The Ontology of The Postcolonial Flâneuse: Decolonisation in British Muslim Women's Writing

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This thesis is submitted to Nottingham Trent University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2024

Acknowledgments

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ
In the name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful.
All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.

I am grateful first to Allah, who has blessed me with an abundance of wonderful teachers in my life. Without his mercy and blessing achieving this PhD would not be possible.

I owe a great amount of gratitude to Jenni Ramone for her guidance, mentorship, encouragement, time, and friendship. She has been an ideal role model to me and continues to inspire me as a female Postcolonial Scholar entering academia. I believe my achievements as a Post Graduate Researcher (PGR) have also reflected her efforts and supervision. I would also like to express the same amount of gratitude to Andrew Taylor, who has been a core part of my academic journey at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). His warmth, creative mentorship and honest advice will remain with me as a poet, writer, and scholar and will be treasured in my personal life also. I call you both my dream team. Your generosity, dedication, and sincere support have contributed to everything I was able to accomplish during my PhD and played a vital role in developing and finalising this thesis. Thank you both for supervising me over these past three years.

I would like to thank Tim Youngs and Andrew Thacker for their time and advice as internal examiners. They have both aided the development of my critical thinking as a PhD student and I'm grateful to them for sharing their time and expertise with me.

I was awarded the NTU Vice Chancellors Bursary to complete this PhD. NTU has provided me with the opportunity to meet amazing scholars and develop my critical thinking, creative practice, and research impact within the university and beyond. I would like to acknowledge the staff of NTU's School of Arts and Humanities who have taught me and shaped my studies. I'd like to express my thanks in particular to Rory Waterman, Nicole Thiara, Eve Makis, Philip Leonard, Nahem Yousuf, Duncan Grewcock, and Angela Brown for their support and encouragement. I would also like to thank Rebecca Cullen and the WRAP (Writing, Reading, and Pleasure) program for letting me be part of such an amazing and impactful initiative at the university. I also owe thanks to the following members of staff from Social Sciences: Sahra Joharachi, Irene Zempi, and Glenn Williams for their partnership, advice, and opportunities for collaboration on projects and events. I am grateful to all of the above for sharing their time and resources with me and allowing me to contribute to the progressive culture at NTU. In doing so I was also able to witness the impact of my own research early on in my academic career as a Postcolonial Scholar. With their help I am able to leave behind my own legacy in NTU Islamophobia Awareness Month. I look forward to seeing this grow and flourish at NTU in the future.

I would like to thank the British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS), Postcolonial Studies Association (PSA), NTU Research for Travel Writing Centre, NTU Postcolonial Research Group, and NTU Global for awarding me funding that supported my research and conference trips during this PhD. I would like to thank the staff at the Musée d'Orsay and Louvre Museum in Paris. In particular, I owe thanks to Denise Faife and Lionel Britten (Musée d'Orsay) and Guillaume Bedot (Louvre Museum) for their generosity, time, and kindness during my visits in 2022. I would also like to thank Dervish Hüseyin and his father Abdullah Pekyatirmaci for

their hospitality and compassion during my time in Konya in 2022. I am also grateful to Asma Sayed for her support and friendship and for her hospitality during my time in Toronto.

I remain indebted to my research participants, who have been anonymised in this thesis, for volunteering their time and experiences. These interviews have contributed to the development of my critical chapters and thesis overall. I am thankful to them for trusting me with their voices and sharing their time so open-heartedly with me. I am also grateful to: Hanan Issa, Naush Sabah, Rakhshan Rizwan, Safia Khan, and Suma Din who trusted me to interview them about their work and discuss their experiences as Muslim women, poets, and writers, in more detail. I would like to thank them for their support, and I ask them to forgive any shortcomings in my interpretation and analysis of their work.

Finally, thank you to those who have sincerely prayed for me, continuously encouraged me and shared words of wisdom with good intentions. I owe the most thanks to my mother, Fazilat Rafique. No words or actions will suffice to thank you. I am grateful for your patience, support, and belief in me. For always showing up and giving me the confidence to face every challenge that comes my way. Thank you for your endless prayers, protection, and reassurance. My success is your success.

I dedicate this thesis to my fellow postcolonial flâneuses. The marginalised women who are fighting injustice in the cities and crowds of this world.

Contents Page

Abstract

This creative-critical thesis examines the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse via British Muslim women's writing, from a postcolonial perspective. Focusing on the effects of class, race, religion, global technological advancements, and the Covid-19 pandemic, this doctoral research project proposes a definition of the postcolonial flâneuse accompanied by four modes of postcolonial flâneuserie. These are: Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and Covid-19 Pandemic Postcolonial Flâneuse. Although these are not the only methods of understanding the shift in this literary figure, I argue that they are the most useful to convey the relationship between the postcolonial flâneuse and the city, the experiences of Muslim women in cities and crowds, and how the postcolonial flâneuse becomes an integral part of re-reading the city with a decolonising gaze.

Addressed separately, the flâneur (Baudelaire, Benjamin, Castigliano, Debord, Fourner, Poe, Queneau, Sadler, White) postcolonial flâneur (Aatkar, Gikandi, Hartiger, Overall) and flâneuse (Austin, Elkin, Levy, Wolff) leave space for the postcolonial flâneuse to interpose. This thesis contributes to the concept of flânerie via theoretical, creative, and research-based practice, by disturbing and challenging traditional notions and expectations of the flâneur and the flâneuse. This line of argument considers how the field of flânerie can be expanded to accommodate for marginalised voices, identities, and experiences akin to the postcolonial flâneuse.

I draw on interviews conducted with self-selecting participants to compare literary representations of Muslim women's urban practices with lived experiences. I have conducted further interviews with authors and poets considered in the critical chapters to develop my identification of patterns and themes, and to support my textual analysis. These include Hanan Issa, Naush Sabah, Rakhshan Rizwan, Safia Khan, and Suma Din. I do not claim to represent the voices of all British and European Muslim women in this thesis as this would be reductive and impossible. Although this thesis highlights some collective shared experiences, each experience is treated as individual. I hope to encourage creative–critical approaches to flânerie in the context of postcolonialism and Muslim women's writing. Furthermore, I aim to contribute to more conscious and sensitive academic approaches to research on visibility, voice, and agency, in the context of Muslim women, globally.

My primary texts include Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan is Not Obliged* (2016), Fatima Daas's *The Last One* (2021), Hanan Al-Shaykh's *The Occasional Virgin* (2019), Hanan Issa's *My Body Can House Two Hearts* (2019), Muneera Pilgrim's *That Day She'll Proclaim Her Chronicles* (2021), Naush Sabah's *Litanies* (2021), Safia Khan's *Too Much Mirch* (2022), Suma Din's *Turning The Tide: Reawakening The Woman's Heart and Soul* (2015), and Rakhshan Rizwan's *Europe, Love Me Back* (2022).

Finally, I engage the identified modes of the postcolonial flâneuse in my own creative practice. Informed by the critical chapters, I have produced a body of poetry titled *The Postcolonial Flâneuse*. The creative and critical components of this doctoral project are connected via a poetics titled 'The Arcade of Postcolonial Flâneuserie'. Attempting to dismantle the rigors of a traditional doctoral thesis, the poetics conceptualises my writing process and creative-critical practice.

The Arcade of Postcolonial Flâneuserie: A Poetics

Trying to understand true aimless-ness,
when walking in modern cities
that function twenty-four hours.
Entertaining the crowd; morning,
day, and night.

From shoulders rubbing to feet rushing over
concrete pavements.
You can zoom in and out of streets using satellites.
Google-Maps. i-Maps. Re-map the spaces you walk in.

'Walking is mapping with your feet. It helps piece a city together'.[1]

Speed, pace, time.

'I ask you to review and scrutinise whatever is natural'.[2]

Stroll past a man who is preaching about church.
The artist who is sketching faces.
Women speaking over lattes and pastries.
Flâneuse? Flâneur? They're everywhere.

'Poetics finds things by accident, by mistake'.[3]

To sit near apartments that great poets
have once lived in.
How do I consider walking
through
passages, arcades, and alley ways aimless?

People around me tell me that I'm going
places. Aren't we all going somewhere? Up
Down
Left Right.

It's inside liminal spaces I find myself stretching the most.

Liminal spaces are described by Homi K Bhabha (1994) as 'in-between spaces' that contribute to developing self-identification in both singular and communal contexts, with the aim to define the idea of society itself.[4]

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[1] Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse Women Walk The City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London* (London: Penguin, 2016), p.21.
[2] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), p.32.
[3] Robert Sheppard, *The Necessity of Poetics* (Liverpool: Ship of Fools, 2002), p.6.
[4] Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.219.

‘There is need for change, I feel that need/ self-definition is the hardest part’.[5]

Arrows on the floor indicate
directions towards new exhibitions
that celebrate Britain’s colonial past.

Images of European empires
are framed and hung
on intricately detailed walls.

Trés chic or Terrorist?

Lines begin at shop doors
and curve round pillars.

Shop signs,
hanging
beside lamp shades,
hanging
on stone walls.
But some stones c u b e.
r m l

Shadows moving between reflections,
on marble floors.RubbingRushing.
Slow
down.

Reflecting on walks within ‘white structures’,
observing, erasing, rationalising colonial power. [6]
Listening to their way of thinking and knowing
the world.

Is the postcolonial subject heard?
Feet squeezed in narrow shoes.
Pace yourself.
Sore feet can only cover so much ground.

What function does the act of walking serve in the lives of Muslim women?

Ask a Muslim woman.
‘Anonymity isn’t a privilege for us all’.[7]

Feet finding their way
up and down arcades and streets.

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[5] Andrew Taylor, ‘A Poetics of Absence’, in *Troubles Swapped for Something Fresh*, ed. by Rupert Loydell, (Cambridge: Salt Books, 2009), pp.4-17 (p.4).
[6] Naomi Waltham-Smith, *Mapping Postcolonial Paris By Ear* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2023), p.10.
[7] Ramisha Rafique, ‘“Musée de l’absence” and Postcolonial Flâneuse”’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2023), pp.1-2 (p.2).

In and out of shops.
Inside and outside of crowds.
Identities exist simultaneously.

Is this a poetics of walking?

'The street conducts the flâneur into a vanished time. For him, every street is precipitous'.[8]

The flâneur is known to have been fashioned by nineteenth-century French poet, essayist, and art critic Charles Baudelaire as, male and wealthy, free to pursue leisure, and apparently aimless. The flâneur is known to be an observer, philosopher, and poet. He notes: 'Sometimes he is a poet […] He is the painter of the passing moment and all the suggestions of eternity that it contains'.[9] Later, in *The Arcades Project*, German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1982) argued: 'Basic to flânerie, among other things, is the idea that the fruits of idleness are more precious than the fruits of labour'.[10]

The flâneur, 'makes "studies" of his subject'.[11]

Postcolonial scholar Simon Gikandi (2010) attempts to adopt the role of the postcolonial flâneur as he describes the figure as 'simultaneously a chronicler of history, a keen observer of the present, and an augur of the future'.[12]

Smoke screen of democracy,
disregarding urgency.
I spend much of my time walking.
Now sitting.
Now observing.

'When an illusion is eliminated, that is, when we see a person or event as it is in existence, apart from us, we feel a bizarre sentiment, half regretting the vanished phantom, half agreeably surprised by the new, by what really is there'.[13]

The colonial subject is rethinking;
how Muslim women have come
to be positioned in mainstream spaces.

'I was thinking about how much I'd rather be/ alone/ with this city,/ but never am'. [14]

Undercover George Sand may have been able
to walk through this passage, unnoticed.

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[8] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans.by Howard Eland and Kevin Mclaughilin (London: Harvard University, 1982), p.416.
[9] Baudelaire (1964), pp.4-5.
[10] Benjamin, p.453.
[11] Baudelaire (1964), pp.4-5.
[12] Simon Gikandi, 'Between Roots and Routes, Cosmopolitanism and Claims of Locality', in *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for The New Millennium* ed. by J.Wilson, C, Dandre, S, Lawson (London, Taylor, and Francis, 2010), pp.22-36 (p.22).
[13] Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*, trans. by Keith Waldrop (Wesleyan University Press, 2009), p.62.
[14] Ramisha Rafique, 'Pavé', Unpublished Poem, (2023)

The rush of new experiences.
What if Virginia Woolf had dropped her
pencil on her walk home?

More recently, Lauren Elkin (2016) has defined the flâneuse as - 'flâneuse [flanne-euhza], noun, from the French. Feminine form of flâneur [flanne-euhr], an idler, a dawdling observer, usually found in cities'.[15]

Muslim women write with pens now.
The burden of representation is
thicker than ink.
They cannot be erased.
The tense is changing.
Turn at whim or instinct.

'White women's whiteness can always help them find their way back to respectability; that option is not there for women of colour'.[16]

The postcolonial flâneuse is:
'An integral part of re-reading the city from a decolonising gaze'. [17]
'Questions legacies of colonialism that exist in the present city'. [18]
'A product of the complex relationships between marginalised groups, such as Muslim women, and British and European cities'.[19]

How does the postcolonial flâneuse exist in occupied
spaces?
Slowly tip toe-ing
between
representation and visibility.

Inviting 'further reflection on the relative position of gender, race, and religious privilege'. [20]

Readdress and address.
How she moves her hips,
(or doesn't).

The boots she wears keep her
feet firmly on the ground.
She should not step beyond
the boundaries that have been
set for her.

But she swaps boots for trainers.

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[15] Elkin, p.7.
[16] Ruby Hamad, *White Tears Brown Scars* (London: Trapeze, 2020), p.75.
[17] Ramisha Rafique, 'Introduction', *The Ontology of The Postcolonial Flâneuse* (Unpublished Thesis), (2025), p.12.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

She refuses to match the window
displays and billboards -
the screens that inform her that
she is not normal. Not welcome.

Can this be a poetics of the postcolonial flâneuse?

Sometimes, she wishes to walk
slowly but the crowd moves fast.
It brushes her off her feet.
Pushes her forward
until she pushes
back.

She strides when the city only allows
permission for women like her to walk.
In uniform. With the crowd.

Cities in pandemics can be strange places.
When you are too full of privilege to feel hunger:
Breathe with the city.
Heal with the crowd.

'There are facemasks,
silicone gloves,
social distancing between
us'.[21]

Enclosed spaces.
We cannot enter arcades and shopping
centres, so we're forced to confront
the bruises and burns that we inflict
on buildings and walls.

Socially distanced crowds collecting remains of human bodies
that were b l o w n u p
and brushedundertherubbleofdestroyed buildings
harbouring dim futures of orphaned children.

What does the future of cities look like
when the world can't hear cries for help?

'The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other – aren't they all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? And aren't they obliged in the end, to seek happiness in the same way and by the same means? And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one – that each keep to his own side of the pavement'.[22]

Who is the city to tell her how to place her feet
and match its pace?

[21] Ramisha Rafique, 'Ghost City', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[22] Benjamin, p.427.

‘The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes more repellent and offensive’.[23]

A sign leads the postcolonial flâneuse
to a boutique. Here, commodities are
laboured over by soft hands
and blistered feet.

‘The arcade is a street of lascivious commerce only; it is wholly adapted to arousing desires’.[24]

Voices boast about shiny frames
as they spotlight detained fetishes.
These white lights burn skin.
Reflections from squeaky clean
windows sting white eyes.
Sore. Red. ‘Brown scars’.[25]

An old lady sits on the street corner,
re-telling stories from books that were
burned, in streets, in squares, in homes.
Spare her some change.
Spare her a moments’ silence.

I see in off white tiles and floral pattens,
marks from torn roots and cuts of exploitation.
This is how injustice became profitable.

‘Doors and walls are made of mirrors, there is no telling outside from in, with all the equivocal illuminations’.[26]

The man in the window does not smile at
me as I walk past his shop.
The walls of the arcade close in.

‘I attract wary glances whenever I try to play the flâneur among the industrious. The slow-motion stare of the impassive observer unnerves them’.[27]

‘The person was literally scowling me down’.[28]

‘It wasn’t safe at all’.[29]

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[23] Benjamin, p.428.
[24] Benjamin, p.42.
[25] Hamad, p.166.
[26] Benjamin, 1983, p.877.
[27] Franz Hessel, *Walking in Berlin: A Flâneur in The Capital*, trans. by Amanda DeMarco (London: Scribe Publications, 2016), p.1.
[28] Interview, participant B3, p.17.
[29] Ibid.

‘I was very uncomfortable’.[30]

‘I'm still here I'm still going to be here’.[31]

Still, retaining the voice of political statements
plastered on walls of streets, arcades, and cafés.
Calls to police a Muslim woman's visibility in the city.

‘For as long as any difference between us means one of us is inferior, then the recognition of any difference must be fraught with guilt’.[32]

If arcades were places of safety for white
middle-class men, how can the arcade
offer protection to women who do not
conform?

Not all women can hide from the gaze that
lingers in cities, arcades, and shopping centres.

‘To the inhabitants of these arcades we are pointed now and then by the signs and inscriptions which multiply along the walls within, where here and there, between the shops, a spiral staircase rises into darkness’.[33]

When the arcades reopen
they’ll be silent spaces.
No white noise.

‘Against the armature of glass and iron, upholstery offers resistance with its textiles’.[34]

Is this a poetics of the arcade?

Sat in a café.
Looking up
from the cup,
to the table,
to the room,
to the window,
to the chaos outside.

‘Sound of grinding coffee beans and laughter from behind the counter’.[35]

‘Those who cannot people their solitude can never be alone in a busy crowd’.[36]

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Audrey Lorde, ‘Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Re-defining Difference’, in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (London: Crossing Press, 1984), pp.114-123 (p.118).
[33] Benjamin, p.453.
[34] Benjamin, p.218.
[35] Ramisha Rafique, ‘Café Soundtrack’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[36] Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Crowd’, in *Paris Spleen*, trans. by Keith Waldrop (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), p.22

Solitude is written about in cafés
full of people living alternative realties.
'Everyone's scrolling.
Swiping left/swiping right'.[37]
Crouching over
laptop screens and iPhones.

'No one speaks to strangers at cafés'.[38]

For my Instagram caption I write
where I am with a pin emoji.
I am moving with the city in live time.
I am documenting this city for its future self.

I capture, amongst grey skies and spots of
sunshine, rays of colours. Blending into the
cityscape like acrylic paint on canvas.

Window displays;
'colourful scarves and turbans, veils, bands, and bracelets'.[39]

Visible markers of faith or cultural identity:
'Eye colour/ leg lengths/ waist sizes/ chest sizes'.[40]

Ongoing oriental fascinations
with veiled bodies.
Living. Breathing.
Down necks. Behind backs.

Edward Said (1978) discusses orientalist treatment of Muslim women, especially of the 'harem fantasy' as disguising a colonial and political motive that depicts Muslim and Arab women as needing to be rescued from oppressive Muslim patriarchy.[41] Said explains this point further during his discussion on the 'cultural representations of women' as he highlights that Muslim women are orientalised for the pleasure of the masculine Western gaze.[42]

Who gets to define beauty?
Determine the value of modest.
Can you translate oppression?

'White feminists keep women of colour trapped in those old binary archetypes because allowing us to break free is too guilt inducing'.[43]

The bookstore is full of aged hardbacks

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[37] Ramisha Rafique, 'Dating', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ramisha Rafique, 'Being Muslim Women', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[40] Ibid.
[41] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.95.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Hamad, p.177.

and paper maps. In these books
Muslim women are objects of pleasure.
The white gaze comes to see, satisfies itself,
and then leaves triumphant.

Defined by labels
and hashtags
she is '#TRENDING. #HOTTOPIC. #UK.'[44]

Understand that these women exist
beyond white E(/e)uro-centric perspectives.

Not just your flavour of the week.

'Everything that adorns woman, everything that serves to show off her beauty, is part of herself'.[45]

Censorship and policing names
does not take away powers.
Crowds grow,
'extract' and 'dispose'.
Connect. Protest.

Galleries attract the most
intimate gazes. Holding questions
for hidden histories hostage.

Speak English or French.
Stand outside in isolation and watch from a distance.
Clean jackets but dirty shoes.

'Is there a lack of me? In the spaces I inhabit'.[46]

Who is there a lack of in this crowd?
Amongst window shoppers huddled together.
Too far for fists to smash through glass ceilings.
Try words, they echo in arcades.

Is this a poetics of identity?

Poetics don't explain; they redress and address. [47]

Gérard Genette (1982) defines poetics as 'a stylistics of genre'.[48] Focusing on genre and poetic style, Patrick Crowly and Jane Hiddleston (2011) later discuss 'postcolonial poetics' as

[44] Ramisha Rafique, 'A Hashtag', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[45] Baudelaire (1964), p.30.
[46] Rafique, p.2.
[47] Charles Bernstein, *Poetics* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.160.
[48] Gérard Genette, 'Poetics Language, Poetics of Language', in *Figures of Literary Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.88.

encompassing ‘various poetic and literary practices’ that are ‘not concerned with establishing a norm, or with canonising a tradition’ but with exploring the diverse discourses surrounding the given subject. [49]

Disturbing white spaces.

Laid out in the street.

This time poetics is the bridge that connects:
Activist.
Dervish.
Cyber.
Covid-19 Pandemic.

Practice & Page.

‘Poetics could be a test of practice;
but practice will test poetics’.[50]

Poetics does not aim to control
and confine.
This time, poetics creates paths
to restructure and redefine.

Poetics is not a rule.
This time poetics imply that breaking
lines is necessary. More now than ever.
The idea of breaking rules was formed to
regulate and conquer.

Dear colonised people,
break lines.

Break rules.

‘Reveal the concealed’.[51]

Find your freedom by any means necessary.
Sharpen knives. Sharpen tongues.

‘Irresistible night is establishing its empire, black and damp, dismal, making all things shudder’.[52]

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[49] Patrick Crowly, Jane Hiddleston, ‘Introduction’, in *Postcolonial Poetics* (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 2011), pp.1-2 (p.2).
[50] Sheppard, p.2.
[51] Rafique, p.1.
[52] Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Sunset of Romanticism’, in *Baudelaire The Complete Verse*, trans. by Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1986), p.267.

Less romanticism.
We don't fall for it now.
Realism is the new trend.

'What happens when realism and sexism collide'?[53]

Decolonisation is not a scenic walk.
In these conversations and processes
there is discomfort.

But discomfort for who?

Jeremy Bendik-Keymer (2020) defines decoloniality as 'the unworking of coloniality'.[54] He proposes that: 'Decoloniality precedes and succeeds decolonisation, challenging the mind-set that keeps colonisation going'.[55] Explaining this further, he states that 'it seeks to resolve the ongoing dynamics of colonial domination, including its traces, so that formally or persistently colonised people find themselves to be true moral equals with the self-determination to live their lives in their own ways'.[56]

Lean back on marble pillars until
your spine begins to bruise.
If arms ache from holding accountability,
sit on the floor.

There are no benches in arcades.
The crowd will push.
But do not let it go.
This is the discomfort that
brings change.

'The arcade was the drawing room. More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses'.[57]

Notions of 'activist' and 'activism'
have been sold in jars of glitter
and dust for centuries.

Someone asks: 'Is it risk or is it luck'?
Sold for cheap.
'Why are the realities of Muslim woman buried inside'?

Little girl holds on with both hands.
Entranced.
Examining the particles,

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[53] Hamad, p.13.
[54] Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, *Involving Anthroponomy In The Anthropocene: On Decoloniality* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020), p.53.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Benjamin, p.423.

separating.

Little fingers touching the label tied
by string. Twisting between
index finger and thumb.

‘Pets or Threats’.[58]

Someone tell her;
it’s important to tell dust from glitter.

The idea of untranslatable experiences
that many Muslim women confront,
like the silencing of voices in
performative discussions of Islamophobia.

‘Is it my faith that is silencing me or your gaze?’[59]

The 2018 Runnymede report provides a longer-form definition of Islamophobia as: ‘Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims [or those perceived to be Muslims] that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life’.[60]

Are you listening to the voice of the Muslim woman.
Do you hear it in the buzz of the crowd?

‘Selling olives, figs, and words wrapped with play’.[61]

Conversations sound like testimonies in court rooms:

‘I try to avoid representing myself as Muslim more because of fear of reaction of public’.[62]

‘I believe in the freedom of everyone and I think if women want to wear hijabs or burqas they should be free to wear them and I do not understand how these countries will preach about freedom of women but then take it away from them at the same time’.[63]

‘They use the excuse of liberty to force oppression on women’.[64]

‘There’s an expectation to adher[e] to modesty. Modest in the

[58] Hamad, p.166.
[59] Rafique, p.2.
[60] Farah Elahi and Omar Khan, *Islamophobia: Still A Challenge for Us All: 20th Anniversary Report* (London: Runnymede Trust, 2018) <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Islamophobia%20Report%202018%20FINAL.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2023].
[61] Mohammed El-Kurd, ‘Smuggling Bethlehem’, *Rifqa* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), pp.13-14 (p.13).
[62] Interview, participant B2, p15.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Interview, participant F2, p.25.

way I dress but also in the way that I engage with other people'.[65]

Gendered Islamophobia constitutes of direct and indirect forms of Islamophobia that target Muslim women specifically, such as physical attacks, verbal abuse, and legislation that imposes limits on how they can express their religious identities and practices.

To whom do we present evidence?
Colonisers play judge and jury.

'Tackling forms of gendered Islamophobia in social and political spaces requires a revaluation of the role that prevailing ideologies play in dividing majority and minority groups in society, including categories of gender, race and religion'.[66]

A store assistant explains the difference
Between 'European Muslim' and 'Western Muslim'.[67]

A middle-aged woman looks up to
the mirror to see which one she is.
Her reflection shows a woman who
is consistently othered, constantly
forced to fit other people's definitions
of her.

'This is how colonialism rigged the game against women of colour'.[68]

Tharik Hussain (2021) explains the difference between 'European Muslim' and 'Western Muslim' as he recognises that there 'are indigenous European Muslims all across this region entirely confutable with their identities […] they have consistently been "othered" by the dominant half of Europe'.[69] Discussing the Western Balkans he explains how 'along with all the areas once part of Evliya's Muslim Europe' the Western Balkans 'had long been alienated by Western Europe'.[70]

Metaphors for marginalised identities are used
to PREVENT wrong answers in check boxes.
They monitor the crowd using CCTV.
This gaze is nestled into corners of the arcade
now. Those who are brave enough to look up.
Look directly at it. Stare back.

'I am no stranger to picking apples out of men's throats'.[71]

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[65] Interview, participant B3, p.16.
[66] Ramisha Rafique and Jenni Ramone, '#HandsOffMyHijab: Muslim Women Writers Challenge Contemporary Islamophobia', in *Handbook of Gendered Islamophobia* (London: Palgrave, 2024), pp.201-220 (p.213).
[67] Tharik Hussain, *Minarets in The Mountains: A Journey into Muslim Europe* (Chesham: Bradt Guides, 2021), p.324.
[68] Hamad, p.43.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Hussain, p.324.
[71] El-Kurd, p.13.

Do Muslim women think of
oppression in underground
tunnels?

Unveiling ceremonies have
proven ineffective.
Digging for liberation won't
be enough anymore.

There is a 'iron curtain' between us.
It fails to conceal Europe's dirty truth. [72]
It aims to remove those who resist,
those who refuse to worship colonial idols.
It revokes voices who do not conform.

Those who refuse to preach imperialism
or call for human sacrifices to feed the
greed of capitalist gods, go missing at night.
Where do they take them in the dark?

Drawing on the metaphor of the 'iron curtain', Hussain describes that E(/e)uropean powers 'continued insistence to define the area as "Eastern Europe" is how this othering and alienation is kept up'.[73] He describes this as a 'curtain [that] was drawn long before the iron one fell'.[74]

Is this a poetics of silencing?

Creating connections.
Every experience an act of worship.
A spiritual practice.
A religious routine.

'captivated
pointing the way'.[75]

'With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, even more irresistible the magnetism of the next street corner, of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name'.[76]

A pilgrimage in this urban metropolis
must mean breaking
apart conventional definitions of
w o m a n h o o d.

Spiritual cleansing.
Clutching symbols of faith
not handbag straps or the handles on prams.

'it's not Mecca, it's Nottingham'. [77]

[72] Hussain, p.327.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ramisha Rafique, 'Sema', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[76] Benjamin, p.47.
[77] Ibid.

As I watch people pass;
I wonder if this is how it
must feel to be a whirling
dervish in the city and crowd.

Whirling through crowds.
Finding purpose in aimless strolling.

'Enjoying the crowd is an art'.[78]

Walking through an abyssal zone of the arcade.
Under clear signs tasbih's sway from vendors'
arms and Quran's are handed out for free.
Stools outside shop doors are stacked with
prayer mats and waves of bakhoor pass over you
and around you.

'Every whirl has become a hum. My body is humming Divine names'.[79]

There is a serenity
in the crowd,
inside the mosque,
in the buzz of a café.

'The city is life itself'.[80]

Streets turn into roads and roads
turn to squares and the passages
move in closer now
and…

'Alas, the form of the city changes faster than the human heart'.[81]

Trams in the Market Square.
'BEEP
BEEP
BEEP'. [82]
Remind me of journeys on the Paris
underground.

'Personally, as a woman who is not a hijabi, she is more
accepted by society, she has more access to opportunities'.[83]

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[78] Baudelaire (1964), p.22.
[79] Ramisha Rafique, 'Tawaf in a Lockdown', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[80] Elkin, p.37.
[81] Baudelaire (2009), p.174.
[82] Ramisha Rafique, 'Paris Metro', Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[83] Interview, participant F1, p.23.

‘If in the future we wanted to wear the hijab [the law] will stop us, all this oppression and discrimination will stop us with our progression in our religion’.[84]

These voices become
background noise in cafés.
‘Merging into lyrics’.[85]
‘Politics vs Pop Culture.’[86]
Frustrated by the triviality of mainstream
newspapers and their selective hypocrisy.

‘The answer is not to attempt to make a woman fit a masculine concept, but to redefine the concept itself’.[87]

Where are we drawing lines?
French Muslim/British Muslim?
Muslim woman?
Muslim?
Woman?

‘It is only in becoming aware of the invisible boundaries of the city that we can challenge them’.[88]

How do we keep track of flânerie
in a constantly changing world?

‘The city is the realization of the ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality of which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself’.[89]

In current time.
A new dimension. This city must be
a simulation.
‘Life is becoming my Spotify playlist on repeat’.[90]

‘Into the depths of the unknown, in quest of something new’.[91]

Is this a poetics of the city?

‘Look back, look forward, look straight ahead and across the page’.[92]

[84] Interview, participant F2, p.23.
[85] Ramisha Rafique, ‘Café Soundtrack’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[86] Ramisha Rafique, ‘Mardi 21 Mars 2023, Le Monde 3.4€’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[87] Elkin, p.11.
[88] Elkin, p.288.
[89] Benjamin, p.429.
[90] Ramisha Rafique, ‘White Walls III’, Unpublished Poem (2023)
[91] Baudelaire (1986), p.247.
[92] Sheppard, p.4.

‘I click “Search map”. I am not where the map thinks I am. But what if I’m not where I think I am? Where am I? It’s a smartphone – prompted existential crisis’.[93]

From browsing window displays to
online browsers. People watching in
cafes to watching people on YouTube
and TikTok.
Reading signs from street to street.

‘The evolution of the department store from the shop that was housed in arcades’.[94]

Inside shopping centres the arcade
is redesigned to fit HD.
Conversations are masked
under background music and digital
advertisements.
The whirring of escalators,
The ping
        ping
            ping of elevators.

‘Everywhere joy, profit, debauchery, everywhere certainty of tomorrows bread, everywhere vitalities explosive frenzy’.[95]

QR codes lead consumers to Instagram and Facebook stores.
Connecting seller
and customer
from different parts of the world.

Queuing in the cyber-space,
browsing aimlessly until your
mind is numb from flashing images
and noise
on top of
noise and
videos,
images,
links,
codes.

Verify.

Is this a poetics of social media?

Consumed in a congregation
of strangers.

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[93] Elkin, p.69.
[94] Benjamin, p.40.
[95] Baudelaire (1986), p.28.

Taps of fingers on keyboards.
Taps of foreheads on prayer mats.

‘World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish’.[96]

The observant loitering of
the flâneur and the flâneuse.
‘Praying, listening, watching’. [97]

‘The sounds of heels tapping concrete/ one after another tap, tap. Taptaptap. Tap tap’. [98]

Somehow the crowd has forgotten
that Muslim women existed here before 2001.

Noor Inayat Khan.
Madam Nafeesa M.T.Keep.
Hannah Quilliam.
Olive Salam.
Fatima Sheir.[99]

‘Uncovering Muslim women’s experiences and contributions to society is essential to building a full picture of Muslim life in Britain in the past’.[100]

‘You don’t need fresh stems to write for liberation.
Colonisers are interested in roots’.[101]

‘Beware roots. Beware purity. Beware fixity. Beware the creeping feeling that you belong’.[102]

I am not asking for shelter.
For a seat at your table.
I am the walls that hold up the roof. I am my own table. I am the room.

In the arcades, I purchase seeds from
a florist and place them in my pocket.
I sprinkle them in the crowd, in streets,
between pavements and roads.
Flowers will grow in places I’ve walked.

Mother Nature is Muslim. She has seen all.
‘Unmute the bliss’.[103]

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[96] Benjamin, p.7.
[97] Ramisha Rafique, ‘10 KM From Syria’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[98] Ramisha Rafique, ‘Rue’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[99] Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor and Jamie Gilham, *Muslim Women in Britain 1850-1950, 100 Years of Hidden Histories* (London: C.Hurst & Co, 2023), p.5.
[100] Ramisha Rafique, ‘10 KM From Syria’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[101] Ramisha Rafique. ‘War in 2024’, Unpublished Poem, (2024)
[102] Elkin, p.279
[103] Ramisha Rafique, ‘Pavé’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)

This city is my own.

Find me:
‘In its mosques of art,
temples of rebellion,
churches of uprising’.[104]

‘Let me walk. Let me go at my own pace. Let me feel life as it moves through me and around me’.[105]

I’ll wait for rain.
In spring I will retrace my steps.
I will exist on my own terms,
in my fantasies and reality.

[104] Ramisha Rafique, ‘Nottingham’, Unpublished Poem, (2023)
[105] Elkin, p.37.

The Postcolonial Flâneuse

A Collection of Poetry

Ramisha Rafique

Poetry Collection: Contents Page

Postcolonial Flâneuse

'There is something maddeningly attractive about the untranslatable about a word that goes silent in transit' – Anne Carson.

No two gazes are the same. My presence, visible, noticeable, judged and assumed.
I am another version of George Sand, hidden behind a camouflage of identity politics and pronoun wars. Anonymity isn't a privilege for all.

Invisibility in crowds of pedestrians, streets, bus stops, and coffee shop queues, pavement tables and library rooms. Is there a lack of me? In the spaces I inhabit. You're socially aesthetic, Instagram grids, whatever fits, it follows the rage.

Neutral positions clash with colourful scarves and turbans, veils, bands, and bracelets. You can't tell them what not to wear, here. Is it my faith that is silencing me or your gaze? Is there a lack of me? In the spaces I inhabit.

Give space. deep breaths, sighs, long strides, fingers fiddling in laps, chins resting in hands. Alhamdulillah. I can walk where I like.

Being Muslim Women

In the beginning there were just women.

Women who became women of class
of race
of nation
of religion.

Women who became women of
skin colour
skin type
hair colour
hair type.

Eye colour
leg lengths
waist sizes
chest sizes.

Still women.

Women who became career women.
Political women.
Racialised for hidden agendas.
A threat if they speak out,
views of their own.

Muslim women.

Muslim women with
views and opinions.
Who wear a hijab.
Who don’t wear a hijab.
Straight, queer, non-binary

Women.

Walk
and stroll
and jog
and run
and jump
and stand
and sit.

Who did you get your assumptions from?

Book in Hand

She has become part of
the mass. She is him, and her,
and them.

She is the flow, sway,
and turn.

She stops to catch her breath.
Crowds continue to pass, hair
flying forward.

The seat next to a man smoking
a cigarette is vacant.

She finds herself next to a
steamed-up coffee shop window,
book in hand.

Café Soundtrack

Piano keys begin a slow melody.
Guitar strings, soft, stirring.

Instrumental.

Conversations
between individuals
at tables.
Merging into lyrics.

Break.

Sound of grinding coffee beans and
laughter from behind the counter.

Accents:
Yorkshire English.
Emirati Arabic.
Local Nottingham slang.

High notes transition to
mellow symphonies.

Cup clinks on saucer.
Rustling sugar sachet,
awkward eye contact shifts.

Confident glances across the room.
A student grabs a hand full of
white sugar to drown in their coffee.

Man fiddling with his rings.
Listening attentively.
Man in a blue cap walks past the
window eating a pasty.

Outro.

Steam floats from his
mouth into the cold air.

Nottingham

Wherever the flâneur or the flâneuse
is emerging the city is moving.

In passages, arcades, and
cobbled streets.
Search for it!

I walk down:
Heathcoat St.
Carlton St.
St. Mary's Gate.
Stoney St.
Bridal Smith Gate.

A familiar energy.
In its mosques of art,
temples of rebellion,
churches of uprising.

Woman

Woman standing at the bus stop,
wrapped in fast fashion.
You fight strong wind while waiting
for a delayed bus.

Where will you go after a long day?
Long hours seem to be catching
up to you.

You're looking at your feet now.
Is it a short trip home or
do you have a few stops?

Weird men and loud teenagers
outside fast-food restaurants
and takeaways.
You remain unbothered.

Will you be able to shut your eyes,
just briefly,
rest your head against the window?

The sound of rain drops blowing
against glass blocked out by the
music in your headphones.

Coffee Shop Milton Street

It's a Tuesday afternoon,
the café is fairly empty.

Usually, it's crowded and
I wonder if I'll get a seat.

Today, even conversations seem;
hush hush.
Noise from the kitchen is loud,
cutlery clattering.

Glasses clinking as they're
stacked on top of each other.

People leave whilst
others are just arriving.

Like musical chairs,
the room keeps changing.
Shuffled and
shuffled again.

Nakbah In The West

I

Thunder rumbles.
Birds hide beneath thick branches,
trembling. The bush in the back garden
has lost all its leaves. It's summer.

The sky is the colour of mustard.
Clouds used to hover over us
around lunch time but now they
occupy the whole sky.

I can't move my feet.
The neighbour's cat hides
under my car. It thinks that
it's found a safe haven, but when
the sky roars, something rips
beneath us.

II

Everyone on the street is asleep
but I'm in the road when it
begins to rain.

Hailstones like golf balls.
The rain is melting
away the street as we know it.
No one lets the cat back in.
The trees sink into cracks in the concrete.

I'm shouting for help
but I can't hear my own voice.
Water is rising around my ankles.

I'll Tell you of The Boulevards

- after Andrew Taylor, 'Tell me of The Boulevards', *March* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2017)

Draw on the noise,
attached to vandalised
buildings and statues.

Ignored pieces of iron and stone
are enough now to commemorate the dead.

Someone will sleep against them.

Distance is finding,
in clusters of swaying hats,
your voice in theirs.

Echoing between both worlds.

In sitting still,
you will be moved in the right direction.

Stickers on Street Signs

What is a sign if not a signal –
inviting direction for change.

Despite interventions,
intentions for those who
walk past, not noticing.

People in these crowds
are communicating.

They are encouraging one
another to take action.
Resist.

Stranger I

I hoped to see you sitting in the café already.
But you’re not here.

I order my coffee and watch people in the room,
the city moves on but you don’t show.

I’ll wait for another unexpected encounter, then.
Somewhere in a café around here.

Tea

Allow the tea leaves to sit a little longer.
Time will give flavour,
colour will follow.

They Watch Pigeons Gather

Man is standing on corner,
listening to music through
his headphones.
But not the city.

Woman standing in the market square.
Busy spaces. She listens to the noise of buses,
people talking, trams moving.
She is watching pigeons gather.

Man

Gazing into the window,
adoring the display of watches that
caught his eye as he was walking by.
Simple pleasure. Expensive hobby.

He doesn’t want for much.
No game consoles or technological gadgets,
his watches are his only valuable possessions.

In his loafers and crisp slacks,
hands hidden in the pockets of his navy parker.
Chin tucked in, sheltered from the wind.

Leaving with a sigh, man,
continues his journey.
Pulls his cap down.

Turtle Walking in Flying Horse Arcade, Nottingham

I hold my slow green friend on a leash as she forces each step slowly. My red beret almost blows off my head from strong winds. The city is too fast for my little friend, her pace is agonising even for its empty arcades. She is not ready to walk in the shopping centre yet.

Twenty minutes feels longer. A woman sat in the window finds herself amused by my struggle. In-between glares and whispers I am gazing at paintings in the windows. I wait for my turtle to take a step forward.

Many people pass ahead of us. Moving behind us. Smiling or staring, intrigued and confused. Everyone is in a rush; pacing between work and more work, holding coffee cups in shaky hands.

It's a short and narrow passage that bends left and right. Little boutiques with empty signs. I look up at the ceiling; it is in part made of glass. CCTV cameras in corners; red light flashing. My poor little friend, she's trying her best but I'm still standing here and she's out of breath.

I pick her up and walk to the café. Frustrated a little, I order my coffee quietly. The man at the counter looks at me strangely: 'Not seen someone take a turtle for a walk before' he laughs.

November Afternoon

November afternoons are;
hot kettles and thick blankets.

Wind howling into the gaps
of your windows.
Branches smacking the glass.
Leaves and twigs are scattered over
roads and pavements.

November afternoons are;
dry eyes and wet noses.

Puddles splashing against bus stops
and wind blowing people from road
to pathway and pathway to road again.

November afternoons are;
gusts of cold wind hitting frozen cheeks.

Dark afternoons and frost on windows.
Eyes squinting.
Mouths dry from gasping and
catching it hit the back of the throat.

Barista

The most powerful tool of
our time is in your hands.

This is how the world is run.

You know best how it can be used,
changed, moulded, manipulated.

A drug for crowds sitting in your shop.
A hobby.
Release
or relief.

We’re in a coffee epidemic and
without it the world would stop working.

This is how you run the world, barista.

Controlling the pulses of
caffeine withdrawal.

The Ends of The Earth

Is this where they go?
When the crowd disperses…
Does the smell of the city follow
walkers to the end of the globe?

Where the threat of ecological crisis,
disease, pollution, nuclear war, and desecration…

should I go on?

Don't mind me, I'm just trying to grapple with the thought
of looming danger as I stroll through the city centre.

My mind wonders to these places when I observe
dirty pavements and over-crowded roads.

Homeless numbers growing and overly filled bins
left opened and exposed.

Walking over broken systems
and heaps of discarded waste.

Long walks to the ends of the earth.
Is it all taken to be gathered there? Waiting?

Girl Talk

Simple pleasures:
Iced coffees and cake slabs.

Cafes with big windows,
full of light.

Laughing over life lessons
and imaginary situations.

Musée de l’absence

Nudity is exposing a
Paradox. Sins and gazes. A world of
conflict. No resolution. Divide and conquer.

Romanticise worship. Poisoned peace from
within. Empty rooms, filled with memories.
Some muted. Others breaking the silence.

The past is still here. It’s more present than ever.
Are they too ashamed? To pull this all from storage.
Open the doors to every room.

Reveal the concealed? Hidden inside pockets
and behind masks? Everyone is welcome.
See the burned and removed. Cancelled.

A culture that continues.
Sins and gazes. A world of conflict.
Still no resolution. Continue: Divide and conquer.

You may remove your masks now.
It’s time to redress and re-address.
Exhibition begins 5:30pm, blunt.

Mardi 21 Mars 2023, *Le Monde*, 3.40 €

Headline this morning reads:
“Après le 49.3, une nouvelle semaine de tensions”.

Cartoon on the front page
shows an empty hand reaching out
of the national bank,
homeless person is copying.

Economic crisis or a
world crisis?

A new week of tensions.
Arrest warrant for Vladmir Putin.
Politics vs Pop Culture.
“Espresso or Cappuccino”?

Cigarettes or vapes.
Doesn’t matter which poison.

Palestine still isn’t free.
World leaders are too busy
with Ukraine.
TikTok.

Culture wars and culture crisis.
Time is of the essence.

Pavé

Sitting at a pavement table
across from the Seine,
distracted by the background
in everyone's selfies.

Mute the buzz.

Gaze follows the clouds
sweeping the sky,
slow motion.

Sea blue, off white, coral
sets in above the Eiffel tower.

The evening breeze; cigarette smoke,
vape clouds, coffee breath.
Striped shirts and white blouses.
Short haircuts and quirky hats.

The windows are open
and the seats are still warm.

Unmute the bliss.

Conversations at different tables.
Somewhere amongst crowds of Parisians,
I was thinking about how much I'd rather be

alone

with this city,
but never am.

Le Coup de Foudre:
Jardins du Luxemburg, 2 June 2022.

She is sat by the second fountain at the Jardins du Luxemburg among many others. After winning a chair and settling in she opens her fruit pot and reaches into her tote revealing a Gallimard edition book. The iconic cream cover and red borders are pressed between her slim long fingers and shiny red nails, as she lifts the page and removes her bookmark. Her hair, highlights of caramel draping onto her shoulders, like silk. Rectangular brown sunglasses, hidden mostly behind loose waves, hiding her side profile but not quite enough, exposing only the pout of her lips and the tip of her nose. She wears a brown blazer over a short white skirt, showing her sun kissed legs. A small smile shows as she gently tucks her curl behind her ear and crosses her right leg over her left. She turns another page. A tall man with dark hair swept back, black shades, white shirt, and linen trousers. He towers over her confidently. She pauses. Her fingers stop on the middle of a page. Clouds gather above him and drops of rain begin to fall.

Paris Metro

"*The apparition of these faces in the crowd: Petals on a wet, black bough*".
– Ezra Pound.

Dark grey. Entrée.
Packedlikesardines. Pushedandshoved.
Shuffle for space.

Get off my case, get off my case.

Look around for a seat. Train is being sucked into a black
hole. Side to side. Fast Forward.
Light at the other end of the tunnel.

Get off my case, get off my case.

On and off.
People standing slide,
left and right. People in their seats jump
off. Suit jackets, coat jackets, coats like
duvets they struggled to leave this morning.

Get off my case, get off my case.

iPhones and Kindles, briefcases and backpacks.
Crocs and Sketchers are trendy now.
Constantly switching places. Stop. By. Stop.

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP

Rushforthedoorandwatch the gap.
Still dark grey. Sortie.

Rue

Bakeries and bars, antique shops
next to book shops with coffee tables,
for ‘café à emporter’ and ‘café pour rester’.
Art galleries, pedestrians coming and
going.

The sound of heels tapping concrete,
one after another. Tap, tap. Taptaptap.
Tap tap. The rhythm of pedestrians crossing
between pavements. Strangers
brushing shoulders.

They all squeeze into the narrow space
between
Red, Cream, Silver, Fiat 500’s, all parked.
Cycles, and motorbikes, lining up like a
European cliché.
How many rues do you think make up Paris?

Red Chairs

Last night, when I opened my window, I watched the top of the Eiffel Tower glitter and glow. A luminous gold covered in white sparkles. The perfect backdrop for white walls with black rooftops. Parisian windows, black balconies, people enjoying a cool breeze and dinner wine. Like small jewels, red and white lights flickered from the first floor. The street below was noisy with traffic, filled pavement tables, and pedestrians looking for empty red chairs.

As the sun rose this morning and the fog set, I opened my window to a grey sky. The Eiffel Tower doesn't sparkle in the morning. It's brown, iron, rusting. Rain trickles over it. I put on my coat and lean against the wall. I watch the young waiter across the rue put out the red chairs. He looks up with a smile and nods at me and I smile back. It always rains when I leave Paris.

Arab Quarter, Marseille

I recognise Muslim men and women everywhere.
I cross through the market
but don't attempt to buy anything.

My first query in English about a bag, quickly
highlighted that I would be given tourist prices
even if I used my accented French.

Tables spread with
herbs and vegetables,
both local and Mediterranean.

Pastèque, Citron, Grenade.

People shouting over market stalls,
all part of the hustle and bustle.
Crowded pavement, messy stalls.

A beige curtain. A marquee in the centre,
people sat at tables with teas and coffees.
A patisserie on the other side.

I order a Moroccan tea and baklava
which is a nice change from Parisian pastries.
Voices drift in and out.

Hidden under the electric buzzing
of motorbikes and street pans sizzling.
Behind me, someone clicks their lighter.

An old lady glances at me suspiciously,
possibly because I'm not wearing a headscarf
and I ordered in English.

The waiter brings out my tea.
The fusion of black tea leaves, mint, and sugar.

I sit and watch the young men across the street
standing by their elders on a corner drinking coffee,
playing games and trying to sell packets of cigarettes.

The smell of tobacco slowly passing through warm air.

Rue St Honoré

“Soye Passionné! Que cela vous concerne ou non”.[1]

Take to the streets, march on.
This is who you are, all for one and one for all.

“Être Parisien c’est être militant”. [2]

The feeling of bodies. Falling
- pushed by police.
The rush of feethuddledintoroads. Fast fast.

Slow.
Slow.

Street cobbles covered by feet warmed from marching.
Voices muted by false news.
The media blacks out protesters boards.

“Se taire ou être ré duit au silence”. [3]

The activists and the radicals,
freedom fighters and free spirits.

“Nous sommes de fiers révolutionnaires”.[4]

Don’t dress like they’re told to.
Don’t think like they’re told to.
Bodies used to patch up a Paris -

divided.

There is always a room for you in Paris,
but remember

“La manière Française ou rester en denhors de notre chemin”.[5]

[1] Be passionate! Whether it concerns you or not.
[2] Being Parisian is being an activist.
[3] To stay silent or to be silenced.
[4] We were proud of our revolution.
[5] The French way or stay out our way.

Parc du Champ de Mars

'It is not given to everyone to blend into the multitude: Enjoying the crowd is an art'
– Charles Baudelaire, 'The Crowd'.

Holding a little green box of macarons, you find a bench on the left side of the park. The sky is tainted yellow as the sun sinks behind the Eiffel Tower. You are waiting for someone or something. You're enjoying listening to the young man singing acoustic versions of songs to his friends on the grass. Groups of youngsters gathered on small blankets, opening bottles of wine and champagne. You're amused by Parisian champagne picnics. It is a beautiful summer evening at Parc du Champ de Mars. You notice the air suddenly became cooler but you haven't brought a shawl. You look in your bag but it's not there. Everyone is huddling together but you, shuffling through your bag, sat on the bench with your little green box on your lap. 10 PM: The white sparks of light flicker, every gaze entranced. The Eiffel Tower sizzles from tip to floor, and you watch from the park bench, alone.

Galata Bridge

Sunny June morning, 10 AM.
The city crowd begins to buzz.
Hustle and bustle, get ready for
the holiday rush.

People passing left and right,
cars beeping, trams and busses
ping.

Tourists try to find a clear spot, pictures
are taken with the Bosporus bridge.
Mosque domes and minarets towering into
the sky in the background.

The perfect social media post: Small clouds
above and seagulls sweeping over.
Istanbul is charming.

Old men on foldable chairs and little boys
sat on plastic stools. Buckets of bait and fish
food, bags with their daily essentials.
They are talking amongst themselves.

They lean their fishing rods against the
bridge arches. Some wearing fisher hats,
others wearing sports caps.
Chai glasses on a round copper tray.

Taksim

I sit outside the mosque
and wait for the call to prayer.

When one call to prayer stops,
another call to prayer starts.

It is time for Maghrib.[6]

The ferries pull into the port
behind the mosque.

Crowds begin to make their way
inside.

[6] Maghrib is the 4th Prayer of the day and happens at sunset.

21,000 steps

Every morning both feet meet on the prayer mat.
One foot beside the other.

Find a pavement. Between mosques
and squares, between streets and
people, crowds and cars, and karts,
up steep hills and
down
cobbled roads.

The call to prayer starts in the Hagia Sophia Mosque
and stops. It continues at the Süleymaniye Mosque.
Passing between streets that surround mosque walls,
I look up to the minarets that tower over the city.

Crowds on their way to pray in congregation,
shoulder to shoulder, feet meet on the prayer mat.
Then they disperse into Istanbul's streets.

Cats are strolling, from door to table,
home to home. From crowd to crowd.
From day to night.
Repeat.

Every night both feet meet on the prayer mat.
One foot beside the other.

10 KM from Syria

The first part of a mini Umrah.[7]
Walking, strolling, stepping over
white stone floors and past beige brick walls,
narrow streets and alleys, passing over
the footsteps of Prophets and Saints.

I touch the gold tap, turning it slowly,
water gushing into the stone basin.
I reach my hands into the holy water.
Cooling.
One hand brushes the other.

I cup my hands and bow to take a sip.

Strolling through dusty streets.
I look up at tall marble pillars,
minarets,
hills that surround the mosques dome.
I touch stone walls, what should l feel?

Visitor. Traveller.

Sitting in the mosque.
Praying. Listening. Watching.

[7] Essentially, the Umrah means '**a visit**' (and pilgrimage) to the Holy Kaaba (the Sacred House of God) in Arabic and can be performed by anyone, anytime of the year; unlike Hajj, which is an obligatory pilgrimage to Makkah, performed every year within the first 10 days of the Islamic month of Dhul Hijjah. Although I was not at the Holy Kaaba, the journey between Konya and Halfeti (which many pilgrims visit) became a spiritual pilgrimage and hence I refer to it as a 'mini-Umrah'.

Beşiktaş port

Outside Ortakoy Cami[8] people stand and sit on benches talking whilst children run around the mosque. The dome and minarets are lit yellow and coral. I look at them contrasting against an indigo sky, dark navy, purple, lilac.

Music floods out of cafes and restaurants, small shops, and market stalls. Boats pass by on the Bosporus carrying parties, disco lights and sound pumping out onto the land. The smells of fried food and shisha smoke passing from one rooftop to the next.

Helium balloons on strings clutched in little hands. Ornaments and dream catchers hanging next to prayer beads, and rows of tapestry and pottery on the floor below. Turn the corner, follow the path, it bends from the port into narrow streets and back around again.

[8] Mosque.

Little Shops

Hidden in streets, you might miss them
if they didn't have their tables and stools outside.
Signs slanting, rusting away. The signs have no use here.
Rows of identical tall beige buildings with their paint chipped,
white wires dangling across small square windows.

A sign on the back of a scooter that is parked outside a shop reads:
'OTO YIKANA'.
Take a seat on colourful chairs, bright woven threads.
Simit or Gözleme, Kavesi or Chai[9].
The marble tiles are chipped exposing the grey concrete below.

Boy walks from one shop to another, balancing a big tray
of fresh Simit bread on one hand and munching on his personal
stash of crusts with the other. He hops along in his tight polo shirt,
his belly sticking out and his sandals flip flopping as he strolls down the street.

He wipes his mouth and shouts his salaam to the old man in the shop.
He is invited in and wipes his feet. The old man was expecting him.

[9] Turkish bread. Looks like a bagel and it is a little sweet, is covered with white sesame seeds, steet food, bread with spinach and cheese inside, or potatoes or meat, Turkish Coffee, Turkish Tea.

Bus to Halfeti

Long roads.

Surrounded by beige
mountains and hills.

Windows open,
warm air.

Driver stops for fuel.
Asks me if I want chai.

Roasted Pistachios

A man walks by with a tray of
freshly baked baklava.
The smell of roasted pistachios
lingering behind him.

I follow.

He shares two pieces with a big
smile, excited to meet a foreigner.

Pulling out a plastic stool,
he gestures me to sit down.

The plastic fork goes straight through
the pastry and pistachio stuffing.
The smell of roasted pistachios
remains in my hair when I walk away.

Sema (*The Whirling Ceremony*)[10]

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem' (*In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*).
May Allah swt[11] send his peace and blessings upon Prophet Muhammad pbuh[12] and his family and his companions. The most perfect of all of Allah swt's creation.

Captivated. Line in the distance, ocean and sky, like a crease in paper. The longer I stare, circles of white robes, crashing sounds like something calling my name, feet already point the way, join the orbit.

Airy and ethereal, strings being plucked, chiming invitations. Light and mellow, push me into the wind that carries the whispers of the flute.
Take me to that line, where the ocean meets the sky.
Stepping into cold waters with hot feet, blistered, peeling, trudged through centuries of sand just for one look, wait in line, reach the Divine. [13]

"God is in the East and the West and wherever you turn there is the face of God" – Quran (2:15)

My legs submerged in water, cold, chilling. Feet pulled forward, slowly lifting. The taste of salt on my lips. My body gradually concealed like the secrets on the sand of the seabed. Inhale. Waves crash, pushing and pulling. Toes brush, heels lift. Float. Submit. Float. Submit. Water rises. Neck, ears, cheeks, nose. Collide, fade, close eyes. Submitting to the ocean, body joining the whirling, whirling, whirling, united with the Divine.

"If the ocean were ink for [writing] the Words of my Lord, it would certainly run out before the Words of my Lord were finished, even if We refilled it with its equal." - Quran (18:109)

Every whirl has become a hum. My body humming Divine names. Whirling. Submitting. Whirling. Submitting. Eyes open, no line, no sky. The flute is still playing. Who is in control? Wind, against my cheeks, cold, crisp, whispers of the flute. Low whirling in love of the Divine. To be in love with the Divine. Purpose. Submit. Purpose. Submit. Here the ocean in me meets the sky above me.

"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest". – Quran (13:28)

[10] Sema is a spiritual ceremony undertaken by the whirling dervishes as a form of dhikr (remembrance of God). Dervish is a common term for an initiate of the Sufi path; whirling is part of the formal Sema ceremony, and the participants are properly known as Semazens.
[11] SWT - Subhanahu wa ta'ala. Arabic for 'The most glorified, the most high'. Muslim honorific for God.
[12] Pbuh – Peace Be Upon Him.
[13] Divine – Term used by Sufi's when referring to God.

Man Outside Coffee Shop

Man, sitting legs crossed at his table.
Arms folded, coffee cup half full.
Foot tapping as he is lost in his thoughts.
Listening to the café music.

Cyber Flâneuserie

Static. Fingers swiping over faces.
Interface and cosmetic surgery,
pictures filtered, edited, controlled.

Losing control.

App store shared surgeon.
This download was recommended.
Slim bridge noses.
They think that the online world is
the only reality.

Time means something different now.

Static. Breathing through the phone speaker.
Story telling on social media has become
'ten second video clips' and 'boomerangs'.
Mouthing songs, trending content,
reeling lips, filled and glossed with linings.

Constant transaction.

Scrolling masked users, insecurities, Al aesthetic.
Poor credit score balances, influencer points
per label. No returns offline.
Everything held in your own hands.

A Hashtag

I am #Trending.
#HotTopic. #UK.
This means conform or leave.
Never stay and become.
Fit this box.
Permission to create your own,
denied.

Dating

We meet through phone screens.
Places to hang out.

'Love Heart' opens chat.
Multiple conversations at
one time.

'X' means next.

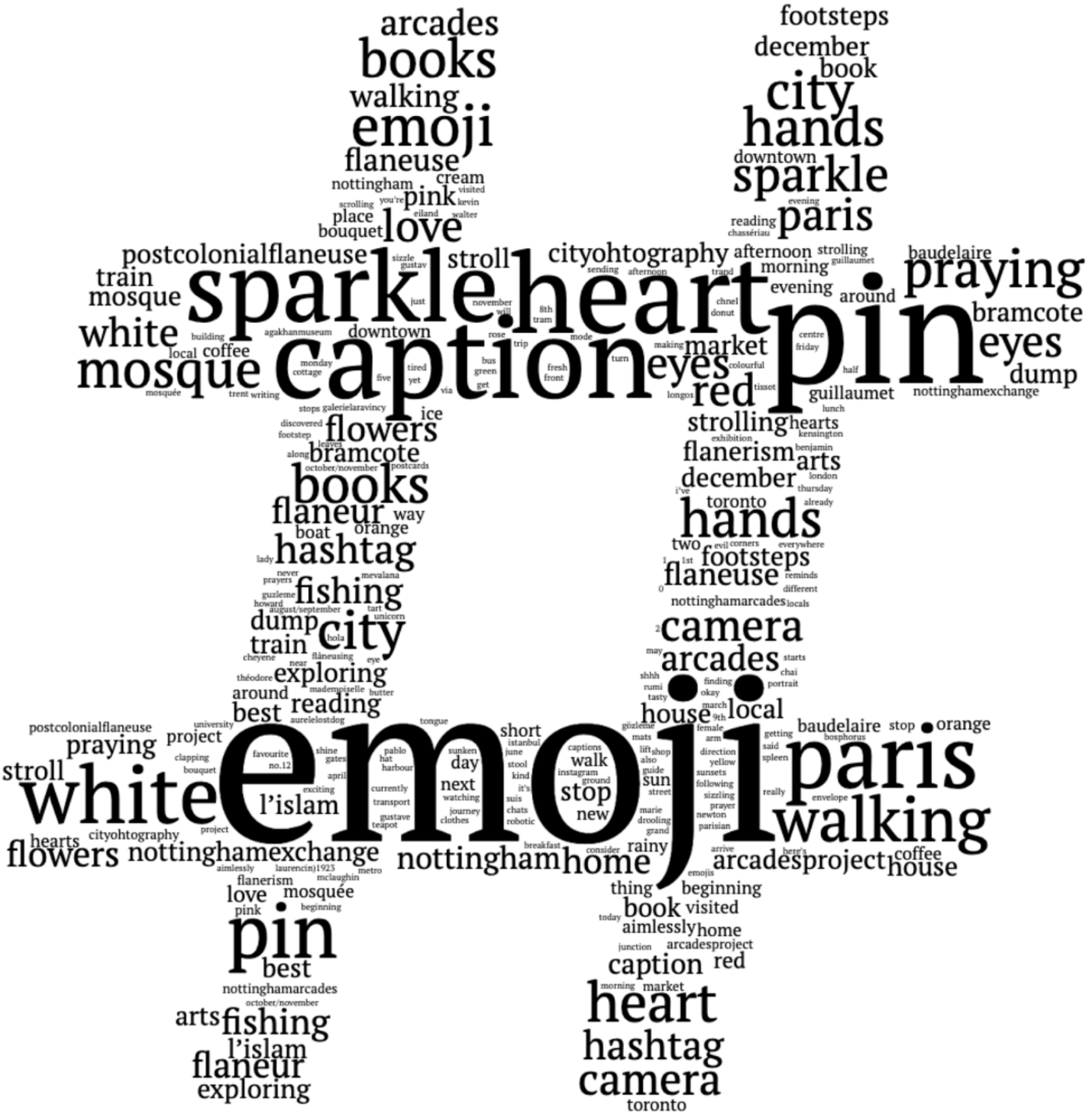
Fake relationships,
maintained on social media.
No one speaks to strangers at cafés,
It's creepy.

Should this be easy in a
world of eight billion people?

Everyone's scrolling.
Swiping left, swiping right.

Connect and dispose,
like the tissue you use to dry your hands.
I'll meet you in cyber space.

Instagram Captions
(@thepostcolonialflaneuse)



Tawaf[14] in Lockdown

I feel like I'm doing tawaf outside my house everyday.
But it's not Mecca, it's Nottingham.
It's 2020 and the world's in lockdown.
There are no pilgrims walking with me.

Someone's just got married, had a baby, moved into a
new house, changed the lights on their windows. Put a
banner on their door, "Congrats". "Happy Birthday".

The same hill, the empty lane, no cars moving,
people walking with pets, or alone, sometimes.
The Co-op and Sainsbury's are open,
the queues go all the way down the pavement.

People forget about social distancing.

Masks on, stand in your circles. Follow the arrows.
Signs that life is still changing, moving forward
in these uncertain times.

I walk up and down the same hill everyday.
I sit on the same bench, halfway point.
Watch the trees. The bare branches.
Swaying…

Slowly.
There is no traffic to observe,
human, mechanical, or otherwise.

Sometimes people walk, the same as me.
Maybe they're doing their own tawafs.
Places from these walks are starting to seep
into my poems, my dreams, my prayers.

[14] Tawaf (Arabic: طواف) is one of the principal rites of the pilgrimage and refers to circumambulating or walking in circles around the Kaaba in an anti-clockwise motion. Seven complete circuits, with each one starting and ending at the Hajar al-Aswad, constitute one Tawaf.

Ghost city

Shut
down.

Lock
down.

Empty roads.

The old man walking his dog looks at me suspiciously.
Walking on the other side of the pavement.

There's pavement, parking spaces, path, road between us.
There are facemasks, silicone gloves, social distancing between us.

Arched eyebrows.
Did he say 'hello'? I can't tell.
Should I ask if he's okay? I can't tell.

Weather is getting warmer. There's shade on this side of the pavement.

I stand outside a café that
I would usually be sat inside.

I think of coffees I have drank on the other side of the window.

Before they turned the sɹᴉɐɥɔ ǝpᴉsdn
uʍop and the lights went out.

Shut
down.

Lock
down.

CLOSED FOR BUSINESS.

Walk home quietly.
I cross the road
[pavement].

Queues
outside
Tesco.
Toilet paper,
and flour
shortage.
Empty shelves.
Arrows on the floor point →

Follow them.
One way only.

Shop online.
Stay inside. One family per bubble. In silence.
Worry anxiously about tomorrow.
News announcement at 6 PM. BBC ONE.

Everyone meets in the living room.
Avoid leaving the house.
Nothing changes for a while.
Front doors.

CLOSED FOR FRIENDS.

Inside our lock down homes
we live with the ghosts
of our pre-pandemic lives.

Shut
down.

Lock
down.

White Walls I

The world has been taken over. Fear.
COVID. Virus. Global. Covid-19 virus.

Unable to return home. The risk. Don't catch it.
Airborne. Everything is unclear, uncertain, chaotic.

"Remain indoors". "All public places are closed". "Wait".

They'll update everybody on the news.

"It's spreading". "You'll catch it". "Breathing".

Everyone is staying out of the streets.
Empty areas. Silence. Nothing moving.

Nothing to observe. The room I sleep in
and clouds passing by my window slowly.

The sky is changing colour.
I do not change my clothes for days.

"Wait". "Assess". "Re-assess", the situation.

Two weeks.
One Month.

16/03/2020.

White Walls II

Today is my eighth day of isolation.
My uniform consists of a hoody and
any trousers with an elasticated waist.

In the past week COVID-19 has
become a pandemic.
I am still getting used to saying the word
‘Pandemic’ more then
‘Thank you’ and ‘Please’.

Everything has officially closed.
I cannot work. I do not socialise. I cannot travel.
The UK is in total lockdown.

I’m constantly keeping up to date with
the news. The NHS is recruiting
its first round of soldiers.
The media reports this like the world has
gone to war.

Trigger warning.
I make sure there is enough snacks
for the evening and night.

I don’t sleep all night.
My old routine has been replaced
with staying awake, watching,
and re-watching movies on Netflix.

I wake up in the afternoon only to wait for better news.

23/03/2020.

White Walls III

Today they announced a lockdown
for two weeks. April ends on a
negative.

Cases on the rise. Still no flights.
I have not written for the past few days as
there is nothing to write about.

Life is becoming my Spotify playlist on repeat.

Everyone is more on edge.
[redacted] said to call the police if neighbours
break rules.
[redacted] isn't from the streets.

I read a article online. It said
the BAME community was to blame for the
spread of the virus.

"Blame the 48,000 illegal immigrants,
the BAME community and the morons
that never obey the rules". [15] - [redacted].

30/04/2020.

[15] STANDUPTORAC, 'ANTI-RACISTS HIT BACK AT TORIES AND SAY NO COVID RACIST SCAPEGOATING' , *StandUpToRacism*, 14 August 2020, https://standuptoracism.org.uk/anti-racists-hit-back-at-tories-and-say-no-covid-racist-scapegoating/, [accessed 28 April 2023].

War in 2024

'*The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command*' - George Orwell (1984).

I can only speak in poetry.
I was taught only to write in prose.
I've performed for whoever will listen,
but I've fallen short of speeches.

In my dreams I scrunch sheets of paper
and form rocks that I hurl at colonisers.

I watch them bounce off men in blue masks;
the rocks fly towards me in slow motion instead.
Leaving cuts.

Red. Wet. Dripping.
Hands covered in bruises.

When poetry is a form of resistance
words are the foundation that build
homes on landslides of desecration.

Take my poem from me.

Colonisers enjoy poetry about
flowing rivers and deep blue seas.
Anything they can conquer and destruct next.

You don't need fresh stems to write for liberation.
Colonisers are interested in roots.

They try to force us to forget but this is not
the history we choose for ourselves.

Introduction: The Ontology of The Postcolonial Flâneuse

> She is saturated with in-betweenness […] I found her using cities as performance spaces, or as hiding places; as places to seek fame and fortune or anonymity; as places to liberate herself from oppression or to help those who are oppressed; as places to declare her independence; as places to change the world or be changed by it.
>
> - Lauren Elkin, 'Flâneuse-ing'.[1]

Lauren Elkin (2016) defines the flâneuse as - 'flâneuse [flanne-euhze], noun, from the French. Feminine form of flâneur [flanne-euhr], an idler, a dawdling observer, usually found in cities'.[2] Developing from Elkin's definition, I question if being a flâneuse is as easy for marginalised women as this definition suggests, whether flâneusing is equally as liberating and world changing for marginalised women, and which voices are excluded from flâneuserie practice? Proposing a definition for the postcolonial flâneuse, this doctoral project focuses on four modes of postcolonial flâneuserie in the context of visible and invisible Muslim women. These are the Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and Covid-19 Pandemic postcolonial flâneuse. Aiming primarily to identify how the postcolonial flâneuse represents the voices of marginalised women, particularly in the context of visible and invisible Muslim women, I conduct a critical textual analysis of works written by British and European Muslim women writers and poets in four critical chapters. I then engage the identified modes of the postcolonial flâneuse in my own creative practice. Informed by the critical chapters, I have produced a collection length body of poetry titled *The Postcolonial Flâneuse*. This thesis also includes a statement of poetics that accompanies the creative work. This proposes a poetics of postcolonial flâneuserie and represents the significance of combining critical and creative practice in this project.

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[1] Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p.22.
[2] Elkin, p.7.

Decolonising flânerie practice is central to both critical and creative parts of this thesis. Jeremy Bendik-Keymer (2020) has defined decoloniality as 'the unworking of coloniality'.[3] He proposes that: 'Decoloniality precedes and succeeds decolonisation, challenging the mind-set that keeps colonisation going'.[4] Explaining this further he states that 'it seeks to resolve the ongoing dynamics of colonial domination, including its traces, so that formally or persistently colonised people find themselves to be true moral equals with the self-determination to live their lives in their own ways'.[5] Reflecting on decoloniality in this way is particularly useful to understanding the practice of the postcolonial flâneuse as disturbing traditional notions and expectations of the flâneur and the flâneuse. In decolonising flânerie the postcolonial flâneuse contributes to this undoing of colonial domination in the city and crowd. Research on British Muslim women in recent years produced by organisations such as the Office for National Statistics (2015), Women's and Equalities Committee (2016), and Tell MAMA (2018), have consistently highlighted the marginalisation, misrepresentation, and silencing of Muslim women in public spheres. Choosing Muslim women in particular for this study was imperative to this project's approach to decolonising the flâneuse figure and combining my critical and creative practices as a British Muslim woman.

Engaging with a qualitative approach in this thesis, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with self-selecting participants to ascertain Muslim women's feelings about dress and visibility when walking in large cities. Jeff Lewis (2008) argues that qualitative research 'seeks to uncover, in particular, the intricate details of people's everyday lives, including the complex attitudes, behaviours, and relationships'.[6] Such ideas have influenced my ontological approach, textual analysis, and study of authorial presence, voice, and agency

[3] Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, *Involving Anthroponomy in The Anthropocene: On Decoloniality* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020), p.53.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Jeff Lewis, *Cultural Studies: The Basics* (London: Sage, 2008), p.261.

of Muslim women. Furthermore, comparing literary representations with participant experiences supported my textual analysis and allowed space to consider the breadth of such experiences in the Global North more widely.

Using ethnographic methodology, I chose an immersive approach. Christopher R. Matthews (2021) argues that 'data produced in this way is often rich in detail, based on social interactions between the researcher and participants'.[7] The initial purpose of these interviews was to produce authentic data which came directly from British Muslim women to compare real and literary depictions of similar experiences. From this data I hoped to glean authentic points of view and experiences to support and strengthen my argument. Interviews throughout this thesis were conducted in person and via Microsoft Teams between May 2022 and April 2023. All participant interviews have been anonymised and can be found in the appendices. I have also conducted interviews with relevant poets which support my identification of similar patterns and themes. These interviews are extremely valuable to supporting my textual analysis of their work. In instances where author interviews have not been possible, I draw from online sources. I do not claim that interviews in this thesis represent the voices of all British and European Muslim women, as this would be reductive and impossible. Although there are some collective shared experiences, each experience should be and has been treated as individual. Rather, I hope to encourage more conscious and sensitive academic approaches to research on visibility, voice, and agency, in the context of Muslim women, globally.

The flâneur is the beneficiary of many privileged associations and titles. He is known to be a man of leisure, an observer, philosopher, and poet. He is the urban explorer and connoisseur of the city and crowd. Originally, the figure of the flâneur was fashioned by nineteenth-century French poet, essayist, and art critic Charles Baudelaire as male, wealthy, free to pursue leisure, and apparently aimless. Baudelaire is best known for *Les Fleurs du mal*

[7] Christopher R. Matthews, *Doing Immersive Research* (Nottingham: CRM Publishing, 2021), p.41.

(The Flowers of Evil), originally published in 1857. This work observes the changing city of Paris during the mid-nineteenth century. Known for writing in a style that reflects themes of Romanticism, his observations of Parisian life celebrate the physical landscape and focus on the individual's isolation, melancholy, and spirituality. His speaker's gaze remains interested habitually in the common man, crowd, and idealisation of women. In his 1846 essay on Romanticism, Baudelaire states: 'Romanticism for me is the most recent up to date expression of the beautiful'.[8] Romanticism, he continues 'will not consist of perfect execution but of a conception analogous to the morality of this century. Whoever speaks of Romanticism means modern art, this is to say intimacy, spirituality, colour, aspiration towards the infinite'.[9] Baudelaire is credited with coining the term 'modernity' to describe life in the urban metropolis and the artistic expression of capturing the experiences of the city but not without the figure of flâneur who fit the landscape of the modern urban metropolis.

Baudelaire's notion of the flâneur enacts 'the description of modern life – and more abstract life' to poetry.[10] Of the flâneur, Baudelaire writes:

> For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate observer, it is an immense pleasure to take up residence in multiplicity, in whatever is seething, moving, evanescent and infinite. The observer […] enters into the crowds as into an immense reservoir of electricity.[11]

Comparing the flâneur to a mirror the size of a crowd in his 1860 essay, he notes: 'Sometimes he is a poet: More often he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist: He is the painter of the passing moment and all the suggestions of eternity that it contains'.[12] Baudelaire was

[8] Charles Baudelaire, 'What Is Romanticism?', in *The Salon of 1846*, ed. by Jonathan Mayne, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: David Zwirner Books, 2021), pp.29-32 (p.30).
[9] Ibid.
[10] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), p.9.
[11] Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen,* trans. by Keith Waldrop (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), p.3.
[12] Baudelaire (2021), pp. 4-5.

influenced greatly by the works of Edgar Allan Poe, in particular his short story 'The Man of The Crowd' (1840) which Baudelaire explores in section three:

> In the window of a coffee-house there sits a convalescent pleasurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd, and mingling, through the medium of thought, in the turmoil of thought that surrounds him […] Finally he hurls himself headlong into the midst of the throng, in pursuit of an unknown, half glimpsed countenance that has on an instant bewitched him. Curiosity has become a fatal, irresistible passion![13]

As an American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic, Poe is widely recognised as a central figure of Romanticism. For Poe, the flâneur was 'someone abandoned in the crowd' but 'above all, someone who does not feel comfortable in his own company'.[14] He highlights 'that is why he seeks out the crowd' and suggests that 'the reason why he hides in it is probably close at hand'.[15] An important comparison is made by Poe between the pedestrian 'who wedges himself into the crowd' and 'the flâneur who demanded elbow room [in the crowd]'.[16] Acknowledging the privileges inherent to the flâneur, he highlights the virtues and advantages of access and accommodation into the crowd as he 'was unwilling to forego the life of the gentleman of leisure'.[17]

Later, in his acclaimed work *The Arcades Project* (1982) German philosopher Walter Benjamin argued: 'Basic to flânerie, among other things, is the idea that the fruits of idleness are more precious than the fruits of labour'.[18] Although other major works by Benjamin included essays on Baudelaire, *The Arcades Project* was Benjamin's final incomplete book that depicted Parisian life in the nineteenth century and was first published in 1982 as

[13] Baudelaire (2021), p.7.
[14] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire A Lyric Poet in The Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Verve. 1983), p.48.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Benjamin (1983), p.54.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eland and Kevin Mclaughilin (London: Harvard University, 1982), p.453.

Passangenwerk. The flâneur, as noted by Benjamin, 'makes "studies"' on this subject.[19] Referring to the flâneur's casual approach to observation, he argues: 'Baudelaire's flâneur was not a self-portrait of the poet to the extent that this might be assumed […] His absentmindedness is the flâneur'.[20] This claim reaffirms that through his own absentmindedness, the flâneur adopted the mind of the crowd via observations of the individuals within it. Yet this implication of supposed neutral motivations prompts questions of how the flâneur could possibly have been as depoliticised as he was presented. I return to this question later. Although Benjamin attempts to compare the evolving version of the flâneur to the badaud (an onlooker) suggesting 'the flâneur has turned into a badaud', French scholar, Victor Fournel (1858) expresses a passion for the history of old Paris and rejects this idea. [21] He argues:

> The flâneur must not be confused with the badaud […] the simple flâneur is always in full possession of his individuality, whereas the individualism of the badaud disappears: It is absorbed by the outside world […] which intoxicates him to the point where he forgets himself.[22]

Whereas Poe's man of the crowd and Baudelaire's flâneur are at home in and are seeking refuge within a crowd, Fournel's argument implies that the flâneur can never really, completely, be a part of the crowd as he preserves his individual identity as 'flâneur'.[23] Whereas the badaud identifies as the public and crowd and as such has no independent identity, his/her identity is the crowd.

[19] Ibid.
[20] Benjamin (1983), p.68.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Victor Fournel, Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire A Lyric Poet in The Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Verve. 1983), p.69.
[23] Ibid.

Edmund White (2015) has more recently defined the flâneur as: 'That aimless stroller who loses himself in the crowd, who has no destination and goes wherever'.[24] Not differentiating by gender, the American novelist creates an interpretation based on the activities that define flânerie rather than the influence and impact of gender, which is particularly significant for the postcolonial flâneuse. French novelist and poet Raymond Queneau, also engages with modern variations of the flâneur, using language and photography. His famous works include *Hitting The Streets* (2013) translated by Rachel Galvin engage with flânerie writing styles. In the introduction, Galvin describes Queneau's flâneur as a: 'linguist with a penchant for the odd spoken phrase as well as a photojournalist with an eye for the telling gesture of the passer-by'.[25] Queneau's engagement with technological advancements of his time are a productive way of considering the evolving and adaptative nature of the modern flâneur. Since Baudelaire established the flâneur in modern poetry, as indicated by Queneau's work, the experiences of flânerie have transformed along with the figure itself, incorporating class, gender, and technological advancements. Queneau reveals how flânerie modes of writing have also adapted to social, economic, and cultural developments through technological advancement, architectural developments, and class and gender consciousness.

In their engagement with Baudelaire's flâneur, several contemporary theorists have tried to redefine this figure by comparing him to more present-time evolutions of the lone ambler. Discussing Baudelaire's flâneur, Benjamin (1983) creates an interesting comparison with the detective.[26] Proposing a detective mode of flânerie, he asserts: '[i]t does [the flâneur] a lot of good socially, for it accredits his idleness. He only seems to be indolent, for behind his indolence there is a watchfulness of an observer who does not take his eyes off a miscreant'.[27]

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[24] Edmund White, *The Flâneur A Stroll Through The Paradoxes of Paris* (London, Bloomsbury, 2015), p.16.
[25] Rachel Galvin, 'Introduction', in Raymond Queneau, *Hitting The Streets,* trans.by Rachel Galvin (Manchester: Carcanet, 2013), p.6.
[26] Benjamin (1983), p.40.
[27] Ibid.

Benjamin claims that the flâneur as 'detective' can 'see rather wide areas opening up to his self-esteem. He develops forms of reaction that are in keeping with the pace of a big city'.[28] For Benjamin, this mode of flânerie means that 'no matter what trail the flâneur may follow every one of them will lead him to a crime'.[29] Commenting on the detective flâneur, Federico Castigliano (2017) more recently notes that 'like the detective, Baudelaire's flâneur investigates the truth through careful observation of the work of phenomena, but this observation that he undertakes on city terrain proves antithetical and specular to introspection'.[30] Extending upon the detective mode of flânerie, Castigliano draws on an inward purpose to these observations claiming that flânerie thus becomes a 'modus vivendi, a style of life lined to the idea that the drift of the city is an instrument for the discovery of one self'.[31] The detective mode of the flâneur assists this critical questioning of the flâneur's outward display of aimlessness, providing an example counter argument by means of the intentional watchful gaze.

For Baudelaire, Benjamin, Poe, and White, flânerie is bound together by the undeniable foundation of the flâneur as an observer of the crowd and city and his integration and relationship with the crowd. To be both at home and to go unnoticed, and also to write of observations from the present moment upon memory of it is central to flânerie. For Castigliano, Debord, Fourner, Queneau, and Sadler, the flâneur has evolved and adapted with the progression of society and science. Reflections on modern flânerie practice and its current variations require the acknowledgment of past traditions, including the supposed aimless wandering of the city and its connection to the privileges of the flâneur.

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[28] Benjamin (1983), p.42.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Federico Castigliano, *Flâneur, The Streets of Paris* (California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2017), p.60.
[31] Ibid.

Attempting to identify more inherent purposes of the flâneur's presence in the city and crowd, Mary Gluck (2003) highlights how within his own modes and stereotypes, the characteristics of the flâneur camouflage a purposefulness to his existence. Gluck claims that 'the essence of the flâneur as a cultural type lay in the fact that his "public-ness" was not a neutral empirical fact but a heroic aspiration, conceived in opposition to the pragmatic and moralistic spirt of the age'.[32] An example of the flâneur's aspirational public-ness can be discerned in Benjamin's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1955) that notes: 'around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The flâneurs liked to have the turtles set the pace for them'.[33] Although he does not suggest such eccentric props are a defining characteristic of the flâneur, Benjamin highlights a visibility and purpose to the flâneur's presence in the city. Benjamin's notes on 'turtle walking' have been considered more recently by Matthew P. Bettelheim (2022) who suggests that 'perhaps what Benjamin meant to convey in his convolute was not that the flâneur took turtles for a walk, but that the flâneur was one who might take turtles for a walk'.[34] Still, the question surrounding the flâneur's intention of walking with a turtle is relevant to the exploration of his supposed aimlessness. Like Benjamin, Gluck further highlights a potential purpose in the flâneur's presence in the city. She claims:

> The flâneur's own use of bourgeois dress codes had fundamental […] social and cultural meanings. His black coat and top hat functioned as a self-conscious costume or a parodic mirror that he held up to bourgeois society. They signalled not so much identification with, as ironic detachment from, the dominant social order.[35]

[32] Mary Gluck, 'The Flâneur and the Aesthetic Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th-Century Paris', *Theory, Culture & Society,* 20.5 (2003), pp.53-78 (p.57).
[33] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1955), p.157-202.
[34] Matthew P. Bettelheim, 'Flânerie or Flimflammery? - The Urban Myth of The Flâneur and Turtle Walking', *Bibliotheca Herpetologica,* 16.1 (2022), pp.1-13 (p.10).
[35] Gluck, p.61.

Gluck's observations of the flâneur's social and political agenda by means of his presence in the Parisian landscape identifies a purpose for the flâneur as a public figure, cultural type, hero, and artist. His choice of dress and associations were complicated by this intended detachment and political stance in the society of his time.

Considering flânerie as purposive and resistant, we might ask why there has been notably little attention to the flâneur within postcolonial studies. Among the few postcolonial approaches to flânerie is an article by Dalia Said Mostafa (2009) who claims that one can, and should, 'recycle the flâneur'.[36] Mostafa explains that 'the interest in the flâneur figure arises for two main reasons'.[37] First, 'as a historical and cultural "image", that can be "recycled", revisited and reincarcerated […] so as to help one interpret an image of a city going through significant transformations'.[38] Secondly, 'the flâneur's historical experience as a stroller or wanderer sheds light on spatial and temporal relations between this city and its inhabitants'.[39] The postcolonial flâneur, typically a racial 'other' may lack this invisibility. Thus, a postcolonial approach to flânerie demonstrates how patriarchal and colonial systems work to shape knowledges that are reproduced in cities and can influence marginalised experiences.
One of the few engagements with the flâneur from a postcolonial perspective include Sofia Aatkar (2019) who notes that 'the flâneur can draw comfort from the crowd precisely because he is able to observe the spectacle and yet slip in and out of it himself unnoticed and unremarked upon'.[40] She argues: 'The street is his home, everyone is his community'.[41] This implies that this figure wanders through the cityscape with ease. However, this is not the case for the postcolonial flâneur or postcolonial flâneuse. Author Sonia Overall (2021) has gone so far ad

[36] Mostafa, p.98.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Sofia Aatkar, 'Postcolonial Flânerie in Caryl Phillips's *The Atlantic Sound* and Ferdinand Dennis's *Behind The Frontlines: Journey into Afro-Britain*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing,* 56.1 (2019), pp.30-42 (p.30-31).
[41] Ibid.

to describe this practice as a 'predominantly white, male affair' and 'an expression of heteropatriarchal privilege' that only 'men do'.[42] However, her psychogeographical analysis of 'working-class' and 'male' observations of the flâneur and dérive are contradicted by her own white, middle-class experience of performing a 'pilgrimage'.[43] Although she acknowledges that the practice of the derive 'encourages the walker to push back against expected ways of moving through public space, following curiosity rather than signage', her work excludes the crucial analysis of racial and religious visibility as factors that have been introduced to current research on flânerie literature.[44]

As noted in Alexender Greer Hartiger's 2016 analysis of the postcolonial flâneur: '[He] resembles the figure of the nineteenth century flâneur [but] with an added critical lens that enables him to engage with the politics of [the] post- "war on terror" world'.[45] Postcolonial scholar Simon Gikandi attempts to adopt the role of the postcolonial flâneur and describes his experiences:

> In a single afternoon strolling down the streets of the cities that I love, I pretend to be a postcolonial flâneur […] The informed spectator of the urban class […] although my passion and profession, unlike that of the Parisian flâneur is not to become one with the masses, I seek to move with the ebb and flow of the crowds.[46]

As Gikandi recognises, the postcolonial flâneur is also a figure of privilege. Gikandi draws attention to the ways in which the role has evolved when considered from frameworks attentive to class, race, and the intentions of the flâneur. The position of his postcolonial flâneur is necessary because it enables the simultaneity of insider/outside status, being both a part of the

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[42] Sonia Overall, *Heavy Time: A Psychogeographers Pilgrimage* (London: Penned in the Margins, 2021), p.14.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Alexander Greer Hartwiger, 'The Postcolonial Flâneur: Open City and The Urban Palimpsest', *Postcolonial Text*, 11.1 (2016), pp. 1-17 (p.1-2).
[46] Simon Gikandi, 'Between Roots and Routes, Cosmopolitanism and Claims of Locality', in *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for The New Millennium*, ed. by J. Wilson, C, Dandre, S, Lawson (London, Taylor, and Francis, 2010), pp.22-36 (p.22).

crowd and apart from it. Yet, the postcolonial flâneur is the figure whose critical gaze provides a way to read, not just the legacies of colonialism, oppression, and exploitation, but also the continuing effects on minorities in British society through political frameworks that shape cities. The postcolonial flâneur is as Gikandi describes, 'simultaneously a chronicler of history, a keen observer of the present, and an augur of the future'.[47] However, the postcolonial flâneuse extends this critical gaze to establish herself as an integral part of re-reading the city. She questions how histories of colonialism are being re-interpreted and decolonised and how this contributes towards future cities.

Notably, all flânerie definitions mentioned thus far have focused specifically on the male stroller. Elkin's recent 'imaginary' fixed definition of the flâneuse is far more equivalent to the flâneur, recognising a gendered dimension. Elkin suggests that 'perhaps the answer is not to attempt to make a woman fit a masculine concept, but to redefine the concept itself'.[48] Thus, we must shift the focus of flânerie to women writers who are using the literary space to create a female gaze on the city. Coining the term 'flâneuserie' whilst engaging with the notion of 'women moving from being looked [at] to looking [upon]', the city, she is thus responding to the idea of the female flâneur and breaking the gendered stereotypes and barriers of flânerie.[49] She explains: 'The joy of walking in the city belongs to men and women alike. To suggest that there couldn't be a female version of the flâneur is to limit the way women have interacted with the city to the ways men have interacted with the city'.[50] This figure continues to evolve and fashion herself from the original meaning which still prevails as the standard definition. Citing Mary Austin (1909) in an earlier article, Elkin (2016) writes: 'Laying claims to flânerie has always enabled us to disrupt the lives we live'.[51] Thus, in re-evaluating women's

[47] Ibid.
[48] Elkin, p.11.
[49] Elkin, p.277.
[50] Elkin, p.11.
[51] Lauren Elkin 'Radical Flâneuseries: Reimagining The Aimlessly Wandering Woman', *The Paris Review* (2016) < https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/08/25/radical-flaneuserie/> [accessed 15 January 2022].

positions in the city and the crowd, Elkin does not just disrupt the interpretation of flânerie in contemporary literature but constructs consciousness around the visibility of the female walker and individual of the crowd.

Considering the history of the flâneuse, it is imperative to recognise the argument that the figure of the flâneuse existed before the twenty-first century. In 1930, Virginia Woolf stepped into the role of the flâneuse, observing people on her walk around central London whilst searching for a pencil: 'Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others'.[52] Although she is temporarily able to join the city, as a woman from the period in which she writes, she is visible. She is not able to fully blend into a male dominated crowd and thus unable to go unnoticed in the city. Such limitations posed on women effectively negate the existence of a flâneuse. British novelist and poet Deborah Levy (1993) described a woman with flâneuserie style as 'a wanderer, bum, émigré, refugee, deportee, rambler, strolling player'.[53] Some of these labels used by Levy hold negative connotations, forming undesirable images of flâneuserie practice for women and potentially reducing their aspirations to interact with cities in this way. In her 2018 essay on the politics of labelling, Tazreena Sajjad discusses how labels such as refugee and deportee allow systematic dehumanisation.[54] She notes that the 'purpose of labels is to simultaneously impose boundaries and define categories while having classificatory and regulatory functions'.[55] Considering Sajjad, the use of undesirable labels criminalises flâneuserie and legitimises male superiority over female walkers. Although politically charged language may

[52] Virgina Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure', in *Street Haunting: A London Adventure including; 'Evening Over Sussex: Reflections over a Motor Car* (Bristol: Read&Co Great Essay, 2013), pp. 202-207 (p.206).
[53] Deborah Levy, *Swallowing Geography* (London: Penguin, 2014), p.67.
[54] Tazreena Sajjad, 'What's in A Name? "Refugees", "Migrant", and the politics of labelling', *Race and Class*, 60.2 (2018), pp.40-62 (p.42).
[55] Ibid.

be used to suggest that the flâneuse is inferior to the flâneur, a postcolonial reading of Woolf's flâneuse reveals her power as an inherently political figure.

Janice Mouton (2001) notes that Woolf:

> Rambles through London's streets with the eye and mind of the true flâneuse […] however in 1927 a woman still needed an excuse for walking the streets alone. She could go for a stroll as long as she had a ready justification'.[56]

By creating a purpose for her walk: 'Really I must buy a pencil', Woolf's flâneuse undoes some of 'the old prejudices' and cultural implications of women from her class wandering aimlessly and alone that she suggests were socially frowned upon: 'We are in danger of digging deeper than the eye approves'.[57] Recognising Virgina Woolf and George Sand's attempts at flânerie in her 1985 essay, Janet Wolff highlights that the 'public person of the eighteenth century and earlier' was a man.[58] She notes that 'women could not stroll alone in the city'.[59] Challenging the masculine gaze and social and political stigmas that shape her wondering as the flâneuse, Woolf asserts her agency by insisting she 'dally a little longer' under the pretence of buying a pencil.[60] Woolf's flâneuse resists the masculine space and attempts to proclaim the female gaze on the city. In disrupting social norms, she challenges gendered spaces in the same way that the postcolonial flâneuse disrupts racialised spaces.

Writing on Francophone literature, Catherine Nesci (2012) defines the flâneuse as: 'A feminine variation of male flânerie'.[61] She argues that contemporary readings of narratives and

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[56] Janice Mouton, 'Feminine Masquerade to Flâneuse: Agnès Varda's Cléo in the City', *Cinema Journal,* 40.2 (2001), pp.3-16 (p.6).
[57] Woolf, p.206.
[58] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and The Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 2.3 (1985), pp.34-50 (p.40).
[59] Wolff, p.41.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Catherine, Nesci, *Le Flâneur et Les Flâneuses (Bibliothèque Stendhalienne et Romantique) (French Edition),* trans. by DeepL Online (Paris, Ellug, 2007), p. 42.

poetry about the urban city require us 'to rethink the detached and overseeing [masculine] gaze of the flâneur'.[62] Nesci's enquiry into the flâneuse can forge alternative representations of her experiences and perceptions of the city which creates space to consider the metropolis as a white space from a marginalised perspective and requires the representation of alternative experiences to disturb and decolonise it. This idea is important in defining the postcolonial flâneuse as reversing her gaze on Western society. This also becomes crucially important to understanding this initial shift from flâneuse to postcolonial flâneuse that deviates from simply existing within a crowd to seeking safety, protection, and acceptance from it. However, this requires consideration of the accessibility, accommodation, and integration of the postcolonial flâneuse based on her religious and racial identity as well as gender and class.

Returning to Elkin's term 'flâneuserie', this idea of switching the gaze to the alternative perspective becomes a central aspect of reading and understanding experiences of place, identity, integration, and accommodation.[63] Nesci argues that to: 'recapture the rich potential of the senses in the activities of the walking, feeling, and representing the city' the flâneuse must analyse: 'the embodied experience of boundaries' and how these 'undo three hierarchies'.[64] These include: 'the gendered and class divisions of social spheres and the division of the senses into high and lower faculties'.[65] In applying Nesci's ideas of undoing such hierarchies to that of the postcolonial flâneuse's re-reading of the city, the reader is expected to re-examine the dominant model of flânerie in the context of colonial legacies, such as class, race, and gender privilege. This also prompts questions of how the postcolonial flâneuse can destabilise gendered, class, religious, and racial hierarchies within the: 'Western hierarchy' framework.[66] Thus, the postcolonial flâneuse is distinguishable from the flâneuse in

[62] Catherine Nesci, 'Sensual Re-reading: Gender, Sensibility, and The Classes of Flânerie', *Journal of The Society of Dix-Neuxiemistes*, 16.2 (2012), pp.133-148 (p.134-135).
[63] Elkin, p.277.
[64] Nesci (2012), p.133-148.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

the same way that Poe distinguishes the flâneur from the pedestrian. The postcolonial flâneuse's consciousness extends further than gender and beyond what is prioritised by Elkin's flâneuse.

The postcolonial flâneuse I am identifying is a particular kind of flâneuse whose flâneuserie is politicised and sometimes perceived to be less aimless than the original flâneur due to the impacts of race, class, religion, and global technological advancements. However, as I unpack throughout the following four chapters, the level of purpose or aim in her wandering is not necessarily far removed from the original flâneur. It is simply more noticeable because of her visibility and in her context as a British Muslim woman. Understanding how the postcolonial flâneuse has come to exist and why her presence contributes towards decolonising the city is imperative to understanding why I have chosen an ontological approach to this study. This approach allows me to question whether there is an inherent political statement being made regarding the flâneur and his connection to the maintenance of privilege, in the outwards display of aimlessness. Furthermore, the evolution of previous variations of the flâneur to the postcolonial flâneuse opens avenues for the future of flânerie and flâneuserie. Thus, the Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and COVID-19 Pandemic postcolonial flâneuse proposed in this thesis are inherent to the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse.

Craig Edwards (1998) defines the word 'ontology' as referring 'to philosophical investigations of existence or being'.[67] Such investigations he argues, 'may be directed towards the concept of being, asking what "being" means, or what it is for something to exist'.[68] This application of ontology is relevant to this thesis' questioning of flânerie and flâneuserie practices. Translated from French to English by Hugh Grey in 1960, French critic André Bazin's 1945 essay debates why an ontological understanding is required to apprehend reality and representation. Bazin compares photographic images and paintings to similar practices of

[67] Craig, Edwards, 'Ontology', *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (1998), < https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/ontology/v-1 > [Accessed 6 December 2023].
[68] Ibid.

preservation in ancient Egypt, such as their practice of embalmment. Bazin states that humans, through history, have used different art forms to fulfil their need to preserve life after death, through representation. He notes that 'today the making of images no longer shares an anthropocentric, utilitarian purpose. It is no longer a question of survival after death, but of a larger concept, the creation of an ideal world'.[69] Bazin's ontological understanding is useful to demonstrating the approach taken in this thesis. However, Bazin's assumption that all images are a literal representation and unaffected by humans, fails to acknowledge the other side of the lens, thus dismissing the gaze of the photographer. Similarly, to assume that the flâneur or flâneuse may be comprehensible to even marginalised individuals fails to recognise the impacts of class, race, and religion, that shape and limit their practice. Like the camera lens, the gaze of flânerie and flâneuserie requires the study of more inclusive experiences.

In postcolonial studies, ontological approaches include Edward Said's engagement with 'ontological stability' and 'ontological inequality' that he applies in his definitions of the occident and orient.[70] In *Orientalism* (1978) Said explains the colonial perception of the orient by examining how 'the orient was overvalued for its pantheism, its primitivity, its stability, its longevity' and 'suddenly appeared lamentably under-humanised, anti-democratic, backward, barbaric'.[71] This theory grew out of strategic comparisons which aimed to maintain inequality 'nourishing similar ideas in the culture at large'.[72] Viewing the occident as having superior ontological status based on their race and dominance over much of the inhabited world, these ontological differences 'between Eastern and Western economic (as well as) religious "mentalities"', Said argues, are insufficient and '"the orient" as an unconditional ontological category does an injustice to the potential of reality for change'.[73]

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[69] André Bazin and Hugh Grey, 'The Ontology of The Photographic Image', *Film Quarterly*, 13.4 (1969), pp.4-9 (p.6).
[70] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), pp.131-151 (p.150).
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Said, p.240.

More recently, Said's application of the term 'ontological' has been applied alongside the epistemological to understand the repositioning of systems of knowledge and visibility discourses in Western spaces outside of hegemony. Robert J.C. Young (2004) comments:

> It is not an issue of removing colonial thinking from European thought, of purging it, like today's dream of 'stamping out' racism. It is rather a question of repositioning European systems of knowledge so as to demonstrate the long history of their operation as the effect of their colonial other.[74]

Reflecting on Said's discourse of orientalism as highlighting a troubled relationship between the epistemological and ontological in postcolonial contexts, Young stresses that 'those from minorities, whether categorized as racial, sexual, social, or economic, stake their critical work in relation to their own political positioning rather than feel obliged to assume the transcendent values of the dominant discourse of criticism'.[75] He acknowledges that attempts to 'decolonise European thought and the forms of its history' tie the use of ontology and Said's application of the term to understanding the disadvantages that come with Muslim visibility in Western cities today.[76] Understanding the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse as the postcolonial observer and decolonising gaze, the postcolonial flâneuse contributes to the repositioning and decolonising of the systems and ideas discussed by Said and Young.

The term 'ontology' is thus central to this project; the postcolonial flâneuse highlights the misrepresentations and inequalities between Eastern and Western patriarchal and colonial structures. The terms East and West are used throughout this thesis in reference to the Global South and Global North. The postcolonial flâneuse dismantles stereotypes, the use of 'types', and subjective representations of such 'mentalities', in particular, the racial, sexual, social,

[74] Robert J.C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and The West* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.158.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

religious, and economic categories placed upon Muslim women's identities.[77] Considering the postcolonial flâneuse in the particular context of hijab (visible) and non-hijab (invisible) wearing British Muslim women, this thesis acknowledges the multiplicity of identities in the works of female British Muslim writers and the representations of their identities and experiences of navigating cityscapes and online spaces. This allows a deeper analysis of Muslim women's agency and autonomy as equal members of society, the city, and the crowd.

The following chapters have been organised using the four proposed modes of the postcolonial flâneuse. In chapter one I develop the idea of flânerie and activism. I argue that the visibility of the postcolonial flâneuse, achieved by clothing, accessories, or otherwise can establish a relationship between flânerie and activism, particularly in the context of British Muslim women and asserting their agency. This will begin the development of the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse in the thesis. I undertake a textual analysis of *Sofia Khan is Not Obliged* (2016) by Ayisha Malik, *The Occasional Virgin* (2019) by Hanan Al-Shaykh and *The Last One* (2021) by Fatima Daas. Proceeding this, chapter two returns to the notion of the inner-self. Following this, I conduct a textual analysis of Suma Din's *Turning The Tide: Reawakening The Woman's Heart and Soul* (2015) and Muneera Pilgrim's *That Day She'll Proclaim Her Chronicles* (2021) in chapter two. I address the act of flâneuserie as a spiritual practice to determine the point at which the casual act of strolling in the city can become a pilgrimage. In this chapter I compare the postcolonial flâneuse to the dervish. Proceeding this, chapter three expands on the influence of global technological advancements and the online space in relation to the cyber postcolonial flâneuse. This chapter considers the British Muslim women poets, Asma Elbadawi (2021), Raheela Suleman (2019), and Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (2019) to analyse their representations of women's fashion, beauty, and aesthetics in both online spaces and the city. Finally, the fourth and final chapter considers the long-lasting impacts that the

[77] Said, p.259.

2019 and 2020 lockdowns have had in enabling yet restricting the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial flâneuse. This chapter employs a textual analysis of *My Body Can House Two Hearts* (2019) by Hanan Issa, *Litanies* (2021) by Naush Sabah, *Europe, Love Me Back* (2022) by Rakhshan Rizwan, and *Too Much Mirch* (2022) by Safia Khan to consider the extent to which flânerie is currently reverting to pre-pandemic practices. Lastly, the conclusion reflects on the postcolonial flâneuse's contribution to the refashioning of the flânerie field and encourages new approaches to studying the flâneur and flâneuse.

Chapter One: The Postcolonial Flâneuse as Activist

This chapter argues that the definition of the postcolonial flâneuse is, in part, an activist who deploys a decolonising gaze in the Western city. Focusing primarily on the visibility of Muslim women and surveying how Western cities construct and restrict spaces for the presence of Muslim identity, I explore how the postcolonial flâneuse as activist disrupts the oppositional dyads (attached-detached)/(included-excluded), that structure the normative relation of activist to flâneuse. Drawing on representations of the postcolonial flâneuse as an activist in the novels *Sofia Khan is Not Obliged* (2016) by Ayisha Malik, *The Occasional Virgin* (2019) by Hanan Al-Shaykh, and *The Last One* (2021) by Fatima Daas, this chapter discusses how Malik, Al-Shaykh, and Daas are countering colonialist stereotypes and gendered interpretations of Muslim women. Having been published in the last ten years, these texts were selected based on their common themes and the ways in which their protagonists highlight the different experiences of visible and invisible Muslim women as postcolonial flâneuses in the city.

Identifying the postcolonial flâneuse in selected texts draws attention to the inherent relationship between women from marginalised backgrounds and diverse forms of social and political activism. Engaging with theoretical and critical work by Lopamudea Basu (2022), Ann Marie Adams (2001), and Sabrina Mahfouz (2022), this chapter contributes to wider debates surrounding literary representations of Muslim women's agency and the city. This chapter also explores the representation of the LGBTQ postcolonial flâneuse through Daas's protagonist Fatima. Drawing on similar arguments to Claire Chambers, Richard Phillips, Nafhesa Ali, Peter Hopkins, and Raksha Pande (2018), this chapter recognises the excluded voices of LGBTQ Muslim women and their invisible identities as female Muslim strollers in the city.

Further reading of the postcolonial flâneuse as activist involves an exploration of identifiable patterns regarding identity politics and diverse forms of activism and resistance through clothing and dialogue. These might be employed to achieve social and political change. It is useful to consider Catherine Nesci's ideas of the 'dramas and traumas of modern life' (2021) in the context of Muslim women's experiences in the modern city, and Mary Gluck's (2003) discussion of the flâneur's dress as a form of 'detachment'.[1] Reviewing existing research on the hijab post - 9/11 and the policing of visible Muslim identity in the city, this chapter draws on work by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (2007) and Sumera Saleem (2021). Engaging with ideas from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) regarding orientalist and colonial depictions of Muslim women, this chapter surveys how Muslim women continue to be restricted by colonial and orientalist ideologies. To support this argument, I also draw on M.D. Mahmudul Hasan's 2005 essay to further analyse how current orientalist and voyeuristic ideologies are used in representations of Muslim women and the challenges these present for Muslim women strollers in the city. This argument draws on Sabah Mahmood's use of 'agency' (2004) that she explains in relation to clothing which can work as an act of resistance to patriarchy, racism, and Islamophobia.[2] In this context, I apply Mahmood's ideas to the study of the postcolonial flâneuse's clothing. I consider the wearing or not wearing of the hijab and its relationship to the visibility of Muslim women in the city.

Considering Rashida Bibi's argument regarding the gendered and racialised gaze of the Western city on Muslim women (2020) and Lauren Elkin's discussion of women's choice to be visible and invisible (2016), this chapter concludes by drawing upon the extent to which the religious identity of the postcolonial flâneuse affects her agency and ability to blend into the

[1] Mary Gluck, 'The Flâneur and The Aesthetic Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th Century Paris', *Theory Culture, and Society,* 20.5 (2003), pp.53-80 (p.61). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0263276403020500 3> [Accessed: 3 August 2022].

[2] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.213.

city and crowd. This approach to flânerie connects to the broader argument of decolonisation in British Muslim women's writing as it signals tentative patterns and comparisons identified thus far in the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse. This chapter also draws on data collected from these interviews to complement a discussion of literary representations of British Muslim women in the city, comparing textual and practical experiences with visibility and resistance. Interviews with British and French Muslim women included in this chapter support my textual analysis of selected texts and argument regarding the relationship between postcolonial flâneuserie and activism. These interviews were conducted in person and via Microsoft Teams between May 2022 and April 2023. Participants' names have been anonymised.

The postcolonial flâneuse's presence in the city as a form of activism can be stimulated through appearance, interactions, social consciousness, and self-awareness in public spaces. If she is a member of the crowd who offers a decolonising gaze, her activism is employed to encourage and achieve social and political change for women of marginalised groups such as Muslim women. This development of social and political consciousness in flânerie modes of writing from that which is only aesthetically pleasing is an important contribution to the dialogue around experiences of constructing and restricting the visibility of Muslim women in the city. Mary Gluck (2003) begins to analyse the role of the flâneur's clothing in the context of his political presence and stance in the public domain. She highlights that 'the flâneur's physical elusiveness was inversely related to the visibility of social types and public life in the city'.[3] Gluck states: 'Whatever façade he chooses to assume the avant-garde flâneur was always composed from outside rather than from within'.[4] Applying Gluck's point of view to the focus of this chapter and the hijab as a form of resistance and activism, the hijab makes the postcolonial flâneuse visible because she stands out from the norm and is therefore restricted

[3] Gluck, p.61.
[4] Ibid.

from fully merging and being at one with the crowd. It can be argued that the postcolonial flâneuse is both visible and invisible depending on the space she is in. Quoting Gillian Rose (1993), Janet Wolff (2010) notes how feminist geographers are 'understanding the contemporary city in terms of a challenge to that omniscient vision and its exclusions'.[5] The sexualisation and hyper-visibility of the female Muslim body in public spaces can thus be read as restricting their ability to stroll in the Western city. As argued by Wolff, 'the licence to haunt the city, to navigate its spaces […] depends on a desexualised body […] for the sexualised body is always mapped and cannot evade the radar that tracks city walkers'.[6] As such the postcolonial flâneuse can be read as highlighting these exclusions.

In Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan is Not Obliged* (2016), protagonist Sofia Khan can be read as the postcolonial flâneuse. As she undertakes several lengthy walks through London, some of which have no clearly stated purpose, she finds herself immersed in the city and crowds. Her gaze is constantly observing her surroundings and remains aware of her identity as Muslim and woman. Ayisha Malik is a British Muslim writer, and this novel revolves around a British Pakistani Muslim woman who wears the hijab and works in a literary agency in London as a publicist. The story is narrated in the first person by Sofia and structured as a personal diary that follows her daily life. Sofia deals with family pressures to marry the perfect British Pakistani and Muslim man and is offered a contract to write a book on Muslim dating by her boss as she experiences new ways of meeting a potential husband. My analysis pays close attention to Sofia's experiences of navigating London by foot and using public transport to highlight her visibility in the crowd and incidents of racism and Islamophobia that she encounters. In a diary entry titled 'Saturday 5 May' Sofia writes about her experience at a pro-Palestine protest with her neighbour and friend, Conall:

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[5] Janet Wolff, 'Keynote: Unmapped Spaces – Gender, Generation and The City', *Feminist Review,* (96) 2010, pp.6-19 (p.11).
[6] Ibid.

> Most people were wearing keffiyehs, jackets were plastered with Palestine badges, people carried huge banners and flags, children with Palestinian bandannas tied around their little heads – a foray of black, white, green, and red […] As we walked through Knightsbridge, past the Queens barracks there were people sitting out on the balconies, waving Palestinian flags, rainbow-coloured flags, cheering everyone on. [7]

Sofia's position from within the crowd allows her to observe as a postcolonial flâneuse. She becomes one with the ebb and flow which is signified as her description changes from 'the crowd' to 'we'.[8] Sofia's observations as a member of this crowd initially suggest that London is a city where people are united by their struggles.

Focusing on Sofia's descriptions of people's clothing, this uniform representation creates a visible identity for the crowd as a whole. In the following quotation Sofia's gaze is identifiable within the crowd of protestors: 'When we got to Hyde Park the speeches had started […] "Yes, we are free but in the words of the great Nelson Mandela: Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians"! At which point the cheers were so loud I couldn't hear my own voice'.[9] Her voice becomes submerged into the voice of the crowd as she is involved in its movement and engages with the traditional notion of political activism. Her involvement with the protest as she 'can't hear her own voice' highlights that she has joined the body of the crowd and is becoming invisible within it. Developing the argument that the city is a problematic space in Malik's novel for Muslim women to engage in everyday acts of resistance, Sumera Saleem (2021) argues: 'London is a space in the novel that is described in relation to its problematic rhetoric's of diversity that belie how it is simultaneously inclusive

[7] Ayisha Malik, *Sophia Khan is Not Obliged* (London: Twenty7 Books, 2016), p.324.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Malik, pp. 324-325.

and racist'.[10] This can also be applied to an analysis of the postcolonial flâneuse as activist in Hanan Al-Shaykh's *The Occasional Virgin* (2019).

Hanan Al-Shaykh is a British Lebanese Muslim novelist. This novel is written in third person and counters stereotypical depictions of Arab and Muslim women, engaging with dialogue and dress to identify the key areas of focus regarding the visibility of Muslim women in the city. Set in central London, this novel follows Huda, the female Lebanese Muslim protagonist, who does not wear the hijab. As Huda navigates central London, she: 'finds herself intervening' in debates around Islam, women, and sexuality. She draws out the cultural and religious identities confused in these discussions that remind her of her father who would: 'kiss the Quran, then bring it up to his forehead'.[11] Huda's constant recollection of her father and his religious practices trigger her anxiety and highlight where religion and culture become tangled for her. Al-Shaykh depicts Huda's status as an outsider in both Lebanon and England. In this way, a postcolonial flâneuserie reading of Huda demonstrates Al-Shaykh's conscious efforts to counter representations of Muslim and Arab women. During an interview with Muddasir Ramzan in 2022, when asked whether she thinks: 'Muslim women in the West are underrepresented' Al-Shaykh responded: 'I think Muslim and Arab women are often presented in stereotypical ways by Western writers'.[12] Ann Marie Adams (2001) has acknowledged Al-Shaykh's part in addressing this. She notes that: 'Al-Shaykh's texts can be seen as an attempt to re-address the gendered discourses that have undergirded national endeavours through an increasingly cartographic narrative strategy that allows the author to "map" a new relationship'

[10] Sumera Saleem, 'Politics of Haya: Embodied Materiality of Piety As Everyday Resistance Among British Muslim Women in Ayisha Malik's Fiction', *Literature and Theology,* 35.4 (2021), pp.449-464 (p.461) < https://academic.oup.com/litthe/article-abstract/35/4/449/6508749> [Accessed 7 August 2022].
[11] Al-Shaykh, p.88.
[12] Muddasir Ramzan, 'If You Want To Put Conditions on Your Writing, You Are Not A Writer'*, Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 51:2 (2022), pp.254-261 (p.256).

between Muslim women and the city.[13] During a stroll in Hyde Park, Huda is then described as joining a protest outside the American embassy:

> Shouting drowning out the roar of traffic. Police everywhere. Women with and without veils. Women wearing headscarves, with and without children. Men with beards and men without beards. "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar". Their voices echoing round the square'.[14]

In comparison to Sofia, Huda feels like an imposter and is unable to discern which side she belongs to: 'She is uncertain what she should do'.[15] Moving through the street, she acknowledges several distinct identities among visibly Muslim women. She notices women 'without veils' and 'wearing headscarves'.[16] She also describes 'a girl wearing a headscarf' who 'smiles at her and she wonders whether to ask her when the event will be over' but 'she decides against it'.[17] Huda's descriptions also draw attention to her invisibility as a Muslim woman in the crowd. Her reluctance to interact with the girl indicates the internal conflict between her religious and cultural identity.

This contributes further to understanding the relationship between images of Muslim women in the West and identity politics surrounding the placement of female Muslim identity in Eastern and Western patriarchies. Examining these relationships in his 2022 essay, Ashraf Waleed Mansour explains:

> The vague image of [Muslim] women may be the reason for encountering racism; for example, the veil is a controversial issue […] especially its many forms, such as the burqa, the niqab, and hijab. Therefore, the loss of clarity drives Westerners suspicions about the identity of the Arab/Muslim woman.[18]

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[13] Ann Marie Adams, Writing Self, 'Writing Nation, Imagined Geographies in The Fiction of Hanan Al-Shaykh', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 2.2 (2001), pp.201-216 (p.202).
[14] Al-Shaykh, p.113.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Al-Shaykh, p.114.
[18] Ashraf Waleed Mansour, 'Arab Diasporic Women Between Challenges and Opportunities in Al-Shaykh's The Occasional Virgin', *International Journal of Literature Studies*, 2:1 (2022), pp.1-7 (p.4).

This is useful in considering Al-Shaykh's ability to navigate and deconstruct reductive colonial and patriarchal understandings of Muslim women's identities. However, this reading of Huda highlights her internal isolation from religious and cultural practices as well as her outsider status. Al-Shaykh's non-conventional representation of a Middle-Eastern Muslim woman who feels just as isolated from her identified religious and cultural community as she does from her physical environment when strolling in central London highlights further complexities to her experience as a postcolonial flâneuse. Her confusion can be read as an attempt to lose herself in the crowd. This constitutes the beginning of Huda's self-awareness as she passes through stages of identity including alienation, self-denial, and finally self-realisation in the novel. Furthermore, this reading of Huda as a postcolonial flâneuse echoes Jillian Curr's concept of negotiating 'new selves' in the city.[19] Curr (2018) argues that: 'In [the] city scape, the characters negotiate new 'selves' breaking out of the stereotypical roles their cultures have required of them […] how the city and the characters interact allows spaces for new identities to develop in'.[20] It is within this crowd that Huda is able to negotiate her visible and invisible identity in comparison to the other Muslim women she recognises at the protest, based on clothing. For the purpose of this chapter, it is important to focus on self-realisation as crucial to her invisibility as a Muslim woman in London, which provides her with social freedom and access to create her own space and identity as a Muslim woman in the city.

Extending the notion of self-realisation and the postcolonial flâneuse as activist, Fatima Daas's novel *The Last One* (2021) provides a platform for the voices of female Muslim LGBTQ members who are overlooked in mainstream debates about Muslim women living in the West. Fatima Daas is a French-Algerian Muslim writer. This autobiographical novel, translated into

[19] Jillian Curr, 'The City: A Place For Reinvention', *Synergy*, 14:1 (2018), pp.118-130 (p119), < http://www.synergy.ase.ro/issues/2018-vol14-no-1/8-JILIAN.pdf> [Accessed 15 October 2022].
[20] Ibid.

English by Lara Vergnaud, draws on Fatima Daas as both the pseudonym of the author and the name of the narrator in the book. During a telephone interview with Julia Webster Ayuso in 2021, Daas explained: 'Using a pseudonym was in line with [the] playful exploration of multiple identities. It was about creating and embodying a character, of reinventing myself'.[21] The novel follows the life of a non-hijab wearing French Algerian Muslim woman and LGBTQ community member, who experiences the city much like any other Parisian woman. Almost all the short chapters begin with the phrase 'My name is Fatima', followed by a few sentences on identity and reflections on her day.[22] However, the story foregrounds reflections of isolation and exclusion from various public and private spaces. Fatima lives in the majority-Muslim Parisian suburb known as 'Clichy-sous-Bois'.[23] The text conveys how Fatima's experiences as a postcolonial flâneuse are marginalised not just by gender and religion but also by her sexuality.

Fatima describes 'women-only happy hours, Barbie(e)turix parties, [and] queer nights at La Java' as places of refuge.[24] When Fatima attends a PRIDE protest with her friends, she finds herself 'immersed' in the 'lesbian world'.[25] Describing her first experience at a PRIDE event, she notes:

> An activist friend, who heard me boasting about it, grabbed me by the arm to correct me. 'PRIDE. Fatima! Not Gay Pride. You make lesbians and everyone else in the community invisible when you say Gay Pride'. […] I learned from her. I replaced Gay Pride with Pride.[26]

[21] Julia Webster Ayuso, 'People Like Her Didn't Exist in French Novels. Until She Wrote One', *New York Times*, 22 Nov 2021. < https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/books/fatima-daas-the-last-one.html> [Accessed 11 October 2022]. (Para 11 of 14).
[22] Fatima Daas, *The Last One*, trans.by Lara Vergnaud (London: Hope Road, 2021), p.7.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Daas, p.82.
[26] Ibid.

This event is symbolic in Fatima's journey towards activism and self-realisation. Replacing 'Gay Pride' with 'Pride' highlights that Fatima's first area of social and political change begins with herself as she advocates for wider social, cultural, and political acceptance and recognition of the LGBTQ community. This is one of the most important aspects of Fatima's story as a Muslim LGBTQ postcolonial flâneuse and activist.

The novel speaks back to the absence of lesbian women in what Claire Chambers, Richard Phillips, Nafhesa Ali, Peter Hopkins, and Raksha Pande have referred to as 'hot topic' debates surrounding Muslim sexuality. [27] However, in the context of this chapter this term will be used in reference to visible Muslim women's identity. During her interview with Ayuso, Daas also mentioned 'hot topics' in relation to her experience with the media as a lesbian Muslim woman: 'The question by the French interviewer was a way to move the conversation away from my work and instead talk about the subject of Islam […] There has been this obsession with Islam and homosexuality, because they are hot topics'.[28] Referring to the French media's fixation with religious and sexual conflict she continued: 'They made me choose between being Muslim and being lesbian, and I don't want to choose [between] one of my identities'.[29] In the novel when Fatima battles her inner conflict, she turns to a religious leader to seek help: 'At the Grand Mosquée, the Imam must hear the same stories multiple times a day. So, I try to rehearse mine while also formulating things as simply as possible'.[30] Still unable to create a union between her spiritual and sexual identities, Fatima identifies with the Muslim women praying in congregation at the mosque: 'I got the idea doing the afternoon

[27] Claire Chambers, Richard Phillips, Nafhesa Ali, Peter Hopkins, and Raksha Pande, '"Sexual misery" or "Happy British Muslims"?: Contemporary Depictions of Muslim Sexuality', *Ethnicities*, 19.1 (2018), pp.66-94 (p.83), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/1468796818757263> [Accessed 5 August 2022].
[28] Ayuso, (para 11 of 14).
[29] Ibid.
[30] Daas, p.168.

prayer, Al-Asr, in the large room on the ground floor, beside the women. Like me. Muslims. Like me'.[31] Yet, she remains conscious of a silent exclusion as a lesbian Muslim woman.

Fatima chooses to draw on her Muslimness to feel more connected to her physical environment, however in her attempts to desperately cling to her Muslim identity she highlights the struggle with her sexuality and the intra-faith exclusions from religious communities and spaces that come as consequences of being a Muslim LGBTQ member. Deniz Kandiyoti (1994) argues:

> Discourse valorising the 'private' as a site of resistance against repressive states, or as the ultimate repository of cultural identity, should not let us overlook the fact that in most instances, the integrity of the so-called 'private' is predicated upon the unfitted operations of patriarchy.[32]

Although Fatima's sexuality does not make her any less Muslim, her lifelong indoctrination to cultural patriarchy forces her to feel that she must supress her sexuality if she wants to be a part of this community. Saskia Warren (2022) recognises the relationship between creative activism and Muslim women's voices, stating that: 'Through creative activism, Muslim women are calling into space the ideal of unity, while disrupting and interrogating Muslim womanhood as a singular concept and mobilising alternative spaces for social formation'.[33] In this sense Daas's novel conveys a form of creative activism to make visible a lesbian female Muslim identity in a Western city. The novel emphasises internal and external problems faced in public and private spheres of the city.

Fatima's positionality as a Muslim LGBTQ postcolonial flâneuse highlights the disruption to normative notions of included/excluded and attached/detached. In her

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Identity and Its Discontents: Women and The Nation', in *Colonial Discourses and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.376-391 (p.388).

[33] Saskia Warren, *British Muslim Women In The Cultural and Creative Industries* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2022), p.238.

conversation with a 'stranger' who she describes as 'wearing a black veil that falls on her shoulders' Fatima indirectly shares her story disguised as that of a 'friend': 'She does her five daily prayers, eats halal, doesn't drink. She's careful not to lie, but she prefers women'.[34] Nervously she adds that her friend 'wears a veil and that she's Moroccan', explaining 'I said that as if to say, it's not me!'.[35] This highlights Fatima's struggle to be her full self in this space. Still extremely conscious of exposing herself prematurely she 'glance[s] over at the two women and even at the sleeping baby' to ensure that their 'conversation is safe'.[36] The stranger responds; '[it's] not a big deal, that it happens, more often than you think' which is reassuring to Fatima until she directly addresses her: 'Except, you mustn't turn haram into halal'.[37] Clinging to the word 'you', Fatima feels exposed and her legs begin to 'shake'.[38] The stranger is fast to correct herself: 'Sorry, your friend, my apologies', but the safe space is compromised for Fatima who is embarrassed and leaves.[39] The stranger's response does not advise Fatima how to be both Muslim and lesbian, but rather that she must reject her sexuality and move on. Although unsuccessful in her attempts to engage with more overt forms of activism in the conventional sense, Fatima's voice highlights an overlooked identity within the umbrella of what it means to be a Muslim woman.

Exploring contemporary depictions of Muslim sexuality in literary works and the presence of Muslim LGBTQ voices, Claire Chambers, Richard Phillips, Nafhesa Ali, Peter Hopkins, and Raksha Pande, claim: 'Homosexuality is discussed on one occasion, amidst an evaluation of sexuality as a: "hot topic" for contemporary global Muslims', however: '[t]he place and role of LGBTQ groups is part of the mix of such discussion'.[40] The confessional

[34] Daas, p.112.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Daas, p.113.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Chambers, Phillips, Ali, Hopkins, Pande, p.83.

moment between Fatima and the stranger in the mosque reflects the struggles of LGBTQ Muslim women in cities as they are invisibly LGBTQ, yet simultaneously excluded. Fatima's voice importantly represents the multiple and complex invisible identities of Muslim women, disregarded by the narrow focus on the veil as recognising their identities and defining their experiences in the city. Fatima's invisibility in both public (the PRIDE protest) and private spaces (the mosque) and her feelings of exclusion based on her inner conflict over religion and sexuality can be compared to that of Huda and Sofia. In Al-Shaykh's novel, Huda uses her invisibility in London to seek refuge within the crowd of protestors and in Malik's novel, Sofia experiences demonstrate social exclusion based on her visibility as a Muslim woman in public spaces. Such policing and sexualisation of Muslim women and the body in contemporary mainstream Western media can be traced back to colonial and orientalist modes of representation.

Orientalist treatment of Muslim women, especially of the 'harem fantasy', disguised a colonial and political motive to depict Muslim and Arab women as needing to be rescued from oppressive Muslim patriarchy.[41] Said (1978) discusses the imperialist theory and practice of dividing the world into two equal halves on the basis of 'ontological and epistemological differences'.[42] He perceives this as leading to the notion of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority and is very particular in his critique of the orientalist projects as a 'web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, [and] dehumanising ideolog[ies]' which has rendered Muslim women with a debased political identity.[43] Said explains this point further during his discussion on the 'cultural representations of women' as he highlights that Muslim women are orientalised for the pleasure of the masculine Western gaze.[44] The orientalist agenda

[41] Ibid.
[42] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.95.
[43] Said, p.25.
[44] Ibid.

to satisfy the West's preconceived imaginary perceptions about the East and the Islamic world were most evident in paintings of Muslim women in the harem.

A feature of this representation was that Eastern women and Muslim women in particular 'spent their time in sexual preparation and in sexual intrigue' as highlighted by M.D.Mahmudul Hasan (2005).[45] Drawing comparisons to paintings like Eugène Delacroix's 'Women of Algiers in their Apartment' (1834) Lopamudea Basu (2022) claims: 'We witness the Western male fantasy of penetrating the harem and seeing the unveiled figures of Muslim women'.[46] Similar paintings such as Theodore Chasseriau's 'Tepidarium' (1853) also display the sexualisation and orientalising of Muslim women through a colonial gaze, further highlighting that the exposure of the hidden female Muslim body is a recurrent and dominant motif in orientalist works. Chasseriau's painting depicts the inside of a harem in which a large group of women are drying themselves after bathing.[47] The women in the painting differ between being completely nude and entertaining themselves with objects from their environment, partially nude, or clothed, sitting on the sides appearing bored. Although the architectural background of the painting was inspired by the artist's trip to Pompeii in 1840, the painting itself speaks to his infatuation with the women of Algeria which he had painted during and after his trip in 1846.

This piece highlights, as described by the Musée D'Orsay: '[t]he belief that the voluptuous customs of the ancient world survived in the Arab world of the 19th century was firmly rooted in the minds of many French travellers'.[48] Both paintings demonstrate how

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[45] M.D. Mahmudul Hasan, 'The Orientalization of Gender', *American Journal of Islamic Sciences*, 22:4 (2005), pp.26-56 (p.31).
[46] Lopamudea Basu, 'Romance and Reception: Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan is Not Obliged* and the Limits of Self-Representation of British Muslim Women', *Women's Studies*, 51.2 (2022), pp.148-161 (p.50), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00497878.2021.2020115> [Accessed 3 August 2022].
[47] Musee d'Orsay, 'Le Tepidarium, "salle où les femmes de Pompéi venaient se reposer et se sécher en sortant du bain', (2022), <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/artworks/le-tepidarium-salle-ou-les-femmes-de-pompei-venaient-se-reposer-et-se-secher-en-sortant-du-bain-1055> [Accessed 19 December 2022].
[48] Ibid.

fanciful depictions of Muslim and Arab women were used to render them objects of pleasure for the masculine Western gaze. These orientalist depictions of the harem maintained the notion that Muslim and Eastern women were nothing more than slaves for the Western man's sexual gratification. Basu reflects that during 'colonial period[s] of Western invasion into Muslim lands, there remained an obsession with the veiled Muslim female body, along with a desire to penetrate the harem; the abode of women, forbidden to outsider males'.[49] The Western fantasy about Eastern women, in particular the Muslim woman, was intensified by such voyeuristic representations.

Returning to Mahmudul Hasan, his reading of Said's argument and its relevance to current reproductions of orientalist ideologies in representations of the female Muslim body, it is useful to reflect further on his observations. He claims:

> Institutional forces on modern Western societies, despite subalternising Western women within metropolitan societies, spread the common impression that just as Western European society is superior to African/Asian society and just as Western men are superior to Eastern men, in the same way Western/White women are superior to Black/Asian women.[50]

Hasan refers to this as: 'the concept of double colonisation'.[51] He argues: 'Already oppressed by local patriarchy [Muslim] women were represented in a demeaning manner by orientalists and thus wore two badges of humiliation; as women and as "Orientals"'.[52] Hasan's observation further highlights the colonial ties between orientalism and Western feminism: 'this orientalist representation of Muslim women added another fold of the feminist constriction to: 'double colonisation' which he refers to as a: 'triple colonisation or a triple orientalisation'.[53] He

[49] Basu, p.50.
[50] Mahmudul Hasan, p.27.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Mahmudul Hasan, p.28.

discusses the Western gaze as categorising Muslim women: 'the orientalists portrayed Muslim women according to a threefold mental image in mind: "Oriental", woman, and Muslim'.[54] This can be compared to the more recent: 'Triple Penalty', discussed by the 'Women's and Equalities Committee' in their 2016-17 report which highlighted that Muslim women in Britain faced triple the amount of discrimination in comparison to their non-Muslim, white, Western, male counterpart on the grounds of their gender, their ethnicity, and their religion.[55]

Mahmudul Hasan's 'triple colonisation' can be recognised in the context of the experiences of British Muslim women in Malik's novel, as Sofia's experience of writing a book on Muslim dating takes a turn when she submits her first draft for feedback only for Brammers to complain about the lack of illicit 'sex' stories.[56] She asks Sofia to include these because the culture of celibacy before marriage, no alcohol, and no parties, that characterises Sofia's life as a British Muslim woman, would be too hard for the average non-Muslim British reader to relate to.[57] This incident highlights the constraints of representation imposed on Muslim women in Western societies. A reading of Sofia as a postcolonial flâneuse suggests that the city provides limited opportunities and spaces for authentic representation of visibly Muslim women like her. Her attempt to break away from the reductive representations of Muslim women in the mainstream media garners no interest from the reading public who expect dominant images of sexual repression of women, religious extremism, and domestic violence. Sofia is portrayed as having little autonomy over what she writes, and her publishers try to structure the narrative of her book under the pretence of minimalising cultural differences for mainstream audiences. Muslim women can only be seen as agents of victimisation, sexualisation, or terror. Like interpretations of Delcroix and Chasseriau, Brammers' interest in illicit 'sex stories' can be read

[54] Ibid.
[55] House of Commons, *Employment Opportunities for Muslims in The UK: Second Report of Session 2016-17* (12 July 2016) [Online] <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/89/89.pdf> [Accessed 10 October 2022].
[56] Malik, p.369.
[57] Ibid.

as the reproduction of an orientalist ideology which purported to liberate female Muslim sexuality from oppressive Islamic and Middle Eastern patriarchies.

The colonial and voyeuristic gaze of Western society portrayed in the novel via Brammers suggests that these ideologies still considerably affect and restrict Muslim women in public spheres. When Sofia declines their proposal, she highlights the limits placed on her career as a writer and as a British Muslim woman, once again excluding her from the mainstream view, undermining her agency in the workplace, and hampering progress in her career.[58] However, Sofia's refusal to conform to her boss's voyeuristic demands can be read as a form of activism and agency, undertaken with personal risk. Saba Mahmood (2004) explains that women's 'agency' is an 'embodied modality of action rather than simply a synonym for resistance to social norms'.[59] Mahmood draws on this theory to challenge the orientation of a Muslim woman's religious self-integration. In Malik's novels, the hijab is described as a form of what Mahmood argues is 'bodily comportment considered germane to the cultivation of the ideal virtuous self'.[60] Mahmood argues that the hijab is a 'bodily practice' of resistance that provides privacy and contests reductive conceptions connected with terrorism, fundamentalism, and extremism.[61] Sofia's hijab in this instance serves as a symbol of her bodily practice of resistance to the publisher's voyeuristic intentions. Thus, Sofia's hijab becomes an embodiment of her agency in the city and her place of work. Malik's novel signifies the religious practice of hijab as the expression of personal will, fundamental to the formation of Muslim female selves in Britain.

In contrast, Huda's choice not to wear the hijab makes her invisible in the Western city. Thus, she integrates easily into the city despite being a Muslim woman. However, Huda is

[58] Malik, pp.396-397.
[59] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.213.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

dismissed and met with suspicion from the Islamic debates at Speaker's Corner because she is not visibly Muslim. A young Muslim man named Hisham argues that she has no right to speak about Islam because of how she is dressed: 'You're not a true Muslim, for here you are head and face uncovered and arms bare'.[62] Similarly to Malik's protagonist Sofia, Huda is defined by other people's narrative of Muslim identity and as a result, she 'feels she must expose' Hashim's cultural patriarchy and hypocrisy during a debate.[63] She shouts out from the crowd: 'Islam does not oblige a Muslim woman to wear long dresses that drag on the ground'.[64] When met with resistance Huda ignores him and continues:

> How I wish we could stop attaching so much importance to the niqab when there are life and death issues like the marriage of underage girls, some of them as young as eight. Girls like dolls, forced to become playthings themselves, and have intercourse with men old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers.[65]

Huda highlights the obsession with female Muslim dress codes in debates on Islam and oppression in the West. In this context, Huda's position in the debate can be read as clarifying cultural and religious misconceptions of Muslim and Arab women. Creating the comparison to the marriage of underage girls, she highlights other issues that also frame negative stereotypes about Arab and Muslim women but seem to be overlooked in debates of liberation and oppression.

Huda's activism as the postcolonial flâneuse draws attention to the problem with patriarchal communities in the West by comparing it to patriarchal communities in the East. Her argument also asserts that the issues which need addressing are not how women should

[62] Al-Shaykh, p.100.
[63] Al-Shaykh, p.101.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Al-Shaykh, p.100.

dress but rather the patriarchal ideologies that are imposed upon them and restrict their social, economic, professional, and academic progress. This implies that that if a narrative does not serve the patriarchal gaze by controlling women's visibility, it isn't discussed. As suggested by Basu in her exploration of the limits placed on self-representation in the works of British Muslim women:

> Women pioneers in the field of Islamic literature […] assert in several books that there is a marked contrast between the function of the veil in early Islam as recorded in the Quran and hadith literature in contrast to its later use in Islamic history.[66]

Huda draws on the history of the veil in both religious and cultural contexts, bringing in cultural interpretations of Sharia law, the Arabisation of female Muslim identity, and the use of the veil in her defence: 'Islam doesn't say that Muslim women have to wear niqab or burqa. This is heresy, otherwise you'd see all women on the pilgrimage to Mecca with their faces covered'.[67] Basu also examines this history in Islamic contexts:

> During the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammad, the veil was never rigidly imposed, and his wives led very public lives, even at times accompanying him to battle. In subsequent eras in Islamic history the veil became imposed rigidly along with the regulation of women to the private domains of the household.[68]

In conversation with an English woman at Speaker's Corner, Huda is fast to defend less visible Muslim women:

> 'I have a neighbour who wears a burka', complains the Englishwoman to Huda. 'I'm sorry to say that I'm scared each time I see her, and I only feel reassured when I hear her voice. Sometimes I think she might be a man! Maybe she's like a terrorist who managed to escape from a London

[66] Basu, pp.148-161 (p.151).
[67] Al-Shaykh, p.98.
[68] Basu, p.50.

> prison […] or the thieves who wear burkas and rob jewellers' shops! Anyway, my question is this: Is there a text in Islamic law that says women have to cover their faces?' Huda answers sharply, 'Islam doesn't say that Muslim women have to wear a niqab or a burka'.[69]

Huda's roots within the Islamic faith connect her to debates on Muslim women.[70] More clearly, the racial profiling of Muslim women as terrorists or criminals is brought out in this text as the English woman is suspicious of her Muslim neighbour and intimidated by the way she dresses. Though Huda is not religious, her intervention signals her agency as postcolonial flâneuse and activist and draws further attention to the issue of representation and understanding multiplicity within the umbrella of female Muslim identities. Furthermore, Huda highlights her innate activism as a Muslim woman that shapes her experiences as postcolonial flâneuse. Lauren Elkin (2016) proposes that 'the barriers and expectations women negotiate in the city have called for more active kinds of transgression than idle walk/wandering'.[71] Drawing on Elkin's view, Sofia and Huda are seen countering the paradoxes and contradictions that surround their religious identities to blend into the city. Although they are free agents, their agency is influenced and shaped by the limitations of their gender, race, religion, and visibility.

Rashida Bibi (2020) argues that being subject to 'a gendered and racialised gaze, a Muslim woman's subjective sense of self is shaped through policing and the regulation of morality and modesty'.[72] Thus, some have identified wearing hijab as a symbolic act, on the part of British Muslim women and other Muslim women in general as resistance to Islamophobia, racial discrimination, and the male gaze.[73] Based on the findings of her

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[69] Al-Shaykh, p.98.
[70] Al-Shaykh, p.97.
[71] Lauren Elkin, 'Reimaging The Aimless Wandering Woman', *The Paris Review,* (2016), <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/08/25/radical-flaneuserie/> [Accessed 29 July 2022].
[72] Rashida Bibi, 'Examining BSA Muslim Women's everyday Experiences of Veiling Through Concepts of "The Veil" and "Double consciousness"', *Identities*, 1.19 (2020), p.1, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1070289X.2020.1845492> [Accessed 5 August 2022].
[73] Ibid.

fieldwork on British South Asian Muslim women, Bibi analyses the 'use of the veil and double consciousness' and 'nuanced experiences of British South Asian Muslim women's everyday lives'.[74] She notes that 'a number of studies in feminist scholarship' have assessed 'the roles of specific clothing practices in shaping experiences of public/private spaces for Muslim women' in the context of identity and visibility.[75] Similarly, Saleem claims that Muslim women 'experience the world through the frame of a connection between the religious and the cultural' and as a result 'their stories engage with alternative modes of living linked with modesty, whilst they are continually being referred to as "hijabi", "terrorist", "scarfie", or "sodding Saudi"'.[76] Commenting on the misrepresentation of cultural patriarchy and norms as religious practices, Saleem highlights an internal conflict and struggle between Muslim women and notions of modesty.

During interviews with British hijab and non-hijab wearing Muslim women, I asked: 'What does it means to be a Muslim woman'? to which I received the following responses. Participant B1, a hijab wearing Muslim woman, said: 'There's a lot of Muslim women everywhere […] I think a lot of people don't pay attention to this because you're expected to be in a certain place and that's where they expect to find you and sometimes, we expect to find ourselves'.[77] Similarly, participant B3 who also wears the hijab said:

> There's this expectation to adhere to modesty. Modest in the way I dress but also in the way that I engage with other people. [There are also] expectations that […] we need to be docile and pretty much have a can-do attitude.[78]

Participant B2, a non-hijab wearing Muslim woman shared:

> I feel if I wore the hijab […] I would be more outcasted in my university […] I am very much proud to say that I am

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Saleem, p.455.
[77] Participant B1, Interview Appendices, p.4.
[78] Participant B3, Interview Appendices, p.16.

> Muslim openly and I have not faced any discrimination […] but I would say it's more to do with the way I look physically […] I think as a Muslim woman, people's reactions to you differ by the way you look, your ethnicity, and [to what extent] you practice Islam. [79]

The voices and experiences of these women highlight a hypervisibility and exclusion of their Muslim identity based on a perceived appropriateness for their religious visibility in public spaces. Muslim women who do not wear the hijab revealed how difficult and different their lives would be in public if they chose to wear it. Their visibility as Muslims disrupts their invisibility as citizens of the city forcing them to detach from the city and creating an inherent relationship with activism. This further reinforces the idea that the presence of the postcolonial flâneuse in the city and her relationship to activism is inherently influenced by her religious identity and visibility.

May Peyron Spangler (2018) reflects on Haussmann's Paris of the nineteenth century, claiming that '[women's] veils undercut the pleasure of the viewer, allowing the wearer to resist absolute surveillance'.[80] However, she clarifies that 'the crucial issue remains: Controlling her exposure to the city, the male gaze, and even her sexuality'.[81] The desire to control women's exposure and sexuality in the city is still evidently present and figured in the pressure Muslim women feel to unveil. In an entry titled 'Thursday 1st September' Sofia reflects on an incident that took place on the underground when she accidentally collides with a white man who calls her a 'terrorist':

> I heard him mumble something, but the doors were beeping and I was too busy pushing through the rush of people to hear. As I stepped into the (non-air-conditioned) crammed carriage, the word finally penetrated my commute-fogged brain. I turned around, mouth open in delayed realisation. Terrorist? Me?[82]

[79] Participant B2, Interview Appendices, p.13.
[80] May Peyron Spangler, *Paris in Architecture, Literature and Art* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), pp.223-263 (p.230).
[81] Ibid.
[82] Malik, p.13.

Sofia is not initially self-conscious in this crowd about her visible appearance as a Muslim woman. Her shock and confusion indicate that this may be the first time she has been racially profiled and abused in public. This incident is a reality check for Sofia; her reaction phases between shock, confusion, isolation, feeling silenced, and anger. She responds:

> I stared at the ground and looked at my shoes; my lovely, teal, snakeskin, peep-toes […] I was like hang on – I don't look like a terrorist […] 'Oi' I shouted. 'Terrorists don't wear vintage shoes, you ignorant wanker!'[83]

Sofia's focus on her shoes provides a diversion from the focus on her headscarf. She implies that her vintage shoes are just as visible as her headscarf but ignored, drawing out the specific and selective focus on her hijab to target and exclude her from the crowd, and make her visible.[84]

This incident is significant in highlighting what could potentially be a daily experience of British Muslim women in public spaces and how Muslim women experience Islamophobia in Western cities. Sofia's choice to wear the hijab in the position of postcolonial flâneuse counters this controlling gaze just as Huda's identity as a Muslim woman who chooses not to wear the hijab is postcolonial in its rejection of the reductive approaches to understanding Muslim women's identities. If Sofia as postcolonial flâneuse is considered an activist, she signals the transformation of her identity into an activist through dress and social engagement. As noted by Saleem:

> By wearing [the] hijab, Sofia attempts to preserve her sense of the religion, which [is] fundamental to the formation of self […] Sofia maintains her act of wearing a headscarf as an act of exercising agency, power, and autonomy, signifying how hijab as the practice of embodying the religion itself is

[83] Malik, p. 14.
[84] Malik, p.13.

a means of resisting and setting limits to domination.[85]

Malik's construction of this postcolonial flâneuse as a British Muslim woman foregrounds activism through Sofia's choice to wear the hijab in defiance of Islamophobia in Britain. Reflecting further on Saleem's idea alongside equality and diversity agendas pushed by the UK government in reports, such as The Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2020/21, the construction of the postcolonial flâneuse's religious identity is reduced to their physical visibility. The report 'precludes other ways of thinking about "equality" and "liberty" that offer a more positive approach for contemplating the wearing of the veil'.[86] Sofia as postcolonial flâneuse and as a visible Muslim woman challenges such ideas and instead highlights how Muslim women resist marginalisation and set limits to such domination. Most recently updated in January 2021, the Govt EDI report cited and critiqued 'the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't'.[87] Although this indicates progressive actions being taken towards creating inclusive spaces within British cities, it fails to address marginalisation and domination alongside protected characteristics. This needs further clarification, particularly in the context of diverse modes of existing and walking within cities.

Considering diverse objectives in engaging with flânerie modes of writing, Catherine Nesci (2021) argues:

> The different modes of walking in the city and various genres of literary and journalistic essays […] became the symbol of the aesthetic aims of writers and artists who wanted to express

[85] Saleem, p.456.
[86] Homes England, *Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2020/21* (27 July 2020) [Online] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964585/Homes_England_Annual_Equality__Diversity_and_Inclusion_Report_2020_21.pdf [Accessed 12 October 2022], p.10.
[87] Ibid.

not only the beauty but also the drama and trauma of modern life.[88]

In reference to Nesci's argument regarding the expression of the drama and trauma of modern life, Sofia's experience on the underground and her journey to wearing the hijab in solidarity with Muslim women post 9/11 can be read as engaging with flânerie modes of writing. In doing so, she can express the drama and trauma of navigating Muslim visibility in the West. During the incident on the tube, Sofia reflects: 'I should just wear a niqab if I'm going to get called a terrorist. At least I wouldn't have to worry about wearing lipstick'.[89] Malik's novel may be interpreted as responding to post-9/11 Islamophobia and the widespread negative stereotypes of Muslim identity in Western mainstream media. Sofia challenges misrepresentations of Muslim women in Britain against dominant images of religious extremism and the need to liberate oppressed Muslim women. The covert nature of the hostility faced by Sofia on the underground highlights how her visibility predisposes the other passengers on the tube to view her as a 'closet jihadist/extremist'.[90] The incident is also valuable in conveying how public spaces within the city can be dangerous for visible Muslim women. It follows that because of her visible Muslim identity, Sofia is subject to the dominant gaze rather than veiled from it.

Socially embedded stereotypes about Muslim women are bound up with their visibility and their presence in public spaces. This shapes Sofia's experience of navigating London. Though her self-awareness is heightened, she is not demotivated from maintaining the practice of hijab. Instead, it encourages her to engage with hijab as an act of resistance to Islamophobia. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (2007) reflects on the impacts of the 9/11 bombings and the notion of perceived Muslim identity in the context of visible Muslim women. She highlights that 'some Muslim women who had been wearing hijab prior to 9/11 removed it as a precaution, as

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[88] Catherine Nesci, 'The Flâneuse Escapes: Gender, Memory, and The Urban Miniature – George Sand, Colette, Assia Djebar', *Gender and Culture in Asia*, 5.20 (2021), pp.3-20 (p.6), <https://opac2.lib.nara-wu.ac.jp/webopac/aa12781506vol5pp3-20_nw._?key=BSEPGL> [Accessed 2 August 2022].
[89] Malik, p.16.
[90] Ibid.

many were counselled to do so, in order to avoid harassment or worse'.[91] Sofia's persistence in wearing the hijab 'two weeks' after the 9/11 bombings, during a time when many Muslim women were removing their headscarves in fear of rising levels of Islamophobia, consolidates her activism as a postcolonial flâneuse.[92] In an entry from 'Sunday 11 September' Sofia mentions it has been 'ten years since 9/11', she remembers, 'this is how we were – glued in front of the TV, anxious, depressed. A shift had taken place, and for a while we'd been displaced'.[93] Sofia explains: 'Two weeks later, I wore the hijab. Good deeds are kind of limited to giving up my seat on the tube'.[94] This resonates with Haddad's findings that '[Muslim] women chose to wear the hijab to witness that they are proud Muslims and are not afraid to say so'.[95]

Exploring examples of oppressive features of cities in the lives of British Muslim women, I asked participants how they experience walking, and they shared their experiences and feelings regarding safety and exclusion in public spaces and on public transport in Britain. Participant B3, who wears the hijab, noted:

> I [would] carry this backpack. I used to have all the resources and handbooks for the kids […] It was massive and I just remember being on the tube and I noticed that when [people on the tube would] see someone else with the same backpack [who] fit their idea of what a British person looks like they looked like they felt safer. [96]

When I asked participant B3 if she felt racially profiled for having a big backpack and wearing a hijab she answered: 'Yes'.[97] The similarity between participant B3's experience and the incident from Malik's novel, both visibly Muslim women on the London underground,

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[91] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, 'The Post-9/11 Hijab As Icon', *Sociology of Religion*, 6:3 (2007), pp.253-267 (p.259).
[92] Ibid.
[93] Malik, p.47.
[94] Malik, p.48.
[95] Haddad, p.255.
[96] Participant B3, Interview Appendices, p.17.
[97] Ibid.

highlights that the racial profiling of visibly Muslim women in literary works reflects reality. In her 2007 essay, Mona Bur argues that 'the streetscape, in some respect could be traversed by the female stroller as a form of emancipation. Yet it also has oppressive features'.[98] The book conveys how visibly Muslim women experience public transport in London and subsequently how this excludes and restricts their presence and movement from crowds and large cities. Furthermore, the context of Bur's analysis of Muslim women's use of public spaces as demonstrated through dress and dialogue can be considered to highlight how the visibly Muslim female stroller's experience is restricted and potentially threatening to her safety.

Similarly, Participant B2, who did not wear the hijab stated that she still felt hyper vigilant when walking and using public transport:

> I feel more wary of my surroundings, I try to avoid representing myself as Muslim because of fear of reaction [from the] public [as] I have heard of stories of my friends who have been openly discriminated against because of their hijab and harassed without one of them doing anything at all. They've just been walking and sitting and they've just been approached and been harassed [because of] their appearance and I have been quite intimidated by that. [99]

This response highlights the ripple effect on the wider community of British Muslim women, who feel the need to conceal their religious identity to protect themselves and integrate into cities and crowds. This has also been evidenced in Haddad's findings of Muslim women who removed their hijabs post-9/11 as a precaution against such harassment. Returning to Bur's ideas in the context of female Muslim visibility and oppressive features of the city, the

[98] Mona Bur, 'Contesting The Gendered Flâneuse of The Arab Metropolis: Literary Representations of Gender, The Body and Urban Space in Selected Urban Writing of Salwa Bakr, Leila Aboulela, and Hana Al-Shaykh', (Unpublished MA Thesis, The American University of Cairo, 2007) *ProQuest Thesis and Dissertations Global* < https://fount.aucegypt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3389&context=retro_etds> [Accessed 7 October 2022], p.17.

[99] Participant B2, Interview Appendices, p.14.

postcolonial flâneuse carries a message of unity for marginalised women's metropolitan experience.

Kinga Araya (2009) asserts: 'It is by the means of walking, the most humble experiences, that the city stroller becomes aware of the fragility of modern existence'.[100] This statement can be discussed in relation to Sofia, participant B2, and participant B3, as Araya essentially draws attention to the fragility of the identities that exist in modern cities. Yet the word 'fragility' implies a vulnerability that surrounds marginalised groups and communities, be that gendered or based on religious protected characteristics, or any other form. In her moment of shock and isolation, Sofia's visibility as a Muslim woman is used to exclude her from everyone else in the carriage. She becomes aware of her physical appearance and vigilant of her vulnerability. Her experience cannot be related to by anyone else around her and she does not recognise anyone like her in the same space. As Araya reflects: 'Those unpresentable, unspeakable, and yet unique "local" experiences are very valuable, and they show us that there is much more to the image of the dominant and happy "global narrative"'.[101] Similar to Sofia's experience as the postcolonial flâneuse the experiences of participant B2 and B3 further highlight that the issue of silencing Muslim women's voices and excluding their identities from the city is relevant on a global scale. This also suggests that they are equally as important and harmful to invisible female Muslim identities.

In Daas's novel, narrator Fatima embodies this form of silence. As a postcolonial flâneuse, Fatima blends into the crowd and observes everyone around her without attracting any attention. She intrudes on people's conversations and her gaze is both one of an insider and an outsider to these crowds. Fatima reflects on her navigation through Paris:

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[100] Kinga Araya, 'Walking The All: Global Flaneuse With Local Dilemmas', *Wagadu*, 7.1 (2009), pp.55-74 (p.59) < https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.996.5423&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 2 August 2022].
[101] Ibid.

> Sometimes I manage to scribble a few pages in my journal. When I'm sitting on the metro, I write about others, the people getting on, getting off, slipping through the doors before they close, the sad faces that I want to take with me.[102]

Although she identifies herself as a 'tourist', she is French Algerian and has always lived in suburban Paris.[103] By referring to herself as a tourist she implies that she does not belong and is different from the crowd, yet she is able to blend into the crowd without any of the confrontation or suspicion that was aroused by Sofia and Huda in the texts discussed above. Like many Parisians, she navigates through the cityscape using different modes of transport in her daily life including the metro and the bus. Fatima's journey highlights her active gaze and postcolonial consciousness as the postcolonial flâneuse. Figured in this way, she observes her surroundings, the crowd, and the city. During a bus journey she notes overheard conversations:

> Excuse me, I'd like to get off. Shit! I can't find my ticket. That child is unbearable. He won't let up. I'm getting off at the next stop. Hey girl, looking good. Can you open the window, please? I'm getting crushed here. Just forget it, I'm hanging up, you're starting to piss me off. We're almost at the Gare du Nord, relax, everyone's gonna get off. Why is he staring at me like that? Pervert! Mum, how many stations left? I feel like I'm suffocating.[104]

In her repetition of other voices, Fatima's own voice is lost, and she can be read as almost invisible, to the point where during this journey another passenger doesn't even look at her when she gives up her seat for them: 'A man in profile, with a Yamaha cap, grumbles. Someone stole his seat. I give him mine. He says thank you without a glance'.[105] This use of dialogue in the novel renders the voices of several people indistinct.

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[102] Daas, pp.62-63.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Daas, pp.41-42.
[105] Ibid.

During a focus group with Parisian Muslim women, several participants who do not wear a hijab, noted that they have not experienced Islamophobia or racism as Muslim women on public transport or the inner-city of Paris. However, they pointed to their invisibility as protecting them from becoming victims of Islamophobic and racist attacks. Participant F1 claimed: 'Personally, I [feel like] it's okay to be a Muslim woman in France because I'm not hijabi […] but I think France [has a] problem with [veiling because] in the [news] they always talk about Muslims [negatively].[106] To which Participant F2 added: '[We're okay now] because we don't wear hijab but in the future if we wanted to wear the hijab [it would restrict] us [from] working [and] studying'.[107] Participant FI later added: 'Personally, as a woman who [does not wear] a hijab, [a woman who does not wear hijab] is more accepted by society, she has more access to opportunities'.[108] These responses convey how French Muslim women feel that they are restricted from social, academic, and professional spaces in society if they choose to veil and be visible as Muslim women in France. In 2004 France 'banned the wearing of hijabs and other religious symbols in state schools'.[109] In response, Tejinder Singh, Hansdeep Singh, Jaspreet Singh, and Ranjit Singh (2014) studied the impact of France's ban on religious attire in public schools. In their report they found that this consequently influenced the 'social exclusion, formal equality, denial or suppression of identity, protection, and cultural norms'.[110] Like Fatima, the participants of the focus group highlighted how the lack of religious visibility of Muslim women helps them safely integrate into the French crowds and cities without being harassed. This also indicates how afraid non-visible Muslim women are about publicly sharing their religious views and identities.

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[106] Participant F1, Interview Appendices, p.23.
[107] Participant F2, Interview Appendices, p.23.
[108] Participant F1, Interview Appendices, p.27.
[109] Tejinder Singh, Hansdeep Singh, Jaspreet Singh, Ranjot Singh, 'When Discrimination Masquerades as Equality: The Impact of France's Ban of Religious Attire in Public School's' (July 2014) [Online]<https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/FRA/INT_CCPR_ICO_FRA_17451_E.pdf>[Accessed 9th October 2022].
[110] Ibid.

Mahmood's idea of 'agency' and 'reality' and Bibi's criticism of the gendered and racialized gaze, offer useful ways to further examine the inclusion and exclusion of the postcolonial flâneuse. Moreover, these provide additional avenues to consider the ideologies used to compare both public and private experiences of Muslim women in cities, as evidenced via a critical reading of Huda, Sofia, and Fatima's experiences above. This conflict between ideologies and realities of Muslim women as subjects of the Western masculine gaze is important in highlighting why literary representations of Muslim women are crucial to the visibility, inclusion, and restriction of the postcolonial flâneuse. The importance of highlighting what Bibi refers to as 'visible and hidden identities' within literary forms enhances the visibility of these issues.[111] The protagonists in the texts discussed aspire to greater equality without abandoning their religious identities. Their practice reaffirms the belief that Muslim women should not have to compromise their values and beliefs to integrate into the city or crowd. By comparing Islamophobic ideologies against Islamophobia as a reality in the daily lives of Western Muslim women this postcolonial reading of Malik, Al-Shaykh, and Daas has highlights how their works demonstrate political engagement within flânerie modes or writing. Analysing the literary representations of Muslim women alongside a comparison of real-life experiences of British and French Muslim women, extends the analysis of how patriarchal systems and Islamophobic ideologies manipulate depictions of female Muslim identity. These systems and ideologies function by reframing their oriental colonial forerunners that affect the lives and experiences of Muslim women.

As Basu claims: '[s]cholarship on Muslim women's fiction as well as ethnographic studies have generally categorized Muslim authors into secular and religious groups'.[112] However Malik, Al-Shaykh, and Daas can be viewed as exploring lives and struggles of

[111] Bibi, p.1.
[112] Basu, p.151.

Muslim women resisting easy classification into secular or religious categories. Instead, these characters are representing a demographic of women that Basu notes 'embody a spectrum of affiliation from religious extremism to a nominal cultural identification with Islam'.[113] Although each postcolonial flâneuse observes their surroundings with their individual gaze and subjectivities they share the common consciousness of their gender and Muslim identity. Each character conveys perspectives of visible and non-visible Muslim women in Western cities to confront social, political, and cultural issues related to marginalised women's metropolitan experiences. Finally, recognising the postcolonial flâneuse as activist in literary works highlights an inherent and unavoidable relationship between Muslim women, visibility, activism, and the city. Such literary representations of Muslim women's experiences encourage understanding of the multiplicity of identities that belong to Muslim women who fight for inclusive spaces and defy patriarchal and colonial ideologies. Disrupting the conflict between ideologies and realities of Muslim women as subjects of the Western masculine gaze, literary representations play a crucial role in highlighting the visibility, inclusion, and restriction of their marginalised identities.

[113] Ibid.

Chapter Two: The British Muslim Flâneuse As Dervish: The Inner-Sufi

This chapter addresses the act of flâneuserie as a spiritual practice to determine the point at which the casual act of strolling in the city can also become a pilgrimage. Reconsidering mainstream notions of the pilgrimage, I acknowledge Islamic definitions to emphasise the importance of recognising alternative knowledges and practices and their significance to the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse. A textual analysis of Suma Din's *Turning The Tide: Reawakening The Woman's Heart and Soul* (2015) and Muneera Pilgrim's *That Day She'll Proclaim Her Chronicles* (2021) indicates that the act of walking and flânerie can be re-imagined as a pilgrimage in the urban city. Acknowledging the spiritual aspect of the postcolonial flâneuse's experience I suggest that she possesses an inner-Sufi by comparing her to the figure to the dervish. Defining the dervish, Mim Kemal Öke (2017) claims: 'A dervish is a person in the Sufi tradition who sets out on a metaphysical journey to reach a higher spiritual level'.[1] He continues; 'a person who embarks on such a journey is traditionally addressed as "salik", an Arabic word for wayfarer. The salik is a disciple, an initiate to a dervish – or Sufi order'.[2] Referring to the spiritual journey of the dervish, he explains:

> The spiritual journey they undertake is referred to as the seyr-u-suluk 'the wayfarers' voyage […] To reach a state of certainty means to feel and perceive Him and His Oneness, to possess intimate knowledge of the Beloved. [3]

The dervish is described as an embodiment of the Sufi's spiritual quest in the material world. In simpler contemporary terms he describes the dervish as 'a romantic, an idealist'.[4] The

[1] Mim Kemâl Öke, *Jalaluddin Rumi and Sufism: A Dervish's Logbook* (Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2017), p. 9.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

dervish seeks spiritual enlightenment from their material surroundings which provides a means of understanding the union of the physical and the spiritual in Sufi practice.

Explained as a romantic and an idealist, the dervish, similarly to Baudelaire's flâneur, is a lost wanderer and observer but seeks the spiritual realm. Given Sufism's distinct roots within Islam, which is particular to considering Muslim women as the postcolonial flâneuse, I address the very specific gaze of the British Muslim flâneuse and her experience of walking in the city as a pilgrimage to argue that the postcolonial flâneuse and pilgrimage are not separately motivated. Discussing pilgrimage in the context of Islamic and Sufi doctrine, this chapter argues that the spiritual gaze is part of the British Muslim flâneuse's way of engaging and existing with the crowd and city. This contributes to an exploration of the similarities between the experiences of British Muslim women walking in the city and practicing Islam in secular spaces. Sophia Rose Arjana (2017) argues that Sufism is 'used in Western academia to refer to the wide set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices describing Muslim devotional and contemplative traditions'.[5] She emphasises that 'some two thousand definitions of "Sufi" exist in Islamic works alone'.[6] Arjana argues that 'it is really more of a set of attitudes and practices'.[7] She claims that 'Sufism pervades Muslim life. The best strategy for dealing with these realities is to remember that Sufism is not a category for Muslims; rather, it is a way for scholars to think about a wide field of tradition and experiences'.[8] Paying close attention to the eleven principles of Naqshbandiyah Khalidiyah Sufi order referenced by Nasurdin (2021), Arley Loewen (2003), and Shivan Mahendrar Ajah (2021), she highlight, in particular: 'Khalwat Dar Anjuman' which translates to 'solitude in the crowd', this chapter draws on similar practices of dervish, flâneur, flâneuse, and postcolonial flâneuse.

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[5] Sophia Rose Arjana, *Pilgrimage In Islam: Traditional and Modern Practices* (London: One World Publications, 2017), p.103.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Arjana, p.107.

I begin by briefly introducing some key concepts of Sufism and Islamic mysticism alongside the French poet and philosopher Charles Baudelaire's flâneur (1860) to create connections between the casual act of strolling and the spiritual experience. Extending this analysis to Lauren Elkin's flâneuse (2017) in comparison to the British Muslim flâneuse creates space to begin redefining the concept and examining where female Muslim visibility and spiritual practice 'might fit into the cityscape'.[9] Recognising the British Muslim flâneuse in the works of Din and Pilgrim allows room to discuss how they employ spirituality to dismantle colonial ideologies and stereotypes regarding the relationship between Islam, Muslim women, and Western cities. Interviews with British Muslim women included in this chapter were conducted in person and via Microsoft Teams between May 2022 and April 2023 and have been anonymised. These interviews provide insight into their expressed ideas about spirituality, Sufism, and the city.

Defined by Arjana, 'pilgrimage in Islam goes far beyond Mecca'.[10] She argues that 'many Islamic pilgrimages occur at local levels' and defines pilgrimage as 'an active, ongoing practice'.[11] Reflecting on studies of pilgrimage, Arjana notes that 'scholarship on Islamic pilgrimage is mostly focused on Hajj and Umrah (the lesser Hajj). Claiming that 'scholars often adopt a myopic focus', she asserts that 'limiting Islamic pilgrimage to the Hajj points to some of the problems in the study of religion and in particular the scholarship regarding Islam'.[12] Continuing this argument, Arjana contends that 'discussions of Islam and sacred space often point to the ways in which people living in the West define space differently than Muslims do, arguing that secularism is a value held solely by those who do not hold Islam as their guiding principle'.[13] However, as she highlights 'for many Muslims,

[9] Lauren Elkin, *Flaneuse Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (London: Vintage, 2016), p.11.
[10] Arjana, p.xviii.
[11] Arjana, p.150.
[12] Arjana, p.xxi.
[13] Arjana, p.1.

there is no division between the world of Allah ("sacred space") and secular space'.[14] She notes that 'in Islam everything is God's domain'.[15] Omar Safi (2017) defines the purpose of undergoing a pilgrimage as a 'journey to find out what has been with us all along'.[16] In his foreword to Arjana's 2017 text, he affirms that 'ultimately, pilgrimage is not to a place, but to a different state of being'.[17] Both definitions acknowledge the physical, mental, and spiritual significance of ongoing spiritual practices in everyday engagement with public spaces and challenge the idea of pilgrimages as having a beginning and end.

In the context of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge Sufi approaches to pilgrimage. In a later article for the British Library (2019) Arjana discussed the pilgrimage in the context of Sufism. Moving away from traditional notions of the term, she states that 'Muslims around the world have their own pilgrimage traditions that exist outside of Hajj and Umrah. In some cases, these are particular to a small community [and] in other cases, pilgrimage is a transnational affair'.[18] Some examples include the tombs of 'Imam Ali, Sayyida Ruqayya, and others', 'Karbala' in Iraq, and the tomb of Jalal- Ud Din Rumi.[19] In the context of Sufi practices and spiritual pilgrimages, Neda Saghaee and Richard Van Leeuwen (2023) also highlight that Hajj is considered a 'metaphorical journey from diversity (kathra) towards unity (wahda). This reflects the trajectory of the Sufi disciple towards inner purification'.[20] The importance of 'the mystical duty' is 'to perceive the inner dimension of the pilgrimage as a means to gain nearness to God or the Divine Beloved'.[21] Identifying the

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[14] Arjana, p.36.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Omar Safi, 'Foreword', in Sophia Rose Arjana, *Pilgrimage in Islam: Traditional and Modern Practices* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2017), p.ix.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Sophia Arjana, 'Islamic Pilgrimages and Sacred Spaces', *British Library Online,* (2019) <https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/islamic-pilgrimages-and-sacred-spaces> [Accessed 20 July 2023].
[19] Arjana (2017), pp.8-10.
[20] Neda Saghaee and Richard Van Leeuwen, 'Sufism and The Hajj: Symbolic meanings and transregional networks, two examples from 16th and 18th centuries', in *Narrating The Pilgrimage to Mecca Historical and Contemporary Accounts*, ed.by Marjo Buitelaar and Richard Van Leeuwen (London: Brill, 2023), pp.91-112.
[21]Ibid.

spiritual quest, Saghaee and Leeuwen reflect the importance of the metaphysical pilgrimage that is less performative and more interested in the persistence of a spiritual state.

Arjana (2017) further notes that 'Sufi's have little concern for sectarianism when it comes to pilgrimage'.[22] She notes that 'Sufi writing often argues that Muslim's should develop a heightened attention to the world, seeing signs (Ayat) in nature, and reflections of the Divine in the world that surrounds each of us'.[23] In this context, the process of the pilgrimage would include a repetition or combination of prayers. Alī b. Al-Hujwīrī and Uthmān al-Jullābī (2001) express that 'the true object of pilgrimage is not to visit the kabah but to obtain contemplation of God'.[24] Alluding to a non-physical goal removes the concept of beginning and end from the pilgrimage since obtaining any closeness to God requires consistent and continual effort from within. Similarly, Saghaee and Leeuwen reflect that 'religious pretence as a worldly trend is rejected in the concept of the Hajj because Sufi thought rejects worldly concerns and is more rooted in the ascetic tendency of early Sufis'.[25] They claim that 'the Hajj is conceived as an allegory for an ascending esoteric journey (safar) towards the Divine Beloved that allows for the development of the soul in order to obtain submission to God and "annihilation" of the self'.[26] Thus, practicing the act of gratitude and remembrance of God through a projection of the inward gaze on the city allows the British Muslim flâneuse to engage with a spiritual aim of reaching oneness with the Divine, whilst being present in the physical cityscape. Thus, she is united with God through the act of strolling in the city.

Current literature on Spiritualism and Sufism in British Muslim women's writing including work by Kathrine Emily Brown (2006), Kristin Aune, Sonya Sharma, and Giselle

[22] Arjana, p.107.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Al-Hujwīrī ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Jullābī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. by Reynold Nicholson (Lahore: Zia ul-Quran, 2001), p.429.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Saghaee and Leeuwen, p.93.

Vincett (2008), Fazila Bhimji (2009), Kristine Aune (2010), and Arina Cirstea (2015) does not address the connection to walking and the city as spiritually reconciliating; they focus instead on religious identity politics and visibility. More recently Anita Sethi (2021) has defined pilgrimage as a 'quest for meaning or sight into the self, others, nature, or to pay homage', claiming that 'a pilgrimage does not have to have a religious purpose'.[27] Drawing on Nasrudin (2021), Arley Loewen (2003), and Shivan Mahendrar Ajah (2021) to discuss the eleven principles of Sufism in relation to navigating space within spiritual contexts, I explore the use of Islamic symbolism and metaphors of the spiritual journey in Pilgrim and Din's work. These include images of light and the ocean to determine how both writers use imagery to engage with the British Muslim flâneuse's spiritual experience of the city and crowd. This chapter also engages with current theoretical material on Islamic Mysticism including Martin Lings (2010), Farid-Ud-Din Attar and David Dicks (2011), Mim Kemal Öke (2017), and Amir Al Ansari (2019). Such material helps to identify and develop further connections between British Muslim women writers and their use of literary forms such as poetry and poetic prose to demonstrate flâneuserie practice in relation to religious identity, visibility, spirituality, and gendered Islamophobia. Alongside the scholarship mentioned above, this chapter addresses published work on Muslim women's writing including Jasmin Zine (2006), Bernadett Andrea (2007), Saskia Warren (2014), and Saskia Warren and Wisra Shahraz (2022) that overlooks spirituality in the context of the internal journey and contemporary Western relationships between women, spirituality, and the city. This is also the case for published material on the postcolonial flâneur including Abdebayo William (1997), Dalia Said Mostafa (2009), Simon Gikandi (2010), Liesbeth Minnard (2013), Alexander Greer Harwiger (2016), and Jennifer Wawrzinek (2018) that does not address spiritualism or the connection between walking in the urban city and spirituality.

[27] Anita Sethi, *I Belong Here A Journey Along The Backbone of Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p.57.

Discussing the modern flâneur, Aimee Boutin (2017) claims that 'there is a revival of interest in flânerie today'.[28] She states that 'there continues to be a need to think of the twenty-first century flâneur in terms of race, gender, and class'.[29] Yet this revival pays little attention to religious and spiritual factors of flâneur and flâneuse. The resurgence of flânerie with the acknowledgement of gender, class, race, and religion allows us to extend the gaze of the British Muslim flâneuse beyond the boundaries of twenty-first century city culture. In so doing, the British Muslim flâneuse pursues a conscious search for a higher self. This requires a detachment from the materiality of the cityscape and reflection of the inner-Sufi's gaze to navigate her external environment as a pilgrimage. In his introduction to Farid Ud-Din Attar's *The Conference of Birds*, Dick Davis (1984) claims: 'It is through this perpetual stripping of the individual's existence that they return to the pre-existence' or 'the essence'.[30] This can be compared to the notion of isolation and belonging of Baudelaire's flâneur as described by German philosopher Walter Benjamin in his acclaimed work *The Arcades Project* (1982) as a 'dreaming idler'.[31] Feminist scholars such as Janet Wolff (1985) have questioned this description's applicability to female figures. Wolff argues that this 'conception of public space as unequivocally male' leaves women 'absent' or as 'objects' of the masculine gaze.[32] The social barriers mediated by the British Muslim flâneuse's visibility or invisibility means that she cannot become part of the crowd by denouncing her individual self, but in seeking refuge and acceptance from the crowd, pursues a spiritual quest and pilgrimage.

The spiritual growth of the British Muslim flâneuse contributes to a new definition of postcolonial flâneuserie, individually and collectively. Arina Cirstea (2015) argues: 'What

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[28] Aimee Boutine, 'The Figure of The Flâneur Today', *Sociétés*, 1.135 (2017), pp.87-91 (p.88).
[29] Ibid.
[30]Farid Ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of Birds*, trans. by Dick Davis (London: Penguin, 1984), p.xx.
[31] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughin, ed. by Rolf Tiedman (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.419.
[32] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2.3 (1985), pp.37–46 (p.38), <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327648500200300 5> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

could be regarded as a counter-reaction to second-wave materialism is a concern with the potential of urban space to trigger individuals' awareness of a spiritual level of existence'.[33] This, she claims 'concerns both gender and spirituality' and is 'central to the representations of urban experience by women writers.[34] Focusing on the spiritual journey, the British Muslim flâneuse searches for a physical and spiritual connection with the city. Öke highlights that 'Sufism embodies a wisdom that is not readily apparent, as everything has both an interior (batin) and exterior (zahir) dimension'.[35] He sub-divides the traveller into categories: 'We have the shameless traveller, the incomplete traveller, [and] the authentic traveller'.[36] Öke's subdivision indicates an ongoing spiritual journey of this life and an afterlife. The journey through life in this world is undertaken from physical, mental, and spiritual perspectives, each characterising a type of traveller based on their purpose and aim for this life. The shameless traveller plans only for satisfaction in this life, the incomplete traveller believes he will only reach closeness to God in the afterlife, and the authentic traveller does not concern himself with the importance of either life or world as his only purpose and aim is oneness with God. The authentic traveller is conscious of God in both lives and worlds. This is valuable to a reading of the interior and exterior dimension of the British Muslim flâneuse's gaze and experiences.

In finding a balance between interior and exterior the British Muslim flâneuse can be compared to the authentic traveller. Suma Din's poem 'Motherhood Rain' highlights the multiple roles and characters that define the narrator's presence and experiences in the city. Suma Din is a female British Bengali Muslim writer known for work on British Muslim women and children's fiction. During an interview she explained that *Turning The Tide* is

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[33] Arina Cirstea, *Mapping British Women Writers Urban Imaginaries: Space, Self, and Spirituality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.3.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Öke, p.18.
[36] Ibid.

structured 'chronologically […] around the stages of [a Muslim woman's] life'.[37] This collection is a compilation of poetic prose, poetry, short essays, and *Ayas.* Explaining this term 'Aya' during our interview, Din said: '[An Aya is] a unit that stands alone in the *Quran*, it's commonly translated as verses'.[38] The use of 'Ayas' in the book contributes to the spiritual theme and is intended to encourage a spiritual reflection on Quranic teachings and engagement with the Islamic principles of Sufism. Drawing on the adaptation of Quranic teachings to everyday life, Sufism can be read as re-connecting Muslim women to the Western city. Martin Lings (2002) states that 'Sufism is in fact something of a bridge between East and West'.[39] Attention to the spiritual gaze of the British Muslim flâneuse reveals how writers navigate secular environments using Islamic spirituality. The gaze of the inner - Sufi perceives the city anew, as a place of pilgrimage for the British Muslim flâneuse.

This idea is important since it invites a reconsideration of the physical act of walking in the context of both the flâneur and the British Muslim flâneuse to the Sufi path and reveals the metaphysical path in contrast with the physical act of walking. Both the dervish on their path of knowledge and the British Muslim flâneuse during her strolls in the city undertake a process of learning through experience when walking in the city since for both, it is a spiritual experience. Davis explains Attar's [Sufi] stages of the soul as: 'A process that begins with a conscious quest or "talab" which basically demands a conscious search for a higher self'.[40] Explaining this further, he continues: 'The [individual] involvement is so that they completely submit themselves to the quest and detach themselves from the outward environment'.[41] This idea of detachment, Davis argues, 'Symbolically appears in different

[37] Suma Din, Interview Appendices, p.85.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Martin Lings, *What is Sufism* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2002), p.112.
[40] Davis, p.xiii
[41] Ibid.

manifestations like waiting, solitude, self-improvement, or self-burial'.[42] Explaining this process he concludes:

> After undertaking several painstaking efforts like heedless melancholic persistence known as 'eshgh', self-protection or 'moraghebeh' […] the characters ultimately reach the final stage of self-annihilation or 'fanā' that simultaneously implies the rebirth or baghā of human essence.[43]

The British Muslim flâneuse reveals subversive flânerie potential because of her spirituality. Whereas the flâneur's act of walking in the city takes place amidst a rapidly evolving urban modernity, the act of walking for the British Muslim flâneuse involves a spiritual dimension.

In relation to Davis's Sufi stages of the soul, the British Muslim flâneuse's journey through these stages can be viewed as dependent on physical mobility and simultaneously, on the metaphysical path. In combining these factors, she can transition from 'eshgh' to 'moraghebeh' in her spiritual quest for 'fanā'.[44] The poetic speaker of Din's poem 'Motherhood Rain' begins stanza one by referring to herself as existing 'between the cracks'.[45] This can be interpreted as the narrator's invisible-self hidden behind the many labels imposed on her by social and cultural patriarchies. It also identifies her vulnerability as a Muslim woman in such contexts. Furthermore, it situates her physically among the paving stones of a pedestrian walking space. The narrator implies an unstable relationship between the accepted versions of herself (exterior) and a more authentic self (interior). Discussing the exterior and interior self, David C. Smith (1991) reflects on the tenets of Transcendentalism which include:

> [Firstly] that a person's inner resources are sufficient to meet any challenge, [secondly] that following the intuition

[42] Ibid.
[43] Davis, p.6.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Suma Din, *Turning the Tide Reawakening the Woman's Heart and Soul* (Leicester: Kube, 2021), pp.158-159 (p.158).

> of one's own genius leads to unexpected success, [thirdly, the individual] challenge[s] the view that humankind [is] defeated by impersonal external forces.[46]

Drawing on these tenets of Transcendentalism in discussion of the spiritual journey of the British Muslim flâneuse, the interior and exterior connect the act of walking passively and the act of walking as a spiritual practice.

Smith explains that Transcendentalism emphasises 'internalization' and 'seeking the truth within'.[47] Transcendentalists argue that 'divinity dwell[s] within the self' and is 'sought [in] the world of the mind as the source of ultimate spiritual truth'.[48] Smith reflects on Henry David Thoreau's 1980 essay 'Reform and Reformers' in which Thoreau establishes the 'importance of the inward quest':

> Inward is a direction which no traveller has taken. Inward is the bourne which all travellers seek and from which none desire to return […] Most whom I meet in the streets are, so to speak, outward bound, they live out and out […] I would fain see them inward bound. [49]

Smith argues that Thoreau 'developed the art of walking into a highly outward spiritual discipline [as] what he really sought in his walks were transcendental insights'.[50] There is already, here, an association between walking and spirituality that has not been associated with flânerie as it should be. This chapter's exploration of the British Muslim flâneuse reveals this facet to develop the definition of flânerie. Thoreau uncovers through his discovery of transcendental mysteries in the realities of everyday existence, primarily through sauntering,

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[46] David C. Smith, 'Walking as A Spiritual Discipline: Henry Thoreau and The Inward Journey', *Sounding: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* 74.1 (1991), pp.129-140 (p.34), < https://www.jstor.org/stable/26607956> [Accessed 4 September 2022].
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Henry David Thoreau, Wendell Glick, *Reform Papers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p.164.
[50] Smith, p.131.

a form of walking which led to self-discovery and spiritual renewal'.[51] Inward directiveness as Thoreau explains, mirrors a spiritual consciousness of the physical environment which is reflected in the observations of the British Muslim flâneuse in the city.

Similarly, Sethi notes: 'We all carry inner-mappings of memory, places that trace their contours within […] a journey is not just linear but takes us inward'.[52] These ideas could be applied to the British Muslim flâneuse in comparison to Smith's sense of seeking truth within. The repetition of 'I fall between the cracks' in stanza one, three, and four symbolises a separation between the spiritual and the social quest.[53] The image of rain is also repeated throughout the poem as the narrator uses the metaphor of rain to build intensity. The poem begins with 'raindrops' in stanza one which develop to 'a light shower' and then 'torrential rain'.[54] 'Light shower' and 'torrential rain' are used to set the pace of the poem and personify the development of the inner-Sufi's quest. Rain becomes an important metaphor for spirituality as it symbolises her spiritual practice and the enlightenment that she gains from it. As her spiritual practice develops the pace of the rain becomes faster. The poem ends: 'By Sunday I had gathered./ Collected in a pool of freshwater glistening'.[55] The British Muslim flâneuse in Din's poem finds her inner spiritual quest and enlightenment in the metaphorical 'pool of fresh water'.[56] This pool of water evokes the frequently used metaphor of water, often in the form of the ocean in Sufi writing as a symbol of faith and spiritual growth or development. When I asked Din what the metaphor of the ocean meant to her, she responded: 'Depth'. Expanding on this, she said:

> How can we see the soul in any visible way? Because naturally it is invisible. It's something that is really hard to capture. The ocean's breath, depth, and the life that

[51] Smith, p.132.
[52] Sethi, p.82.
[53] Din, p.158.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Din, p.159.

> is underneath the surface is why I chose that because it just seemed to me to make sense that even though we can't see the soul it is the life of us […] the oceans like that, you look at the surface, but you can't see all the life that is going on underneath it.[57]

Din's use of this metaphor that she claims was a 'fairly simple comparison' since 'the ocean fitted a physical manifestation of the soul' connects very closely to ideas of Islamic Mysticism that are embedded in Sufi scholarship.

Lings also draws on this metaphor of the ocean: 'In the treatises of the Sufis, this "ocean" is mentioned again and again, likewise by way of symbolic reference to the end of [and] towards which their path is directed'.[58] Engaging with this metaphor to explain ideologies that exist in Sufi practices, he notes:

> From time to time a revelation 'flows' like a great tidal wave from the ocean of infinitude to the shores of our finite world and Sufism is the vocation and the discipline and the science of plunging into the ebb of one of these waves and being drawn back with it to its eternal and infinite source.[59]

Sufi literature makes frequent use of such metaphors. The spiritual path is referred to as an eternal ocean without shores. Explained by Öke: 'The spiritual journey is indeed like venturing out into the deep, blue sea'.[60] Relating to the flânerie concept of joining the 'ebb and flow' of the crowd, one can draw on the comparison of the wave and the British Muslim flâneuse's connection to her religious identity whilst seeking spiritual enlightenment and refuge in the city.

Considering the British Muslim flâneuse's connection to faith, the crowd, and the city, I now return to Nasrudin's 2021 discussion of the eleven principles of the Naqshbandiyah

[57] Din, Interview Appendices, p.93.
[58] Lings, p.24.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Okë, p.34.

Khalidiyah Sufi order. Nasrudin discusses all eleven principles of the Naqshbandiyah Khalidiyah Sufi order, however, for the purpose of this chapter I have chosen to focus on his discussion of the fourth principle: 'Khalwat Dar Anjuman'.[61] He explains that this requires 'emptying the heart of the creatures in the crowd'.[62] Simplified, he describes that the individual's 'heart must always be present with Allah in all circumstances'.[63] Arley Loewen (2003) has translated the eleven principles claiming the 'the Naqshbandi emphasis on Khalwat Dar Anjuman', means being 'outwardly with people and inwardly with God'.[64] Thus, Baha' Al-Din Naqshband advocates an inner spirituality in the midst of society.[65] In a closer reading of how the eleven principles have evolved within Sufi practices in contemporary times, Shivan Mahendrar Ajah (2021) claims that the 'mystical exercise' of 'temporary seclusion (Khalwa)' is 'solitude in society (Khalwat Dar Anjuman)'. He explains this 'to be outwardly (zahir) with the people (khalq) and inwardly (batin) with God (Haqq)'.[66] In exploring notions of belonging in her admiration of everyday life, the British Muslim flâneuse embarks on an inward journey and pilgrimage requiring an engagement with this idea of being outwardly with the crowd but inwardly with God. Physically she joins the ebb and flow of the crowd but spiritually she joins the ebb and flow of the infinite ocean of faith.

To support this claim, an observation of Din's use of water, which she describes as an important theme throughout her work, highlights the connection between her work and the spiritual teachings of the *Quran*:

> I always thought it was central to the *Quran*, water is mentioned so much. Water is mentioned as healing, as

[61] Nasrudin, 'Suluk As Social Piety: Phenomenological Studies At The Naqshbandiyah Khalidiyah Sufi Order in Sokaraja Banyumas', *Journal Kajian Islam Dan* Budaya, 19.2 (2021), pp.315-334.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Arley Loewen, 'Proper Conduct (Adab) is Everything: The Futuwwat – Namah – Sultāni of Husayn Va'iz-Kashifi', *Iranian Studies*, 36.4 (2003), pp.543-570 (p.555).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Shivan Mahendrar Ajah, 'Part IV – The Sufis', in *The Sufi Saint of Jam* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp.187-222 (p.189).

> an Aya and sign from Allah. Water is mentioned in times of replenishment with [Prophet] Nuh. Water is named for different reasons, sometimes it's metaphorical, Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala is giving us a lesson and once you start looking, you can't not see water.[67]

In poetic prose, the speaker states: 'As water is the source of life on earth, our soul is the core of our being'.[68] She begins by creating a comparison to the soul as water for the body. This comparison is continued in the depth of the ocean to her spiritual quest as the internal and external journey are brought together using this metaphor: 'Our soul, like the ocean, has a delicate balance where its 'health' is vital to humanity's survival. A thriving ocean's chemistry is best measured by its unseen floor, where it absorbs everything around it'.[69] Both are 'as deep and expansive as the widest ocean'.[70] Commenting on the poem ' Motherhood Rain' in our interview Din explains: 'I was trying to use the ocean to introduce the idea or the concept of having a soul. It can be lost, believe it or not […] and yet people can go [for] ten, twenty, thirty, years and not think about their soul'.[71]

The connection between the soul, the crowd, and the city can be found in French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's acclaimed work *The Poetics of Space* (1994). He discusses the concept of 'topo-analysis' which he explains is 'the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives'.[72] He argues that the 'unconscious is intimately connected with the physical space' in which an individual develops.[73] Drawing on poetry, he attempts to engage the 'reverberation' of spatial structures that he believes are produced in the human soul. He believes poetry best captures the 'unmediated impression [of the internal gaze] under the

[67] Din, Interview Appendices, p.93.
[68] Din, p.159.
[69] Din, p.3.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Din, Interview Appendices, p.93.
[72] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p.8.
[73] Ibid.

form of poetic images' or metaphors.[74] Bachelard's idea and Davis's analysis can be reflected upon in this reading of the physical journey of the British Muslim flâneuse. Whether it is submerged within the city or the crowd, the speakers practice as a British Muslim flâneuse becomes an integration of inner and outer identity. Internally she is one with the crowd, however she is also detached. This extends to her visibility, especially if she is visibly identifiable as a Muslim woman. Her exclusion from the British city and crowd may restrict her access to certain spaces and crowds in the city. The acceptance of the British Muslim flâneuse's religious and spiritual identities along with the diverse range of people in the crowd is important to her experience. If her spiritual gaze is inherent to her existence as the British Muslim flâneuse, any restriction in this space also restricts her ability to engage with flâneuserie.

Din's work can be read in parallel with Bachelard's valorisation of the concept of the soul: 'The poet, in the novelty of his images is always the origin of the language […] poetry, rather than being a phenomenology of mind, is a phenomenology of the soul'.[75] The use of water as a metaphor of the narrator's spirituality and of interior and exterior phenomenology is applicable to Din's religious ideas of the soul reflected in the imagery in the poem. Connecting the act of pilgrimage to the inner journey using the metaphor of the ocean, the idea that the pilgrimage is a continuous state of being in this life also infers a constant state of spiritual engagement with a spiritual gaze. Carol P. Christ (1976) differentiates between the social and the spiritual quest, using 'awakening' and 'surfacing' as metaphors for describing the spiritual experience of a social quest.[76] The comparison with the spiritual quest thus depends on a metaphysical inclusion and exclusion of the inner self in the context of the

[74] Ibid.
[75] Bachelard, p.8.
[76] Margaret Atwood, 'The Surfacing of Women's Spiritual Quest and Vision', *Signs*, 2.2 (1976), pp.316-330 (p.321), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173450> [Accessed 2 November 2022].

British Muslim flâneuse's pilgrimage in the city. This reading further supports the comparison of the British Muslim flâneuse to the figure of the dervish. The dervish who submits to Sufi teachings follows the eleven principles, one of which connects with a key feature of flânerie (solitude in the crowd). This grants the British Muslim flâneuse the ability to be simultaneously an insider and an outsider to the crowd. Thus, she is restricted from fully submitting to and belonging to the material crowd and city. Rather, she submits to the pilgrimage by mentally detaching from the material crowd.

During the section titled 'The Heart: Seas of Change', Din incorporates five short poems. The third poem draws on the rediscovery of spirituality and pilgrimage: 'I had never been to sea, but when I drifted away from true/ faith, I experienced drowning'.[77] Once again drawing on the metaphor of the ocean, the drowning can be read as submission to the spiritual quest and the pilgrimage of the British Muslim flâneuse. However, the speaker applies the expression to describe herself losing her faith. She continues: 'I lost all hope and was resigned that/ when the waters are so deep, they silently consume you and/ you are lost as though you never were once alive'.[78] The speaker describes an overwhelming sense of being lost in the physical world and detached from a spiritual connection. When drowning, she finds spiritual enlightenment: 'Calling out to the owner/ of my, soul, to the Self-sufficient, in need of nothing and no one./ The answer came to my call, and I lived again'.[79] This can be read as symbolising the death of the exterior world and her submission to the metaphysical and spiritual realm. The act of drowning becomes an important metaphor for the spiritual path where the narrator can be understood to be reaching for 'Fanā'.[80] Discussing the recurrent use of this metaphor in Islamic Mysticism, Lings writes:

[77] Din, pp.88-89 (p.89).
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Lings p.25.

> The Sufis speak of 'seeking to be drowned' (istighrāq) in the verses of the Quran which are, according to one of the fundamental doctrines in Islam, the Uncreated Word of God. What they are seeking is, to use another Sufi term, extinction (fanā) of the finite and the infinite; and for some Sufis the recitation of the Quran has been throughout life, their chief means of concentration upon God which is itself the essence of every spiritual path.[81]

Reflecting on the connection between nature imagery, Islamic Mysticism, and Sufism, we return to the inner directive of the British Muslim flâneuse who may project Quranic verses (Ayas) as part of her spiritual learning on to the physical cityscape. This becomes part of her spiritual experience in the city.

This also resonates with the Sufi idea of the path being taught through experience. Din's poems engages further with the act of walking as a spiritual practice in the section 'Myriad Voices' which Din described as 'vignettes' that are 'fictional [voices]' through which she is 'trying to convey […] different points of view all distinct from the perspective of Muslim women'.[82] The speaker engages directly with the spiritual journey: 'On my journey I tread life's path of tests and trials./ Tests of pain and pleasure, success and failure,/ Trials of fear and hope'.[83] The speaker uses the act of walking as a spiritual practice: 'Hopeful am I of walking in the shade of His Mercy,/ Stepping in the light of His Guidance,/ The Praiseworthy, the giver of Peace' to describe the spiritual journey.[84] Her engagement with the act of walking engages the physical act with the 'path minded' gaze. Michel De Certeau (1998) describes footsteps as 'an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form of those "real systems whose existence in face makes up the city"'.[85] For the British Muslim flâneuse,

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Din, Interview Appendices, p.94.
[83] Din, p.88-89.
[84] Din, p.88.
[85] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press,1998), p.97.

the act of walking in the city as a pilgrimage mirrors Lings' views on the Muslim consciousness of their spiritual roots. He argues:

> [The] Muslim – be he Arab or non-Arab – is conscious that his spiritual roots are in Mecca – a consciousness that is regularly sharpened once a year in every Islamic community by the setting off and return of pilgrims, and in the five daily ritual prayers, each cycle of movement culminates in a prostration which could be described as a pouring out of the soul in the direction of Mecca.[86]

During our interview, Din noted that walking is a prominent spiritual practice for her as a Muslim woman:

> For me, walking has countless Ayas put together, Ayas in my body [such as] signs within myself that I'm just amazed at. How do I take one step after the other […] just automatically. That's a massive spiritual exercise of gratitude and I feel that, and then when you are walking outside there's just so much that is enriching your faith, and if something is strengthening your connection to the creator then that's a spiritual act.[87]

She highlights that her intended purpose is not to conduct a pilgrimage, however seeing God in everything during her walk is her way of interacting with and experiencing the city. Thus, her spiritual gaze can also be understood as part of her practice as the British Muslim flâneuse. Din continues:

> I make a point to try and walk more because I enjoy the spiritual side to it, even if it is just going to Tesco to pick up some milk, there's so much beauty on the way there and back and it makes you say Subhan'Allah, Alhamdullilah. When I'm walking on something like an errand I will keep making [prayer] to Allah [asking for the ability to] walk as long as I'm alive. I ask 'please allow me to walk, and never take that away from me'. So, it's a very spiritual

[86] Lings, p.37.
[87] Din, Interview Appendices, p.90.

> experience.[88]

Din highlights how the centre of consciousness can be recognised as connecting to and recognising the inner-Sufi. This transforms the perception of the British Muslim flâneuse.

This idea is also inherent to Baudelaire's own development, which Benjamin highlights in his essay on Baudelaire in 1938:

> [Baudelaire] set out to conquer the streets—in images. Later, when he abandoned one part of his bourgeois existence after another, the street increasingly became a place of refuge for him. But in flânerie, there was from the outset an awareness of the fragility of this existence. It makes a virtue out of necessity, and in this displays the structure which is in every way characteristic of Baudelaire's conception of a hero.[89]

In conquering the street and creating a conception of a hero he establishes an additional purpose to flânerie. In the context of spirituality this hero can be read in comparison to the dervish. He is freeing himself from the rules of society and is outwardly present but inwardly free from the rules of the city. Christ argues that the 'social quest is a search for self in which the protagonist begins in alienation and seeks integration into a human community where he or she can develop more fully'.[90] In relation to Christ's metaphor of awakening, the insider vs the outsider binary can be drawn upon through a reading of the British Muslim flâneuse as the dervish.[91] Although both aim to be lost in the crowd, whereas Baudelaire's flâneur aims for the 'ebb and flow' of the 'city's crowd', the dervish's detachment from the material crowd assists his concern with the ebb and flow of divine knowledge and the Sufi path.[92]

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Walter Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', in Th*e Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire,* trans. by Harry Zohn, ed.by Michael William Jennings (New York: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp.46–134 (p.76).
[90] Christ, p.321.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), p.9.

Referring to the work of Constantin Guys, Baudelaire draws out a spiritual aspect to observing the external milieu. He describes how 'the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy'.[93] Baudelaire's analysis of Constantin Guys draws on the figure of the flâneur as engaging with the city and crowd in metaphysical and spiritual contexts, revealing a form of internal healing for the artist and the viewer:

> The perpetual correlation between what is called the 'soul' and what is called the 'body' explains quite clearly how everything that is 'material', or in other words an emanation of the 'spiritual mirrors', and will always mirror, the spiritual reality from which it derives.[94]

For Baudelaire this spiritual quest requires the flâneur to 'renounce the rights and privileges offered by circumstance – for almost all our originality comes from the soul which time imprints on our sensations'.[95] Similarly, the dervish, as the observer, and spiritual seeker, aims for the 'ebb and flow' of 'intimate knowledge of the Beloved' as a form of this spiritual journey from which he obtains his internal healing.[96] Lings explains that for a Sufi:

> In addition to being more dedicated and more 'path-minded' than the rest of his community [the Sufi] has not only to pray like them the ritual prayer in direction of Mecca but has to perform many other rites for which he prefers to face the same way, so that this outward symbolic 'concentration' may serve as a support for inward concentration.[97]

Although it may be interpreted as a focus on a physical direction by means of looking at the floor, applying the path-minded gaze opens up a space to discuss the spiritual reflection and

[93] Baudelaire (1964), p.9.
[94] Baudelaire (1964), p.14.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Öke, p.9.
[97] Lings, p.36.

consciousness required for the pilgrimage in the context of the British Muslim flâneuse and the inner-Sufi. In the same way that the dervish faces the direction of Mecca for spiritual focus, the British Muslim flâneuse draws on the inward direction to focus on the spiritual experience of the walk in the city.

Muneera Pilgrim's poem 'Luminous' provides an engaging example of using the physical and spiritual direction in poetry. The poem can be a read as a pilgrimage for the poetic speaker who pays homage to a street of significant interest to her. The sense of 'pilgrimage' as an ongoing practice that shapes how the British Muslim flâneuse experiences the city, informs a textual analysis of her collection *That Day She'll Proclaim Her Chronicles* (2021) to explore religion and identity within her hometown Bristol and through her navigation of urban spaces in British cities. Previously known as Tanya Williams, Pilgrim converted to Islam in 2005 and is known professionally by her Muslim name: Muneera Pilgrim. She is a British Muslim poet and activist from Bristol and is best known for her spoken word performances. The poem is written in four long stanzas making use of free verse form and each stanza conveys the gaze of the speaker. The poem begins with a prayer for light:

> O Allah, place light in my heart, and on my tongue light,/ in my ears light and in my sight light, and above me light, and/ below me light, and to my right light, and to my left light, and/ before me light and behind me light. Place in my soul light./ Magnify for me light, and amplify for me light…/ Dua for light.[98]

In the context of this poem the prayer can be read as the officiation of the speaker's pilgrimage. This is significant to the spiritual theme of Pilgrim's collection and the

[98] Muneera Pilgrim, *That Day She'll Proclaim Her Chronicles* (Portishead: Burning Eye Books, 2021), p.42.

importance of the speaker's religious identity as a British Muslim flâneuse. The metaphor of light and the use of a prayer in Pilgrim's poem highlights a recurrent theme in her collection that engages with the spiritual quest and inner journey.

The repetition of 'light' in this prayer contributes to the harmonious tone of the poem as stanza one begins with the speaker's observation: 'The barbershops are brimming/ on Stapleton Road, a mother negotiating/ her son's first trim./ There are queues of cars outside the Senegalese/ car wash, tasbihs hanging from each rear-view mirror'.[99] Drawing out the 'Senegalese car wash' and 'tasbihs hanging from each rear-view mirror', the speaker employs a flânerie tone to highlight the multicultural character of the street that she is walking along and observing. In his introduction to *Real Cities,* Steve Pile (2005) claims that 'the city does not just express itself in the buildings, the streets, the traffic, that seem to define it, but in the ways in which people live, work, trade; their customs, habits, pleasures, crimes, angers'.[100] He continues: 'the analysis of real city life (should be) extended to include the shadows, irrationalities, feelings, utopianisms, and urban imageries'.[101] Upon reflection of Piles' argument, the observations of the speaker takes on a new emphasis. The speaker begins the poem with a dominating flâneuserie tone, however this transitions to a pilgrimage when she engages with the gaze of the inner-Sufi. She illuminates every detail and highlights the ways in which people live, work, and trade on this street rather than only describing the buildings and traffic. She describes:

> Rotisserie chicken spins outside the Lebanese café;/ two
> uncles stand in the doorway of,/ the Three Black Birds
> disputing whether pimento,/ or thyme is best to flavour
> mackerel rundown/ all before agreeing the breadfruit
> from/ across the road is water belly and overpriced./
> Fearless of spillage from syrup mixed with/ crushed ice,
> the sky juice.

[99] Ibid.
[100] Steve Piles, *Real Cities* (London: Sage, 2005), p.13.
[101] Ibid.

man looks ready.[102]

The speaker's inner- pilgrimage can be recognised through her illumination of the street's ambiance and essence more than just the infrastructure and traffic. This experience is spiritually enhancing and positive for the speaker as it reflects the Divine perception in her material surroundings. Thus, the passive active walking necessitates the spiritual gaze which is projected on to the external physicality of the city.

This reiterates the earlier reference to the centre of consciousness and the relationship between the interior self and exterior self. The speaker's glorification of her physical location can be interpreted as a spiritual practice of gratitude, as strolling and observing allow her to assert her religious presence in spaces within the city. She reclaims her presence in the city by crossing boundaries of the social quest such as gender and class through means of her spiritual quest. The speaker ends the poem by recognising 'the light of the everyday people' in response to the opening prayer where she asks God for light.[103] This reading identifies the narrator more clearly as a British Muslim flâneuse and recognises the spiritual gaze of the dervish that remains present throughout her observations of the city. In stanza three the speaker focuses on the people of this street more closely:

> The roadman helps the old woman across/the street with
> her shopping; they speak about the/rising price of food, and
> how in her day there/were more helpful young men like him./
> He feels good for the first time in a long time.[104]

The image of a 'road man' and an 'old woman' highlights the sense of cultural and religious teachings which inform her observations of the community in the poem. She continues:

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[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

> The church sisters are on the side/ of the boy at the bus stop, such that when police/ try to stop and search/ the sisters rebuke them in the name of Christ the Lord,/ and it seems Jesus hears, because they relent.[105]

The juxtaposition of the church sisters and the police who try to conduct a stop and search, creates an oxymoron in the poem between religion and politics by drawing on an image of visible religious figures in the city. The conjunction of religion and politics in the urban landscape of the poem as portrayed by Pilgrim's speaker highlights a visible example of religious and political contradictions in British cities.

This also highlights the presence and conflict between religion and contemporary secular Western cities. Furthermore, this reading highlights the presence of police brutality, political silencing, and policing of religious identity. Discussing cultural and religious practices in Western cities, Andrew Kirk (2007) argues that 'contemporary Western culture relegates spirituality and religion alike to the sphere of private opinion and invests scientific reasons alone with the authority of public knowledge'.[106] The poem ends with the line: 'Days like this when the air is scarce/ and the sun beats down to compete with/ the light of the everyday people who decorate the streets/ they are lighthouses, or lanterns at least'.[107] The poetic speaker, immersed in the hustle and bustle of this street uses the image of decorations, lighthouses, and lanterns to describe the people she has observed. Light is used to draw on the idea that she is reflecting the Divine onto the cityscape and crowd and thus using the gaze of her inner - Sufi on her stroll. This comparison is useful to reading the poem as a pilgrimage as it reiterates the Sufi principle of seeing the Divine in everyday life and practicing through experiences. In her 2017 study, Saskia Warren offers an empirical observation of

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Andrew Kirk, *The Future of Reason, Science, and Faith: Following Modernity and Post-Modernity (Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology)* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.1-2.
[107] Pilgrim, p.43.

contemporary understandings of 'leisure walking practices' amongst British Muslim women and how these 'may have been shaped by elite European social milieus'.[108] Warren argues that these urge a reconsideration of alternative perspectives on everyday walking in the urban city and of how visibly Muslim women navigate spaces politically or spiritually by highlighting the 'complexities of the ways in which individuals experience the built environment'.[109] Thus, the path-minded gaze supports the British Muslim flaneuse's spiritual quest in the urban city. This reading suggests that in seeing people as lighthouses and lanterns, the speaker's gaze as British Muslim flâneuse transforms passive observations during a stroll into a spiritual quest and pilgrimage.

Similarly, Pilgrim's poem 'Unfinished Sympathy: Throwback Suite 2', separates the speaker from her physical home to convey a spiritual displacement. Invoking an uncomfortable pattern, the poem begins: 'Girls like me have become accustomed to being asked/ *Where are you from/ Where do you belong?*/ *Where is home?*'.[110] The speaker responds to this in stanza one: 'I'm seeking a place for this displaced soul to call home./ In a Sufi village called Medina Baye/ lies my heart, but where is home?'.[111] Recognising a spiritual home in the poem, the speaker is identifying herself as displaced physically as well as spiritually. This can also be recognised and compared to the flâneuse's presence and position. Lauren Elkin claims: 'There is a sense of the city you can't plot on a map, or a phone. It is an intense, embodied relationship to atmosphere'.[112] Elkin's flâneuse is drawn to the sense of freedom and liberation gained from the physical act of walking in the city. She continues: 'Something happens when we push boundaries, and cross over them; some

[108] Saskia Warren, 'Pluralising The Walking Interview: Researching (Im)mobilities With Muslim Women', *Social and Cultural Geographies*, 18.6 (2017), pp.786-807.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Pilgrim, p.53.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Elkin, p.83.

ambiguity is sustained, that cannot be absorbed into some kind of homogenous identity'.[113] The city space can be explored as a multidimensional space for social and spiritual quests. The use of the city can challenge the British Muslim flâneuse as much as it can provide enlightenment to her non-Muslim and invisible counterparts. Restricted access to spaces in the city based on visibility can prevent her inclusion within the city and her spiritual experience.

Drawing on Elkin's discussion of the liberation of strolling in the city as a flâneuse, the act of walking in a city can simultaneously be a spiritual pilgrimage. This requires the British Muslim flâneuse to be more 'path minded'.[114] Comparing the flâneuse or flâneur who Elkin describes as 'both surveyor and surveyed', she argues that 'the flâneur is a beguiling but empty vessel, a blank canvas'.[115] The narrator of Pilgrim's poem continues: 'If I'm to believe my birth certificate/ I would say it's Bristol./ But I've been quizzed for so long/ and so many times/ I'm starting to doubt it'.[116] In the context of the British Muslim flâneuse, the exterior and interior displacement of the speaker's identities creates space to read her relationship to the crowd and the city in both physical and spiritual contexts. The repetition of 'I was born in Bristol in the eighties' in stanza two and three reaffirms a physical location for home. [117] The focus on belonging and not-belonging in a 'city covered with dark corners and contradictions' draws out an internal displacement with her physical location.[118] Bristol's slave past, with its well-known statues that recall generational trauma and unsettlement re-assert the city's relevance in this poem as a space of racial and religious inequality for the British Muslim flâneuse. Fargione's argument regarding the integration of the 'interior and exterior world[s]' as a 'means to help mediate the disrupted relation between self and external

[113] Elkin, p.279.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Elkin, p.10-11.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Pilgrim, p.54.
[118] Ibid.

milieu' is useful in better understanding the speaker's physical navigation and spiritual pilgrimage in Bristol.[119] She continues: 'I learnt from an early age/ you didn't have to commit a crime/ when your skin tone stands out like mine'.[120] Drawing on the policing of Black Muslims based on their racial and religious visibility the narrator refers to the racial and religious boundaries imposed on her experiences of the city.

Relating to the flânerie concept of joining the 'ebb and flow' of the crowd, one can draw on the comparison of the British Muslim flâneuse's connection to her racial and religious identity whilst seeking spiritual enlightenment and refuge in the city. The spiritual displacement in Pilgrim's poem does not require the British Muslim flâneuse to leave Bristol physically but rather to extend her spiritual self beyond the external material boundaries. Thus, the point at which this speaker's gaze transitions from idle observation to a spiritual quest can be identified when the gaze of the British Muslim flâneuse transgresses the physical boundaries of race and class in her search for her spiritual home amongst the 'dark corners' of the city, in reference to Bristol's colonial slave trading past.[121] In exploring her ancestral history through her acknowledgement of everyday life the British Muslim flâneuse embarks on an inward journey and pilgrimage. Physically she joins the ebb and flow of her community but spiritually she exercises Khalwat Dar Anjuman. This reading of the poetic speaker as the British Muslim flâneuse can also be identified in the poem 'Munir' as the exchange of the individual self for the higher self is visible in the speaker's internal projections onto her physical surroundings. The speaker describes: 'Placed in our chest/ is the desire to gather them'.[122] The 'them' which the speaker refers to are the 'pieces of us', 'us' being the community.[123] Her interest in 'light' which she cannot find in the material crowd does not

[119] Pilgrim, p.56.
[120] Pilgrim, p.54.
[121] Pilgrim, p.54.
[122] Pilgrim, p.75.
[123] Ibid.

weaken the reading of her as the British Muslim flâneuse but rather highlights how her flânerie requires this acknowledgement of her way of existing in the city.[124] The use of 'God's light' sets a mystic tone in stanza one which the speaker describes as: 'Blissful dreams/ only a creator could conjure/ lasting prayer from our ancestors/ suspended in time'.[125] The comparison to a 'blissful dream' suggests a metaphysical experience.[126] Engaging with concepts of Islamic Mysticism, the speaker alludes to the spiritual quest in the subconscious. She develops this further: 'If God is beauty that wants to be known/ then we are seekers and seamen/ nomads and pilgrims/ sojourners and travellers in search of God's light'.[127] The use of 'we' serves a double purpose; firstly, it infers a belonging to the crowd, and secondly it directly addresses the reader, inviting them to perceive an internal gaze.

The second purpose and connection to the internal gaze is important to this chapter's reading of the poetic speaker as a British Muslim flâneuse and her spiritual engagement to the city and crowd. In a study of the female Muslim experience with identity and agency in the religious sphere, Fazila Bhimji (2009) asserts: 'Scholarship on Islamic Feminism in Western contexts has focused on visible symbols such as the veil and little attention has been given to the social processes that Muslim women may engage in order to better understand and practice Islam'.[128] Such reductive approaches and restrictions render the integration between Muslim women and the city difficult. As Din notes: it is 'not spiritual: it's stressful'.[129] If the British Muslim flâneuse is distracted and hypervigilant her gaze is re-directed since her eyes are constantly alert to potential threats. Furthermore, if she is suspicious, this draws her away from engaging with the city as a spiritual place for a pilgrimage. Thus, the act of walking can

[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Fazila Bhimji, 'Identities and Agency in Religious Spheres: A Study of British Muslim Women's Experience', *Gender, Place, and Culture*, 16:4 (2009), pp.365-380 (p.367).
[129] Suma Din, Interview Appendices, p.90.

only transcend to a spiritual quest when the British Muslim flâneuse is not threatened or unsafe. During interviews with visible and invisible Muslim British women, participants highlighted similar thoughts and feelings. For the purpose of this chapter, I draw on the response of Participant B3, a visible British Muslim woman who wears the hijab. She said:

> Are you talking about somebody who you can kind of point out as a Muslim woman or is it about what a person says about themselves? Because they are two different things […] I can say somebody is visibly Muslim because they are wearing a headscarf but they might not even be Muslim, [for example] a lot of time Sikh [identity is confused with] Muslim because [Sikh] women sometimes cover with a headscarf and […] men have big beards, but they are not [Muslim].[130]

This participant draws on the physical recognition of Muslim identity. She develops the idea of physical signifiers such as headscarves and beards being misinterpreted to exclude Muslim individuals, and others who may be assumed to be Muslim inaccurately, from the majority.

Attempting to detach Muslim women's engagement from feminist practice using orientalist and fundamentalist frameworks, Jasmin Zine (2006) argues that Muslim women 'are reclaiming the hermeneutic spaces of religious discourse as a means for developing a basis for Islamic feminist engagement'.[131] Restrictions beyond gender and race include religious visibility in secular spaces that can affect the spiritual experience of the British Muslim flâneuse. Such restrictions are also reflected in the non-poetic example provided in this chapter via the interview with author and poet Suma Din. A textual analysis of Din's and Pilgrim's poetic speakers as the British Muslim flâneuse reveals how the act of walking in the manner of Baudelaire's flâneur and Elkin's flâneuse can develop from casual strolling to a pilgrimage in the city. Engaging poetic forms with Sufi scholarship and flânerie modes of writing highlights

[130] Participant B3, Interview Appendices, p.18.
[131] Jasmin Zine, 'Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: The Politics of Muslim Women's Feminist Engagement', *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 3:1 (2006), [Accessed 12 November 2022], p.4.

the way in which religious identity is addressed in works of British Muslim women who employ poetry as a means to assert their religious agency through a path-minded gaze and submission to a spiritual path. In adopting the religious gaze, the stroll in the city becomes a pilgrimage when the British Muslim flâneuse is safe and able to project her interior self on her external environment. Similarly, in doing so she can draw on her external environment to detach from its material qualities and achieve spiritual fulfilment, or 'fanaā'.[132] In conclusion, the gaze of the inner-Sufi becomes an alternative way to counter the external exclusion and isolation. It is an inherent part of walking in the city as a spiritual practice which enables the British Muslim flâneuse to transcend the rigid borders and restrictions imposed on her experience and engagement with the British city. Thus, transforming it into a place of spiritual quests and pilgrimages.

[132] Lings p.25.

Chapter Three: The Cyber Postcolonial Flâneuse and The Online Space

Anna Piela (2012) argues that 'the presence of Muslim women on the internet is rapidly increasing, yet their use of the internet remains under researched'.[1] Piela notes that British Muslim women who wear hijab, niqab, or burqa are still frequently perceived as unable and unwilling to integrate into the Western world. This chapter identifies the cyber postcolonial flâneuse navigating the online space as an emerging area of flânerie. It considers the British Muslim women poets Asma Elbadawi (2021), Raheela Suleman (2019), and Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (2019) to acknowledge the prevalence of the postcolonial flâneuse in their work. Moreover, this chapter analyses their representations of women's fashion, beauty, aesthetics, and safety in online spaces and the city. Attention to this field reveals the possibilities and barriers enabled through online communities and interactions. Acknowledging Charles Baudelaire's ideas on beauty and the aesthetic (1846), this chapter focuses on contemporary poetic representations of beauty and the aesthetic. I argue that both concepts have a new relevance and are harnessed as routes towards resistance and decolonialism. This attention to beauty and the aesthetic enables a reading of the postcolonial flâneuse as a decolonial presence in the virtual space since she addresses the visible Muslim body, its vulnerability in online spaces, and equivalent vulnerability experienced in the city.

In his 1846 essay 'On the Heroism of Modern Life', Baudelaire suggests that beauty, in the context of the interpretation of art and poetry, requires a composition of two separate elements: The 'eternal' and the 'transitory'.[2] The eternal refers to that which is common to all,

[1] Anna Piela, 'Muslim Women Online, Faith and Identity', in *Virtual Space,* ed. by Anna Piela (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), pp.1-12 (p.2).
[2] Charles Baudelaire, 'On the Heroism of Modern Life', in *The Salon of 1846*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (New York: David Zwirner Books, 1846), pp.139-143 (p.139).

whereas the transitory results from the changing modes of feelings and characteristics of different ages.[3] He states:

> All forms of beauty, like all possible phenomena, contain an element of eternal and an element of the transitory – of the absolute and of the particular. Absolute and eternal beauty does not exist, or rather it is only an abstraction skimmed from the general surface of different beauties. The particular element in each manifestation comes from the emotions […] and just as we have our own particular emotions, so we have our own beauty.[4]

In *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1863) translated by Jonathan Mayne in 1964, Baudelaire further discusses this idea in two separate contexts, the first being 'Religious art' and the second 'Sophisticated art/artists'.[5] The first he claims is the 'ingredient of eternal beauty [which] reveals itself only with the permission and under the discipline of the religion to which the artist belongs'.[6] The latter 'belong[s] to one of those ages which in our vanity we characterise as civilised'.[7] However if the two are combined, religious and sophisticated art depend not on the fashioning of ideas that ascribe beauty and the aesthetic, but the particular temperament of the artist or individual who is interpreting the object of art.

This supports Baudelaire's idea that the 'duality of art is a fatal consequence of the duality of man', as the dichotomy referenced through religious and sophisticated art can be interpreted through the religious and cultural identities that form an individual's subjective sense of beauty and the aesthetic.[8] Baudelaire's discussion of beauty originally refers to the beauty of the cityscape and how the gaze interprets the aesthetics of the city and crowd. However, this infers that the gaze of the flâneur is only as beautiful as the flâneur himself. He

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans.by Jonathan Mayne, ed. by Jonah Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), pp.1-40 (p.3).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

notes that 'we might liken him to a mirror […] or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness'.[9] If the flâneur is physically beautiful, he will interpret and appreciate the beauty in his surrounding environment. He makes such an assertion by establishing 'a rational and historical theory of beauty, in contrast to the academic theory of a unique and absolute beauty'.[10] This highlights that beauty is always of 'double composition' and 'the impression that it produces is single'.[11] Baudelaire acknowledges the configuration of the flâneur's gaze. This complexity means that the flâneur looks at himself before observing his environment. Thus, his observation produces a reflection of the double composition that the gaze represents. Like the effect of the mirror and the kaleidoscope, the flâneur projects himself onto the city and crowd. Inevitably, if the flâneur's vision reflects himself, his self-consciousness when conducting flânerie can easily be politicised. Thus, the flâneur's act of walking has relative intent as his identity, if considered in the traditional context of white, male, and middle-class, is reflected in his observations and interpretations of the city and crowd.

The city functions as a mirror to reflect the flâneur's physical beauty: 'The idea of beauty which man creates for himself imprints itself on his whole attire […] Man ends up looking like his ideal self'.[12] This view assumes that the walker meets a suggested criteria of ideal beauty that appeals to the aesthetic of the society and period that they live in. Demonstrating how they come to be accepted and blend into the beauty of the city and the crowd, this approach fails to account for marginalised identities who may, in this way, be excluded from mainstream images of beauty. Refusal to acknowledge the experiences and identities of marginalised women results in overlooking the identity of the postcolonial flâneuse whose movement may be restricted by her physical appearance. This may not

[9] Baudelaire (1846), p.9.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Baudelaire (1846), p.3.
[12] Baudelaire (1846), p.189.

necessarily align with Western definitions of beauty and may not appeal to Western perceptions of the aesthetic, but rather, oppose them. Such restrictions signal the complexities of identity in relation to narrow and simplified notions of beauty that prevent the integration and accommodation of the British Muslim woman and other marginalised groups into the city and the crowd.

Lev Manovich (2017) notes that, 'the most common meaning of the word "aesthetics" today associates it with beauty. We use this word to refer to principles and techniques to make something beautiful, and with our experiences of the beauty'.[13] In comparison Ossi Naukkarinen argues: 'Aesthetics cannot, therefore, be properly understood without understanding the world in which it occurs and is observed'.[14] He continues:

> It is not useful to approach aesthetics as its own separate and autonomous section of culture since it is always closely tied to what occurs around it: In technology, science, ethics, the economy, politics, and elsewhere. This does not mean that aesthetics does not have its own characters and features, but it is not independent of the factors surrounding it. [15]

Monovich and Naukkarinen agree that ideas of beauty are inseparable from notions of the aesthetic. Naukkarinen claims that the contemporary aesthetic 'serve[s] as the lens through which we observe aesthetics past and aesthetics yet to come and therefore it's the only aesthetic there is'.[16] Manovich continues: 'Digital tools and software workflows that industries gradually adopted in the 1990s have led to an "aesthetic" revolution'.[17] He claims that 'the concepts of beauty and aesthetic pleasure have been almost completely neglected in theories of media'.[18]

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[13] Lev, Manovich, 'Aesthetics, "Formalism", and Media Studies', *Keywords in Media Studies,* 9.12 (2017), pp.1-4 (p.1).
[14] Ossi Naukkarinen, 'Aesthetics and Everyday Behaviour', *Journal of Contemporary Aesthetics*, 15.0 (2017), pp.1-10 (p.4).
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Manovich, p.9-12.
[18] Ibid.

In this context, what is observed as aesthetically pleasing or displeasing is subjective to the same gaze that influences socially and culturally accepted perceptions of beauty in Western society and which objectifies British Muslim women.

However, when adapted to online spaces and communities these ideas are constantly evolving since they are actively negotiated and experienced by the user including the postcolonial flâneuse. This can be explored through her ongoing interaction and participation with groups (online) and crowds (offline). There are visible parallels between these online groups and offline crowds that I will discuss further below. These function in similar ways to police visible Muslim women's bodies through concepts of beauty, the aesthetic, and appearance. Hans T. Sternudd and Anna Johansson (2014) draw on the Kantian idea of beauty and the pleasure of the sublime (1790) to argue that this 'use of the concept of the "aesthetic" [redefines] values and qualities [of beauty]', that are central to this definition of the aesthetic.[19] Sternudd and Johansson argue that 'online representations are therefore an important source of studying how emotions are conceptualised and communicated' to redefine current interpretations of beauty evolving from social media.[20] Aesthetics in this case are connected to beauty through the concept of taste that Immanuel Kant (1790) defines as: 'The feeling of pleasure or displeasure' and as 'a feeling which the subject has of itself and of the manner in which it is affected by the representation'.[21] He views aesthetics as subjective to the observing gaze that identifies aesthetic satisfaction or dissatisfaction from it. Kant further argues of the individual, that:

> We do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of the understanding with a view to cognition, but by means [of] understanding […] we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. [22]

[19] Hans S. Sternudd and Anna Johansson, 'The Girl in The Corner', in *Aesthetics of Suffering,* ed. by Lolita Guimãraes Guerra and Jose A. Nicoao (London: Brill, 2019), pp.105-115 (p.106).
[20] Ibid.
[21] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.35.
[22] Ibid.

Explaining this further he concludes: 'The judgement of taste, therefore, is not cognitive judgment, and so not logical, but is aesthetic which means that it is one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective'.[23] Considered in the context of identity and visible British Muslim women, the hijab can be discussed as subject to this judgment of 'taste' aligned to Western fashion standards and interpretations of beauty.

Reflecting on the aesthetic symbolism of the headscarf as an accessory and not a symbol of Muslim identity, it should be recognised that the headscarf is praised by organisations such as *Vogue France* as 'haute couture' and beautifying.[24] Such social and cultural privileges and contingent acceptances are withdrawn when Muslim women refer to the headscarf as a hijab. Associated with symbols of extremism rather than understood as a woman's fashion accessory, the hijab is consequently classified as synonymous with a perceived identity of female religious 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' in the post-911 climate of heightened Islamophobia. This makes it undesirable and not beautiful. In a recent article for *The Independent* exploring *Vogue France*'s 'Yes to the headscarf' comment when worn by Julia Fox, Saman Javed (2022) wrote: 'The post sparked backlash from Instagram users, who criticised the magazine for perpetuating a "double standard" and "praising [Fox] for wearing a headscarf in a country that actively oppresses Muslim women from doing so"'.[25] Analysing comments from the magazine's Instagram post, Javed wrote: 'Given the restrictions imposed on Muslim women in the country, social media users have labelled *Vogue France's* post as "frustratingly tone deaf"'.[26] As highlighted, one Instagram user commented: 'Yes to the headscarf? This is really quite

[23] Ibid.
[24] Saman Javed, 'A SLAP IN THE FACE OF EVERY MUSLIM WOMAN': VOGUE FRANCE CRITICISED FOR PRAISING JULIA FOX'S HEADSCARF', *The Independent* (1 February 2022), < https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/vogue-france-julia-fox-headscarf-muslim-b2004515.html> [accessed 10 February 2022].
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

insensitive to the hijab ban in France and glamorising non-Muslim women for wearing something that Muslim women are constantly policed about', whereas another user, quoted by Javed said: 'So the headscarf is OK on a non-Muslim? Fashion is allowed, not religion? Freedom of choice is only for white people?'.[27] This further reiterates the contradictions between headscarves when used as a fashionable aesthetic in contrast to being perceived as a religious choice for Muslim women.

Policing religious choice in the contexts of headscarves contradicts the endorsement of fashionable trends, that include wearing scarves to cover your hair. Whether the head scarf is a religious choice or a fashion statement, self-expression, be it religious or cultural, should not be regulated or prevented. More importantly, acknowledging the practice of wearing the headscarf as a religious choice for Muslim women globally, I argue that a social, political, and cultural rejection of this as a choice is Islamophobic and hinders Muslim women's agency. Additionally, the use of online platforms to enable British Muslim women's voice, views, and experiences demonstrates that Muslim women are actively engaging with social spaces online to counter negative perceptions of their religious identity. Technological advancements and the recent growth of various social media platforms such as TikTok have altered the emphasis put on beauty and the aesthetic online. In their 2021 study on social media and its effects on beauty, researchers Mavis Henriques and Debasis Patnaik analysed how social media is used to 'set standards of beauty'.[28] They argue that 'social networking sites' impact on the perception of standards of beauty and newer unrealistic trends' can 'alter options and also cause harm' in the long run.[29]

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Mavis Henriques and Debasis Patnaik, 'Social Media and Its Effects On Beauty', in *Beauty – Cosmetic Science, Cultural Issues and Creative Developments*, ed.by Martha Peaslee Levine and Júlia Scherer Santos (London: Intechopen, 2021), pp.1-9 (p.1).
[29] Ibid.

Looking more closely at TikTok and the impact of such social media platforms on beauty and aesthetics, Social Scientists Veya Seekis and Richelle Kennedy have more recently noted that 'the proliferation of beauty TikToks, which includes the promotion of often risky facial aesthetic procedures' is 'seemingly normalising the belief that women should constantly be considering' how their 'beauty is inadequate'.[30] In the specific context of the postcolonial flâneuse this idea can be extended to study the lack of representation on social media. This also effectively transforms functions of public spaces to similar purposes online. As noted by Miriam Cooke (2007): 'New media produces radical connectivity across the globe and fosters a new kind of cosmopolitanism marked by religion'.[31] The 'cosmopolitan turn' that Cooke draws on appeals to debates over multiculturalism and minority rights.[32] Defined by Robert Audi (2015), this notion of cosmopolitanism refers to 'a conception of the self, built around exposure to different ways of life and rejection of a fixed identity rooted in one culture'.[33] Audi defines cosmopolitanism as 'the view that all persons in the world constitute a single moral community and that this fact carries strong normative implications independent of any smaller societies'.[34] However, considering philosophical meanings in the context of the cyber postcolonial flâneuse and Muslim women, the distinction between moral, political and cultural cosmopolitanism requires acknowledgment.

For the purpose of this chapter, I draw on moral and political cosmopolitanism to identify how Muslim women as postcolonial flâneuses challenge and demonstrates ideas of cosmopolitanism. Moral cosmopolitanism 'posits that all human beings ought to be morally committed to an essential humanity above and beyond the reality of one's particularistic

[30] Veya Seekis and Richelle Kennedy, 'The Impact of #Beauty and #Self-Compassion TikTok Videos on Young Women's Appearance Shame and Anxiety Self-Compassion, Mood, and Comparison Processes', *Body Image*, 45 (2023), pp.117-127 (p.119).
[31] Miriam Cooke, 'The Muslimwoman', *Contemporary Islam,* 1.2 (2007), pp.1-7 (p.2).
[32] Robert Audi, 'Cosmopolitanism', in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.134-233 (p.137).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

attachments (such as nationality, kinship, religion)'.[35] In comparison, political cosmopolitanism, inspired by the cosmopolitan vision of Immanuel Kant (1790), 'posits the development of a global legal order which can be seen as the institutional embodiment of cosmopolitan values of equality, solidarity, and human rights, as well as the expression of a universal political consciousness'.[36] The postcolonial flâneuse challenges social and cultural barriers to the moral cosmopolitan that is practiced in online and offline spaces. Although she advocates the values of equality and solidarity, the rejection of her identity highlights a conflict between this idea and practice in reality. As noted by Mageakeba Nowicka and Maria Rovisco, cosmopolitanism 'as expression of both an attachment to "the world" and a characteristic of the civilised urban self' works here 'as a rhetorical resource in these struggles to value certain forms of belonging over others'.[37] This argument can be drawn upon in connection to the relationship between the cyber postcolonial flâneuse and cosmopolitanism.

Returning to Audi's idea of the rejection of a fixed identity, the cyber postcolonial flâneuse disturbs limited understandings about Muslim women in the online space. Piela further notes the relevance of this for Muslim women suggesting that, 'given the relative absence of Muslim women's expression in the mainstream Western media, the internet is a useful space to research the increasingly visible links between Muslim women's faith, identities, and voices'.[38] Susan Basanti's 2001 study of Muslim women's activity online highlighted that participants were more comfortable expressing their 'Islamic' identity in the group that they shared a mutual sense of belonging with.[39] As such: 'They [were] able to share their concerns about the difficulty leading a religious life in a predominantly secular Western society'.[40] Babak Rahimi

[35] Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco, 'Introduction: Making Sense of Cosmopolitanism', in *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, ed.by Maria Rovisco, Magdalena Nowicka, and Professor Robert Holton (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.1-19 (p.21).
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Piela, p.3.
[39] Susan Basanti, 'Muslim Women Online', *Arab World Geographer*, 3.1 (2001), pp.40-59 (p.51).
[40] Ibid.

(2008) also analyses the effects that internet technologies and the freedom provided by the internet have on platforms such as blogs. He conveys that they have been used extensively by Muslim women across the world to express their views on 'myths and stereotypes' about them and to oppose dominant discourses which are intended to control them.[41] Social media applications such as Instagram and TikTok, however, have a more prominent presence than blogs, and their remit is visual, emphasising the development of aesthetically pleasing content that attracts likes and followers. The 'eternal' and 'transitory' forms of beauty that Baudelaire describes can be identified in new forms of the online 'aesthetic', such as the emphasis on luxury brands, beauty enhancing treatments and surgery, and living standards which are unrealistic for the average person.

These are employed to create aesthetic content for online profiles, alongside the promotion of what Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani (1995) terms 'sensual' beauty.[42] This is made possible by travelling beyond the boundaries of home to places that are visibly pleasing.[43] This includes luxury homes and resorts with expensive interiors, as well as conveying the comfort of the outside world without leaving one's home and interacting with other people.[44] In the introduction to *Mufradat Fi Gharib Al-Quran* (1995), Al-Isfahani discusses beauty in the following forms: 'Beauty is [that which] makes human happy and cheerful and actually offers him what he dreams of and is waiting for'.[45] Therefore, he classifies beauty in three tiers: 'Rational beauty, Sensual Beauty, and Sensible beauty'.[46] Al-Isfahani believes that rational beauty 'stands for any kind of beauty that is favoured by mind or intellect', sensible beauty is 'any kind of beauty that is favoured by human nature', and sensual beauty is 'rooted in human

[41] Babak Rahimi, 'The Politics of The Internet in Iran', in *Media Culture and Society in Iran,* ed. by M. Semanti (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.1-20 (p.12).
[42] Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Fi Gharib Al-Quran* (Aholbait: Qom, 1995), p.5.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

lust'.[47] He emphasises the concept of moral and spiritual beauty which is the predominant way in which the concept of beauty is discussed in the *Quran*. In comparison Kant defines the beautiful as: '[T]hat which, apart from concept, is represented as the object of a universal delight'.[48] Developing his definition, he explains: 'Where anyone is conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest, it is inevitable that he should judge the object as one containing a ground of delight for all human beings'.[49] Both definitions, although approaching the concept from different ideologies, identify the significance of materiality to aestheticising visible and invisible beauty. In the context of the cyber-postcolonial flâneuse, materiality is important to the self-identification and inclusion of marginalised identities and voices in online spaces. In the particular context of visible Muslim women, the adoption of aestheticised versions of beauty forms pressures to confirm and edit their outwards appearance in order to fit in and access otherwise restricted spaces.

Alice Markwich (2013) describes the 'edited self' as a strategy that users rely on when interacting and creating online content.[50] She claims that this comprises more than one factor. On the one hand, it involves internal norms with each community determining appropriate forms of self-presentation; on the other hand, it demonstrates intrinsic features of online social content such as 'searchability'.[51] This is applicable to Kant's idea of universal delight as it can be applied to the 'edited-self' in the argument for universal validity and communicability. Considered in these contexts, searchability is determined by the aesthetic appeal and interaction of the individual's self-presentation and online presence. That which is trending is normalised and recognised as an appropriate form of self-presentation whereas anything less popular, that refuses to conform to the same aesthetic appeal, is rejected, policed, and treated with suspicion.

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Kant, p.42
[49] Ibid.
[50] Alice Marwick, *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p.194.
[51] Ibid.

The threats posed to the postcolonial flâneuse online include objectifying her religious identity. Conveying her 'edited self' in contrast to her authentic self prevents her from undertaking genuine engagement and interaction, since her aesthetic appeal does not equate to the set value of universal delight. Instead, the cyber postcolonial flâneuse is excluded from certain spaces and is not represented.

Reflecting on Kant's view of beauty, Asma Elbadawi's poem 'Shades' can be read by connecting an online sublime to an offline aesthetic. The poem engages with the concept of beauty and the aesthetic by reflecting on the lack of diversity in Western beauty and fashion industries, which is a prominent theme of Elbadawi's work. Asma Elbadawi is a British Muslim Sudanese female spoken word poet. In 2015 she won the Words First Leeds National poetry competition, organised in partnership with BBC Radio 1Xtra and the Roundhouse.[52] Elbadawi is best known for her involvement in the FIBA ALLOW HIJAB campaign which was successful in persuading FIBA (The International Basketball Federation) to allow female Muslim athletes to wear the hijab in professional basketball.[53] Elbadawi's poems explore the themes of religious identity, dual heritage culture, and suffocating stereotypes of British Muslim women. They demonstrate a consistent engagement with flâneuserie as they provide observations and reflections of the speaker's interactions with her surroundings. This is undertaken using the form of lyric poetry, covering subjects such as place, identity, racism, and Islamophobia. Through an exploration of these topics, Elbadawi's work breaks down stereotypes of Muslim women in the Global North by drawing on experiences and connections to place and religious practice.

The poem 'Shades' can also be explored in view of Baudelaire's ideas of beauty and the aesthetic from the specific perspective of the British Muslim woman. The postcolonial

[52] Asma Elbadawi, *Belongings* (Birmingham: Verve, 2021), p.1.
[53] Ibid.

flâneuse can be identified in Elbadawi's poem via the poetic speaker who addresses Eurocentric connotations of beauty and the aesthetic in phrases including: 'What our bodies should look like', 'which clothes are acceptable', and 'To keep up-to-date with a world that creates insecurities'.[54] Her physical appearance, clothing, and beauty is policed on the street and online by problematic beauty standards. As defined by James M. Blaunt (2000), the term 'Eurocentrism' is used to indicate false claims that European society is superior to all other societies'.[55] Applying this to the current understanding of beauty and the aesthetic, European associations of beauty are deemed superior to others. Elbadawi's poetic speaker is responding to the lack of positive female Muslim representation in mainstream beauty and fashion campaigns, that exclude marginalised identities.[56] Thus, the poetic speaker draws on physical beauty and the aesthetic to create a conflict between visible and invisible beauty.

Composed in ten stanzas, the themes of beauty, race, and gender are explored through 'shades' that the poem considers, shades of skin colour and tone. The poem begins ironically: 'There are some shades to be ashamed of'.[57] Referring to shades of skin colour, the speaker responds to racial inequalities that perceive fairer skin tones as more desirable and 'beautiful' in comparison to dusky or darker skin tones. In his essay on skin bleaching and the influence of the media, Oberiri Apuke (2018) argues: 'Many women with naturally dark complexions believe that fair skin makes them appealing, attractive, and successful'.[58] This is because they are surrounded by images, in the media and social spaces, that portray such ideologies. The repetition of the word in the poem operates as a metaphor for female beauty and identity as the speaker personifies these 'shades' of skin colour to further discuss racial inequalities in the form of marginalised women's bodies. In their 2014 study on the hijab and body image among

[54] Elbadawi, p.47.
[55] James M. Blaunt, *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000), p.14.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Elbadawi, p.47.
[58] Obriri Apuke, 'Why Do Women Bleach? Understanding The Rationale Behind Skin Bleaching and The Influence of Media in Promoting Skin Bleaching', *Global Media Journal,* 16.30 (2018), pp.1-4 (p.2).

British Muslim women, Viren Swami, Jusnara Miah, Nazerine Noorani, and Donna Taylor, compared data collected from 587 hijab and non-hijab wearing female Muslim participants from London. They found:

> Those who wore the hijab had a significantly higher body appreciation and significantly lower weight discrepancy, body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, social physique anxiety, reliance on media as a source of information about appearance ideals, perceived pressure from media sources, internalization of media messages, self-evaluative salience of appearance, and motivational salience of appearance.[59]

Drawing on the above quote, the hijab as a mode of self-expression and womanhood develops mainstream understandings of 'beauty' beyond the normative context of the definitions discussed this far. Whereas not wearing the hijab is recognised as a choice for some, others continue to fight for equal acknowledgment of its value to their life as British, Muslims, and women. Such data can be drawn upon to argue that the postcolonial flâneuse engages with the concepts of beauty and the aesthetic beyond physical appearance.

The speaker continues: 'There are some shades to be ashamed of/ Shades too colourful to be hung on the walls of museums/ Clothes worn incorrectly/ You will never see them in galleries'.[60] The line: 'You will never see them in galleries', implies that these representations are avoided and erased from formal cultural spaces. Furthermore, the absence of these 'shades' and 'clothes' addressed in the above quotes, infers the disproportionate representations and exclusion of these diverse identities in mainstream artistic spaces.[61] If the shade of colour that the speaker of the poem is referring to is completely excluded from and invisible in the museum, the speaker can be read as indicating that these shades of skin colour do not meet the

[59] Viren Swami, Jusnara Miah, Nazerine Noorani, and Donna Taylor, 'Is The Hijab Protective? An Investigation of Body Image and Related Constructs Among British Muslim Women', *British Journal of Psychology*, 105.1 (2014), pp.352-363 (p.358).
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

criteria of what is aesthetically pleasing and beautiful to the artist's gaze or to the gaze of the museum. In stanza three, the speaker addresses reductive approaches to representing British Muslim women in white feminist discourse: 'Wombs are not what make women/ Not the shades of skin that are born out of them/ Some shades think other shades need liberating,/ Some shades step over other shades to make it'.[62] This stanza reflects on race and neoliberalism hidden underneath a veneer of feminism. White feminism as discussed by Ruby Hammad (2020) refers not to any 'feminist who is white' but rather 'feminists who prioritize the concerns of white, middle-class women as though they are representative of all women'.[63] Hammad questions whether they 'are even listening to women of colour when we say we experience race and gender simultaneously rather than as distinct separate impositions'.[64] Reading Audrey Lorde (1984), Hammad notes that 'white feminism has a vested interest in ignoring the work of women of colour' as 'a deliberate choice to uphold whiteness'.[65] Elbadawi's poem alludes to ideas of beauty and visibility by placing an emphasis on colour and the visual. In this context, the visually as pleasing and beautiful is central. The concept of beauty in relation to the speaker's identity is also central to this discussion.

The speaker's use of 'wombs' implies generational suffering and a history of unequal representation that still affects marginalised women of colour. Hammad asserts that:

> White women can oscillate between their gender and their race, between being the oppressed and the oppressor. Women of color are never permitted to exist outside of these constraints: We are both women and people of color and we are always seen and treated as such.[66]

[62] Elbadawi, p.46.
[63] Ruby Hammad, *White Tears/Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Color* (Trapeze: London, 2020), p.167.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Hammad, p.177-178.
[66] Hammad, p.14.

Reflecting on Hammad enables an understanding of the poem as a response to white feminist approaches to the visibility of Muslim women. The poem also responds to the exclusion of Muslim women from mainstream notions of what is deemed aesthetically pleasing and beautiful. As Hammad points out, marginalised women cannot exist beyond that which the gaze allows. By applying Baudelaire and Rageb's ideas of beauty to the online context, it is possible to interpret stanza four - 'But it's only when all shades come together that we'll truly/ be able to celebrate/ There are some bodies that control other bodies' - as challenging current perceptions of fashion and beauty in the context of Islamic interpretations of female beauty and fashion.[67] This encourages the idea that modest fashion is equally aesthetic, desirable and relevant. Furthermore, this reading reveals a critical response to contemporary forms of 'transitory' beauty (Baudelaire) since they exclude certain religious and culturally specific interpretations of beauty. These include Muslim women's beauty and aesthetic tradition which are in keeping with Islamic doctrine and practice.

Returning to Baudelaire's concept of beauty, the poem can also be interpreted as symbolising the 'eternal' beauty, or that which is expressed with the permission and under the discipline of religion. Stanza six implies that both eternal and transitory beauty can co-exist: 'True freedom is wrapping material over our bodies any way that/ pleases us'.[68] The reference to wrapping material becomes a metaphor for the speaker's agency as she uses the image of fabric being wrapped around her to signify choice and safety. Baudelaire suggests that individual interpretations of beauty come from diverse experiences and the arising sentiments of those subsequent experiences. In stanza five, six, and seven, the speaker confronts the negative effects that a lack of religious diversity has on younger Muslim women and girls and how they perceive themselves within wider mainstream ideologies of beauty: 'Instructions on

[67] Elbadawi, p.47.
[68] Ibid.

billboards on what our bodies should look like/ What clothes are acceptable to wear in which season/ Check the catalogues/ Sex sells in all seasons'.[69] The speaker adopts the gaze of the postcolonial flâneuse through her attention to billboards and by placing herself in the street. This stanza responds to the view that Muslim women are pressured to adopt Western interpretations of beauty in place of their own ideas, religious dressing, and according to Islamic doctrine.

The speaker directs the reader's gaze to this method of disseminating mainstream concepts of beauty and the aesthetic. Online adverts and pop ups in virtual spaces function in a similar way to billboards. As virtual alternatives, they can be used to perpetuate positive and negative body images that affect online users and groups, including the postcolonial flâneuse. This similarly prohibits inclusivity. The postcolonial flâneuse and the British Muslim woman is, thus, forced to address her personal bodily beauty and aesthetic styling. This consists of how she considers her clothing and accessories when engaging with her surroundings, whereas the flâneuse as defined by Lauren Elkin (2017) does not. Elkin's flâneuse can be found 'using cities as performance spaces, or as hiding places; as places to seek fame and fortune or anonymity'.[70] Equally, this flâneuse finds in cities 'places to liberate herself' and 'declare her independence'.[71] The ease of such privileges as a white flâneuse operating in the city are not extended to the postcolonial flâneuse. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988) explores homogenous notions of the gender oppression of women as a group, which she argues produces the image of an 'average third-world woman'.[72] Mohanty explains:

> The average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being third-world (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Lauren, Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p.22.
[72] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminism Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, 30 (1988), pp.61-88 (p.65).

bound, religious, domesticated, family oriented, victimized, etc).[73]

She suggests that this 'is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control of their bodies and sexualities, and the "freedom" to make their own decisions'.[74] These limitations tend to identify Muslim women as oppressed and by implication white first world women as liberated. This further corresponds with Hammad's argument that 'most devastating for women of colour today' are 'binary archetypes into which racialized women were and still are forced to fit'.[75] She claims that 'stereotypes dissolve any requirement to take certain people seriously or to empathise with them'.[76] Mohanty also states: 'The symbolic space occupied by the practice of [religious dress] may be similar in certain contexts, but this does not automatically indicate that the practices themselves have identical significance in the social realm'.[77] This is visible in the poem as the speaker demonstrates the importance of fabric to asserting this individuality and freedom: 'Those who go against the grain are outcast'.[78] Thus, the postcolonial flâneuse draws attention to the postcolonial condition of the city and invites the decolonisation of social spaces and the crowd.

Returning to the wearing of the headscarf and its connection to female agency and visibility, the hijab may be worn as a means of averting a sexualised male gaze and asserting oneself as an individual rather than a sexualised object. Mohanty argues: 'To assume the mere practice of veiling […] indicates the universal oppression of [Muslim] women through sexual segregation is not only analytically reductive, but also proves to be quite useless when it comes to the elaboration of oppositional political strategy'.[79] This understanding of the policing and

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Hammad, p.59.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Mohanty, p.75.
[78] Elbadawi, p.46.
[79] Ibid.

politicising of religious clothing highlights reductive approaches to understanding choice and religious practice in the context of Muslim women. This extends to discussions of the aesthetic and conventions of what shapes and determines the composure of the crowd and city beyond architecture, clothing, and accessories. Particularly if they are politicised into symbols of religion and culture. Returning to the repetition of 'shades' in the poem, the focus on 'shades' of skin colour and tone to racially divide and 'other' minority women can be compared to Raghib's Islamic interpretation of beauty using his three tiers of beauty discussed above. Skin colour might be categorised in the third, sensual beauty. By implying that one shade is superior, more desirable, or more 'sensual' than others, Western ideologies of beauty contradict Islamic ideologies, in the context of skin shades, which encourage the idea that everything created by God (who is perfect) is consequently perfect.[80]

Hasan Bolkhari Ghehi (2017) investigates the concept of beauty both in its rational and sensible terms and argues that: 'In [the] Quran, rational affair dominates sensible affair, therefore rational beauty is flowing in all sensible parts […] Whatever God has created is beautiful because he created a sensible form out of rational being'.[81] Ghehi's main argument is that the *Quran* demonstrates an inherent relation between creation and beauty, and that Islamic thought requires humanity 'to purify his soul [and] then see the world, that is when he sees everything beautiful'.[82] In this regard, Baudelaire's notion of 'eternal' beauty can be recognised as consistent with the Islamic ideologies of beauty that operate within modern Western society. Drawing on Baudelaire and considering beauty in Ghehi's rational and sensible terms, rational being favoured by mind or intellect and sensible beauty favoured by human nature, the postcolonial flâneuse positions her gaze away from colonial ideologies of beauty. Thus, she

[80] Hasan Bolkhari Ghehi, 'Aesthetic and Concept of Beauty in Quran', *International Journal of Art*, 7.1 (2017), pp.1-5 (p.2).
[81] Ghehi, p.2.
[82] Ibid.

challenges any notion of beauty that requires marginalised identities to conform to something unnatural. Her rejection of mainstream and popular ideas of beauty that exclude her disturbs spaces in which contemporary notions of beauty and aesthetics are created and celebrated. Sabeena Akhtar (2021) argues: 'While "Muslimness" is, of course, not limited to a piece of cloth, so often we as hijab-wearing women find ourselves judged by our visibility without being afforded ownership of the narrative that surrounds it'.[83] The religious visibility that Akhtar refers to demonstrates the vulnerability inherent in making the Muslim body and femininity hyper-visible through the media offline and in online spaces.

Akhtar emphasises that British Muslim women are judged by this visibility, yet they are not given ownership of the narrative surrounding it. This is crucial to understanding the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse. She provides an alternative outlet for the gaze and voice of British Muslim women in response to surrounding narratives that Akhtar claims frame their identities. She argues that if Muslim women are constantly forced into being a public entity, other discourses can only ever offer a reductive and partial representation. Such forms of direct gendered Islamophobia eliminate the possibilities of 'eternal' or, in Ragheb's terms, rational and 'sensible' beauty.[84] By 'creat[ing] insecurities' that force Muslim women to feel 'othered' and 'excluded', Western perceptions completely overlook the element of appreciation in Baudelaire's 'religious art' by only acknowledging that which is permissible under 'sophisticated art and artists'.[85] As noted by Ossi Naukkarinen (2020):

> The aesthetic shaping of the world begins at close range: With ourselves […] We will not escape this aesthetic as long as we live, and in its most intimate form, [the] aesthetic begins and ends with our body for us all […] With the exception of some individuals alienated from normal social life.[86]

[83] Sabeena Akhtar, 'Introduction', in *Cut from the Same Cloth? Muslim Women on Life in Britain*, ed.by Sabeena Akhtar (London: Unbound, 2021), p. 1.
[84] Al-Isfahani, p.5.
[85] Baudelaire (1964), p.3.
[86] Ossi Naukkarinen, *Aesthetics As Space* (Finland: Aalto University Press, 2020), p.15.

If the postcolonial flâneuse is to be perceived using Naukkarinen's idea of the alienated minority, she can be understood as calling attention to the lack of accommodation for perceptions of beauty that belong to marginalised groups. Furthermore, the postcolonial flâneuse represents a rejection of the notions of beauty and the aesthetic that reinforce colonial ideologies and thus invites a decolonial position.

The speaker in 'Shades' asserts: 'It's not victory if only one race survives/ I am here to turn the tables'.[87] Here, the speaker defies and rewrites narratives used to control the identity of British Muslim women.[88] Additionally, the lines 'Some fine-dine/ Others are deemed erasable' indirectly compares the privilege of non-Muslim women in the Global North who are seen 'fine dining', over Muslim women who are 'deemed erasable'.[89] This argument can be developed via an engagement with Boaventura de Sousa Santos's abyssal line theory (2018). Santos claims: 'Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking'.[90] He asserts that abyssal thinking consists of 'a system of visible and invisible distinctions'.[91] Explaining this further, he notes:

> The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realms of 'this side of the line' and the realm of 'the other side of the line'. The division is such that 'the other side of the line' vanishes as reality, becomes non-existent, and is indeed produced as non-existent. Non-existent means not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being. Whatever is produced as non-existence is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other.[92]

[87] Elbadawi, p.46.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of The Cognitive Empire, The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of The South* (Croydon: Duke University Press, 2018), pp.3-4.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

Santos argues that the most fundamental characteristic of abyssal thinking is 'the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line', with the other side of the abyssal line being 'the realm beyond legality and illegality [lawlessness], and of beyond truth and falsehood [incomprehensible beliefs, idolatry, magic]'.[93] These forms of negotiation together result in a radical absence of humanity as modern sub-humanity.[94] Reflecting on Santos, I argue that similarly to knowledge, which Santos argues is deemed as non-existent beyond this side of the line (Europe), any other conception of beauty that is produced on the other side of the line (beyond Europe) is also viewed as 'non-existent'.[95] It is thus excluded from the mainstream and accepted perceptions of beauty in Western societies. Furthermore, it becomes relevant to exploring Islamic interpretations of beauty in the West and in the context of the postcolonial flâneuse.

This also emphasises how colonial ideologies continue to influence current perceptions of beauty and the aesthetic in Western society. Vikki Ann Carpenter (2021) argues that: 'Historically, colourism has been used as a tool within European colonized societies to ensure dominance of colonizers and those who possesses the sought-after features'.[96] In relation to Santos, the gaze of the postcolonial flâneuse can be recognised as decolonial as it represents an insider/outsider identity that reflects ideas of beauty and the aesthetic from both perspectives and applies these to the crowd and the city. This new representation of beauty resists Western perceptions of the female body, challenging the gaze in the context of the online domain, cityscape, and architecture as well as physical human beauty. Applying this concept to the postcolonial flâneuse online, it is instructive to acknowledge situationist approaches to

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Vikki Ann Carpenter, 'Because I am Who I Am: At The Intersection of Perceived Skin Tone, Self-Efficacy, and Discrimination', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Keiser, 2021) <https://www.proquest.com/openview/2b33326943c2073f39423afdd87a6098/1.pdf?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar> [accessed 10 February 2022].

marginalised experiences. These approaches extend the postcolonial flâneuse's existence online and the restrictions imposed on her in online spaces, groups, and platforms. Guy Debord defines situationism in '*Les Lèvres Nues'* (1956) as: 'Having to do with […] constructing situations' and a situationist as 'one who engages in the construction of situations'.[97] Whilst exploring place online, the postcolonial flâneuse may construct situations that allow her room to move between, and engage with, groups and applications, just as she would move 'offline', between crowds in cities.

This connection can be explored further by deploying psychogeographic ideas. Merlin Coverly (2006) claims: 'The postcolonial flâneur's ability to write back to dominant depictions of the urban represents the link between postcolonial flânerie and psychogeography'.[98] Similarly, the cyber postcolonial flâneuse's access to online spaces and her engagement with social media platforms creates an imperative link between the postcolonial flâneuse and psychogeography. Her choice to be visible or invisible, use her voice in online chat spaces, and respond to online discourses focusing on women from marginalised groups, allows the postcolonial flâneuse to disturb the online space as she would the city. However, it is important to recognise that risks affect online platforms just as they persist in cities and crowds. A 2020 report by Tell MAMA following the Christchurch terror attack showed that anti-Muslim hate speech online increased 63 percent whilst abusive behaviour online increased 21 percent.[99] The online world can be just as unsafe an environment for the postcolonial flâneuse, and this accords with Cooke's concept of the 'Muslimwoman' (2007).[100] In her definition, Cooke explains that she combines 'Muslim' and 'woman' into one word 'to evoke or describe a

[97] Guy Debord, 'Situationist International Online', '*Theory of Derive'* (1958) <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html> [accessed 21 December 2021].
[98] Ibid.
[99] Anon, *The Impact of The Christchurch Terror Attack Tell MAMA Interim Report 2019* (London: Faith Matters, 2020), pp.39-43 (p.42).
[100] Cooke, p.3-4.

singular identification'.[101] This 'is both a noun and an adjective that refers to an imposed identification that the individual may or may not choose for herself'.[102] She also notes that this is 'not a description of a reality. It is the ascription of a label that reduced all diversity to a single name'.[103] Cooke demonstrates how a reductive approach to understanding the religious identity of British Muslim women can subsequently strip away their individuality and overlook the diverse representations that exist amongst British Muslim women.

Cooke's essay attempts to construct a term of singular identification for Muslim women, but it fails to accommodate for Muslim women who do not veil.[104] Furthermore, it does not consider the possibility of non-Muslim women who wear the headscarf and/or veil.[105] This approach further highlights how signifiers of religious identity, such as the headscarf, are associated today with '[a] signifier of Muslimness'.[106] As such, these can exclude the postcolonial flâneuse from wider notions of flânerie because they disregard her existence and restrict her from accessing the same privileges as that of the traditional flâneur and flâneuse. The British Muslim woman's position as postcolonial flâneuse in the city, her embodied relationship, and her experience of the online space, are equally limited by her religious identity and physical appearance. With reference to Debord's ideas of the aesthetic and hierarchical factors that shape and restrict the outcomes of constructed situations, it becomes clear that the postcolonial flâneuse is received according to positive or negative representation in the media. This can also impact her movement and integration. As discussed by Alexander Hartwiger (2016): 'Marginalised experiences, that range from colonial and imperial history to the present influx of non-Western immigrants [have] been predominantly mediated through popular

[101] Cooke, p.140.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

cultural representations in film, TV, and music'.[107] Sternadd and Johanason also claim that 'the internet may provide the means for otherwise marginalised groups', such as British Muslim women, 'to make their voices heard in public' and 'online representations are therefore an important source for studying how emotions are conceptualised and communicated in [online] groups' and communities.[108] Thus, I acknowledge that online platforms have evolved into alternative channels for the postcolonial flâneuse to observe and explore the crowd.

In her 2021 essay, Kaushiki Das argues that online social spaces are reproducing 'masculine dominations' and mainstream ideologies of beauty rather than 'providing safer alternatives' for vulnerable minorities.[109] This is useful in considering how British Muslim women poets are engaging with the concept of social media and the cyber space. British Muslim women poet Raheela Suleman has used online social spaces to share her poetry. Suleman is British Muslim poet, former Barbican Young Poet, and member of the Octavia Poetry Collective. Exploring the notion of place in the online domain, Suleman's poem 'Version 2.0.' is replete with technological terminology. The poem draws on the obscurity of becoming dependent on the online world, global technological developments, and social media applications. Revealing how an online presence is becoming increasingly prioritised over a real-world presence, her use of 'force to quit', 'recycling bin', 'monitor', and 'permission' serve a double purpose in the poem as the speaker describes ways her life has transferred online.[110] The combination of technological terms used to describe her online actions such as 'force to quit' and 'permission' that are carefully used alongside objects such as 'recycling bin' and 'monitor' connect the technological/online space to the technological/real space in the

[107] Alexander Greer Hartwiger, 'The Postcolonial Flâneur: Open City and The Urban Palimpsest', *Postcolonial Text,* 11.1 (2016), pp.10-17 (p.3).
[108] Sternudd and Johansson, pp.105-115.
[109] Kaushiki Das, 'Digital "Lakhsiman Rekhas": Understanding The Impact of Safety Apps on Women's Freedom of Movement in Urban Spaces', *Global Perspectives Journal,* 2.1 (2021), pp.1-56 (p.1).
[110] Raheela Suleman, 'Version 2.O', in *Use Words First*, ed. by Jude Yawson (London, Wrecking Ball Press, 2019), pp.97-98 (p.98).

poem. Employing conversational English creates the association to applications and features of technological devices, such a Microsoft Office software, computer application names, and other terminology used across social media platforms. The use of these words suggests that the line between online and offline space has become less recognisable through the dominance of cyber identities and spaces in our lives. The speaker describes a scenario in which she physically lives inside of her computer: 'Convincing us of inanimate living, real actualisation, incarnation, immersion'.[111] Engaging with negative perceptions of the online space, this emphasises dependency on technology and social media, and the anxieties surrounding the effects of unrealistic standards and expectations formed online.

These dependencies and anxieties follow users into their lives offline. In their 2017 essay, Florencia García-Rapp and Carles Rocacuberes argue that: 'In opposition to the short lived visibility of online trends, viral videos and memes, […] sustained popularity [is] considered influential', which translates offline to a 'high status community position in a competitive cultural industry'.[112] They continue: 'Online and offline visibility highlight the juxtaposition of two opposing political economies (community and commerce, commoditization and connection).[113] Such topics are found at the forefront of debates regarding social media and mental health. The online experience of the British Muslim woman is also considered in Elbadawi's poem 'Lockdown'.[114] This poem is written in the style of a diary entry recounting the speaker's personal reflections during the lockdown stage of the pandemic. The poetic speaker explores her personal journey with her spiritual self and Islam after being cut off from the external world during the initial lockdown. The poem creates contrasts by using human dependency on technology pre and post the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns.

[111] Ibid.
[112] Florencia García-Rapp and Carles Rocacuberes, 'Being An Online Celebrity - Norms and Expectations of Youtube's Beauty Community', *First Monday,* 22.7 (2017), pp.2-26 (p.3).
[113] Ibid.
[114] Elbadawi, p.46.

Although the influence of social media on contemporary interpretations of beauty and the aesthetic existed before the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to acknowledge the increased engagement and dependency on social media and the enhanced consumption of material promoted online during these periods. These contributed to particular online representations of beauty and the aesthetic and intensified marginalised experiences of self-identification on virtual platforms. The speaker recounts 'disconnecting from connections we have worked so hard/ to build over the years' and 'Self-isolating in houses some of us never spent enough time/ to make homes in'.[115] The disconnection from the offline space is a pivotal moment of migration from the real world to the online space for the speaker.

Focusing on the meaning of 'social distancing' both physically and spiritually, the speaker asserts that she and those she includes in her community 'Never wanted to come face to face with loneliness/ Never gave our minds time to fixate on could have beens/ Should have beens/ We are human beings'.[116] The online space becomes an alternative area in which to form connections and relationships. This is highlighted with a focus on the ways that post-pandemic social distancing has created a transition to online alternative ways of living. This is also represented through the allegory of the house as the physical connection to the world and the home as a metaphor for the spiritual self. Expanding on social distancing, Mark Alfano (2013) argues that it is: 'A function of three dimensions: Interaction, Group Identity, and Information'.[117] Drawing on Alfano's three dimensions in the context of social media applications, these alternative ways of living can be gauged in the postcolonial flâneuse's online 'interactions', both as an individual and within groups. This is achieved by contrasting the information gleaned from an individual interaction with that gained from inhabiting a group identity as a Muslim woman.

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Mark Alfano, *Characters of Moral Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.183-184.

The speaker of Elbadawi's poem can be read as discussing how the online space has provided a platform to 'redefine' and challenge stereotypes about Muslim women: '[B]rought together by this universal moment in history/ That will make break us/ Redefine how we perceive ourselves and one another'.[118] Elbadawi's speaker contributes to this idea of alternative notions of socialising, that include finding 'alternative ways of living', referring to the new norm of working at home and living online.[119] In their 2020 report, Muhammad Said, Musta'in Mashud, and Rachmah Ida found that, 'social media was given a new function of providing pandemic updates and keeping individuals connected to friends and family'.[120] Their study revealed that: 'Empathy amongst the respondents [on] social [media] networks has increased during the pandemic situation, and people [do not] feel alone in facing [the pandemic]'.[121] The data produced noted that 46.0 percent of respondents used social media applications to keep themselves busy, 35.1 percent used it to stay in touch with relatives and update them on their situation, and 41.7 percent used it to share their experiences with friends and other social media users.[122] The usefulness of creating non-physical connections online is also reflected in the poem. The poetic speaker demonstrates how behaviour adaptations facilitated social distancing and bridged social gaps for individuals and groups.

As I have suggested above, social media platforms do not sufficiently tackle barriers of racial and religious inequalities but rather provide additional barriers for the postcolonial flâneuse. In a case study from 2014 focusing on 'the lived experiences of Muslim women in Niqab', Irene Zempi employs autoethnographic approaches to the daily interactions and experiences of visibly Muslim women in the streets of Leicester, UK. Zempi wore a niqab for

[118] Elbadawi, p.56.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Muhammad Said, Musta'in Mashud, and Rachmah Ida, 'Usage of Social Media During The Pandemic: Seeking Support and Awareness About COVID-19 Through Social Media Platforms', *Journal of Public Affairs*, 20.10 (2020), pp.1-9 (p.3).
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

a fixed period and was physically and verbally abused during the experiment. Zempi explains that the experiment had 'emotional, psychological and physiological impacts on [her] well-being', leading to 'withdrawing' and isolating herself from society due to increased anxiety and fear of vulnerability in public spaces.[123] This experience of a non-Muslim woman who has chosen to dress in Islamic fashion further indicates the lack of equality and acceptance for diverse forms of self-expression in British cities. Tariq Modood (2020) emphasises that 'oppressive mis-recognition requires re-correction and respect for difference by creating positive identities that are equal to others and accommodate the difference shared by all'.[124] His argument draws on a sense of 'belonging' without 'boundaries [that] vary across time and place and social construction'.[125] In this context, I argue that imposing bans on religious clothing such as hijabs, burqas, and niqabs, targets the religious identity and practice of Muslim women.

Placing restrictions on Muslim visibility applies further pressure on Muslim women to compromise their religious views in accordance with that which is accepted by Western society and as a result forces them to compromise their individuality. Sternhood and Johansson claim: 'In a time when depression, stress and anxiety are said to increase among young people, it is important to understand how such feelings are mediated and associated with certain forms of cultural expression'.[126] Returning to Elbadawi's poem 'Shades', the speaker demonstrates how online activity impacts discussions offline around the use of social media by Muslim women to tackle stereotypes. She describes a situation where women will 'redefine how we perceive ourselves and one another/ Will we succumb/ To our survival of the fittest instincts/ Or will we unite as one in our bid to fight this?'.[127] The pause between stanzas seven and eight is

[123] Imran Awan, Irene Zempi, *Islamophobic Hate Crime, A Student Textbook* (London: Routledge, 2019), p.77.
[124] Tariq Modood, 'Islamophobia and Normative Sociology', *Journal of The British Academy*, 8.29 (2020), pp.29-49 (p.40).
[125] Ibid.
[126] Sternudd and Johansson, pp.105-115.
[127] Elbadawi, p.56

significant since it represents the silencing of women's voices and creates unity between women of all 'shades', religions, and classes.

The stanza repeats the phrases 'she says' and 'no' that can be read as responding to experiences of physical and verbal attacks on Muslim women including the objectification and victimisation of those who choose to wear the hijab, niqab, and/or burqa. Barbara Perry (2014) states: 'Muslim women and girls appear to be extremely vulnerable to violence motivated by their status as Muslims but especially as Muslim women'.[128] Key statistics from a report by Tell MAMA in 2018 on Islamophobia highlighted that, 'women made up 57 percent (741) of 1244 violent Islamophobic attacks in the UK'.[129] Poet and Activist, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, responds to the lack of safety of women walking the city in her poem 'Reclaim the Night'. This poem was originally written for the Reclaim the Night march which took place in Cambridge in 2015. The poetic speaker describes a protest as she declares: 'Tonight we will walk/ but we will reclaim the art of walking/ we will stride/ march, stamp/ heads high/ rescue our eyes from the ground/ and our ears/ from the footsteps/ always the footsteps'.[130] The speaker is protesting for safer spaces in the city for women. The act of walking is important to reading the poetic speaker as a postcolonial flâneuse as she lists the positions of her feet, her movement, and her physical contact with the city. These include 'walking', 'stride', 'march', 'stamp'.[131] Each movement can be read as contributing to the non-conforming nature of the postcolonial flâneuse. Rather than simply strolling, she engages with alternative modes of navigating the city and protesting. The speaker creates space for the silenced voices of women, as she continues: 'We will snatch back the feeling of solitude in open fields/ we will recover the art

[128] Barabara Perry, 'Gendered Islamophobia: Hate Crime against Muslim Women', *Social Identities*, 20.1 (2014), pp.74-89 (p.74).
[129] Anon, 'Tell Mama Annual Report: Normalising hatred', *Tell MAMA,* 2 September 2019, <https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-annual-report-2018-_-normalising-hate/> [accessed 9 August 2021].
[130] Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, *Postcolonial Banter* (Birmingham: Verve, 2019), p.102.
[131] Ibid.

of confidence even when the streetlights flicker'.[132] Interpreted in the context of this chapter, the poetic speaker draws on womanhood, agency, and visibility. This assertion of agency and visibility is significant in arguing that the postcolonial flâneuse requires racial and religious accommodation. This will contribute to tackling barriers and restrictions to the movement of the postcolonial flâneuse, online and offline.

The presence of the online space in the practice of the cyber postcolonial flâneuse highlights the evolving nature of flânerie and flâneuserie. Social media allows the postcolonial flâneuse to use the online space, as described by Saskia Warren (2019) to: '[r]enegotiate familial community, institutional and social norms in the contemporary times' and thus create 'new images of Muslim women' in the city that 'challenge conservative and Western-liberal thinking of Islam [and] gender' and equality.[133] The postcolonial flâneuse thus reflects a less normative version of beauty and the aesthetic in the city and the crowd to the extent that her observations of beauty and the aesthetic move away from capitalist and colonial notions and aim to decolonise those concepts. The poets discussed in this chapter demonstrate how the online space is used to challenge not only stereotypes about identity but also the construction of these concepts in relation to British Muslim women. Warren claims: 'Creating new spaces of identification and belonging in predominantly Western-liberal societies [is] challenging stereotypes and resisting socio-economic exclusion by interrogating notions of Muslimness and womanhood'.[134]

Finally, it is important to remember that the postcolonial flâneuse exists offline and online simultaneously. Considering how the poets discussed in this chapter engage with the notion of 'place' online, it is apparent that the cyber postcolonial flâneuse finds herself

[132] Manzoor-Khan, p.101.
[133] Saskia Warren, '#youraveragemuslim: Ruptural Geopolitics of British Muslim Women's Media and Fashion', *Political Geography*, 69.0 (2019), pp.118-127 (p.119).
[134] Ibid.

vulnerable and excluded as often as she feels included. She faces multiple barriers beyond her gender, specifically imposed due to her racial and religious visibility. Reflecting on the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse, this chapter has identified the importance of adapting to technological advancements and embracing new forms of travel and navigating space. This also requires further attention in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdowns and the restrictions imposed on travel and navigating space that followed post-lockdowns. Reflecting on the history of pandemics, epidemics, and flânerie, the following chapter considers further barriers for marginalised groups, such as Muslim women, in pandemic cities and during the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdowns.

Chapter Four: The COVID-19 Pandemic Postcolonial Flâneuse

In a recent essay, Marylaura Papalas examines three references made to flânerie in French journalism during the Covid-19 pandemic to highlight how flânerie has evolved and adapted to pandemic restrictions. She observes: 'Between March 2020 and April 2021, the French press used the word flânerie frequently in two contexts: The French bookstore and the fashion show'.[1] Associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, journalists in France invented expressions like 'Flânerie Inversêe', 'L'impossible Flâneries', and 'Librairie Flâneuse' to describe how the practice had adapted to pandemic restrictions in the city space.[2] This pointed to new forms of flânerie which, in this instance, evolved from lockdowns. This chapter employs textual analysis of poetry and participant interviews to explore the practice of flânerie and flâneuserie, specifically in the context of Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, from the perspectives of Muslim women as postcolonial flâneuses.

The outbreak of the Corona virus, more popularly referred to as Covid-19, which is airborne and spreads by human contact, initiated a global pandemic and led to lockdowns, curfews, and various other strict measures being implemented to prevent further spread of the virus in early 2020. All public shared spaces were closed for the foreseeable future and people were forced to stay at home and adapt their work lives to their home spaces. From late 2020, face masks, hand sanitisers, and social distancing rules were enforced. Spending more time at home, the domestic space was complicated with lockdown routines. Social and professional spaces became synonymous. For students, school classes and university lectures became Zoom or Teams calls from their dining tables and bedroom desks. Similarly, business meetings and office work resumed from home, closing the gap between what David Antonio Moody

[1] Marylaura Papalas, 'Flânerie in The Time of Covid-19', *French Politics Culture and Society*, 40.2 (2022), pp.75-89 (p.75).
[2] Ibid.

describes as 'private labour (resting, eating)' and 'public work (building, producing)'.[3] In his 2022 essay which explores flânerie in the virtual city, he claims this reduced an 'individual's ability to understand and express their own directiveness'.[4] In the context of Moody's distinction between private labour and public work, the Covid-19 lockdowns forced both the private and public sphere to merge. As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded and lockdowns persisted, the British government introduced guided exercise times (two hours per day) which gave the public permission to exercise outside of their homes.[5] Outdoor exercise boosted people's physical and mental wellbeing during lockdown and was encouraged, persuading more people to walk, cycle, jog, and run. Most importantly to the context of this chapter, it unintentionally encouraged acts of flânerie and flâneuserie.

With reference to the postcolonial flâneuse in poetry books: *My Body Can House Two Hearts* (2019) by Hanan Issa, *Litanies* (2021) by Naush Sabah, *Europe, Love Me Back* (2022) by Rakhshan Rizwan, and *Too Much Mirch* (2022) by Safia Khan, this chapter identifies how writers can use flânerie as a mode of writing to gain visibility, assert agency, and create political and religious dialogue. This chapter also demonstrates how online platforms have been employed to engage postcolonial flâneuserie and wider poetry audiences in the context of British Muslim women poets during and after pandemic lockdowns. This draws attention to poetry trends, such as online readings and book clubs, that appeared during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and have continued to remain part of poetry culture. Videos referenced in this chapter include: 'Hanan Issa: The Land Would Disappear' by the Learned Society of Wales (2020) and 'Almost Live: Durre Shahwar' by Glynn Vivian (2020). These videos are analysed alongside published poetry to demonstrate how different methods of sharing poetry during the

[3] David Antonio Moody 'Walking in The Virtual City: Gallery, Flânerie, Game', *South Atlantic Review*, 87.2 (2022), pp.119-143 (p.122).
[4] Ibid.
[5] RT Hon Boris Johnson MP, 'Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 March 2020' (2020), Gov.uk, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020, [accessed 23 January 2023].

lockdown stages of the pandemic have continued to be practiced since lockdowns have lifted. Since the end of lockdowns, official statistical data indicates an increase in people walking regularly.[6] Findings from such reports highlight that 'increases in walking' took place mainly in the 'second phase of the pandemic' and continued to rise throughout and after the lockdowns.[7] The National Travel Attitudes Study (NTAS) also suggested: 'A high proportion of people (94%) intended to carry on increased levels of walking' once restrictions were removed.[8] Considering the long-lasting impact that the lockdowns have had in enabling yet restricting the postcolonial flâneuse, this chapter considers the extent to which flânerie is reverting to pre-pandemic practices.

Flânerie is no stranger to pandemics and has had to confront other pandemics and epidemics throughout history. In the nineteenth century, the average Parisian resident believed cholera was a form of toxic or bad air that was transmitted aerially. This complicated the public's relationship with cities and crowds. In 'The Man of The Crowd' (1840) by Edgar Allan Poe, the narrator describes a scene in 1830's London where a cholera outbreak amongst other epidemics such as influenza and tuberculosis had a mass effect on the city.[9] In the beginning of the short story, Poe's flâneur describes a 'mysterious' illness:

> Men die nightly in their beds, wringing the hands of ghostly confessors, and looking them piteously in the eyes – die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of mysteries which will not suffer themselves revealed.[10]

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[6] Unknown, Department for Transport, 'Official Statistic: The Impact of Corona Virus Pandemic on Walking and cycling statistic, England 2020' (2021), < https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2020/the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic-on-walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2020>, [Accessed 25 January 2023].
[7] Ibid.
[8] Unknown, Department for Transport, 'National Statistics: National Travel Survey 2020' (2021), <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020/national-travel-survey-2020>, [accessed 25 January 2023].
[9] Edgar Allen Poe, 'The Man of The Crowd', *Poe Stories* (1940), < https://poestories.com/read/manofthecrowd> [accessed March 4, 2023].
[10] Ibid.

The cholera epidemic, which is indirectly referred to by Poe's flâneur, killed thousands of people in London and Paris. Between outbreaks, local citizens would regroup in marginal spaces such as coffee shops. He explains: 'I sat at the large bow-window of the D— Coffee-House in London. For some months I had been ill in health but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods […] merely to breathe was enjoyment'.[11] Poe's flâneur, recovered from illness, now sits at a coffee shop observing the city and crowd around him:

> I felt a calm but inquisitive interest in everything. With a cigar in my mouth and a newspaper in my lap, I had been amusing myself for the greater part of the afternoon, now in pouring over advertisements, now in observing the promiscuous company in the room, and now in peering through the smoky panes into the street.[12]

The repetition of 'now in' is significant to the sensory restrictions and recovery of the flâneur. Each clause related to his action can be read as a metaphor that connects his internal recovery to the external act of flânerie during the epidemic. The first act of Poe's flâneur is very insular and restricted as he reads the paper, 'pouring over advertisements', the second, transitioning to his observations of 'the promiscuous company in the room' as he is thinking about the crowd around him, and finally the third act in which he is looking beyond his immediate environment and 'peering through the smoky panes into the street'.[13] This signifies the three stages of his internal recovery and the shifting of the relationship between the flâneur and the internal to the flâneur and the external.[14] He is submerged in the crowd at the coffee shop and becomes a bystander who is observing the latest news and trends, his company, and the crowd on the other

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

side of the window. His behaviour signifies a return to pre-epidemic routines but with a new consciousness and apprehension. Having been restricted from the simple pleasures of being a flâneur, he has a newfound awareness and appreciation of his positionality and privilege.

The same sense of hesitancy following a period of restricted movement can be detected in Baudelaire's description of a woman's movement through the street, observed in his poem 'To a Woman Passing By' (1860). First published in English in 1861, the poem provides a glimpse into the city of Paris during an epidemic. The speaker notices a woman in mourning, moving silently between crowds of pedestrians: 'The darkening street howling round me when a woman passed on her/ way, so tall and slender, all in black mourning, majestical in her grief with/ her stately hand lifting and swaying in scallop and hem'.[15] As she drifts away into the crowd the speaker asks, 'shall I never see you once more except in eternity?'.[16] This moment is significant to the sense of loss and uncertainty that came with the viral outbreak as the speaker describes the tense and crammed pavements as 'darkening street howling round' him with uncharacteristic detachment and doubt. He is referring to himself as 'tense as a man out of his wits'.[17] Baudelaire's flâneur is entranced by this woman's loss but simultaneously consumed by the grief of the crowd. The relationship between flâneur and the crowd existed even as the epidemic was ongoing; Poe and Baudelaire convey the evolving and adapting nature of the flâneur to epidemics and pandemics, which can be compared to poetry produced in more recent times including work by Khan, Sabah, Issa, and Rizwan.

Complicated by lockdowns, restrictions, and social distancing, the postcolonial flâneuse created a bridge between herself and the city and crowd using poetry. This contributed to her internal and external processing and healing during the lockdown in the same way that Poe's flâneur experienced an internal and external healing process. Papalas translates from

[15] Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire The Complete Verse*, trans. by Francis Scarf (London: Anvil, 1986), p.186.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid

French articles by Anthony Galluzzo, Gregory Plouviez, and Nicole Vulser, to propose more modern pandemic and post-pandemic ways of considering flânerie. Galluzzo's article for 'LeMonde Diplomatique' (2020) classifies the 'Flânerie Inversée' as 'underscor[ing] journalism's hyper-awareness of the changing practices of walking and shopping during the global pandemic'.[18] Plouviez's article in 'Le Parisien' (2020) introduces the 'L'Impossible Flânerie'.[19] This is a phrase that 'illustrates how Parisians, most respectfully of their fellow citizens and of the laws nonetheless became frustrated with losing what were once the easy rituals of browsing, strolling, and observing with near total freedom'.[20] He explains that 'walking, even digitally […] provided the would-be stroller with choices'.[21] Elaborating on Vulser's 'Librairie Flâneuse', Papalas translates Vulser's article for *Le Monde* (2020) in which he notes that, 'creative arrows and pathways directing the literary flâneuse (such as the Librarie Flâneuse) through the library' became a 'reality [as] they attest to the heightened level of regulation of walking, and at the same time they liberated the stroller to perhaps go in a direction they may not have consciously chosen'.[22] This encouraged the flâneuse to move through sections offering intellectual, academic, or leisurely interest. Vulser emphasises that, 'the stroller may experience a different book section or display island and be exposed to a genre other than the one they usually choose'.[23] These forms of exploratory flânerie during the Covid-19 pandemic expand our understanding of the evolving and adapting nature of the flâneuse.

Drawing on the above modes of flânerie and comparing Baudelaire and Poe's flâneur in the pandemic city to the flâneuse in the pandemic city, invites questioning of the urban

[18] Anthony Galluzzo, trans. by Marylaura Papalas, 'Flânerie in The Time of Covid-19', *French Politics Culture and Society*, 40.2 (2022), pp.75-89 (p.76).
[19] Gregory Plouviez, trans. by Marylaura Papalas, 'Flânerie in The Time of Covid-19', *French Politics Culture and Society*, 40.2 (2022), pp.75-89 (p.77).
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Nicole Vulser, trans. by Marylaura Papalas, 'Flânerie in The Time of Covid-19', *French Politics Culture and Society*, 40.2 (2022), pp.75-89 (p.78).
[23] Ibid.

setting as becoming safer and more inclusive for the postcolonial flâneuse, or the contrary. George Sand is widely interpreted as a flâneuse of the nineteenth century. In her autobiography *Story of My Life* (1854) translated by Thelma Jurgrau in 1991, she describes how being a woman restricted her freedom. To assert her agency in the city, Sand had to reconsider her visibility and how she dressed. She claimed her 'skirts, dainty shoes and general femininity' made her vulnerable.[24] She writes:

> I had made for myself a redingote-guérite in heavy grey cloth, pants and vest to match. With a grey hat and large woollen cravat, I was a perfect first-year student […] With those little iron-shod heels, I was solid on the pavement. I flew from one end of Paris to the other. It seemed to me that I could go round the world. And then, my clothes feared nothing. I ran out in every kind of weather, I came home at every sort of hour, I sat in the put at the theatre.[25]

Disguised in male garb, she becomes 'an atom lost in the immense crowd' where 'no one paid attention to [her], and no one looked at [her], no one gave [her] a second thought'.[26] Janet Wolff (1985) identifies the closest thing to a female stroller in George Sand as she writes 'the disguise made the life of the flâneur available to her; as she knew very well, she could not adopt the non-existent role of a flâneuse. Women could not stroll alone in the city'.[27] Sand's anonymity when dressed as a man revealed a privilege not afforded to women at that time.[28] This remains true in the context of visibly Muslim women. Visibly Muslim women struggle to be this 'atom' in the crowd if they choose to wear a hijab, niqab, or burqa. Although being a female stroller in the city is now an unquestionable norm in the West, there remain many unaccommodated individuals who are excluded from public spaces.

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[24] George Sand, *Story Of My Life*, trans. by Thelma Jurgrau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), p.905.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2.3 (1985), pp.37-46 (p.42).
[28] Ibid.

While Sand becomes invisible dressed as a man, she is conscious of her invisibility as a woman and the temporary nature of her disguise. In similar circumstances, the visible Muslim woman remains perceptibly a part of minority race and faith groups that form her identity as an individual member of society. Her race and faith differentiate her from the majority, thus, raising the question of how the visible Muslim woman can stroll the city without being paid unwanted attention, imposed to vulnerability, being looked at in a way that excludes her, and without anyone finding fault with how she chooses to dress and where she chooses to exist. Lauren Elkin (2016) focuses on the street strollers' gender, positionality, status, and agency, as she states: 'What we build not only reflects but determines who we are and who we'll be'.[29] Commenting on the construction of urban spaces as a means of representation for the society that they are inhabited by, this quote reflects on how the construction of the city's landscape is psychically built to accommodate for or exclude specific groups of people. This idea creates space to question what legacy is left for future generations, particularly in the context of marginalised women. If who we are as a society is reflected by our cities, how do we physically construct and reshape the city's landscape to be more inclusive and safer? Elkin notes that 'it is only in becoming aware of the invisible boundaries of the city that we challenge them'.[30] A woman's positionality in the city is influenced by the materiality of the metropolis and whether this is a safe and inclusive space for her to be part of.

Considering these 'invisible boundaries' and the postcolonial flâneuse, the materiality of the city impacts her agency and ability to conduct flânerie.[31] Elkin continues: 'Humans don't just thrive, no matter where you put them. Environment matters. Environment is determinative, constitutive; it makes you who you are, it makes you do what you do'.[32] In the context of the

[29] Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse Women Walk The City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and Londo*n (London: Penguin, 2016), p.33.
[30] Elkin, p.288.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Elkin, p.33.

postcolonial flâneuse as a Muslim woman, class, race, and religious consciousness affect her experiences and intensify her positionality and agency in her environment. Repositioning flânerie in postcolonial contexts is an important tool for community engagement and global awareness, especially regarding twenty-first century cities. In these cities we find traces of colonial histories and the continual reverberations of colonialism, controversial political events like Brexit, and historic social movements like Black Lives Matter and Hands Off My Hijab.

Rakshan Rizwan's collection *Europe, Love Me Back* (2022) questions the relationship between Muslim women and the European city by exposing her position as a 'small brown woman in Dutch suburbs, hospitals, and academia'.[33] Rizwan is a poet and editor who was born in Pakistan but moved to the Netherlands. She has previously lived in Germany but is now living in America. During an interview with Rizwan, we discussed key themes in her poetry including isolation and identity. She shared: 'Isolation is something that comes up a lot in the collection. When I was faced with isolation in the pandemic it made me remember the isolation in my own life'.[34] Expanding on her personal experiences of isolation as a Muslim woman living in the Global North, she said:

> It made me think of instances in my life when I've
> experienced loneliness and isolation not because
> I'm alone but because I could be in a crowd of people
> or a crowded place and still feel alone. Whether it was
> as a brown Muslim woman in the suburbs or a loneliness
> in a café, [or] being the only hijabi person in the department. [35]

Echoing the detachment of the postcolonial flâneuse from the crowd, Rizwan's experience of exclusion and isolation within the city contributes to her detachment from the space and crowd.

[33] Rakhshan Rizwan, *Europe, Love Me Back* (Birmingham: Emma Press, 2022), pp.23-25 (p.24).
[34] Rakhshan Rizwan, Interview Appendices, p.101.
[35] Ibid.

The poem 'Flâneuse' which is written in three stanzas, navigates the physical body, the city, and the relationship between the self and imaginary city. The poetic speaker begins by questioning: 'How does one walk in a city,/ when the city was imagined for others?'.[36] Immediately conveying the exclusion and othering of her identity, she queries the relationship between Muslim women and belonging in the city, asking whether the city accommodates women like her, or intentionally excludes them. Reflecting on the opening of this poem, Rizwan spoke about the different experiences of walking within European cities in the Netherlands and Germany in comparison to her home country, Pakistan. She focused on the difference in navigating the city alone as a visibly Muslim woman:

> I talk about being in cities or being the flâneuse in cities
> that aren't built for you, whether that be in Lahore, so cities
> that are not built for young women or Holland or Germany
> [where] the city is built for white men or white women. Just
> walking around the city knowing that these spaces are not
> built for you, they're not meant for you, and you're not welcome,
> even though you love walking through them, and you feel
> a sense of belonging to them […] it's not always reciprocated.[37]

Connecting her own experiences to the voice of the poetic speaker, Rizwan draws attention to the physical barriers and restrictions associated with being the postcolonial flâneuse. The speaker continues: 'The gazes seek her out,/ letting her know she shouldn't be here'.[38] This is followed by a shift where: 'She is learning to find herself/ beneath all the words and the lessons/ about space'.[39] Reflecting on this, Rizwan said: 'You move to a city where it is more socially acceptable for you to walk but then there's other kinds of dangers'.[40] The poem uses the metaphor of the human body to highlight the restricted relationship between the speaker and the urban landscape. This is important to the theme of the poem as the speaker's gaze becomes

[36] Rizwan, p.24.
[37] Rizwan, Interview Appendices, p.108.
[38] Rizwan, p.24
[39] Ibid.
[40] Rizwan, Interview Appendices, p.108.

a mirror for her visibility in the city. Rizwan's focus on visibility and exclusion highlights the limitations and obstacles for Muslim women strolling in cities more broadly. The poem concludes: 'Now all she needs are pockets to store her pepper spray/ and a lipstick that's secretly a knife', signalling constant vulnerability.[41] Read as the postcolonial flâneuse, the speaker conveys how these spaces impose limitations on her practice.

Suggesting introspection in both public and private spaces, Rizwan's poem 'My House is Becoming Like My Country' blends the public and private spaces of the speaker's life during the lockdown period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering the form of the poem, Rizwan explained: 'I chose free verse because I wanted it to have this continuous rhythmic feel, to not have any interruptions […] I just really wanted to pull the reader into this experience and immerse them, so they were in it with me'.[42] The poem begins by exposing uncomfortable and invasive experiences from the speaker's public life using the setting of her home to create the discomfort in the private space by means of her relationship with her husband and son. The speaker shares: 'Everything feels very strange between us,/ black marionettes – zwarte pieten – swing from the walls/ and traipse all over the house like trapeze artists,/ sleep in the window displays and have such cheeky grins/ but we don't know what any of this means'.[43] The home space is used to reflect the pandemic setting, once again connecting the internal and external like Poe. Discussing the poem in more detail during our interview, Rizwan clarified:

> I was trying to defamiliarise the private space. We think of the private space as our homes: Relaxation and reclusion and ease and comfort and rest but what happens when that is no longer the case and if the public space intrudes into the private space making it exactly like that.[44]

[41] Rizwan, p.25.
[42] Rizwan, Interview Appendices, p.109.
[43] Rizwan, pp.23-25 (p.23).
[44] Rizwan, Interview Appendices, p.109.

This reading of the speaker as a postcolonial flâneuse makes clear that her exclusion from specific public places are connected to her religious visibility. She says: 'No one speaks to me for days. I push my headscarf/ further back into my bones but nothing changes'.[45] Rizwan maintains the use of the home space as a metaphor to comment on the politics of Muslim women in Western cities. She explained:

> I wanted the reader to think about the relationship between the public and the private. How they function for Muslim women. Women who wear the hijab like me. There is a difference, at home you're unveiling and you're relaxed, and then when you're outside it changes. So, it's an introspection on what that means for different people and different bodies.[46]

In this context, the deliberate use of uncomfortable and invasive images in the poem portrays the feeling of violation and suffocation: 'There is a border security officer in our bed/ he covers our bodies with exit/ entry stamps/ as we drift in and out of sleep if anyone/ as much as brushes against me in the corridor/ I break into sweat'.[47] These images intensify: 'When I go to the attic/ to bring down the laundry I have palpitations/ once someone came up behind me as I showered/ and offered me loose change'.[48] The speaker's personal space and identity are simultaneously invaded and objectified. This is further intensified in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

Highlighting the invasion of her identity and boundaries, she draws on her vulnerabilities as a Muslim woman of colour to highlight her isolation. Her agency is violated by the country she is living in and suffocated by Islamophobic ideologies that intentionally isolate her from her community and from public spaces in the city. Rizwan comments: 'I wanted this connection to come through. There definitely is a relationship between the way that

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Rizwan, p.24.
[48] Ibid.

the speaker perceives themselves, perceives other people perceiving them, and how those changes shift their relationship with the city'.[49] Comparing Sand to Rizwan's speaker, we can observe that the visibility of the postcolonial flâneuse has implications for her positionality and agency, revealing further layers of power, race, and religious disparity. The political consciousness of the postcolonial flâneuse affects her ability to stroll in the city as it requires her to adapt to alternative modes and zones in the city that feel like safe spaces to her. These could be identified in her local areas, more populated spaces in main cities, and online platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, where she can identify with likeminded individuals and form communities who she feels represented by.

Discussing pre-pandemic flânerie, Jo Livingstone and Lovia Gyaryke (2017) suggest: 'The flâneur walks around the city. He is in constant pursuit of knowledge, appreciates aesthetics, and feels most at home in crowds. He is a default subject with no markers of identity'.[50] They claim that the flâneur has 'a pair of eyes with no human relationship and a politics only of witnessing'.[51] This highlights the privilege of being a white male flâneur that is not extended to the postcolonial flâneuse. As much as she cares for the beauty of the present moment, her gaze is conscious of the ways that the socially structured legacies of colonialism such as Islamophobia, racism, orientalism, imperialism, and capitalism, continue to surround her and make her visible. This affects her experiences within public spaces. Although the pre-pandemic postcolonial flâneuse was able to stroll the urban city without government-imposed restrictions and guidelines, her access to spaces was obstructed by her hypervisibility, especially if visibly identifiable as Muslim. The Covid-19 outbreak intensified this exclusion that is based on her visibility.

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[49] Rizwan, Interview Appendices, p.108.
[50] Jo Livingstone and Lovia Gyaryke, 'Death To The Flâneur', *The New Republic* (2017) < https://newrepublic.com/article/141623/death-flaneur> [accessed 3 February 2023].
[51] Ibid.

Several anthologies of lockdown and pandemic literature have been published, yet the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the city experiences of marginalised groups remains under-emphasised. In Rachid Acism's 2021 study of lockdown poetry and its role in healing public anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic, he highlights: 'A quick search for Covid-19 lockdown poetry online yields the following results: "Poems of the pandemic", "Pandemic poetry", "Poems on coronavirus", "Of poetry and pandemic", "Poetry on a pandemic", "Poetry in the midst of a pandemic", "Poems from a pandemic", "The pandemic in poetry"'.[52] Whilst researching Covid-19 lockdown and pandemic poetry by British Muslim women, I noticed an absence of their voices in journals such as: *Perhappened*, *CPQuartely, The Ramnant Archive*, *Dust Poetry*, *Brag Writers*, and *Amberflora*. These focused principally on pandemic poetry and appeared at the beginning stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. This absence invites enquiry into the spaces where voices of Muslim women writers were most invisible during the pandemic and how issues surrounding race and religion were being challenged in literary spaces. Claire Gail Chambers (2021) introduces the term 'pericoronial writing' which she defines as 'literature published mostly before but also during the novel coronavirus's emergence'.[53] Explaining pericoronial writing she notes that, 'such writing resists imperialism and thinks through issues around race, class and gender, while also exploring public health crisis and unequal access to medical care'.[54] Considering Chambers' idea of pericoronial writing in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial flâneuse, creates scope to compare how selected poets address political, spiritual, and online influences during and immediately following the lockdowns.

[52] Rachid Acism, 'Lockdown Poetry, Healing and The Covid-19 Pandemic', *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 34.2 (2021), pp.67-76 (p.69).
[53] Claire Gail Chambers, 'Pericoronial Writing From China and The Diaspora', *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, 8.2-3 (2021), pp.193-215 (p.210).
[54] Ibid.

Discussing lockdown flânerie in an article for *The Guardian*, Chris Moss provides a refreshing perspective on how to walk in the city during the lockdown and advises people to enjoy strolling in the empty spaces and 'walking the twenty first century ghost city'.[55] His reference to the 'ghost city' characterises empty spaces as a phenomenon that needs to be observed as part of history.[56] He argues:

> For some translators, 'idler' is the best equivalent of flâneur. Ambling is best enjoyed slowly, daydreaming. 'A dandy does nothing', Baudelaire wrote. The pandemic-struck city, with its permanent Sunday-state, is ideal for leisurely meandering. Use it while it lasts.[57]

In encouraging people to walk, he reinvents flânerie in the context of the pandemic, listing the compatibility of certain flânerie characteristics with the emptiness of the pandemic city. This further highlights its appeal to flâneurs and flâneuses as individual observations and reflections become a form of reconnection and reintegration to pre-pandemic norms.

Sara M. Dye (2022) explains how walking in 'Covid times' influenced the practice of flânerie more widely. She asserts: 'The twenty-first century flâneuse/flâneur emerges as an actor whose presence and witness-bearing engender numerous possibilities for political engagement'.[58] Contributing a colonial and political consciousness to flânerie practice, the postcolonial flâneuse creates space within this role to question the marginalised experiences of walking in the city during the pandemic. Chambers suggests that 'the city, then, is a haunted spaced populated by ghostly reminders of the structural inequality and systematic racism of the world system'.[59] Disturbing the pandemic city space, the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial

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[55] Chris Moss, 'Why Cities Emptied by Covid-19 Are Perfect For Modern Flâneur's', *The Guardian* (2021) < https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/apr/06/cities-emptied-by-covid-perfect-for-modern-flaneur-baudelaire> [accessed 9 September 2021].
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Sara M. Dye, 'Walking in Covid Times: Practicing Flânerie, Practicing Politics', *South Atlantic Review*, 87.2 (2022), pp.38-59 (p.38).
[59] Chambers, pp.193-215.

flâneuse calls out the structural inequalities and systematic racism that affect her practice and experience in the city. Dye emphasises: 'Who is out walking and where they are walking is political'.[60] She argues:

> Communicating who feels safe enough to walk or is compelled to walk and communicating something about the desirability or necessity of moving through or to a particular place, in the context of the temporal, sensorial and emotional array of covid times [is] marked by yelling […] out experiences of time and place and community.[61]

Dye's argument is relevant to the ways that experiences of walking during the pandemic are directly linked to the identity of the walker which has implications for their visibility or invisibility.

Naush Sabah's collection *Litanies* (2021) aims to replace prayer with poetry in an exploration of doubt, dissent, and dislocation. During our interview I asked Sabah if she considered herself to be a British Muslim woman writer to which she responded: 'Yes, I do but that's not how I would describe myself. It just is the facts of various aspects of my identity'.[62] Expanding on this, she said: 'The idea of seeing myself through a particular lens can have the effect of limiting who my audience might be and who might be interested in my writing'.[63] Sabah's poem 'Questions of Faith' is written in prose and explores the oppressive impact of male religious authority, patriarchy, and gendered Islamophobic approaches to shaping female Muslim identity in the private and public sphere. It focuses on the silencing of voices and lack of female Muslim representation in public spheres of Western society and private spheres of the British Muslim community. Written in first person it draws on the internal and external

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Naush Sabah, Interview Appendices, p.111.
[63] Ibid.

politicisation and conflict of a Muslim woman's life: 'The worst thing/ a Muslim woman can do is have sex and let people/ know about it or not break stereotypes'.[64] The speaker's intentional contradictions in this poem address the consequences and challenges caused by harmful stereotypes as she continues; 'or fail/ to talk about decoloniality and Islamophobia or roll/ her eyes at lefty politics or the activism of so many/ narcissists who speak for speak for speak'.[65] In this stanza, she begins to connect silencing and exclusion with invisibility and agency.

The repetition of 'for speak' indicates the misrepresentation and tokenism of Muslim women's voices and suggests a politicisation of their identity for the sake of an agenda that does not benefit them. She continues: 'Because everything we do is in/ relation to white men become Muslim women in/ headscarves what a pretty costume it becomes you/ and our bodies are always the target'.[66] As she refers to the 'white men' as taking away her agency, the hyper-visibility and politicisation of the speaker's identity also stands for the majority of Muslim women in Britain who she represents: 'I am bored of hearing about everyone's identity/ none of my identities are me you are boring I don't/ want to talk to anyone about it'.[67] Discussing these ideas further during our interview Sabah said: 'I think for a lot of Muslim women we occupy this space where we are carefully balancing hyper-visibility within visibility and we're trying to find a safe group between the two which is also a very awkward thing to do'.[68] As the postcolonial flâneuse, the speaker refuses to be defined and stereotyped by her race, religion, class, and gender as these labels do not interest her. In relation to this, Sabah stated:

> Muslim women are in this double bind of, on the one hand they have all the very negative racist anti-Muslim discriminatory lens that they're seen through by a certain demographic in society. But then they also have on the opposite end of the

[64] Naush Sabah, *Litanies* (London: Guillemot Press, 2021), pp.19-20 (p.19).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Sabah, Interview Appendices, p.112.

> spectrum: Their own community and their ways of seeing what is acceptable for a Muslim woman and they have to operate in that middle group. So, you're either visible to both so you can't be disapproved of by either, or you're having to present yourself [in a way] that's palatable to either.[69]

Sabah highlights how Muslim women continue to struggle against these forms of regulating female Muslim identity and stresses the restriction imposed on the postcolonial flâneuse. Government-imposed regulations following lockdowns such as face coverings and masks during a period of increasing Islamophobia in Europe and bans on female face coverings, specifically niqabs and burqas, became problematic for many Human Rights and Muslim rights activist groups including Amnesty International. Their International expert on discrimination in Europe, John Dalhuisen argued: 'A complete ban on the covering of the face would violate the rights to freedom of expression and religion of those women who wear the burqa or the niqab as an expression of their identity or beliefs'.[70] These bans highlighted a contradictory standard by which face veils were banned whilst face coverings were endorsed, instigating protests and global movements such as Hands Off My Hijab.

Considering pandemic histories of flânerie and the pandemic relationships of Muslim women and Western cities, this chapter now moves on to discuss Safia Khan's poetry collection *Too Much Mirch* (2022) which 'dwells in the ambiguities of human relationships, exploring how people and communities can be lifted up or let down by those around them'.[71] When discussing identity with Khan during our interview she noted: 'I don't want to be tying my community, my religion, my identity to things that just look like negative stereotypes'.[72] Explaining her connection to community and its significance to her identity as a writer she shared: 'I was conscious of not being offensive towards my community. I went through a lot

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[69] Ibid.
[70] John Dalhuisen, 'Amnesty International Press Report' (2021), < https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/pre012452010en.pdf> [Accessed 2 August 2023].
[71] Safia Khan, 'Blurb', in *Too Much Mirch* (London: The Poetry Business, 2022).
[72] Safia Khan, Interview Appendices, p.126.

of effort and work with my own family to make sure that what I was writing was fairly representative of my community'.[73] The poem 'Ghazal' touches on the poetic speaker's religious invisibility and exclusion as a racial minority: 'If what we share turns water to ink,/ Even the oceans would disappear./ At night, we dissolve cartographers' maps,/ Let the borders between us disappear'.[74] Using the metaphor of the ocean to refer to commonalities between herself and her surrounding crowd, the poetic speaker highlights her status as a minority due to her racial and religious identity. However, they are imperceptible to the crowd, so she is conscious of the commonalities between them.

The metaphor of water and the ocean is also significant in asserting her religious identity in the poem; the above line borrows imagery from the *Quran*: 'Say, "If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement"'.[75] The image of the sea of ink used in the poem echoes this Aya from the *Quran*. The poem creates an image of the ocean disappearing in the same way that the Aya describes the sea as becoming exhausted. The speaker's comparison of this Quranic verse to human disparities of the life-changing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the significance of her religious identity and spiritual gaze on the pandemic city. In this regard, Khan reflected on the importance of her faith and spiritual practice regarding her writing. She said:

> Islam is the lens through which I see my entire life […]
> It's really the core of who I am. If you think of creativity
> as an impulse of the soul which I, as a Muslim person, have
> a general understanding of myself as being created around
> a soul, then that's where my creative impulse comes from.
> So, the essence of creativity is like a Divine trait that I tap
> into.[76]

[73] Ibid.
[74] Khan, p.33.
[75] *The Qu'ran*, trans. by M.A.D. Abdul Hameed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 18:109.
[76] Khan, Interview Appendices, p.123.

Engaging with the conventional form of the ghazal, the poem follows the tradition of repetition. The word 'disappear' is repeated eight times and is significant to the poem's response to identity and visibility: 'Is it better to pickle or disappear?'.[77] The speaker indicates that the silencing of Muslim identity and presence in the city all together limits her spiritual expression in public spaces. By not accommodating for religious and spiritual identities and practices, Western cities exclude Muslim women's existence completely which subsequently prevents the postcolonial flâneuse from engaging her spiritual gaze with the pandemic city.

Acism discusses the relationship between poetry and the pandemic by identifying that: 'Human beings were forced to stay home and follow tough restrictions' and as such 'turned to poetry for self-recollection and introspection as it provides them with an escape from their panic and anxiety' in response to the physical and mental implications of Covid-19.[78] In exploring the potential of lockdown poetry to cure 'public anxiety' and 'healing stress and excessive fear' Acism's study highlights a spiritual practice through poetry that triggered different forms of healing.[79] As Anthony Caleshu and Rory Waterman (2021) note, Covid-poetry also 'offered solace if not solutions'.[80] They discuss poetry as:

> [A] useful form of discourse to combat the adverse ramifications of the virus, helping people better to deal with common mental health symptoms, grief, and the 'death of inspiration' suffered due to social distance, as researchers noted in a coronavirus edition of *National Geographic* in spring 2020.[81]

[77] Khan, p.33.
[78] Acism, p.69.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Anthony Caleshu and Rory Waterman, 'Introduction', in *Poetry and COVID-19: An Anthology of Contemporary International and Collaborative Poetry*, ed. by Anthony Caleshu and Rory Waterman (Swindon: Shearsman Books, 2021), pp.25-26 (p.25).
[81] Ibid.

Drawing important connections between the act of walking during lockdowns and writing poetry encourages a reassessment of our relationships with the public and private spheres that shape our identities. Similarly, Acism suggests that the increasing interest in poetry during the Covid-19 era could be ascribed to two things: First, 'the ruthlessness of the virus' and second 'the launching of poetry contests and competitions worldwide to encourage people to react in a positive way'.[82] The lasting effects of such global connections changes people's attitudes positively as this creates more accessible spaces for creative communities to connect and collaborate. Viewing the positive relationship and outcome of Covid-19, Acism highlights how poetry encouraged healing and healthier mental wellbeing during the pandemic.

In this context the postcolonial flâneuse's isolation allows her to navigate her spiritual presence through the act of walking and writing during lockdowns. During interviews with Issa, Khan, Rizwan, and Sabah, I asked them about their experiences of walking during lockdowns. Sabah said:

> [I] definitely did lots of walking during lockdown […] during Covid, you were made to look harder, appreciate what's nearest, appreciate it more, let it be the soup in which the creativity sits.[83]

Engaging with the act of flâneuserie during the lockdown stages of the pandemic, Sabah continued:

> I did a lot of going back to where I grew up. Going back to those streets and walking through those streets and paying attention to those places and watching those places and watching people go by and watching traffic go by.[84]

[82] Acism, p.70.
[83] Sabah, Interview Appendices, p.117.
[84] Ibid.

Indicating how she engaged with flânerie in the lockdown city and during the pandemic, Sabah's experience highlights a self-reflective element. In contrast, walking became a coping mechanism for Khan. During our interview she noted:

> During lockdown all there was to do was to go for walks. So, I would just go for walks around the estate and I would just go insane but I would go even more crazy if I stayed in the house. It was almost like I was doing tawaf. I would just walk around the estate every day in the same pattern and it was like this strict routine.[85]

However, discussing her consistently aimless walking practice during lockdown, Khan highlighted an unintentional engagement: 'Even though I was walking around the same space everyday it was almost like a sense of peace to see […] that things were changing […] There were always these signs of life.[86] Khan's walk had a spiritual and conciliative effect as she compared it to 'tawaf'.[87] Sophia Rose Arjana (2017) defines 'tawaf' as 'the circumambulation of the Ka'bah'.[88] Providing some context to this definition she notes that it is 'performed seven times in an anti-clockwise direction' that 'mimics the movement of angels around the celestial throne'.[89] Although Khan's walks were undertaken only for the purpose of walking, her observations of the estate and other people who lived on it can be identified as a postcolonial flânerie gaze in a pandemic space. This is important in identifying spiritual practice during lockdown as it connects the physical act of walking and flânerie to the spiritual effects of Hajj (major pilgrimage) and Umrah (minor pilgrimage) during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Contemplating the relationship between Islamic spirituality and Western spaces during the pandemic, Hanan Issa's poem 'Converts' provides space to interpret the relationship between Islamic spirituality and Western spaces as tangible as much as it is spiritual. Hanan

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[85] Khan, Interview Appendices, p.129.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Khan, Interview Appendices, p.129.
[88] Sophia Rose Arjana, *Pilgrimage in Islam: Traditional and Modern Practices* (London: OneWorld, 2017), p.210.
[89] Arjana, p.58.

Issa is a Welsh-Iraqi poet, film maker, script writer, artist, and current National Poet of Wales. She has participated in spoken word poetry performances as well as publishing her poetry in anthologies. Her collection, *My Body Can House Two Hearts* (2019) which was written prior to the pandemic has been selected here to create an effective comparison between flâneuserie in British Muslim women's writing before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. Her collection explores the boundaries of history, culture, relationships, and language by connecting physical places to ideas of the inner-space and self.[90] In the poem, there is attention to the spiritual and physical journey of converting to Islam: 'Right hand over left over a heart that searched for space in a pew and perfumed cushion/ at the bottom of a glass/ in another's arms'.[91] An analysis of the image of 'rows' in the poem can be read as creating metaphors for converts. This creates spaces to compare the experiences of converting to Islam with trees transitioning between seasons: 'Standing together in rows/ they are the gentle trees in whispering fabric gifted from a friend'.[92] The poem makes use of a concrete form and mirrors the rows in three long stanzas which read horizontally across the page. The poem conveys a ceremony: 'Here they breathe. Standing in rows/ turning their trust upwards/ seeing signs'.[93] This creates a connection between faith and land that becomes a significant image in describing the speaker's spirituality and inward journey.

In the translator's foreword to Pablo Neruda's *Five Decades: Poems 1925-1970,* Ben Belitt (1974) claims that in Neruda's short essay 'Towards An Impure Poetry', where Neruda praises 'the used surfaces of things, the wear that the hands give to things', he steers the reader towards the tangible use of poetry in society.[94] Neruda emphasises that 'the mandates of touch,

[90] Learned Society of Wales, 'Hanan Issa: The Land Would Disappear', YouTube Video, YouTube (2020), < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj-MbfH61Vk>, [Accessed 12 March 2023].
[91] Hanan Issa, *My Body Can House Two Hearts* (Portishead: Burning Eye Books, 2019), p.16.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ben Belitt, 'Introduction', in *Pablo Neruda Five Decades: Poems 1925-1970*, trans.by B. Belitt (New York: Grove Press, 1974), pp.7-29 (p.22).

smell, taste, sight, hearing […] all lend a curious attractiveness to the reality of the world that should not be underprized'.[95] Applying Neruda's idea to a reading of this poem, it is useful to pay attention to the poem's inclination towards hope that connects the speaker's relationship with God to the physical landscape. In the conclusion of his 1935 essay, Neruda asserts: 'Melancholy, old mawkishness impure and unflawed, fruits of a fabulous species lost to the memory cast away on a frenzy's abandonment-moonlight, […] surely that is the poets' concern, essential and absolute'.[96] Speaking on a lack of appreciation for poetry of emotion and thought, Neruda's argument regarding poetry that does not describe the materiality of the city and crowd, insists for equivalence between the thought and the material, as he claims that without one the other is pointless. This is also an important part of flânerie writing in pandemics since it captures the city atmosphere and crowd.

Connecting to the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial flâneuse, Neruda's ideas engage with the act of writing poetry as a method of healing from pandemics: 'Where we begin to process abstract feelings of loneliness, illness, unhappiness, financial woe, grief, anxiety, general malaise or melancholy'.[97] Likewise, Issa's poem can be read as an example of demonstrating how engagement with spirituality in pandemic poetry using the metaphor of the external landscape allows the postcolonial flâneuse to project abstract feelings as well as capture the general condition of the pandemic city. In Issa's poem the landscape becomes a metaphor for an internal shift and movement. Once again, this conveys the relationship of internal and external healing in the pandemic. This approach to poetic aesthetics can be compared to the postcolonial flâneuse's experiences in the pandemic as she applies poetic form and modes of flânerie to convey political opinions, spiritual reflection, and online interaction.

[95] Neruda, Belitt, p.25.
[96] Neruda, Belitt, p.22.
[97] Belitt, p.24.

Similarly, Sabah's poem 'Lament To The Lost Door' which was written during the pandemic explores themes related to spirituality, including prayer, losing faith, sin, relationship with God, confrontation with self, and death. Written in prose, the poem begins: 'I never got to say goodbye to god,/ to raise my cupped hands and ask for one last thing/ or with a mudd of tears, thank him'.[98] The speaker begins by reflecting on the distance between her and God, and the pressures and anxieties surrounding the Covid-19 virus. These are not directly addressed but instead they are suggested in the speaker's exploration of insecurity, and her fear of unexpected death. The speaker uses land as a metaphor for her spiritual healing: 'The earth's magnetic poles switched suddenly/ and I was left a disorientated dervish'.[99] The comparison to a dervish is significant in highlighting her preoccupation with faith during the pandemic as the dervish symbolises a path to maintaining a direct connection and closeness with the Divine (God). Like Issa, Sabah's use of the earth as an embodiment of Godliness draws attention to the relationship between land, the individual, and their spiritual journey. Although the prior was written pre-pandemic and the other during the pandemic, both poems draw on land and convey navigating through a place as a metaphor for navigating a spiritual realm to communicate with God. In the context of Neruda's ideas of impure poetry, the poem embodies diaspora and an emotional distance from a homeland as well as a spiritual conquering. Similarly, discussing the non-aesthetic, the postcolonial flâneuse draws on poetry to convey the evolving nature of flânerie and challenge Baudelaire's traditional aesthetic principles of flânerie.

The relationship between poetry and the online space also becomes important to reading voice and political freedom, in the context of Muslim women and the postcolonial flâneuse. Not only has poetry been used to engage with the online space but as postcolonial flâneuse,

[98] Sabah, p.6
[99] Ibid.

Hanan Issa and Durre Shahwar demonstrate how the postcolonial flâneuse asserts her agency online as a Muslim woman. Poetry delivered online (via YouTube) include Hanna Issa's 'The Land Would Disappear' (2020) and 'Almost Live: Durre Shahwar' (2020). Issa's video 'The Land Would Disappear' is a total of two minutes and seven seconds in length, during which time Issa is seen on one half of the screen reading the poem to the camera and the other half shows lines from the poem and upcoming events via the Learned Society of Wales.[100] At the start of the poem the poetic speaker's son asks why he must learn Welsh: 'On the drive to school, a no conversation before coffee kind of day, my son asks "Why do I have to learn Welsh"?'.[101] In the poem, the speaker draws on the metaphor of land to create a paradox between the land as a threat and the land as safety: 'Everywhere I look words begin to bite and break and change, choking the S A F E out of mouths'.[102] The poem comments on the relationship between place, identity and language to reflect pre-pandemic issues but becomes relatable to people connecting with land and space during lockdown. As the poem ends, the speaker's son understands that if he doesn't learn Welsh the land would disappear: '"I see now" says my son as we witness the world from my car "the land would disappear"'.[103] Language becomes connected to one's identity and relationship to their homeland. Fear, loss and detachment during lockdown made this poem especially relatable to audience members.

Likewise, Durre Shahwar's 'Almost Live', part of a Lockdown series in which she reads her poems to an online audience, serves a similar purpose.[104] Shahwar is a writer and editor whose work straddles the boundaries between non-fiction and poetry, and often explores decoloniality, gender, and identity. Her YouTube video is sixteen minutes in length and is

[100] Learned Society of Wales, 'Hanan Issa: The Land Would Disappear' YouTube Video, YouTube, (2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj-MbfH61Vk> [Accessed 6 March 2023].
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Glynn Vivian, 'Almost Live: Durre Shahwar', YouTube Video, YouTube, (2020), < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdYDUnZawK0> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

divided into six poetry segments. In these segments, Shahwar reads her poems over video images that rotate between empty cities and landscapes, the poet sitting in front of a white wall, and the poet in a park, alone.[105] The poems read by Shahwar during the video speak to her experiences with isolation, social distance, and mental health during the lockdown stages of the pandemic. During the first poem 'Whales', she explores her identity in relation to her community and her pandemic related anxiety: 'I feel your gaze on me, but I have no answers for your unspoken questions'.[106] This signals the theme of identity and displacement to be recalled in the following poems. In 'An Exchange', she says: 'I tell my mother not to worry, that it will be a short visit, that we will be careful'.[107] Describing a book exchange with a friend during the lockdown, she continues: 'Divia will place the book on our doorstep and step back six feet so I can get her book'.[108] The poem describes the social distancing rules during the lockdown and throughout most of the pandemic: 'Then she will step back another six feet so I can step forward six feet and place my book at the halfway point between us'.[109] Even after the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, these themes continue to be relatable to audiences and generate a wider discussion in the comments sections below the video.

As these examples and audience reactions indicate, the online space offered the postcolonial flâneuse an additional space to practice flânerie during the lockdown stages of the pandemic. Furthermore, it gained popularity as an alternative method of interaction. Interviews with poets highlight the different forms of interaction that they experienced online and how it became a part of their pandemic lives and routines. Khan noted: 'At the start of the pandemic all I did was scroll through social media and it was literally ruining my brain'.[110] She describes how 'doom scrolling became almost a daily part' of her routine which she identified was bad

[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Khan, Interview Appendices, p.125.

for her 'mental health'.[111] Sabah claimed that the online space 'forced an outlet' for her creativity.[112] She continued: 'The internet and being online was a particular outlet, being on Zoom was a particular outlet that we had where we couldn't socialise in the normal ways'.[113] Both Khan and Sabah demonstrate the different ways that cyber-flânerie signals the postcolonial flâneuse's navigation of the pandemic city and online space at a time when offline public spaces were inaccessible.

Engaging with the online space and lockdown in her work, Khan's poem 'Timeline' focuses particularly on social media. The poem begins: 'Regional accent is crying in the beach hut/ she has just been properly mugged off/ influencer is offering you laxative/ branded as flat tummy tea for the summer/ #sponsored #ad'.[114] The poem is full of fragmented clashing images from social media such as: 'Breaking News: Foreign Body Drowned' and 'Blond highlights is live-streaming herself'.[115] These are used to create a clash between offline and online realities during the pandemic. It highlights the disparity of pandemic impacts on marginalised groups and the discriminations that were brought to the surface via tensions surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. The speaker refers to social media videos and adverts and highlights social trends of the time. Furthermore, her use of hashtags indicates that she is engaging with social media practices. The speaker describes: 'Blonde highlights is elbowing the air/ in a car park to film a dance for TikTok [uncredited photograph]'.[116] The repetition of 'influencer is offering' and '#sponsored #ad' are similar references to lockdown cultures and social media dependency which remained after restrictions were removed. This also draws attention to the rise in influencer culture and the transition to virtual socialising. TikTok videos and social media

[111] Ibid
[112] Sabah, Interview Appendices, p.115.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Khan, p.26
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

platforms such as Instagram were influential in the lockdown experience. In our interview Khan noted:

> During lockdown you'd see posts about earthquakes, genocides, people dying in their homes and then you'd see posts about Love Island's new season coming out and people sharing unnecessary personal details like: 'I baked this bread today' and I would think 'I don't care [about your bread]. People are dying'. Your brain starts to blend it all. I quit social media and that poem was about why I had to because it was messing me up.[117]

The poem signals problematic aspects of using social media and the toxic dependency that emerged from the lockdowns. Although it was a tool to engage with important issues, it was policed and restricted in the same way that voice and identity is regulated offline. Thus, marginalised voices were equally silenced in the online space as they were in the city. However, the contrast between images in Khan's poem of earthquakes and Love Island episodes conveys very different experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Moody indicates:

> The early months of the Covid-19 pandemic led to an outpouring of social media commotion […] These actions maintained many individuals' ability to perform social distance, to express their independent identity in a public space and to promote a sense of identity security through social observation.[118]

This experience was not the same for all groups and individuals in society, as highlighted by Khan. Mental health disparities and other inequalities seemed to be mirrored in online spaces, creating unsafe environments online as well as offline.

Acknowledging a 2020 study of BAME Covid-19 deaths by Abdul Razaq, Dominic Harrison, Sakthi Karunanithi, Ben Barr, Miqdad Asaria, Ash Routen, and Kamlesh Khunti, Chambers (2020) highlights that 'in Britain BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) people'

[117] Khan, Interview Appendices, p.125.
[118] Ibid.

were 'dying at exponentially higher rates due to a complex nexus of poverty; classist, racial, and religious discrimination; lack of access to healthcare; and risky occupations – among other factors'.[119] Reports of online Islamophobia in the UK, including MEND's 2021 report, identified a 62% increase in Islamophobic hate crime online since the start of the pandemic. A more recent report titled 'How We Get Along' (2022) by the UK Woolf Institute also found that negative attitudes to faith were 'stronger than for ethnicity or nationality, with especially marked intolerance and prejudice towards Muslims'.[120] There remains a persistent negative representation in print and online media, and within film and television, of Muslim women as victims, subjugated, segregated, complicit or implicated in regimes of violence against Western liberal values. Such negative depictions continued to be circulated on social media over the lockdown periods of the pandemic. The 2022 report identified that 22% of British participants disagreed that religious diversity in Britain is good, which is a significant minority view.[121] Writers that I interviewed shared varied responses when asked if they had felt any indirect or direct racial/religious discrimination during the pandemic. Khan said: 'On my estate where there weren't that many Asians, you could feel people staring at you […] it's a very insidious racism […] there's hostility that's never outwardly articulated'.[122] Sabah shared that for her it is 'part of the background noise' of how she exists.[123] She said: 'It's sometimes hard to pinpoint a specific thing unless you go through a very particular direct incident because it's like that low level background noise that we live beside'.[124] Based on their individual experiences, these responses highlight that each Muslim woman experiences themself as postcolonial flâneuse

[119] Chambers (2020), p.141.
[120] Wolf Institute, 'How We Get Along' (2022), https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/assets/file-downloads/How-We-Get-Along-Full-Report.pdf, [Accessed 28 February 2023].
[121] Ibid.
[122] Khan, Interview Appendices, p.127
[123] Sabah, Interview Appendices, p.116.
[124] Ibid.

differently. Nonetheless, each woman felt they experienced religious and/or racial discrimination which reflects a wider issue with marginalised identities in British cities.

Each response portrays an individual identity and experience and cannot be reduced to a collective definition for a group or identity such as 'British Muslim women' or 'Muslim women' which would only serve to further reduce a Muslim woman's presence and agency. This is important when considering the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial flâneuse and the experience of visible Muslim women in pandemic cities and during the lockdown period. Although in some aspects of society, life can be viewed as reverting to pre-Covid-19 pandemic ways, the marks of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns remain instilled in the logistics and consciousness of both the city and the online world. This contributes to and informs the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse because it identifies the opportunities and limitations of being a postcolonial flâneuse before, during, and immediately after the Covid-19 lockdown. More importantly, though, poetry, if used as a medium in the given context, allows the postcolonial flâneuse to overcome obstacles and assert her agency as a Muslim woman in the city and the online space. As the world continues to work through the aftermath, the list of impacts and effects grows.

To conclude, in examining the postcolonial flâneuse in the context of Covid-19, this chapter indicates some remaining impacts of the lockdown including an increasing engagement with online spaces, walking, and interest in spirituality. Though I acknowledge that it is still too soon to claim any lasting impacts of Covid-19, these writers indicate themes and trends within their writing that suggest that Muslim women have either consciously or subconsciously engaged their voices and identities within topics that shape their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. Still surviving a global pandemic, the postcolonial flâneuse has adapted and evolved from the lockdown environment in a new era of digitalised strolling and scrolling.

Conclusion: A Postcolonial Refashioning of Flâneuserie

The flâneur (Baudelaire, Benjamin, Castigliano, Fourner, Gluck, Poe, Queneu, White), postcolonial flâneur (Aatkar, Gikandi, Hartiger, Overall), and flâneuse (Austin, Elkin, Levy, Wolff), leave a space for the postcolonial flâneuse to interpose. With regards to Muslim women, the postcolonial flâneuse invites further reflection on the relative positions of gender, race, and religious privilege, that are an integral part of re-reading the city from a decolonising gaze. The Muslim postcolonial flâneuse's purpose in wandering is not far removed from the flâneur's, although her wandering can be perceived as less aimless than the original figure. This is because the politicisation of her identity, particularly as a Muslim woman, deems her more visible in comparison. She challenges flawed representations of marginalised women, such as British Muslim women. Thus, her practice of flânerie defies negative perceptions of cultural and religious identities and explores the integration of marginalised women in British and Western society.

Proposing a definition of the postcolonial flâneuse alongside four modes of postcolonial flâneuserie - Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and Covid-19 Pandemic - this thesis has considered how the field of flânerie can be expanded to consider female marginalised voices and experiences of walking in cities and crowds. Highlighting the inherent gender, race, and class privileges of the flâneur and the flâneuse, the postcolonial flâneuse challenges existing colonial ideologies within the field of flânerie. Drawing on similarities between literary representations and research findings drawn from participant interviews, the critical chapters indicate that British Muslim women writers demonstrate the potential of a decolonised literary flâneuse. Paying attention to the protagonists and poetic speakers in comparison to the experiences of research participants suggests some of the ways that the postcolonial flâneuse lives amongst us. Although the original purpose for incorporating interviews was to support and reaffirm my

reading of set texts and argument, they also support the transition between critical and creative practices in this project. Reflecting on interviews has also contributed to my practice as postcolonial flâneuse for which I exercised each mode of the postcolonial flâneuse proposed in this thesis. This influenced how I consider my own visibility, positionally, and privilege as a non-hijab wearing, and thus invisible, British Muslim woman.

Reflecting upon my chosen methodology and creative practice, my experiences as a postcolonial flâneuse and Muslim woman in Nottingham, London, Paris, Marseille, Istanbul, Koya, and Sanliurfa allowed me to directly experience and write about various boundaries and opportunities faced by Muslim women in European cities. This contributed to the development of my critical ideas on the materiality and future of modern cities, as well as accessibility and accommodation for marginalised groups and vulnerable minorities. Undertaking interviews with visible and invisible Muslim women from these countries was crucial to including authentic experiences and voices that revealed positive and negative responses regarding what it means to be a Muslim and a woman in Western cities. Although they were initially intended to support my textual analysis of primary texts and develop my identification of patterns and themes, these interviews also informed my creative process and revealed the individual complexities faced by Muslim women in cities and crowds. Encouraging creative-critical engagement from the reader, the poetics was intentionally placed at the beginning of the thesis in attempt to dismantle the rigors of a traditional doctoral thesis and embody my creative-critical practice. Having been inspired by the cities I visited during my research trips and produced within various cafes in Nottingham, the poetics has allowed me to bring together the theoretical, creative, and research-based practices that this thesis embodies.

Extending from Bendik-Keymer's 2020 definition of decoloniality referenced in the introduction, the four modes of postcolonial flâneuserie contribute to the unworking of colonial ideologies in the flânerie field. More recently David Boucher and Ayesha Omar (2023) have

discussed decolonisation in the context of interdisciplinary perspectives. They claim that 'decolonisation as a conceptual term relates to more than just a set of historical processes signalling the demise of colonialism'.[1] Instead they argue that 'while definitionally it is associated with the historical process of political independence of former colonies' it 'has become a floating signifier for a range of contemporary struggles against injustice'.[2] Reflecting on the work of leading anti-colonial thinker Frantz Fanon (1952), Boucher argues that 'liberation, for Fanon, involves rejecting the subservient and inferior identities imposed on the colonised by the colonisers and developing a national consciousness to combat cultural genocide'.[3] Boucher's argument expands on Fanon's ideas of liberation. His argument regarding recognition, identity, and cultural consciousness may be applied to this thesis' proposed modes of the postcolonial flâneuserie and the analysis of her practice and presence in the city and crowd as rejecting the labels imposed on marginalised women. This encourages a decolonial consciousness in response to colonial domination in the city and crowd.

Lauren Elkin (2016) asserts that 'the argument against the flâneuse sometimes has to do with questions of visibility'.[4] Reflecting on Luc Sante's defence of his own gendering of the flâneur as male and not female, she argues that this 'is at the same time unfair and crucially accurate'.[5] Elkin responds to Sante's ideas by arguing:

> We would love to be invisible the way a man is. We're not the ones who make ourselves visible in the sense that Sante means, in terms of the stir a woman alone in public can create; it's the gaze of the flâneur that makes the woman who joined

[1] David Boucher, Ayesha Omar, 'Introduction: Decolonisation: Interdisciplinary Perspectives', in *Decolonisation: Revolution and Evolution*, ed. by David Boucher and Ayesha Omar (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023), pp.1-27 (p.2).
[2] Ibid.
[3] David Boucher, 'Fanon's Challenge: Identity, Recognition and Ideology', in *Decolonisation: Revolution and Evolution*, ed. by David Boucher and Ayesha Omar (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023), pp.121-143 (p.122).
[4] Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p.13.
[5] Ibid.

their ranks too visible to slip by unnoticed.[6]

Elkin's focus on the dominant masculine gaze of the flâneur and its implications on marginalised bodies challenges the flâneur's privilege and presence in the city and crowd. Drawing on Bendik-Keymer's idea of 'unworking', the postcolonial flâneuse can be read as embodying this idea through her relationship with cities and crowds as a marginalised woman.[7] Sara Ahmed (2000) deals with notions of space as gendered, focusing on how bodies come to be perceived as 'out of place' or 'strange' in the city and/or 'urban' landscape, and the consequences of othering these bodies.[8] The Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and Covid-19 Pandemic postcolonial flâneuse focuses on the female Muslim body, how it is policed and restricted, and how this impacts her access to British cities and her relationships with crowds.

The above modes of postcolonial flâneuserie challenge myopic perceptions and ideas about the experiences of marginalised women. Each approach offers a deeper reading of the postcolonial flâneuse's practice. The postcolonial flâneuse as activist, discussed in Chapter One, encourages discussion on visibility in the context of postcolonial flâneuserie and British Muslim women. Considering visibility in comparison to her predecessors, the postcolonial flâneuse as dervish in Chapter Two reflects on Western and secular approaches to pilgrimage and spirituality. This draws on visible characteristics such as dress, and questions how the reception of religious visibility in cities and crowds impacts the postcolonial flâneuse. Comparing online and offline spaces, this chapter further notes how the practice of flânerie is evolving, and how the postcolonial flâneuse incorporates technological advancements within her experiences. Technology has unavoidably become a part of practicing flânerie and flâneuserie. The cyber-postcolonial flâneuse proposed in Chapter Three contributes to

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Postcoloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.44.

discussions of the online space and how social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok can exclude and marginalise Muslim women. This reflection on social media and the online space connects with Chapter Four. Recognising the practice of flânerie and its association with pandemics, the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial flâneuse considers the impacts of the pandemic lockdowns on marginalised women, and addresses walking in pandemic cities.

Although these are not the only methods of understanding the shift in this literary figure, I have argued that they are the most useful frameworks from which to convey the relationship between the postcolonial flâneuse and the city, the experiences of Muslim women in cities and crowds, and how the postcolonial flâneuse's decolonising gaze becomes an integral part of re-reading the city. This thesis has challenged limited perspectives on Muslim women that contribute to stereotypes, such as being submissive and voiceless, through a textual analysis of the primary texts that include fiction and poetry. A critical exploration of the protagonists and poetic speakers as postcolonial flâneuses establishes the significance of this literary figure in British Muslim women's writing as a medium to challenge negative preconceptions and stereotypes. In a recent article, Mariya Bint Rehan (2023) considers literary depictions of Muslim women to argue that 'constant "rediscovering" of the Muslim woman as human – having agency, complexity, whim and will, beauty and humour […] assumes a default audience position of seeing her as less so'. [9] She highlights that 'the conceptual frame it puts Muslim women in is one of a submissive, static, and one dimensional stereotype'.[10] Bint Rehman reflects on colonial connections to representing and 'rediscovering' Muslim women via the lens of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as she argues that 'in constantly "rediscovering" Muslim women, it pushes us further away from the signified "human"'.[11] In the context of the

[9] Mariya Bint Rehan, 'Unimagining Muslim Women – The Spurious Art of Representation', Amalia, 16 May 2023, < https://www.amaliah.com/post/66634/visual-culture-and-the-objectification-and-misrepresentation-of-muslim-women-in-art-media> [accessed 15 March 2024], p.1.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Bint Rehan, p.1.

postcolonial flâneuse, such oriental and colonial representations can shape reductive understandings of Islamic traditions that affect the Muslim postcolonial flâneuse's practice. By dehumanising and stereotyping marginalised women, their access to cities and crowds becomes compromised. This hyper-visibility increases their vulnerability to external threats which further restricts how they may approach public spaces.

Recently, British television personality Piers Morgan sparked controversy as he claimed that women who converted to Islam did so 'because they want to be oppressed'.[12] Morgan's implication that Muslim women are oppressed fuelled Islamophobic comments online for which he faced backlash from journalists, authors, and academics such as Khaled A.Beydoun who tweeted 'Piers Morgan is an Islamophobe'.[13] Morgan's comments on Muslim women prove that orientalist tropes continue to follow and shape the experiences and representations of Muslim women offline and online. Furthermore, this example draws attention to broader attitudes towards understanding the relationship between Muslim women and Islam. Considering Bin Rehman's attention to literary representations of Muslim women's identities as submissive, static, and one-dimensional, it becomes clear that the postcolonial flâneuse challenges simplistic notions of identity and experience as represented through literary work. Lindsey Moore (2003) argues that 'it becomes necessary to examine not only how creative work represents women's issues (most obviously through character, theme, and plot), but also ways in which it foregrounds the fact that gender is mediated in and through language and scopic structures'.[14] Moore's ideas help us to consider the significance of the postcolonial flâneuse as a literary figure who walks the line between creative representation and authentic

[12] Safaa Fasaroui, 'Piers Morgan Sparks Backlash Calling Muslim Women Oppressed', *Morocco World News*, 15 December 2023, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/12/359529/piers-morgan-sparks-backlash-by-calling-muslim-women-oppressed [Accessed 2 January 2024].
[13] Khaled A.Beydoun, 'Piers Morgan is an Isamophobe. RT if you agree.', *X* (2023) https://twitter.com/KhaledBeydoun/status/1737190711361999297 [Accessed 2 January 2024].
[14] Lindsey Moore, 'Introduction', in *Arab, Muslim, Woman: Voice and Vision in Postcolonial Literature and Film* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.1-24 (p.16).

experience. It is apparent that through the means of literary devices, the meaning of the postcolonial flâneuse can be further applied to a broader range of writing by Muslim women. Furthermore, through visual, literary, and technological means, the postcolonial and British Muslim flâneuse examines the positionality and power of marginalised women in cities and crowds.

The texts discussed in the four critical chapters provide examples of literature that conveys the figure of the postcolonial flâneuse in the city. In Chapter One, the protagonists Sofia, Huda, and Fatima from *Sofia Khan is Not Obliged* (2015) by Ayisha Malik, *The Occasional Virgin* (2018) by Hanan Al-Shaykh, and *The Last One* (2020) by Fatima Daas highlight an anti-colonial stance which reinforces the argument of activism as being inherent to the postcolonial flâneuse's practice. This is useful when considered in the context of the social, religious, and cultural associations with activism in the lives of Muslim women. Discussing Muslim women's religious and social activism, Jeannette S. Jouili (2023) argues that 'within their activism, Muslim women have to constantly negotiate the political agendas defined by different European states they call their home'.[15] She notes that 'they have to resist their marginalisation within male dominated community spaces where they strive to articulate their own priorities, ambitions, and concerns'.[16] Consciously addressing the visibility of marginalised women, the postcolonial flâneuse's activism not only affects her integration within or exclusion from the city and crowd, but also how the literary figure can be applied to challenge misrepresentations and stereotypes in literary works. As noted by S. Jouili, this can be read as 'a politically leftist or humanist agenda' or considered to 'stem from a religious conviction according to which service for social justice is an important part of Islamic ethics'.[17]

[15] Jeannette S. Jouili, 'Muslim Women's Religious and Social Activism in Western Europe', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Women*, ed. by Asma Afsaruddin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp.503 -518 (p.504).
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

Thus, reading the postcolonial flâneuse as activist via Sofia, Huda, and Fatima, supports the argument that this literary figure can convey representations of Muslim women's relationships and experiences through creative mediums.

Traditionally the flâneur's relationship to the city and crowd was recognised by his defiance of time and pace. As argued by Keith Tester (1994): 'Flânerie is existence at a pace that is out of step with the rapid circulations of the modern metropolis'.[18] Focusing on the technological developments of the modern city, Tester claims that 'flânerie is only really possible if the flâneur is in no great danger of getting run over by speedy things'.[19] Discussing shopping arcades as alternative public spaces, he claims that they were 'refuges from the vehicular traffic on the regular street'.[20] In modern cities the threat of cars, trams, and buses may influence the mobility and movement of the flâneur and flâneuse. Although arcades, as explained by Tester, 'were public spaces which were protected from the circulations of the city', they no longer serve the same function in flânerie and flâneuserie practice.[21] The postcolonial flâneuse reconsiders the role of public spaces such as arcades and the threats posed on her movement and accessibility in cities. This has required further examination of the threats that exist beyond the physical cityscape, such as discriminatory attitudes and behaviours alongside her racial and religious visibility that make her more vulnerable to such dangers in public spaces.

Considering movement and accessibility in this way, French art and culture critic, Nancy Forgone (2005) explains that an 'intensified feeling of self-presence can […] heighten awareness of one's relation to the surrounding world and can impel the walker to seek out habitually that mode of interaction'.[22] The practice of walking in cities for the postcolonial

[18] Keith Tester, *The Flâneur* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.6.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Nancy Forgone, 'Everyday Life in Motion: The Art of Walking in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris', *The Art Bulletin*, 87.4 (2005), pp.664-687 (p.669).

flâneuse can create a personal paradox between space and movement. By walking through spaces that do not accommodate for her, she reclaims the public space by asserting her agency and mediating between flâneuserie and decolonial practices. Addressing the act of flâneuserie as a spiritual practice in Chapter Two, I connect the casual act of strolling in the city to the notion of pilgrimage. Mim Kemal Öke (2017) defines a dervish as a 'salik' or 'wayfarer' that he explains is 'an initiate to a dervish – or Sufi – order'.[23] Seeking spiritual enlightenment from their material surroundings, the dervish provides a means of understanding the union of the physical and the spiritual in Sufi practice. This comparison of the dervish and the British Muslim flâneuse's experience creates space to reflect on the limits imposed on the religious and spiritual practice of the postcolonial flâneuse in the city. Considering the hijab as a symbol of Muslim women's spiritual practice, bans on religious clothing are drawn upon to highlight examples of restrictions imposed on the postcolonial flâneuse's spirituality and religious practice in cities and crowds. The impacts of such restriction are also noted online.

As the postcolonial flâneuse now exists offline and online simultaneously, Chapter Three identifies the importance of adapting to technological advancements and embracing new forms of navigating space. In an article for *The Independent*, Saman Javed (2021) writes:

> While many Muslim women experience verbal and physical abuse in public, they are also targets of hate online. [Ayesha] Yaqub, an employee at the Muslim Association of Britain, often faces racism on Twitter which gets worse if her profile picture shows her hijab. 'The minute they see a headscarf on your profile, that's it, you're a target. They don't care where you're from, for them being a Muslim is worse – it's the worst identity you could have' she says.[24]

[23] Mim Kemâl Öke, *Jalaluddin Rumi and Sufism: A Dervish's Logbook* (Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2017), p. 9.
[24] Saman Javed, '"There is no safe space for me to be myself": The British Muslim women targeted for their beliefs', *The Independent* (1 December 2021) <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/islamophobia-awareness-month-muslim-women-b1966921.html [accessed 2 March 2022].

The cyber postcolonial flâneuse highlights how British Muslim women are marginalised online and offline and also how online spaces can be used to counter virtual discrimination and exclusion. This chapter reflects on colonial ideologies within cyber structures and the ways in which the postcolonial flâneuse engages with virtual platforms to challenge colonial ideologies online. The increasing dependency on social media and the shift towards online spaces has also been noted in Chapter Four in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter emphasises the residual impact of the 2019 lockdowns, including increasing engagement with online spaces, walking, and interest in spirituality. Considering Claire Gail Chambers' (2021) term 'pericoronial writing' in the context the Covid-19 pandemic postcolonial flâneuse, this chapter compares the works of selected poets and how they address political, spiritual, and online influences during the Covid-19 pandemic and immediately following the lockdowns.[25] Drawing on Durre Shahwar (2020), Hanan Issa (2019), Naush Sabah (2021), Rakhshan Rizwan (2020), and Safia Khan (2022), this chapter reconsiders the relationship between pandemic cities, Muslim women, and flânerie via the voice and gaze of the postcolonial flâneuse.

Bringing this thesis to a close, I now return to the ontology of the postcolonial flâneuse. Throughout this thesis I have suggested that the four principle modes - Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and COVID-19 Pandemic - are inherently and unapologetically part of the postcolonial flâneuse's existence. In defining the postcolonial flâneuse, I aim to encourage new possibilities for women from marginalised backgrounds to reconnect with cities. As Elkin notes, 'the flâneuse is still fighting to be seen, even now, when, as we'd like to think, she more or less has the run of the city'.[26] Muslim women can simultaneously belong in, and be excluded from, cities. This critical and creative approach to discussing the four proposed modes (Activist, Dervish, Cyber, and COVID-19 Pandemic) of the postcolonial flâneuse demonstrates how such

[25] Claire Gail Chambers, 'Pericoronial Writing From China and The Diaspora', *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, 8.2-3 (2021), pp.193-215 (p.2).
[26] Elkin, p.18.

practices can offer Muslim and other marginalised women opportunities to represent their experiences in cities. Returning to the claim by Elkin (2016) with which I began my thesis, I propose that the postcolonial flâneuse, saturated with in-betweenness and histories of colonialism and inequality, exists for women who feel that the city requires them to change. The postcolonial flâneuse disturbs spaces that oppress marginalised women and force them to compromise and suppress parts of their identity in order to feel acknowledged, accepted, and safe. In doing so, she rejects the idea that marginalised women, like Muslim women, must change to fit the city. Instead, the postcolonial flâneuse is refashioning flâneuserie practice, and the city and crowd, insisting that they must evolve to accommodate marginalised women instead.

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