate worlds. Ideally, they are divided by walls and physical space and women are secluded in their homes. Well-off families can afford to keep their women in the luxury of purdah as a sign of status, but the poor don’t have the finances to cocoon females within their family, so when these women appear in public, they are divided from men by the use of veil.

(Brown, 2005, p. 64)

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25 Figure 14. Examples of types of veils worn by Muslim women. Retrieved from https://www.pinterest.com/pin/326159197986040000/
While the marginalised women Brown reports on have relative freedom in observing the veil, Weiss’s lower and lower middle class women do not have the option of flexible veiling. As soon as a girl reaches puberty she is veiled; this also means, in most cases, she no longer attends school, if she had been attending school at all. The need for escorting the girl to and from the school often results in her having to leave her studies, a decision also supported by her family’s thoughts of her prospective marriage. Marriage for the women of the lower middle-class respectable families of Lahore is a very important and a pivotal issue. That is why most of the ruminations of the women of Weiss’s study revolve around their marriage, in-laws and children. In their talk we see how observing *purdah* is one of the major factors in the lives of the women of the walled city. The opening quote of Weiss’ book comes from one woman of the walled city:

“We power? Taking off the *burqa* and putting on a *chador*: now that’s power!”—*A woman in Kucha Kakaziyan* [italics in the original] (Weiss, 2002, p. xi)

These women regard getting rid of the extensive clothing of the *burqa* and putting on the more flexible *chador* (shawl) as a form of empowerment for women of the walled city.

In contrast to Weiss’s women, Brown’s higher status women have a multi-layered, somewhat flexible, and at times problematic relationship to the veil. In their professional dealings they may or may not veil themselves but on occasions where there is need to profess their respectability as women they meticulously drape their bodies in their veils or the *chadors*. As Brown observes, ‘There’s a finely judged code about exactly when and how far a woman should veil’ (Brown, 2005, p. 66).

When a male visitor calls at Maha’s house, she adjusts her *dupatta* in a manner that reflects his social status in relation to her own. If the man is important and has high *izzat*, honor, she sits on the mattress while covering all of her hair, her breasts, and her legs with a *dupatta* or chador. She may also lower her gaze and speak quietly. If the man is less important, her *dupatta* is looser and her hair often tumbles out from under the material. If he’s of low status, the *dupatta* barely sits on her head and she jokes and laughs loudly while lounging on the mattress. If the man is a workman or a
servant, she doesn’t even bother to veil and the *dupatta* lies crumpled on the floor.

(Brown, 2005, pp 66-67)

Women like Maha know exactly when, where and how much they should veil themselves. The veil, whether a *burqa*, a *chador*, or a *dupatta*, stands as a symbol of female respectability. In spite of the fact that the prostitutes of the Heera Mandi can easily discard the veil, and usually do so in order to meet the demands of their profession, on many occasions they willingly veil themselves: ‘In Heera Mandi’, writes Brown, ‘a rich, secluded, and veiled woman has honour’ (Brown, 2005, p. 66). Thus we see how the veil as material object and cultural signifier performs different functions in the lives of the ordinary women and prostitutes living in the same general area of the walled city.

Various researchers have discussed veiling and its strong links to sexual and social dominance by men in Muslim society. The veil has often been seen as a physical embodiment of the subjugation that women suffer in an oppressive social order. In ‘Muslim Women and the Veil: Problems of Image and Voice in Media Representations’ (2006) Myra Macdonald argues that in the colonial agenda of rescuing impoverished and disadvantaged Islamic woman subjects, the foremost concern has been to remove her from her veil. Paradoxically, the veil not only becomes a fabric enclosing the space of a woman’s freedom and independence but also acts as a strategy for enticing men towards that very sexuality the veil is supposedly designed to hide. Quoting Meyda Yegenoglu, Macdonald adds that ‘the desire to penetrate behind the veil was intensified by the “scopic regime of modernity” that privileged seeing as the primary route to knowledge. It was “characterized by a desire to master, control, and reshape the body of the subjects by making them visible”’ (Macdonald, 2006, p. 8). This link between visibility and the body is also addressed by Massimo Leone, who discusses the tradition of veiling in early Christianity: ‘In the eyes of Tertullian and his contemporaries, but maybe also in those of many current religious fundamentalisms, the veil should not so much protect the female body from male desire, as defend male desire from the female body’ (Leone, p. 281). To be sure, the veil as signifier and cultural practice can be seen as a sign of the subjugation of women, as an attempt to render them invisible, but it can also function to enhance women's sexual appeal, if not always intentionally.

In the ethnographic nonfiction narratives of Brown and Weiss all these functions of veils are evident: isolating, rendering invisible, and manipulating the male gaze. In the
section titled ‘The Luxury of Purdah’ Brown discusses the undercurrents of the trope of purdah:

Wearing a veil is a sign of respectability, but no one wears a dupatta in Tibbi Gali [the most notorious section of the Heera Mandi]: there’s no point. These are the lowest order of women, and they are granted no comforting pretences when they work here. Pretensions only cost money, so they remove their dupattas to show they are public women for sale.

(Brown, 2005, p. 64)

The workings of the veil go hand-in-hand with the operation and manipulation of the male gaze. In the world of brothel semiotics where the veil can serve to entice the onlooker’s gaze, it also serves to indicate the veiled woman’s potential sexuality. Thus in the mujras or the dances the semiotic relationship between the veil and the gaze is deliberately accentuated: ‘Manipulation of the veil and management of the gaze is an art. Women flirt with a glance that lasts a fraction of a second, and they are provocative even while wearing a piece of material that’s supposed to obscure their sexuality’ (Brown, 2005, p. 67). As the dancers toy with their veil, they also play with the male gaze: manipulating the gaze is part of their professional finesse. The power relation between the gazed and the gazer is reinforced and yet reversed as the object of sight can herself see as well as hide. Brown shows how, during the mujra (dance), the dancer can employ her look and her veil to accentuate each other: ‘The women dance, hiding their faces behind their hands and peeping through their fingers. They then keep their eyes fixed on their clients and then, for a carefully choreographed few moments, they drop their gaze to the floor and slowly, longingly, they look back at him. It works every time: the tamash been—customers—are transfixed’ (Brown, 2005, p. 67).

Once outside the platform of the mujra, however, both the veil and the gaze of the women are immediately regulated and controlled. Maha is chastised by her husband Adnan for ‘looking’ at a man, thereby committing the crime of unveiling her gaze and not observing the purdah of her eyes:

Maha is accused of looking at another man staying in one of the other rooms. He’s a musician, quite young and only moderately attractive, and he has very little money. I can’t imagine Maha would be interested in him. She is supposed to have looked at him from our room as he lay in the courtyard
smoking with the other men. Adnan thinks it’s an unforgivable betrayal: she didn’t keep her eyes in *purdah* [veil].

“You are *kharab*”—a spoiled, rotten woman—Adnan declares so loudly that the whole house will hear.

Maha is distraught. She’s been crying for hours and pleading, “I wasn’t looking at him. I promise. I swear I didn’t look at him.”

(Brown, 2005, p. 116)

Unlike Maha, who despite Adnan’s bullying does have some choice over seeing and being seen, some women in Brown’s narrative are literally erased from the visual plane. One such character is the unseen daughter-in-law of an old prostitute named Rani. Rani’s daughter-in-law is frequently scolded, often beaten and regularly chastised: yet she herself is never seen, heard or known by anyone outside her own home. She is even denied an independent name of her own, only referred to as ‘Rani’s daughter-in-law’. Rani’s daughter-in-law is a ‘proper’ wife, who has never been in the sex trade. Brown writes: ‘The sons of *nachne wali* (dancers) don’t marry dancing girls: their first wives are girls of unquestioned virtue’ (Brown, 2005, p. 62). But, as Brown remarks, these wives are little better than domestic slaves. They do all the household chores but are kept secluded and subjugated. ‘For Rani’s daughter-in-law, the benefits of being a genuine wife may not be all that clear. Unfortunately, I cannot ask her directly. She is completely secluded, and I will never see her’ (Brown, 2005, p. 62). Seclusion, another form of veiling, borders on rendering the woman physically and socially invisible. The veiled woman is deliberately removed from sight, neither to see nor to be seen.

The veil not only separates the two domains of seeing and being seen. It is also a point of difference between the public world of exposed reality and the private space of personal life. Like the wall, the veil has two sides: one is exposed to the all-seeing public and the other faces the segregated personal world or the woman’s private space. As the dividing line between the public and the private, the veil becomes an in-between state, a concrete line of difference touching two opposite sides. As Massimo Leone points out in ‘Cultures of Invisibility: The Semiotics of the Veil in Early Christianity’ the veil’s phenomenological essence ‘probably lies exactly in its “betweenness”, in the fact of being between something and something else: between the naked surface of the body and an external gaze, as is the
case in many cultures of invisibility, but also between an internal gaze and the external world, as is the case in some other cultures of invisibility’ (Leone, p. 275).

In Heera Mandi’s culture the veil’s in-between-ness is personified in the one entity that literally inhabits the in-between territory between the two genders or sexes: the eunuch. The eunuchs are an important part of the Heera Mandi; they perform both musical activities and sex. Almost all the eunuchs living within the sector of the Heera Mandi are singers, dancers or pimps. The eunuch is both man and woman and shares attributes of both social genders. Brown refers to the khusras of the Heera Mandi and how they try to seem like women, but are less bound by the restrictions enforced on women:

The khusras of Heera Mandi are similar to the hijras of India. Both are often described as “half man, half woman’. Most of the khusras I know in Heera Mandi were born biologically male: they look like men and they have a penis and testicles. A few—very few—are genuine hermaphrodites. Some of the biological males undergo surgery, often paid for by their clients, to remove their sexual organs. In the process, they rise a notch above their still complete friends. Their superiority is based on their lack of a penis and on the more feminised appearance that they begin to develop once their bodies are deprived of the testosterone produced by their testicles.

(Brown, 2004, p. 49)

The success of the eunuchs depends upon the ambiguity of their sexuality. They try to appear like women, but they do not profess themselves to be women. As liminal figures, the khusras mediate between male and female norms regarding veiling itself.

Although they profess to be between the two sexes, or perhaps because of it, khusras never observe purdah; ‘they wear veils only as a prop for some extra-piquant flirting’ (Brown, p. 51). For the khusra the veil exceeds the problematic of their ambiguous gender identities and so reaffirms their right to the shared space of both genders. In her essay ‘Darmiyaan … search for an in-between’ (2010) Asha Achuthan ponders over the role of the transvestite in occupying the middle ground between the two genders. Apart from the physical attributes the eunuch shares with both men and women, the ‘inner sense of “being”

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26 The word ‘Darmiyaan’ in the title of Achuthan’s essay is formed of the Persian words ‘dar’ (within) and ‘miyaan’ (scabbard, sheath). ‘Miyaan’ also means centre or axis. Therefore, the word ‘darmiyaan can mean ‘in the center’ or ‘between’.
that the words male or female are supposed to convey, along with the word identity when clubbed with gender, suggest an “internal coherence” in these categories that not only precludes mixing or overlap, but is also somewhat already there, a priori, present before the Law’ [italics in the original] (Achuthan, 2010, p. 421). In the very description of the eunuch’s gender identity as being ambiguous, the language used for these members of the society also borders upon the in-between state of ambiguity: “‘They are not girls,” two customers tell me. “They’re half-man, half-woman’” (Brown, 2005, p. 126). Yet, in spite of such bantering about the eunuch’s ambiguous gender, the cruel side of this life of in-between-ness cannot be denied. As the eunuch Tasneem tells Brown, entry into the shared space of both male and female genders for her was marked by her first being repeatedly violated as a child:

Tasneem says she was raped when she was young—so many times she cannot remember—and that it made her the way she is: she cannot be a man and she will never be a woman. She can only be a khusra and the only way she can live and survive is by selling sex. Men do not want her now her body is hard and she is able to grow a beard, but she can still cross the gender divide if she wears a pretty shalwar kameez and matching lipstick.

(Brown, 2005, pp 51-52)

1.3. Religion, Law and Society

The Shahi Mohallah of Lahore is like a cross-word puzzle with three domains: prostitution, religion and law. In the activities of the bazaar the sex trade is perceived differently by the deeply religious society, the law, and the prostitutes themselves. Pakistan is an Islamic state with a dominant Muslim population and adultery is officially prohibited, but polygamy for men is permissible under certain conditions, and men are allowed to take up to four wives at a time. While adultery by women is a serious offence, adultery by men is often condoned under the pretext of polygamy. But Pakistan is also a democracy, and its constitution entitles each individual equal opportunities and freedom of choice. This leads to much confusion in many legal and technical matters:

Sex outside marriage is technically illegal for everyone in Pakistan, but in practice this rule does not apply to men. A marked double standard operates. Women must be chaste daughters, faithful wives, and celibate widows—good women whose sexuality is under tight control. Men, in contrast, are at
liberty to have extramarital affairs and indulge themselves with lovers, like those from Heera Mandi, who will be condemned for participating in those same relationships. In places like Shahi Mohalla, society has created a group of women, distinguished from the chaste daughters and faithful wives, who live under another form of male control: simultaneously celebrated for their sensual beauty and derided as unclean.

(Brown, 2005, p. 58)

The interplay of religion, law and society produces disturbing contradictions in the context of prostitution, where women in the sex trade suffer the dual scourge of social stigmatisation and legal retribution. Most prostitutes refer to their customers as their ‘husbands’ and in doing so try to ward off the illegality of their business as well as give themselves and perhaps some others the illusion of a more official relationship, even if through the temporary adoption of a subtitle of legitimacy. These women, however, are referred to by intensely derogatory names like kanjri, randi, or the more demeaning taxi (borrowing the English word and implying she has been used so often that she is almost like a taxi whom anyone can ride for a price). These pejorative labels reveal the unmoving power structures within Pakistani society, wherein the stigmatized are further condemned through verbal lampooning. Language is a very powerful instrument of control in the scheme of the Heera Mandi and serves to seal the stamp of low status and low personal value on the sex workers. Maha and her daughters are frequently referred to as gandi kanjari (dirty prostitute). Thus, uncleanliness and filth become signifiers of the socially retributive qualities of the sex trade, and the lower a prostitute is on the rungs of social acceptability the filthier she is imagined to be. Perhaps that is why most prostitutes become indignant when called unclean (gandi). The prostitutes’ main form of protest against their social stigmatisation is through their claim to personal cleanliness, as though their avowal of cleanliness enables them to ward off the social filth heaped on them from all quarters of the society.

Like their claim to cleanliness, real or imaginary, the prostitutes also vie for professional finesse. The dancing girls and women of Lahore try to polish their skills of attracting customers, mostly to ensure financial security but also partly to relish excelling in their area of expertise. Indeed social legitimacy, artistic skills, and a sense of religiosity are the only things that allow these women to derive some semblance of dignity from their intensely denounced profession. In his essay ‘Symbology and Subaltern Resistance in Hira Mandi Mohalla’ (2011) Nahim Jabbar discusses the element of religiosity and the attempts at
social acceptability among the prostitutes of Heera Mandi. This religiosity is further accentuated by Pakistan’s official status as an Islamic country, in which social acceptance associated with religious orientation is frequently recognised and exercised.

This is why almost all the women of the Shahi Mohalla observe religious occasions with full fervour. One such occasion is the *taazia* or mourning procession carried out on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of the Prophet Mohammad. This commemoration occurs on the tenth of the month of *Moharram* in the Muslim calendar. Most prostitutes of the Heera Mandi are Shias, and so they devoutly observe the *Moharram*. Like other stigmatised or weak segments of the society, the prostitutes practice religion more enthusiastically than others in an attempt to hold on to some socially acceptable position. In practicing religious rites and customs they try to enter the circle of acceptability which their profession has denied to them.

The prostitutes of Lahore pay their devout and lavish allegiance to Shiite religious figures and practices, despite their limited financial means. The procession of mourners commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain is especially dramatic. Jabbar writes that ‘In this inglorious enclave of Pakistani society today is gathered a host of human beings, prostitutes in the main, for whose subaltern existence the term “unregenerate humanity” fits because their consciousness of who they are points to a meridian beyond the conventional designations for a collectivity without identity’ (Jabbar 2011, p. 96).

According to Jabbar, the conditions of the prostitutes of Heera Mandi align with Emile Durkheim's analysis of society, crime and law. In *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) Durkheim sees society as forming a group or community with a ‘collective consciousness’, meaning that all or most members of society have similar beliefs about social order and behaviour. Durkheim defines collective consciousness as ‘the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society [which] forms a determinate system with a life of its own’ (Durkheim, 1984, pp. 38-39). The collective consciousness controls the society with rules of morality based upon commonly held views about the rightness or wrongness of particular life matters. Durkheim links the concept of collective consciousness to the mechanical solidarity of a society, by which Durkheim means that all the members of the society think and act in the same way; they all believe alike. These members share similar beliefs and respond to religious practices in the same way. Mechanical solidarity leaves almost no room for individuality and original thinking. As Durkheim points out ‘we should
not say that an act offends the common consciousness because it is criminal, but that it is criminal because it offends that consciousness’ (Durkheim, 1984, p. 40). In Durkheim’s view the propriety of action or the legitimacy of a practice depends not so much upon its ‘legal’ implications but upon the extent to which it does or does not conform to the mechanical solidarity of society. In Durkheimian terms, the world of Heera Mandi is despised and stigmatised as being beyond the pale of respectable society. Its inhabitants are viewed with horrified repulsion. The notoriety of the Heera Mandi is such that most residents of Lahore would not even acknowledge its presence or admit any awareness of its whereabouts. The Shahi Mohallah stands there, in the middle of the city, as a huge example of an unseen presence, a constructed blind spot in the eye of respectable Lahore. To resist this invisibility, to gain markers of identification and signifiers of respect, however momentary, the women of Heera Mandi observe religious festivals with the zeal of the devout. The Eid, the month of Ramazan, the procession of Tazia (Shia religious procession of mourning), all give the women a temporary reprieve from the stigma attached to their lives.

Religion, for the women of the Mohallah, is a means of acquiring some semblance of acceptability in the society—at least for the time during which the rites are being performed — and a way to find the solace of conformity which binds them to a higher social order:

The twentieth of Ramzan is an important day in the Shia Muslim calendar: it is the death anniversary of Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed. Maha has told me that his body is being taken in a procession from Heera Mandi to a place just outside Bhati Gate. … It is a time for mourning. 'We', several local women insist, 'are Shias'. Mourning is what Shias do best. They’ve made it into an art and a way of life.

We’re passing from Heera Mandi Chowk to Tarranum Chowk, and above us hundreds of women are gathering to watch the procession from the second-, third-, and fourth-floor windows and balconies. I pause to look. It’s breathtaking: the invisible prostitutes of the mohalla have come out from between their four walls.

(Brown, 2005, p. 131)

This is perhaps the only occasion when the visibility of the prostitutes has nothing to do with their professional needs. They have come out not to be viewed but to participate, to see the procession with which they want to identify themselves. When they do, the prostitutes are on
equal footing with the respectable housewives of the society; for a brief interval the walls dividing the two groups of women have been erased.

Louise Brown’s *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* shows the Heera Mandi culture in a way that allows the reader to enter the tabooed neighbourhood and understand the workings of the power structures there. The most touching parts of Brown’s study are those related to the lives of the prostitutes and other marginalised figures of the society, as they grapple with their economic, social and personal problems. Brown’s research shows that the women of the brothel, their children, the eunuchs and the pimps are all human beings who have been born in the vicious circle of the sex trade, and who have to face the challenges that life has posed them. The young girls, the price of their virginity that feeds their families, their lost childhood, the damp, dark and dirty interiors of their rooms, and the insensitivity of the other women are very touching and poignant. Louise Brown writes in the afterword:

> It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to write *The Dancing Girls of Lahore*. As an academic at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, I’ve spent years researching prostitution and the trafficking of women and girls throughout Asia: the Thai and Filipino girls working in Japanese clubs; the sex-tourist venues of Pattaya and Angeles, the sexual exploitation of children in Cambodia’s shack-lined red-light areas; the migration and trafficking of teenagers from Nepal’s beautiful mountains to the vast brothels of India’s congested cities. But nowhere has been quite like Heera Mandi, with its long artistic traditions, its strongly felt Muslim religion, and its sense of community, tightly bound with Shia ritual. In the late 1990s it was clearly a community in transition, moving swiftly from an old-world brothel district steeped in artistic performance and the romance of purchased love to a more modern red-light area, stripped of elite pretensions and reliant upon the sale of sex.

(Brown, 2005, afterword)

*The Dancing Girls of Lahore* shows the various ways in which walls and veils operate in the brothel of Lahore. The work also shows that the dynamics of the veil are not only present inside the Heera Mandi, but are operative around the very existence of this stigmatised section of Lahore’s walled city. In spite of its physical presence, its historical backdrop and its significant place in Lahore’s cultural heritage, the Heera Mandi is curiously shunned by
the public eye. No respectable person in Lahore would admit having any knowledge of the brothel’s whereabouts. Respectable Lahore has always turned a blind eye to it. Heera Mandi is there in the walled city of Lahore but it has been rendered invisible. Just as the veil that hides the woman who wears it and the male gaze that subjugates the female object of sight, the city of Lahore has turned this neighbourhood into its blind spot.
Chapter 4


This chapter discusses veils and walls in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* (2000) to show how the female main character, Mumtaz, responds to her role as a wife and a mother. The first part compares the figure of Mumtaz with the seventeenth-century Mughal empress upon whom the character in the novel is based. The second part shows how Mumtaz tries to free herself from the walls of socially assigned roles and resists predetermined gender roles. The third part analyses how names and titles function as veils to hide the individual behind a constricting network of nomenclature. Acquiring a male pseudonym, Mumtaz defies the walls of a gender-specific identity.

*Moth Smoke* (2000) is set in Lahore in the late 1990s, a place full of competition, bribery, drugs and secret love affairs. Most of the characters in the novel belong to the upper-class society of the city, though some characters come from the lower-middle class and resort to crime to maintain their financial and social status. Apart from representing the atmosphere of cut-throat competition and the hashish-smoking elite class of Lahore, *Moth Smoke* also represents the predicament faced by women of this society, who are bound by the restrictions imposed on them by the patriarchal order and constrained by the demands of their roles as mothers and wives. Hamid’s novel explores a woman’s thoughts and feelings as a separate individual, as a part of the family, and as a member of the society. In particular, the novel presents the woman protagonist who feels walled up or constricted by stereotypical and patriarchal roles. Mumtaz belongs to an affluent family of Lahore yet still feels the suffocating limitations imposed upon her because she is a woman, an elite woman.

27 I take the title of this chapter from Jean-Paul Sartre’s play ‘Huis Clos’ (1944) meaning ‘No Exit’. The French title can also be interpreted as ‘In Camera’ and reflects the individual's struggle against seeing oneself as an object of sight by other people. This chapter addresses Sartre's question as part of the wider discussion of walls and veils.
4.1. History recreated in *Moth Smoke*

The plot of *Moth Smoke*, while set in late twentieth-century Lahore, is based on an earlier episode in the history of India, associated with the family of the fifth Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan (1594-1666) and his wife, Mumtaz (referred to here as 'Empress Mumtaz' in order to differentiate her from the character ‘Mumtaz’ in the novel). Empress Mumtaz died in 1631 in childbirth. Shah Jahan loved his wife very much and built the famous Taj Mahal as her mausoleum. As the Emperor aged there arose a fierce war of succession among his four sons—Dara Shikoh, Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad. Aurangzeb emerged victorious, had his father imprisoned in his Agra fort in 1658, and became Emperor. Aurangzeb then had his other three brothers arrested and executed. The most important contender for the throne was Aurangzeb’s eldest brother, Dara Shikoh, also favoured by their father as the heir apparent. Soon after becoming emperor, Aurangzeb charged Dara Shikoh with apostasy and had him executed in 1659.

In *Moth Smoke* Mohsin Hamid recasts the story of the Mughal family in modern day Lahore. The novel revolves around Darashikoh (Daru), his best friend Aurangzeb (Ozi), and Ozi’s wife, Mumtaz. Ozi and Mumtaz have a three-year old son, Muazzam. Ozi and Mumtaz belong to the elite class of Lahore, while Daru clings precariously to this class through his friendship with Ozi and Mumtaz. Daru’s financial circumstances, however, keep deteriorating. He loses his job in the bank when he retaliates after being insulted by a client with a powerful background and connections with the bank manager. Unemployed, his finances rapidly dwindling and his stress-level rising, Daru starts selling drugs and takes part in robbing a jewellery shop. During the course of the novel Daru becomes attracted to Mumtaz, and the two begin a secret love affair. When Ozi learns of the affair, he gets Daru implicated in a false hit-and-run car accident, for which Ozi himself was actually responsible. Daru is arrested and a trial follows. The narrative is structured by the trial in which the characters one by one narrate their partial version of the story, and readers are asked to act as judge and pass their verdict on Daru’s innocence or guilt. At the end of the novel we see Daru still in prison, as he awaits the readers’ judgement, while Mumtaz leaves her husband and son and keeps working to prove Daru’s innocence. At the end of the novel Daru asks readers to judge the case for themselves.
There are many similarities between the story of the seventeenth-century royal family and Hamid’s novel. One can easily see that the novel is an adaptation of the Mughal dynasty: Daru and Ozi are named after the Mughal princes, Darashikoh and Aurangzeb. Ozi’s father is named Khurram, the original name of Emperor Shah Jahan. One of Daru’s accomplices in crime is named Murad, who was the third prince in the Mughal family and partner of Aurangzeb in defeating Dara Shikoh. Even the road crossing where the hit-and-run accident takes place is named after the very place where Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh had their final battle, which Aurangzeb won.

All incidents and characters of the earlier historical story are replicated in Hamid’s novel. However, there remains one very prominent discrepancy between Hamid’s novel and history: in the historical narrative Empress Mumtaz was the mother of Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb, while in *Moth Smoke* Mumtaz is the wife of Ozi and the paramour of Daru. This shift from a mother-child relationship to a husband-wife relationship highlights the problems of gender specific roles in a patriarchal society. In making Mumtaz the wife and paramour of the two men who, in history, were actually her sons, the narrative raises the question of what the woman actually feels about her relationship with her child, her husband and her lover. In addition, the novel also throws light upon the gender specific narrative that is woven around and for women, which forces them to act in a certain way as soon as they become wives and mothers.

Critics and readers have responded variously to the historical background to *Moth Smoke* and to the cyclical nature of the bloody war for power. Paul Jay, in ‘The post-post colonial condition: Globalization and historical allegory in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*’ (2005), sees the use of an historical frame as an attempt to present a picture of Lahore which belongs to the ‘post-post-colonial’ age, ‘one less interested in foregrounding the persistent effects of British colonization than dramatizing how economic globalization has transformed Lahore and the characters populating his novel’ (Jay, 2005, p. 53). Jay thinks that in spite of Hamid’s attempt to differentiate the colonial period from Pakistan’s current problems, including terrorism and lawlessness, these problems can and do have a link with colonialism. The Mughal era, writes Jay, was itself a form of colonialism:

Hamid invokes the Mughal Empire at the outset of the novel in order to ‘bypass colonialism’ (*The Chronicle Online*, np) but the Mughal Empire was itself a colonialist empire. The history of colonialism in South Asia did not
begin with the British Raj but in fact has a much longer history, one that includes Persian and Islamic invasions from the North and suggests that the forces of globalization were at work on the continent long before global capitalism and the internet came along.

(Jay, 2005, p. 56)

However, Munazza Yaqoob sees the historical narrative in *Moth Smoke* as performing the function of foregrounding the idea of imprisonment. The dominant metaphor in the novel, according to Yaqoob, is of prison and feeling caged in. Yaqoob writes in ‘Human Perversion and Environmental Space: An Ecocritical reading of Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*’ that the novel shows that Lahore ‘seems a symbol of apocalypse where life is fluttering in the cage of spiritual and emotional as well as social death’. Yaqoob goes on to say that the city is a place where people are ‘isolated whether they are in large social gatherings, air-conditioned rooms or airless dark rooms’ (Yaqoob n.d., p. 94). Other critics focus on the cut-throat competition and criminality in the novel. Vidisha Barua analyses the scene in the novel where Daru and Murad rob a jewellery shop, and Daru shoots at a young boy, probably killing him. Barua argues that Daru is clearly imagining the boy at the shop to be Muazzam, Mumtaz’s three-year-old son, and in shooting the boy at the shop he is vicariously killing Mumtaz’s son. Barua compares Daru’s action with Raskolnikov’s bludgeoning of the old woman in Mikhail Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*:

When Daru commits his murder during the course of the robbery, his aversion for Muazzam, Mumtaz’s son, had been growing for a while. Daru sees a kid running for the door. Nobody is allowed to leave the boutique alive. Not only does Daru not hesitate to kill the boy (with overpowering thoughts of Muazzam), he feels completely detached from the act, as if it was somebody else who raised the hand and committed the murder. This is comparable to Raskolnikov’s mental state when he killed the old woman. The act is done swiftly, and both the actors are scarcely conscious of themselves at the moment.

(Vidisha Barua, n.d. p. 233)

The theme of killing in the novel is extended by Cara Cilano to apply to the representation of the overall atmosphere of Lahore and to the historical and political contexts of wars between
countries. Cilano extends the theme of fratricide present in the historical background of the Mughal family and the war of succession to apply to contemporary Lahore’s atmosphere where the country’s nuclear program is frequently linked with the threat of impending war with India. Cilano points out that ‘in place of crown-lust, Hamid’s contemporary characters—Darashikoh (Daru), the central figure especially— desire drugs, Black Label scotch, and Pajeros. And, rather than the threat of literal fratricide, the characters inhabiting Lahore at the close of the twentieth century carry around the anxiety of nuclear conflict with India, a figurative fratricide’ (Cilano, 2009, p. 188). The theme of fratricide, the metaphor of being caged in, and the shifting desires of parent-child relationships are woven together from the outset of the novel. The nuclear threat in the region contains signs of impending war and hostility between India and Pakistan, the two countries once part of the same Mother India. The presence of the great Taj Mahal in the narrative background also stands as a reminder of the problematic life-death duality present in the mother-child relationship that the novel portrays: Empress Mumtaz died in childbirth and now silently witnesses her own sons killing each other in the struggle for power.

4.2. Walled in Motherhood

*Moth Smoke* can be read intertextually as a comparative reading of the role of the mother in a Muslim historical allegory. In the figure of Mumtaz in *Moth Smoke*, Hamid constructs a modern-day response to the figure of the seventeenth-century Empress Mumtaz. Both women are mothers and wives. However, Empress Mumtaz is little-known outside her role as a mother. In the nineteen years that she was married to Shah Jahan she bore him fourteen children; her upbringing of her sons is mentioned in history; and, dying in childbirth, her death also comes stapled with her role as a mother. The historian Khurram Ali Shafique writes that not much is known about the woman who inspired the building of one of the most magnificent buildings of the world:

We have, however, another interesting indirect insight into her character, which has generally escaped the historians. Out of the four of her sons who survived, the three elder ones who had an opportunity to grow up under her supervision were the best disciplined and the noblest generation in the entire dynasty since Tamerlane. Murad, the youngest, who got the fewest years to spend with his mother, turned out to be a hopeless alcoholic and a complete idiot.
Writing about her death, Shafique further states that even on her death-bed Empress Mumtaz was concerned about her children:

History tells us that she died while giving birth to her fourteenth child. Common tradition adds a little anecdote (the only one we have about her!). It is said that on her deathbed she asked Shahjehan to promise that he would never marry again, so that their sons don’t have any stepsons to endanger their lives over the war of succession.

A figure of the historical past, the wife and mother of emperors and princes, Empress Mumtaz remains unknown as a separate person. She is only objectified in the form of her magnificent mausoleum: the very name ‘Taj Mahal’ is short for her name, ‘Mumtaz(j) Mahal’.

When we compare the historical Empress with her namesake in *Moth Smoke*, we find that the contemporary character Mumtaz is the exact opposite of Empress Mumtaz. She is outgoing, fun-loving and tired of her marriage. She has an affair with her husband’s best friend, and gives birth to only one son, whom she also considers a burden. She leaves her three-year-old son at home with his nanny while she goes out or parties with her husband and other friends. During her affair with Daru she has mixed feelings towards her husband and her son, bordering on guilt, boredom and even regret. Zia Ahmed shows that Mumtaz is entirely dissatisfied with her husband, Ozi, which results in her awkward social and sexual behaviour: ‘The cause of much awkwardness in the social and sexual behaviour of Mumtaz cannot be other than her dissatisfaction because of the neglect of her husband’ (Zia Ahmed, 2009, p. 97).

Mumtaz’s own narrative during the trial presents her life and feelings towards her family and lover. Mumtaz yearns to be freed from the taxing roles of mother and wife and wants to explore a new identity, one where the woman is not seen fixed in roles such as that of mother and wife. In the two chapters allotted to her as narrator, Mumtaz takes the reader to her innermost self. In chapters entitled ‘wife and mother (part one)’ and ‘wife and mother (part two)’ Mumtaz talks about her changing feelings towards her husband, Ozi, and her feelings towards her son, Muazzam. That is, the narrative contrasts others’ reports about her
with Mumtaz’s own self-narration. She tells the readers about her past, her reaction to her pregnancy and the birth of her son. She shows how, in spite of all her efforts, she could not bring herself to really love her son:

I started to get bored. And then I started to get frightened. Because when I looked at the little mass of flesh I’d produced, I didn’t feel anything. My son, my baby, my little janoo, my one and only: I felt nothing for him. No wonder, no joy, no happiness. Nothing.

(Hamid, 2000, p. 152)

Mumtaz’s own narration rejects the traditional images of devoted mother and undermines the relation to her seventeenth-century historical counterpart. After the birth of her son, Mumtaz feels as if she’s caught in the role of motherhood. She tries to liberate herself from this taxing duty by trying to get a job. But this option is denied to her because of the expectations attached to her as the mother of a little baby:

I’d done everything I was supposed to do. I’d played with Muazzam and read to him, even though he couldn’t understand a word, and bought him clothes and fed him with my own body and cleaned his shit with my own hands. I felt so guilty. I knew there was something wrong with me. I was a monster. But I didn’t want to be. Staying with my baby was the right thing to do, what everyone expected of me.

(Hamid, 2000, p. 153)

The smouldering sense of waste and hopelessness Mumtaz feels as a new mother is accentuated by the setting of the novel. Set in contemporary Lahore where the society, environment, and even the people are smouldering in the self-destructive fire of corruption, *Moth Smoke* tells the story of Mumtaz’s conflict and her sense of futility with regard to her son. Motherhood in *Moth Smoke* is not necessarily full of or synonymous with love. For Mumtaz motherhood is mostly a bodily function, the result of certain physical phenomena such as intercourse, conception and pregnancy, over which the woman might or might not have any control. These physical conditions faced by the woman often lead to emotional problems for her such as frustration, guilt and even hatred, about which the new mother might feel equally helpless. In *Moth Smoke* the three-year-old Muazzam appears only briefly twice, yet he is spoken of frequently by Mumtaz and the other characters. Mostly Mumtaz criticises herself for the way she feels. She is angry and guilty for not loving her son as she
should: ‘it wasn’t my fault I didn’t love my son (Hamid, 2000, p. 241). In the chapter ‘wife and mother (part one)’ Mumtaz tells the reader of her feelings upon finding out about her pregnancy, which was an entirely unwelcome development for her:

We were growing together, and I was happy.

Then I got pregnant.

I’d always been a condom person, but since I was regular and we’d both tested negative, Ozi and I switched to the rhythm method. Which can be almost as reliable as the pill. Almost. I told Ozi about it sadly, because I’d decided to have an abortion. But he was ecstatic. I’d never seen him so happy. He told me I had to think about it for a week. And he did something I still haven’t forgiven him for: he told his mother. She flew out to New York immediately, bringing gifts and advice. It’s amazing what the gene pool will do to perpetuate itself.

[emphasis added] (Hamid, 2000, p. 150)

Mumtaz is caught in an unwanted relationship with her child, a relationship that reminds her of her own physicality and biological make-up. In spite of belonging to the upper class Mumtaz feels as helpless as any other woman in society when she realises how powerless she actually is when it comes to having control or decision-making power regarding her own body. Her feeling of helplessness comes not simply out of physical subjectivity, as is the case for many other women in similar circumstances, or for the Heera Mandi prostitutes, but also due to the pressure of public opinion, represented in the novel by her mother-in-law who flies to them with presents and eager advice for the would-be mother. As weeks pass and her pregnancy advances, Mumtaz starts feeling more and more helpless:

I decided to take another week to think about it. Then another week. And the more I thought about it, the less power I seemed to have to end it. I felt guilty. More than that, I felt selfish. I tried to convince myself that I wanted the child as well, that childbirth was an expression of female power, that it would make our bond even stronger. So the week turned into weeks. Eventually we had a sonogram done, and after that, the idea was a little person, growing, and it was too late to turn back.

(Hamid, 2000, pp. 150-51)
Mumtaz falls into the role of motherhood out of sheer helplessness, fear or inertia, something not forced upon her by her husband, but which arises out of her feeling of guilt and her awareness of her body. She reluctantly accepts the biological imperative of her maternal body specially created for propagating the race and which carries the socio-cultural titles of love and sacrifice: ‘I resigned myself to it. Or maybe I saw it as a kind of martyrdom. Sacrificing myself for something noble: for love, my man, the species’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 151). From being a free and independent woman, Mumtaz gets caught in the maze of the roles and titles of her biological make-up and the duties and virtues of motherhood, social values anchored to the female body.

The notion of the body as a central part in women’s identity forms the crux of Moth Smoke’s narrative. The woman’s body turns out to be her most vulnerable part, over which she seems to have little or no control. In her essay ‘Physical Subjectivity and the Risk of Essentialism’ Suparna Bhaskaran refers to the woman’s body and the biological processes attached to it, such as motherhood, as being a major factor in contributing to essentialising the definition of a ‘woman’. Bhaskaran points out that anti-essentialist feminists argue that the concept of ‘woman’ is unstable and the act of defining and naming the concept of woman is problematic (Bhaskaran, 1993, p. 192). Problematic because in the very act of naming one tends to ‘fix’ and ‘naturalise’ (Bhaskaran, 1993, p. 192) the woman into a category of roles:

For example, the category ‘woman’ in the heterosexual-patriarchal naming scheme would deem it perfectly ‘natural’ or normal or even mandatory for women to pursue motherhood or wifehood. Thus motherhood is considered to be a logical destiny (gets fixed) for women.

(Bhaskaran, 1993, p. 192)

Bhaskaran asserts that making connections between the female biology and the category ‘woman’ would mean ‘engaging in essentialism and biological determinism’ (Bhaskaran, 1993, P. 192).

In Moth Smoke the connection between female biology and womanhood is maintained first by Mumtaz’s mother-in-law, who comes loaded with presents and advice for Mumtaz, and later by Mumtaz’s own acceptance of her biological essentialism in a new key: ‘childbirth was a form of female power’. This very system of gendered identification denies Mumtaz the power of refusing to enter the role of motherhood. She is unable to get the abortion done, not because of any feeling of love for her baby — though she does go on to

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have a consideration for the ‘little person’ growing in her (Hamid, 2000, p. 151) — but because having an abortion goes against the heterosexual-patriarchal scheme of naming that makes her see herself as a ‘mother’.

Language plays a significant role in defining Mumtaz as mother. Through language, Mumtaz is made to realise the exalted status of motherhood which she is about to enter. Commenting upon Simone de Beauvoir’s early reaction to French feminism, Arleen B. Dallery points out that ‘the structures of language and other signifying practices that code a woman’s body are as oppressive as the material/social structures that have tended to mediate one’s awareness of one’s body and self and erotic possibilities’ (Dallery, 1989, p. 54). Dallery refers to Julia Kristeva, who says that by giving birth, a woman enters into a relationship with her own mother, and with the nature of continuity. In her essay ‘Motherhood According to Bellini’ (1980), Kristeva distinguishes between the symbolic aspect of motherhood in the patriarchal scheme, where the role of motherhood has strong phallocentric associations, and the presymbolic. In the presymbolic, Kristeva writes that ‘the Mother’s body is that towards which all women aspire just because it lacks a penis. … It is the reunion of a woman-Mother with the body of her Mother’ (cited in Dallery, 1989, p. 57). In Mumtaz’s case the presymbolic associations of motherhood are hardly benevolent — her father used to beat her mother, ‘once so badly she lost her hearing in her left ear’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 149). Furthermore, Mumtaz’s flamboyant lifestyle — ‘I should have known I wasn’t the marrying sort’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 148) — implies that Mumtaz never aspired to marriage or motherhood at all in the first place. In the absence of any presymbolic, and benevolent, associations of motherhood, Mumtaz refuses to see herself in the feminine roles assigned by motherhood and womanhood. In the opening lines of Mumtaz’s narrated chapter ‘The wife and mother (part one), she introduces herself to the readers: ‘I’m sure we’ve already met, Lahore being such a small place and all, but let’s introduce ourselves so that there is no mistake. I’m Mumtaz Kashmiri’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 147). She then goes on to tell the readers more about herself:

Where to begin? Certainly before Muazzam was born. Definitely before I got married. Before I went to America? Hmm. No. we haven’t the time to go that far back just now.

Let’s start in New York City, my senior year in college. The scene is the East Village, a little before midnight, on the steps of a fourth-floor walk-up on
Avenue A. The date is important: October 31. Halloween. I’m dressed as Mother Earth (rather ironic, as you’ll see). My roommate, Egyptian, English major, is improvising around the Cleopatra theme again. This year there’s a sun motif. Ra, you know. Last year it was more Leo.

(Hamid, 2000, p. 147)

Mumtaz’s denial of her role as a mother comes with her rejection of her essentialised self, as represented by her Mother Earth costume. ‘How upset I was when I finally got my period, at fifteen, because I’d accepted it would never come’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 149). She refuses to accommodate herself to her menstrual cycle, another sign of prospective motherhood, and revolts against her unwanted pregnancy.

Mumtaz’s reluctant acceptance of her pregnancy comes through the associative use of language and symbolism. The language of motherhood foregrounded by Ozi’s mother also promotes her son as a prospective father. In the eyes of Ozi’s mother, Mumtaz’s motherhood is both a sign of her son’s phallic power as well as her daughter-in-law’s entering into the continuity of motherhood. That is why, when Mumtaz meets her mother-in-law, she sees Ozi’s mother as a subconscious mother-wife to her son:

How do you lose your respect for the person you love? It isn’t easy. It takes—it took—a lot. It took his mother, for one thing. She’d spent half her life making her son into the man she’d wished she’d married, and now that he’d returned, she was back in business. She corrected his posture, critiqued his suits, made him self-conscious about his receding hairline by telling him again and again how a good haircut would hide it. And the effect she had on him was incredible. One look from her would transform the relaxed, charming, sexy man I’d married into an uncomfortable little schoolboy.

[emphasis added] (Hamid, 2000, p. 156)

Here we see Ozi’s mother re-enacting her own motherhood in the face of Mumtaz’s motherhood. In spite of Ozi’s adulthood, his mother still clings to his role as a child in her life, turning him from a mature man in Mumtaz’s eyes into ‘an uncomfortable school boy’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 156). Motherhood is seen by Ozi’s mother as an expression of woman’s power, one which she does not want to let go of, even at an age when Ozi is himself a father. Clearly Ozi loves their son more than Mumtaz does. In his part of the narration Ozi never
once mentions Muazzam as being a burden, as Mumtaz does in her section of the narration. In Ozi’s love there is the hint of the phallocentric discourse, whereby the male sexuality fears the woman as a mother. As Dallery states, ‘Patriarchal culture seeks to repress this primordial memory of fusion with and later separation from the maternal body; this fear of the mother is masked in male sexuality (Dallery, 1989, p. 57). Ozi’s phallocentric love for the mother-son relationship is seen in the way in which he and Mumtaz have their relationship as husband and wife after the birth of Muazzam: ‘You learn a lot about your man when you become the mother of his child. Ozi began drinking my milk and talking like a little boy when we made love’ (Hamid, 2000, p. 152). It is indeed not without reason that Hamid has chosen the historical personalities of Empress Mumtaz and her son Aurangzeb, and converted them into a husband-wife relationship in his novel.

4.3. Names and the Dynamics of Viewership

If Mumtaz cannot escape her biological essentialism through rejecting the role of motherhood, she does succeed in denying her womanhood in another far more direct and physical way which seems almost in direct line with Bhaskaran’s comments about naming and language. Seizing language as power, Mumtaz adopts a male pseudonym and starts writing as a freelance journalist. The name she chooses for herself is Zulfikar Manto, directly associating herself with the famous Urdu writer Saadat Hassan Manto, known for his controversial subject matter involving man-woman relationships and for his bold portrayal of many taboo subjects, including the graphic portrayal of the woman’s body. Manto is one of the most famous short story writers in Urdu literature, and Mumtaz’s adoption of his name for herself directly retaliates against any attempt to fix her in terms of any traditional form of gendered essentialism or norm. As a journalist she writes about social evils, gender discrimination and other forms of injustice just as Saadat Hassan Manto did. Often, in protest at her writings, the windows of the newspaper’s office get broken by angry mobs. The first part of her pseudonym is also interesting. Zulfikar literally means 'sword', implying, perhaps, that she is using her pen as a sword. The reference to sword contains another phallocentric hint, with an underlying wish to acquire a phallic pleasure for penetration, whether through sword or the penis. Therefore not only does Mumtaz adopt a male name, but the name’s meaning also contains connotations of penetration, carrying with it the image of what Beauvoir calls ‘the construction of a counter-penis’ (cited in Dallery, 1989, p. 54). Through her change of identity from Mumtaz to Zulfikar Manto, Mumtaz’s intentions clearly have
phallic undertones, which are in line with her earlier attempts at the rejection of her own womanhood and the desire for the acquisition of a masculine identity.

Her male pseudonym gives her a masculine identity and a freedom from the essentialised female existence. It also turns Mumtaz into an onlooker, a witness who can examine or survey Lahore’s society without herself becoming a part of the scene. Thus her male pen-name turns Mumtaz into the gazer instead of the gazed at. Luce Irigaray observes that ‘Investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains the distance … the moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality’ (cited in Owens, 1985, p. 70). We see Mumtaz relishing her role as a journalist, a writer writing under a male pen name. She goes to different places, conducts interviews, and writes articles under an assumed identity, and enjoys her sense of freedom by being liberated of her female identity. When asked why she writes under a masculine identity, Mumtaz’s answer shows how an assumed male identity makes life much easier for her:

“So who is Zulfikar Manto?” I ask.

She laughs. “Me.”

“You?”

“Me. I am Zulfikar Manto.”

I start to laugh, too. “But why don’t you just write articles under your own name?”

“That’s a little complicated. Anyway life is much easier if I’m not working and Zulifkar Manto is.”

(Hamid, 2000, p. 46)

In Pakistani society, as we have seen (Chapter 3), the gaze is mainly a male prerogative. It is that tool through which the patriarchal order controls and dictates the women of society. Whether this gaze is the fixed stare of a street loafer or the angry glare of the menfolk of a conservative family, it is the most effective ploy to control and dominate women. Hamid’s later novel, How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia, also makes this point when the narrator’s sister is ogled at by a neighbour. The young brother and sister are playing in the street,
imagining the sister’s shawl to be a rope for crossing an imagined river, but their play is halted by the realisation that a neighbour is watching the girl:

You grip the shawl firmly. In your hands it becomes the rope you will use to ford the river. But before you can do so, and without warning, the spell breaks. You follow your sister’s altered gaze and see that a formerly shuttered window is now open. A tall, bald man stands inside, staring at your sister intently. She takes her shawl from you and throws one end over her head, the other across her still-small-chested breast.

She says, “Let’s go home.”

(Hamid, 2013, pp. 27-28)

This incident shows how the gaze is attached to and dominates the woman’s body. The neighbour’s intent staring at the girl makes her become self-conscious of her body. The shawl here is not just a piece of clothing for fending off the cold, but a veil to hide the body from the penetration of the male gaze. As a result of the male gaze, the veiling shawl, the chador or dopatta in Urdu, becomes a necessary part of a woman’s clothing, not simply because it hides her body, but because it gives the signal of the wish or attempt to cover one’s body. The contours of the body can hardly be hidden by a covering shawl or chador, but the draping stands as an expression of the wearer’s intention to be hidden, to almost become invisible. The gaze and the veil share the effort to annihilate a woman’s identity, the former by dwelling upon its physical contours and the latter through a women’s attempt to make herself vanish into thin air.

The gaze may be a masculine tool but it is exercised by women too, as Mumtaz’s mother-in-law indicates. Women suppress other women, weaker than themselves, by turning them into objects of unchecked scrutiny. One such area of scrutiny where women acquire the male gaze over other women is the institution of marriage. In Pakistani society marriages are often arranged through a meeting of the boy’s family with the girl’s family. The first step in such arranged matches is when the boy’s family visits the girl’s house and ‘sees’ the girl, after which she is either rejected or accepted for further visits. During such match-making visits the girl is adorned and presented in front of the boy’s family for possible acceptance. Family matters also revolve around the dynamics of the masculine gaze, where once again the woman is reduced to an object of sight. In her short story on the tradition of match-making in Asian societies, Anu Mitra shows how this practice has mentally tormented
thousands of unmarried girls whose families are in search of suitors: ‘So every Sunday afternoon, I would go through the motions of displaying myself before a bunch of cynics and a man whom God had created in his parents’ image’ (Mitra, 1993, pp. 210-11). Earlier Mitra points out how the would-be daughter-in-law sees herself being scrutinised by the guests’ piercing gaze:

Then, shepherded by aunts and married cousins, I would be chaperoned to a place in the living room that caught the twilight sun as it filtered in through the windows. I would sit under this makeshift spotlight and barely raise my eyes but not quite…. From the corners of my eye, I would see the parents—the figures of authority and the voices of reason. They saw everything; they judged how I walked into the room, whether my posture was womanly enough, whether my words were to the point and filled with respect and devotion for these unknown people.


The adorned girl is viewed by the guests, while she herself hardly raises her eyes, but not quite. While she timidly only catches glimpses of her onlookers from the corner of her eye, the boy’s parents and other relatives openly watch the girl from every angle, to later on ‘proffer expert advice’ (Mitra, 1993, p. 210) about the girl. The gaze here is masculine and penetrative, upholding the ‘demeaning tradition that brought women to their knees’ (Mitra 1993, p. 211), a visual weapon for holding the woman in perpetual realisation of herself as an object to be viewed. This demeaning tradition is upheld in the story by the women of the family, the grandmother, mother and aunts: ‘I just could not fit into roles determined for me by Grandmother and her purity stories’ (Mitra, 1993, p. 211). Mitra’s narrator finally rejects the one-sided display of power of the gaze, and openly defies the visitors:

At the magical hour of four, the guests arrived. On previous occasions this had been the moment of transformation from a high-schooler to a poised and controlled woman. I was late at the doorway today and the soft and easy transformation just passed me by. I strode in, making direct eye contact with the prospective in-laws and their son. I gave out a shrill, nervous laugh and proclaimed that I wasn’t really glad to see them. … I had had enough. I demanded an apology from them — directed to me and all the other unknown women they would measure, and evaluate and consider—before
they took their leave.

(Mitra, 1993, p. 211)

The narrator’s defiance of the guests is initiated by her ‘making direct eye contact’ with them. She resists this power structure by returning their gaze and refusing to become an object of display for them.

If the marriage market is one domain where the masculine gaze controls the female object then the brothel house is another. In Moth Smoke Mumtaz, along with Daru, visits Heera Mandi. In the brothel she meets Dilaram. The meeting between the two women proves to be a significant moment when the masculine gaze is exercised by a woman for another woman:

Reclining against a long, round cushion is a middle-aged woman with finely plucked eyebrows, her fleshy body well-proportioned and voluptuous. She takes a gurgling puff from the hookah beside her and with the tiniest dip of her chin indicates that we should sit.

“It’s a man’s habit, but I love it,” she says, taking another puff.

(Hamid, 2000, p. 49)

A few lines later the woman starts talking about Mumtaz:

“You’re not bad-looking,” the woman says to Mumtaz, who smiles and lowers her gaze politely. “A nice face. And good hips. But your breasts aren’t generous. You should eat more.”

Mumtaz starts to laugh. “They are bigger than they were. I’ve fed a boy.”

“With those?” The woman considers. “Perhaps it’s because you have broad shoulders that they seem small.” She smiles. “Are you looking for work?”

(Hamid, 2000, p. 49)

The way Dilaram eyes Mumtaz makes her (Dilaram) enter the domain of masculine control exercised over women. The freedom with which Dilaram views her visitors places her into the category of male patriarch and she does enjoy smoking the hookah, a man’s habit.

In spite of being viewed and evaluated by the prostitute, Mumtaz does not at all feel affronted or slighted in the way the narrator of Mitra’s story feels. On the contrary, Mumtaz
laughs and responds with equal familiarity: ‘Mumtaz flashes a sly grin. “Your tea is delicious, Dilaram.”’ Although both women are viewed by other people, mostly women, for their physical attributes, Mumtaz is directly different from the narrator of Mitra’s story. One reason for this difference of response is that while Mitra’s narrator sees the guests as challenging her personal integrity and independence as a woman by scaling her person through their eyes, Mumtaz sees Dilaram as a fellow sufferer in a man’s world. At the very beginning of her interview of Dilaram, Mumtaz realises her suffering as a woman:

“How did you come to begin learning?” Mumtaz asks, slowly taking out a minicassette recorder.

Dilaram laughs solidly, her body rippling. “It’s quite a funny story really. I was a pretty girl, like this one here.” She smiles at our adolescent tea server. “Only younger. The landlord of our area asked me to come to his house. I refused, so he threatened to kill my family. When I went, he raped me.”

Mumtaz shut her eyes.

Dilaram chuckles. “I was so skinny. Not like a woman at all.”

“He paid you?” Mumtaz’s voice is so soft I can barely hear her.

“No.”

“Then what happened?”

“He kept making me come. … Then I became pregnant.”

(Hamid, 2000, p. 50)

Mumtaz and Dalaram are completely focussed on each other, while Daru, narrating this episode during the trial, is completely left out of the actual event. Daru’s position as actor and narrator is interesting because in spite of having been in the same room he is denied the privilege of becoming part of the conversation. He is treated as being only a man, as the son of another man:

Then [Dilaram] points one henna-decorated finger at me [Daru]. “Have I seen you before?”
“No,” I say.

The woman chuckles. “Of course not. Your father, perhaps, but not you.”

(Hamid, 2000, p. 49)

Daru is seen by Dilaram as just another man, another part of the patriarchal system that has subjected women to such physical and mental ordeals. When the meeting ends and they bid Dilaram farewell, the madam flashes an angry glance at him: “When the interview is over, Dilaram watches us go, laughing to herself. Our eyes meet for a moment, and I’m startled by the anger in her glance” (Hamid, 2000, p. 51). Here we see a difference between Dilaram’s gazing at Mumtaz and the viewing of Mitra’s narrator by the boy’s family. The brothel is a place where the lady of the house, Dilaram, has acquired a masculine position, eyeing her dancing girls and evaluating their prospective gains. But she has gained this masculine position by first being exploited and used as a woman, suffering rape and being sold by her male exploiters in her younger days. Mumtaz sees in the woman a victim of that very patriarchal system which she is apparently supporting by running the brothel. Mitra’s narrator, on the other hand, sees her viewers as endorsing the patriarchal tradition of reducing women to objects of display by their own choice; and the women of the match-making families are themselves acting as propagators of this demeaning tradition.

The historical figure of Empress Mumtaz returns as a direct counterpart to other women. She has been treated as perhaps the biggest object of display of all by being walled in a marble mausoleum that immortalises her beauty and her husband’s love. In spite of being given the most magnificent memorial, she remains mostly unknown to us as a person, her only titles of identity being those of mother or wife. In taking up the story and family of the historical Mumtaz and recreating a modern Mumtaz, Hamid shows us with irony the place of a woman in Lahore’s society, and by extension her place anywhere in the world, as it is dictated by the tools of power exercised by the patriarchal system. These tools of power include language and the gaze, whereby women are either transfixed into sublimating titles of virtue and sacrifice through their entering into motherhood, or visually scrutinised and held in check by reducing them to mere objects of viewership.
Section III: Walls and Transcendence
Chapter 5

Bridges and Walls in Rudyard Kipling’s ‘On the City Wall’ (1888)

This chapter analyses Rudyard Kipling’s short story ‘On the City Wall’ (1888) to show how the image of the wall in the story serves as a bridge between different people and events in the narrative. That is, the wall has narrative and thematic significance as both divider and connector. The chapter is divided into three parts: the first reads the figure of Lalun, the lady of the house on the city wall, as a trope for the bridge connecting different segments of society. The second interprets Kipling's use of the image of darkness as a version of the wall trope, as a time of transition and a rich state of things. ‘On the City Wall’ mediates Kipling’s own memories of his early childhood in England and India. The third reads the wall as a key part of Kipling's narrative technique, linking different voices and points of view in the narrative.

Although written earlier than most of the literary texts discussed in this thesis, Rudyard Kipling’s work is important for understanding the trope of walls and veils in South Asian fiction. Kipling’s work forms an important and complicated part of the cultural and historical contexts for contemporary writers in English in Pakistan and India. In this section, I focus on Kipling’s short story ‘On the City Wall’ (1888), set in Lahore, and discuss how walls and bridges function in the narrative to connect people together and interrelate different narrative points of view.

Kipling's story contains three dominant elements, each of which corresponds to the metaphor of the bridge or the wall as link rather than divider. The first is the character of Lalun, a courtesan of Lahore at whose house men of different religions and nationalities assemble every night, for conversation and socialising. The second is the image of darkness, associated not only with the events in the story (diegesis) but also with the figure of Lalun herself. Darkness is not just an atmosphere or setting for the narrative events. Both Lalun and the state of darkness in the story serve as bridging agents in the narrative. The third element is the bridge as a narrative technique. The text of the narrative encompasses different voices
Bakhtin’s ‘dialogism’ in the story, and. Kipling’s narrative weaves together these different voices and perspectives to create in effect the city of Lahore as a kind of collective narrator.

Kipling’s Lahore short stories abound with images of architectural structures, especially walls, which are often, but not always, threatening, obstructing, or concealing. Walls, windows, roofs, even roads and alleys form pivotal parts of the narrative settings. In ‘The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows’ the house of Old Fung-Tching is in a street so narrow that ‘a loaded donkey couldn’t pass between the walls’ (Kipling, Plain Tales from the Hills (1888), p. 201). The house of Suddhoo has ‘four carved windows of brown wood, and a flat roof’ on which old Suddhoo sleeps at night (‘In the House of Suddhoo’, Plain Tales, p. 108). Little Muhammad Din starts to build a ‘wondrous palace’ in the dust (‘The Story of Muhammad Din’, Plain Tales, p. 217). The alley in which Bisesa lives ‘ends in dead-wall pierced by one grated window’ (‘Beyond the Pale’, Plain Tales, p. 127). At the end of the story even that grating is walled up and Bisesa is lost ‘in the City where each man’s house is as guarded and as unknowable as the grave; and the grating that opens into Amir Nath’s Gully has been walled up’ (‘Beyond the Pale’, Plain Tales, p. 132). In ‘Without Benefit of Clergy’ the house where Holden had lived with his wife and child is to be pulled down and a road built in its place ‘so that no man may say where this house stood’ (‘Without Benefit of Clergy’, Life’s Handicap (1891), p. 137). In ‘The City of Dreadful Night’ the narrator tells how he decided to take to the road because ‘it was impossible to sit still in the dark, empty, echoing house and watch the punkah beat the dead air’ (Life’s Handicap, p. 270).

Architectural structures acquire thematic significance as well as narrative context in Kipling’s Lahore writings, and we see this especially in ‘On the City Wall’, one of Kipling’s most celebrated stories. As I shall discuss, in this story, walls, literal and figurative ones, acquire several connotations, each of which manifests itself as a cementing or linking agent.

Bakhtin observes that all language is dialogic, and we think in terms of voices, as when one looks inside oneself, he or she ‘looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another’ (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 287). This plurality of perspective is seen in Kipling’s short story, where the entire narrative becomes an essentially dialogic experience. As in Gerard Genette’s narratology where he distinguishes between multiple levels of diegesis within a single text (Genette, 1980 [1972] pp. 227-237), we see in Kipling’s narrative technique how one narrative encloses another. Genette points out that firstly there is the author/narrator who occupies an extradiegetic level, which is the outermost level. Within this outermost level we have the intradiegetic and the metadiegetic levels, wherein the character/narrator tells his/her story. Thus we see how in ‘On the City Wall’ the reader, narrator, and character grasp only fragments of truth during the course of the narrative, and the reality is only fully disclosed (if that is possible) towards the end of the story. While I do not here go into the details of male and female voices in the story — as seen in the voices of the narrator, Wali Dad and Lalun — and the semiotics of gendered narratives, as do Lanser (1986) and Bal & Trevor (1981), I do view the story as occupying an integral place in terms of Kipling’s narrative technique.
5.1 Lalun and Lahore

The character of Lalun, the courtesan of Lahore, serves both as social wall and bridge in that she joins people and events together. Her house is the centre of gravity for the men of the city, most of who come there in the evening to chat and gossip. Among these men are the narrator and Wali Dad. The narrator is an Englishman and Wali Dad is a disillusioned and sceptical Muslim youth. The other main character in the story is Khem Singh, an old prisoner at Lahore Fort, which Kipling calls ‘Fort of Amara’. As the story moves forward the narrator’s interest in Khem Singh increases, as he hears more about him first from Lalun and then from the Subaltern who serves in the Fort. On the night of the Muharram procession of the Muslims, there is great commotion in the city as Muslims and Hindus attack each other, and the police are forced to intervene to curb the violence on the streets. The story contains a vivid description of the Muharram procession with thousands of mourners. As the procession passes by, Wali Dad, in a surge of religious frenzy, jumps into the crowd of mourners and accompanies them.

During this riotous night while Wali Dad has gone with the procession, the narrator visits Lalun’s house and sees her and the maid, Nasiban, trying to haul an old man over the wall. The narrator helps them pull the man over the wall. The narrator is then cajoled by Lalun to help the elderly man, whom she calls (or at least the narrator reports her as saying) an old ‘Mohammadan’, to pass safely through the riotous crowd. The narrator agrees and escorts the old man through the charged crowd. Because he is accompanied by the Englishman, the old man is not stopped by the police officials, and so the two safely pass through the streets and reach one of the Gates of Lahore, where a man with gold pince-nez takes charge of the old man and leads him out of the city. Only at the end of the story do we learn that the elderly gentleman whom the English narrator had helped pass through the police contingents and the riotous mob was none other than Khem Singh, the escaped prisoner from Fort Amara. Lalun had used the narrator and his white man’s status to make good the escape of the revolutionary prisoner. The narrator then realises he has been ‘in the dark’ and that Lalun had used him and had made him her vizier after all, as she had once jokingly asserted.

‘The Sahib is always talking stupid talk,’ returned Lalun, with a laugh. ‘In this house I am a Queen and thou [Wali Dad] art a King. The Sahib — she put her arms above her head and thought for a moment — ‘the Sahib shall be
our Vizier — thine and mine, Wali Dad — because he has said that thou shouldst leave me’.

(‘On the City Wall’, para. 42)\(^{29}\)

At the end of the story the narrator reports how he realised that while he enjoyed the higher status in colonial India, he has not been in control of the situation nor aware of all the implications or effects of his actions. He has been partially ‘in the dark’ in Lahore.

Lalun is the most enigmatic character of the story, one who, in spite of staying within her house on the city wall, moves the entire action of the narrative. ‘On the City Wall’ opens with a reference to Lalun and her profession:

Lalun is a member of the most ancient profession in the world. Lilith was her very-great-grandmamma, and that was before the days of Eve as everyone knows. In the West, people say rude things about Lalun's profession, and write lectures about it, and distribute the lectures to young persons in order that Morality may be preserved. In the East where the profession is hereditary, descending from mother to daughter, nobody writes lectures or takes any notice; and that is a distinct proof of the inability of the East to manage its own affairs.

(‘On the City Wall’, para 1)

The narrator's last sentence in this passage turns the description into a negative evaluation of Indian morality and competence, one at the very least complicated by, if not at odds with, the narrative actions of Lalun.

The story's opening paragraph connects Lalun to the matriarchal order of nature and to the profession of prostitution\(^{30}\). Lalun’s essentialist link to Mother Nature herself is further accentuated by her strange marriage to a ‘big jujube tree’:

Lalun’s husband stood on the plain outside the City walls, and Lalun’s house was upon the east wall facing the river. If you fell from the broad window-seat you dropped thirty feet sheer into the City Ditch. But if you stayed

\(^{29}\) Textual citations from ‘On the City Wall’ are taken from online version of the text. Therefore, I have referred to paragraph number instead of page number.

\(^{30}\) In The Dancing Girls of Lahore the prostitute Maha asserted that ‘the daughter of a dancing girl always becomes a dancing girl. They pass the occupation and the stigma from one generation to the next like a segment of DNA’ (Brown, 2005, p. 18).
where you should and looked forth, you saw all the cattle of the City being
driven down to water, the students of the Government College playing
cricket, the high grass and trees that fringed the river-bank, the great sand
bars that ribbed the river, the red tombs of dead Emperors beyond the river,
and very far away through the blue heat-haze, a glint of the snows of the
Himalayas.

(‘On the City Wall, para. 3)

Having established Lalun as belonging to the primeval order of nature, the narrator goes on to
describe the house in which she lives, a place situated ambiguously on the City Wall. The
location of the courtesan’s house is more significant than its architectural design, as it brings
together men of different, sometimes hostile religions or factions:

In the long hot nights of latter April and May all the City seemed to assemble
in Lalun’s little white room to smoke and to talk. Shias of the grimmest and
most uncompromising persuasion; Sufis who had lost all belief in the
Prophet and retained but little in God; wandering Hindu priests passing
southward on their way to the Central India fairs and other affairs; Pundits in
black gowns, with spectacles on their noses and undigested wisdom in their
insides; bearded headmen of the wards; Sikhs with all the details of the latest
ecclesiastical scandal in the Golden Temple; red-eyed priests from beyond
the Border, looking like trapped wolves and talking like ravens; M.A.’s of the
University, very superior and very voluble — all these people and more also
you might find in the white room.

(‘On the City Wall’, para. 13)

Critics and readers of Kipling have responded to ‘On the City Wall’ in different ways.
Some see the story as prescient about the future of modern, postcolonial India. Philip Mason
calls the story ‘most substantial’ (Mason, p. 78), and Louis L. Cornell points out that ‘On the
City Wall’ is ‘more than the account of an exciting night of religious riot in the alleys of
Lahore. In its pages the forces that were to shape modern India confront one another and
struggle towards a partial and ironic resolution’ (Cornell, 1966, p. 153). Others interpret the
story as revealing Kipling's deep ambivalence about ethnic Indians and their cultures, or even
his jingoistic attitude toward Britain's colony. David Gilmour asserts that ‘On the City Wall’
is ‘a remarkable story in which Kipling managed to display perception and an appreciation of
Indian life at the same time as he mocked the idea of Indian self-government’ (Gilmour, 2002, p. 40). Shamsul Islam comments that stories like ‘On the City Wall’ show how ‘the negative character of India is further revealed in Kipling’s depiction of rampant chaos and confusion’ (Islam, 1975, p. 65), and Anna Suvorova asserts that through the story Kipling shows Lahore as ‘a city of violence and death’ (Suvorova, 2011, p. 181). More critically, George Orwell criticises Kipling as ‘a jingo imperialist’ (Orwell, 1942), and Salman Rushdie dismisses the story as artistically lopsided, with the central characters limited to Wali Dad, Khem Singh and the riotous mob (Rushdie, 1991). However, Mathew Lyons, responding to both Orwell and Rushdie, asserts that Lalun is amongst the most important characters of the story and in fact is ‘the embodiment of the Eastern, who ultimately controls her destiny under British rule – and implicitly the destiny of the British in India’ (Lyons, 2012).

I want to push Lyons’ reading further and argue that the figure of Lalun holds far greater relevance to Kipling’s narrative practice and representation of Lahore than most critics of the story have allowed. I see her as the very embodiment of the city itself. Lalun is Lahore. Kipling’s narrative reworks the theme of the woman as city, traditional in for instance medieval love allegory, which positions male characters in pursuit of or attracted to the woman/city and what she/it has to offer.

The courtesan's strangely street-popular name ‘Lalun’ conveniently rhymes with ‘Lahore’. We have already noted Lalun's description which links her with Mother Nature and timeless beauty. The narrative links her agency with her professional ability to bring together in her house men of all religions and creeds. Curiously situated on the City wall, her house offers a panoramic view of the entire city. Everything about Lalun reproduces some aspect of Lahore. Even the narrator's description of her beauty reminds us of Lahore:

Lalun has not yet been described. She would need, so Wali Dad says, a thousand pens of gold and ink scented with musk. She has been variously compared to the Moon, the Dil Sagar Lake, a spotted quail, a gazelle, the Sun on the Desert of Kutch, the Dawn, the Stars, and the young bamboo. These comparisons imply that she is beautiful exceedingly according to the native standards, which are practically the same as those of the West. Her eyes are black and her hair is black, and her eyebrows are black as leeches; her mouth is tiny and says witty things; her hands are tiny and have saved much money; her feet are tiny and have trodden on the naked hearts of many men. But, as
Wali Dad sings: “Lalun is Lalun, and when you have said that, you have only come to the Beginnings of Knowledge.”

[emphasis added] (Kipling, ‘On the City Wall’, para. 11)

Wali Dad's tautology ‘Lalun is Lalun’ carries strong reverberations of the famous Urdu saying Lahore Lahore hei (Lahore is Lahore). Even the narrator himself repeats Wali Dad's description of the woman:

'Yes,' said Wali Dad, 'it is curious to think that our common meeting-place should be here, in the house of a common — how do you call her?' He pointed with the pipe-mouth to Lalun.

'Lalun is nothing but Lalun', I said, and that was perfectly true.

(‘On the City Wall’, para. 42)

The narrative marks how Lalun stands for or reproduces Lahore not only through her physical description but also in the activities associated with her house, what goes on inside its walls. The courtesan Lalun's house is the multicultural centre of Lahore for men of different religions and cultures: “‘It is Lalun's salon,” said Wali Dad to me, “and it is eclectic — is not that the word?’” (‘On the City Wall’, para. 13). Ambiguously, Lalun's house is both open, yet well fortified: 'The feet of the young men of the City tended to her doorways and then — retired' (para. 40). Lalun's maid Nasiban reports that Lalun has jewellery worth many thousand pounds. If some thief were to grab it, ‘all the City would tear that thief limb from limb, and that he, whoever he was, knew it’. Lalun's house is on the city wall, but her identity is distributed throughout the city.

Another image that links Lalun and Lahore intimately together is that of darkness, the material circumstance which creates illusion and hides reality in the city. Lalun’s house is descriptively and narratively associated with night-time, in particular with the hazy time between day and night, twilight, the point in time when things are in a state of ambiguity or transition. We might say that the entire narrative schema in ‘On the City Wall’ is constructed around the image of darkness or twilight. Lalun’s window looks out into the ‘dust-haze’ of the city. The escaped prisoner Khem Singh’s face is hidden in the shadows, and his background is unclear, to both the English narrator/character and the reader. The riots during the Moharram procession take place in the dark, which allows Khem Singh to escape:
The east and southeast were by this time dark and silent, and I rode hastily to Lalun's house for I wished to tell her to send someone in search of Wali Dad. The house was unlighted, but the door was open, and I climbed upstairs in the darkness. One small lamp in the white room showed Lalun and her maid leaning half out of the window, breathing heavily and evidently pulling at something that refused to come.

'Thou art late — very late', gasped Lalun, without turning her head. 'Help us now, O Fool, if thou hast not spent thy strength howling among the tazias. Pull! Nasiban and I can do no more! O Sahib, is it you? The Hindus have been hunting an old Muhammadan round the Ditch with clubs. If they find him again they will kill him. Help us to pull him up'.

('On the City Wall’, para. 67-68)

Under cover of darkness Lalun and Nasiban use the narrator to help Khem Singh escape. Though the narrator later realises when he holds the old man’s wrist that he 'felt a bangle there — the iron bangle of the Sikhs', he does not have any suspicions, 'for Lalun had only ten minutes before put her arms round me'. Kipling's narrative thematises darkness and twilight in terms of illusion and reality, perpetrated by Lalun. The narrator is tricked into believing he is helping an old helpless 'Mohammadan', when actually he is being used by Lalun to help a Sikh revolutionary escape from British control. The Muharram procession provides a religious cover for Lalun's and her maid's political action, to which the English narrator unwittingly contributes.

4.1. **The rich time of darkness: Kipling and the dark**

Darkness is a rich time in Kipling’s Lahore writings. Besides 'On the City Wall', other stories thematise darkness as creating illusion or hiding reality. In ‘Watches of the Night’ the misunderstanding starts in the darkness of the night. In ‘Beyond the Pale’ the relationship between Bisesa and Trejago takes place and even ends during the darkness of the sunless alley. In fact the moonlight becomes a part of the storytelling as the moonlight strip on the high wall and the blackness of Amir Nath’s Gully remain part of the obscure surroundings which conceal the doomed relationship between the lovers. The entire atmosphere of ‘The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows’ is made up of a hazy, semi-darkness. In ‘By Word of Mouth’, Dumoise leaves Meridki (a town near Lahore) in twilight for Nuddea, eventually to meet his
death. In ‘In the House of Suddhoo’ the deep darkness of the house is reflected in a belief in the occult, while in ‘The City of Dreadful Night’ moonlight itself seems to be adding to the heat of the city: ‘Overhead blazed the unwinking eye of the Moon. Darkness gives at least a false impression of coolness’. Darkness apparently had a strong psychological effect on Kipling. Perhaps this was due to his growing trouble with his eyesight causing a 'gray haze upon all his world' (Kipling ‘Baa, Baa, Black Sheep’) or his insomniac night wanderings when the ‘night got into [his] head’ (Kipling 1936, p. 43). Night-time was a very active time for Kipling during his Lahore years: his night prowling through the city streets led to the prolific outpouring of many a tale ‘between moonset and the morning’ (Kipling, ‘The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows’ Plain Tales, p. 201).

Kipling’s preoccupation with light and darkness, or semi-darkness, might be traced back to his early years. In his memoire Something of Myself (1936) Kipling remembers his early childhood in terms of light and shade, when he lived in an idyllic Indian paradise with his parents, little sister and caring Indian servants: ‘My first impression is of daybreak, light and colour and golden and purple fruits at the level of my shoulder’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 33). On these morning walks with his Ayah, and his little sister, Trix, Little Ruddy, as the young Kipling was affectionately called, and his Hindu bearer, Meeta, went to Hindu temples where he looked at the ‘dimly-seen, friendly Gods’ and held Meeta’s hand, being ‘below the age of caste’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 33). By contrast, Kipling felt the menacing darkness of tropical eventides’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 33), a time during which he also saw the Parsees ‘wading out to worship the sunset’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 33). In his initial dread of the darkness, when he was afraid of the stuffed animal in his nursery, the Hindu Meeta came to his rescue and saved Ruddy from his ‘night terrors or dread of the dark’ by dispersing his fear of animals in the dark (Kipling, 1936, p. 34). Disturbing darkness remained with Kipling as an almost palpable presence and a concrete part of his childhood memories.

The psychological experience of darkness also entered Kipling’s childhood in another way, when little Ruddy and his sister were sent to Southsea, England at ages six and three respectively to be educated. The days of Bombay’s strong light and darkness ended, and the two little children were sent, the older Kipling remembers, to a ‘dark land and a darker room full of cold’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 35). Kipling spent the next six, perhaps hardest, years of his life in that circumstance. Angus Wilson has pointed out that we might think that ‘Kipling’s lifelong memory of this time was exaggerated in its horror, but it is not possible to doubt the effect it had upon him’ (Wilson, 1987, p. 47). Kipling recorded in his autobiography some
sixty-five years later his childhood experience of living in Southsea, in the boarding house of Captain Pryse Agar Holloway and Mrs. Sarah Holloway, a place he refers to as the House of Desolation: ‘If you cross-examine a child of seven or eight on his day’s doings (specially when he wants to go to sleep) he will contradict himself very satisfactorily. If each contradiction be set down as a lie and retailed at breakfast, life is not easy. I have known a certain amount of bullying, but this was calculated torture’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 36). Cold, dark England was a place of childhood trauma for the young Kipling.

The children did, however, find refuge with relatives whom they could visit during the holidays or at Christmas. Among these was his maternal aunt, Georgiana. Later, Kipling recalled how his aunt would ask him why he didn’t tell anyone how he was being treated. The autobiographer tries to explain the child's response to the situation and the trauma:

> Often and often afterwards, the beloved Aunt would ask me why I had never told anyone how I was being treated. Children tell little more than animals, for what comes to them they accept as eternally established. Also, badly-treated children have a clear notion of what they are likely to get if they betray the secrets of a prison-house before they are clear of it.

(Kipling, 1936, p. 41)

As a result of his childhood trauma in England, Kipling's early memories of Bombay and Southsea remained with him, partly shaping his experience of Lahore and finding their way into his Lahore stories. When he came to Lahore in 1882 the ‘night had already got into [his] head’ (Kipling, 1936, p. 43), and he would wander around the house till daybreak, realising that ‘such night-wakings would be laid upon [him] through [his] life’, (Kipling, 1936, p. 43). These bouts of insomnia led the young writer to view darkness as a time pregnant with stories and thoughts, both fearful and elating. Moreover, in Lahore the night acquired a new hue, not the cold desolation of his years at Southsea, but the rich darkness of the sweltering Lahore nights.

Darkness as a narrative context and theme in ‘On the City Wall’ is full of infinite possibilities. Janet Montefiore has commented insightfully on Kipling's use of day and night in his fictions and the homologies they are related to:

> The essence of his view lies in the division of life into two worlds, one of action and one of dream. In the Indian stories, this division corresponds
roughly to the dichotomy between day and night, and white men and native Indians. It is remarkable, even on a literal level, how many of the stories dealing with natives have night-time settings.

(Montefiore, 1977, p. 299)

Montefiore further notes that Kipling creates two worlds in his stories, the daytime world and the night-time world. The interplay of language and style relates the two worlds together very strongly:

The creation of these worlds depends mainly, however, on language and style. In the interplay of styles — ‘dialects’ is perhaps a better term — the relationships of the two worlds are established and Kipling's preoccupation with what words can mean and what their limitations are, and with what human beings can achieve and imagine, is articulated.

(Montefiore, 1977, p. 299)

Alongside the enigmatic Lalun, darkness is the moving force behind the action of ‘On the City Wall’, not only because it is part of the narrative setting but also because, like Lalun, darkness bridges between different events of the story.

Darkness contains and hides real motivations, the true meanings behind the visible surface pattern of things. ‘On the City Wall’ is like a game of chess: some people are used as pawns by others, kings and queens. This chess image is linked to the darkness theme through narrative description. The opposition between appearance and reality is seen in the names and titles of characters. While Lalun calls the narrator a Vizier, Khem Singh becomes the Subadar Sahib. The narrator does not explain why Khem Singh is called Subadar Sahib except that it is used as a term of respect for the old man by the Subaltern in charge of him in the Fort. Yet the events of the story show how the chess pieces, king, queen, pawn, assume titles according to their parts in the game. ‘Suba’ mean province, and ‘Subadar’ means ruler of the province, governor. All the characters of the story are described as fulfilling specific functions within a cultural and political game of chess.

Khem Singh is also a bridging agent in the story: the bridge between the past and the present:
'He is an Interesting Survival', said Wali Dad, pulling at the huqa. 'He returns to a country now full of educational and political reform, but, as the Pearl says, there are many who remember him. He was once a great man. There will never be any more great men in India. They will all, when they are boys, go whoring after strange gods, and they will become citizens—"fellow-citizens"—"illustrious fellow-citizens". What is it that the native papers call them?"

(‘On the City Wall’, para. 36)

Khem Singh and Wali Dad, respectively, indicate India’s past and future. Yet both turn out to be ineffectual: Wali Dad went absent when Lalun needed him in the scheme for Khem Singh’s escape, and Khem Singh himself retraced his steps back to the convenient life of imprisonment. Yet the answer does not lie with the British either: the white man (narrator) has proved the easiest to deceive.

The biggest actor of the story is neither Khem Singh, nor Wali Dad, nor the mob, not even the narrator. It is the image/theme of the bridge, either in the form of Lalun or darkness. 'On the city Wall’ is about bridges, the cementing structure of in-between-ness. The story presents Kipling’s belief in the failure of rigid extremes of creed, religious or political. The narrative substitutes a new perception of the mutual understanding between people of apparently different ethnic origins. This idea of social or cultural eclecticism is reinforced by the prevailing atmosphere of darkness in the story. Twilight is a time poised between broad daylight and pitch blackness, parallel with Lalun as Lahore, the city poised between the East and the West, and the narrator as a character situated between knowledge and ignorance. The narrative shifts darkness as image and theme from hiding and creating illusion to bridging and creating new community.

4.2. The bridging narrator

Like many of Kipling’s stories, ‘On the City Wall’ has a framed first-person narrative. The voice of the narrator wraps around the voice and experience of the character who has lived through the events narrated. The dialogue and dramatic tension between the narrator and the character emerge most clearly towards the end of the story:

Of course you can guess what happened? I was not so clever. When the news went abroad that Khem Singh had escaped from the Fort, I did not, since I
was then living this story, not writing it, connect myself, or Lalun, or the fat gentleman of the gold pince-nez, with his disappearance. Nor did it strike me that Wali Dad was the man who should have convoyed him across the City, or that Lalun's arms round my neck were put there to hide the money that Nasiban gave to Kehm Singh, and that Lalun had used me and my white face as even a better safeguard than Wali Dad who proved himself so untrustworthy. All that I knew at the time was that, when Fort Amara was taken up with the riots, Khem Singh profited by the confusion to get away, and that his two Sikh guards also escaped.

[emphasis added] (‘On the City Wall’, para. 92)

The voice of the narrator and the voice of the character map out two different levels of knowledge. The narrator of ‘On the City Wall’ is not Kipling himself, but a persona who, as Philip Mason argues, Kipling would have liked to have been (Mason, 1987). The narrator is an Englishman, not fully involved with the codes and norms of Indian religious and political cultures but someone nonetheless with a close, almost intimate understanding of Indian cultures and languages. In ‘On the City Wall’, the narrator is a Sahib, but also someone who can understand the Indian languages well: he translates Wali Dad’s English for Lalun and understands ‘Persian poetry with a triple pun in every other line’. Kipling’s narrator is a version of Kipling himself, a character better able to mediate between English and Indian cultures. The narrator is literally a bridge between English and Indian. As in other of Kipling's short stories (e.g. 'In the House of Suddhoo’) the narrator of ‘On the City Wall’ is a marginal figure, but also the speaker of the story, the centre of narration. As the narrator of ‘In the House of Suddhoo’ self-referentially declares:

This lets you know as much as is necessary of the four principal tenants in the House of Suddhoo. Then there is Me of course; but I am only the chorus that comes in at the end to explain things. So I do not count.

(‘In the House of Suddhoo’, Plain Tales, p. 109)

While the narrator/character in 'On the City Wall' has more narrative agency than in 'In the House of Suddhoo', this narrating and narrated ‘Me’ is a chorus-like figure, one present in most of Kipling’s short stories. But in 'On the City Wall' the narrator is more than the chorus: he is a bridge between the knowledgeable author and the ignorant but gradually enlightened
character. The narrative mediation between knowledge and ignorance, white man and Indian, outsider and insider is a persistent theme in Kipling's writing. Idealistic or utopian as it might appear, this mixing of voices is part of Kipling’s attempt to cross over to the Indian character and become one with him. Such cultural hybridity might ultimately be impossible, like mixing oil and water, as Khem Singh says, but literature is all about attempting the impossible, creating other versions of ourselves, and imagining what we don’t or can't yet know. Standing as a translator between two cultures, the narrator of 'On the City Wall' is at once inside and outside the action, the bridge between participant and reporter, Indian and English, Lahorite and Londoner. As Philip Mason points out:

‘On the City Wall,’ the most ambitious and the longest, is an example of one of Kipling’s favourite devices, ‘the marginally involved spectator’ who recounts the events of the tale as they came to him at the time, when he did not always fully understand what was going on. This Narrator, the ‘I’ person, is by no means always the historical Kipling, though no doubt he is someone Kipling would have liked to be thought to be.

(Mason, 1987)

Ultimately, the narrator's description and reporting are the bridge between the character and the reader, both of whom are equally ignorant during the course of the story. In terms of the narrative situation, the narrator has knowledge which the character and the reader do not have, or which the reader has inferred from the narration but not received directly from the narrator. The narrative itself becomes a kind of twilight zone.

Reading closely ‘On the City Wall’, we have seen how the image/theme of darkness coincides with that of the wall, that which can not only isolate or hide but which also brings opposites together. In his Lahore writings Kipling reveals his belief that Lahore can be a place where darkness is a rich, full, exciting time of life, even as darkness is a forbidding place of childhood and urban traumas. In the twilight the world balances itself on the wall of differences and reveals truth in glimpses and indirection, and we survive. These are themes which continue to intrigue and motivate contemporary Pakistani novelists.
Chapter 6

Order of the Border\textsuperscript{31}: Mohsin Hamid’s \textit{The Reluctant Fundamentalist} (2007) and Haroon K. Ullah’s \textit{The Bargain from the Bazaar} (2014)

This chapter deals with the idea of walls in the post 9/11 world. Focusing on Mohsin Hamid’s \textit{The Reluctant Fundamentalist} (2007) and Haroon K. Ullah’s \textit{The Bargain from the Bazaar: A Family’s Day of Reckoning in Lahore} (2014), I study the ways in which religious and political differences form walls of mistrust among the communities of the world. This chapter has three parts. The first deals with walls of mistrust in narratives of border situations and airport security checks. The second analyses social barriers in \textit{The Bargain from the Bazaar}. The third examines \textit{The Reluctant Fundamentalist} and links the narrative with social and cultural translation. I also compare Hamid’s fictive narrative with Deborah Baker’s biography \textit{The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism} (2011) and with Ullah’s creative non-fiction narrative in order to assess the strategies for representing cultural and political differences through narrative form.

In 2010 Bollywood, the popular title of the Indian Film Industry, released the movie ‘My Name is Khan’, starring the well-known actor, Shah Rukh Khan. The movie proved an instant success, breaking many box office records, and was especially popular among its Muslim viewers. ‘My Name is Khan’ shows how the Muslim community in the United States was affected after the September 11 attacks. The key sentence of the film, which is also the film’s title, is spoken by a Muslim man, Rizwan (Shah Rukh Khan), when he tries to tell the US president, ‘My name is Khan — and I am not a terrorist’. The film came out soon after Shah Rukh Khan himself was stopped at Newark Liberty International Airport (New Jersey) where security officials detained him for more than an hour because his name ‘came up in a computer alert list’ (‘Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan detained at US airport’, \textit{The Telegraph}, 2009). The ‘computer alert list’ was probably the infamous ‘No Fly List’, which contains the names of thousands of persons whom the United States Terrorist Screening Center considers threats to the national security (‘No Fly List’, Wikipedia, 2015) and so are not allowed to enter or fly over the US.

\textsuperscript{31} Ghassan Hage, 2003, p. 86.
The very fact that the famous actor, like others, was detained at the airport just because of his rather common Muslim name, together with the novel character Rizwan’s assertion that he is not a terrorist in spite of his name, poses questions about how far the US’s counter-terrorism strategies have turned meticulously devised safety measures into a paranoid obsession with names and ethnic identities. The possibilities for overreaching are enormous, and computer glitches have at times resulted in hasty apologies from embarrassed officials. To cite one extreme example: an eighteen-month-old girl was pulled off a JetBlue flight in Fort Lauderdale because airline officials thought that ‘her name was on the US no-fly list’ (‘Airline pulls 18 month old girl off plane in ‘no-fly’ alert’, The Telegraph, 2012), leading her indignant parents to infer ‘they were targeted because they are of Middle Eastern descent and the mother wears a hijab’ (‘Airline pulls’, 2012, para. 1). It cannot be denied that identity markers like names and codes of dress have become increasingly significant in the relations between the Western countries and their Muslim populations and visitors. A feeling of humiliation follows each special security check, some leading to overt or covert retaliatory measures, like the refusal of the toddler’s parents to board the plane because they felt they ‘were put on display like a circus act because [the] wife wears a hijab’ (‘Airline pulls’, 2012, para. 2).

Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) narrates a similar situation, set in the months immediately following the 9/11 attacks. Changez, the protagonist living in the US and narrator of the novel, describes how an immigration officer interrogates him upon his return from Manila where he had gone on a business trip: “‘What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?’ she asked me. “I live here,” I replied. “That is not what I asked you, sir,” she said. “What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?’” [italics in the original] (Hamid 2007, p 75). Chagrin, humiliation and possible retaliation result from these kinds of ethnic and racial discrimination and xenophobia. In the discussion that follows I examine Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Haroon K. Ullah’s *The Bargain from the Bazaar: A Family’s Day of Reckoning in Lahore* (2014) in terms of how these writers have responded to the post 9/11 scenario and the extent to which ethnic and ideological affiliations have been redefined in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. While *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* deals with Changez’s disillusionment with life in New York, *The Bargain from the Bazaar* uses novelistic narrative to show how the son of a family based in Lahore becomes involved in the terror network. Both texts show that after the 9/11 America’s paranoid preoccupation with names and appearances has not only spread across
countries and continents but also seeped into the very roots of the social fabric of metropolitan cities like Lahore and New York.

Recent researches view the post 9/11 novel from various angles. Peter Morey points out that the coming into existence of a post 9/11 literary canon requires an entirely new framework of articulation. In “‘The rules of the game have changed’: Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and post-9/11 fiction’ (2011), Morey writes that the gap between the global and the postcolonial is bridged by novels like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* which ‘challenges the orthodoxies of the post-9/11 novel’ (Morey 2011, p. 135). Instead of recapitulating the ‘unproblematic notions of essential cultural difference’, Hamid’s novel ‘refuses to articulate the kind of confession, charting the road to Islamist radicalism, one might expect from the title, and instead employs hyperbole, strategic exoticism, allegory and unreliable narration to defamiliarize our reading experience and habitual identifications’ (Morey, 2011, p 135). The ability to defamiliarize oneself becomes a part of the reading experience of this canon of literature. The emphasis now is upon finding new meanings in a common experience, as in Lynne Sharon Schwartz’s *The Writing on the Wall* (2005) where language itself becomes a struggle for a new vocabulary to express one’s loss after the September 11 attacks, or in Deborah Baker’s *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (2011) where the very act of writing someone’s biography becomes a multi-faceted task of cross-cultural translation. The post 9/11 novel can at times turn into an example of ‘Muslim misery memoirs’ (Morey, p. 136), as does H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy*, or articulate psychic and social fragmentation by visualising the ‘fall’ in all its literality as does Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*.

However, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* attempts neither to trace the psychological scarring of characters caught in the 9/11 web nor to generalise the sense of mortification felt by the Muslim community living in the West. Rather, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* digs deep into the roots of communal and cultural differences between the East and the West and asserts that outer borders and boundaries reflect inner divisions. While Daryoosh Hayati applauds the novel by observing that ‘In the end of this superbly powerful narrative every character is left hanging off metaphorical and literal cliffs and reminded that this is simply not a story of a rise and fall, but concerned with events that happened after the fall, for falling is only but the beginning of the story’ (Hayati, 2011, p. 38), Mahmood Mamdani examines the subtleties of cultural difference present behind the apparent theme of fundamentalism: “Every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and then explains politics as a
consequence of that essence” (Mamdani, 2005, p. 16). Ahmed Gamal points out that the very nature of diasporic literature has changed as a result of political conflict after the 9/11:

What is particularly new about post-migratory literature produced by writers like Soueif, Desai, Ghosh, Hamid and Shamsie is its proclivity toward a dynamic and undeviating reconstruction of the global and the postcolonial. The aesthetic structure of postmigratory novels thus tends to appropriate a rather more circular form of Bildungsroman, replete with recurrent continuities and discontinuities across global and postcolonial geographies and histories. Conversely, migrant literature of the 1980s and 1990s endorsed a more linear form of Bildungsroman, where the protagonist starts in a romanticized version of the host country and ends in disillusionment in his original home country. In such works, the gap between the global and the postcolonial was hence constructed as hardly bridgeable and translatable.

(Gamal, 2013, p. 599)

As I will show in this chapter, The Reluctant Fundamentalist imagines how in the post 9/11 world we have not only walls but mirrors, where every image of a real or imagined ‘foreigner’ is reflected and magnified a thousand times to create an unending chain of divisions and representations.

Compared to The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Haroon K. Ullah’s The Bargain from the Bazaar suffers from both structural faults and thematic implausibility. However, this ethnographical creative non-fiction reveals to us much about how narratives of identity and division relate to cultural practices and social associations. Set in Lahore’s Anarkali bazaar, The Bargain tells the story of the ups and downs faced by the family of Awais Reza, a former soldier-turned-shop owner, who helplessly watches as his second son, Daniyal, becomes a suicide bomber. In spite of being caught in the quagmire of Lahore’s notoriously string-pulling administrative set-up, where secret service agencies are highly susceptible to ‘orders from above’, Awais Reza somehow manages to disentangle himself from the web of police interrogations and legal prosecutions and even succeeds in winning back his good name in the market. Given the sensitivity of the subject of Islamist extremism in Pakistan, where religious and political forces often lock horns about the very definition of ‘jihad’ and the nature of Pakistan’s foreign policy, one can hardly spell out a clearly defined line of difference between religious and nationalist groups.
In *The Bargain* Islamist militants and nationalist liberals are clearly on opposite sides, but the narrative fails to address overlapping areas of common interests between the two factions, such as personal associations of members of the Pakistani government with Islamist militants, the manipulation of Quranic interpretations for political purposes, and the misuse of the notorious blasphemy law in the country. Even the arguments about Islam and liberalism in the text are conveyed either through verbal exchange between family members or are demonstrated in the form of lectures in a law classroom. The ending of the work shows an unbelievably happy recovery by Awais Reza’s family, marked by a wedding and probable procreation, though hardly two months have passed since one of their sons had blown himself up in a packed cafeteria, killing scores of innocent people.

Despite its flaws, *The Bargain* remains a faithful picture of post-9/11 Lahore. The narrative’s strength lies in its vivid portrayal of Lahore, based upon interviews and research conducted by the author in Pakistan, the Middle East and South Asia (Ullah, 2014, viii-ix). Weaknesses of plot and characterisation are compensated for by the narrative’s realistic description of Lahore’s political and cultural atmosphere, surpassed in contemporary fiction only by Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* (2000) and Ali Sethi’s *The Wish Maker* (2009). *Moth Smoke* shows Lahore’s elite class amidst an air of speculation regarding Pakistan’s nuclear arms race with India, and *The Wish Maker* contains a narrative that spans across three generations that have witnessed the country see-sawing between democracy and military dictatorship. Based on the writer’s research, *The Bargain* presents Lahore immersed in terror and insecurity. The work thus remains an important contribution to the canon of the post 9/11 novel, depicting the ways in which Islamist extremism is literally manufactured and distributed in the streets of Lahore.

6.1. **Walls in the Bazaar**

The trope of walls occurs repeatedly in *The Bargain from the Bazaar* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. References to walls appear very early on in the texts either as indicators of doubt and apprehension, structures of stoic resistance or façades of outward appearances concealing inner reality. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* the American listener likes to sit with his back ‘close to the wall’ (Hamid, 2007, p. 2) because he seems to be mistrustful and wary of Lahore’s atmosphere and general environment. In fact, the very opening lines of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* show the complete breakdown of a relationship of trust between the Pakistani narrator Changez, and his American listener.
Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America.


The beard, like the wall and the veil, is a curtain that screens the face behind it. A gradual domination of appearances over the possible reality of things starts becoming visible from the very outset of this novel.

Like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *The Bargain from the Bazaar* contains vivid passages describing an inability to see through appearances. *The Bargain*’s opening lines contain an equally poignant description of a weather-beaten man whom nobody could recognize, trudging on the road. This figure, we come to learn, is an exhausted and bedraggled soldier of the Pakistani army. The character is Awais Reza who had been taken prisoner during Pakistan’s war with Bangladesh in 1971. Ullah writes in the ‘Author’s Note’ at the beginning of *The Bargain* that he had spent many years researching on ‘the everyday struggles of ordinary, middle-class families, which are seldom seen in the news, by telling the true story of one family, the Rezas’ (Ullah, 2014, viii). After the surrender of the Pakistani army in December 1971, Bangladesh became a separate country, and thousands of Pakistani troops became prisoners of war in Bangladesh. Somehow Awais Reza had escaped and succeeded in returning home. Although this worn out soldier was later recognized by his wife, it was only after looking at him ‘for a long moment’ (Ullah, 2014, p. 2) that she sees beyond his bedraggled exterior. Both texts begin with scenes of uncertainty and misrecognition. This initial emphasis upon appearances as misleading indicators of reality also shows that there lies in human nature a tendency to judge people and events from their exteriors, without going deep into their true natures.

The image of the wall then comes to be physically present in the narrative world of *The Bargain from the Bazaar*. In the first chapter we get to know of the legacy of bloodshed...
and violence in the lives of the people of this region, especially those who had witnessed the anarchy during the days of India’s Partition:

The Reza family walked into the wreckage of Partition, visible everywhere by the time they arrived in Lahore. In those early years, new-comers found accommodation in the homes abandoned by owners who had either fled or been killed. The Rezas had cousins already living in Lahore’s Anarkali section, so they were able to get settled relatively quickly. However, their new home, a three-room ground-floor apartment, bore disturbing traces of its previous inhabitants. Some of the walls had blood stains that refused to wash away in spite of repeated scrubblings. It seemed as if the very air were full of terror and heart-break.

[Emphasis added] (Ullah, 2014, p. 5)

The blood on the wall remained present in their house and in their lives as a lurid reminder of the bloodshed woven into the very fabric of their history by the trauma of Partition in 1947. During that time of mistrust and insecurity, Awais’s father once witnessed near the Anarkali bazaar how ‘a man casually walked up behind another and shot him in the back of the head’ (Ullah, 2014, p. 5). The presence of bloodshed around him also affected Awais’s young imagination at that time, and he often mused over the happenings that must have taken place in that house during the days of Partition: ‘Some nights Awais would lie awake, imagining an unknown boy his own age. Was that his blood on the wall? He often wondered: What was it all about? Why all the hatred?’ (Ullah, 2014, p. 5). The young Awais’s mental identification with an unseen boy his own age leaps over the boundary between sects or tribes and tries to make a deeper link between individuals when they rise above religious and ethnic ties. This mental link between Awais and that unseen boy of the past reimagines blood not only as trauma and rupture but also as something which transcends outer signs of differences such as religions and nationalities.

The image of the walls also looms large in the very existence of this historical marketplace. Anarkali bazaar got its name from a beautiful courtesan in the Mughal Emperor Akbar’s court. Originally named Nadira Begum, she was given the title of ‘Anarkali’, ‘pomegranate blossom’, because of her beauty. However, when Emperor Akbar discovered that Anarkali had fallen in love with prince Saleem, his own son and heir apparent, he became furious and sentenced her to death. The way she had to die was equally cruel: she
was to be buried alive between two walls. Though historical accounts differ as to the authenticity of this myth, popular opinion is that Anarkali was buried alive in an upright position and walls built around her, brick by brick. The story of Anarkali is one of the most popular romances of the Mughal era and the subject of many films and songs that retell this historical myth. The tomb of Anarkali is still present in Lahore’s civil secretariat building, quite close to the marketplace that bears her name.

In the context of tangible and intangible walls in the Anarkali bazaar, and the growing insecurity and mistrust in the otherwise bustling marketplace, both *The Bargain* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* extend these walls to persons belonging to different communities, nations and religions.

6.2. Two interpretations of Islam in *The Bargain from the Bazaar*

Based on Ullah's seemingly close relationship with the Reza family, *The Bargain from the Bazaar* depicts two parallel interpretations of Islam: a strict one and a more moderate one. Daniyal belongs to the former group, while his brother, Kamran, belongs to the latter. Walls of differences start becoming visible among the members of the same family when Daniyal takes a separate road to the interpretation of Islam, the road of the extremists who enforce a very strict allegiance to the principles of Islam, especially emphasis upon *jihad* (crusade against the infidels). When Islamist militants bomb a shrine in Lahore, killing scores of people, the whole city is gripped in panic. The novel gestures towards the historical bombing of Data Durbar, a popular shrine near Anarkali bazaar, which was attacked by two suicide bombers in 2010. Awais and his wife, Shez, are traumatized as they watch the news channels reporting a huge number of dead and injured. They immediately try to locate their three sons and ask them to return home as soon as they can.

When the three boys finally do come home a debate ensues as to the rationale behind the bombing. The narrative reveals two different interpretations of Islam articulated in the views of Daniyal and his younger brother, Kamran:

Awais threw a hand at the news on TV. ‘This is madness, utter madness. The country will dry up and blow away if we allow things like this to continue. They’re destroying all we have worked for over the last sixty years.’

‘The question is,’ Salman said, ‘who can stop them?’
'No one,' Daniyal replied. ‘It will go on until there is true Islamic government in power. Then there will be no other reason for the attacks.’

Kamran objected, ‘Oh come on, Daniyal. There’s never a good reason for killing innocent people.’

(Ullah, 2014, p. 54)

As the brothers’ debate gets more heated, Daniyal and Kamran start presenting their respective views about Islam:

‘The leaders of the faith have spent years studying religious scripture. They know better than all of us that the will of Allah cannot be denied. It is inevitable. … And in religious texts it is written that we must live under Islamic law and no other. The guidance is very clear on this.’

‘But what kind of Islamic law?’ Kamran asked. ‘The Islamic law of truth and justice? Or the Islamic law of intolerance and cruelty?’

(Ullah, 2014, p. 55)

Kamran shows his annoyance at the rigidity of people like Daniyal by recounting how the strict interpretation of Islam is affecting the entire society:

‘Every day we hear about women having acid thrown in their face. Fingers and noses cut off. Women being strangled, raped. I myself have even been bullied by these so-called fundamentalists. And who does these things? It’s always some character who claims there was a violation of strict Islamic law. Is that what we want for modern Pakistan—mutilation, murder?’ He nodded at the TV. ‘Dozens of innocent people killed just to make some religious point?’

(Ullah, 2014, p. 55)

Gradually, Daniyal gets drawn into the whirlpool of extremism and is soon selected by his mullah to be trained for jihad which, we learn later, involves suicide bombing. Daniyal’s training starts, and he and two other young men start preparing for their task under the vigilance of an extremist militant, Gul Nawaz. Soon the government authorities discover Daniyal’s involvement in militant activities and an investigation gets underway to locate him. The intensity of the search is fuelled by the twin blasts at the shrine a few days earlier. The
police also question Awais in connection with his involvement in his son’s activities. Things get worse for the Rezas’ when another militant killed by the police turns out to be Daniyal’s friend who had also, on one occasion, visited Awais’s shop with Daniyal. Suspicion now turns to Awais, and he is apprehended by the law-enforcement agencies. Shez, Salman and Kamran are in despair. They hire a lawyer for Awais but in the volatile times during the War on Terror such charges are not easy to resolve. The lawyer arranges with the prosecutor to get Awais a minimum sentence of a year or two in jail if he admits to being privy to his son’s activities, but Awais, a former soldier and a self-made man, will not be cowed. He refuses to admit he has been an abettor of terrorism.

The wall between the two interpretations of Islam is also addressed in the academic institutions of Lahore, including the law university where Kamran studies. Kamran ‘had put his faith in law and order as a means for social change’ (Ullah, 2014, p. 35). The debates during the class lectures at the university foreground the different views regarding Islam and Pakistan held by the younger generation of the country. Kamran and his girlfriend, Rania, take active part in this debate. Their teacher, Professor Qasim, explains the situation in Pakistan:

‘On the one hand, we have the devout Islamic followers who strive to dictate how we should all live. On the other hand, we have the better educated who seek a more pluralistic, more democratic society — to throw off the shackles of ancient prejudice and superstition and live in the modern world. Make no mistake about it, students: within Pakistan, a great race is now being run. Quote: “a race between education and catastrophe.”’

(Ullah, 2014, p. 76)

Professor Qasim then goes on to state how the extremists use violence to make their point:

‘The extremists have a powerful weapon we do not possess. And that weapon is?...’

‘Violence,’ several students called out.

‘Yes, but not just violence. Violence perpetrated in the name of God. They say God tells them to kill. And it is by the use of this “divinely sanctioned” bloodshed that they hope to terrorise us into accepting their Islamic brand of
theocratic rule. God wants it, so you’d better do it, or else.’

[italics in the original] (Ullah, 2014, p. 77)

In the lecture halls of the law university the debate about Islam goes on. As Professor Qasim explains to the law students, this debate has been going on at a wider scale on the very streets of the country, and indeed in the entire world:

It was a major theme of Professor Qasim’s class and one of the nation’s most pressing and complex issues, as important as the debate about Pakistan’s moribund economy: what should be done about the militants operating within Pakistan? The alliance with the United States was not helping the situation on the ground or in the arena of public opinion. The national cooperation with Washington was now openly questioned by everyone from the media to the man on the street.

(Ullah, 2014, p. 77)

_The Bargain_ tries to depict how a terrorist network plays upon the religious feelings of the Muslims and manipulates them to serve its own agenda. People like Gul Nawaz are employed by players in a larger, more dangerous game and use gullible individuals like Daniyal to serve their purpose of spreading terror.

Suicide terrorism and other violent forms of resistance have been studied by various writers and thinkers. While Achile Mbembe (b. 1957) sees the power to kill as a form of acquiring sovereignty over the lives of others in his essay ‘Necropolitics’, Ghassan Hage (b. 1957) examines the rationale and the reasons behind the suicide bombers’ act of killing themselves and others. In his article “‘Comes a time we are all enthusiasm’? Understanding Palestinian Suicide Bombers in Times of Exstępophobia’ Hage analyses the suicide bombers in Palestine who retaliate against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank:

To my mind, both the Israeli invasion and the suicide bombing constitute a kind of warped postmodern pastiche associating medievally violent political affects, early modern veneration of political entities such as ‘the nation,’ and late-modern military technology.

(Hage, 2003, p. 67)
Hage cites the example of Palestinian struggle for sovereignty, and points out that this form of ‘legitimate violence’ is one which we tend to ‘normalize’ (Hage, 2003, p. 72). While we condemn ‘terrorist violence’ we do not condemn in the same way some other equally destructive and lethal forms of violence. For Hage, violence, in particular the violence that we have internally legitimised such as police checks and interrogations, leads to a sense of humiliation which results in people taking up retaliatory measures. Hage’s analyses show that the use of terrorist violence is actually only the tip of the iceberg. This iceberg is formed by a long standing, lethal and chronic sense of violation, born out of the feeling of unjust treatment at the hands of a particular ethnic group. This violence, this realisation of being abused and unjustly treated, gradually manifests itself in the form of drastic measures such as suicide attacks, and is initially even seen in the explicit use of violence like throwing stones at the Israeli tanks.

While Hage agrees that most suicide bombers carry out their self annihilation in accordance with what Durkheim calls the ‘altruistic suicide’, seeds of suicidal tendencies and defiant retaliation can be seen early on in Palestinian stone-throwing: ‘There is already a suicidal tendency exhibited in those practices well before they materialise in the form of suicide bombing. …the participant deliberately faces the danger of annihilation and at the same time seeks to accumulate personal status and self-esteem’ (Hage, 2003, p. 77). These measures are directed not only towards attacking one’s opponents but also at attempting to retrieve that sense of self respect which is deemed as the right of every individual and which is seen as having been usurped by the dominating force.

In this phobic culture where everything is viewed as either threatening and in need of extermination or threatened and in need of protection, there is an invasion of the order of the border. From the borders of the self to the borders of the family, friendship, neighbourhood, nation, and all the way to the borders of western civilization, everything and everywhere is perceived as a border from which a potentially threatening other can leap.

(Hage, 2003, p. 86)

In Ullah's ethnographic narrative Daniyal’s extremist tendencies arise not from a sense of being humiliated or collectively violated as seen in the suicide bombers of Palestine,
nor from the overt display of discrimination, but from the fact that he grew up in an era when Pakistan’s population was being rapidly changed by a new Afghan immigrant population. In the years after the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, millions of Afghans crossed the border to enter Pakistan. With these Afghans, also called Pashtuns, came a more intolerant view of Islam:

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a great flood of Pashtun refugees had flowed into Pakistan. These mountain people of eastern Afghanistan came by the millions, and in a very few years, the culture of Pakistan was thrown out of its natural orbit. Without objection from the major Western and Muslim nations, the Pashtuns imported into Pakistan a new and more rigid concept of religion that rapidly took root.

(Ullah, 2014, p. 32)

This infusion of different, stricter interpretations of Islam came not due to the presence of borders but because of the absence of a border. The north-western border of Pakistan with Afghanistan is actually a vast mountainous region and is frequently crossed over by Afghan tribesmen, allowing them a safe passage into Pakistan. In his article ‘Pakistan’s Dangerous Game’ Seth G. Jones writes about the insurgency of Afghan extremists into Pakistan:

No government of Afghanistan has ever formally recognised the British-drawn Durand Line that divides control over Pashtun territories. The Durand Line refers to the line drawn by the British and signed in 1893 with the Afghan ruler, Amir Abdur Rehman Khan. It divided Afghanistan and what was then British India (which now is the North West Frontier Province, Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Baluchistan areas of Pakistan). The Durand Line continues to be a source of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Settling the border will require coordinated investments in the underdeveloped areas on both sides. Such coordination is impossible while the border remains unrecognised and un-demarcated.

(Jones, 2007, p. 26)

The recognition of a national border, a secure wall, is regarded as critical for maintaining social order in Pakistan and keeping out unwanted influences. The lack of such a clear border is regarded as a critical social and national problem for Pakistan. While Pakistan’s border
with India was created through the tearing apart of united India, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan continues to remain a major area of insurgency.

The figure of Daniyal represents the Talibanisation of Pakistan youth as a result of this un-walled terrain. The narrative makes this historical point directly:

Daniyal Reza, who came of age during this era, was typical of the young men who became deeply involved in Islam, encouraged by a group of extreme-minded religious students. It wasn’t long before he joined a madrassa in Lahore headed by a fiery, proselytizing mullah. A major step in Daniyal’s radicalisation came when he dropped out of school to put all of his energy into following the pure Islamic way of life.

(Ullah, 2014, p. 33)

Such denotative discursive narration is what sometimes keeps The Bargain from being a strong book. It reads at times like an overly scripted history lesson. Nonetheless, the narrative highlights the rhetorical function of walls in Pakistan’s social discourses.

The border is not only a physical demarcation of space but also a mental mapping of ideas. As more extremist Afghans crossed into Pakistan, there emerged a social environment which enforced a rigid interpretation of Islam, which directly affected Pakistani youth like the fictional Daniyal. The absence of strong physical borders that protect and withstand differences leads to the building up of mental and cultural differences inside the nation, as we see in the different view-points held by Daniyal and Kamran. These intra-national differences reproduce international differences, captured by the spiraling chain of ‘us’ and ‘them’ oppositions found in both Eastern and Western cultures.

6.3. ‘Us’ and ‘them’ in The Reluctant Fundamentalist

While The Bargain addresses the conflicts between two different interpretations of Islam, embodied in the brothers Daniyal and Kamran and their fates, The Reluctant Fundamentalist expands the chasm of differences to encompass the clash between Eastern and Western cultures. This chasm is depicted and critiqued in the novel through the narrator, Changez, in the form of a conversation between himself and an American in the Anarkali bazaar. Since the American listener hardly ever speaks, the novelistic narration becomes more of a monologue. This narrative form is a favourite with Hamid, one he also employs in
his other two novels, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) and, as we have seen, in *Moth Smoke* (2000). The first-person narration gives the reader a distinct perspective, that of Changez, though the narrator also reports or anticipates the responses of his American listener. In telling his story to the American in the bazaar, Changez simultaneously unfolds his past and marks his listener’s responses to the story.

Changez had lived in America for four and a half years, first attending Princeton University in New Jersey and then working in New York. Recently returned to Lahore, Changez tells his American listener, how he was initially fascinated by America and its ambience of power:

When I first arrived, I looked around me at the Gothic buildings—younger, I later learned, than many of the mosques of this city, but made through acid treatment and ingenuous stone-masonry to look older—and thought, *This is a dream come true*. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible. *I have access to this beautiful campus, I thought, to professors who are titans in their fields and fellow students who are philosopher-kings in the making.*

*[italics in the original] (Hamid, 2007, p. 3)*

After the 9/11 attacks Changez feels the world around him changing rapidly. He and other Muslims in the US are viewed with suspicion, even intimidation, by the Americans around them. This change leads Changez to retaliate against this discriminatory attitude, both in the US and elsewhere. There arises among Muslims of the world, including Changez, the feeling of, what Hage calls, having been ‘cumulatively disadvantaged’ (Hage, 2003, p. 80). This sense of cumulative disadvantage comes to be seen as the basis of all forms of violent retaliation in the ongoing global conflict. One incident narrated by Changez reflects how the feeling of being chronically violated or discriminated against leads to the urge to retaliate:

Once I was walking to my rental car in the parking lot of the cable company when I was approached by a man I did not know. He made a series of unintelligible noises—‘akhala-malakhala,’ perhaps, or ‘khalapal-khalapala’—and pressed his face alarmingly close to mine. I shifted my stance, presenting him with my side and raising my hands to shoulder height; I thought he might be mad, or drunk; I thought also that he might be a
mugger, and I prepared to defend myself or to strike. Just then another man appeared; he, too, glared at me, but he took his friend by the arm and tugged at him, saying it was not worth it. Reluctantly, the first allowed himself to be led away. ‘Fucking Arab,’ he said.

(Hamid, 2007, p. 117)

Changez makes it clear to his American listener that he is neither an Arab nor what he calls a ‘belligerent chap’. But the parking lot incident he narrates made him feel the heat of being racially and ethnically discriminated against. It even led him to discover he might be capable of retaliating to this offense with violence:

…My blood throbbed in my temples, and I called out, ‘Say it to my face, coward, not as you run and hide.’ He stopped where he was. I unlocked the boot, retrieving the tire iron from where it lay; the cold metal of its shaft rested hungrily in my hands, and I felt, at that moment, fully capable of wielding it with sufficient violence to shatter the bones of his skull. We stood still for a few murderous seconds; then my antagonist was once again pulled at, and he departed muttering a string of obscenities.

(Hamid, 2007, p. 117-118)

This incident can be seen as exemplary of those faced every day since 9/11 by people like Changez who feel they have been wronged or ethnically discriminated. Later, as Changez tells his story to the American listener, he reflects that he can hardly remember his abuser’s face: ‘But how odd! I cannot now recall the man’s particulars, his age, say, or his built; to be honest, I cannot now recall many of the details of the events I have been relating to. But surely it is the gist that matters’ [italics in the original] (Hamid, 2007, p. 118). As happens so often, the abuser’s physical features are forgotten yet the ache of bruised pride or ethnic indignation remains. As Changez says, it is after all the gist that matters, the message of hatred that remains scathingly engraved in one’s mind, resulting in that smoldering sense of mortification which may later erupt into reckless retaliation. In the novel the racial discrimination and feelings of chronic violation continue for Changez, from his feeling of being an outsider among his American colleagues to his intense sense of humiliation at the immigration officer’s insinuating attitude towards him at the airport on his way back to New York from Manila. Even his relationship with his American girlfriend, Erica, seems to be going nowhere. The narrative accumulation of incidents shows how the sense of being
'cumulatively disadvantaged' seeps into the psyches of people like Changez, adding to the widening chasm between communities.

One significant incident occurs in the narrative when Changez tells about his business trip to Manila with a group of his American colleagues. At this point in the narrative he is an American, working in an American firm and making the trip with his team of American colleagues. But he discovers in Manila he is also, and still, a third world citizen from Lahore:

Yet there were moments when I became disoriented. I remember one such occasion in particular. I was riding with my colleagues in a limousine. We were mired in traffic, unable to move, and I glanced out the window to see, only a few feet away, the driver of a jeepney returning my gaze. There was an undisguised hostility in his expression; I had no idea why. We had not met before—of that I was virtually certain—and in a few minutes we would probably never see one another again. But his dislike was so obvious, so intimate, that it got under my skin.

(Hamid, 2007, p. 67)

Changez soon realizes why the man is looking at him with such hatred. Sitting with his white American colleagues in a limousine and able soon to return to New York, Changez is presented with the Filipino driver’s view of him as belonging to a better, more privileged world, which the Filipino will probably never be able to enter.

Afterwards, I tried to understand why he acted as he did. Perhaps, I thought, his wife has just left him; perhaps he resents me for the privileges implied by my suit and expensive car; perhaps he simply does not like Americans. I remained preoccupied with this matter far longer than I should have, pursuing several possibilities that all assumed—as their unconscious starting point—that he and I shared a sort of Third World sensibility. Then one of my colleagues asked me a question, and when I turned to answer him, something rather strange took place. I looked at him—at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work—and thought, you are so foreign. I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside.

(Hamid, 2007, p. 67)
At this critical point in the novel Changez realizes he occupies a middle ground between the two entities — ‘us’ and ‘them’. He had assumed he was part of ‘us’, at least from the Westerners point of view which Changez is partly internalizing, but he realizes that actually he is much closer to being ‘them’. Changez now occupies an in-between position where his luck and his intelligence have placed him among the American team but he comes to realise as a person that he is closer to the Filipino man than to the Americans. Significantly, Changez’s new identification with the Filipino man comes through the medium of the gaze. When their eyes meet, they gaze at each other with a mixture of hatred and bewilderment. The gaze communicates a subtle message of both identification and strangeness. In this encounter both Changez and the Filipino driver realize the presence of an unseen border between them, a wall that is almost palpable in its stoicness. Yet it is a wall that also allows the two people to view each other too, a glass wall that allows the gaze to reach to the other through the medium of their eyes, but denies any further access between the two.

When he returns to Lahore Changez is faced by another dilemma: coming to terms with post-9/11 life in Pakistan. As he explains to his American listener, re-visiting ‘home’ after a long period of time requires a ‘different way of observing — I recall the Americaness of my own gaze when I returned to Lahore that winter when war was in the offing’. He feels shame and sadness at the poor conditions of his parents’ home: ‘I was struck at first by how shabby our house appeared, with cracks running through its ceilings and dry bubbles of paint flaking off where dampness had entered its walls […] this was where I came from, this was my provenance, and it smacked of lowliness’. He feels alienated and lonely even in Lahore, which he had regarded as ‘home’. His memory of his affair with Erica also haunts him, and he sees in his relationship with her the same helplessness that he finds in his stance towards America. Though he and Erica were in love with each other, they could never make love. Their inability to consummate their relationship suggests the barrenness of Changez’s relationship with America itself, emphasized by the similarity of Erica’s name with that of the country. In his memories of Erica and of America, he realizes that his stay there has changed him forever and he can never be the same person again:
Often, for example, I would rise at dawn without having slept an instant. During the preceding hours, Erica and I would have lived an entire day together […] Such journeys have convinced me that it is not always possible to restore one's boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship.

(Hamid, 2007, pp 173-4))

Changez’s growing realization he has been occupying two worlds at the same time can be compared to that of Maryam Jameelah as described by Deborah Baker in her biography The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism (2011). Maryam Jameelah was born as Margaret Marcus, the younger of two daughters of a Jewish family in New York. At the age of nineteen years, Margaret became attracted to Islam, and encouraged by the writings of the Muslim cleric Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi, she converted to Islam, changed her name to Maryam Jameelah and started living in Lahore. Maryam’s conversion and decision to leave New York and live in Lahore shows a personal journey marked by conflicts and self-defeating contradictions. In The Convert Baker shows how she meets Maryam and is both impressed and revolted by the conditions of her life. In spite of having lived in Lahore for many years and having married a Muslim man and having borne five children with him, Maryam is far from the strong woman Baker had imagined her to be from her letters. Baker’s biography is thus as much about Maryam as it is about the very task of understanding and reproducing a person. Towards the end of The Convert Baker describes how she confronts Maryam and asks her about her stance towards some fundamental issues in the Muslim world: “How carefully have you weighed what you have written against how you have lived your life?” (Baker, 2011, p. 213). She asks Maryam how she could denounce Western civilization so openly when she herself was not being able to fully fit into the role of a Muslim woman:

It is one thing to espouse these views as a sheltered and single American woman. But how could you continue to denounce science, with its “naked atheism and materialism,” while you were asking your mother to send you books on infant nutrition? Or while you were pleading with your father to intervene with your husband on the subject of your children’s vaccinations for polio, smallpox, and diphtheria?

(Baker, 2011, p. 212)
The personality of Maryam Jameelah, with all its contradictions and conflicts as Baker presents, is comparable to that of Changez. Like Changez, carrying as a fictional character the connotations of ‘change’, Maryam is a translated person who goes through a series of translations. First, she undergoes a physical and mental translation by changing her name, place and religion; second, she translates herself into her own writings including her letters to Mawlana Mawdudi, her parents and Baker; third, her convert personality is translated by Baker into the form of narrative biography, mediated by a reporting voice. In each of these acts of translation, the true nature of Maryam Jameelah remains an enigma, and her biographer realizes the impossibility of translating a person wholly into another world. Like Maryam Jameelah’s letters, Changez’s narrative can be equally unreliable as he says to his American listener: ‘It seems to me that you have ceased to listen to my chatter; perhaps you are convinced that I am an inveterate liar’ (Hamid, 2007, p. 183). Both Changez and Maryam Jameelah are ‘reluctant’ fundamentalists: reluctant because they cannot wholly sever ties with their respective homelands nor can they entirely merge into their adopted culture, and fundamentalists because they are too much obsessed with the ‘fundamentals’ or ‘gist’ of their lives. Both have forsaken their own worlds, yet both are conscious of their inability to refuse returning, though mentally, to the very grass-roots of their past: ‘Try as we might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside and something of the outside is now within us’ (Hamid, 2007, p. 174). Changez realizes that walls are a part of the modern man’s predicament; they are both his scourge and minister. As Changez says ‘I do not mean to say that we are all one, and indeed—as will soon become evident to you—I am not opposed to the building of walls to shield oneself from harm’ (Hamid, 2007, p. 174). The need is not for oneness but for the right act of translation. That is why when Baker confronts Maryam Jameelah about her dual stance towards the West, she clearly differentiates Maryam’s voice from her own:

These are your words now.

And these are mine: What is this spiritual purity? When the jihadi’s come to the door of your house in Sant Nagar, will they find the family living there sufficiently pure? Don’t you have an American passport? Don’t your children and grandchildren? Will it matter to these men that you have been a Muslim for fifty years, or will someone remind them that you were born a Jew?
When will you speak up?
If not now, I ask Maryam Jameelah, when?

(Baker, 2011, p. 215)

In urging her to speak about her true views about Islam and the West, Baker is actually trying to translate the views and personality of Maryam Jameelah into her own understanding of the Western civilization in the eyes of the Eastern countries. The efforts and challenges facing Baker are similar to those encountered by Hamid.

Yet part of the problem lies in the fact that The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a novel while The Convert is a biography. Both foreground narrative as knowing, but Hamid takes the material of his novel from his own reservoir of thoughts and memories, while Baker constructs a person from letters, interviews and observation. Hamid is creating a character in a context of other created characters and situations, while Baker is trying to fathom a living person. She is trying to translate Maryam Jameelah through her writings and from her conversations. Both Hamid and Baker are indulging in an act of translation, whether this translation is done directly and consciously or indirectly and unconsciously. As John B. Kincheloe observes:

Baker begins questioning Maryam at every turn, and even writes her a letter pushing against her rehearsed speeches, and asking her to own up to her contradictory thought process and actions. She finds that Maryam has no more desire to answer her questions honestly than to be candid in their interviews. But the critique that Baker exercises in this is the true testament to her work as an act of good translation. Whether she is being genuine or not, through Baker’s process, she gives her audience a closeness and intimacy with her subject that at least strives authentically for Jameelah’s aura.

(Kincheloe, 2013, p. 56)

In juxtaposing Maryam Jameelah with Changez and in comparing a work of non-fiction with a novel, I am attempting to see how much and how far can one understand the views of one person through his or her narrative, and by extension to see how far it is possible for a person of one culture to understand the implications of another culture.
Narratives help us do that but they also show us the limits of that attempt. The problem of borders and the friction seen at visible marks of walls such as airports and lines of control are only a manifestation of the misunderstandings that stem from a lack of cross-cultural translation. The question is, where do these walls start melting off? The answer to this question lies somewhere in Changez’s own analysis of his feelings towards New York and Lahore. Like Jameelah, Changez wants a transnational existence in the world, where he is not fixed to one locale, name or even identity. He refuses to bow down to any stamped identity, which is why when, towards the end of the novel as Changez and his American listener get up to leave the Anarkali Bazaar which is now a bit deserted, Changez says to his American listener ‘It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins’ (Hamid, 2007, p 183). The need is for what Kincheloe calls ‘an act of good translation’. Instead of branding members of one community as terrorists or labeling those of the other community as paranoid, one needs to understand that cultural differences, like walls, can be transcended.
Conclusion

Fictional, ethnographic nonfiction and creative nonfiction writings on Lahore use tropes of walls, veils, borders, and darkness to represent various forms of division, alienation, and subjugation in Pakistani society. Walls in particular are deployed as metaphors for the Partition of India, and structures of division. At the same time, walls in many of the works discussed in this thesis also represent frontiers of shelter and protection. Walls and borders thus mark out a space within contemporary Pakistani narratives where historical memory and trauma are replayed or interrogated or feared. Walls in these texts can also act as veils, which hide, control or dominate the body, especially women's bodies that they are designed to cover. Like walls, such coverings can become meeting points of the sections of space they divide, and therefore they can act as agents of translation, embodying the need to recognise, accept and respect diversity. Such transformations of images or figures are crucial aspects of the novelistic imagination in contemporary writings on Lahore.

Containing walls, veils and borders, the city of Lahore itself is also enclosed by the ancient city wall originally constructed to protect the city, its people and property, against invaders. Although the physical wall of Lahore has diminished over the years, its presence, both real and imagined, is still there. The oldest section of Lahore is still referred to as the Walled City of Lahore. In this thesis I have discussed a range of contemporary fictional narratives which to different degrees are set in and around Lahore. But Lahore the city is more than a setting or backdrop in these texts. Lahore is not only a figure and a myth but a character in these narratives. In addition, the urban context, structured by walls and borders, motivates the narratives' use of urban, architectural and geographic figures, and establishes a social ethos in the texts which interrogates Pakistani social ideologies, especially to do with gender identities.

a) Walls and borders: a shift in perception and representation

Based on my narrative analysis, supported by scholarship and some of my personal memories and experiences, I find that the literary representations of walls in post-1900 Lahore writings have undergone a series of significant changes. Lahore as a city occupies an important place in the historical, geographical and political framework of the wider region. Lahore, close to the Wagah border, the only border between India and Pakistan which is also a road, stood witness to the mass exodus of population in the 1947 Partition of India. The Partition and its traumatic consequences revealed how the so-called British policy of "divide
and rule’ was also one of ‘divide and withdraw’. The Partition is a cruel chapter in Lahore’s history, more poignantly felt because of the displacement of tens of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had to leave their beloved city and migrate across the newly created border, as countless Muslims left their cherished hometowns in India and were forced to travel to the newly established nation of Pakistan.

In the Partition literature of Lahore, the representation of walls moves in two directions: on the one hand, walls are portrayed as an enclosed and safe space of communal living that marked pre-Partition India while on the other hand they are seen as structures of division. As a result, during the Partition the idea of being within the four walls of one’s home became many people’s cherished memory of a lost utopia. This longing or nostalgia for the home’s walls is a persistent theme in writings on Lahore. Walls are figured as structures of maternal warmth and communal affiliation, especially in the literature produced in the years immediately following the Partition. The 1950s and 1960s produced a wealth of writing in the regional languages, such as Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi, but the period also witnessed the emergence of celebrated works in English, including Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Mumtaz Shah Nawaz’s *The Heart Divided* (1959), Balachandra Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959), and Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961). These works dwell upon the history of co-existence and communal affiliation which had been roughly, even violently, disrupted by the 1947 Partition.

However, the Partition literature that was produced much later, for example Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and sections of *The Bride* (1983), represent walls as hegemonic structures that control and segregate people. This post-1970 imagistic change in the discourse and representation of walls in Lahore narratives was partly due to the fact that after the Partition of India, both India and Pakistan became involved in a series of political confrontations: wars in 1965 and 1971, the long-term hostility regarding the Kashmir region, the demolishing of Babri Mosque in 1992, the Kargil affair in 1999, and the ethnic riots in Indian Gujarat in 2002. As hostilities have escalated or been reduced between the two countries, the representation of walls in literary texts have moved between protection and control, separation and community. Lahore, as the hub of cultural and literary activity in Pakistan, could not remain aloof to such changes in the political atmosphere of the two countries. Nor could the cultural identity which Lahore carried in Pakistan’s social discourse remain unaffected.
In more recent years the representation of walls in Lahore writings has become still more complicated. After the 11 September 2001 attacks in New York and the onset of the so-called ‘war on terror’, Lahore suffered much in the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, including frequent bombings in the city, border security concerns, and Afghan infiltration through the mountainous terrain at Pakistan’s northern border with Afghanistan. These events and the generalised increase in friction and anxiety between the Muslim world and the West have resulted in the spread of insecurity and bloodshed in the streets of Lahore. The Talibans have repeatedly bombed Pakistan's cities, killing thousands of innocent people. At the same time, American high-handedness and cultural arrogance has led to general sentiments in Pakistan of hatred and exasperation at both the Americans and the Afghans. In this context, the literary significations and representation of walls have changed.

As we have seen, novels such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the creative nonfiction *The Bargain from the Bazaar*, both post-9/11 narratives, inscribe urban walls as metaphors of borders between countries. The narratives explicitly critique the view that such boundaries have become indispensable because they prevent insurgency as well as safeguard the sovereignty of the state. In *The Bargain from the Bazaar* the narrative accounts for Daniyal’s extremism and religious fanaticism by claiming, perhaps too simplistically, that extremist Muslim attitudes were imported into the country by thousands of hardline Pashtun refugees who had been arriving in Pakistan since the Soviet war in Afghanistan. The narrative presents these militarised migrants as polluting traditional Pakistan society:

> Without objection from the major Western and Muslim nations, the Pashtuns imported into Pakistan a new and more rigid concept of religion that rapidly took root. Women were suddenly required to wear the full-length burqa, as prescribed by scripture. [. . .] Men were encouraged and even intimidated to keep their beards unshaven and had to wear turbans or bandanas to cover their heads.

(Ullah, 2014, p. 32)

Such border infiltrations, which are thought to corrupt Lahore’s traditional culture, motivate a number of people, as seen in Ullah’s text. In *The Bargain from the Bazaar*, we see how the absence of walls, specifically adequate border control, can affect the peace and stability of the region. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* we see how Changez, despite having faced religious discrimination against himself as a Muslim in New York, does not advocate the entire
breaking down of walls. Rather, he sees the presence of walls as ambiguous, as undermining the good in human nature and the community in self-identity while at the same time providing definition, security, and safety:

Such journeys have convinced me that it is not always possible to restore one’s boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us. […] I do not mean to say that we are all one, and indeed—as will soon become evident to you—I am not opposed to the building of walls to shield oneself from harm.

(Hamid, 2007, p. 174)

Many recent Lahore writings show that in the modern age we need to not do away with walls but restrict their operation to political and strategic spheres, and not allow them—walls, veils, ethnic bias, sexual oppression—to spread via religious discrimination among people of different communities. We read the same endorsement of humanism in the face of religious extremism in Deborah Baker’s The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism, her self-conscious biography of Maryam Jameelah, the U.S. Islamic convert living in Lahore. At times Baker directly confronts Maryam Jameelah about the conflict between her religious claims and her professed faith in human values:

Muslim youth are killing their sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers. This is social disintegration. Young men and women are killing themselves to better kill others. This is perversion. In Lahore, saints’ shrines have been locked, pilgrims turned away, out of fears of suicide bombers intent on poisoning the very wellspring of your faith.

Yet now you are quiet.

Now you say, “Ask the ulema.”

You drew a savage and titillating portrait of America and those who didn’t practice their Muslim faith exactly the way you wanted them to, yet you disclaim all responsibility for the crimes these youth commit and still conspire to commit every day in Pakistan or New Jersey or Somalia or Malaysia.

(Baker, 2011, pp 213-214)
Baker’s words to Maryam Jameelah address the extent to which Jameelah has or is able to translate Islamic values into her Western background and vice versa.

In the novels and creative nonfiction works I have discussed, walls are both the scourge and minister of the modern man. We can neither annihilate them nor submit to their absolute authority. Rather, for peace, we have to acquire the ability to transcend the walls of cultural and religious discrimination by the act of right translation and tolerance of difference.

b) Walls, veils and the culture of invisibility

In many of these texts walls function as a synonym for veils. There is a close connection between the walls that restrict a person, especially a woman, to a confined existence and veils that literally try to obliterate her identity as a public person. A veil is not only a piece of cloth to cover the face or the body, but also a cultural imposition which attempts to conceal her from sight, and in doing so, make her invisible to all but her male ‘possessor’. These writings on Lahore show that in the male-dominated society of Lahore veils operate as hegemonic structures which try to blank out the personality of women. Veils, like walls, are also closely associated with the operation of the gaze, especially but not exclusively the male gaze. The opacity of walls becomes linked to the opacity of veils. Walls and veils operate in Lahore society like the unseen male gaze which dominates the woman.

Another aspect of this link between walls and veils is a woman’s right to speak and articulate her thoughts. The women in texts like The Dancing Girls and Moth Smoke try to break free from the oppressive walls of silence around them. One powerful way for women to break free from the walls of patriarchal society is for them to take on public aspects of male identity, as Mumtaz does in Moth Smoke. She adopts a male pen name and writes articles for the newspaper. By doing so she indirectly endorses the very male-dominated order against which women like Mumtaz are rebelling, but through her writing she also inserts into Lahore’s public discourse a fundamentally female perspective.

Representing the walls of gender discrimination against women, some of these Lahore writings probe into the very definition of protest itself. Dilaram, the brothel madam, had been repeatedly raped and was then sold off in her youth, but now she wields power over her male clients as well as the women workers of the brothel. That she does so in the sex trade and therefore operates at the margins of Lahore society indicates the complications and ambiguities of her newly won power. In these novels, women like Mumtaz and Dilaram
sometimes seem to internalise the order of male domination. The novels represent their marginalised female identities as to some extent unconsciously conforming to the tradition of male superiority against which they apparently protest.

c) Walls in the narrative

As tropes, walls are not only topics or subject matter but also figures which construct narrative technique and signification. The texts by Kipling, Manto, Sidhwa and Hamid which I have discussed in this thesis share certain literary similarities in that these authors have used strategies of implied narrative, reportage, and interior narration to convey information to the reader. In each text, however, there is an underlying subtext of things left unsaid, or partly said, something in the narrative's shadows which cannot be seen clearly. The subtext is woven into the main text while the voice of the narrator allows the reader to have information that he, as a narrator, professes to have known only partly. In this way, several of these narratives construct limited or less than entirely reliable narrators. For example, in ‘In the House of Suddhoo’ and ‘On the City Wall’ the narrator is brought into the scheme of deception and is made a ploy at the hands of those who beguile others, such as the Seal Cutter and, to some extent, Lalun. In these texts, the narrator is as little aware as the reader of being used as a ploy in the overall scheme of things. Only at the end of the text do both the narrator and the reader grasp what has been going on:

Of course you can guess what happened? I was not so clever. When the news went abroad that Khem Singh had escaped from the Fort, I did not, since I was then living this story, not writing it, connect myself, or Lalun, or the fat gentleman of the gold pince-nez, with his disappearance. Nor did it strike me that Wali Dad was the man who should have convoyed him across the City, or that Lalun's arms round my neck were put there to hide the money that Nasiban gave to Kehm Singh, and that Lalun had used me and my white face as even a better safeguard than Wali Dad who proved himself so untrustworthy. All that I knew at the time was that, when Fort Amara was taken up with the riots, Khem Singh profited by the confusion to get away, and that his two Sikh guards also escaped.

(Kipling, ‘On the City Wall’, para. 92)
The narrator understands the reality of things, the secret behind the narrative wall or veil, only after the events have unfolded. Like the reader, the narrator has been telling the story from the perspective of the protagonist.

My readings of the tropes of walls and veils in the narratives help account for how the narrative technique of implied narrative emerges out of the strategy of dividing or partitioning the voices of the author, the narrator and the character. As Monika Fludernik shows, first- and second-person narrative points of view erect a wall between the implied reader and narrator: ‘Since the narrator, by definition, occupies the deictic position of the “I” and the addressee the deictic position of the “you”, you can only refer to the narrator in passages of self-address in which an “I” splits into two voices that interact dialogically’ (Fludernik, 2004, p. 25).

In the Lahore writings, examples of this splitting of the “I” occurs most prominently in *Moth Smoke*, where the entire novel is constructed around the voices of the narrators, which often do not conform to each other. It is not exactly *Rashomon*, but the ambiguity of narrative point of view in *Moth Smoke* confirms the text as an urban narrative of walls and mirrors. This division of narration is also seen in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, where Changez is both the narrator and the character in the novel. We find this technique of splitting or creating a wall between the voices of the implied narrator, who seems to be ignorant of events or implications but is also the centre of narrative authority and reporting, in texts by Kipling and Hamid. This technique not only allows the narrator to maintain the suspense in the story but also to remain oblivious to the underlying scheme of things, linking the reader and narrator in a narrative space defined by the time of reading the story.

**d) Areas for further research**

This thesis has opened up a number of areas in contemporary Pakistan literature which might fruitfully bear further research. The city wall of Lahore and its gates, together with their historical and geographical importance, are a topic for further research which connects architecture and urban history with writing. The relations between narrative and poetry and the architecture of the walled city, the function of windows as revealing the power relations at work in a society where women are supposed to live in seclusion, the juxtapositions of urban neighbourhoods which define status and separate one group from another, are all provocative areas for further literary and cultural study.
As the contemporary society within the walled city of Lahore is changing, women are now venturing out of their houses more frequently in search of education and employment, activities in which they are being supported or hindered by their real and fictive kin. By fictive kin I mean the people who live in the neighbourhood, and who are called by the titles of ‘mother’s brother’, or ‘father’s sister’, or ‘mother’s sister’s husband’ even though they might not be any of these. The network of fictive kin is an essential part of the social network of life in the walled city of Lahore. The network makes up the support system which women need to succeed in the face of patriarchal traditions, weak administration, and a legal system whose religious basis works against them. This socio-cultural network of fictive kinship as represented and interrogated in contemporary Pakistan literature is another area where further research and close reading is warranted. In this regard Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Bride* (1983), Claudine d’Ison’s *Hira Mandi* (2011) and Ali Sethi’s *The Wish Maker* (2009) might fruitfully be examined as literary texts that directly address the discourse of socially constructed kinship among the residents of Lahore.

Writing in the native vernacular is another important area that can and should be explored in Pakistan literature. The Urdu literature of Lahore runs parallel to the Anglophone literary tradition, and the Urdu novels of India and Pakistan form a rich canon which contains some remarkable works, including *Umrao Jan* (1905) by Mirza Hadi Ruswa (1857-1931), the story of a courtesan of nineteenth-century Lucknow. Ruswa’s novel has been translated into English by Khushwant Singh (2005) and also by David Mathews (2006). Depending on the critic’s bilingual proficiency, future research might explore the complexities and intricacies of translation between the Urdu original and the English versions. A similar comparison of Hadi’s novel, Manto’s short stories and the Urdu poetry of Mirza Ghalib (1797-1865) is also promising. The common thread in these last three works is the way in which the writers address social norms, especially those related to women. The three writers also experiment with narrative technique and the narrator’s voice.

Further research on Lahore writing could explore other aspects of literary and narrative technique and experimentation. The study of split narrative point of view or the difference between the narrative and the implied narrative would be a provocative topic within the history of the South Asian novel. Mohsin Hamid’s characteristic second-person narrative can be compared to the writings of other Pakistani writers in English, such as Nadeem Aslam, Kamila Shamsie and Daniyal Mueenuddin. The manipulations of narrative voices hold further potential for research when juxtaposed with the experience of migration.
Works like Rukhsana Ahmad’s novel *The Hope Chest* (1996), which depicts three women who are each caught in a web of fantasy, can be studied with reference to the split in the narrating perspective in the context of migration and shifting social and ethnic identities. Lahore is a multi-cultural and historical city, and its social norms, its architecture, its tangible and intangible walls, and its rich literary tradition in English, as well as in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi languages offer a broad area where further research can be pursued.

A comparative study of the literary and creative non-fiction representations of Lahore’s Heera Mandi with those of brothels and the sex trade in other South Asian cities such as Delhi and Lucknow might also be very fruitful. It would be very interesting, for example, to explore the different texts on brothels and the sex trade and women’s defined and resistant roles in the societies of India and Pakistan. For instance, comparing Louise Brown’s *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* (2005) and Mayank Austin Soofi’s *Nobody Can Love You More: Life in Delhi’s Red Light District* (2013) would reveal much about the working of power relations in dominant and marginal contexts among the prostitutes of Lahore and Delhi and the roles that narrativising their lives have on their socially constructed identities.

Lahore offers rich potential for further research for the historian, the archaeologist, the anthropologist, the social scientist, the linguist, the town planner and the student of literature. The present thesis is one step in this direction and hopefully opens new ways for further research and studies that will give this remarkable city and its literature the attention it deserves.
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Glossary of Urdu terms

Ashura: Mourning procession that commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad.

Ayah: Nanny or woman servant hired for taking care of children in Indian households.

Azaan: Call for prayer in the mosques.

Biradari: Family, especially the extended clan; caste

Burqa (burkah, boorka): Long veil that covers the body from the head to the feet, usually worn by Muslim women in Eastern countries like Pakistan.

Chadar: Shawl or covering for the head and face of a woman.

Churel: Witch.

Doputta or dupatta: Long piece of cloth worn by women to cover their head and torso.

Djinn: Genie.

Hadith: Sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

Haveli: Mansions, mostly found in India and Pakistan, often housing extended families.

Hijab: Head scarf.

Hijra: Eunuch; transvestite.

Hookah: Long pipe with a base holding water, used for smoking.

Jihad: Crusade or a religious war against infidels. A Jihadi is a person who wagers such a war.

Koran or Quran: Holy book of Muslims.

Khusra: Transvestite, eunuch.

Kucha: Neighbourhood or suburb.

Mandi: Market or place of selling something. ‘Mandi’ has less prestige attached to it than the word ‘Bazaar’
Moazzan: Man who calls for prayer in the mosque.

Mohallah: Neighbourhood

Mujra (pronounced ‘moojra): Dance of the courtesan; usually carrying pejorative connotations of sexual undertones.

Pahailwan: Body-builder, or a strong fellow.

Pir: Pious person in Pakistani society who is believed to hold knowledge and understanding of spiritual matters.

Pirni: Female saint or pir in Islam.

Purdah: Veil; also referred to as a life of social isolation for a woman.

Salafi: Member of strict and orthodox code of Sunni Islam, endorsing a strict following of Koran and Sunnah.

Sayed: Sect among Muslims believed to descend from the line of Prophet Muhammad.

Shalwar kameez: Loose fitting and trouser and long shirt worn by majority of women and men in Pakistan.

Shia: See Shiite

Shiite: One of the two major sects of Muslims. The Shiites believe in the third caliph, Ali, who was also the son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad. The other sect is Sunni.

Sitar: Stringed musical instrument, similar to the guitar, but longer and heavier and with more strings. It is played in a seated position.

Sunnah: Life and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnah forms a major part of Islam along with Koran and Hadith.

Suni or Sunni: One of the major sects of Muslims, who adhere to the sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

Tabla: Musical instrument like a drum. Usually they are played two at a time, one for each hand, and are drummed in unison.
**Taazia:** Mourning procession taken out by the Shia community to mark the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of prophet Mohammad.

**Tawaif:** Courtesan.

**Wahabi:** Sect of Sunni Muslims who believe only in the unity of God and do not believe that any saints or pious men should be paid homage to.