بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Be(com)ing Arab in London:

Performativity between structures of subjection.

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Summary

This thesis is based upon eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in London undertaken between January 2006 and July 2007. It explores the discourses and practices which (re)produce notions of gender, race, ethnicity and class among young people born or raised in London to migrants from Arab states. Instead of taking the existence of an Arab community' in London as self-evident, this thesis looks critically at the idea of Arab-ness in London and the ways in which it is signified, reiterated and recited. Taking the theorising of performative gender as a starting point I explore the possibilities of a sequential reading of 'gender' and 'race' and the practices and discourses which produce that which they name 'Arab woman,' Arab man,' 'British-Arab'. By looking at discourses, practices and political context, 'ethnicity' and 'race' appear to be less about an inner fixity or even multiple identities, instead they can be significantly attributed to a discursive and corporeal project of survival and social intelligibility between structures of subjection which create imperatives to enact and reproduce notions of 'race' and 'gender'. In this sense it is no longer satisfactory to see ethnicity as something that one possesses – but something that one does and embodies imperfectly, constantly adding, reinforcing and disrupting its presumed structure.

Looking at what it means "to do" Arab-ness in London provides opportunities to look at the underlying normative and psychical structures that inform the doing of ethnicity in a particular setting. The shift from foundationalist and "epistemological account[s] of identity to [those] which locate[s] the problematic within practices of signification permits an analysis that takes the epistemological mode itself as one possible and contingent signifying practice" (Butler 1990: 184). Through the *Shisha* cafe, 'Arabic nights', images and narratives I explore the discursive and corporeal acts that signify Arab-ness in London at a particular historical moment.

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part to any other University for the award of any degree.

Signature

Rämy Mounir Kamal Aly

Acknowledgements

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Note on the Romanization of Arabic:

There are six international standard systems for the Romanization of Arabic in addition to a large number of variations in the characters and pronunciation used by different Arabic countries. In this thesis I have adopted the UN Romanization System (UNGEGN) which was produced through consultations with Arabic experts and representatives of Arabic-speaking countries and approved by resolution in 1972. The UN Romanization system has provided the basis of subsequent systems like that used by the American Library Associations and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

The UN system focuses on pronunciation, is simple and avoids the use of symbols and characters which sometimes complicate reading for non-Arabic speakers. For example in other systems the letter ش is Romanized as š while the UN system represents it phonetically as *sh*. Where colloquial Arabic features in interview conversations I have chosen to transliterate to reflect the speaker's accent and pronunciation which usually vary from formal transliteration conventions. On the following page I provide a basic Romanization table as guidance. For more information please visit the website of the UN working group on Romanization systems www.eki.ee/wgrs or for more detailed guidance on the Romanization of Arabic access the following document www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1_ar.pdf

	1	2	3	4	5
1	ء				ʾ , - A
2	ا			ا	- B
3	ب	بـ	ـبـ	ـب	b
4	ت	تـ	ـتـ	ـت	t C
5	ث	ثـ	ـثـ	ـث	th
6	ج	جـ	ـجـ	ـج	j
7	ح	حـ	ـحـ	ـح	ḥ
8	خ	خـ	ـخـ	ـخ	kh
9	د			ـد	d
10	ذ			ـذ	dh
11	ر			ـر	r
12	ز			ـز	z
13	س	سـ	ـسـ	ـس	s
14	ش	شـ	ـشـ	ـش	sh
15	ص	صـ	ـصـ	ـص	ṣ
16	ض	ضـ	ـضـ	ـض	ḍ
17	ط	طـ	ـطـ	ـط	ṭ
18	ظ	ظـ	ـظـ	ـظ	ẓ
19	ع	عـ	ـعـ	ـع	ʿ
20	غ	غـ	ـغـ	ـغ	gh
21	ف	فـ	ـفـ	ـف	f
22	ق	قـ	ـقـ	ـق	q
23	ك	كـ	ـكـ	ـك	k
24	ل	لـ	ـلـ	ـل	l
25	م	مـ	ـمـ	ـم	m
26	ن	نـ	ـنـ	ـن	n
27	ه	هـ	ـهـ	ـه	h C
28	و			ـو	w
29	ي	يـ	ـيـ	ـي	y

Column 1 denotes an independent consonant character

Column 2 denotes the initial form of a character

Column 3 denotes the medial form of a character

Column 4 denotes the final form of a character

Column 5 gives the Romanization equivalent

A. Not Romanized. This character is called a Hamza which produces a sound eqvalent to (i)

B. The letter ‎ا‎ (alif) may be romanized *a or ā*

C. In certain endings the letter t *(tā)* is written as ة, i.e. like ه *(hā)* with two dots, and is known as *tā marbūtah.* It is Romanized *h*, except in the construct form of feminine nouns, where it is romanized *t,* instead.

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in west London during 2006 and 2007. In it I ask what it means to be an 'Arab Londoner,' to see one's self or be seen by others as an 'Arab in London'. I do so by exploring the lives of young people born or raised in London to migrants from Arab states and (some) of the ways in which they *'do'* or achieve Arab-ness. Assuming a critical stance towards identity politics and multiculturalism as population management, I argue on the one hand that Arab-ness, (like all other categorical labels) is best understood not as a form of authentic 'being' but as repertoires of 'doing' achieved through the imperfect (re)iteration of culture over time and space. On the other hand I argue that the political celebration of an exotic, 'hybrid' 'multicultural' London (see Hutnyk 2000) fails to take into account the structures of governmentality which create and promote the reproduction of essentialised 'ethnic identities,' providing culture, religion, ethnicity and race with the ontological status of "proper objects". Following Judith Butler I argue that like gender, 'race', ethnicity and identity should be seen as performative. The historical subject, agent or consciousness that is named, in this case the 'Arab Londoner' is produced through a discursive and corporeal relationship between subjectivity and subjection.

This thesis aims to make deconstructive gestures towards the discourses that produce the problematic "Arab [and/in/of] London". At the heart of this binary are concerns over the cultural future of 'Britain' which remains dominated by a deep seated reliance on homeland-centred identities and the sedentary logic of the State whereby, the dweller is positively assessed over the migrant wanderer who is seen at best as a distortion and at worst a threat (Clifford, 1997; Malikki, 1992). Sedentararist assumptions about attachment to place lead some to define displacement not as a fact of socio-political and economic contexts, but rather as an inherent pathological characteristic of the displaced (Malikki, 1992: 33). The favouring of fixity over mobility, of "*roots* over *routes*" as Gilroy puts it, relies upon conventional modes of subjectivity and notions of origin which inevitability constrain the self within rigid and exclusionary boundaries (Gilroy, 2000; D'Andrea, 2006).

The persistence of these foundationalist discourses are not simply the result of the messy world outside rational empirical academia. As Baumann argues, the study of

ethnicity routinely acknowledges the complexity of 'identities,' "yet when it comes to empirical studies of ethnicity, most students are given (or chose) topics such as "The Turks in Berlin," "The Berbers in Paris," "The Sikhs in New York" or in my case "Arabs in London". "The focus is on national, ethnic, or religious minorities as if anyone could know in advance how this minority is bounded and which processes proceed inside and which outside that assumed community" (1999: 145).

In his 1994 reappraisal of his seminal work *Ethnic groups and Boundaries* Barth, somewhat belatedly acknowledges the centrality of the internal dynamics within groups in the study of ethnicity. Cultural standards and the construction of internal boundaries are used to assess members of the same ethnic group and evaluate the extent to which "...they are playing the same game" (Barth, 1994: 13). Baumann's ethnography of Southall builds upon Barth's work by drawing attention to demotic discourses of community which emphasise different often value and culture laden criterion for demarcating and defining community which shows boundaries to be a matter of context which are informed by generation, gender and resistance to dominant discourses (1996). While my research appears to fall within the study of ethnicity it is not only interested in boundaries' *between* ethnic groups, but equally in cultural critique and understanding what "Arab culture" in London is about. Barth argues that "[E]thnic relations and boundary construction in plural societies are not about strangers, but about adjacent and familiar others." (Ibid: 13). This is a particularly pertinent formulation for the study of post-migration subjects who inhabit the same "diaspora space" as "those represented as indigenous." (Brah, 1996: 209).

While to some it may seem an unnecessary overindulgence, treading on that unwelcoming space between formal ethnography of the 'other' and auto-ethnography, I begin with the personal, not simply as ritual ethnographic reflexivity, but because it provides an opportunity to introduce the notion of 'performativity' and draws attention to the dialogic relationship between 'ethnic boundaries' and cultural content.

My sister, who like myself, was born in London to Egyptian immigrant parents in the late 1970s, had run-away from home at the age of twenty four. Her departure was deeply painful for the whole family. There was an overwhelming sense of failure borne largely by my parents who, in my opinion, had worked tirelessly and selflessly to raise us. In truth her departure had been a long time coming. She had a difficult journey through childhood and adolescence, in many cases her decisions and choices seemed to be her own, the result of idiosyncratic dispositions and coping strategies; but on other

occasions I watched as she failed to live-up to the ideals and expectations of others. To my discomfort now, I must admit to have taken part in the disapproving glances and remarks.

I was living in Dubai when she left home without taking any clothes or money. I had left the UK in an attempt to 'return' to the Arab world after growing up in London. I couldn't help feeling that "we" 'Arabs' and particularly females, born or raised in Britain were torn between competing ways of life; between the demands of our families and communities on the one hand and the wider society on the other, not being able to live a full life in either one or the other realms or indeed between one and the other. I blamed a clichéd "culture clash" for my sister's plight and to a large extent my own (see Thompson 1974; Taylor 1976; Ballard 1976 Anwar 1976(a); 1976(b)) .

A recurring theme throughout our childhood was my sister's failure to master and embody the Female, Middle-class, Egyptian, Arab and Muslim 'identities' (not necessarily in that order) that she was expected to grow into; or as Butler (1990) following Beauvoir (1949 (1997)) would respectively described it, *'to do'* or *'to become'* those things. She was neither, passive, feminine or studious enough, nor had she mastered the art of living two lives, one *in* and one *beyond* the home and family. She consistently failed to become these things, drawing her into constant conflict with those around her. She had 'gone native', often appearing to be far too 'English' with what at the time seemed an incomprehensible and unhealthy appreciation of urban English working-class and Caribbean cultures; both equally unacceptable and horrifying within the family and the wider 'Egyptian community' in which we lived.

She was of course not alone in these predicaments, we all knew of others who quietly suffered the same fate. The pressure not to make 'mistakes' the feeling of being constantly watched, evaluated, moulded and judged were exasperated by her role as a daughter, the symbol of honour, the ultimate measure of whether our parents had successfully managed to raise us despite and in spite of the "England" that surrounded us.

The preconceived ways of being that had been chosen for her consistently eluded her both as performances and perhaps more importantly as aspirations. I recall how she always resisted, with the help of her stubbornly Afro-Semitic hair, my mother's weekly attempts to tame and straighten her wiry locks, to make her appropriately *White* or presentable in that subconsciously colonised notion of Egyptian femininity. Adding to her failure to perform and embody these roles in a bounded sense was the rejection of

her own unbounded and imperfect performative renditions. A cause of her increasing estrangement and, I believe most hurtful for her, was the way in which her transgressions were judged by those that surrounded her socially as perverse and wrong, ultimately casting her as an anomaly and unintelligible.

My sister's 'failure' to demonstrate convincingly that she was 'playing the same game' had serious implications that led to her estrangement and rejection, giving weight to the argument that while ethnic boundaries may exist between so called 'groups', perhaps they should be seen as having no unique ontological significance for the individual that privileges them over the internal boundaries and dynamics within a group. As Cohen argues, "there is no axiomatic rule which stipulates that the boundaries of selfhood and self-consciousness are less significant in this regard than are those of the collectivity" (1994: 74). As the child of immigrants, my sister's difficulties and those of many others like her are often discussed in terms of the notions of 'identity' and 'identity crisis' (Erikson 1968, 1975, 1994). It is here that I would like to distance myself from the notion of *identity,* a term which today "now either stands for too much or too little" bearing an awkward theoretical burden (Brubaker 2006: 37-40).

Judith Butler replaces the notion of 'gender identity' with the notion of 'gender performativity' arguing that gender is not an essence but *always a doing* that produces the gendered subject (Butler 1993, 2004). I will attempt to argue that Butler's approach to sex, gender and performativity is an appropriate basis on which to think about the ways in which ethnicities and identities are conceived and played out in settings like London. Like sex and gender, the structures and social consequences of 'race', ethnicity and culture are inherently discursive and performative, being the result of the "stylized repetition of acts through time" (Butler 1990: 140). Butlers description of the way in which "the performance of gender produces the effect of an organising principle – an identity – that appears to cause the behaviour" (ibid) can also be used to understand the status of ethnicity and its progenitor 'race' in contemporary Britain.

In the initial weeks of my fieldwork I conducted interviews and informal meetings with 'Arab community representatives'. I attended meetings in Parliament and 'City Hall' ranging from a meet-and-greet with the first 'second generation British-Arab' Borough Councillor to the meetings of parliamentary lobbying groups like the 'Council for Arab British Understanding'. These encounters all seemed to be framed within a highly formalised lexicon of local, national and international politics. Community 'leaders' were keen to emphasise the size of the respective national minority they

represented, the strength of their relationships with local councillors or ministers and the importance of the funding which they had received or were seeking to ensure the continuation of the 'services to the community'. Local councillors stressed the need for more "Arabs to get involved in politics" so that on the one hand Arabs would be represented in British politics and on the other hand to ensure that Arabs were seen as an integrated and engaged migrant community. It seemed that there were many people coveting the "Arab community" calling upon it to play a more active part in the public sphere and to *act* like a community. At the time at least, the 'Arab community' itself seemed largely absent, a fact that was often explained as being an Arab cultural problem, a legacy of the repressive political cultures of the Arab states from which these different groups had come. There seemed to be consequences to the absence of the 'Arab community' as an active agent on the multicultural playing field. While some of these consequences are economic and political they are overshadowed by a similar kind of failing as that experienced by my sister, a performative failure. In other words a failure to *recite* the norm of the 'ethnic community' as understood in multicultural Britain. Failures, in the performative sense, those that fall short of normative ideals through imperfect reiteration, play a deeper role in the story of Arab-ness beyond London and multiculturalism (which I will go onto discuss in more detail later in this introductory chapter).

Like many others I believed that the problems of the 'Arab community' and its constituent '*communities*' were down to the fact that were an 'unrecognised' and 'hidden,' ethnic group and consequently unsure of their status in Britain. In 2010 the Office of National Statistics (ONS) announced that the categories 'Arab', and 'Gypsy or Irish Travellers' would be included in the 2011 census. The news was met by "full support" by the 'Muslim Council of Britain'[1] but with consternation by the Sikh Federation which argued amongst other things that "The Prioritisation Tool[2] did not indicate any policy or service specific demand or need for including an 'Arab' category" in the census and that 'Arab' had been favoured over 'Sikh', an "officially

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[1] 2011 Census Ethnic Group, National Identity, Religion and Language consultation Summary report on responses to the 2011 Census stakeholders consultation 2006/07. P20
[2] While the ONS recognised the need to amend the ethnic group question logistical and financial constraints meant that only two new ethnic groups could be introduced in the 2011 census. Along with an 'Equality Impact Assessment' the 'Prioritisation Tool' was used to evaluate evidence for a large number of proposed ethnic groups.

recognised ethnic category," as a result of "predetermined conclusions".[3] Baumann lucidly argues that Britain's political culture "encourages so-called minorities to strive for emancipation as if they were sports teams: They are approached as so-called "communities," and politicians, the media and almost everybody else thinks of them as tightly knit "cultural groups" held together by the same traditions, value systems, and history. It is perfectly clear that this is not true; but this is the misperception under which they must hope to achieve civil emancipation, as well as the misperception under which British state elites try to "help" them" (1999: 76). Indeed, as George Yudice argues, "there is no point in blaming the victims who wield identitarian politics; instead our attention must be focussed on the politics and structures that feed its reproduction (2003: 49). "Foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and subsequently, political action to be taken" (Butler; 1990: 181).

I cannot recall or identify a time where I had decided that 'ethnic identity' or 'ethnic community' were important, they seem to have been notions that had always been there. It could be that I gradually acquired this high regard for ethnicity by virtue of living in London, a city that is aggressively promoted as multicultural but which is silently fixated with ethnicity which is always 'under erasure'[4] (Derrida 1988; 1998). The governmentality from which multiculturalism has emerged produces that which it names 'British,' 'White,' 'Black', 'Asian,' 'Chinese,' 'Mixed-Race' and importantly those it excludes. It was perhaps the initial acceptance of the self-evident nature of ethnic categories and ethnic groups which entangled me in an all too simplistic routine of labelling, reducing and reifying differentiated experiences under convenient ethnic labels and the formal frameworks of state population management (Foucault 1977, 1997).

Looking at what it means "*to do*" Arab-ness in London provides opportunities to look at the underlying normative and psychical structures that inform the doing of 'ethnicity' in a particular setting. The shift from foundationalist and "epistemological account[s] of identity to [those] which locate[s] the problematic within practices of signification permits an analysis that takes the epistemological mode itself as one

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[3] 'Can the Office of National Statistics be Trusted with the 2011 Census?' a Report commissioned by the Sikh Federation UK, January 2010.

[4] Derrida argues that concepts can only be considered and used 'under erasure' [sous rature] whereby the inherent paradox of language and the possibility of meaning (aleph-null) resembles a (permanent) state of erasure of a word on a page whereby the word concept exists but has been suppressed by deletion which acts only to reinforce its ambivalence.

possible and contingent signifying practice" (Butler 1990: 184). Through the *Shisha* cafe, 'Arabic nights', images and narratives I explore the discursive and corporeal acts that signify Arab-ness in London at a particular moment.

A Journey through the thesis

In chapter two I set out the context in which my fieldwork took place. I address methodological issues around being a presumed group insider, how gender and the settings of fieldwork were perceived by others and why the adoption of autoethnography as a methodological stance allowed me to make sense of the entangled voices of self and others that produce ethnography. In the second part of chapter one I go on to outline how the study of 'performative gender' has informed my understanding of gender and helped me to take a critical stance towards race, ethnicity, culture and identity by placing them within a linguistic, philosophical, psychoanalytic and mimetic framework.

A performative approach relies principally on the power of discourse and so in chapter three I turn to the archive to search for the critical junctures of 'Arab London' which in turn mark out how 'Arabs' have been discursively constructed and imagined and what implications these might have for performative Arab-ness today. To follow the complex course of descent in this way is to "maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations or conversely, the complete reversals the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us ....." (Foucault and Bouchard, 1980: 146)

In chapter four I draw attention to the way in which becoming Arab is narrated in accounts of growing-up in London in the 1980s and 1990s. These accounts show that the process of being gendered is often accompanied or made complete through the sequential process of being 'raced'. The journey of becoming 'Arab in London' is one that seems to develop significantly through adolescence when young women and men seem to find themselves between competing structures of 'race' and gender subjection through which they learn to be 'Arab women' and 'Arab men'

Chapter five centres around one of the most important sites for the practice of Arabness in London, the (Q)ahwah or as they are commonly known *'Shisha'* cafes. In the *Shisha* cafes dotted around west London Arabic culture is literally consumed and

(re)produced. The way in which the *Shisha* is used and consumed by young Arabs suggests that it is an object through which some publicly stake a claim to ethnicity, authenticity and distinction. The (Q)ahwah which is traditionally the preserve of men, has, as the *Shisha* cafe in London, become a locus through which gendered norms are enacted and reiterated, a place in which Arab men and Arab women are re-produced and ethnic and classed 'selves' and 'others' are made.

In chapter six I look at how young people produce and reproduce notions of Arab class, gender and ethnicity through practices of sociability and in particular dance. While middle-class young Arabs in London resist the association with Arab oil wealth in some settings they covet and play with this stereotype in London's night clubs to produce the aura of distinction. While partying amongst themselves young Arabs reproduce gendered norms through an ambivalent relationship with Middle Eastern dance where for women cultural knowledge and discursive competence involves a delicate balance between expressions of erotic Arab femininity and comportment. As a cultural repertoire belly dancing offers insights onto the complex process of 'culture' and 'tradition' making which show themselves to be the result not of authentic indigenous forms but the interplay between disparate groups, aesthetic and relationships of power.

In my final ethnographic chapter (seven) I look at the way in which some young people have reclaimed orientalist imagery and representations of Arab-ness in the semiotic exchanges of culture symbols that takes place in London against the backdrop of cultural hostility towards Arab and Muslim people and cultures. These images demonstrate the way in which material and visual notions of 'culture' and 'identity' are continuously reproduced and reconstructed *in situ* but always in reference to past meanings and forms. These visual imprints lead to an entanglement with the canon of orientalist artistic representation but equally to a more deep seated subaltern Arab consciousness which is made visible through these visual compositions

In my concluding chapter I turn to the project of extrapolating performative race from performative gender by looking at how the ethnographic material and analysis I have presented can be made to speak to the particular configurations of identification, desire, mimesis and encryption central to Butler's theorising of performative gender. Race and gender mark the body in specific ways and I do not intend to imply that 'race' and 'gender' are homologous discourses *per se* or that the process of being raced and gendered is more consequential than other processes of subjectification like class. The

intersections and interaction of race, class, gender, age, sexuality and geography (among others) are equally consequential in charting the way that subjectivity is produced and experienced at different stages of a life course. While this thesis does not seek to theorise class within a performative framework (nor present it as a foundational category) I attempt to show the interactions and intersections where class informs the simultaneous processes of being raced and gendered particularly in relation to forms of leisure, consumption and representation. My central argument is that it is possible to extrapolate performative race from Butler's performative gender (an assertion that has met with considerable resistance) while recognising that the theoretical proximity of the process of being 'raced' and 'gendered' as I present them in relation to this ethnography do not entail a subordination of other intersecting processes of subjection which may require far more research than I am able to incorporate here.

While this thesis is substantially about cultural practices, narratives and discourse among and around young people raised in London it also seeks to answer questions of a more sociological and historical nature that have to date been left largely unanswered in relations to 'Arabs in Britain'. In the remainder of this introductory chapter I will briefly review the literature on Arabs in migration studies and address a gap in research by presenting the most significant characteristics of migration from nominally Arab states to Britain in the post 1945 era. To situate and facilitate subsequent discussions I will then turn (in the second part of this introduction chapter) to *the idea of 'the Arabs'*.

Part I: Arab Migration

The debate as it stands: Arabs in migration literature

Writing on race, ethnicity and migration in Britain has until very recently focused almost exclusively on the experiences of Black and Asian migrants and their descendents. While this has been based on the scale of these migrations and the structural inequalities and discrimination that these groups have faced, it has meant that migrants and migrations that fall outside these two umbrella groupings have received little academic attention. Since the early 1990s a small body of British research on different 'Arab' migrant groups and 'Arab migrants' as a whole has emerged (see Searle

and Shaif 1991; Halliday 1992; Al-Rashid 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996; Lawless, 1995; Nagel 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Karmi 1991, 1993, 1997, 2005; Al-Ali 2007).[5]

Halliday (1992) and Lawless (1995) focus on the Yemeni communities that were established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a number of port towns around England and Wales. Madawi Al-Rasheed has conducted extensive research on Iraqi Assyrians in London as well as a number of interventions on the 'Arab' category in British ethnic monitoring exercises and the census.[6] Ghada Karmi has made a number of contributions, her assessment of 'Arabs and British public life,' (1991) has argued for greater engagement from the 'community' and her monograph on 'the Egyptians of Britain,' found strong links with Egypt and a pervasive 'myth of return' (1997). As the title to Halliday's (1992) book 'Arabs in Exile' suggests, broadly speaking Arabs in Britain are understood to see themselves as unwilling or forced migrants and have tended to see their stay in Britain as temporary. Perhaps the closest but most fleeting reference to the experience of becoming Arab in London which I attempt to capture in this thesis is provided by Nadje Al-Ali (2007) who briefly reflects on her own process of 'becoming Iraqi in London', a city which provided her with the opportunity to interact with other Iraqis and perhaps for the first time to identify and engage openly with her Iraqi heritage.

Since the year 2000 Caroline Nagel has produced the most sustained research on Arabs in London (Nagel 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). Reflecting similar concerns over ethnic recognition by the state as Al-Rasheed, Nagel has argued that Arabs are 'hidden' to British multiculturalism because of the enduring influence of the race-relations paradigm.[7] Overall Nagel has been critical of British multicultural*ism* for its emphasis on difference at the expense of similarity (2002, 2005).

Nagel's research has focussed on middle-class professionals, political and community activists and maintains an interest in orientations towards debates on integration and multiculturalism. Her early research suggested a typology of these orientations for Arabs in London. The first 'Middle-class negotiators' believed in confining displays and attitudes of difference to the private realm and established an

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[5] With the exception of Halliday 1992, Lawless 1995 all works cited on Arabs in Britain appear in peer reviewed journals or as chapters or sections in edited volumes.

[6] Al-Rasheed's work on Arabs and ethnic monitoring in Britain is cited in the sections on 'Arab migration to Britain' and 'Arabs and ethnic monitoring in Britain'

[7] Hidden minorities are ethnic groups which function beneath the strata of dominant groups which have primary influence in the political, economic and social spheres (Rollins 1981: 4).

understanding of 'Arab' values in opposition to perceived 'English' values. The second, 'Arab multiculturalists' mostly employed in London's Arab economy, were less concerned with hiding markers of their difference in public and sought to carve out an Arab space for themselves in London. In contrast to the first two types who were largely migrants, 'Young cosmopolitans' (the third type) were British born or raised. Nagel's use of the term 'cosmopolitan' for this group was intended to capture the way these young people expressed detachment and in-betweeness, not fitting into either a British or Arab 'culture' completely. She suggests that 'young cosmopolitans' have novel and 'hybrid' approaches to identity that were to a large extent facilitated by and limited to the post-colonial migrant communities existing in London (2002).

Nagel's (2005) research with skilled Arab migrants in London found that while respondents felt it was "incumbent on them to fit into British society" (207), and in some cases participated in the local politics of multiculturalism and integration, "first and second generation alike — are aloof from 'mainstream' British society, keeping company primarily with other Arabs" (ibid: 208). Nagel and Staeheli's most recent engagement with British-Arab activists again found that while the need for immigrants to participate actively in their society of settlement was recognised by participants, the idea that integration entailed cultural conformity or exclusive loyalty to Britain was rejected in favour of a notion of integration where equal 'communities' all participated in dialogue for a shared social cohesion (2008).

Invisibility & the struggles of the homeland: the (un)making of 'Arab' communities

Historically, Arab migrants in Britain can be said to have experienced a double exclusion, the first a result of ethnic and racial discrimination, the second stemming from their exclusion from British multiculturalism which is still largely concerned with the consequences of colour and culture for Black and Asian minorities. This is perhaps best illustrated by Searle's (1991) interview with Abdulgalil Shaif, Chairman of the 'Yemeni Community Association' in Sheffield, one of the longest standing and established Arab communities in Britain. Shaif offers the following:

"The first thing that Yemeni's here wanted to do in 1971 was to support the revolution and learn all about it. They could only learn in Arabic. So the first information and lessons that they gained in working-class consciousness and organisation was not about the struggle here in Britain. It was about how the Yemenis organised the revolution back home. That was what taught them how to organise themselves as working-class people first of all, and then they applied that to their life and experience here in Sheffield. But they didn't learn about working-class struggle and development in Britain. They were divorced from that, and that was part of the racism they faced. If local working-class organisations had helped to give them an education about organisation, about taking power, it would have integrated them into the movement and they would have developed with that. But it didn't happen that way. The British trade unions and working-class organisations didn't bother reaching them, so they took their inspiration from their struggles in the homeland." (Searle and Shaif 1991:74)

Shaif here draws our attention to the class differential in the double exclusion experienced by 'Arab migrants' who are stereotypically seen (and often see themselves) as middle-class despite evidence that the overwhelming majority are working-class. This is supported not only by what we know about longstanding Yemeni settlement in the industrial and port towns of Britain from the late 19th century onwards; equally the majority of Egyptians and Moroccans who came to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s came on visa voucher schemes to work in the hospitality and catering industry. More recently

the most significant waves of migration from the 'Arab world' have been the result of war, dislocation and forced migration from Iraq, Algeria and Somalia. In many respects the assumption of affluence stems from the point at which these separate migrations are taken out of their particular national contexts and understood in terms of 'Arab' migration. Thus heterogeneous and contested political and cultural affiliation comes to stand for a geo-political idiom 'Arab oil wealth' and consequently the notion that Arabs are not economically disadvantaged or discriminated against systematically like other migrant groups and are therefore are not in need of inclusion within anti-racist working class solidarity or equality initiatives in Britain.

Furthermore, the ethnic indistinctness of Arabs within the terms of racial and ethnic classification in Britain. Al-Rasheed (1996) and Nagel (2001, 2002) both stress the way in which Arabs have been excluded from British 'multiculturalism'. As Nagle argues it is not clear why 'Arabs' are recognised as an 'ethnic minority' in France but not in Britain or why a group that is thought to be larger than the British Chinese community is not similarly enumerated in the census (2001). In some ways Nagel's question seems to overlook the way in which specific colonial relations between particular European nation-states and their post-colonial migrant communities create different discourses and modes of classification. Notwithstanding, this exclusion is common to 'Arabs' both in Britain and the United States where racial and biological notions of difference prevail while the category 'Arab' has little meaning in terms of biological difference or racial distinctiveness. Although being 'Arab' "is spoken of with confidence with regards to Oil, Terrorism and Middle Eastern politics...There is no mention of Arabs as part of 'multicultural Britain' despite indications that they are economically active and educated, achievements that other minorities have been commended for...Arabs in Britain are neither an oppressed 'racial' minority nor are they accepted" (Nagel, 2001: 382).

However, the absence of Arabs from the multicultural landscape in Britain cannot simply be explained by the persistence of race-relations paradigms. I would argue a second reason may be the failure I alluded to at the outset of this thesis, namely the failure of 'the Arabs' to reiterate or recite the norms of 'ethnic community' and their failure to come to a common understanding of their collective 'Arab-ness' or interests. Apart from the Yemeni, Moroccan, Somali and more recently Iraqi 'communities,' most (other) Arab migrant groups have weak community structures. The modest success of Yemeni, Moroccan, Somali and Iraqi community organisations is largely down to the

impetus provided by the particular socio-economic difficulties and hardships these groups faced upon arrival in Britain and their needs for particular services and resources. The picture for both nationally defined migrant organisations and broader pan-Arab organisations is one of fragmentation, sectarianism and often suspicion. For example, while the Egyptian Nubian and (Coptic) Christian communities and The 'Egyptian Medical Society'[8] have well-functioning organisations, the same cannot be said of the broader 'Egyptian community' which is highly fragmented, lacks institutional direction and is perceived to maintain relations with the Egyptian regime which many prefer to avoid. On a broader pan-Arab scale there are over sixty registered charities and associations which cater to the social and culture needs of 'The Arab community' in Britain, however many of these groups are often dominated by the interests and agendas of particular nationalities or elite groups and participation by members is acutely low and only ever sporadic.

This contrasts significantly with the situation in France where, despite the lack of a 'communities' ideology Silverstein finds that Algerian community "institutions exist as nexus where various kinds of identity based on culture and locality are expressed and demonstrated. As such they have served as key sites for the emergence of immigrant actors onto the public stage" (2004:284). The same cannot be said of 'Arab' or the individual national community institutions in Britain, raising questions about the nature of both national and supra-national identifications like 'Iraqi' or 'Arab,' and making the task of investigating how these identifications manifest themselves in different migratory settings all the more relevant. One might ask for example, why is it that a formal 'Arab community' has failed to galvanize in Britain but has flourished in the United States?

Shain (1996) observes that the contentious nature of 'An Arab-American community' and the heterogeneity and inter-Arab enmity characteristic of Arab-Arab relations in the Middle East and beyond have, in the United States, been diminished by the solidarity produced by events in the Middle East like the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the Palestinian *Intifada* (1987-1993). Arab-American scholars have long made the point that it was only after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that Arab-Americans,

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[8] A professional Union of Egyptian medical professionals practicing in the UK

and in particular the young, displayed sufficient levels of 'self awareness' for their identity as 'Arabs' to be politically meaningful (Suleiman et al 1994).[9]

The 1991Gulf War was a turning point for many Arab communities in Europe and the United States. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) set up a call centre to record the large number of racial attacks against Arabs in 1991 (Peters 1992). In equal measure the tenuous position of Arabs in French society was again played out, this time as a result of conflict in the Arabian Gulf. Gross describes how the French "national press were enthusiastically sensationalising the threat of a terrorist attack and some even warned of the Arab threat within France. The interior minister at the time Michael Ponatowski, a member of the Giscard d'Estaing government even suggested mass expulsion of immigrants (read Arabs)" (Gross et.al 1996: 125). The language used to describe Arab communities in France had been disrupted by the Gulf War, the post-colonial syntax which had preferred to identify communities as 'Maghrebins', 'Communaute Maghrebine,' 'Beurs,' 'Secone/deuxieme generation,' 'Jeunes issus de l'immigration Muslemans' or 'Communaute Muslimane' was suspended and the term 'Arab' reappeared in 'jeunes Arabes Francais' or 'Communautes Arabes' (Yuval-Davis and Silverman, 1999:10).

In Britain, Yemenis living in Sheffield also felt the consequences of their 'Arab-ness' during the Gulf Crisis (Searle 1991: 80), while in January 1991 up to 150 "Arabs," most of them living in London for over twenty years were detained without charge or recourse to due process on the grounds that they were considered a threat to national security (CARF 1991 No.1). The 1991 Gulf War appears to be a 'critical event' (Das 1995) for Arabs living in Europe and North America and as this thesis will go on to show, young British-born or raised Arabs living through the war in London were profoundly affected by it (see chapters three and four).

Abdulgalil Shaif's (1991) allusion to the relationship between Arab migrants and the "struggles in the homeland" is a theme which is consistent in much of the literature on Arab diaspora more broadly. While the experience of discrimination resulting from the Gulf War and its cultural interpretation in 'the West' seems to be shared by Arabs in

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[9] There is a far larger body of literature related to Arabs in the United States than in Britain (see for example: Wasfi 1964; Aswad 1974, 1993; Nabeel 1978, 1981, 1989, 1994; Sameer 1981 1983(a) 1983(b); Hourani and Shehadi 1992; Shyrock 1998; Laurel and Abraham 1974; Sameer, Aswad and Abraham 1983; Freidlander 1988; Hoogland 1987; McCraus 1994; Naff 1985; Sulieman 1994, Cainkar 1994; Senngstock 1983; Sands 1986; Zogby 1990; El-Badry 1994; Shadroui and Bahhur 1995; Zenner 1982; Abu Laban and Suleiman 1989; Peters 1992; Walbridge 1997; 1974; Wigle 1974 Hartman 1974)

North America and Europe, regional conflict has not had an even effect on Arab ethnogenesis or political mobilization in diaspora settings.

Arab migrants in Europe and North America share in the experience of a persistent and historic ascription of Arab 'other-ness' which casts them as "barbaric, cruel, treacherous and cunning, warlike and bloodthirsty, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic and mistreating women" (Slade 1981: 158). In the period post-911 Arab-Americans have reported higher incidents of discrimination in the workplace and social settings (July 2002 Arab American Institute Foundation), but what is important to remember is that 911 is only a watershed in a long history of vilification. The resounding historical negativity surrounding the term 'Arab' both pre and post-911 is evident in the testimony of playwright Karim Al-Rawi at a conference on anti-Arab racism organised by the Greater London Council in 1984:

> "The Arab, when stereotyped is often amorphous. He is rarely defined too specifically with regard to nationality. He is part of a semantic field that encompasses harem, barbarism and fanaticism. The Arab is always very different than the stereotype of the Egyptian, the Moroccan or the Yemeni. These national images have their own specific connotations. They are more concrete and more positive than the image of the word Arab. This word has literally become the equivalent of the term 'Nigger'" (Edmunds 1998).

For his part Jack Shaheen has made a life's work producing an encyclopaedic overview of the vilification of the 'Arab world' and Arab people in American and British popular culture which stretches back to the early days of Hollywood cinema (1984, 1997 2006, 2008). When seen alongside Edward Said's work on literary 'Orientalism' Shaheen's work on the Hollywood representations of Arabs provide an important indication of the depth and abundance of anti-Arab sentiment in 'the West'. Arguably if Arabs in the diaspora share anything at all it is likely to be the negativity with which their Arab-ness is viewed in the countries in which they have settled.

Thus, as a diasporic group regional conflict and anti-Arab discrimination have been seen as factors that have the potential to promote a sense of 'Arab community' where there may have been none, although this has not been the case in Britain. Should this alleged failure *to be* or (in the terms of this thesis) *to do* 'Arab community' be cause for celebration or grief? Saliba (1999) points out that, while cultural theorists argue

increasingly against identity politics and essentialised conceptions of identity, advocating instead mutable, hybrid and borderland identities; community activism nurtures a sense of community cohesion, victimisation and a promotion of identity politics. This is to say nothing of the funding motivations that British multiculturalism provided to those who wished to produce and reproduce 'ethnic community'. According to Sivanandan the provision of 'ethnicitised funding' was central to the fracturing of anti-racist solidarity, "Black was the colour of our politics not of our skins …. Black broke down into its ethnic parts and retreated either into ethnic enclaves or nationalist politics – and equal opportunities became equal opportunism" (2009: 96). The increasing importance of ethnicised funding ultimately ruled out any radical politics which could threaten that funding (see Solomos 1989; Keith 1993; Gilroy 2000; Hansen 2000; Murji and Solomos 2004; Kundnani 2007; Panayi 2009). Indeed it need not be governmental Multiculturalism alone that has contributed to the commercialisation of certain types of ethnic and racial difference, Gilroy draws our attention to the link between intellectual and antiracist practice and the fact that antiracism and reflexive intellectualism can often give way into the "barren terrain where work on "race" is overshadowed by privatised, corporate multiculturalism and cultures of simulation in which racial "alterity" has acquired an important commercial value" (Gilroy 2000: 52). In this regard it appears that "theory and practice pull in opposite directions" (Shohat & Stam 1994: 342) a point which alerts me to the importance of the debates on what position one might take in relation to the essentialism involved in labelling, knowing and representing a presumed group (which I discuss in the second part of this chapter).

To date the research on Arabs in Britain provides valuable insight and a starting point from which to draw comparisons with Arab migrant groups in other sites of migration. There are however a number of issues that this emerging body of research has yet to address. Very little is known about the actual patterns of migration and settlement from up to twenty two countries in North Africa and the Middle East to Britain which are subsequently spoken of as 'Arab migration to Britain'. In the following section I seek to address this gap in research and outline how, when and why different migrations came about. While on one hand, this provides a better understanding of 'Arab' migration patterns as a whole, it equally unravels the imputed Arab-ness of these migrants and migrations which are cut across by temporal disjuncture, specific national and political contexts, class, gender and sectarianism.

While scholars like Nagel (2002) Singer et al (2002) have emphasise the importance of London to Arab migrants and the Arab world very little has been written about where Arabs live in the city or what kind of the events and discourses have marked the relationship between 'Arab' migrants and London (see chapter three). In the rush to assert the existence of 'Arabs in Britain' and to make the case for their political incorporation into multiculturalism, the extent to which we can speak of an 'Arab community' or 'Arab communities' and the discourses and practices involved in *doing* Arab-ness have been left almost entirely without interrogation. On the whole research on Arabs in Britain speaks to particular disciplinary perspectives within sociology and human geography where notions of ethnic group, identity (identities), multiculturalism, integration and hybridity are largely taken as self-evident concepts. In contrast I seek to problematise these units of analysis. My concerns are less to do with showing that Arabs as an 'ethnic minority' are 'successful' or 'integrated' or and more to do with what 'Arab-ness' in London means, how it is achieved and what it tells us about prevailing epistemologies and modes of knowledge.

Arab migration to Britain

Broadly speaking there have been four phases of migration and settlement from Arab states to Britain. The first, takes place between the mid-19th century and the mid-20th centuries during which a small number of merchant families from Syria and Morocco established themselves in the Midlands in the mid-19th century to benefit from the burgeoning textile industry. Towards the end of the 19th century Yemenis and Somalis arrived in London as dock workers in the merchant navy which eventually led to the establishment of Yemeni communities in a number of industrial and port town in Britain like Sheffield, South Shields and Cardiff (see Halliday 1992; Lawless 1995; Al-Rasheed 1996; McGowan 1999). During this early period of migration a small but steady stream of students mostly from Egypt and Iraq were sent to study at British universities.

A second phase of migration takes place in the 1960s and 1970s when students, political exiles and economic migrants from Arab states began to arrive in Britain. Citizenship and naturalisation data suggests that the majority of migrants from the Arab world living in Britain at this time did not take up British citizenship even when they became entitled to it. It is not until the mid-1980s that a process of naturalisation begins

to take place which represents the third phase. The fourth and final phase takes place between 1990 and the present which has seen the highest volume of migration and settlement of the citizens of Arab states in Britain, largely as a result of civil war and conflict.

Based on (actual) volume, Arab migration to Britain should be considered a relatively recent phenomenon and even though 'Arab migration to Britain' encompasses migrations from up to twenty two states, as a whole it cannot be compared to the volume of migration from Old or New Commonwealth states to Britain. In the following sections I highlight some of the most prominent features of the four phases of migration and settlement I have identified.[10]

Émigrés and Sojourners 1962 -1983

None of the newly independent Arab states joined the British Commonwealth precluding any large-scale migration to Britain. Between the years 1962 and 1968 less than 200 Arab nationals were granted British citizenship each year. This figure grows to just over 500 people per annum in 1975. It is not until 1981 that the number of Arabs nationals acquiring British citizenship reaches 1000 per annum (after which number begin to decline). This means that over a twenty year period (1962-1983) only 9,545 people holding an Arab nationality were granted British citizenship, on average representing just 3.15% of the total grants of British citizenship each year.[11]

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[10] Migration patterns from the Arab world to Britain have been under researched. There are a number of instances where data has been collected by government bodies and agencies; however, statistics are highly fragmented, creating problems of consistency, comparability and availability. For example, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) collected data on the 'Arab' ethnic group between 1979 and 1991, yet the 1991 census (In which the ethnicity question first appeared, did not enumerate Arabs separately). Furthermore, from 1992 onwards the LFS ceased enumerating Arabs separately and the group was subsequently included in the 'Other ethnic group' category. It is often unclear why ethnic and geographical categories change from one survey to another or why data from different agencies and bodies present different geographic and ethnic categories, however these inconsistencies in relation to small groups (in relation to volume of migration or labour force) like 'Arab' are common. In my discussion I rely primarily on Home Office 'citizenship and naturalisation' and 'asylum statistics' which provide insights onto three legal categories (i) those 'granted British citizenship' (ii) those granted 'asylum' on the basis of 'refugee status' and finally (iii) those granted 'indefinite leave to remain' on 'other grounds' which together provide the most accurate measure of the permanently settled community and the basis on which applicants have been granted citizenship. However, this data leaves two categories of people invisible (i) those who live or work in the Britain illegally and, of more consequence to this research, (ii) British-born people of Arab origin.

[11] The majority of those granted British citizenship during this period came from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Morocco (6,802 in total). A further 2,751 grants were to Jordanians (750) Syrians (469), Yemenis (585), Sudanese (312) and Algerians (155). The remaining (480) grants were given to citizens of Libya, Tunisia, The Palestinian Occupied Territories and the six Gulf States.

The majority of Egyptian and Moroccan migrants came to Britain for economic reasons, many of them working on visa voucher schemes in the 'hospitality and catering' industries.[12] The earliest Iraqi migrations to the UK were the result of political upheaval. Iraqi monarchists and members of the Assyrian minority fled to Britain after the 1958 'Free Officer' *coup* which deposed the British installed monarchy. Political pressures resulting from the 1963 *coup* and the 1968 purges, led Communists, Christians, Kurds and Nasserites to leave Iraq in greater numbers (Al-Rasheed 1992: 539). From 1968 onwards Iraqis became the largest Arab migrant group to Britain with the highest number of applications for British citizenship. Nonetheless, up until the mid-1980s Arab migrants appear to have lacked one of the principle characteristics of Arab migrants to United States, Canada, Australia and South America, namely the intention to settle in Britain.[13]

The 1979 Labour force survey (henceforth LFS) survey, which is based on a sample of the population, estimated that there were 33,000 people living in private households in the UK who identified themselves as being of "Arab" ethnic origin. The survey indicated that there was a male to female ratio of 2.5:1 within the Arab ethnic category, the lowest ratio among any of the ethnic categories surveyed.[14] Labour Force Surveys from the late 1970's and early 1980's also estimated that 47% of Arabs living in England and Wales were to be found in the Greater London[15] and "according to the

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[12] Prior to the 1952 revolution Egypt had been a migrant receiving country. Today there are believed to be up to up to 7 million Egyptians living abroad (see. 'Egyptian Migration History and Statistic' Ministry of Manpower and Emigration (Egypt) 2004). Overall Egyptian labour migration has mostly been to countries other than Britain with United States, Canada, Australia, Italy and Greece being the destinations for 80% of Egyptian migration outside the Arab world. The remaining 20% of Egyptians living outside the Arab world are spread around North West European in France, Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. (see. CAPMAS, 2001).

[13] At the time those who had renewed their work visas for four consecutive years (under the voucher scheme) were entitled to apply for indefinite leave to remain and were entitled to apply for citizenship which could be granted at the discretion of the Home Secretary. Source: Home Office statistical bulletins (notes to tables) 'Persons acquiring British citizenship' 1962-1983.

[14] While this figure drops to 169 males per 100 females in the 1981 survey, in the 1985 survey it is readjusted to 256 males for every 100 females. The large fluctuation in the estimated number of Arabs in Britain and male to female ratio between the 1979 and 1984 LFS reduces confidence in the accuracy of the data sample. Citizenship data suggests that the number of Arab women obtaining British citizenship through 'naturalisation' (Which requires a minimum of 4 years residence in Britain) to be one fifth the size of those acquiring nationality through 'registration' (Granted as a result of being married to a British citizen). The majority of 'Arab' women obtaining British citizenship through marriage during this period were from Egypt, Iraq, Morocco and Lebanon. After 1977 comparison between the numbers of Arab women acquiring British citizenship through 'naturalisation' and 'registration' is no longer possible as these categories were merged in the published data. Source: Home office control of immigration. Citizenship and Naturalisation statistics 1962-83

[15] The 1981 LFS suggests there were 17,000 people in London that identified themselves as 'Arab,' smaller concentrations were also found in the South East (6000), Greater Manchester (3000) and the West

1981 census there were 76,563 Arab-born residents in England" (Al-Rasheed 1991: 4).[16]

Naturalisation begins 1984-1994

From 1984 onwards a process of naturalization begins to take effect with the number of Arabs applying for and being granted British citizenship increasing significantly. This increase appears to be largely the result of political and legislative developments in Britain (passing of the British Nationality Act in 1983) and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Halabja massacre in 1988,[17] the 1991 Gulf War and the UN sponsored sanctions regime were key factors affecting the extent and nature of migration from Iraq in particular. In the months leading up to the 1991 Gulf War, Iraqis, Arabs and British Muslims more broadly were targeted by the British security services and the tabloid press.[18] "We should round up every one of the Iraqis now in Britain BEFORE THEY ATTACK US ON OUR OWN DOORSTEP" read the headline of *The Daily Star* (20th August 1990). From the outset tabloid coverage of the Kuwait crisis fuelled widespread fears that there were hundreds of Arab and Muslim would-be terrorists in Britain.

Between September 1990 and March 1991 a total over 160 Iraqis and Palestinians, frequently described in the press as "Arabs", were deported and up to 150 others

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Midlands (1000). In contrast Al-Rasheed's (1991) analysis of the 1981 census found that there were approximately 30,402 people born in the Arab world and living in London.

[16] A major adjustment in the LFS estimate of the size of the Arab community in Britain took place in 1984 with a 48% increase (from the 1981 survey estimate of 36,000) to 69,000 people identifying themselves as being of 'Arab' ethnic origin. While the census and the LFS and the census figures do not match they are within 10% of each other. Data from the 1981 census clearly had a major implications for sampling fluctuation and methods, which made items such as ethnic origin particularly susceptible to a large sampling errors prior to 1983 (Notes to tables 2.4 sampling error 1979)

[17] On the 16-17 March 1988, in the closing days of the Iran-Iraq War, Iraqi armed forces used chemical weapons against Kurdish town of Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan, under the pretext that the attack was directed against Kurdish insurgents. The attack instantly killed up to 5000 civilians and injured 7,000-10,000 more. Subsequently thousands more died of complications, diseases, and birth defects.

[18] On the 15th of September 23 Iraqi students and business men living in Britain were expelled, the following week on the 21st September the British Government announced a ban on new Iraqi students coming to the UK. Two days later on the 23rd September more than 100 Iraqis including students and members of the diplomatic mission are expelled. On Sunday 11th November 2 Iraqi directors of a Coventry based engineering firm, are ordered out of Britain for breaching the trade embargo. Sunday 13th January Britain orders expulsion of 28 Iraqi Embassy staff. Wed 16th January a further 28 Iraqis are detained on the grounds of 'national security'. The Home Office announces no plans to intern Iraqis if war breaks out. Thursday 17th Home office announces a further 35 Iraqis are to be deported on the grounds of National security. See: *Gulf Crises Chronology* (Compiled by the BBC World Service). Longman. London 1991.

interned without trial.[19] The political events of this period are likely to have motivated many Arabs living in Britain to secure their legal status.

Conflict and Civil War: the changing face of Arabs in Britain

By far the most dramatic increases in the number of Arabs settling in Britain takes place after 1994. By 2001 the 'born in the Arab world living in London' group had increased by 240% on its 1981 size and the make-up of this group had changed dramatically. While in 1981 Egyptians were the largest group, migration from Egypt and settlement in London was not significant between 1981 and 2001 with the number of 'Egyptian-born' Londoners falling by 5.43%. In contrast the number of 'Algerian born' and 'Middle East born'[20] Londoners increased by 90% and 344% respectively.

The huge growth in the 'born in the Middle East living in London' category is attributable primarily to Iraqi settlement in London. In the eight years between 1992 and 2000, 10,398 Iraqi nationals were granted British citizenship, almost double the number that had officially settled in Britain over the preceding thirty years. Data from the 2001 census put the number of Iraqis living in Greater London at 17,264 or 65-80% of the Iraqis in Britain (DMAG Briefing paper 2005).

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[19] Arab detainees in London were questioned using a panel known as the "three wise men." The detainees were refused the right to know why they had been labelled as potential terrorists or even which organisation they were alleged to have links with. They were also denied legal representation during the interrogations and the court of appeal refused to intervene to bring their detention under customary judicial standards. The panel asked questions about the Iraqi *Ba'ath* party and the London based 'General Union of Arab Students' as well as questions about their attitudes towards Israel and America (see. 'Crisis in the Gulf: Expulsion of Arabs could backfire. *The Independent'*. January 5, 1991. 'Crisis in the Gulf: Court refuses to help detainees.' '*The Independent'*. 2nd February 1991. 'Arabs faced 'McCarthyite questioning'. *The Guardian'* 8th March 1991). The security roundup in London led to similar crackdowns in France and Germany. Diplomats began referring to a Europe wide "Arab witch hunt" as 200,000 police, wearing bullet-proof vests and toting machineguns were deployed in France under the 'Vigipirate plan' which, it was claimed, was intended to prevent terrorism, keep the peace within the Arab immigrant communities and prevent racist violence. In Germany 100 Iraqis, Jordanians and North Africans were detained.

[20] In data extractions from the census for London 'Middle East' represents migrants from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Occupied Territories, Jordan and the Gulf states.

Place of Birth	Born in the Arab world, living in London (2001 census)	% change from 1981 census
Algeria	6,408	+87%
Egypt	9,120	-5.43
Libya	1,832	+23%
Morocco	7,904	+51.5%
Tunisia	1,395	+9.5%
Other ME	46,343	+344%
Total	73,002	+240%

Table 1: Born in the Arab world, living in London (2001 census)
Source: Adapted from DMAG Briefing paper2005/19 and Al-Rasheed (1991)

Even though the decade long Iran-Iraq war had claimed the lives of up to half a million Iraqis and a million Iranians, the conflict did not trigger migration to Britain on the scale of the 1991 Gulf War and the total number of Iraqis settling or obtaining British citizenship increases rapidly towards the end of the UN sponsored sanctions regime and the build-up to the 2003 US/UK invasion. In 2003 14,570 (Iraqi) asylum applications were received with almost 50% of applicants successfully gaining refugee status or indefinite leave to remain. Iraqi migration stemming from the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 US/UK invasion bought with it a noticeable change in ethnic and sectarian make-up with an increasing proportion of Iraqi Shi'a settling or seeking refuge in Britain. Although on a formal organisational level Iraqi Assyrians, Shi'a, Kurds, Sunnis and Chaldeans organise as separate communities in the UK, Iraq's longstanding ethnic mix means that a large proportion of Iraqi families are a mixture of the countries many ethnic groups. In addition to the displacement of Iraqis as a result of the Gulf War, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Arabs of other nationalities (whose governments had taken a neutral or anti-war stance during the conflict e.g. Palestine, Jordan, Sudan) were expelled from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia accounting for some of the growth in the 'born in the Middle East' (and living in London) category during this period.

The growth in the number of Algerians living in London (which has never been an obvious destination for Algerian emigration) is almost entirely attributable to the flight of thousands of Algerians from the civil war that gripped the country during the 1990s.[21] The Thalit massacre[22] in 1997 marked the start of the most intense period of

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[21] In the first round of the 1991 Algerian elections the 'Front Islamique du Salut' (الجبهة الإسلامية للإنقاذ) secured almost 200 out of the 429 parliamentary seats leaving the ruling party with on 15 seats leading the military to effectively seizing control of the country and nullifying the elections results. Between

attacks on the urban and rural population in Algeria and claimed the lives of over 2,500 people (see. Martinez 2000; Miller et al 2009). Between 1997 and 2004 (when the civil war stabilized) 7,525 Algerians applied for asylum in Britain with 1,310 (17.5%) being granted asylum or leave to remain. Young Algerian men made-up the bulk of migrants and refugees and a large proportion went on to gain British citizenship through marriage to British citizens.[23]

The patterns of Arab migration to Britain established during the 1960's and 1970's which were principally based on labour and student migration were dramatically affected by conflict in the Middle East and North Africa from 1990 onwards. Migration stemming from the failure of national and regional state systems became the overwhelming cause of migration to Britain.[24]

November 1991 and April 1997 the majority of the civilian population had managed to avoid the spiralling political violence.

[22] In April 1997 the village of Thalit was attacked, allegedly by the 'Armed Islamic Movement' or GIA, resulting in the killing of the entire village population (53 people). It was thought that villages were targeted according to who they voted for in the elections which had been annulled when Islamist parties appeared to secure a majority of the vote.

[23] While the average number of Algerians acquiring British citizenship during the 1990's was 114 persons per annum, between 2002 and 2007 that figure rose to an average of 1,234 per annum. Further analysis of the Algerian born community from the 2001 census shows that only 29% of those born in Algeria and granted British citizenship were female suggesting that a large proportion of marriages between Algerian men and (non-Algerian) British citizens. During this latter period (2002–2007) the proportion of Algerians gaining British citizenship based on marriage to a British citizen fell from 49% (1990-2001) to 23% (2002-2007), while the proportion of those obtaining citizenship through residence or relevant employment rose from 36% (1990-2001) to 56% (2002-2007).

[24] The civil war in Sudan and the breakdown of the state system in Somali as well as the post-civil war economic decline Lebanon and the increasing use of South and East Asian labour in the Gulf States are also contributing factors in the increase scale of migration from Arab States to Britain.

Arabs and Ethnic Monitoring in Britain.

In this section I consider how British born Arabs, as well as those born in the Arab world have negotiated the 'ethnic origin' question in the 2001 census by analyzing commissioned data from the 'Office of National Statistics Longitudinal Survey' (Henceforth LS).[25] There are currently 19 possible categories which foreign or British born people can use to respond to the 'ethnic origin' question and as mentioned previously the 'Arab' ethnic category is not one of them.

Nagel (2001, 2002) considers Arabs in Britain to be a 'White minority'; while Yuval-Davis and Silverman suggest that they "have sometimes been included in the political category of Black" (1997: 10). Both these instances exemplify the inadequacy of attempts to fit 'Arab' into a colour-based conception of difference. Al-Rasheed argues that the 'ethnic origin' question is often confusing to people from the Arab world as they are not White, Black or Asian in the way that these labels are understood in Britain. She concludes that the majority of Arab migrants would record themselves as 'White,' transposing conceptions of colour from their country of origin (1996). In contrast British-born or raised Arabs are less likely to select 'White' as they are more aware that the contextual meaning of 'White' which is largely not an objective determination of skin colour but primarily refers to Europeans. This certainly came across in many interviews I conducted where even those who appeared 'white' would speak of 'indigenous' others as "White people". As a result when confronted with the 'ethnic origin' question many 'second generation' Arabs select the 'Other-other' category.

The LS data allows us to split the Arab sample into those born in England those born outside the UK.[26] It shows that sixty six percent (66%) of the 'Arab' sample 'born in England' responded to the ethnicity question in the 2001 census using the 'Any other ethnic group' category. Within the other category 57% described themselves in the free text field as [Other] 'Arab' while 31% described themselves as [Other] 'North African' and 11% described themselves as [Other] 'Mixed Arab or Middle Eastern'.

Fifteen percent (15%) of the Arab sample born in England used the 'White' ethnic category with 60% going on to describe themselves in the free text field [White] 'Arab'

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[25] The LS sample contains almost a million people and the commissioned table put the Arab sample within the LS at 734 people, twenty four percent of whom were born in England

[26] The LS does not include data on Scotland or Wales which are part of a separate data sets. As a result the data presented relates to those born in England (not the UK) and those born outside the UK.

with the remaining 40% described themselves as [White] 'North African'. Ten percent of the Arab sample born in England used the category 'Asian' then described themselves as [Asian] 'Arab' and finally up to ten percent identified themselves as Moroccan.

Those born in Egypt make up 50% of the 'Other - North African' group followed by Algerians (15%) and Moroccans (10%). Algerians and Egyptians were also the most likely to describe themselves as 'White North African'. Those born in Iraq (27%) and Yemen (24%) dominated the foreign born population describing themselves as 'Asian Arab'. Iraqis also represented a high proportion of those describing themselves as 'White Arab' (25%) followed by those born in Lebanon (13%) and Syria (12%). Overall those identifying themselves as '[Other] Arab' made up the largest proportion of the foreign born Arab sample (33%).[27]

While it is clear that Arabic speakers defy classification along the ethnic and racial lines currently available and as a result are scattered across all the ethnic categories, the generational divide, whereby immigrants see themselves as 'white' is indicative of the allure of whiteness and its implications for access to resources. In many ways self-designation as 'white' by Arab immigrants is arguably not only the result of a misunderstanding of the contextual meaning of whiteness in Britain as suggested by Al-Rashid, but the exact opposite: an appreciation of racial hierarchies in a particular context and their implications for access to resources.

As Ignatiev (1995) notes in relation to the Irish and Brodkin (2009) in relation to Jews in the United States; the adoption or incorporation of groups into 'whiteness' is often the result of the dynamics of racial subordination and economics. Ignatiev demonstrates the way in which the Irish, an oppressed and subordinated group in 'old world' Europe, adopted 'colouration' as a way of managing their stake in the antebellum American labour market and upward mobility. Similarly, according to Karen Brodkin, Jews were incorporated into whiteness along with other 'white ethnics' from southern and eastern Europe in 1960s taking their place within a racial hierarchy

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[27] The LS extraction is bound by confidentiality clauses which stipulate that categories with less than 3 respondents cannot be enumerated separately in case it led to the identification of individuals from the sample. Therefore those describing themselves as '[Black] Arab,' who were too few to enumerate separately and were added to the "Other Arab" category, similarly the '[Black] North African' group was added to the '[Other] North African' group on the same grounds while those describing themselves as 'Moroccan' includes those describing themselves as [White], [Asian], [Black], [Mixed] or [Other] 'Moroccan'.

based on a scale of subordination in which African and Asian Americans were the most
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disadvantaged. In the case of some Arab migrants to Britain, I would argue that in a
similar way they may have sought to distance themselves from 'Black', 'Asian' and
where it was applied 'Arab' categories in ethnic monitoring exercises instead seeking to
be counted among other 'white ethnics' in Britain like Italians, Greeks, Cypriots, Turks
and Spanish, in a sense deploying Mediterraneanism. The allure of the structures of
whiteness is not only the affliction of middle-class migrants in Europe and North
America but equally meaningful for working-class migrants in racialised systems.
Punjabi Taxi drivers in New York acknowledge their racial and class subordination and
respond by creating moral, ethical and racial others of Blacks and Hispanics (Mitra
2008. See also Dhingra 2003; Bhatt 2000; Ho 2003; Prashad et al 2000).

Having said this the dominance of the "Other" Arab category among the sample born
in England and the foreign born population gives weight to Al-Rasheed's choice of this
category as being the most likely to contain both immigrants and the children of
immigrants from the Arab world (1996). It is also testament to the way in which the
meanings and consequences of ethnic categorisation change over time and across
different policy eras of racial governmentality on the one hand and equally to the
recognition by many that the desire of white colourlessness is futile in light of the
cultural exclusivism in which Muslims are considered in contemporary Britain.

Conclusions

The narrative of Arab migration to Britain tells a story which requires interrogation. On what basis are migrants from over twenty countries grouped together under one ethnic category? How can one speak of 'Arab migration' to Britain when the migration and settlement patterns suggest distinct national and sub-national groups with specific political and economic causes for migration, which take place at different historical times, with different levels of education and different relationships to the Arabic language and 'pan-Arab' politics. The way in which I have repeatedly suspended the term 'Arab' between inverted commas leads to basic questions which cannot be overlooked. 'What is meant by or who are the 'Arabs?' Is it people who are Arab or just the States from which they migrate? Is Arab-ness about language or religion, politics and history? If so, whose? Is it sufficient to rely on the amorphous notion of 'Arab culture' or even the comforting plural 'Arab cultures' to construct this group?

What connects Egyptian and Moroccan migrants working in the hospitality and catering industries in the 1970's to the students and professionals from Iraq and Egypt who came to qualify as medical professionals and engineers? Do the thousands of Iraqis and Algerians who fled from civil war, totalitarianism and sanctions, share a common experience with each other or with the sojourners and students of the Gulf region, whose material investment in London is so much part of the notion of Arab wealth? What of the gendered, generational and class differences that cut across these groups and their corresponding notions of self, collectivity, nationalism, tribalism, sectarianism and history? If migrants from the Arab world identify to some degree on the basis of language, politics or dispossession, on what basis do their British born or raised children identify with each other?

Particular historical and political developments in the Middle East and North Africa gave rise to the contemporary notion of the 'Arab nation,' and the 'Arab world'. As a result of global migrations Arabs are also seen as being a diaspora, or the culmination of many diasporas. In Britain, as elsewhere, 'Arab' has become an ethnic category of identification, the most recent addition to the family of nationalities, races and religious groups which are counted by the state. The Longitudinal survey results show that a considerable proportion of the British-born children of migrants from Arabs states openly identify with the collective ethnic label 'Arab'. Equally the Longitudinal survey shows that a great many other racial, geographical and national identifications are used.

The adoption of ethnic labels might appear to be a simple case of voluntary ethnicity, but to what extent are these associational choices the result a particular set of norms and political practices of identification related to 'race,' ethnicity, culture and identity? While demographic data may help us make sociological sense of the field, of how 'Arabs' came to be here, where they might live and what they might do, it is not the job of social scientists to "uncritically adopt categories of ethno-political practice" as our categories of analysis (Brubaker 2004:10). There continue to be serious conceptual challenges that should be posed to 'ethnicity' as it is understood and deployed by some academics, policy makers and ethnic entrepreneurs (which I will go on to discuss in chapter two).

In the following section I look at the emergence of the contemporary notion of pan-Arab-ness and how it developed in relation to pan-Islamism, colonialism and modernity. This necessarily incomplete mediation into the nature of 'Arab-ness' under different historical circumstances puts 'the doing of Arab-ness' in London in context and helps establish how, if at all, this disparate group of people can constitute a diasporic group.

Part II: The idea of "the Arabs"

In this thesis I take the position that the "Arab world" is the result of dialogic flows and confrontations with Islamic and European modes of modernity and that in recent times traditional kinship and elite conceptions of Arab-ness have been overtaken by an everyday experience made widely available through contemporary migration and cultural production both within the region and beyond.

The very existence of an 'Arab world' is arguably the result of the relationship between Islam and the Arabic language. In the pre-Islamic era the Middle East and North Africa contained a vast array of local languages like Acadian, Aramaic, Numidian (Amaziq), Pharonic, Coptic, Hebrew, Canaanite, Hadrami, Manichean (Middle Persian), Greek and Latin. Arabic itself is an ancient language that predates Islam with northern Thamudic and Southern Arabic forms. Between 622 AD and 750 AD Islam spread rapidly, first throughout the Arabian Peninsula, then the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and Libya in the west, followed by Anatolia and the Caucasus in the north and Persia in the east. Subsequent expansion under the Umayyad Dynasty would 'open' the remainder of North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula in the west and parts of South Asia in the east (see. Hourani 1947; Zaman 1997; Bashear 1997; Jamil 1997)

The Arabic language did not take hold in the same way everywhere Islam spread. In Persia, the Turkic regions and parts of South Asia, Arabic became influential beyond being the language of worship but did not unseat the languages of those regions. In the Arabian Peninsula, the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and the urban centres of North Africa Classical Arabic took hold as the language of worship (even for non-Muslims), of State, arts, science(s) and daily life. In the transition and interaction between Arabic and a large number of local languages a great variety of Arabic dialects and lexicons developed which have made Arabic a diglossic language. Dialects, referred to as *'āmi/* common or *'Arabi darij/* colloquial Arabic (low Arabic) are not written or taught at school but are used in normal conversation and can vary sharply from one area to another both within State boundaries and across the entire region. Today *fus-ha* (Classical or high Arabic), the language of liturgy and jurisprudence and 'Modern Standard Arabic' (MSA), a rationalised version of *fus- ha* used in the education and legal systems, print media and formal discourse, are spoken and written in exactly the same way across the entire region. While *'āmi* is not typically used in formal discourse

or writing, each dialect carries a corpus of poetry, music and literature often described as *sha'bi* (popular), which is derived from *sha'b* (people, nation).

The relationship between *aami* and *shābi* (low Arabic) on the one hand and *fus ha* (high Arabic) is both intimate yet divisive and goes to the heart of the idea of Arab commonality. While *fus ha* and MSA emphasise Arab affinity, the distinctiveness and contrast between dialects both within and between States exposes class relations, as well as (sub)national and regional divides. On a regional level distinctions are drawn between dialects of the Arab *maghreb* (west) and those of the *mashriq* (east) which are themselves made up of a large number of dialects and accents. There is no reason for this situation to be seen as problematic, however political pan-Arabism, largely dependent on *tawhid* (oneness), integrity and contiguity of the Arabic language, is challenged by the pervasiveness of *'āmi* dialects forms. Studies have shown that educated Arabic speakers with different dialects typically use their own accents with accommodations where they may switch to accents other than their own or to Modern Standard Arabic and classical Arabic in order to facilitate comprehensibility (see Abu Melhim 1991; Mitchell 1986; Grosejan 1982). However for those who have not studied Arabic formally, dialects can appear as totally different languages. This is particular relevant for British-born or raised Arabs, many of who only have a cursory understanding of Arabic beyond the vernacular they have acquired in their home environments or through television or holidays. A young British-born Algerian or Moroccan may find the Arabic of Iraqi or Egyptian friends unintelligible, which in turn produces boundaries of inclusion and exclusion within the notion of common 'Arab-ness'. The highs and lows, similarity and diversity of the Arabic language is a good basis on which to begin thinking about the nature of 'being Arab,' while much is shared there are significant differences.

The idea of the Arabs is not simply a linguistic one, tribal and kinship structures are central to social orders across the Middle East and North Africa. While some parts of the Arab world are more defined by tribalism than others, Arab societies on the whole tend to construct relationships with others based on the extension of kinship terms, what Khuri calls "seeing the world as a family" (1990: 28). He argues that kinship terms which are informed by status hierarchies are used for legal, behavioural, linguistic and interactional purposes. "Terms such as *akh* (brother), *ukht* (sister) *a'mm* (father's brother), *khal* (mother's brother) and others not only indicate actual referents in the gendered kinship structure but by extension also reflect a wide range of feelings and

attitudes between interactors" (ibid 30). Indeed even the relationship between Arab States is built around the notion of kinship (*Duwal Shaqiqah*) which creates certain expectations in terms of state policies and inter-Arab state relations. This is hardly exclusive to 'the Arabs,' Anderson observes that large collectivities are provided with the properties of naturalness through the use of kinship terms as metaphors for framing the relationship between individual and collectivity (1983: 91). Ironically the deployment of kinship logic within the Arab state system has had the result of highlighting the insincerity and limits of rhetorical *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) among Arab States and regimes.

Importantly, as the earlier discussion of Arabs and ethnic monitoring in Britain impies, there is no such thing as an 'Arab race'. Today people who speak Arabic or live in the Arabic speaking regions of the Middle East and North Africa are a mix of Semite, Hamite, Caucasian, Circassian, Turkic, African, Asian, European and a large number of 'indigenous peoples' of which the Arab tribes of the Arabian peninsula and the fertile crescent are a part. *Aşl* (Origin)*, Nasab* (Lineage) and endogamy continue to be important across the social spectrum whether in relation to tribal, familial, geographic or class affinities. Nonetheless, in many parts of the Arabic speaking world there has been significant 'ethnic' and 'racial' mixing through marriage and migration (Kahhalah 1978; Nishio 1999; Abadi 2004). Migrants from the Caucuses, Africa and Europe have settled across the region and have in some cases played a central role in political, economic, social and military affairs. For example Circassians from the Caucasus region played a central role in the establishment and development of modern Amman, the capital of Hashemite Jordan; similarly medieval Cairo was established by Fatimids' from Carthage and subsequently has been host to Caucasian Mamelukes and Ottomans among many others. (see. Shami 1982; Sonbol 2000; Abdallah 2001; Ziadeh 1953). Arabic speakers are therefore not only linguistically and culturally diverse but also 'racially' and 'ethnically' mixed. Arab-ness can at times be based on tribalism but more broadly has been produced through linguistic, religious, economic, political, historical and socio-cultural connections. Despite the fact that many Arabs are Christian and Jewish the terms 'Arab' and 'Muslim' are often used interchangeable, particularly in Britain where the awareness and fear of 'Muslim' minorities is acute. Yet, incongruously the contemporary idea of the 'the Arabs' and 'pan-Arabism' emerged largely as a form of secular nationalism in opposition to the pan-Islamist order.

Pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism: two versions of the future

Ottoman and European colonialism have been central to the development of both contemporary pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism as vehicles for resistance, self-determination and unity. These two movements are both internally diverse and at times inter-referential in their central beliefs and historical development. As Antonious (1938), Hourani (1962), Sharabi (1970) Tibi (1981) and Kayali (1997) demonstrate, the nationalist movements emerging in different parts of the Arabic speaking regions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were neither unified nor did they hold similar views on the future. In the early twentieth Century there were bitter disputes between Egyptian nationalists and the Arab nationalist movement in Greater Syria which contested the relationship with the Ottoman Empire and the European powers. Egypt was under British occupation and as a result loyalty to the Islamic Ottoman Empire became part of the resistance to British occupation. In contrast in Greater Syria European powers and Christian missionaries patronized the Arab nationalist movements and literary societies and consequently the Ottomans increasingly became seen as occupiers that sought to stamp-out the seeds of self-determination and Arab cultural autonomy.

The nascent Arab movement in Greater Syria was largely based around Christian minorities who sought secularism while in Egypt the dominance of Islamic structures led to an accommodation between Nationalism, Ottomanism and Islamic universalism. Indeed Egypt at this time neither considered itself nor was considered by the Arabs under Ottoman rule to be 'an Arab nation'. (Antonious 1938; Tibi, 1981: 111). It was only in the 1920s' with the writings of Sati al-Husri that Egypt and the rest of North Africa were incorporated into the notion of the 'Arab Fatherland' (Tibi, 1981:210).

While pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism are related in terms of their anti-colonial character, as Tibi argues, the idea that pan-Arabism is an extension of pan-Islamism is a crude oversimplification. Pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism are based on opposing notions of organic solidarity, one advocating the religious bond, the other a national bond. In his analysis of Sati Al-Husri, who is considered the theoretical father of the contemporary pan-Arab movements, Bassam Tibi shows how al-Husri only ever made references to Islam as a civilization (not a religion) in a way that would allow the pan-Arab movement to gain mass appeal yet maintain its secularist credentials. While the Arab nationalist movement of the 19th century had been framed around Francophone and

Anglophone experiences Al-Husri's ideas of pan-Arab nationalism, first developed in the interwar war years (1918-1939), took its main approach to the nation and the nation-state from Herder, Fichrt, Arndt and the German Romantic school and not from the Islamic notions of the *Ummah* or *Jama'h*.

Even though Islamic reformers like Mohammed Abdu sought an Islamic modernity and a renewal of the *Shariah* through *Ijtihad* (reasoned deduction) rather than *Ijma'* (the consensus of the learned) they nevertheless saw the *Shariah* as the equivalent of European bourgeois natural law and Islam as the only true common bond amongst the people of the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. On the other hand Nationalists of all types ultimately believed that the nation was a cultural community with a common language and historical memory, their ideas were not framed in a reform of Islam but in the subordination of religion in favour of enlightenment inspired modernisation. Tibi argues convincingly that pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism are opposing theoretical and political movements a position which is evidenced by the fierce rejection of nationalism and secularism by all Islamic reform movements (Tibi, 1981: 90-92, 161-177).

However, Sharabi highlights the way in which certain groups like the *Wafd* party in Egypt and Sunni Muslim circles in Iraq and Syria had gained momentum after the 1916 Arab revolt. These movements expressed themselves "in characteristically nationalist terms and came quite close to identifying Arabism (nationalism) with Islamism (1970:110). Others like Tunisian Mahmoud Messadi have argued that "the Arabs had passed through three stages in modern times: from pan-Islamism through pan-Arabism to the new nationalism (*Qawmiyyah*). This last differed from the others in that it was based on language and not religion. While concerned with social justice, "it rejected or ignored the doctrine of man which lay at the basis of Islam" (Hourani 1962:373). By the early twentieth century Islamic resistance to Ottoman stagnation, Europeanization and colonialism had "run its course. Nationalism and its demands, not the problem of Islamic reform, had become the central social force in both Egypt and the Fertile Crescent. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the caliphate (1924) were catastrophic turning points for the Islamic reformists (Sharabi 1970: 132) and cause for celebration and opportunism for Arab nationalists.

Both pan-Arabism and pan-Islamist movements were development in relation to the ideas and power configurations of their time. In both cases Europe played a prominent role in their formation both as a site where these ideas were expressed and as colonial

and cultural forces of subjugation against which these movements were forged. "Arab Nationalism, like most other Middle Eastern nationalisms, was a child of the intellectual atmosphere of the nineteenth century" where modernism, nationalism and self-determination were dominant discourses of resistance to colonialism (Khalidi 1991: 1363). Equally both pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism were connected to Ottomanism, Kemalism[28] and Zionism which were all parallel movement taking shape as the Arabic speaking world increasingly became a part of the "process of incorporation of the world into a single system with Europe at its centre" (ibid: 1364).

The "Arab World" is born

The pan-Arab movement experienced a major shift between the interwar years (1918-1940) and post-Second World War period. In the early 20th century the movement had been associated with the alliance between the largely Christian secularist literary movement of Greater Syria and the aspirations of the Hashemite tribe of northern Arabia. This coalition of secular Arab modernism and Arab religious tribalism allied itself with the British and French against the Ottomans in the First World War in return for the promise of an independent Arab kingdom in what is now the Northern Arabian Peninsula, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Despite agreements and correspondence, the British and French had no intention of allowing the fledgling kingdom to take hold; they had already agreed to split the Fertile Crescent and the Eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula between them in the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. This was quickly superseded by the League of Nations Mandates which provided 'internationalist' legitimacy to European colonialism in a new world order.

In the 1930s at the height of the Mandate period, *Al-Qawmiyah al-Arabiyah* or Arab nationalism began to be articulated in formal political movements and ideologies. We only need to look as far as London for traces of these early articulations and expressions. In June 1933 *The Arabic World*, a weekly newspaper edited by Dr. Mahmoud Azmi, an Egyptian academic and journalist living in London, began circulation to a limited readership from its offices at 128 Grand Buildings WC2. In its

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[28] Kemalism is a term used to describe the political movement of secular nationalism in Turkey headed by Mustapha Kemal Attaturk between 1919 and his death in 1938. Attaturk is considered to be the father of modern Turkey; ideologically Kemalism built upon the gains of the 'young Turk' Revolution (1908) and was characterised by the de-Islamisation of the state and it's institutions and the emulation European modes of social and political reform (see. Hourani 1970; Cleveland 1972, Kayali 1997; Sayyid 1997)

opening article Dr Azmi provides us with a situated and insightful exposition of the message that the emerging Arab intellectual class wished to communicate to their British and European occupiers.

"The Arabic World, that stretch of adjacent countries reaching from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf is made up of the following political and administrative denominations: Morocco, Riff, Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli, Egypt, Sudan, Somaliland, Hedjaz, Nejd, Assir, Yemen, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

In spite of the numerous frontiers dividing these peoples, the many political and economic regimes in force, the various European influences existing there, and the dual Semitic and Hamitic racial origin, The Arabic World constitutes a social and cultural unit born of a great historical event, owing its continued existence to an important and determining characteristic. When these countries were conquered by Islam they became endowed by a unique social system with a single language. There are certain differences in the manifestation of their social lives as there are in the pronunciation of their language, but these are mere differences of detail. In the course of 14 centuries they have kept and continue to keep an essential unity of conception: the Arabic language has retained and continues to retain unity of literary expression.

To these elements, which till now have brought about the unity of the Arabic world, a third – equally important – has been added, namely, the reawakening national sentiment in all its forms and in its juxtaposition to the renaissance of Arabic culture to which every region is now contributing. And the addition of this third element, due to the rapid evolution of ideas since the Great War, has had a radical influence on the conception of the Arabic world. From religious unity, having pan-Islamism as its aim the Caliphate as its symbol, it has turned to nationalism, with pan-Arabism as its end and Arabic culture as its medium.

But if the awakened national sentiment in the Arabic world is universal, the cultural levels of neither the national nor the protagonists of the daily struggle are alike. Nevertheless the difference, though worthy of note, is not likely to diminish the strong tendency towards a united Arabic World, which is composed of three main groups – ethnographical, homogeneous entities – thus: -

1. Northern Africa, excepting Egypt.

2. The Arabian Peninsula

3. Egypt, Iraq and Sham (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan)

Reduced to realistic terms, these entities take on the following aspects: - In North Africa the struggle is against absorption by the French, Spanish and Italian colonists; In Arabia the tendency is towards sedentarism and modernisation of national economy; in Egypt, Iraq and Sham there is a desire for stability through treatise of alliance with great Britain and France.

Not one of these entities – not one country forming a part of these entities, though preoccupied with its own national aspirations – forgets for a moment the common bond linking it to every other country in the Arabic World. A glance at the newspapers of any one of these countries shows clearly to what extent the common bond exists.

Dr. Mahmoud Azmi. *The Arabic World,* London, June 1933.

In the post-Second World War period the pan-Arab movement shifted from monarchism to populism and subsequently became dominated by militaristic republicanism. Syria which had been at the centre of Hashemite attempts to form the 'Independent Arab Kingdom' (1918) had declared itself an independent republic in 1941. Egypt too had become a republic after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952 and it was not until January 1956 that Egypt formally became an 'Arab nation'. As Tibi notes "however natural such a declaration may appear today, it was certainly revolutionary at the time, especially in view of the fact that the modern Egyptian intelligentsia was sufficiently far from the tradition of Arab nationalism to be opposed to it well after 1952 (Tibi, 1981: 182). In 1958, Iraq too became a republic after 38 years of British controlled Hashemite Monarchy. Two political movements dominated this period, the *Ba'ath*/ Rebirth Party and *Harakat al-Qawmiyun al-Arab*/the Arab Nationalist Movement. In both cases military officers became the principle conduits through which these ideological movements were mobilized.

As independence movements gave rise to new nation-states between the 1950s and the early 1970s an Arab Statesystem emerged, in which royalist and republican regimes alike staked their claim to the Arab-ness of their nations. A commitment to the Arabic language and the 'Arab *Ummah'* (Nation), became standard characteristics of constitutions. Some ethnic minorities that found themselves living in nominally Arab states like ethnic Kabilys', Amaziqs' or Berbers from Algeria and Morocco, 'Dinka' speaking people of southern Sudan, Assyrians and Kurds in Iraq and Syria or Maronites in Lebanon contest the imposition of what they saw as a hegemonic Arab identity and

the 'Arabisation' policies undertaken in many of these states (see Hourani 1947; Tapper and O'Shea 1992; McDowall et al 1992; Jawad 2005).

It has not only fallen to ethnic minorities to contest the Arab-ness of States and societies, members of the establishment like Taha Hussayn (nicknamed the dean of Arabic literature) questioned the homogenizing of history and society that the new wave of Arab nationalism had imposed, believing instead that Egypt was Pharonic and European (Hourani, 1962: 131). Even within the pan-Arab movement there was no agreement on the place of socialism, or religion in the 'Arab nation' or even whether Arab-ness was an identity of choice or one that was predetermined. Polarization within the pan-Arab movement led to a 'Cold War' between *Ba'ath*ists and Nasserites on the one hand and royalists and republicans on the other (Kerr 1977). These divisions led to political purges and persecution and a protracted and bloody war in Yemen (in which Egypt and Saudi Arabia fought a war by proxy in the 1960s). Jamal Abd el-Nasser who resisted British and French imperialism during the Suez crisis in 1956, and charismatically advocated pan-Arabism and Palestinian liberation, created a demagogic brand of pan-Arabism that has become popularized as 'the glory days' of the pan-Arab movement. However, Abd el-Nasser's gains were short lived, the brief union with Syria (1958) fell apart in 1961 and by the end of the 1960s Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza were all under Israeli occupation. The Six Day War (1967) was not only about a crushing defeat of Arab armed forces and the loss of more land; it also marked the de-legitimization and symbolic end of the statist pan-Arab movement. It is at this stage that political Islam and pan-Islamism, which had lain dormant or had been violently oppressed, re-entered the debate on the future of the region.

Those who assert that Islam is now 'resurgent' seem to overlook the fact that it is has been the often violent imposition of a particular understanding of secular European modernism by colonial and post-colonial elites that has been short-lived and is now seemingly in retreat. This does not in any way imply a pristine or unproblematic pre-colonial *Islamism* but simply exposes the terms by which the debate is regulated, whereby different forms of (Arab and European) Islamophobia prevent balanced or critical social and historical analysis.

Although the 4th of June 1967 is the date etched on the headstone of the pan-Arab project it has been pronounced dead on numerous occasions since. The 1979 Camp David agreement, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent participation of Arab armies in the war against Iraq in 1991; the 2003 war

against Iraq where American and British troops used air and land bases in the Arabian Peninsula to launch their attack on Iraq are pivotal moments, yet the list of incidents is considerably longer with the silence and inaction on the part of Arab governments over the Israeli wars against Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza 2009 being the most recent additions (see Ajami, 1979, 1981). The political failures and totalitarianism of the regimes that lay claim and justified their policies in the name of pan-Arabism have ultimately demonstrated that their very existence and continuation are the main barriers to regional transformation (Tibi, 1981: 215).

One of the central points of contestation between pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism has been the debate about an autonomous versus a mimetic vision of European modernity, in Du Bois terms this might be expressed as a "double consciousness" (1996). While there are Islamic visions of modernity, the 'Arab world' and Islam has had to come to terms with a hegemonic European version. These as yet unresolved relationships with Europe and with modernity still dominate ideological and political discourses in the Arab and wider Muslim world. Regimes and state institutions in most of the Arab world have insisted on maintaining, through force and authoritarianism, the primacy of the ideals of a (fabricated) secular pan-Arab regional state system (with the exception of the Arabian peninsula), while on a popular level Islamism has been on the ascent, it is denied legitimate space within the formal political process, ultimately driving it underground. The case of the cancelled Algerian elections in 1991, the boycotting of the democratically elected Hamas government in Palestine and the imprisonment and persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Syria and Jordan are exemplary of the lengths to which the Arab state system is willing to go to in order to prevent political Islam from assuming a formal role.

The unfinished story of Arabism and Islamism is far more complex than simple ebbs and flows of one over the other. In Hegelian fashion these two dichotomous positions are increasingly synthesized as cultural resources and in formal political structures. In Saudi Arabia a version of *Shariah* that dominates personal freedoms, political rights, public space and norms does not extend to the questioning of the very un-Islamic feudal absolutism of that country's political system; and in Egypt, a nominally 'secular state' the *Shariah* has been constitutionally enshrined as the main source of its legal system while simultaneously and paradoxically the regime bans parties "of a religious character" from operating legally.

Although political boundaries still demarcate pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, crossing over between the two while avoiding the ideological contradictions of being staunchly Arabist and Islamist at the same time is increasingly common. One would be mistaken to think that the convergence of these ideologies is a philosophical matter that does not affect people. One of my interviewees, who was raised by secular parents in London, recalled in dismay how members of the Arabic society at University in London "treated me like I wasn't a real Arab because I didn't bring food for 'the brothers' during Ramadan, even though culturally and politically I am more Arab than they are!" Although it seems that increasingly Arab and Muslim are seen as one and the same thing, as this thesis will go on to discuss, in the realm of practice the 'doing of Arab-ness' by young people in London can be an alternative to the 'doing of Islam'(see chapter five).

Contemporary cultural production

In spite of the failures and tyranny of the Arab state system and the cultural and political revival of Islam, *the idea of the Arabs* remains an important resource and social force. I argue that while political pan-Arabism has overall seen a decline and is widely viewed with cynicism and disappointment; migration, cultural production and the emergence of an contemporary Arabic public sphere have produced the more influential force of *everyday pan-Arabism* which has added a phenomenological layer to the idea of "the Arabs". De'Certeau might describe this as 'tactical', embedded in everyday practices and contexts, a *poesis,* in spite or despite the theorising of 'strategic' pan-Arabism as a political or intellectual project. Everyday practices are indeed as De'Certeau asserts, absent from most theorising of Arab-ness often only acting as evidence for theoretical narratives. The notion of an everyday Arab-ness affords legitimacy to those who experience Arab-ness in their daily lives to see it as a text which they not only recite but importantly one which they continuously write (De'Certeau 1988).

Cultural production and popular culture have typically taken second place to ideological debates in the historiographies of pan-Arabism and Middle East studies (Shay 2000: 61). In the most authoritative analyses of pan-Arabism which I have used above, culture within the notion of pan-Arabism is often seen in terms of the elite

literary circles and *Nahdah* (renaissance) movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, since the mid-1990s and the emergence of new technologies of communication, namely satellite television and the internet, a new layer has been added to the centuries old forms of cultural exchange among Arabic speakers across this disparate region.

Andrew Hammond asks "when, why and in what ways did culture perceive itself as Arab? Given the size and complexity of the region, one might well ask whether it is possible to write about something called contemporary Arab culture at all" (2005: 1). Despite posing these critical questions Hammond goes on to argue that "on a cultural level Arab unity has become a remarkably pervasive reality, not as a formal political movement but as a cultural lingua franca with its own momentum" (ibid 5), if anything counter to the regimes of the region and their hollow claims to Arab-ness.

The music of *Om Kalthum*, *Fayruz* and *Sheikh Imam*, the poetry of *Shawqi*, *Qabbani* and *Darwish*, the publishing houses of Beirut, the broadcasting and film studios of Dubai, Doha and Cairo and the Arab blogosphere have arguably done more to create connectedness among Arabic speakers in different nations and locations than the Arab League, the *Ba'ath* Party or even the writings of al-Husri.

In recent years cultural production by Arabic speakers has been radically transformed from one of elite consumption of a formal literary tradition to one of multiple media and mass consumption. Poetry, literature, music, radio, television soaps, cinema, transnational Arabic news networks and now the internet have played a central role in this process. Ulrich (2009) reflects on the transmission of ideas and information in Middle East history charting the changes from parchment to printing to radio and television waves and finally the blogosphere. Along with these technological changes there has been an accompanying, but by no means even, undermining of authoritative and dominant social discourses. The dominance of cultural production by state Ministries of culture and media has been challenged by cultural production from parts of society considered marginal and parts of the region considered peripheral. Satellite television is arguably one of the most influential components of the emergent national and regional public spheres. News networks have created what Lynch describes as the "New Arab Public" which "has forced Arab leaders to justify their positions far more than ever … [B]y focusing relentlessly on the problems facing the Arab status quo – social, cultural and political … [A]nd by placing political developments both positive and negative into a common Arab narrative …" (2006: 3). Others have noted the way in

which the interaction between local, tribal and national identities on the one hand and global consumerism on the other have led to a re-imagining of pan-Arabism described by Rinnawi (2006) as "McArabism" and "instant nationalism" (see also Barber 1996). Other satellite television genres like the soap opera and historical drama, which are purposefully designed for a regional as opposed to national audience, command a phenomenally popular following. In his seminal work on the imagination of community Benedict Anderson (1983) argues that national imagined communities were forged through media such as the newspaper which created a proto-national community of readers. Similarly new media technologies, practices and formats create certain matrices of belonging at national, sub-regional and regional levels across the Arabic speaking region. While recent analysis of Arabic media production has emphasized how transnational media has led to the creation of a regional Arab identity, it important not to disregard the parallel processes of disaggregation and deconstruction which expose the multiple and sometimes conflicting constituencies and discourses of nation and region. This process is as much concerned with exposing what it means to be *Shia* in Saudi, a *Bahai* or homosexual in Egypt or an Iraqi who is pro-invasion. The media technologies that are seen as signs of the globalised world have also facilitated new forms of journalism concerned with local stories and local people that bypass the State's monopoly on information and control of the public sphere.

If there is such a thing as *Al-rai al-'ām al-Arabi* (Arab public opinion) it is arguably manifest most commonly in a collective narrative of despair and frustration. There are prominent and recurrent themes to this discourse which are given day-to-day meaning by the similarity of political oppression and economic inequality that are so common in the different national settings in the region. The continued occupation of Palestine, the destruction of Iraq, military weakness, the exploitation of the regions resources by national elites and 'the West', corruption, authoritarianism, wastefulness, underdevelopment, the absence of transparency, the crisis of citizenship and the resultant human displacements and brain-drain are the standard markers of seeing the world through 'Arab' eyes. This collective narrative is fertile ground for melancholia where the theme of defeat, injustice and victimization are internalized and become part of what it means *to be* and *to do* Arab-ness (see: Bishara 2008; Lynch 2006; Dawisha 2003; Heggy 1998; Ajami 1979, 1989).

My emphasis on cultural expression and post-national aesthetics takes its cue from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993). However, Gilroy has been criticized by some

for privileging culture over politics in this way (Evans 2009). In her overview of critiques of *The Black Atlantic* Evans cites Chrisman's (2003) argument that Gilroy's approach to black cultural expression meant that "aesthetics and aestheticism were made to function as both as an explanation of and solution to social and political processes" (Evans 2009, 264). Gunning argues that the "materiality of national space" is ignored (2004: 29) while Puri contends that the cultural expressions of the black Atlantic are negotiated through relationships between Britain and America and that Gilroy "makes a double movement between denying the nation state […] and unintentionally re-inscribing the nation state" (Puri 2004: 28 in Evans 2009: 264).

Indeed, advocates and apologists of the Arab state system may seek to claim that it has been their economic, political and cultural policies on the one hand and ideological writing and movements on the other, that have provided the framework for these new forms of connectedness. For example, Al-Jazeera, which has been credited with revolutionizing Arab broadcasting and public access to information, is owned by the State of Qatar and the very satellites whose broadcast signals have been the scaffold of the new Arab public sphere were launched, paid for and operated by Arab states. Arab governments have historically played a central role in regulating cultural production and the creation of popular cultures which have been constructed through and framed within notions of *al-turath al-Arabi/* Arab heritage and *al-thaqafah al-Arabiyah/* Arab culture (see Gaverielides and Davis, 1991).

Clearly one cannot see debates about the analytical place of cultural production, politics and the nation-state as a matter of choosing between them. Gilroy expresses "black" and black political culture through the notion of 'connectedness' which, he argues takes account of mutability and differences in a way that accounts centred on nation-state / diasporic binary or "brute pan-Africanism" are unable to do (1993: 29-31). Much the same problem exists in relation to the expression of Arab-ness which is all too often framed within pan-Arabist discourses or the total rejection of the notion of 'the Arabs'. I therefore take the perspective that Arab-ness is about connectedness and not about a political project or the ultimate sameness of 'Arab people' which is how it has been largely framed to date.

Instead of presenting a unifying notion of categorical cultures like "Black" or "Arab," different places and contexts are seen as constantly leading to a renegotiation in a web of interactions between the local and the global, a process which takes place as much in the diaspora as it does in the 'Arab world'. Charles Pinot asserts that cultural

exchange can flow both ways, so that Africa can be seen not only as the ancestral homeland of diasporic communities but also "diaspora-derivative" since the cultures of the black Atlantic have in turn impacted on the development of local African communities" (Evans 2009: 261) an, argument similar to Axel who suggests that "rather than conceiving of the homeland as something itself that creates the diaspora, it may be more productive to consider the diaspora as something that creates the homeland" (Axel, 2002: 426)

Conclusion: emplacement, diaspora and Arab-ness.

It is in a place like London that your grocer might be Lebanese, your butcher Algerian, your Arabic teacher Iraqi and your neighbour Egyptian; where journalists from across the Arab region work together on a daily basis and where capital-flows from the Arabian Gulf can provide a British-born person of Palestinian origin the opportunity to work on the Middle East desk of a global financial management company in the City. As Miller would argue "In a London Street" Morocco, Iraq, Syria and Sudan "are no longer thousands of miles apart, but just a few doors away" (2009: 289). This city nexus where Arab-ness is experienced in an everyday sense is also available in cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Jeddah where capital has drawn labour from across the region and the world in huge numbers. These urban centres become "cultural sites" (Fog Olwig 1997; Gardner and Mand forthcoming) where dialects, traditions, religion, politics, food, music are counter exposed, not only in an introverted Arab-Arab fashion but within the context of local and global cultural, economic and political flows. "Identity and culture … increasing look like vestigial rather than determinant of the order of things" (ibid: 289). This is not to suggest that these settings are unproblematic or that they are places where people revel in the care-free world of 'hybridity' and 'cosmopolitanism,' these settings are marked as much by expressions of power which undermine assumed solidarities and commonality as they are by those that might support them. Miller questions the importance that concepts like 'society' and 'community' might play in an immediate sense in the lives of people who reside in a modern metropolis like London. He argues that the efficiency of the state bureaucracy, public services, the media and the economy are such that our daily needs are met "without us having to know anything much about how this came to be… we do not seem to require an active allegiance to, or alignment with, some abstract image of

society or community" (2009: 283-84). People do not necessarily need to believe in society and their fundamental allegiances may be to different countries or any number of imagined communities "not necessarily related to the place where they happen to live and whose laws they feel thereby constrained to obey. Many have allegiances which are either fluid or unimportant" (ibid 285).

Migration and transnationalism have played a major role in the Arab regions recent history and as this research suggests on the very idea of what it is to be an Arab. It is worth noting that in Arabic those who live outside their 'homeland' are often described (or describe themselves) as living *Fil'ghurba* living *'in strangeness'*. No positive connotations have been affixed to *al-Shattat* (Dispersion or Diaspora) as a way of being or a condition, it is only very recently that phrases like *Arab al-mahjar* (the Arabs of the migration) have started to be used in neural or positive terms. Assuming the existence of an Arab diaspora as a form of consciousness would be as misleading as assuming a matter of fact "Arab" world or culture. Anthias argues that "the idea of diaspora tends to homogenise the population referred to at the transnational level" (1998: 564). Arabs of the *Mahjar* (migration) include large movements from the Levant in the 19th century to North and South America on the back of famine and religious discrimination. Nineteenth century colonial and twentieth century post-colonial capitalism led to labour migrations from Yemen and Somalia to Britain and on a much larger scale from Algeria and Morocco to France (post-1945). Did these disparate migrant groups have any sense of a common 'identity' as 'Arabs' at the time or today? Do Arabic speaking migrants in London have anything in common or any connections with their counterparts in Paris, Marseille, Detroit, Bogota, Lagos or Sydney? Is there an Arab diasporic consciousness? These questions are rarely asked and if the answer is sought in the existence of formal transnational organisations or social movements the answer is a resounding no. The search for coherence is bound to disappoint, "diaspora is constituted as much in *difference* and *division* as it is in *commonality* and *solidarity*" (Anthias, 1998: 569).

Clifford writes that diaspora is about myths and memories of the homeland, "alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, on-going support for the homeland, and a collective identity defined by this relationship" (Clifford 1994: 306). A diaspora is "diacritically shaped by means of political struggles with state normativities and indigenous majorities; and upon the tension between local assimilation and trans-local allegiances" (ibid 307-308). The relationship between diaspora and locality is

further fractured by "the socio-spatiotemporal disjuncture of globalization engendering degrees of diasporic alienation" (ibid 315).

However, for diasporic young people alienation is not simply about the struggles for rights in the countries of the birth, it is to a large extent about acceptance of their versions of the "homeland", cultural belonging and tradition. In reference to the Indian diaspora in the United States Radakrishnan asks "whose version of India is correct, the old or the new generation, the insider or the diasporan?" There can be multiple constructions of the same reality. There are two kinds of relationship with 'diasporic homelands,' one based on experience and knowledge of the homeland (the migrant) and the second based on an emotional investment in the homeland (the child). "It is counterproductive to maintain that the only way to understand a place is to be in it" (Radakrishnan 2003: 120). British-born or raised Iraqis or Palestinians may have never been able to visit their 'country of origin', while many Moroccans and Egyptians are accustomed to frequent visits. A significant proportion of British-born or raised 'Arabs' cannot speak Arabic beyond the limited vernacular of their home lives. Alienated from reading, writing or even listening to Arabic news or Arabic literature, *being* Arab is sometimes claimed through a process of racialising Arab-ness as an inner, albeit mute, essence. Sometimes Arab-ness is simply about not fitting into 'English' or 'Black' or 'Asian' and at other times about a adopting and recreating fragments of cultural practices in new contexts. While these differences are often seen in terms of 'generation' I attempt to understand them through 'performativity' or imperfect repetition, reiteration and recitation between structures of subjection.

Lisa Lowe (1996) cites *Woman Warrior* (1975) where Maxine Hong Kingston suggests that one of the more important stories of the Asian-American experience is about the process of receiving and rearticulating cultural traditions in the face of a dominant national discourse that 'exoticises' and 'orientalises' Asians, a point which resonates with Arabs in Britain who are constructed as exotic and oriental but also as feared savages.

Hong Kingston asks Chinese-Americans "when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, to insanities, one's family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is 'the movies'?" (Lowe 1996:137). Performativity and iterability can answer Hong Kingston's question by pointing to the parody and discursive (un)reality in which all things idiosyncratic, phantasmic,

(in)authentic and all the other possible meanings of being 'Chinese' or 'Arab' are included within what it is *to do,* to repeat, gender, race, ethnicity, culture and belonging.

In the following chapter I go on to outline the main methodological considerations and theoretical approaches which I have adopted or arrived to through the ethnographic encounter and which have been influenced by feminist contributions to the study of gender, selves and others.

Chapter Two

Epistemologies and ontologies

Introduction

In this chapter I will address some methodological issues around the supposed disadvantages of being a presumed group insider, how gender and the settings in which I conducted my fieldwork were perceived by others and how the adoption of autoethnography as a methodological stance allowed me to make sense of the entanglement of 'self' and the others whose voices, emotions and experiences helped produce the ethnography that follows.

In the second part of this chapter I go on to outline why the study of 'performative gender' as outlined by Butler can help add to the debates on the ontological status of race, ethnicity, culture and identity. Throughout the thesis I will be linking ethnographic material to the theoretical structures of performativity in an attempt to explore the limits of what it can tell us about doing Arab-ness in London.

Part I: Epistemologies: Researching selves and others

The context of fieldwork: Arab London

Broadly speaking, 'Arabs' are concentrated mainly in the West and North West boroughs of London. The most visible densities occur in an area stretching westwards from Camden through the Northern wards of the Royal Boroughs of Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea which have the highest density of people born in the Arab world and living in London. There is also a relatively contiguous band from the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham towards the Boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Brent. This band of settlement corresponds quite well to the area between the A41 (heading the North West) and the A316 (heading West South-West) and is particularly concentrated along the western corridors of London close to the A4 and A40.

In inner London, Edgware Road has long been seen as the centre of the Arab life. It is perhaps better described as the road around which Gulf tourism has evolved with its restaurants, *Shisha* cafes and, in its early days, the 'Victoria Casino'. From the mid-1970s onwards many regular visitors from the Gulf purchased properties both north and south of Hyde and Kensington Parks with different areas like Mayfair, Knightsbridge and South Kensington attracting different levels of affluence than Edgware Road, Queensway and Bayswater.

These pockets of transient affluence are concentrated around the embassy quarters of Westminster and Kensington. Importantly the housing stock in these boroughs also contains a substantial volume of council housing in which the bulk of inner London's Arab communities live. North and west from Church Street market there is a concentration of council housing taking in Maida Vale and Royal Oak and parts of Kilburn, Just west of this area is Golbourne (Ward) in North Kensington and Westbourne Park (North Westminster), areas best known for its concentration of Moroccan migrants. This zone of residential council housing gives way to suburban housing as you travel north and west between the Harrow Road, Queens Park and Brondesbury which appear to have mix of Iraqis, Lebanese, Egyptian and other Middle Easterner residents. There are also a large number of Arab families living in the far south of Kensington and Chelsea in the area around the Worlds End Estate and the North End Road in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Figure 1: Wall outside a College in West London showing London's 'Baghdad zonez'
The postcodes SW10, SW8, SW9 and SE5 which have been designated as "*Baghdad Zonez*"
Source: Author

Figure 2: The remains of an Iraqi election poster from the 2006 elections. The poster was found on Bell Street just of a few Streets away from Church Street market (City of Westminster). Source. Author

Figure 3: Arab services on Church Street
Source: Author

Figure 4: A Masserati imported from Saudi Arabia for summer holidays in London.
Source: Author

Further west towards outer London, businesses and services are a good indication of the settled Arab population. Starting from Shepherds Bush along the Uxbridge Road all the way to Ealing Common there is a dense clustering of Arab orientated retailers, wholesalers, market stands, cafes and restaurants. Crossing the A40 at North Acton, Lebanese bakeries, cafes and food importers pepper this industrialised area which eventually joins up with the Harrow Road at Willesden.

In East Acton, Arab families began to settle around the King Fahad Academy in the 1980s. As Arab services took hold in the area the Arab population grew considerably settling in West Acton and Park Royal as well as pockets in and around West Ealing, Hanwell and Greenford. Along the A4 around the town of Hounslow there is a fragmented Arab community living in the western half of the borough and in the area around Feltham there is a significant concentration of Algerian migrants.

Although Arabs seem to be concentrated in West London, areas like Finsbury Park in the North of the city with its large Turkish, Greek and Cypriot communities also contains large numbers of Algerians. Similarly many Iraqis have settled in the area south of Richmond Park and in the northern neighbourhoods of Kingston-upon-Thames.
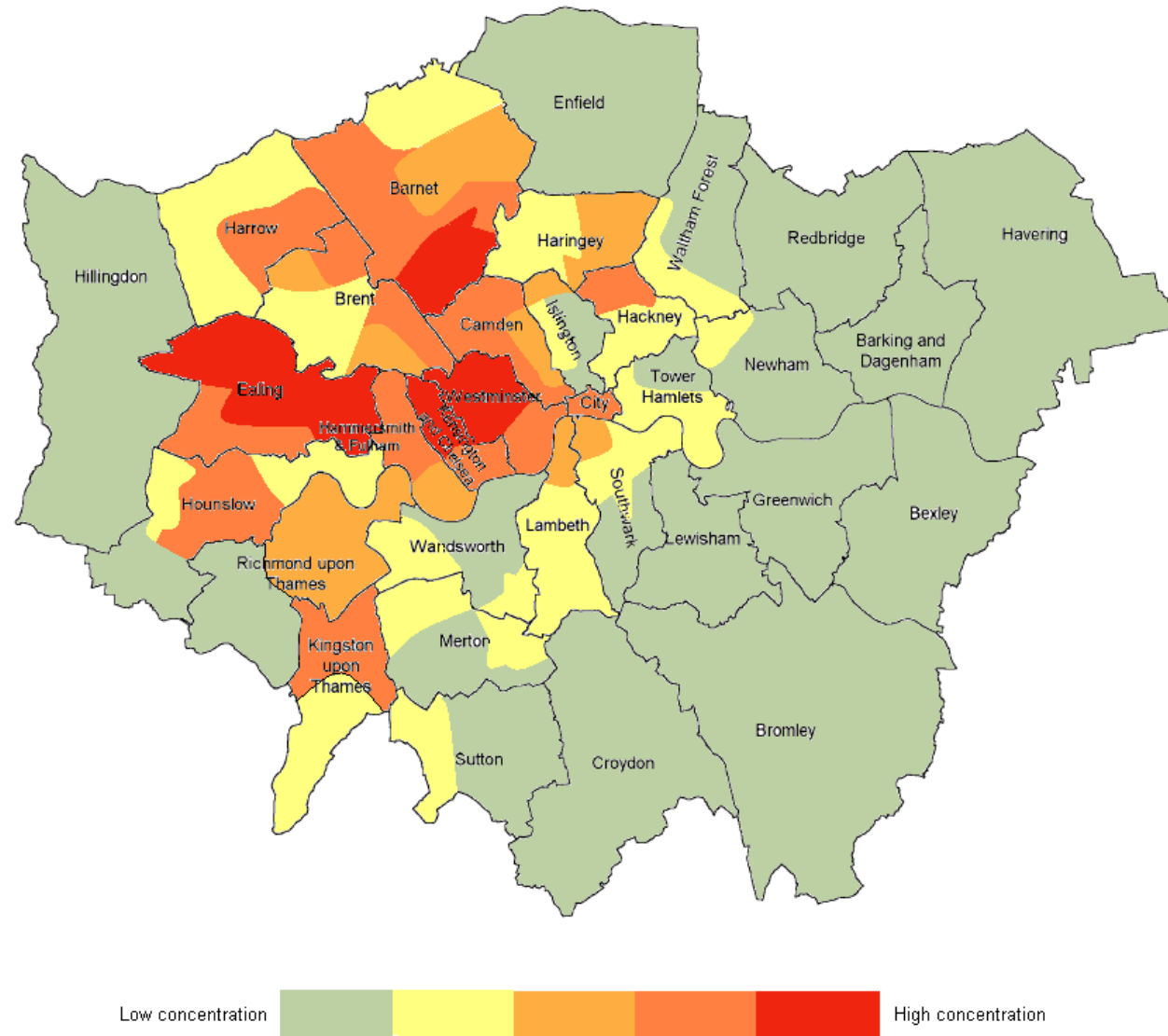
Figure 5: Representation of areas in London with significant Arab settlement. Source: Adapted by author from Kayabi 2005 (based on 2001 census data)

The Participants

I set out to find people aged between 18 and 35 living in London with Arab heritage. Initially I had considered focussing exclusively on those born in Britain. However, I found that a large proportion of people that I met had been born or partly raised in the Middle East or North Africa. In many families there were some siblings born in Britain while others were born abroad. Although the idea of being British-born and notions of 'second generation' had been important to the way that I had thought about the research in its early stages I quickly put this concern to one side in the way that I approached potential participants. This does not suggest that country of birth should be entirely discounted in terms of its potential meanings to some. However, in terms of how people socialised within this age range I could find no guarantees in the sociological typology of 'first' and 'second' generations or the idea that being born in Britain might make you more British or Arab than someone who was born abroad.

I tried a number of different ways of engaging potential participants. I contacted Arab related groups and organizations, attend any meeting or event that was related to Arabs and in the process spread the word that I was "doing research on Arabs in London". I also joined a number of social networking websites and created profiles describing my research and calling for participants. I found snowballing to be the most effective way to get access to a wide variety of people. Indeed within a few months of beginning fieldwork I had met people who were willing to help by putting forward friends and encouraging people to talk to me about their experiences.

One such person was Zainab who had heard that I was 'doing research on Arabs in London'. She helped arrange my first group interview which was rich in substance and introduced me to new people from a variety of backgrounds who I went on to interview and spend time with like Mohammed, a British born Egyptian in his early twenties who was to become a close friend and who in turn introduced me to other young people from Sudan, Yemen and Iraq. The following year and a half was characterised by this snowballing effect which drew me into new relationships with people and places. In total I conducted four group interviews in the first four months of fieldwork, each with between 6-8 participants. Two took place in a formal conference room setting (at a hotel) and two at people's houses. They were very useful as a way of being introduced to people and getting an idea of the direction in which I should take my research. After

eighteen months I had recorded almost sixty one-on-one interviews, a considerable proportion of which were repeat in-depth interviews that took place with ten people.

On a number of occasions I was struck by the emotional potential that interviews and relationships with 'participants' could generate. In some cases the recollections of discrimination at school, difficult family relationships or multiple dislocations and migrations were deeply moving and emotional for the narrator and of course reminded me of my own reasons for undertaking the research. These feelings played an integral part in changing my attitude towards field interactions from one focussed on the idea of 'data collection' to a realisation that what I was capturing was people's lives and not simply material for academic career making. Listening to the narratives and experiences of others and sharing in their lives over an extended period of time was a deeply personal privilege, generating fragments of meaning and relationships far beyond a strictly scientific framing of fieldwork. One of the ways in which I was able to incorporate these emotional and personal aspects of fieldwork into my methods was the adoption of 'autoethnography' (which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter).

As the field notes that follow suggest, during my fieldwork I encountered two recurrent themes which reflected many of the issues. The first was the experience of being seen as having ulterior motives as a result of time spent with female participants. The second related to the reluctance of many of those I engaged with to accept that anything could be learnt about 'Arabs' by observing and participating in the social settings in which young people spent their time

> 12/06/2006
>
> *Last weekend in the car with Jamal and Ashraf on our way to a party, someone's birthday, Ashraf asks me how the research is going, so I tell him "yeah it's really good - Sometimes up sometimes down".*
>
> *Jamal interjects...*
> *"He's whoring around, going to parties and nightclubs and meeting women – he's the first person I know to do a PhD and get a bad reputation for it"*
>
> *Increasingly I think I need to take note of this as it is a blow to any sense of authority or legitimacy. There is quite a significant rejection of participant observation as a legitimate and scientific method, perhaps because of the settings*

I have chosen. Why is it so difficult to accept that observing a social setting or event can be legitimate and useful? I suppose I am expected to be talking to ambassadors, community leaders and activists. Tonight as on many nights the idea that I was doing nothing more than messing about and chasing women reared its head again. As we stood in the queue outside the 'Pangea' nightclub waiting to get into the 'Arabic night' inside, Noor (Female – Iraqi) says "I don't usually go to these things"

Ramy: *"Oh yeah, why?"*

Noor: *"The music is terrible, people are so fake and the men are lecherous"*

Ramy   *"So why are you going then?"*

Noor: *"I had a big fight with mama and she's not talking to me, 'Khatieyeh' (poor thing) I really stressed her out so I thought I would take a night off"*

Ramy: *"I agree, it's not particularly my style either"*

Noor: *"So why are you going"*

Ramy   *"Well to be honest I'm going to observe, it's an event that's related to Arabs so I want to check it out and see whether I can learn anything"*

Noor: *"That's your excuse for everything, why don't you just be honest?"*

Gender was an "important social feature to be considered in terms of the quality of field relations" (Back 1993: 24). Les Back discusses some of the implications of being a male researcher interacting with female participants in particular settings which, in his case, led to numerous accusations that he "fancied" or was "chatting-up" a particular women. He goes on to describe how in the course of doing fieldwork "it became clear that such contact placed young women themselves in a vulnerable position. This meant that I often met with young women outside the view of their male peers. This produced other sets of issues and dilemmas" (ibid 25). However, as the 'doing of Arab-ness' was clearly gendered I could not allow talk about me to prevent me from gaining insights across gender. Indeed the sensitivity with which both males and females assessed how different male/female interactions would be seen by others came to play an important role in understanding interactions between young people and the gendered codes that regulated behaviour in certain social spaces. The censure and suspicion I had experienced became far less of an issue after I became engaged to my partner in June

2007. While wearing a ring on my right hand helped to put some people's suspicions at ease, it did nothing to reduce the scepticism about some of the settings I had chosen to observe 'Arab-ness'. When I went looking for young Arabs at the beginning of my fieldwork I found them almost exclusively in social settings like restaurants, *Shisha* cafes, parties and gatherings in particular places in the city.

'*Shisha* cafes' seemed to act as nodal points in the city's landscape and spaces where people would socialise on a daily basis. Although groups of males and often females established a 'regular' or a 'local' *Shisha* cafe which they would frequent almost every day, venues tended to change according to the company being kept. More up-market venues were often favoured when males and females socialised together or were courting. In turn women avoided certain cafes altogether because they were too male dominated or if the toilets were dirty. The time of year also seemed to affect which cafes were used and by whom. In the summer months many cafes that acted as regular meeting places for British-born or raised Arabs were often abandoned when tourists from the Gulf region filled certain locals in the west of the city. Cafe sociability (which I discuss in chapter five) gave an everyday dimension to my fieldwork interactions. *Shisha* cafes were not only places where I could observe 'Arab-ness' being done or achieved but also places where weekends and holidays were planned, job interviews and exams discussed, football matches and wars watched on TV and the monotony of daily routines eased by card games and gossip

I soon found myself moving from interviewing people or hanging out in cafes to joining in with different social activities. According to who I was with this could range from a university Arabic Society dinner or nights at the restaurants, bars and clubs frequented by young 'Arab' professionals. These settings offered remarkably rich insights and on the expressions of ethnicity, class and sexuality through dance (discussed in chapter six) and also some of the ways in which young Arabs choose to represent themselves visually (the subject of chapter seven).

Even though I followed participants to the venues and settings that they socialized in, for many there was a disconnection between what happened in these places and the idea that it reflected 'Arab-ness' or indeed the material of social research. Perhaps at the heart of this unease was the notion that I was researching "Arab identity in London" which seems to automatically have the politics of multiculturalism as its referent so that the task of 'representing' Arabs appropriately should only involve research on formal 'community structures' and the political projects of integration or ethnogenesis. In

contrast I argue that what one must ask instead is "how Arab-ness is done in London?" However 'unserious' these settings may [have] appear(ed) to some, my fieldwork was ultimately determined not by an idealised notions of studying an 'ethnic community,' (to which I was quite attached at the outset) but by following the way that people integrate day-to-day settings, activities and identifications into "extended milleux" (Clifford 1997; Abu Lugod 1986; Durrschmidt 1997; Hastrup and Olwig 1997).

Archival research also played an important part in my fieldwork. In total I collected over eight hundred newspaper and magazine articles (much of which I have been unable to incorporate into this thesis) relating to Arabs in London, some dating back to the early 20th century. Through this historical reconstruction, which makes no claim to be comprehensive, complete or authoritative, I attempt to address the unreported relationship between London and Arab migrants. My concern with the written record extends beyond knowable events and incidents to the power of discourse and how specific modalities of power are operationalized through language and images (discussed in chapters three and seven). It became clear that a local discourse of 'Arabs' was available with implications and traces in performative Arab-ness today.

Together, interviews, field notes, images and artefacts allow me to present a critical account of the 'doing of Arab-ness' in London. I make no claim to be able to represent a knowable social whole, instead the ethnography I present is one constructed through particular narratives and discourses, certain kinds of historical resources (and not others) and only some of the cultural practices of an extremely diverse group of people.

In the following section I turn to the politics of positions within anthropology in order to address the way in which particular disciplinary methods and approaches to ethnographic knowledge framed my relationship with both the field and the subject of my research as problematic.

Ethnography inside-out

"The more you know about a situation as an ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an ethnographer. It is no coincidence that ethnography was born and developed in the study of non-western cultures. The less familiar you are with a social situation the more you are able to see the tacit cultural rules at work"
(Spradley 1980: 61).

Although somewhat dated these words were among the first to confront me as I came to terms with the idea that I was becoming an anthropologist. I was born in London, to a certain extent I was raised to think of myself as an Arab and I even fell within the age group that I would be interacting with. Anthropological methods based on notions of being western and being an outsider seemed to burden me with the disadvantage of being an 'insider'.

Early 'feminist,' 'native' and 'semi-native' anthropologists were confronted with the task of gaining enough distance from the 'groups' they were considered to be part of in order to make objective inferences about them. However, Hennigh argues that "becoming a stranger to a familiar people is an arbitrary contrivance" and that studying one's own culture and studying an alien culture are two experiences that are inherently different, producing different results that should be judged by their own standards (Hennigh 1981: 121). Apart from emphasizing the idea that anthropologists' are beings that must stand apart from the 'other' which they study, this stance towards familiarity seems particularly puzzling when it is precisely familiarity that 'western' anthropologist seek to acquire through training and immersion in the lives of the 'other' in order to properly represent them. This seems to effectively legitimise certain forms of familiarity while problematizing others. More broadly it seems untenable to maintain that 'familiarity' is any more problematic than 'exoticism'.

Abu-Lughod describes those anthropologists that are partial members of the group being studies as 'halfies'. She argues that the propensity with which they have been constructed as problematic is due to a particular understanding of 'culture' which enforces separation and encourages the formation of hierarchies. What happens when, as in my own case, "the 'other' being studied is simultaneously constructed (at least partially) as 'self?' (1986: 140).

Bulmer and Solomos (2004) observe that the people now undertaking research on 'race' and 'ethnicity' in the United States and Britain have changed. Increasingly scholars from so-called 'ethnic minorities' are undertaking research often with strong personal motivations, political engagement and from positions which challenge traditional white/other dynamics (see also. Twine and Warren 2000; Ratcliffe 2001; Gunaratnam 2003; Alexander 2006).

However, these changes come with no guarantees of authenticity or authority. The presumption of familiarity, of being with '*my people*' was supported by some interactions and shattered by others; we are always only ever members of a group in passing, living through "shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" (Narayan 1993: 671). Fieldwork taught me that there were no assurances based on a shared 'Arab' ethnicity, language or religion which are each reconstructed differently by each person. Indeed the Streets, settings , people and practices that I considered familiar were often given new and unanticipated meaning through the practices and discourses of others.

The idea that a researcher has grown-up discretely inside an 'ethnic community' or even in 'London' overlooks the fragmentation of the city as well as shifting perceptions and identifications over a life course, to say nothing of the effects of class, politics, language, education, religion and nationality on the construction of insider and outsider-ness. Naples (1996) argues that being an insider or an outsider is subject to a process of construction. During her fieldwork in a rural setting where she expected herself to be the only outsider she found that many of her rural informants described themselves as feeling outside 'the community'. Mascarenhas-Keyes (1987) ethnographic work in Goa began with the assumption that, as a Catholic Goan raised in Kenya, she might be considered a cultural insider in Goa. However, the circumstance created by migrations, place and dislocation from "home" often caused her to be seen as an outsider. The ethnographic process itself with its consent forms and note taking can cause familiarity to give way to distance and sometime suspicion (Narayan 1989).

Researchers must critically examine their relationships with their own societies and refrain from assuming that their belonging is uncontested or unproblematic (Aquillar 1981). The crisis of representation and the post-modern reflexive turns in Anthropology have shown the "vital organs" of anthropology to be vulnerable constructions and the pursuit objectivity in textual representation to be a positivist fantasy (Abu-Lughod 1988: 138). "Applying anthropological research to selves and others ... problematizes

the essentialising of both" (Aull-Davies 1999: 34) and the task of producing a truly reflexive ethnography that accounts for the dynamics of interaction apply to all, regardless of their presumed or assumed *position*.

While I have tried to believe that 'my position' creates as many advantages and disadvantages as any other researcher I must admit to fearing the burden of representing 'my own people'. Abu Lughod describes this as the multiple binds when one writes for other, mostly 'western,' anthropologists, but at the same time is identified with and accountable to an 'Arab' audience both in the diaspora and the 'Arab world' who are likely to evaluate whether I have represented 'Arabs' positively. Writing with these considerations in mind involves a "complex awareness of and investment in reception ... [to which] there are no easy solutions" (ibid: 156).

Autoethnography and co-production

Anthropology and ethnography cause me to assume an instinctively defensive posture, the former for reasons of post-colonial suspicion, the latter for post-modern concerns over representation. In response I adopt autoethnography as "both a method and a text" (Reed-Danahay 1997: 5). I find Marilyn Strathern's definition of auto-anthropology as "anthropology carried out in the social context which produced it" to be the most appropriate description of the research that follows (1987: 17 See also Jackson 1987). While I assert here that I am doing autoethnography, sometimes described as 'anthropology at home' I am inconveniently neither western nor native and remain uncommitted about what or where 'home' is.

Autoethnography has its detractors who argue among other things that "anthropology achieves its aims only via specific disciplinary practices, namely the culture shock of fieldwork - a new bodily becoming via immersion in new habitual practices – followed by writing up in a theoretical language that is neither here nor there but both at once" (Rapport and Overing, 2000:18). Others assert that Strathern's definition of autoethnography is both deliberately ambiguous and tautological (ibid). However, these critiques, although vehement, offer no way beyond the epistemological insider/outsider debate.

Since the mid 1970's scholars have debated the issues of authenticity, validity and the configurations of 'self' and 'other' in autoethnography (see. Heider 1975; Hayano

1979; Brandes 1982; Strathern 1987; Denzin 1989; Lejeune 1989; Deck 1990; Pratt 1992; Van Maanen 1995; Reed-Danahay 1997). Because autoethnography has come to represent so many approaches, some of them very autobiographical, it is important to be clear on how autoethnography is used and understood in this thesis.

Autoethnography celebrates rather than demonises personal stories and experiences. Saying that I use autoethnography does not mean that the 'data' lies between my ears but that I acknowledge that as a participant and an observer I am visible, interacting, affecting and being affected. It is never only through introspection that cultural understanding or an understanding of the research process is achieved, but through the interplay between the narratives of self and other. I therefore consider this autoethnography to be the result of a co-production where participants make themselves and their personal experiences available to a researcher who is affected and affects the nature of the narratives and experiences shared with him/her and attempts to represent and orientate these to address theory.

The most progressive aspect of autoethnography is its attitude towards emotion, indeed my early attempts to hide my emotional investment and interest in this research was challenged primarily by participants themselves who often turned-the-tables on me and asked me searching and personal questions. Autoethnography, as a broad reflexive textual movement encourages researchers to treat the feelings of participants with equal importance and relevance as their own and to include their own emotions and experiences in the overall ethnographic representation.

As Heewong Chang notes, one of the pitfalls of autoethnography can be that "the methodological focus on 'self' is sometimes misconstrued as a license to dig deeper in personal experience instead of wider into the cultural context of the individual stories commingled with others"(2008: 52). Chang goes on to warn that "self-indulgent introspection is likely to produce a self-exposing story but not autoethnography" (ibid: 54). Therefore I rely overwhelmingly on the stories of others told through individual and group interviews, field notes, archival research, and document and visual analysis while acknowledging that the 'constant' in all of these interactions is the researcher. As Judith Okley argues "... in an academic context 'the personal is theoretical.' This stands against an entrenched tradition which relegates the personal to the periphery and to the 'merely anecdotal': pejoratively contrasted in positivist social science with generalizable truth. Yet, anthropologists are steeped in the anecdotal" (1992: 9)

The politics of 'positions' and 'representation' extends beyond a reconciliation with the methodologies of my adopted discipline but fundamentally draws me into wider philosophical concerns about how to approach notions of 'gender,' 'race,' 'ethnicity,' 'identity' which have become key yet persistently inconclusive units of analysis for anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and literary theory. In the second part of this chapter I discuss the relationships between 'gender' and 'ethnicity' to the 'doing of Arab-ness' in London and notions of collective and personal identification. In so doing I seek to address Anthias & Yuval-Davis contention that theories of 'race,' 'gender' and 'ethnicity' often fail to interrelate these processes adequately (1995: 68). I argue that Judith Butler's approach to 'performative gender' facilitates sequential readings which counter expose the hegemonic norms of "being raced" (making and being made an "Arab") and "being gendered" (making and being made into, an "Arab wo/man").

Part II: Ontologies of race and gender

Conflux: race, ethnicity, culture and identity

In the 1960s the analysis of ethnicity was extended from the study of pre-capitalist, 'bounded' tribal groups, characteristic of early anthropological functionalism to industrialised societies, where migration and notions of 'majority' and 'minority' relations had become increasingly important (Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma 1996; Banks 1996; Jenkins 1997). Barth's seminal work on 'Ethnic groups and Boundaries' did not entail a total rejection of culture, as is evident from his 1994 reappraisal, but his approach contained an implicit reinforcement of the salience of boundaries and groups (Eriksen 1993: 41-45; Bank 1996:66-68). Clifford Geertz's interest in States and modernisation posited that primordial loyalties like religion, caste and ethnicity would impede modern state building. He later went on to adopt a more interpretive theoretical position developing his theory of 'symbolic anthropology' (1973). Geertz argued that culture was "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973:89). Abner Cohen following Barth and Geertz, attempted to

combine primordialism and instrumentalism by arguing that in urban contexts ethnic symbolism developed from being subjective, malleable and individual into an objective and collective reality (1974: 161), in some senses a form of ethnicity and identity fetishism. While it appears that instrumental, interpretive and Marxist approaches have discredited the primordial view, the rise of ethnic assertiveness, broadly seen as taking place in the 1980s, led to its rehabilitation as a way of explaining the way in which 'race', 'ethnicity', 'nationalism' and 'religion' were widely valued and deployed from 'within' groups (Eriksen 1993; Baumann and Sunnier 1995; Banks 1996; Jenkins 1997). Debates as to whether 'ethnicity,' now cast as everything between 'race' and 'identity' is a matter of primordial ties, instrumental interaction, subjective content or objective structural forces remain as relevant today as they have ever been.

Stuart Hall asks us to suspend the colonial and biological implications of 'race' and reformulate it in favour of a 'new (black) ethnicity' which is the result of "a cut and mix ... diasporization" (Hall 1992). Despite Hall's call to rescue ethnic construction from readymade labels (seeing it as a process of becoming not finality) textual and political practices around 'race,' 'ethnicity,' 'culture' and 'identity' seem inextricably and discursively bound to each other so that similar terms of reference form the substance of these categories (biology, language, religion, culture, origin and descent). Gupta argues that Hall's advocacy of 'new ethnicities' was "in many ways the announcement of identity-based political positions incorporation into identity politics in Britain" (Gupta 2007: 45).

In spite of the postmodernist and constructivist turns that have taken place in the study of 'race' and difference, the relationship of 'race' to its successor's 'ethnicity,' 'culture' and 'identity' are at best dubious. The academic career of this triumviri suggests not only a disciplinary division of labour (Bensons 1996) but also a conflux where "a focus on 'race' and racism has been superseded by a resurgent interest in 'ethnicity' and 'culture' as the locus for identity politics or, increasingly, simply identity" (Alexander, 2002: 556).

While the 'reality' of race has been widely discredited (Miles 1984, 1989) it has subsequently been replaced with the "fact of ethnicity" (Modood 2005: 51). Goldberg describes this slip from the 'race' to 'ethnicity' as *ethnorace* (1993). Indeed as Alexander (2006) suggests the slippage continues onto 'culture' and 'identity'. The study of subjectivity and difference in contemporary urban settings often deploys "identity" and the 'group' as primary units of analysis, a practice which seems to slip

too comfortably into contemporary political vocabularies that make constructivist advances in the approach to the idea of 'identity' opaque (Brubaker 2004). Indeed, the relationship between social constructivism and identity politics has been characterised by Gergen (2001) as kind of cathartic 'love affair' where anti-essentialism "within different identity-based political positions" has the result of strengthening foundationalist identity politics (Gupta 2007:30).

A growing number of scholars point to a confused and overstretched relationship with the term 'identity'. Gilroy suggests that "there is more at stake in the current interest in identity than we often appreciate" (2000: 98). He argues that the circulation of the term "identity," particularly within policy circles, and global commerce and marketing, has added considerably to the term's fragmentation and manipulation as a catch-all interpretive device. "We are constantly informed" he writes "that to share an identity is to be bonded on the most fundamental levels: national, "racial", ethnic, regional and local. Identity is always bounded and particular" noting that sadly nobody speaks of a human identity (2000:155). "The idea of collective identity has emerged as an object of political thinking even if its appearance signals the sorry state of affairs in which distinctive rules that define modern political culture are consciously set aside (ibid)

The principle concern with the way in which these approaches have developed is that the line between identity as a "category of practice" in the everyday sense following Bourdieu, has been conflated with the "identity" as a unit of analysis in social science literature. Cooper & Brubaker antagonistically diagnose the constructivist approach to identity which we are lead to favour in contemporary anthropological and sociological research as being "clichéd constructivism" where the soft conception of identity is "routinely packaged with standard qualifiers… which have become so familiar – indeed obligatory – in recent years that one reads (and writes) them virtually automatically", multiple, contingent, unstable, in flux fragmented constructed, negotiated (Cooper & Brubaker and 2000: 38). The question we are left with is, is this "elastic" approach to identity capable of any serious analytical work?

The effort to think of identity in terms of plurality has led to a rather superficial supplanting of the singular form 'identity' with the plural 'identities'. Butler suggests that "if 'identity' becomes the unit that is multiplied, then the principle of identity is repeated – and reconfirmed without ever yielding to another set of terms" (2000: 439). Often what we mean by identity is recognisability, representation, culture, agency,

meaning, historical formation and contextualisation (ibid: 440), affinities, affiliations, belongings, commonalities and connectedness, self-understanding and self-identification. All the meanings and consequences that these categories carry frequently distilled into the notion of 'identity' or 'identities' (Brubaker 2004).

"The unmediated first person voice is offered as the final phenomenological legitimation for a political claim" stemming from a continued emphasis on the language of *positions* that reflect an individual's place in a social hierarchy and from where they speak" (Butler 2000: 440). Butler asks "To what kind of cultural effect do we seek recourse when we seek to ground ourselves in a subject position?" (ibid) Identity' carries with it the expectation of cultural specificity and increasingly "identity and specificity work interchangeably" so that the "subject position" becomes self-referential leading to kind of "closed circuitry" or "cultural solipsism" (ibid: 441). Through this type of identity politics which today dominates political and cultural vocabulary we are encouraged to think of marking our position as the ultimate act of political emancipation, responsibility and accountability. "And when politics is reduced to political moralism of this sort, the self-referential declaration of identity is elevated to the status of an ethical imperative, restricting the field of public discourse to individualist declarations or to claims first grounded in such declarations" (ibid: 442). In research and activism taking account of 'race' and 'identity' are thus equated with ethical responsibility, to mark him/herself out as, for example, an "Arab anthropologist" unwittingly reducing the researcher and the object of research to 'race,' so that what begins as reflexivity can often fall far short of progress.

The essentialism involved in speaking of races, ethnicities, identities and genders is sometimes seen as 'strategic,' necessary to be able to 'speak' as 'a woman' or 'an Arab,' at other times involves the use of "positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (Spivak 1985: 205). Spivak argues that essentialism is not inherently bad and that it is the way in which essentialised categories are applied that requires critique. Webner argues for a "distinction between essentialisms: between negative reification and an objectification which entails a self-essentialising whose aim is a project of imagining community" (1997:143).

Indeed essentialism and the problems and opportunities it presents in relation to knowledge are far from being resolved. In recent years ethnic and racial studies in Britain have been dominated by oppositional academic trends where some seek to highlight and address structural inequalities and discrimination, a goal made possible by

counting and reproducing ethnic and racial categorisation (see Modood et al 1997b 2005; Mason, 2000). On the other hand there are those who would see these projects as reliant on contemporary forms of 'colonial counting,' disturbing the ethnic and racial opacity (Appadurai 1996) and instead advocate a post-'race,' 'ethnicity' and 'identity' approach which seeks to undermine 'identity politics' and the 'reality' of the ethnic and racial categories it relies upon in favour of a broader basis of identification and solidarity (Banton 1977, 1983a 1983b; Gilroy 2000, 2002; Ali 2003).

Tariq Modood's work has, among other things, pointed to new forms of cultural racism (1997) and is a cornerstone of contemporary anti-racist policy research in Britain particularly in relation to Muslims. In response to post-identity politics readings of race like those of Banton, Modood argues that "the fact of ethnicity (and the limitations of individualism) needs to be given far greater prominence" (2005: 51). Modood consistently argues for the legitimacy of identity politics as the means of emancipation asserting that "Underneath and beyond a case of racist categorisation may be not just be individuals but *real* collectivities, common and distinctive forms of thinking and behaviour, language, customs and religion and so on; not just modes of oppression but *modes of being*" (my emphasis) (2005: 51).

My objection here is not to the observation that collectivities might exist, but that firstly, ethnic-othering in the urban contexts which Modood is most concerned with relies on notions of essential difference and distinctiveness and cannot be legitimised based either on self-selection or ascription. In many respects sociology has been content to argue that voluntary ethnicity is the ideal of race-relations (see Banton, 1983; Smith, 2002) or that ascription is inevitable. Brubacker (2004) describes the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed as "groupism" arguing that despite the advances in post-structural and postmodern social theory there have only ever been "uneven challenges to groupism" (2003 553). "Somehow when we talk about ethnicity, and even more when we talk about ethnic conflict, we almost automatically find ourselves talking about ethnic groups" (ibid 554). This does not necessarily mean advocating a radical individualism but simply reasserts that there should be no comfort taken in either personal or collective illusions of essential difference or solidarity. Bringing me to the second point, which is undeniably political; instead of accepting that ethnic self-selection and ascription are simply 'out there,' which indeed they are, the challenge which any kind of progressive politics faces is how to deconstruct the workings of certain types of self-

selection and ascription. The pursuit of ethnic mobilisation, visibility and recognition within Britain's multicultural political framework is arguably reactionary. Criticisms of post-race positions neglect to see that so long as access to equality and social justice are framed within a scramble over essentialised difference and distinctiveness we are unlikely to be able to move beyond the illusionary and crude ordering principle of 'race'. As Gilroy suggests, "perhaps the first task on which we must risk the gains secured on the back of identity politics is that the call to the demise of race is not something that should be feared" (Gilroy; 2000: 12). I argue that it is fruitless to see ethnic othering as an innate pathological affliction of humanity; "the human sensorium has had to be educated to the appreciation of racial differences" (Gilroy 2000: 42) As 'performativity' would have it, the collectivities which Modood argues exist *a priori* to racism and other false beliefs are not forms of *'being'* as he suggests but forms of *doing*.

Racializing Islam

The slippage of the logic of 'race' to ethnicity and culture has also had the effect of transforming Muslim-ness into an incommensurable marker of difference. Since 1997 Modood has argued (with much foresight) that Muslims in Britain and elsewhere in the 'West' have been subjected to "increasingly pernicious discourses of racialisation" (Modood and Meer 2010:143). "Until recently, Europe's Muslims were rarely the subject of sustained academic enquiry or political scrutiny. Throughout most of the post-war era, these individuals were defined not primarily by their religion but rather by their citizenship status, economic function, race, ethnicity or nationality... Over the past two decades, however, European Muslim have increasingly come to be understood *qua* Muslims, with this aspect of their identity viewed as trumping others, and with 'Muslim' frequently racialised as an essential category of identity, difference and inferiority" (Bleich 2010: 169). Typically 911 and 7/7 are sighted as being the main causes behind the intense scrutiny and Islamisation of migrants from 'majority Muslim' countries. A common-sense discourse of post-911 threat to national security and national identity has been widely accepted and is "taken to be exceptional and beyond ordinary understanding" (Brown 2010: 172). This has not only led to the securitization of Muslims in Britain (ibid) but equally to the ascription of *Islamism* upon all Muslims. Indeed this phenomenon is not restricted to Britain, it is now well documented in France

(see Geisser 2003) The United States (see Cainkar 2009) and Germany where Ramm (2010) finds this process to have 'Islamized' Turkish migrants in Germany transforming them from *Ausländers* and *Gastartbeiter* to Muslims.

Indeed it is now common to impute Muslim-ness based on the 'ethnic community' which a person is presumed to be a part-of, the country of migration from which they or their parents have come or simply their name. Consequently people with Muslim heritage are assumed to see the world through Muslim eyes, to have Muslim concerns and sensibilities regardless of their actual relationship to Islam and other Muslims.

The vast majority of Muslims, I would argue, are at the mercy of two constituencies busily advocating their opposed yet curiously proximate projects of Islamic racialisation. On one hand anti-Muslim prejudice propagated by the media depicts a monolithic, incommensurable and irreconcilable *Islamism* at the core of every Muslim living in 'the West' making them all potential suspects (Nguyen, 2005). Parekh argues that there is now a widespread perception "that Muslims are collectivist intolerant, authoritarian, illiberal and theocratic and that they use their faith as a self-conscious public statement, not quietly held personal faith but a matter of identity which they must jealously guard and loudly proclaim, not only to remind them of who they are but also to announce to others what they stand for (2006: 180-81). Richardson sees this mode of representation as "serving the very practical function of removing British Muslims from empowered positions in and affecting the public sphere by demanding either their cultural and political assimilation or expulsion" (2010:168). On the other hand an equally essentialist discourse of Islam is propagated by Islamists who Sayyid argues attempt to transform Islam from a nodal point in a variety of discourses into a master signifier.... the master signifier functions as the most abstract principle by which any discursive space is totalised" (1997: 46-47; See also Halliday 1996). Beyond the constituency of people who whose lives are visibly and practically defined totally by Islam, it seems of little interest that there are others from the 'Islamic world' or 'Muslim communities' of Britain who may be non-practicing, secular, agnostic, atheist or simply nominally Muslim, yet in an everyday sense less interested in Islamic orthodoxy than they are in capitalism, consumerism, accumulation and class.

One of the most challenging aspects of my research has been how to deal with the overwhelming academic interest and concern regarding the plight or threat of young Muslims, particularly as my research was not directly intended to be an investigation of Islamic practice or values or the politics of anti-terrorism. As parts of my ethnography

will demonstrate it is extremely difficult to understand the extent to which an individual may be distancing themselves from or coveting Islamic orthodoxy. As one participant put it to me *"there is something about our generation which means we can go to the Mosque on Friday lunchtime and go out clubbing on Friday night"*. However in an environment in which ever more weird and wonderful stories about Muslims have become a media staple, the actual nuances and negotiation taking place with Islam are lost.

Mondal finds that "Young Muslims are moving in several different directions at the same time. Some are becoming westernised, following a largely secular lifestyle in common with many of their non-Muslim peers. Others are becoming more religious and islamically conscious" (2008: 20). Attitudes and practices relating to Islam vary over a life course and are influenced by an array of influences; there is no linear path to or away from Islam. "Is there any explanation which might encompass the variety and heterogeneity of young, British Muslim experience today? Many have, of course, tried since it is the hot topic of the day, and figuring out the young Muslim predicament is considered a matter of political urgency" (ibid: 21). As a consequence of this political and security interest in 'young Muslims' it seems that all the other influences and interests to which they might be party are automatically relegated to the ephemeral or circumstantial. In the same way that I express an anxiety towards assuming that my participants are primarily 'Arabs' I also wish to avoid imposing upon all those with a relationship with Islam an irreducible and racialised Muslim-ness. As Mondal helpfully offers "If you listen carefully to what young Muslims actually have to say for themselves rather than what they say in response to someone else's agenda, the ways in which people frame their life stories, the figures of speech they associate with particular episodes can often illuminate the choices they made and their understanding of them" (2008: 22). I remain uncomfortable describing the people I spent time with and interviewed by using the polarised notions of 'Westernised' or 'Islamised,' as if people comfortably fit into such ideal typologies. "It is more helpful to think of 'Westernisation' and 'Islamization' not as alternatives but as two sides of the same coin, two dimensions of the same phenomenon" (ibid: 48)

What is almost beyond doubt is that young people are sensitive and acutely aware of the flood of negative representations and attitudes about Muslims in the British media, a matter which seems to affect people regardless of their religious observance. Poole (2002, 2006) Richardson (2010), Meer and Modood (2010) Saeed (2007) Bleich (2010)

among many others have documented the unprecedented rise in the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the media since 911. Richardson's qualitative analysis of election reporting between 1997 and 2005 "suggests that the rise of press interest in Islam and Muslims has been accompanied by the rise of a hostile and stereotyping discourse that emphasises the putative threat that Muslims pose to *'our way of life'*" (2009: 376). Offering little consolation for the subjects of my research Bleich finds that "contrary to what may seem obvious or at least plausible, Muslims are *not* the most distant ethno-racial outsiders in Britain and France. Being a Muslim appears to be less of a disadvantage than being Asian, Arab or Roma, even if some surveys suggest that it may be more of a disadvantage than being black" (2010: 189). Meer and Modood have found that among news media professionals there is little sympathy for those who accuse the media of being Islamophobic, a charge which is seen as a way of stifling debate and criticism and has encouraged Muslims to develop a 'victim mentality' (2010).

Katherine Brown offers an analysis of some of the instances in which the 'securitized caricature' of Muslims propagated in parts of the media has been resisted through the promotion of alternative representations through publications like the Muslim lifestyle magazine *Emel (Hope),* initiatives like the 'Muslim Women Power List' and the showcasing of Muslim 'success stories' like the businessman/celebrity James Khan (2010: 178). However, Brown concludes, in my opinion correctly that the terms upon which such 'positive' and successful representations are formulated "remain the socially validated ones of hard work and conspicuous consumption" (2010: 180). In chapter seven I will consider similar attempts by young Arabs in London to resist the same characterization of 'dangerous Islamists' and 'backward Arabs' which in turn implicates them in similar processes of validation framed within the terms of the neo-liberal, consuming, productive citizens; but equally in forms of auto-Orientalism (see. Mazzarella 2003). More broadly in my research I have found that the *Shisha* (water pipe) the belly dancer and the stereotype of Arab oil wealth, all classical devices of Orientalism are sometimes re-appropriated by young people and given new uses and meanings in the semiotic encounter with a hostile 'Islamophobic' public sphere. Elizabeth Poole notes that themes in the media representation of Muslims are produced to suit the political purposes of the time so that while the image of the oil rich sheikh with his harem dominated the 1970s in reaction to the oil crisis and the oil boom it has diminished in more contemporary constructions (2002: 43). While some themes in the representation of Arabs and Muslims may diminish in their political and economic

importance to the news agenda, they do not necessarily disappear from the discursive terrain or cease to have meaning a matter which I explore later in this thesis (chapters five and six). To my mind, these subordinated voices, images and texts of 'resistance' against a backdrop of insidious hegemonic discourses of Oriental 'otherness' highlight the centrality of speech, semiotic and corporeal acts to the project of making and being made into a subject and affirm the potential Butler's performative approach has for our understanding of 'gender', 'race' and by implication essentialist approaches to Islamic ethnicity, culture and identity.

Trespassing: the reach of performativity

In this section I explore Judith Butler's account of 'performative gender' as a means of understanding both 'gender' and 'race'. In so doing, I seek to move away from the idea of 'being' (of) a given gender, race, ethnicity or culture, which implies that these categories are 'proper objects' that represent essential identities; to the idea that 'race,' 'ethnicity' and 'culture' are discursive things that we *do* within a performative matrix of mimesis and imperfect repetition through structures of subjection and importantly motivated by a project of social intelligibility and survival. Performative gender takes place within the structures of hetronormativity, a set of discursive practices, behaviours and ideologies which produce the gendered subject. The reiteration (or repeatability) of (gendered) norms has an inevitable dualism. Reiteration is designed to reinforce and reproduce forms of authority, but the imperfection inherent in repetition also makes it possible for the same norms to be rearticulated and transgressed. In Butler's works normative gender and sex are the result of a particular configuration of identification, desires, mimesis, melancholia and the projects of survival and intelligibility.

Throughout this thesis I explore the possibilities of extrapolating performative 'race,' 'ethnicity' and 'culture' from performative gender. I do not mean to totally discredit or conflate these terms (race, ethnicity and culture) which are often studied as distinct realms where, in a British context, Black people have race while Asians have ethnicity and culture (Alexander; 2002). However, following Butler, I argue for an intellectual trespassing of disciplinary boundaries and methodological approaches which tend to 'force separation in the interests of canonisation and provisional institutional legitimation. For the analysis of racialisation and class is at least equally important in

the thinking of sexuality as either gender or homosexuality, and these last two are not separable from more complex and complicitous formations of power' (Butler 1994: 21). After presenting my ethnographic chapters I will explore in greater detail whether the particular configuration of identification, desire, mimesis, melancholia and projects of survival characteristic of performative gender have any meaning with reference to so-called racial and ethnic identities in London.

Simone De Beauvoir's proposition that one is not born but becomes a woman raises many questions for Judith Butler. She asks, if one is not born but becomes a woman, what is involved in becoming a woman? "Who is the "one" that becomes and when do the discursive mechanisms of becoming arrive on the cultural scene transforming the human subject into a gendered subject?" (Butler 1990: 111). While there is no denying the difference between male and female reproductive organs, hormones and chromosomes, Butler's main concern is with gender discourses and the hetronormative matrix which give cultural meaning and social consequences to these biological differences. Butler argues that "gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'pre-discursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (1990:12). By radically un-constructing 'sex' and 'gender,' 'gender' is shown to be a cultural fiction not an internal way of being that manifests itself externally as an 'identity' but instead:

"Acts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, that produce *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organising principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments generally constructed are *performative* in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if the reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interior is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse ... an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (ibid 1990: 173).

Accordingly 'a performative act' is one which brings into being or enacts that which it names' (Butler 1993:134) a specific modality of the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomenon that it regulates and constrains' (ibid 2-3) One of the principle criticism levelled at *Gender Trouble,* has been that it has been interpreted as representing an argument for the 'death of the subject.' a critical character in the humanist tradition (Salih 2002: 92). While the *performativity* Butler espouses is developed from Austin's (1962) speech-act theory where 'things are done' with performative utterances by an autonomous agent/ author, Butler adopts a Derridean reading of Austin which argues against the proposal that the discursive or performative acts are singular and voluntaristic. Derrida takes issue with depiction of authorial agency in Austin's distinction between *etiolating* and *parasitic* utterances. Instead he uses the notions of *iterability*, dissemination and citation where communication is about repetition and where the use of a word or sign inevitably operationalises all the possible meanings, uses and interpretations of that word or phemes.

Iterability in this sense is the repeatability '*iter,* again, probably comes from <u>*itara*</u>, other in Sanskrit and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity' (Derrida 1997: 7). Iterability stands for our mastery of language, our broaching of it, and simultaneously its breaching, that which makes its repetition imperfect, incomplete, unsuccessful, the impossibility of 'rigorous purity'. Failure is central to the structure of language blurring what it means to successfully communicate. (ibid: 10-30). As Bearn writes:

> "Determined to strip the masks from the masqueraders, he [Austin] found behind each mask another one. Derrida's explanation for Austin's failure is that Austin was attempting to understand an essentially theatrical activity – linguistic action – while holding in abeyance all categories of theatre. But one can understand Austin's motivation, for once the theatricality of linguistic action is admitted, we may not be able to hide our eyes from the theatricality of action period. If Iterability troubles the authenticity of signatures [LI 20], it may also trouble the very idea of authentic action. Thus the most troubling consequence of iterability may be that nothing is simply authentic. Everything is also theatrical: every utterance, a performance, every action, acting"
> (Bearn, 1995: 23).

By unravelling Austin's model of language Derrida draws attention to the 'double writing' inherent in communication, removing the distinction between pure and performative illocutionary acts. A brief comparison between Derrida and Bakhtin (often overlooked) may help illustrate these different approaches. Bakhtin's notion of *hetroglossia* argues that every time we use language we are using the voices of others. "The word in language is always half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with their own intentions. Prior to this moment of appropriation the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (i.e. not in a dictionary) but rather it exits in other people's mouths, concrete contexts, serving other peoples intentions. It is from there that one must take the word and make it ones own." (Bakhtin; 1981: 293). Bakhtin believed that language originated in social interaction and struggle and that these are always implicated in its use and meaning, representing our use of language as a struggle to create our own voices. (Maybin, 2001: 64).

While Derrida would probably agree with Bakhtin's depiction of language as always being drawn from past utterances and contexts and that phemes are (re)cited in new and unanticipated ways, it appears that their agreement might end there. Derrida's understanding of intentionality, what Bakhtin would describes as "making the word one's own," is that it is always within the frame of the *iterability* of a sign "which cannot be contained or enclosed by any context, convention or authorial intention" and furthermore that these signs are "cited, grafted and reiterated in ways that do not conform to their speakers or writers original intentions" suggesting that every sign carries the possibility of a communicative failure (Derrida 1982: 93-103)

Thus the injunction to be a given gender produces necessary failure, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated. The compulsion to repeat is where agency is located. However, according to Butler the repetition of signification is a regulated process. Some of the interpretations of *Gender Trouble* have resulted in the reading that "if gender is performative it must be radically free" (Butler in Osborne and Segal; 1994: 32)

Gender citation and performativity are closely related to the hegemony of the hetronormative matrix. As Vicky Bell notes, the importance of the term 'hegemony' for Butler lies in understanding that the hetronormative matrix does not simply hold up certain ideals of gender and sexuality as normal but that there are risks and consequences in transgressing those norms and boundaries, some of them moral and

others physical. In other words, the phantasmic ideals of the hetronormative matrix are *policed* (Bell 1999: 140). Butler moves from a fixed notion of the hetronormative matrix in *Gender Trouble* to one of hegemonic order with the possibility for constant recreation and adjustment in her subsequent work (ibid).

As the notion of performativity has been drawn upon in a number of disciplines it has inevitably undermined disciplinary approaches which rely on humanist "spatially embedded, intentional human practice" (Nelson 1999: 332). Responding to criticisms from Benhabib and Weir in *Feminist Contentions* (1995) Butler clarifies her position on agency and power in *Excitable Speech* (1997) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). In *The Psychic Life of Power,* Butler returns to Foucault to explain her approach to the autonomous individual, borrowing the concept of *assujetissement* or 'subjectification and subjection' which seeks to describe the process of always being subjugated by power in the process of becoming a subject. *Subjectification* seems to suggest that subjection and power are necessary conditions in the making or *the doing* of subjectivity. By choosing to neither opt for humanist autonomy or structural determinism Butler places the subject between the two where the impossibility of perfect repetitions of the hetronormative provides the opportunity for agency which, in itself is neither a personal attribute or a formal object, but 'only ever a political choice' (Butler 1993, 1997a 1997b).

The relationship between subject and structure is problematised through this Foucauldian reading of the *techniques of the self* where the moral self is at once the 'subject *of* and subject *to'* schemes of power and knowledge (see. Marshall 2009). Butler's use of Foucault, along with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis rejects the strong heterosexualising imperatives that produce over deterministic understandings of gendered structures. So while she supports the idea that 'every speaking being is born into a symbolic order that is always-already-there...the status of that always-already-thereness' should not be seen as static (Butler in Osbourne and Segal 1994: 35).

Butler's discursive emphasis has drawn criticisms from anthropologists like Cecilia Busby which in turn help to highlight some of the limitations and misinterpretations of performative gender. Busby argues that while Butler's theory has potentially interesting sociological implications, it is primarily framed through the philosophy of language and is not focused on acts and gestures but the discursive frame within which they are realised. The implication is that little attention is paid to actual material practices or the materiality of bodies, which is simply seen as an effect of power manifested through

language rather than practices (2000: 11-19). Taking up Busby's point in this thesis I attempt to find links between gendered and racialised material practices and discourses.

However, Busby's other major criticism that the notion of gender performativity seems to lack relevance for the 'fixed sexed body' among the Marianad in India is more problematic. She argues that 'India offers an understanding of the relation between body and performance which is different' (ibid: 219). There is an inherent suggestion here that gender and body are different in a Euro-American perspective from other contexts. At best this assertion is a form of relativism which would render any theoretical scheme neutral and at worse could be considered Orientalist, so that while gender and the body are fluid in 'the West' they are static and fixed in 'the East'. Indeed the very effect of hetronormativity and gendered discourse is the production of a natural and undeniable normative relationship between the body and the cultural structures which give it meaning and consequence. Busby inverts the performance/ performativity distinction made by Butler but in so doing seems to rearticulate Bourdieu's *habitu*s with its emphasis on 'embodiment' and an objective social field based around the market and the division of labour.

Miron and Inda attempt to bridge the gap between performative gender and race by interpreting race as a kind of speech act. Their discussion is a rare instance where speech act theory and race are inter-related. They argue that by uncovering the ways in which early race thinking has flourished through naturalising practices designed to fix difference and attribute characteristics to races; "Race does not refer to a pre-given subject. Rather it works to constitute the subject itself and only acquires a naturalised effect through repeated or reiterative naming of or reference to that subject" (2000: 86-87).

'Race' is largely absent from '*Gender Trouble*', in '*Bodies That Matter*' Butler incorporates the issue of race into her thinking in her discussion of Nella Larsen's novel *'Passing'*. While she draws a parallels between 'queering' and 'passing' she stops short of discussing performative race or expanding on what she refers to as 'racialising norms' (Butler 1993: 130; see also Salih 2002: 92-93; Hubel and Brooks 2002: 188).An important area of research where performativity seems to reach beyond gender is in the analysis of American literature and cinema on the theme of racial *passing* (see Piper 1992; Smith 1994; Bennett 1998; Sanchez and Schlossberg 2001; Hubel and Brooks 2002; Keresztasi Treat 2002 Knadler 2003; Rottenberg 2004(a) 2004(b); Kay Williams 2004; Harrison-Kahan 2005; Horne 2006; Belluscio 2006; Elam 2007; Cutter 2010).

Through her analysis of Mourning Dove's 'ethnic modernist' novel '*Cogewea, The Half Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range*' (1927) Keresztasi Treat signals that Butler's interpretation of Larsen's novel 'leaves the door open for making the leap from the performativity of gender to the performativity and ambiguity of racial identity' (2002: 188). Keresztasi Treat examines how passing is not available to everyone while attempting to demonstrate how the strategies of passing and mixed blooded identity can be the basis of extending Butler's argument from gender to race. Gayle Wald draws our attention to the narrative limitations of the passing plot which tends to be valorised as the transcendence of social definition (2000: 30).Wald's observation speaks directly to the misreading of performativity where often transgression or transcendence are valorised as radically paradigmatic. A concern with performativity (not performance) is fundamentally concerned not with the transgressive act or subject but with the notions of transcendence and transgression themselves. Performativity valorises neither conformity nor transgression but shows all gender, sexuality and race as parodies of each other with no natural, original or stable origin from which transgression can be measured. In interpretations of performativity and performance building upon/ from *Gender Trouble* tend to make the distinction between these two terms opaque or use them interchangeably without unpacking their related but separate meanings and implications. What Butler sets out to do by theorising 'performativity' is postulate it as a 'vehicle through which ontological effects are established. Performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed' (Butler 1996: 111-112; see also 1993: 12 & 234).

The analysis of *passing* in both film and literature has uncovered some of the modalities of power around race, gender, class and how they interact and intersect. As Wald notes in relation to racial passing in films like *Pinky* and *Lost Boundaries* the epistemological authority of the epidermal common sense of race and the white gaze are undermined while calling into question the visual epistemology through which race comes to be known. However in so doing the black-white opposition is unravelled only for the purposes of setting-up a narrative predicament and its subsequent closure which re-stabilises the opposition. Thus by 'brandishing the performativity of race, they do not provide the key to its undoing as a strategy of social power' (2000: 95). Indeed much of the resolution and re-stabilisation of race in early accounts of passing are made in reference to class mobility whereby the demonstration of particular middle-class notions of taste and cultivation ultimately secure passage into whiteness. Within these cinematic

and literary narratives a colonial mimicry of whiteness seems dominant and consequently a particular configuration of identification, desire and mimesis seem to frame the characters. Wald finds that the end of the traditional passing from black to white or 'refusing to pass' is synchronised with the erosion of particular forms of political, social and economic laws of segregation and discrimination. Passing is thus put in context not as a denial of the black self but as intrinsically situated and tied to strategies of reiteration, recitation and survival between particular structures of subjection (ibid: 119) Important for my project of extrapolating performative race from Butler's schema of performative gender Wald's analysis, particularly post-passing narratives in Black popular culture signals the relationship between identification, desire, encryption, mimesis and cultural survival is not fixed in a single configuration but is reconfigured contextually as is evident in more contemporary narratives of passing like Danzy Senna's novel *Caucasia*.

Thus passing in literature and film are part of the 'designs for living' (Alexander 2004) in a particular context and as such both passing and the performances they involve can be seen as part of a traumatized project of survival. Having said this Sanchez and Schlossberg's (2001) volume on *passing*, sexuality, race and religion suggests that passing is not always a mode of survival and self-defence but can also be a radical playfulness an assertion which should draw our attention back to the structures of gender performativity which Butler frames within melancholia and a project of survival. It is important to recognise the inherent tensions and *undecideability* over agency and structure inherent in the deployment of performance and performativity in contemporary scholarship. For Bryant Keith Alexander (ibid) following Singer (1992), Turner (1998) Guss (2000) and Williams (2001) passing is at once the site of performance (an active engagement) and performativity (ritualised repetition of communicative acts).

'This is not the process of becoming but rather the state of being between
two performance communities – the point of origin and the territory of desire –
with the performance expectations of both communities serving as a mediator
in a tentative feud (or maybe fraud) of identity – acceptance versus denial. For
although performance can manifest the subject of its focus, it does not modify
the materiality of embodied presence and the social investment in race'
(Alexander 2004: 380).

Indeed Alexander's reflections on the performance of 'Black masculine identity' lays bare the complex terrain of this field of investigation as he attempts to deal with 'passing', 'cultural performance', 'performativity' and 'individual agency' at once – term which to my mind are inherently laden with theoretical oppositions. In the process he transgresses in a performative sense the disciplinary boundaries that have been set-up as determining different positions on the riddle of personhood relying both on a Foucauldian discursive subject manifest by the circularity of power within a given context, while at the same time citing Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) to argue that the performance of the 'Bad Black man' is not always reactionary because it is a "reaction" framed by the historic structuring of black-white relationships. Personally, I believe that Butler provides an insightful addition to the debate on theoretical difficulties with personhood when in Gender Trouble she postulates that the 'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not features of 'personhood' *per se* but instead 'socially instituted and maintained norms of social intelligibility' (1990: 17). I will go on to discuss the insights from the literature on racial *passing* in reference to the ethnographic material I present in subsequent chapters particularly in reference to specific insight on the configuration of identification, desire, mimesis and encryption that form the basis of Butlers theorising of performative gender. Importantly, what might distinguish my analysis of the leap from performative gender to performative race from the analysis of literary *passing* and performativity is that I attempt to explicitly interrelate the schema of identification, desire, mimesis, encryption and the project of survival in *Gender Trouble* with performative race.

In the following section I would like to return to the discussion which I have initiated above in relation to the way in which scholarship tends to emphasise particular notions like 'performativity' on the one hand and 'habitus' and 'embodiment' on the other as mutually exclusive. I will attempt to briefly scope-out the ways in which these modes of analysis inform and oppose each other and the possible ways in which they can be seen as beginnings and modes of analysis - not Meta theoretical ends. I argue that by interrelating these theories we can come closer to the challenges of understanding different modalities of power and structure and the way they intersect to illuminate the techniques of the self around the interaction of gender, race and class.

'Performativity' and 'Habitus' or the intersection of gender, race and class

Butler's approach is often characterised as being entirely discursive, a negation of the *materiality* of the body which has no meaning or existence beyond the discourses which mark it and impose injunctions to be a given gender. Bourdieu's approach sees the body (hexis) as the site and repository of the incorporation of history. For Bourdieu bodily practices are not unilateral or radically free either. Habitus is acquired not through hermeneutics or imposition but through practice and the need to function in a given social field (practical sense) and understand its rules (doxa). The defining factors in *habitus* are 'the market' and the 'objective social field' (Bourdieu 1990:54). Together the market and the social field provide the 'structuring structures' which the body, through *habitus*, appropriates and conforms to. Subjective habitus is represented as a mode of mimesis which produces behavioural and perceptual competence and conformity. Habitus generates pre-dispositions or the 'dispositional subject' in relation to the social field; while the social field requires *habitus* for its reproduction it is imbued with unalterable objectivity, agency and stability despite Bourdieu's assertion that it is composed of cultural arbitraries (Butler, 1999).

Both Butler and Bourdieu draw upon Austin's speech-act theory (Lowell 2000). However, while Bourdieu speaks of masculine domination in which women are little more than objects to be exchanged (1990) Butler speaks of hetronormativity (1990) which sees a particular notion of femininity and sexuality enforced through cultural discourses and practices. 'Performativity' and 'habitus' are both clearly degrees of structuralism however, the principle disagreements between Butler and Bourdieu is over their different approaches to the pervasiveness of structure and their determining force.

As previously noted Butler follows Derrida's approach to structural norms which sees them as constantly there, but always in a process of accumulation, an approach which I am personally convinced by. Derrida argues that a structure only becomes a structure through the repetition of its structurality, making the nature of the "already-always-thereness" of a structure fundamentally and permanently a process of being made and remade. Repetition, where the structure is reinstalled can never be perfect, it is consistently a failure. While social conservatives or traditionalist might see this failure to reproduce structures perfectly as a literal or pejorative "failure", sometimes manifesting itself in moral panic or the desires to "preserve," the Derridean approach to structure characterises failure as an inherent, necessary and natural reformulation of the

structure over time. As Morris argues much of the appeal of performativity lies in its potential to address the crisis of structuralism by offering something between an anti-structuralist and a neo-structuralist rubric (Morris 1995: 571).

Nonetheless Butler's performativity also relies on the notion of mimesis but postulates the desire to repeat in pursuit of social intelligibility through psychoanalysis. Bourdieu explains a lack of conformity as an incomplete acquisition of a given *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990; 1997) which curiously resembles the notion of the 'failure' inherent in the reiteration of a structure as adopted by Butler following Derrida. For Butler, the lack of conformity to structural norms is an inevitability of their imperfect repetition through which subjectivity might be expressed. As Lovell notes, despite the antagonism between Bourdieu, Derrida and their adherents "there are common elements in their intellectual heritage and they should have much to say to one another" (2000: 28).

While habitus with its emphasis on class distinctions and markets helps us to understand certain forms of consumption which produce and reproduce class distinction and power; performativity helps us to see how the repetition of discursive structures make and remake the 'gendered' and 'raced' subjects. There is no doubt that *performativity* and *habitus* are different, and Butler clearly rejects much of the underlying structures of habitus as a means of explaining how gender is reproduced or indeed how it has been transgressed (1999). Nonetheless, this does not necessarily entail choosing between one and the other theory, which to an extent have turned into disciplinary markers. Performativity and habitus explain different phenomenon and address different concerns but together may provide a more complete picture of what is happening in a context like London where one is rendered a subject by being gendered, raced and classed through practices, institutions, discourses and modes of consumption. As Lovell lucidly points out in Bourdieu's *Distinction* "gender is largely invisible, as is 'race'" (Lovell 2000: 36). Equally, critiques of Butler cite the absence of material practices, class and consumption which seem at best to have been overshadowed by the linguistic, psychoanalytic and philosophical prowess of Butlers writing on performative gender. As a result I am hesitant in taking the bait and having to choose between *performativity* on the one hand and *habitus* and *distinction* on the other, or to see their theoretical formulations as absolutely authoritative, instead I see them as starting points, and incomplete interventions which both contribute to modes of analysis.

I must make it clear, and hope that the examples I provide from my ethnography will support that, I am not implying that Bourdieu's conception of the market and class as

material, objective or foundational on the one hand while race and gender are discursive and phantasmic on the other.

Some readers may ask why I do not address the need to interrelate gender, race and class by adopting a position which sees economics, and therefore class, as performative? Recent innovations within economics have postulated the notion of economic performativity (see Callon 2006; MacKenzie et al 2007). However, while I accept and advocate the reflexive turn within economics as a discipline which seeks to account for the way in which economists both construct economic theories and models, and frame relationships within and between particular economic actors; I argue that we must be careful not to confuse the increasing varieties of 'performativity' as all referring to the same phenomenon or theoretical schema. If and when we do, we risk conflating a discursive constructivist turn within particular disciplines like economics for performativity as articulated, in this case, in relation to gender by Butler or blur the distinction between performance on the one hand and performativity on the other (see page 74). There is much yet to be explored and deconstructed in relation to 'the market presumption'. While accepting her limited understanding of economics Butler has attempted to advocate performativity in relation to economics as an analytical strategy uncovering effects as causes and questioning the ontological status of proper objects like 'the market'. What performative economics offers is a an approach to 'market economics' which uncovers the 'processes that work to fortify that very assumption, but also to call into question its pre-given ontological status as well as the supposition that it operates by causal necessity' (Butler 2010: 158). However it is one thing to assert that economics is performative and quite another, altogether more complex assertion, to suggest that class is performative in the same sense as I am suggesting race and gender might be (in relation to identification, desire, mimesis, encryption, melancholia and cultural survival).

Catherine Rottenberg (2004), who has argued that performative race cannot be extrapolated from performative gender, has been quick to dismiss class as performative. Her assertion is made in relation to a particular economic and class context in the United States where economic ideology and changes in mass production and consumption, coupled with the American dream (which formally holds the promise of material wellbeing for all) mean that class does not speak to the same configuration of identification, desire, mimesis, encryption, melancholia and cultural survival that we find in Butlers theorising of performative gender. The assertion that class consumption

or positions are a performance is quite different from the assertion that class is performative and I argue that theorising class as performative is a legitimate yet underdeveloped field which I cannot resolve in this thesis which is principally concerned with interrelating the theoretical schema of performative race and gender.

In this thesis I take the position that class is, in many instances, not simply an objective sociological measure of education, occupation or affluence, but significantly a cultural project. My interest in Bourdieu is in the way in which consumption practices are often motivated by the (re)production of difference. However, taking into account the notion that economics is performative as well as a Foucauldian approach to power I do not subscribe to Bourdieu's characterisation of the working-classes as being simply subordinated in terms of taste, nor do I agree that 'the market' and 'class hierarchy' are imbued with the permanence and objectivity which Bourdieu instils them with. Far from simply recreating, enforcing or informing class differences *per se*, consuming for distinction can equally be motivated by the desire to create or reproduce sub-cultures, niche networks, and particular notions of racial and gender belonging amongst other things. Signification in visual and material culture rarely isolates class from gender or race but cites them all simultaneously. The ethnographic material that I present does indeed suggest that there are particular classed regulatory ideals, modes of consumption and representation which can be donned and doffed in a theatrical way in order to negotiate particular settings and contexts. It is my intention to both uncover these and attempt to understand how they interact with other processes, in this case, those of being raced and gendered at particular stages of a person's life, and in particular contexts and settings.

One way in which to articulate the need to take into account multiple levels of analysis without having to position oneself within a paradigmatic frame which might privilege class over gender or race over culture or nationality is the notion of 'intersectionality'. The notion of intersectionality in research has diffused considerably since Crenshaw's use of the term to describe the multiple binds of black women.In recent years intersectionality has come to be seen as a research paradigm (Hancock 2007). Following Knapp (1999), Anthias (2002), Brah and Pheonix (2004) and Yuval-Davis (2006a, 2006b) see the relevance of intersectionality in its potential to facilitate the analysis of any grouping of people, "advantaged as well as disadvantaged" (Yuval-Davis 2006a). Intersectionality helps avoid unitary paradigms and encourages researchers to seek to understand the "diverse conditions which gave rise to the

constitution of differences as well as their historical interconnectedness" (Knapp, 1999: 130). As Yuval-Davis argues, while there may be a long list of differences which may shape people's lives; "gender, stage in the life cycle, ethnicity and class...tend to shape most people's lives in most social locations" (2006:203) . Perhaps most important of all is the clarification that when seeking intersectional analysis, one seeks the recognition – of social power axes, not of social identities (ibid). In my research I therefore seek to account for the effects of gender, class, ethnicity and generation as discursive, corporeal and material practices and forces of subjection and in so doing I cannot help but draw upon the extremely influential theories of performativity and habitus, despite their seemingly troubled disciplinary and theoretical relationship to each other.

Conclusion: performative 'gender' and 'race'

In order to develop performativity at all one must take it as a beginning and not an end. Race thinking itself has gone through a number of phases not least the displacement of biological racism by the notion of cultural incommensurability discussed earlier (see. Gilroy 1990; Balibar 1991; Modood et al 1997). Race only has the appearance of interior substance and a natural existence as a consequence of its continued interpellation and reiteration.

While the nation-state, with its notions of a bounded people, culture, language, loyalty and belonging, is a major source of racial subjection, it is far from being the only site or source. Following Foucault's approach to power, subjection should not be conceived as simply projecting from the top-downwards (Foucault 1982). Instead the structures of gendering and racialisation are multivalent, emanating across social institutions ranging from family and religious institutions, to literature, art, social movements and person-to-person interaction. While gender performativity is imposed and maintained by a universal hetronormative matrix, race is similarly maintained by what could be described as an 'ethnonormative matrix' which naturalises biological and cultural differences and is bolstered by notions of arboreal origins and nationalism. Like hetronormativity, ethnonormativity is fundamentally universal yet is interpreted and manifest in particular ways in different places.

I argue that in Britain concerns regarding race have been incorporated within the discourse of liberal population management where, it plays a critical role in the discourse of societal health, happiness and economic prosperity. British

Multicultural*ism* is the child of race-relation and immigration control which have become key components of 'governmentality' (Foucault 1977, 1997). Although there have been numerous critiques and defences of race-relations, identity politics and multiculturalism few have looked at these systems as forms of governmentality or the technologies of government. Multiculturalism has been repackaged in a way that obscured its beginnings and the consequences of its means. It is vital here that it is clear that what is under question are the policies, institutions and methods used to manage this multiplicity through the logic of corporatist ethnicity. "Don't ask me who I am or tell me to stay the same: that is the bureaucratic morality which keeps our papers in order" (Foucault 1972: 17; 1978b).

The political action around which Black politics in Britain flourished in the 1960 and 1970's was necessary for people to wrestle control of their lives, the places in which they work, the schools their children attended and the welfare state system to which they contributed, against the backdrop of a largely hostile and discriminatory nativist discourses. The multicultural policies implemented in the 1980s, many of which survive to today, "were a mode of control rather than a line of defence. Multiculturalism in this sense referred to a set of policies directed towards taking African-Caribbean and Asian cultures of the streets - where they had politicized and turned into rebellions against the state – and putting them in the council chamber, in the classroom and on television where they could be institutionalised, managed and commodified" (Kundnani 2003: 45). Michael Keith describes this process as one centred around two characters, that of the "ethnic entrepreneur" and the "street rebel". "The ethnic entrepreneur is the assimilationist hero, the street rebel the bourgeois nightmare... both become organising themes through which race, gender, class and sexuality are invoked to make sense of the inner city. Importantly Keith reminds us that these characters have made sporadic appearances throughout industrial history but their realisation is always historically and geographically specific (1993: 44).

It is important to recognise that the governmentality is dialogic. We cannot characterise racialisation as emanating solely from a highly organised and focussed government strategy spanning over six decades and numerous government administrations. As John Solomos argues "the racialisation of British political life did not come about in a linear fashion; it was the outcome of complex political, social and economic processes that interacted in specific ways at particular points in time" (Solomos 1989: 175). Governmentality is not "a sociology of government" (ibid: 18)

instead it is far better conceived as an overall approach to the technology of power (Foucault 2007: 117). It is perhaps the misreading of multiculturalism as a benign anti-racist project that backfired in the face of the moral forces that advocated it, that has led to this sense of betrayal and anti-climax.

One of the central characteristics of governmentality is its ability to socialise us into governing ourselves through the institutional and discursive practices of government. Dean argues that the study of governmentality is concerned with how "thought operates within our organised ways of doing things, in our regimes of practices and with its ambitious effects"; importantly our concern here with the governmentality of race in Britain is based on a relationship between the practices of government and the different ways in which "truth" is produced and consumed in social, cultural and political practices (Dean 2009:17-18). The institutional landscape of the inner city creates a cultural reality that in part defines the lens through which mapped subjects are rendered legitimately visible or as Butler might describe it "intelligible". "Living the true lie of racialised subject positions is at least in part about both colonising the normalising whiteness of British government and re-appropriating the racialised subject positions such techniques and practices generate" (Keith 2005: 96).

The hyphenated identities of multiracial and multicultural systems where one is Black-British or African-American are a testament to race logic, for what are these labels if not binaries with the enigmatic hyphen attesting to their dissolution. These binaries hide a violent and racialised hierarchy "One of the two terms governs the other or has the upper hand" (Derrida 1981: 41). Rhadkrishnan (2003) makes the point that ethnic labelling in the United States has privileged ethnicity over American identity in a horizontal classification convention (e.g. African-American, Native-American, and Italian-American). In the British context people can be Black-British, British-Asian or in our case British-Arab. What are the implications of these labels and how are they formulated? Is it simply how the label rolls of the tongue that determines its formulation or are there underlying implications? Is it acceptable to be assertively Black but not so if you are Asian, Arab or Muslim? If so to what extent are the historical and semiotic structures of racism a part of this condition? "Indeed these constructions embody a logic that valorises the first term while subordinating the second. And this is not simply a matter of semantics because such classificatory practices carry material consequence" (Mirion and Inda; 2000:97). It is quite astounding that while people consistently demonstrate an ability to overcome the illusionary boundaries of racial and cultural

thinking by procreating, living, eating, dressing, reading and listening across the false yet vociferously policed boundaries of race and culture; racial governmentality insists that the multiple ways of being that people enact be distilled into discrete racial and cultural labels for the sake of liberal population management.

"The resignification of the racial subject thus takes place through the appropriation of the power to name oneself and set the conditions under which the name is deployed" (Miron and Inda; 2000: 103) Even when reappropriation takes place ('Nigger,' 'Paki,' 'Sand Nigger,' 'Yid') the term deployed cannot be controlled, it will always call into force the historical meanings and insinuations of the past. Reappropriation of racialised terms has become somewhat valorised as representing a form of empowerment, however what this discursive approach to race suggests is that reappropriation offers us no way out of the logic or structures of race. Thus the act of bring into being that which is named, for example the "Arab woman" imposes a set of gendered and racialising discourses, norms and practices which the subject must recite for cultural survival because of the pervasiveness of both hetronormativity and ethnonormativity.

Gilroy (2000) Ali (2003) and Nayak (2006) among others, have pointed to a tendency for social constructivist scholarship to declare that 'there is no such thing as race' only to then concede that race is so socially embedded with the accompanying discourses of equality and social justice that it cannot be ignored. Race remains a potent and permeating mode of social organisation. In many ways it is difficult to argue with Modood's assertion that "If race does not exist then what does?" (Modood 2005:51). 'Race' continues to inform social hierarchy and people's sense of self and subjectivity. David Mason states that "clearly there is no such thing as races. Yet it is equally clear that large numbers of people behave as if there are" (Mason 2000: 8). He goes on to ask "how might we retain a recognition of the social significance of race as a concept without appearing to legitimise the idea that race represents a real division of human species?" (ibid). There are material corporeal implications to the experience of being 'raced,' sustained by linguistic social, legal and ideological discourses and practices. In other words, outside post-race theorisations, the ontological status of race and the logic of racialisation are alive and well. I argue that a performative approach to 'race' and 'ethnicity' allows me to go beyond the limitations of social constructivism by adopting performativity as a framework which might allow me to understand the influence that gender, race and class retain as structures of subjection while at the same time giving

them no ontological legitimacy beyond their discursive and phantasmic construction and reiteration.

By combining a performative approach with the ethnographic encounters an analysis of both material and discursive modes of power is possible without necessarily subordinating one to the other. Thus, sequential and interrelated readings of gender, race and their relationship to class practices and discourses is necessary in order not reduce performativity to 'linguistic monism' and at the same time not deny the role of the discursive and the psychoanalytic in understanding cultural and material practices.

Some argue that the differences between the modality of performativity in relation to 'gender' and 'race' are distinct enough that the leap cannot be made from performative 'gender' to performative 'race' (see. Rottenberg 2003, Bell 2006a, 2006b). Indeed the internal structures of gender performativity: melancholia, identification and desire, mimesis and cultural survival are both particular and complex; nonetheless I will interrogate them throughout the thesis and in greater detail in concluding chapter. For now I shall begin with a proposition that Butler's call to seek sequential readings of performative gender, race and class can be used as a basis to begin analysing how they work together in this case producing middle-class Arab men and Arab women in London.

In the following chapter I begin the project extrapolating performative race from performative gender by attempting to identify the discursive forces that bring Arab-ness into being in the local and global context of London. I ask how have 'the Arabs' been discursively represented and imagined in Britain? and what have been the critical junctures in the relationship between 'the Arabs' and London? In later chapters I will extend this approach by asking how these discourses relate to the way 'Arab-ness' is practiced and understood by young Londoners. However, it is important to emphasise that in turning to the archive I seek descent and genealogy and not origin or ethno-history. The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations; on the contrary it disturbs what was previously considered immobile, it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (Foucault and Bouchard 1980: 147).

Chapter Three

Critical junctures in place-making

Introduction

"...every three days a thousand Arabs arrive in London for business, pleasure or something more sinister"
The Times, August 22nd 1978

"The only way you could tell it was Paris and not London was that there were more Japanese and fewer Arabs."
The Guardian, November 24th 1990

"What is it that really makes summer in the city? ... It is Arabs: Arabs by the thousand, walking in the park, drinking coffee in the Edgware Road, emptying the shelves of the Marble Arch Marks and Spencer."
The Guardian, August 24th 1998

These opening quotes point to distinctive relationship between people from the Arab world and the city of London, a relationship that remains scarcely documented or accounted for. Cubit argues that "representations of the collective past hinge … on the backward projections of current perceptions of identity; the past takes mental shape by being viewed as the breeding and testing ground of today's social collectivities (Cubitt 2007: 200). His observation is a poignant reminder of the political act of labelling that is involved in any historicism where complex and often incoherent events and meanings are cast into a coherent and seamless ethnohistory of 'Arabs in London'. With this cautionary note in mind and through 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' I follow the complex course of "descent, where accidents, minute deviations and complete reversals give birth to ideas" about 'Arabs' in Britain "that continue to exist and have value for us today" (Foucault, 1972: 148). *Archaeology* in this case is the process of working through the historical archive to bring to light the discursive formations and

events that have produced "the Arabs". However, in order to disrupt those objects that are inevitably created and bought into being by repeatedly being named, archaeology must always be subjected to the disruption of *genealogical* analysis. 'Effective histories' are those where events are understood not as formal decisions, treatise or battles, but the reversal of relationships of force, "the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked other" (Foucault and Bouchard 1980: 154). The forces operating history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events" (ibid 155)

My principle interests are twofold, firstly to uncover the dialogic nature of the ethnic construction of 'Arabs' in a British context which has come about as much through Arab 'self-representation' as it has through ascription and othering. Secondly I aim to explore Derrida's assertions in relation to *iterability* whereby the meaning of a sign "cannot be contained or enclosed by any context, convention or authorial intention" (1982: 94). During time spent with young people talking about their notions of self and collectivity I found that the label "Arab" was "cited, grafted and reiterated in ways that do not conform to their speaker's or writer's original intentions" always carrying the possibility of a communicative failure (Derrida 1982: 93-97). As one participant put it: *"I'm Arab, but not that kind of Arab"* as he explained why he avoided some *Shisha* cafes during the summer because of the flood of tourists from the Gulf. *"And what's wrong with tourists from the Gulf, they're Arabs too!"* I replied. *"Come you know what I mean Ramy...The money, the cars, the sleaze, their clothes I just don't like being associated with that"*. Even though Mo's life was so different from that of a Gulf tourist, in London he shared the label "Arab" with them and all the meanings that it generates within the context of the city. Even though he and many others had appropriated "Arab-ness," the *sign* "Arab" was beyond control, it always calls into force the historical meanings and insinuations of the past and the present.

What I intend to investigate through the archive are some of the meanings and relationships between London and 'the Arabs' and the extent to which the genealogy of a sign is embedded in discourses and present day material and cultural practices. I suggest that analysis of (overwhelmingly) British archival material between 1925 and

1989 presents three principle figures, the 'student militant', the 'playboy prince' and the 'terrorist' (once cast as the radical nationalist, today the radical Islamist). However this is not simply a matter of the violence of external ascription and othering. The events, incidents and trends that mark this period highlight the complexity of Arab-Arab relations which are characterised by ideological conflict, violence, suspicion and disunity. Therefore for British-born or raised Arabs the iterability of 'the Arabs' involves reciting the accumulated historical meanings and insinuations produced by both 'Britain' as well as 'the Arabs' themselves.

The 1990-91 Gulf crises represents a critical event when the experiences and memory of British born or raised participants begin to take prominence in ethnographic interviews. Therefore my analysis in this chapter will end in 1989 so that some of the implications of these accumulated meanings can be explored in the subsequent chapter (four) *Learning to be Arab: growing up in London.*

Arab students and the struggles of the homeland(s)

In July 1939 Egyptian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi students formed the Oxford University Anglo-Arab Union (AAU) with the prominent Arabist Professor A.R. Gibb (later known as Faris Gibb) as its President. The AAU was the first student society in Britain that reflected the ideals of pan-Arab federalism.[29] In the post-war period the numbers of students from the Arab world studying at British Universities grew steadily[30] and new organisations began to emerge to cater for the cultural and pastoral needs. One of the earliest examples was the Anglo-Arab Association (AAA) which was established at 27 Eaton Place, Mayfair in 1948. The AAA aimed to provide welfare and social activities to Arab students in the UK as a means of strengthening cultural relations between Britain and the Arab world.[31] Shortly after its inauguration the AAA established the Anglo-Arab Students' Hostel and worked to raise funds for its maintenance by organising, amongst other things "Arabian nights" fundraising events. As I will go on to show in chapter six, the 'Arabian night' theme survives to this day

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[29] Oxford Anglo-Arab Union. Great Britain and the East. July 13th 1939
[30] Education in the Middle East (C.T. Barber), Letters to the Editor, *The Times* Saturday 5th April 1958 p.7
[31] Mr. E.L. Spears , Letters to the Editors "Arab Students" *The Times*, Tuesday 8th April 1958 p.9

and remains an important means for gathering second generation British born Arab students at Universities in Britain.

In September 1954 "The Arab Students' Union in the UK", held its first conference[32] No documents survive from these early meetings but it is likely that they would have been occupied with the discussions of unfolding developments in what by this time had become 'the Arab world'. Jamal Abd el-Nasser was rising to power in Egypt (April -November 1953); the Palestinian crisis had assumed a central place in discourses of regional emancipation as had the Algerian struggle for independence from France. Other "Arab" student associations also began to appear in London like a chapter of the 'General Union of Arab Students' and the 'Arab Students League'.[33]

The growing republican movement that was taking hold across much of the region with its culturalist and secular ideology was not universally welcomed. The hereditary monarchies of Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia maintained a complex relationship of apprehensive recognition of the newly empowered and populist pan-Arab republican movement. Relations between Iraqi and Jordanian students in the UK and their governments (who sponsored their education and travel) were complicated by support for the charismatic movement of Abd el-Nasser, particularly during the 1956 Suez Crisis. In Britain, Iraqi students demonstrated against British policy despite the virulently anti-Nasserist and anti-Republican policies of Nuri Said's government in Iraq which had placed the country firmly in support of British interests in the region within the framework of the Baghdad Pact.

In response to the British, French and Israeli attack on Egypt in 1956 fifty Arab students at Oxford University led by Mr E. El-Mehdi (St Johns' College) boycotted lectures and tutorials. In protest of the invasion the renowned historian Dr W. El-Khalidi a lecturer at Oxford University took the drastic action of resigning from his post, selling his home in Oxford and moving back to Jordan.[34] At Loughborough College of Technology forty Iraqi students boycotted lectures and went on hunger strike for three days while in London three hundred Iraqi students were involved in a sit-down strike outside the Iraqi Embassy.[35] The protesters submitted a petition urging the Iraqi

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[32] To-days Arrangements, *The Times* Friday 17th September 1954 p.9

[33] To-days Arrangements, The Times Saturday 10th April 1948 p.5

[34] Oxford Undergraduates Lobby "Wavering" M.P.s: More Protests Against Suez Policy, The Manchester Guardian 6th November 1956 p.3

[35] Fights at Universities during Anti War demonstrations: Staff and students sig protest. The Manchester Guardian Saturday 3rd November 1956

government to put its forces under a united Arab command, sever diplomatic relations with Britain and France, stop the flow of oil and withdraw from the Baghdad pact.[36] Unwilling to engage with the students the Iraqi embassy called on the Metropolitan Police to disperse the crowd, a move which reflected the increasingly large ideological gap that had grown between young Iraqis inspired by the pan-Arab movement and the British installed monarchy. Iraqi students in Britain supportive of Abdel Nasser were condemned as being supporters of "Egyptian imperialism" or of being "agents of Nasser" by Iraqi monarchists and the establishment in Britain. Those who were known *Ba'athists* or Nasserites were targeted by the Iraqi authorities who withdrew financial support, subjected some to interrogation and intermittently requested the Home office to arrange deportations of Iraqi student dissidents.

The privileged elites of the region as well as the emerging socially mobile generation of intellectuals and business people who were sent to Britain from across the Arabic speaking Middle East and North Africa to qualify and specialize, mixed with each other in London and in Britain in a way that few Arab cities could offer. However, relations between Arab students in Britain seem to have been constantly framed by the ebbs and flows of the emerging Arab state system. A good example of this is provided by *The Arab Review*, the magazine of the Arab Students Union (ASU) in Britain which began publication in 1958.

The ASU had established a football team which drew its players from university clubs from across the country. *"Our team"* wrote the review *"is a symbol of Arab unity. It includes players from nearly all the Arab countries – Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Lybia (sic), Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Algeria. We have no politics in our team and every Arab who can play is welcome."*[37] While it was politics which was the cornerstone of the idea of a collective Arab-ness at the time the extract illustrates how in their daily interactions the commonality generated by the discourse of pan-Arabism was constantly under erasure – always the principle collective reference point yet one that had to be left largely without close interrogation or debate because of its divisive and contested nature.

The political changes and struggles in the region created partisanship that was often difficult to resolve within the pretence of a happy Arab family. Arab intellectuals like Sati Al-Husri (1879-1968) and Darwish al Miqdadi (1896 – 1961) had long sought to

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[36] Arab Students to Boycott Lectures: Demonstration at Iraqi Embassy The Times 6th November 1956 p.7
[37] *The Arab Review*. March 1958, page 14

provide a flexible approach to the tensions between *Wataniyah*, a sense of local patriotism and *Qawmiyah* a sense of nationalism or Arabism. For the tribal monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula, Jordan and Morocco Arab-ness was framed within tribal relationships and practices of authenticity while in other parts of the region like Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya and Algeria contemporary Arab-ness was a political identity forged in the anti-colonial struggles and a modernist social order.

This was a period where tolerance was in short supply, and what the archive presents us with is not a straightforward "Arab identity" shared among Arabic speakers in Britain but dispersed and contested political discourses. Thus to be an Egyptian *Ba'athi*, an Iraqi Nasserite or a Jordanian Republican was not a simple matter of being opposed to the mainstream or holding a political opinion, in many cases it involved being subjected to totalising discourses of exclusion on the one hand and persecutions, banishment or imprisonment on the other. The different approaches to the 'Arab destiny' would in the coming decades be violently played out in the Streets of London.

Figure 6: (Previous page) Members of the first Arab student Union football team in Britain 1958.Caption reads *"Standing Left to right: Khalil, Hassan (Capt.), Ghassan, Hashim, Farouk. Seated left to right Fayig, Maan, Ibrahim. The Arab Review*. March 1958.

The 1958 July revolution in Iraq led to the fragmentation of the 'Iraqi Students Society' (ISS) in Britain and the formation of the 'Iraqi Republican Students Society' (IRSS). Much to the surprise of the new members, the IRSS was quickly denounced by the then Iraqi Ministers of Economics and the Director of Scholarships, reflecting the disjointed political landscape in Iraqi in the aftermath of the revolution. In February/

March 1959 Iraqi students in the UK were sent letters by the deputy cultural attaché at the Iraqi Embassy in London on behalf of Dr Ibrahim Kubba the Minister of Economics, threatening that if students did not declare their non-membership of the IRSS within 8 days their scholarships would be suspended.[38] The dynamics of national and regional politics at this time seem to constantly change and punctuate what it meant to be Iraqi, Egyptian or Arab illustrating the contingency and constant negotiation taking place around these identifications.

During the 1960's Arab student activism began to evolve, becoming more visible and vocal in relation to the Palestinian and pan-Arab causes. Apart from organising regular lectures and annual Palestine-day conferences and solidarity events, Arab students began to take to the Streets of Britain to demonstrate. The close relationship between scholarships and membership of ruling parties and movements meant that activism was in many cases orchestrated by embassies and government affiliated student unions. Arab students were mobilised to represent and act out the political disputes of the day in London. For example, when David Ben Gurion arrived in London in 1960 he was met by a demonstration of over one hundred Arab students at Heathrow airport. Arab student activism was not limited to protests against the Israelis and 'the West' however. In the weeks leading up to the Six-Day War, eighty Arab students demonstrated at Heathrow airport at the arrival of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia where the monarch was greeted with pictures of Jamal Abd el-Nasser. Relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia were strained over the conflict between monarchists and republicans in Yemen. While Nasser's adventure in Yemen had been a military and economic disaster for Egypt, his continued commitment to the Palestinian cause and rhetorical consistency towards the idea of Arab unity ensured his hold over the "Arab Street" which students in the 'West' were a part.

Indeed London itself seems to have played a central role in providing day-to-day interactions and exposure between students and migrants from different Arab states. Nader, now in his mid-70s explains how London provided more opportunities than his native Cairo for exposure to the different pan-Arab ideological movements.

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[38] Persecution of Iraqi Students: A statement by the executive committee of the Arab student's Union in the United Kingdom. *The Arab Review*. April 1959

Nader I must say that coming to London made me learn a lot, I met Ba'athists, I never knew what a Ba'athi was when I was in Egypt. We met these people at the General Union of Arab students in London. We met Left wing people and ideologues and Ba'athists. They reminded me of the Socialist Union back in Egypt; they talked a lot and had very little activities. There were debates and discussions but for me personally, my personal experience was that I learnt more about these different political positions by interacting with these people socially. Those Ba'athists are very ideological almost fanatics. And the names Michael Aflak and all those people we learnt about them here in London. Even though I was involved in political activism in Egypt we didn't know anything about these figures or movements.

A turning point in the nature of Arab political expression in London came in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The psychological and ideological impact of the defeat on Arabs as a whole was nothing less than devastating, particularly for the front-line States. The failure of Arab armies to resist the Israeli assault, and moreover to liberate Palestine over the preceding nineteen years signalled the beginning of the end of Nasser's movement and placed a huge strain on the very concept of Arab collective action.

For the Palestinian political leadership the unprecedented defeat and loss of even greater tracts of territory pointed to the need for an independent Palestinian strategy (Sayigh 1997: 155). The preceding 20 years during which the Palestinian cause was led by the front-line Arab states had shown, beyond doubt that it would no longer be realistic to rely on the Egyptians, Syrians or Jordanians to achieve Palestinian independence. Although the military role of the front-line Arab states remained an important component in the overall liberation strategy, Palestinian groups began to mobilise themselves independently as Guerrilla movements.

Central to the story that would unfold in London was the lack of a unified policy among the different Palestinian factions with regards to the rules of engagement. Yasser Arafat's *Fatah* movement which effectively took over the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1969 openly declared its opposition to attacks on civilian targets. They were joined by the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP). However, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) which had

led the first attack on an Israeli *El Al* passenger aircraft (1968) disagreed with this policy and argued that Israeli attacks in the West Bank and Gaza were acts of state terrorism directed at the Arab civilian population. Sayigh argues that "the escalation of Palestinian urban terrorism paralleled the sharp rise in Israeli attacks on civilian targets in Jordan" (Sayigh 1997: 211)

Figure 7: Arab demonstrators burn the Israeli flag in Kensington 1969. A petrol bomb is thrown into the crowd. Caption reads *"His clothing alight, a policeman leaps back from flames near the Israeli Embassy as a blazing petrol can hits the Road". The Times February 24th 1969*

Beginning in the late 1960s The PFLP embarked on a bombing campaign in London aimed at Israeli and 'Zionist owned' businesses. The first attack took place on the 18th of July 1969 when a device exploded outside the Marks and Spencer's department store on Oxford Street. This was followed by the bombing of the 'Zim Israel Navigation Company' offices on Regent Street on Monday the 25th August. In a statement on the 29th of August 1969 Dr George Habbash the leader of the PFLP claimed responsibility for the attacks and warned that "… there will be more fire and bomb attacks on Jewish owned establishments in London".[39]

The emergence of Palestinian guerrilla movements and their oscillation between different sponsors and territories came to a head in September 1970 when the extent of Palestinian Guerrilla activity in Jordan caused the near collapse of the State. In an attempt to salvage its authority the Jordanian government began a military campaign against the armed Palestinian groups operating throughout the country but mostly on the eastern bank of the river Jordan and in Amman. The Syrian regime of Hafiz Al-Assad threw its weight behind the Palestinians factions and launched a short lived invasion of

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[39] New Threat to Jewish Targets in London, *The Times,* Saturday 30th August 1969

Jordan, reaching the city of Irbid. These events known as 'Black September 'gave rise to a further spate of Arab-on-Arab violence in London. On the 23rd of September 150 pro-Guerrilla and pro-Syrian "young Arabs" demonstrated outside the Jordanian embassy chanting slogans against the "murderous fascist regime of King Hussain."[40] The following year 'Black September' made a failed assassination attempt on the Jordanian Ambassador in London. The police conducted searches of "Arab homes" in the Notting Hill area of London where the assailants had abandoned their car and escaped.[41]

On the 1st of October 1970 Jamal Abdel Nasser died. When the news reached Arabs in London hundred gathered outside 'The Banqueting Hall' in Whitehall where women and young girls dressed in black and carrying pictures of a smiling Nasser led the funeral procession. The symbols of Nasser's political career were evident as twelve men carried large horizontal flags, one of the failed United Arab Republic and the second of occupied Palestine.

Figure 8: 2000 Arab mourners march in a procession through London in memory of Jamal Abdel Nasser 1970. Caption reads *"In London, Muslims gathered in Horse Guards Avenue before making their way to the Islamic Centre, Regents Park"* The Times Friday 02/10/1970 p.7

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[40] London march in support of Palestinians, *The Times.* Wednesday 27th September 1970.

[41] Guerrillas admit murder attempt on Jordan envoy in Kensington. *The Times*. Thursday 16th December 1971

The procession ended at 'the Islamic Centre' in Regents Park; newspaper accounts described mourners reluctant to leave, milling around seeming to "have nowhere to go and nothing to do."[42] Regardless of the various evaluations of Abdel-Nasser by his advocates and detractors, he had over the preceding fifteen years embodied and articulated pan-Arab ideals through displays of charismatic, militant and masculine leadership. Reports of the reaction to Nasser's death in London seem again to illustrate the way in which the notion of common Arab-ness was principally organized around political causes and allegiances which were powerful enough to bring together disparate migrants, from disparate national contexts and political persuasions and at other times could drive these same parties to open conflict and confrontation.

1972 saw letter bombing campaigns in London and Bonn which led the West German government to impose travel restrictions upon citizens from the federation of Egypt, Syria and Libya. As very few students and migrants at this time had acquired citizenship in their European host countries these measure would come to affect their movements and daily lives with police investigations of the armed groups leading to homes being searched and people being put under surveillance. The move was met with harsh criticism from President's Sadat, Assad and Gadhafi who described the measures against Arab citizens living in Europe as "inhumane" and initiated reciprocal restrictions on Europeans in their own countries.[43] Whether they were involved in politics or not Arabs living or studying in Europe seemed to consistently be implicated in and affected by the de-territorialised Arab-Israeli conflict. No sooner had the letter-bomb campaign ended than the 1973 Yom Kippur war broke out. In London students and migrants organised demonstrations in support of the Palestinian cause and campaigned to raise money for reconstruction in Egypt and Syria. On the 13th of October 1973 'The General Union of Arab Students' placed adverts in national newspapers calling for donations from members of the public to fund the reconstruction of villages and towns destroyed in Egypt and Syria during the war with an additional advert calling for a demonstration. On the seventh day of the war, Arab demonstrators took to the Streets of London marching on the Israeli and American Embassies.

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[42] Women head procession of Arabs in London. The Times Friday 2nd October 1970
[43] Arabs agree to restrict West Germans. The Times Saturday 7th October 1972

Figure 9: Arab demonstrators march on the Israeli Embassy in Kensington, London, 14th October 1973 with pro-Palestinian banners. (Photo by Chris Djukanovic Evening Standard/Getty Images

What seems like a passing demonstration was put into context during my fieldwork. In a totally unrelated interview with a British born female participant of Egyptian origin I happened to show her some of the photographs that I had found. She was astonished to identify her parents in the photograph above, her mother standing in the foreground holding a poster that reads "Remember Palestine". It was a poignant reminder of the way in which genealogy can help understand points of continuity as well as contradictions in the doing of Arab-ness. Thirty three years after the photograph above was taken, my interviewee, just as her parents had, gathered with thousands of others in London to demonstrate, this time against the Israeli war on Lebanon in July 2006. Where once the struggle against colonial rule had acted as a common political and cultural bond across the Arabic speaking region, in the post-colonial period the struggle against the Israeli state and opposition to its policies has taken on deep cultural significance and has become an enduring feature of Arab solidarity within the region and in the diaspora. The same causes of anti-imperialism and liberation, the same protest routes and in many cases the same chants seem to resonate across generations of Arabs living in the city.

The 1973 war led to a new wave of attacks against Israeli targets in London. In November 1974 a British Airways flight from Dubai was hijacked. Twenty British hostages were on board and one of the conditions of their release was that Prime Minister Edward Heath express regret for the role that Britain played in the establishment of the State of Israel. Health refused to meet the demands of the hijackers who later surrendered at Tunis airport. Days later Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir

visited the UK (November 1974) to attend a dinner organised by the "Labour Friends of Israel". Prime Minister Heath and around 100 labour MPs attended the dinner which coincided with the hijacking and a picture was taken of former Golda Meir weeping on Heath's shoulder which was later published on the front page of a number of national newspapers covering the hijacking.

In response to the front page photo Dr E. Mehdi who, as a student at Oxford in the mid 1950's had led a group of Arab students in a boycott of lectures (in protest at the Suez crisis) placed an advertisement in *The Times* newspaper titled "Shouldn't Britain Come First?" in the name of the "Committee for Justice in the Middle East" (CJME). The CJME campaign argued that it was not in the interest of British taxpayer for public funds to be channelled to Israel by the government. Importantly the advertisement makes no reference to Dr Mehdi or Arabs in Britain; instead it sought to present itself as a concerned rights group, a sign of the negativity which any reference to Arabs would have had on such a campaign. The advert is significant because it is one of the first attempts by settled Arabs in Britain to address the general public and contextualise their concerns and interests using the language of domestic politics and through the use of lobbying.

Figure 10: Committee for Justice in the Middle East campaign advert December 1974

In March 1975 a number of 'anti-Arab' incidents took place in London. It is likely that these were related in some way to the oil crisis which gripped Britain, Europe and North America. Arab Student meetings in London were twice disrupted by people storming into the meetings and clashing with students.[44] Despite the heightened tensions the General Union of Arab Students and other student organisations maintained a regular itinerary of activism, the principle theme remained unchanged, Palestine.

Whatever unifying power the Palestinian cause had for Arabs living in London at the time was mitigated by the rivalries and tensions in the wider Arab state system. In December 1975 intense sectarian violence had taken hold in Lebanon. In June 1976 Syria sent troops into Lebanon to secure what the regime saw as its 'legitimate interests'. The move sparked a series of reprisals against Syrian targets by Arab political factions around the world. In London a group of 15 Arab students attempted to storm, occupy and burn the Syrian Embassy in Belgravia.[45]

From the onset of direct-action as a vehicle for Palestinian independence in 1967, the notion of "the Arabs" in British discourse and the public imagination was inevitably dominated by political turmoil and violence manifesting itself within and around Arabs living in the British capital. The 1973 war had other consequences apart from reinforcing the image of the region and its people as being violent and unstable. The war had led Arab oil exporting states to the use oil to pressure Europe and the United States to bring an equitable solution to the war. This in turn led to the oil crisis which gave way to the oil boom of the mid 1970s when extraordinary revenues were generated by Gulf States. This wealth was soon to find its way back to London adding a new layer of meaning to the idea of the "Arabs" in the city.

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[44] The first disturbance took place on the evening of the 8th of March at the Cooperative Hall in Westminster and a further incident took place on Wednesday the 19th at the Marylebone's Central London Polytechnic where a brawl broke out in the meeting room. The Times Diary. *The Times* Friday 21st March 1975.

[45] 15 Arab students arrested after attempt to take over embassy. *The Times*. Thursday 6th of July 1976

Figure 11: Two Arab students protest at the London offices of the Arab League against Syrian involvement in Lebanon 10th June 1976 (Photo by Dennis Oulds Central Press/©Getty Images)

London for Sale: playboy princes and "aggressive Arab interests"

The experience of colonialism for the people and ruling families of the Arabian Peninsula sits in considerable contrast to the experience of European colonialism in the rest of the Arab world. To a large extent Britain can be seen as the surrogate father of the fledgling Gulf region. Britain achieved pre-eminence in the Gulf not through direct occupation or subjugation but through treaties which encouraged the separation of the sheikhdoms of the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula from both the Ottoman Empire and Persia, Britain appointed political agents to tribal rulers and bestowing titles those rulers which far exceeded those given by the Ottomans. For example, Britain was the first to legitimise the conquest of al-Hejaz by Ibn Saud in 1924 and helped cement his rule by bestowing the secular title of "King" upon him through the Anglo-Saudi Treaty of 1927 (The Treaty of Jedda). The treaty "with Ibn Saud, acknowledged his full and absolute independence and was almost unique in that it was not aimed at a state, such as Egypt or Iraq, but a man" (Leatherdale 1983: 73 see also Al-Enazy 2009).

All over the Arabian peninsula and particularly in the Trucial coast Britain's relationship with local leaders had been vital in bringing power to a handful of tribal families who became the rulers of newly formed states that remained under British

direct rule as late as 1972 (see Monroe 1981; Leatherdale 1983; Ayubi 1995). In Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates statehood and independence coincided with the oil boom and London was a natural location in which to deposit and invest this new found wealth. The fabled metropolis which had provided the early trappings of statehood became the home-from-home of *Khaleeji* elites. In the mid-1970s financial capital and tourism from the Gulf began to play an important role in Arab London. The arrival of tourists and the growth of investment portfolios are significant for two reasons.

Firstly, up until this point the post-war Arab population of students and settlers in London was almost exclusively from non-Gulf Arab states which were relatively 'westernised' settings which were racially and religiously mixed and importantly women rarely wore the veil which allowed most Arabs to blend into the growing cosmopolitan mix in London. In contrast early Khaleeji (Gulf) tourists were highly visible, their waving robes, veils, wealth and traditionalism corresponding more closely with the powerful aesthetics of exotic Orientalism.

Figure 12: A group of male Khaleeji tourists watch London go by on the traffic Island in South Kensington 25th August 1976.Caption reads *"A group of Arabian men relaxing in a busy Kensington Street, London."* (Photo by John Minihan/Evening Standard/©Getty Images)

Although largely seasonal and transient, *Khaleeji*'s (people from the Gulf) have played a central role in the construction of 'Arabs' in London. The exotic curiosity, extravagant spending and disreputable sexual behaviour with which they were to become associated added to the already potent image of Arabs in Britain as terrorists

and provided a regular source of stories for gossip columnists and chroniclers of the bizarre in the tabloid papers.

Secondly, Gulf capital and tourism would go on to provide an important source of income and employment for the settled Arab migrant population in London, many of whom became and remain employed as bankers, journalists, embassy staff, fixers, agents, restaurateurs and drivers for *Khaleeji* business and families. Arguably it is the growth and stability of these capital flows from the Gulf to London that has done most to distinguish the Arabs of London socio-economically and perhaps socially from their counterparts in continental Europe.

Figure 13: "An Arab family in South Kensington, London." 5th March 1976. The arrival of tourists from the Gulf introduces a new Arab visibility, markedly different from that of the settled communities. (Photo by Evening Standard/©Getty Images)

From the mid-1970s onwards Gulf fiscal surpluses began to be recycled back to the United Kingdom in the form of hundreds of millions of pounds worth of British Government securities. As the Kuwait Investment Office had established early on, it was necessary to make the huge surpluses generated by oil revenues profitable by investing in property and industry. By the mid-1970s both British and Arab newspapers began to take note of the growing portfolio of Gulf property acquisitions in London. Some in Britain maintained that investments from the Gulf would create an expectation among Arab states that Britain would take a lead role in the formulation of an independent European foreign policy that would be more considerate to Arab political aspirations in the region, including possible arms deals with Egypt and Syria (the

principle front line states in the Arab-Israeli conflict).[46] However, the looming economic stagnation and high inflation in Britain soon dispelled any reservations Harold Wilson's government had about the political implications of Gulf investment in Britain which was soon recognised as vital to keeping the country's economic neck above water.

The way in which investment from the Gulf was seen as sinister was repeated across Europe where a panic ensued as 'Arab investors' eyed major companies and trading groups. Gulf investments were seen as either being insidious or a threat to 'national interests' with some commentators describing the period as a 'petrodollar invasion' or as 'aggressive Arab interests'.

Continental markets were perceived to be less vulnerable than London to the consequences of the petrodollar invasion.[47] Germany's economy was the largest in Europe and enjoyed the lowest inflation which was seen as immunising it from the need for cash injections from foreigners.[48] Paris was also seen as successful in resisting the new wave of Arab investments, mainly due to its relationship with the Shah in Iran with whom it had an established trading and investment relationship. The pro-Israeli and western stance of the Shah was seen as counterweight to dependency on the Arab oil producing states.[49]

Economic conditions in Britain and its relationship with the newly independent Gulf States made London a particularly attractive setting for investment, medical treatment and tourism from the Gulf. Linda Blandford's 1976 book *Oil Sheikhs*[50] devotes its first chapter to an account of London "for sale" with free-spending, oil-rich Arabs 'off-loading' their 'petrodollars' in a period described as "Arab fever". Blandford provides a rare account of the arrival of a new type of Arab in London in the mid-70s suggesting that, "If one had to pinpoint a moment in time when London realised that it had become the Arabs' new home-from-home, it was the day in August 1975 when airing mattresses appeared over the window–sills of a £300,000 mansion in the Bolton's" (Blandford 1976: 11).

Khaleeji ruling elites began acquiring properties in Knightsbridge, the Embassy quarter in Mayfair, Eaton Square, The Bolton's, Grosvenor Square and Rutland

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[46] London cool on Arab investment reports. *The Times*. Wednesday August 28th 1974
[47] London: Drops from ocean of Arab cash. *The Times*. Tuesday 4th March 1975.
[48] Bonn: ideal climate for investment. *The Times*. Tuesday 4th March 1975.
[49] Paris: No petrodollars yet. *The Times*. Tuesday 4th March 1975
[50] Oil Sheiks: Inside the supercharged world of the petrodollar. London. Star Books

Gardens. This was accompanied by a huge presence in the most exclusive Hotels in the Park Lane area each summer. Entire floors could be taken up by one family and their entourage. Middle Eastern restaurants in the vicinities of these Hotels would reportedly send men carrying steaming pots and trays covered in tin foil to cater for the tastes of the *Khaleeji* clientele and fleets of chauffeurs waited patiently for the moment when the clients would emerge (Blandford 1976), scenes which remain a regular feature of London in summer to this day.

The behaviour of (some) male *Khaleeji* tourists in London began to draw criticism from newspapers in the Arab world and in London. The damage that the insensitive behaviour of "Oil Shaikhs" (*sic*) was causing to the image of Arabs as a whole was spelt out in *The Times* in August 1976.[51] Newspapers in Egypt, Libya and Syrian were primarily concerned that vast oil revenues were being invested in the capitals of the ailing former colonial powers instead of the ailing non-oil exporting countries and front-line states of the Arab world; while newspapers in Kuwait lamented the corruption of their youth in the nightclubs and casinos of London.

Figure 14: Libyan Cartoonist Mohammed Alzuwawi caricatures the behaviour of Male Khaleeji tourists in London 1977.Published in his collection '*A'ntum (you): Social and political cartoons 1973-1983*. Tripoli, Libya. Iqra Publishing 1987.

The *Khaleeji* presence in London had economic effects beyond the settled Arabs. The trend in the early 1970's when a small numbers of the ruling elites were buying major London landmarks and real estate portfolios gave way to sales with a new merchant class, less extravagantly wealthy in comparison but none the less determined

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[51] Polishing the Arab image. The Times. Friday 27th of August 1976

to own houses and flats in London. With the opening of the Regents Park Mosque in 1977 St' John's Wood and Hampstead were added to the list of locales in Kensington Chelsea, Knightsbridge and Bayswater as areas where Arabs were buying properties at apparently absurd prices.

London also became a medical hub for Khaleeji's as medical services in Kuwaiti, Qatari, the UAE and Saudi Arabia were still basic. The Consulates of Gulf States in London opened 'medical section' through which they coordinated the treatment of officials and citizens. In the mid-1970s private hospitals around London like the Cromwell Hospital in Kensington, The London Clinic in Harley Street and The Wellington Hospital in St'Johns Wood began to cater specifically to this new market providing culturally sensitive service including interpreters, Arabic menus, Arabic TV and gifts for the patients during Eid. In its first year of operation in 1974 Dr Arthur Levin Director of the Wellington Hospital reported that the hospital had received over £2 million from patients from the Gulf, equivalent to £31 million in relative terms.

The emergence of a new merchant class in the *Khaleej* had also drawn the attention of the British Council which began to covet the Gulf as a lucrative market for universities and summer schools in Britain.[52] Up to this point the Arab student population in Britain had mostly come from the countries like Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. However, the spending power of students from the Gulf States and the abundance of scholarships changed this. The British council arranged for courses to be run to cater for the specific 'economic development needs' of students from the Gulf.[53] Significantly the *Khaleeji* market was not only vastly more lucrative than the rest of the Arab world but it was seemingly free of the ideological baggage and militant politics of the Arab student from the republic and front-line states in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

While the petrodollar tourists were welcomed for their spending habits they were simultaneously reviled for what many in Britain felt was an undeserved wealth. The weakness of the pound, and the spending habits of Princes and Sheikhs from the Gulf was reported to be the main reason for the massive profits being made by major

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[52] See: Arabs at Universities; Letters to the Editor. *The Times* 16th March 1977. Arabs at Universities. Letters to the Editor. *The Times*. 22 March 1977. Foreign students in Britain 2: Lucrative University summer schools: Attentive response to literature and culture. *The Times*. Tuesday 23rd August 1977.

[53] Letters to the Editor. "Arabs at university" from Mr Antony Sherwood, Head of Africa and Middle east Division at the British Council, *The Times*. Monday March 21st 1977. *Also see "*Foreign Students in Britain, Lucrative University Summer Schools: Attentive response to Literature and Culture." *The Times* August 27th 1977.

gambling clubs and casinos in the capital.[54] Newspapers were particularly interested in stories about Arabs losing hundreds of thousands of pounds on roulette and blackjack tables and paying thousands of pounds for sex in the capital. The excesses of prominent figures like the reluctant King Khalid Ibn Saud propelled the stereotype of the high–rolling, womanising and cash-laden Arab to the fore of public imagination. This imagery frequently cast *Khaleeji* Arabs in London not as noble savages but undeservedly wealthy and crass savages. Importantly the unfavourable image of the Gulf Arab tourist was as much a part of Arab discourses and imagery as it was in Britain and the wider western world. Yet the exotic fascination with the *Khaleeji nouveau riche* in London and the growing economic influence of Gulf region for the British economy would not overshadow, but would come to sit by the image of the Arab terrorist as a new wave of Arab-on-Arab bombings, assassinations and purges would grip London and grab British headlines.
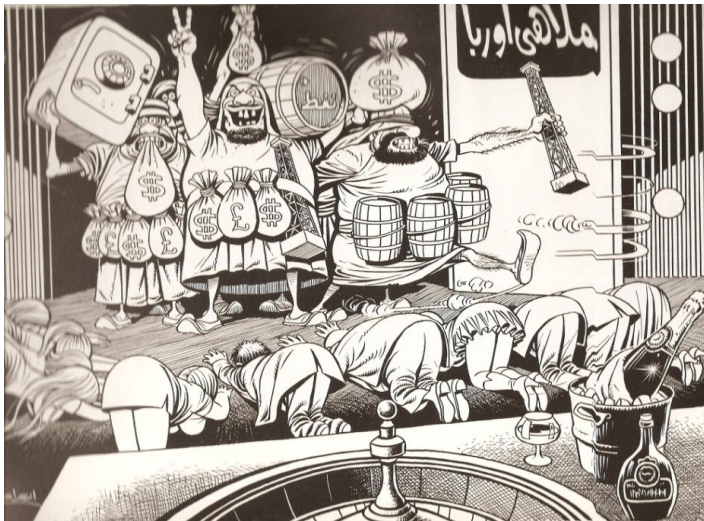
Figure 15: Libyan Cartoonist Mohammed Alzuwawi caricatures the high rolling Gulf gambler in Europe 1977. The sign in the top left hand corner reads "The Clubs of Europe" Published in his Al-Fajr Al-Jadid Newspaper 1977. *Antum (you): Social and political cartoons 1973-1983.* Tripoli, Libya. Iqra Publishing 1987

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[54] Why high –rollers are switching their bets. *The Times*. Tuesday 4th December 1979.

Political purges in London

Along with the rise of student militancy and the arrival of Gulf sojourners and capital, London also began to attract a large number of Arab political exiles and dissidents who began operating from the city as opposition movements in exile. Starting in 1977 rival Arab secret services engaged in political violence against each other and the assassinations of Arab dissidents. The political purges and reprisals began with the assassination of the former North Yemeni Prime Minister outside the Royal Lancaster Hotel in April (1977) and ended abruptly in 1989 with the murder of the Palestinian political cartoonist and satirist Naji Al-Ali near Kings Road in Chelsea.[55]

Arab-on-Arab violence drew ever more public attention as the incidents themselves became ever more spectacular. On New Year's Eve 1978 two Syrian embassy staff were killed when their car exploded near Piccadilly Circus just meters away from crowds of people gathered to see in the New Year.[56] Days later on the 4th of January 1978 Said Hammami the PLO representative in London was shot and killed in his office at 1 High Hill, Mayfair which was at the time the Arab League office in London.[57] On the 9th of July 1978 General Al-Naïf the former Iraqi Prime Minister was shot and killed by two gunmen outside his Hotel on Park Lane. In late July eleven Iraqi diplomats were expelled from the UK for suspected smuggling of light weapons in diplomatic packages. Just days later on the 28th of July a hand grenade was thrown at the Iraqi Ambassador's car outside the Iraqi Embassy in Queens Gate.[58]

The Iraqi embassy in London was thought to be the main source of light weaponry and explosives used by the PFLP and Black September for their London operations. Although nobody officially claimed responsibility for the attack on the Ambassador suspects included rival factions within the Ba'ath Party and Kurdish separatists. A similar attack on the Iraqi Embassy in Paris took place in the same week. The following month (August 1978) the PFLP claimed responsibility for a high profile attack on a coach carrying EL AL crew from their hotel in Duke Street Mayfair to Heathrow Airport, two people were killed and nine bystanders injured in the incident.[59]

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[55] Former Yemeni Prime Minister and Wife Die in Triple Shooting. *The Times* April 11th 1977.

[56] Witnesses to bombed car sought. *The Times*. Tuesday 3rd January 1978

[57] Gunman Assassinates PLO Leader in London: PLO holds Britain Responsible. The Times January 5th 1978

[58] London New Arena for Arab State rivalries. *The Times*, 29th July 1978 p3. *See Also*. Owen Warning after Grenade Attack on Iraqi Ambassador. *The Times* 29th July 1978.

[59] Bombs for Embassies Intercepted. *The Times* January 7th 1978.

The dramatic Iranian embassy siege where a group of (allegedly) Iraqi sponsored *Arabistan* separatist took armed control of the embassy, only added to a long list of violent acts associated with the Arab presence in London that pitted public opinion and public imagery against thousands of unsuspecting migrant workers, students and tourists. Mr Ali Tarrabassi, a regular visitor to London from the Emirate of Sharjah in the UAE wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* in May 1980, in it he described how he had experienced discrimination for being visibly Arab in London as a result of the accumulation of negative images, and attitudes.

Sir, I am an Arab from Sharjah. I write to you very angry and upset about my treatment by some people here. I do not know why! Is it because of the Iran embassy siege or of the film?

The story is that I used to like to come to Britain with all my family. We love the parks and flowers, green places we do not have in Sharjah. Every year I work hard to have some money to come for holidays here with my wife and two sons, but this year I come with my wife only because she is ill. We decided immediately to come to Britain to see a doctor. We would never spend our holiday money anywhere but Britain.

No wonder we were upset when we met the immigration officer at the airport. He was bad to us, he keep asking us questions for 30 minutes. We were very tired, the long flight the waiting and my wife ill but he must know how much money we have and where we come and where we go. My English is not quick and when I did not understand he said to me and I swear it "we have enough ill people here to see -, you go back and stay with your camel". He never use thank you or please. British are very famous for please and thank you.

On Tuesday May 6th me and my wife standing on Baker Street waiting to go to the hotel. We cannot find a taxi we wait for a bus and at 3:30 bus No. 30 came. We were in a cue and as we were going on the bus the conductor said no to us. He said you are rich Arabs take a taxi and the people behind us went on the bus. Two people saw this, I was upset, we walk and my wife ill. Why, what happened to the British we never treat people like this in home?

I am going home to be with my camel but we leave depressed and upset, my wife never come out from the hotel since Tuesday. Why, we never hate you, why you hate us? Please excuse my English. [60]

The situation soon worsened, in the early 1980s the Libyan regime began to purge opposition figures living in London. The campaign began in February 1980 when newspapers reported a "Libyan looking man" setting fire to a Park Lane Arabic bookshop that had been distributing *al-Jihad* the publication of the Libyan Islamic opposition movement. The London based a*l-Hawadith* newspaper claimed that the Libyan government had earmarked funds to attack exile opposition leaders and dissidents. In the April 1980 Mohammed Mustafa Ramadan a Libyan dissident and journalist was shot by two gunmen near the Central Mosque in Regents Park. Days later on the 25th of April Mahmud Salem Nafa, a Libyan lawyer who had lived and worked in London for five years, was shot and killed at an Arab legal centre on Westbourne Grove. On the 26th of November Ahmed Mustafa a Libyan student was stabbed to death allegedly by a Libyan "hit squad," after being missing for three days his body was found in a council flat in Manchester. In what seems to have been an improvised reprisal a firebomb exploded at the offices of Libyan Arab Airlines in Piccadilly on the 28th December but there were no injuries and little damage. The purge ruthlessly targeted any suspected opponents of Gadhafi's regime however marginal the individual may have been. Eighteen year old Sanoussi Latiwish, a Libyan student living in London who was suspected of being in contact with the exiled opposition disappeared in early April 1981, his decomposing body was found in a field in Cambridge a month later.

At the same time that the Libyan purge was taking centre stage, other forms of political violence continued to occur around the settled community and the causes associated with it. On the 3rd of June 1982 "an Arabic man pulled a submachine gun out of a bag and fired at Israeli ambassador Shlomo Argov as he left a party at the Dorchester hotel". The four accused of his attempted murder had come to the UK in 1980/81 and registered as students. During their prosecution they were accused of being in contact with the military attaché at the Iraqi Embassy who was thought to have

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[60] An Arab's View of London. Letters to the Editor. *The Times*. 19th May 1980

supplied the weapons for the assassination attempt. The incident was used by Israel as the *casus belli* for invading Lebanon 1982.[61]

In the early hours of the 11th of March 1984 an explosion occurred outside a London newsstand selling Arab newspapers on Queensway in Bayswater. A few minutes later a second bomb exploded at *L'Auberge*, a Mayfair nightclub owned by a Lebanese man and frequented by Arabs. About 120 people were in the club at the time 23 of whom were injured in the ensuing fire. Shortly afterwards a third bomb was found on Kensington Road and was diffused in a controlled explosion. A fourth bomb exploded hours later outside another news stand on Queensway. At the same time two bombs exploded in Manchester. The first was planted under the car of a Libyan exile and went off in the Whalley Range district, a residential area where a number of Libyan families lived. The second bomb exploded in an apartment block and injured a Syrian couple and their child. Another bomb was found and defused the following evening at the Omar Khayyam nightclub on High Street Kensington.[62] The following day the Metropolitan Police provided armed guards to a number of key Libyan exile figures.[63] [64] A month later the ten day Libyan embassy siege took place in which PC Yvonne Fletcher was shot and killed. The incident again drew the small settled Libyan community into the fray as schoolchildren and teachers at the Libyan school on Glebe Street in Chelsea were searched by armed police.[65] The small school which had 350 students and 30 teachers at the time was funded by the Libyan government but was forced to close in 1987.

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[61] Marwan al-Banna, Hussain Ahmed Ghassan Said and Nayaf Rosan, all members of the Palestinian Abu Nidal Organisation were convicted and sentenced to between thirty and thirty-five years imprisonment each. The invasion did nothing to stop attacks on Israeli targets in London and elsewhere. On the 31st of August 1983 a bomb exploded outside the Israeli owned Bank Leumi near Oxford Circus. On the same day a bomb exploded in the doorway of a Diamond merchant in Holborn and outside an American construction executive's house in Knightsbridge. Responsibility was claimed by the Abu Nidal Organisation. On Christmas day 1983 a 1-3 pound bomb exploded in a waste bin in Orchard Street between Marks and Spencers and Selfridges. Tunisian Habib Maamar (25) was arrested in Paris in May 1986 and allegedly confessed to the bombing in London and other European cities which he said were organised by the Abu Ibrahim group.

[62] Britain puts Libya under pressure. *The Times*. Monday 12th March 1984

[63] Key Libyan targets get armed guard after wave of bomb attacks. *The Times* Monday 12th March 1984

[64] On March 13th a 44 yr old Libyan business man Ali El-Giahour and three others are accused of the bombing spree in London. El-Giahour was released on bail and subsequently disappeared; four months later his decomposing body was found by Police in an apartment in Marylebone with multiple shot wounds to the head. Libyans quizzed in hit squad hunt. *The Standard*. Monday 13th March 1984. Also see: Street terror. The *Standard*. Monday 12th March 1984. 8 Libyans being held over bombs. *The Standard*. Tuesday 13th March 1984.

[65] Libyan children searched. *The Evening Standard*. 18th April 1984

One of the most disturbing incidents of the period was the Hindawi affair which is an apt illustration of the way in which political violence took place almost on a daily basis in and around the settled Arab community. By 1985 Jordanian Nezar Hindawi had lived in London for 5 years. His life in London mirrors that of thousands of other Arabs who arrived at the same time. In 1982 he had a brief job at the London based a*l-Arab* newspaper and in 1984 he tried to get a job with an Arab business magazine based in London but was rejected.[66] Perhaps struggling to find regular work Hindawi was allegedly employed as an informer by the 'Libyan People's Bureau' supplying them with the names, addresses and car registration numbers of Gadhafi's opponents in London. Hindawi was also involved with the Syrian secret service in London; on the 17th of April he sent an allegedly Syrian prepared 3lb plastic explosive bomb with his pregnant Irish girlfriend Ann Murphy onto an *EL-AL* flight from London to Tel Aviv. The bomb was intended to blow up at 30,000ft over Austria but was discovered at Heathrow. Shocked and appalled by her boyfriend's contempt for her life and that of their unborn child and the 375 passengers on board, Murphy quickly identified her boyfriend to Police who subsequently "searched areas of London popular with Middle Eastern people, but concentrated on Bayswater which has a large Arab community."[67]

Meanwhile Hindawi was allegedly collected by Syrian embassy officials and spent the night in a safe house where he was disguised. Fearing that the Syrians would kill him for the failed operation Hindawi escaped from his Syrian minders, and took refuge in a Hotel owned by a Jordanian man in Earls Court. The hotel owner knew Hindawi's Brother Mahmud who persuaded his brother that he had to give himself up; plain clothes police officers arrested Nezar Hindawi that evening at the hotel.

The connections that Hindawi had with the community are clear he worked along or socialised with people working in the Arab publishing industry based in London and his work as an informant for the Libyan "Peoples Bureau" would have bought him into close contact with ordinary members of the Libyan and wider Arab communities. His brother Mahmud Hindawi in his late thirties at the time lived with his family in West London and worked at the Jordanian Embassy as a clerk and as an assistant administrator in the 'medical section' of the Qatar Embassy where incidentally my own

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[66] Terror 'coalition' is at work professor says / Police examining possible link between plot to blow up El Al airliner and West Berlin discotheque bombing The Times (London). April 23, 1986, Wednesday
[67] Arab held in bomb hunt / British police arrest suspect Hindawi over plot to place explosives on El Al jet at Heathrow The Guardian (London) April 19, 1986

father worked. The incident attracted considerable press coverage further intensifying stereotypes and associations with violence. The Hindawi incident highlights the extent to which these largely political events connecting the Middle East to London were taking place in close proximity to settled Arabs. They affected the way that people socialised and informed attitudes towards their own and other Arab nationals with whom they shared workplaces, schools, mosques and nightclubs. I asked Omar, a 32 year old Libyan raised in London during the 1980's if any of these events had any impact on his personal or family life and relations with other Libyans.

Omar: *I remember at the time that our parents were quite careful about who we mixed with particularly if they were Libyan. The community was relatively small and people knew each other, or of each other. Those who were close to or part of the regime were known and we were only allowed to mix with families who our parents thought were safe, those closest to us. Anyone else was treated with a degree of suspicion, and they would be treated that way until proved otherwise.*

We were effectively told to stay away from other Libyans as much as possible. Libyan students who were here on grants were expected to write reports about their fellow students and the violence kind of spoke for itself. At the time of the shooting in Regents Park we lived just down the road in St John's wood and I remember hearing the shots and a bullet hit our car, the police took the car away to test the ballistics and stuff like that. I mean sometimes we used to just try and hide that we were Libyan, not that we were not proud to be Libyan, even after I got my British passport I always say I am Libyan; but it was a difficult period and unlike other locations like Rome or Germany where the regime had activists actively campaigning for Gaddafi, London was the base of the opposition movement and like the Iraqi INC [Iraqi National Congress] it was recognised and backed by Britain and the US, so it was quite messy.

I remember right after the embassy siege that Gaddafi made a speech calling the opposition movement the "Stray dogs in London". The whole environment was tense and we did whatever possible to avoid crossing paths with anything that might draw us into politics. But

it wasn't only Libyans I remember there was a Syrian school friend whose father was assassinated here in London and my mother wouldn't allow us to go to Queensway and Edgware road, of course we went anyway, that's where everyone was hanging out. They even wanted us not to invite him to birthday parties and get together in case there was more to come, of course that was impossible.

It was the same with some of my Iraqi friends. and all the INC families would not invite children from families that were considered to be Baathists and vice versa and for those who were not rich enough to be part of the political establishment. With some of my Iraqi friends their parents would tell them specifically which families should not be invited together at parties and celebrations because they didn't want any trouble. In a way Arab politics played quite a regular role in our childhood and we knew it.

Other British-born or raised Arabs from different nationalities had a similar awareness and experience of the consequences of Arab politics at a young age. Ayham a 32 year old Iraqi whose parents were on Iraqi government PhD scholarships in the early 1980's describes how his parents were forced to take part in government sponsored events during the Iraq-Iran war.

Ayham: *My parents weren't really politically involved but one way or another you had to be at the time. I mean they weren't activists or anything like that, but you had to be pro-government you couldn't be part of the opposition. Having said that though, up until the end of the kind of Ph.D. period it did become fierce, you had to be more vocal and more pro-active - things like spraying graffiti on the walls with anti-Iranian slogans, things like that. My dad I think he did it once and then he refused to do it after that.*

Ramy: *How did it happen? Were they given instructions or was it on their own initiative?*

Ayham: *No it wasn't anything they wanted to do – quite the opposite. You had direct requests from particular individuals, I'm not going to name them- but he (Father) had to. He did it once and he hated himself for it. I remember once they had like a Iraqi national day party and the embassy had invited all the Iraqi's to a big hall in Cardiff and all families and parents and whatever and what happened was they sealed off the hall and a guy came in and started shouting all the women and children stay inside and lock all the doors don't open the doors whatever happens and then he called out all the men – I remember my dad running outside and apparently there were three vans full of Iranians with baseball bats and they were outside and they were gonna go and start a fight. I remember actually a huge fight broke out and my dad actually broke his ankle in it and a lot of damage was done on that day.*

    It was crazy back then, I remember it but I didn't see it. I remember something going on outside and my Mum was like screaming. But after that incident my dad completely withdrew himself from any Iraqi involvement – politically especially and as a result they stopped funding him. He funded the last couple of years of his research out of his own pocket by doing extra work on the side, extra lab work and any savings we had were used to finish the PhD – that's why my mum left early, cause we couldn't afford to stay here with him so she took us back to Iraq even though it was 1987 and the war was still going on. So yeah we kind of knew about all this stuff even though we were just like little kids! It has been, it's been a big factor in our lives.

The Libyan embassy siege in which WPC Yvonne Fletcher died and the callousness of Hindawi incident had caused attitudes towards Arabs in Britain to hit an all-time low. In January 1986 *The Sun* newspaper ran a headline *'Arab pig sneaks back in'* in response to news that a Libyan with a British wife and children who had been deported in the wake of the embassy siege in 1984, had returned to live in Britain.

Dr Adnan El-Amad, Director of the Arab League office in London attempted to bring a prosecution against *The Sun* newspaper alleging incitement to racial hatred. The prosecution was blocked by the Attorney General who described the headline as "intemperate, abusive, and insulting, but not racist." In response to the announcement of

the blocking of the prosecution *The Sun* published a cartoon with the caption: *'Trouble, now the pigs object to being called Arabs'*.[68]

On the July 22nd 1987 Naji al-Ali was shot in the head outside the office of the London based Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Qabas* on Ives Street, Chelsea. Al-Ali had drawn over 40,000 cartoons in which he lampooned Arab, Israeli and Western governments in equal measure and was reported to have received over 100 death threats in response to his work. The identity of his killer(s) remains unknown although he is known to have received threats from members of the PLO in the weeks leading up to his assassination. His murder appears to have tragically punctuated the preceding 20 years of intense political rivalry and murder orchestrated largely (and allegedly) by the Syrian, Libyan and Iraqi embassies along with movements like the PFLP and Abu Nidal.

Conclusion

The stories above suggest that Egyptians, Iraqis, Syrians, Jordanians, Moroccans and others living in London learnt to become British and Arab in equal measure. 'The struggles of the homeland' (Shaif 1991) consistently overshadowed Arabs settled in the city, simultaneously bringing them together and driving them apart. From the first records of the Arab student population in the early 20th century, Arabs living in Britain seem to have been largely defined by the politics of the Middle East, rarely if ever appearing or being considered a settled community in public discourses which focussed on the activities of tourists, political activist, militants and embassy operatives who lived within and around the settled community. As a result Arabs have inevitably become stigmatised and reviled for their politics, their violence, their visibility and in some cases their obtuse taste for consumer spending.

There has been a long standing relationship between the people and states of the Arabic speaking world and the city of London. Looking at this relationship, which we cannot characterize with any singularity shows a number of overlapping, interconnections with diverse trajectories which are in many cases represented or made coherent using the sign 'Arabs'. To a degree the significations that these incidents and stories produce retain their traces in contemporary social arrangements, experiences and discourses and are to some extent a 'history of the present' (Foucault 1977: 31).

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[68] Racist suit against Sun blocked / Attorney General blocks Arab League bid to prosecute tabloid newspaper. *The Guardian* (London). September 4, 1986

However, Foucauldian discourse analysis postulates a relationship between discourses and subjectivity. Therefore of equal consequence to these lived experiences is the discursive terrain of texts which represent "delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given an interpretive gloss" (Parker, I. 1992: 6). The discourses that emerge from these texts "hail us and make us listen as a certain type of person" (ibid 9) generating certain types of knowledge and power. "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at some time power relations" (Foucault, 1977: 27) The public discourse of Arabs in the British press eventually provides a knowable object, 'the Arabs' who are wealthy and exotic, dissimilar and suspicious, dangerous, violent and homicidal.

The language of hijacking, terrorism, freedom fighters, hostages, sieges, plots, militancy and hit-squads forms part of the repertoire of terms associated with Arabs. Binary relationships are created, for example 'the Arab' is offered an object position of Hijacker with corresponding oppositional subject position of the non-Arab (western) hostage. In fact these modes of representation create multiple object and subject positions, Arab fundamentalist vs. non-Arab libertarian, Arab destroyers of life vs. non-Arab preservers of life, Arab pathology vs. western rationality, ugly vs. beautiful and so on. 'Arab' and '*Arab-ness*' therefore take on an 'evaluative accent' eliciting judgement about what it is referring to (Bakhtin 1981)

These meanings are realised and reiterated in active responsive understanding – which reinforces the dialogic qualities of communication. As Jim Whites expedition into Queensway in 1992 for *The Independent* demonstrates the evaluative judgement of what 'Arab' signifies in a British context is internalised by young Arabs growing up in London. "Five lads were sitting on high bar stools, chatting. They wouldn't give their names. 'We're terrorists,' one of them mocked. 'No publicity'. 'Call us all Mohamed,' said another. 'The five Mohammeds'. Five guys named Mo'.[69] Power is not only negative it is productive and runs throughout the whole social body (Foucault 1980: 119) and for Bakhtin and Volisinov social struggles are always implicated in its use and meaning (Maybin 2001).

Discourse is pervasive and powerful and the meanings that are generated are encrypted into language so that whether or not young Arabs are actually aware of the

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[69] Five thousand guys named Mo. *The Independent*, Jim White September 11, 1992.

details of these incidents in the way that Omar and Ayham were through direct experience, they are acutely aware that Arabs are considered to be (among other things) terrorists and rich, part of the accumulated layers of meaning that have calcified around the term of their 'ethnic' identification. These events therefore represent actual experiences for some while for others they are experienced through the pervasive power of discourse. As I will go on to show in the following three ethnographic chapters, displays of ethnic assertiveness, reappropriation and the *doing of Arab-ness* in multicultural London are replete with attempts to resist, reclaim and reactivate these sedimented meanings. In the following chapter I turn to the narratives around learning to be Arab and growing up in London in which British-born or raised 'Arabs' reconstruct the themes of vilification, war and collective othering which (among other things) appear to punctuate their narratives of becoming Arab men and Arab women.

Chapter Four

Learning to be Arab: growing up in London

Introduction

In this thesis I argue that one is not an Arab by birth, but that one becomes an Arab man or woman through an accumulation of discursive and corporeal acts framed within constantly iterable structures of subjection, including the family, school, 'the community' and the governmental projects of the nation-state; all of which exert performative forces which one is *subject to* and the *subject of*. As Butler argues people are 'gendered' and 'raced' through a hermeneutic process framed by discourse, the desire to be socially intelligible and to survive. Subjectivity is realized not through radical human agency but through the inevitability of repetition which produces unexpected consequences, a mixture of imperfect conformity and transgression. In this chapter I turn to some of the events, acts and contexts through which the substance and boundaries of 'self' and 'other,' masculinity and femininity, similarity and difference are learnt and from which Arab 'ethnicity' is (re)produced in London.

The complex layering of experiences that inform the way that self and other are perceived take place through a patchwork of memories of the every-day, at the family dining table, the playground fight, the walk home from school, weekend gatherings of friends and family, through news headlines of war, overheard telephone conversations with relatives and the testing and the stretching of boundaries with peers and kin. While narratives may draw upon memories they are framed in the present, in the narrator's sense of themselves now. Unlike memories, narratives are structured, inherently social and intended for public consumption (Gardner 2002: 31-32). Narratives are stories that people tell in different ways to different audiences and in reference to different social contexts. Discursive psychology suggests that individuals do things with the words they choose, that speech is not neutral or objective but productive, interactional and always seeks to achieve an end (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Listening to narratives is therefore far from a passive act, the listener affects the narrative itself and the different roles and plots that are emphasized and those that are hidden (Gardner 2002: 33). These interactional considerations mean that narrative reception and reading are often as

important as authorship, causing me to think carefully about my own role in the way that these stories were told (see Potter and Wetherell 1987; Andrews et al 2000).

In this chapter I consider how narratives of school reveal some of the processes, interaction and events which together produce 'gendered' and 'raced' subjects or in other words the process of learning to be an Arab man and an Arab woman in London at particular historical moments. I also explore how these narratives might begin to inform the theoretical extrapolation of performative race from performative gender.

The war at school

"What do Hiroshima and Baghdad have in common … nothing yet"
The Sun January 4th 1991 '*Jim's Gulf Joke goes down a bomb'.*

Two days before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 the effects of the crisis between the two countries were felt in London. At the 'Tokyo Joe's' nightclub, a well-known Arab haunt in Piccadilly, a 31 year old Syrian man who lived on Edgware Road, took 150 people hostage for 10 hours, including members of the Kuwaiti and Emirati ruling families.[70] The sensationalism of this event was perhaps to be overshadowed by that of the world's first comprehensively televised war. Between September 1990 and March 1991 over 160 Iraqis and Palestinians, described in the press as "Arabs", were deported and up to 150 others interned without trial at Pentonville Prison.[71]

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[70] Club siege 'linked to Iraqi invasion' The Independent May 14th 1991. Motive for dummy bomb raid on club 'a mystery'. The Independent 8th May 1991. Man jailed over siege at nightclub. The Independent. June 1st 1991

[71] On the 15th of September 23 Iraqi students and business men living in Britain were expelled, the following week on the 21st September the British Government announced a ban on new Iraqi students coming to the UK. Two days later on the 23rd September more than 100 Iraqis including students and members of the diplomatic mission are expelled. Sunday 11th November. 2 Iraqi directors of a Coventry based engineering firm, Adnan Amiri and Hana Jon are ordered out of Britain for breaching the trade embargo. Sunday 13th January Britain orders expulsion of 28 Iraqi embassy staff. Wed 16th the 28 are detained on the grounds of national security. Home office says no plans to intern Iraqis if war breaks out. Thursday 17th Home office announces a further 35 Iraqis are to be deported on the grounds of National security. See: *Gulf Crises Chronology* (Compiled by the BBC World Service). Longman. London 1991.Also see 'Crisis in the Gulf: Expulsion of Arabs could backfire', The Independent. January 5, 1991. 'Crisis in the Gulf: Court refuses to help detainees' The Independent. 2nd February 1991
'Arabs faced 'McCarthyite questioning'. The Guardian 8th March 1991. The security roundup in London led to similar crackdowns to be initiated in France and Germany. Diplomats began referring to a Europe wide "Arab witch hunt" as 200,000 police, wearing bullet-proof vests and toting machineguns were deployed in France under the *Vigipirate* plan which, it was claimed, was intended to prevent terrorism,

For some young Arabs, in particular Iraqis, living in London during the 1990 Gulf crisis and the subsequent (1991) Gulf War made them the focus of attention and the brunt of abuse and violence at school and within the public imagination. The broad area of discussion during these interviews was 'school' but I found that time and again the war was a recurring feature in these accounts. The Gulf War was therefore not an event which simply happened in a distant, dusty and forbidding Middle East, but one that was also played-out in the daily lives of young people in London. These narratives are thus reconstructions of local experiences in the context of global processes (Appadurai et al 1991). "Looking at critical events from a pluralist perspective, so that we hesitate to apply closure too early, seems one way to ensure that the right to name and the right to organise memory" and history "are challenged" (Das, 1995: 209-10).

Newspaper reports in Britain suggested that Arab students were feeling the effect of the conflict in their day-to-day lives. At the School of Oriental and African Studies in London a Palestinian student reported "I've friends who have been called 'dirty Arab', and been told to 'get out.'" An Egyptian colleague (at SOAS) reported that the abuse she encountered was the worst in the two years she had been in England "On the Tube a guy looked at me and said 'Iraqi bastard, bloody Arab'". The anxiety was heightened among the Arab student population in London by news that a Lebanese PhD student had been among those arrested in the 18th of January roundup.[72]

Many of the Iraqis I interviewed were at school when the crisis erupted and in most cases had only been in Britain for a few years. Their sense of 'belonging' was firmly invested in the discourses and experience of Iraqi nationalism and kinship ties, presenting them with a particularly difficult set of circumstances and emotions to navigate. The narratives of young men about this period are marked by the experience of violence and the masculine bravado of fighting. Masculinity and violence are salient features of the Gulf War as a whole. Linville (2000) and Straw (2008) have written about the way in which the Gulf War was an opportunity in both cultural and political terms to *re-masculinise* America after the defeat of Vietnam, another instance where "the shadow of the other falls upon the self" (Bhabha 1990: 188). On one hand the 1991 Gulf War was an opportunity for America and Britain to rearticulate their respective 'national identities' anew in the opening chapter of the post-cold war world. On the

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keep the peace within the Arab immigrant communities and prevent racist violence. In Germany 100 Iraqis, Jordanians and North Africans were detained.
[72] Crisis in the Gulf: War brings out the racist streak The Independent. January 26th 1991

other hand the values at the heart of the notion of 'the Arabs': solidarity, unity, kinship and honour were again unravelled. Yet ironically, from these, new recitations of 'Arab-ness' came to be expressed by British-born and raised Arabs in London.

Learning to be an Arab man.

Haitham is half-Iraqi, half-Syrian, born in Kuwait he lived in Abu Dhabi with his parents until he was sent to school in England in 1987 where he has lived ever since. Haitham appeared to lean more towards his mother's Syrian culture, his accent, the food and aesthetic he loved were distinctly *Shammi*[73]. He often spoke about Damascus, its historical sites, shops, cuisine and people as we sat and discussed the past and the present. Physical experience of Iraq was a distant memory; he had never lived there and had rarely visited, nonetheless his attachment to Iraq remained important, coming to the fore perhaps because of his estrangement from it and not least during times of conflict. He was about to start his second year at boarding school when Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Haitham *"I had a really rough year, I was homesick anyway but I also just got into loads of fights. I was really sensitive to what was being said and when you saw people reading 'The Sun' and all the headlines – it was difficult, anything could send you off. Of course I was the only Arab in my year. I was lucky because there was another half-Iraqi half-English guy, a few years older, and he used to look out for me. He was well liked in his year and a good sportsman so people didn't mess with him. But I got beaten up so much, I was quite small and whenever someone said anything I just went for it. The worst thing was that we had to do CCM which is like military training at school, you choose a service and you do training, night exercises and everything. The officers were fine, they were very respectful apart from the odd jibe, but everyone gets that – but it was the other students they really had a field day with me. They said they were going to bomb my house and other rubbish 'Iraqi bastard,' 'Arab pig' and stuff like that."*

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[73] The Arabic word used to describe both Greater Syria area (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine) but also the city of Damascus

The public discourses of the war in Britain clearly had an effect on the way that Haitham's peers constructed him as the embodiment of 'the enemy' who should be defeated not only on the battlefield, but at school. It might be suggested Haitham's recent arrival made it easy to associate him with 'the enemy,' however, Payani has argued that in times of conflict "the length of residence of members of the group receives little consideration" (Payani 1993: 5).

While her discussion is arguably related to more extreme forms of physical violence and suffering, Veena Das's discussion of critical event in contemporary India invites us to look more closely at the discursive dynamics where individual biographies of pain and suffering become social texts. Pain and suffering "are not simply individual experiences which arise out of the contingencies of life and threaten to disrupt a known world. They may also be experiences which are actively created and distributed by the social order itself" (Das, 1995:138) where the dialectics of the individual and the collective develop in the context of pain and suffering.

An important theme in school narratives of the war and difference more broadly, is that of being "the only Arab" in the class or at school. Important to this theme is the arrival of other Arabs (friends or acquaintances) who engendering feelings of safety and solidarity and play a central role in resisting violence and taunts in the playground. Ahmed had lived in Britain and Iraq intermittently while his parents completed their higher education. The family returned to Baghdad in 1988 only to be forced to leave a few years later when the prospect of invasion loomed on the horizon. After almost a year living in Libya, the family decided to try and return to the UK, where Ahmed picks up his story:

Ahmed   When we got back to this country, life became difficult for me especially.

Ramy   Why?

Ahmed   Because I was much more aware of politics and living in hardship and um I missed having the luxuries of Iraq. But when you live in this country and then you start hearing racist comment and they start to bully and make fights just literally because I came from Iraq (sic). It was 1992 and so it was still fresh after the war and a lot of kids used to make a point of saying, you are from Iraq and you are a Saddam loyalist and this that and the other, to

the point that I actually became a Saddam loyalist because I thought you know what "if you are already categorising me as a Saddam loyalist when in fact I left because of him well in that case I might as well become a Saddam loyalist and piss you off". I used to go into school with pictures of Saddam stuck to my books and folders. I became very Iraq patriotic, anybody who would speak about Iraq I would have a fight with to the point to which I had two friends of mine one Syrian one Sudanese and we were the only three Arabs in the whole school but we were the most feared three foreigners in that school cause like in Iraq we have fights every day in England it's not the same so we were used to like getting beats.

Ramy   *Tell me about your friends*

Ahmed   *They were called Noor and Mohammed. Noor's dad was a political dissident from Syria and uh they were Christian, he wasn't even Muslim or anything and he was a friend of the family and his son happened to be my age and in the same school so we made friends. Um he'd adapted more to the English way of life rather than me cause he'd been here much longer. He didn't have that gap in Syria; he'd never been to Syria. He was born there and taken away when he was 2 years old, whereas for me that period in Iraq changed me, I became much more Arab and Iraqi I realise that. The Sudanese guy he was just hardcore Sudanese he'd only been in the country for 5 years so he was fresh.*

Ramy   *And how did you three communicate? In English or Arabic?*

Ahmed   *In Arabic and that was done on purpose to piss everybody off. It became a fight literally a daily fight where if somebody made fun of me or attacked me the other two would automatically get themselves involved. I used to support them they used to support me. By the end of the high school year we had built up such a reputation that people actually started to respect us, not because we were Arabs or foreign but because we were just really good at fighting. But it wasn't nice because you always felt threatened you always felt ... that's when I felt I can never be part of this country. Sometimes it was*

verbal sometimes it was physical, as an example sometimes they would just walk past and make a sound like a bomb being dropped. That used to make me go nuts!

Ramy   *Sound like the war was important*

Ahmed   *It changed everything, I was more pro-Britain before the war. When I was in Iraq I couldn't wait to leave but when I did and I came here and I saw this reaction I couldn't believe it and I became much more patriotic I realised that Iraq wasn't as bad as I thought it was and Britain wasn't as good as I thought it was. Unfortunately due to the situation I couldn't go back.*

Like Haitham, in the shadow of the war Ahmed was bullied at school for being Iraqi and resisted verbal and physical abuse by responding with violence. In both narratives other 'Arabs' are central to this coping strategy. Ahmed's narrative gives him the opportunity to recite a particular understanding of Arab-ness which is not contingent on being Muslim or being of a certain race but by a code of loyalty framed within discourses of masculine militancy and collective defence. Willis (1977) argues that although "the lads" are a subordinated group, their values and actions must be understood in terms of their own culture rather than as merely reactive to domination. In this case exclusion stemming from the circulation of war propaganda in British schools might be seen as an aggravating rather than a determining factor. As Ahmed is keen to point out, he and his friends gained the respect of others at school not because they were 'Arabs' but because of their ability to fight together, reaffirming the primacy of "solidaristic masculinity" and violence as sites of recognition and respect among adolescent's males (O'Donnell and Sharp 2000: 43). Alexander (2005) argue (following Keith 1993, 1995) that "much violence in urban contexts has to be understood as instrumental, rational and everyday... and as part of a performance of masculine power and resistance that carries with it its own set of rules and expectations" (Alexander 2005: 200). Nonetheless masculinity here is given an 'ethnic' gloss so that notions of 'Arab' loyalty and solidarity during struggle or hardship, a crucial component and expectations of Arab brotherhood, can be recited. Indeed, the three friends are described as using their shared Arabic language to invert the power of exclusion employed by

peers to reinforce solidarity and wrestle control over the boundaries between themselves and others at school.

Ahmed's narrative of the war also demonstrates the way in which identification is contextual but also complicated by domination. Importantly, his narrative reinforces not only his masculinity but the idea that he is 'Iraqi' and 'Arab' and makes a connection between his experience of discrimination in 1991 and his feelings of 'belonging' today. When Ahmed's family returned to Iraq in the mid-1980s Ahmed's 'English-ness' became an important marker at school in Baghdad where he was placed with other students whose English language was more developed than Arabic. But his sense of English-ness was challenged upon his return to Britain a few years later, in his opinion as a direct result of the construction of the war and its main protagonist Saddam Hussein. Ironically, even though the family's dislocation had been caused by Saddam's war mongering and totalitarianism Ahmed found himself cast as a 'Saddam loyalist,' unable to escape this label, he believes he was forced to attempt to re-appropriate and recite it, a testament to the power of discourse to mould subjectivity.

The simulated sound of a falling bomb and similar taunts may be considered banter and an inevitable part of youth interaction. However, as Back points out "the danger of racist banter is that it can easily turn into more serious insults and even pave the way for lasting ill-feeling" (1996: 90). In this case the banter is intimately connected to the actual destruction and death wrought on a massive scale and in a sense simulates that violence. The forms of ascription and self-identification that take place through every-day interactions at school are not solely about deciding what category a person belongs to but also about mapping a system of meaning onto them and 'their group'. One becomes a member of a group in part through their exclusion from another (Lewis 2003).

In a very different school setting Jamal, who was born in Egypt but raised in London from the age of three, narrates his experience of the war. Over 1,500 Kuwaiti students arrived at his school, the King Fahad Academy in Ealing, at the beginning of the academic year in September 1990. They were mostly from families who had been on holiday in London during the summer and had become stranded as a result of the invasion. The school administration made every effort to welcome the Kuwaiti students as would be expected from a Saudi institution and amongst other things distributed 'Free Kuwait' stickers and pamphlets,. However, relations between the Kuwaiti visitors and the overwhelmingly non-Gulf Arab student population of Iraqis, Egyptians,

Palestinians and Syrians were strained, particularly by the political discourses around the war, much of it picked-up from the home, which drew young people to engage in the debate about who (and which country) was acting like a 'real Arab'.

Jamal: *The war was such a laugh! It sounds bad but it was it was exciting! There were bomb scares – sometimes we'd get called at home and told not to come in and a couple of times the school was just evacuated in the middle of the day. We would all stand outside while the fire brigade and the bomb squad drove through the gates with sirens and everything you know to check the buildings. I think some of the older boys might have phoned in a couple of those to get out of class – they couldn't do anything about it anyway. Every morning we had our bags searched at the gates for bombs, and they gave everyone an ID card which you had to have to get into the building. And then there was the Kuwaitis, it was like an invasion, suddenly it was like the school was full of them – no one told us about it - it just happened. The thing is most of our friends were Iraqi – we didn't have Kuwaitis before the war. Being a Kuwaiti was like a cuss anyway – we thought they were all gay. They were like the Jews of the Arabs, you know tight. Anyway we hated them and we loved Saddam. They were giving out these "Free Kuwait" badges and no one at the school wore them! There were enough fights between us and the Kuwaitis! We would shout "Saddam Saddam" in the playground in the gym wherever really (laughs). The teachers hated it but it just didn't stop – we didn't do it that much in front of the Arabic teachers' cause you know - but in front of the English teachers and the Kuwaitis – all the time until some of them just gave up saying anything. We didn't understand the politics of it all but we just knew that it was Iraq vs. Kuwait and that Saddam was standing up to America - and most of us were with the Iraqis cause they were our friends you know. When he bombed Israel – that was - we just loved it – he had the balls to do it and to stand up to the Americans, he was a hero.*

Ramy *But how would you explain that to someone who might be horrified that you were a Saddam supporter, why did you take the Iraqi side instead of the Kuwaiti? I mean the rest of the country was in support of Kuwait's cause.*

Jamal   *Even the Arabic teachers, they had to show that they were with Kuwait but really I bet a lot of them supported Saddam. At home when you heard people talking about it they all didn't like the Kuwaitis or the Khaleejis that much, like they were different not as educated they just had money. And worst of all was like getting the Americans and the British to like fight for them... what a bunch of pussies' khawalāt (gay). Arabs getting a British or American army to kill other Arabs. How can you justify that? basically no matter what, like the ultimate. We just thought, like what is Kuwait? It's just this little place that used to be part of Iraq and the British just created it – they just didn't want Iraq to have more power. They were afraid of Saddam and that's... like at school who would you rather support the Kuwaitis or Saddam? Saddam of course! We didn't think about who was right and who was wrong it was a loyalty thing. We're Arabs and we're supposed to be one country and look what he did to the Israelis he stood up to them too.*

Ramy   *What about Egypt and Syria? They were fighting against Iraq too*

Jamal   *Yeah but that was different; no Egyptian or Syrian or whatever would really deep down inside support that. It did make me feel bad, it was a bit embarrassing, your own country is taking part in it. But that made me love Saddam even more because he was a man and we really thought he would win and bomb the Israelis and Americans.*

The war created situations where individuals came up with situated understandings of what it meant to be Arab and male. As a minority, Arabs (and more broadly Muslims) were stereotypically associated with threat and violence in the lead up to the war. As Jamal and Ahmed's accounts suggest the figure of Saddam Hussein provided a readymade model of masculinity, similar in some sense to a celebrity, through whom others might experience and project particular Arab and Muslim notions of masculinity (Osella and Osella 2006). Jamal is reflective enough to recognise that his decision to support Saddam was motivated primarily to display 'loyalty' and possibly to minimize the damage of the 'shame' of Egyptian involvement in the war against a 'brother country'. Choosing Saddam over the Kuwaitis made more sense in an environment

where masculinity or, as he puts it, "having balls" is highly valued. Both Jamal and Ahmed's accounts point to the importance of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion marked by masculinity, fighting, bravery and loyalty, which Jamal and Ahmed show to be as important among Arabs as they are between Arabs and non-Arabs at school.

While the references of particular expressions of 'ethnic masculinity' should be taken into account, as Mac an Ghalil (1994) argues, schools are one of the places where boys learn how to be male, implicitly socialising boys into adopting particular notions of masculinity. Apart from being influenced by the gendered and sexualised, classed and racialised discourses associated with the schools as structured institutions; boys learn that there are different ways of being a male, some more valued and prestigious than others and perhaps none as powerful and attractive as the use of physical violence against peers, both male and female.

In Jamal's account there is a clear reference to what Back (1996) described as 'race-gender othering' in relation to the visiting Kuwaiti students and 'Khaleejis' more generally. This is based on their inability to defend themselves against the Iraqi military threat, and importantly, on the decision to use 'non-Arabs' to resolve an 'Arab' dispute. Thus, Kuwaitis and the *Khaleejis* are constructed as disloyal, feminine and not 'real Arabs,' in other words displaying a failed Arab masculinity. Back (1996) finds that while shared values and images of masculinity can break down some racial boundaries, race-gender othering simultaneously constructs feminised others who do not adhere to or reflecting those idealised forms. These accounts suggest that in the narration of the war as an event, and male adolescence as an experience, there might be a relationship between the idea of being Arab and a set of masculine behaviours and expectations. On the other hand Jamal and Ahmed's reconstruction of the war as "fun" through banter and masculine bravado is in another sense a coping strategy.

It is interesting to contrast these male narratives of the war at school in London with an account by Roula who had been in Britain for two years when the crisis came to a head. Her parents were active members of the Iraqi Communist Party and left Iraq when Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979 settling in Algeria where Roula spent most of her childhood. When the Algerian authorities refused to renew her father's work permit Roula's family were forced to migrate. Originally they had planned to migrate to Canada but were encouraged to consider coming to Britain by close family friends who had settled in London. When they arrived in 1989 Roula and her family stayed with

their friends in a North London neighbourhood before eventually moving to Hounslow where Roula joined the local school in Cranford.

Roula   *I was quite happy there but actually it was the time of the first Gulf war so I actually lived in denial of being an Arab. No one asked so I used to, at the time I thought ok 'if I'm asked I'm not going to say I not Iraqi' but nobody really asked. When I was finally asked where I was from and I told them I was Iraqi, from that point on I was known as "the dirty Arab".*

Ramy   *Are you being serious?*

Roula   *Yeah, it was one of the reasons we moved to Queensway about a year later, because it was more of an Arab area. That was an ugly ugly era. I was the bad guy; I was part of the country that had just been invaded. We were good when the Iran-Iraq war was on because we were fighting the bad guys. In Cranford the Asians and Whites were equally racist. There were only a handful, four or five Arabs and I never knew they even existed, they kept it quiet. I felt like I was the only one. It wasn't harsh bullying because I was quite a popular kid but it's when you feel even your friends are pulling away from you that's when you get really depressed – when there's only two people left walking home with you instead of fifteen; or when there are boys picking up your skirt and saying "you smelly Arab". A lot of people got it worse like that guy who we were staying with in North London, he used to get beaten-up because they thought he was a 'Paki' but when they found out he was Iraqi during the war it got a lot worse. He still has a complex because of it, he actually got beaten-up daily and he's a big guy who looks like he could defend himself but you can't when there are like ten people all trying to beat you up. He definitely still has issues.*

Ramy   *So what happened?*

Roula   *Well my Mum and Dad were working for 'Al-Sharq Alawsat' (A London-based Arab newspaper) and my dad quit because he said "Ok I'm not working for a paper that says these things about my country". They were*

one of the few Iraqis who remained against Saddam and said what he was doing was wrong. He (father) said this is a 'la'uba' (a game) How can we say it's wrong for the Americans to bomb us and invade us if that, if Iraq is doing that, invading another country. You know this is the man we ran away from (Saddam). Lots of people were against him (Father), they said "how dare you say this, he (Saddam) has changed, he is anti-American "Battal il Arab ba'ad" (The Arab hero now). And my parents still... Iraqis are so political that if their friends for twenty years changed their political views they would literally never speak to each again, and that happened to a lot of Iraqis. Like half of our family friends, since then I don't know where they are, because the parents would have an argument over the war and that would be it. It was just a horrible time ... my parent both got really depressed it was a real period of uncertainty.

It is notable here that Roula had to hide her 'Iraqi' and 'Arab' identity for fear of recrimination and she suggests the handful of other Arabs at school did the same. This strategy of hiding or trying to pass for another ethnicity, which reoccurs in other narratives I heard seems to affirm the power of the negative discourse of 'the Arabs' in circulation and its social and physical consequences. Roula's also emphasises being the "only Arab" at school and cites an expectation of Arab kinship solidarity. Accordingly had she and the other Arabs students 'in-hiding' known about each other, they may have felt less anxiety about identifying with or being ascribed as 'Arabs' or at the very least that they could have shared in their collective fears.

Roula's understanding of national politics is heavily influenced by her parents' political orientation, confirmation that she had successfully acquired their political habitus. The families' decision not to be taken in by the rhetoric of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism espoused by the Iraqi regime in crisis clearly had an impact on her political attitudes. The 'Saddam syndrome' seems to plays a central role in the stories of all Iraqis whether they supported or opposed him, in Roula's household Saddam's domination of every-day conversations was such that the family sought to rid themselves of him by fashioning a 'Saddam box,' so that each time the despot's name was mentioned a fine would be imposed.

Roula's narrative style corresponds closely with Sangster's assertion that women's narratives are embedded in family life and relationships which shape their view of the

world (1994: 89). In comparison to Jamal, Ahmed and Haitham's narratives Roula certainly appears to support this assertion and the notion. Yet, there is no self-evident rule that 'gender' should be seen in terms of a 'gender identity'. A performative approach does not entail a rejection that there are narrative styles that correspond to particular gendered roles. It is the ontological status of gender roles that requires disruption, not the enunciation. Gender has a "truth effect" that is achieved through the collective performative accomplishments of social actors and audience which leads to gender acquiring the semblance of a substance or 'identity' which appears to causing behaviour (Butler 1990). In this sense Roula's narrative of living through the war is a testament to her immersion in gendered discourses and the corresponding modes and styles of gendered narratives. My reading of Haitham, Jamal, Ahmed and Roula's narratives leads me to argue that they point to questions about how one is 'raced' and 'gendered' at the same time and not simply to the existence of racial and gendered 'identities'. Rather than obscure the forces that produce these narratives by resort to an amorphous notion of 'identity' these narratives are better understood as products of situated repetition and (re)citation of hegemonic discursive norms of subjection like masculinity, femininity, nation and Arab-ness.

(Re)citing Heroism

In order to further interrogate the notion of (re)citation of hegemonic norms or structures of subjection, I ask what exactly is it that is being recited in relation to the 'Saddam syndrome' and young 'Arab' men? Miriam Cooke suggests that "the war myths of many cultures, including those of the Arab world, designate appropriate spaces for specific kinds of actions and appoint protagonists for particular preconfigured roles. "When the fighting is done and it demands to be described, understood, and especially justified, then the war myth becomes the ultimate ordering principle. But how is the myth evoked, and who invokes it? .... However, in most cultures' myths it is men who tell these stories, and they remember the components that add to the notion that war is an arena for the display of men's manliness and heroism" (Cooke, 1996: 10-11). Ghada Karmi attempted to explain "why there had been so much support for Saddam among Palestinians" to the Royal Anthropological Institute in April 1991. Her contribution offers a good entry point to this exploration (Benthal 1991: 17; see also, Karmi 1993).

Karmi suggested that support for Saddam was partly the result of the Israeli physical and cultural oppression of Palestinians which had made the gestures and rhetoric of Saddam attractive, however, she also stressed that the "Saddam syndrome" was related to the nature of the 'Arab family'. Saddam, she argued, was a "symptom, when he falls, another will come to power, and there are numerous Saddam clones elsewhere in the Middle East ... the main problem is that a system of authority is reproduced in the Arab family. This is epitomised by the Arabic word *rabb,* which means both 'God' and 'head of family'. In these societies people are socialized from early childhood to admire strong masculine leaders. 'The West' has bought technology and the trappings of change, but has not changed the basic structures of authority*"* in the Arab world (Benthal 1991: 18).

Karmi's contribution (if accurately related) shows the continued centrality of debates on modernity and the Arab world. In her estimation European modernity has been imperfectly emulated in the Arab world which has failed to adopt a correspondent social liberalism. Karmi was heavily criticised by other (non-Arab) members of the panel who felt that her interpretation reproduced stereotypical approaches to the Arab family (Benthal 1991: 19).

I tend to agree with those criticisms. If we were to put a fixed and essentialised 'Arab culture' or 'Arab family' at the centre of our attempt to understand this phenomenon we

could argue that, 'in Arab culture' honour relates to masculinity and the social implications of manliness. That shame is experienced when manhood is undermined or when female sexuality is publically questioned (Gilmore 1987). Or, that of particular importance to "Arabs" is the notion of "bravery" and "militancy," which are qualities that have been traditionally celebrated among the pastoral Bedouins of northern Arabia and have a deep connection to a tradition of raiding and warfare (Meeker 1979). Also part of the Bedouin code of honour, specifically in the case of males, is the premium on freedom, steadfastness and autonomy, whether in the context of family relationships or political power (Abu-Lughod 1986: 45-71).

According to the Ibn Khaldun's model of historical development outlined in his seminal work *al-Muqadimmah* (see Rosenthal and Dawoud, 1967) the core values of the Bedouin ethos are at the centre of a struggle between the '*Badu*' (Bedouin), where these culture characteristics and values are prominent and intense, and the '*Haddar*' (Urbanites) whose sedentary lifestyles are expected to dilute the concepts of honour, shame, generosity and chivalry, bravery and militancy (ibid: 91). Work on contemporary Arab culture like Racy's (1996) investigation of poetry and musical genres, suggests that the "Bedouin ethos" in modern Arab music "exists not as a monolithic concept or a discrete set of rules and expressions but as a large network of interlinked cultural values and practices" (1996: 419). He argues that in contemporary Middle Eastern societies "the Bedouin ethos appears pervasive, yet highly elusive, gradually fading out across time and place, yet displaying an ability to survive somewhat subliminally and in selective social domains" (Racy 1996: 421).

What makes Karmi's and the 'culturalist explanation' problematic is the implied integrity of these values across time, place and context and the almost biological inevitability that they are imbued with through the vehicle of 'ethnic culture'. Karmi implies that the solution to the values which lead to the valorisation of despotic and patriarchal tyrants seems to be the imposition or adoption of a 'true' or loyal European modernity in the Arab world. Her assertion is extremely troubling; despotism and patriarchal tyranny (and their celebration by some) are hardly exclusive to the 'Arabs'. Why are 'bravery,' 'militancy,' 'loyalty,' and 'autonomy' coded as 'Arab' or 'Bedouin' instead of a feature of masculinity and power *per se*, and to what projects of cultural denunciation and subordination is such a designation put to? After all, all these qualities are equally part of the idealised 'western' man, leader or soldier and are conspicuously part of British and American narratives war and nation identity. Is it then

understandable, legitimate or unthreatening to be 'gung-ho,' to have a 'stiff upper lip,' or to be self-interested and daring if you are western? Are these values the result of western family structures? The 'Arab family' and 'Arab culture' seem only to have a residual role in recitation of heroism through the Saddam syndrome which is far better explained primarily as a feature of the ideologies of masculinity and political opportunism not ethnic culture.

On the 5th of January 2007 millions of people watched the grainy images of Saddam Hussein's execution on *YouTube* just hours after the fact. I received an SMS from Shams a British born Egyptian, his message somewhere between a rap and a poem read:

"They found blood on da shirt of da brave martyr where those savage animals
hit with their shoes after he majestically and gracefully met his demise.
Muqtadar da pussy and his heinous minions were there
Imposing their justice, the biggest injustice it was.
Saddam da true son and leader of Iraq died a martyr.
And Iraq, under da influence of da mob, descends into depths of hell.
People remember Saddam.
He was the only one truly capable of ruling Iraq.
Now Iraq is in the hands of pussies and cowards".

When we met a few days later over coffee in Portobello, I asked him about the SMS

Ramy   *where did you get that poem from, who sent it to you?*

Shams   *Bruvs I wrote it. That execution propa pissed me off, I just had to get it out*
              you know.

Ramy   *Who did you send it to?*

Shams   *Just a few people, sympathisers*

Ramy   *Ok tell me about it*

Shams   *I don't know I just woke up vexed, it was a bit of a shock cause it happened*

so suddenly and on Eid man, how could they, that's disgusting. Like when you expect someone to pass away, like someone old, it's not as bad as when you just wake up and someone has been knocked over by a bus or something, you know what I mean?

Ramy   *Yeah but it was on the cards for a while man, why are you upset about Saddam's death?*

Shams   *Because it was just wrong, he is a Ramz Arabi (Arab symbol) you know. It's not because I think he was a good leader, yeah he did a lot of bad shit, but look at the country now it's fucked up. I was having this discussion with Sari and this other friend a Yemeni bre (brother) and they were like: the execution was right, it was justice and I don't know what. I mean it got pretty heated and they were like why do you care?*

Ramy   *Yeah why do you care?*

Shams   *I don't know bruvs honestly but its eatin at me you know.*

What Sham's poem, delivered in *mestizo* west London vernacular, points to is the situated nature of repetition. His poem is populated with recited norms and discourses from multiple sources. He recites traditionalist pan-Arab discourses which have argued that Saddam, 'the strong-man,' was the only *man* capable of holding Iraq together. There is complex distinction between, on the one hand, the defiance of western hegemony that makes Saddam an Arab symbol of militancy and steadfastness, and on the other hand the excesses of his brutal and authoritarianism regime. His refusal to be dominated despite the overwhelming odds is central to his mastery of the performance of masculinity. In contrast his hangmen are constructed as feminised and illegitimate others *"pussies and cowards".*

As Farzana Shain argues, support for Saddam Hussein among British Asians during the Gulf War was neither connected to Saddam's beliefs, cause or based simply on shared religion. Instead she emphasises the extent to which support was an act of defiance to a British social structure which she argues "systematically excluded them from its benefits" (2003:22). Here the identification with Saddam Hussein by Ahmed,

Jamal or Shams is not necessarily related to the repetition or recitation of cultural norms but to forms of instrumental resistance and the rejection of inequalities and hegemony. It is not just inequalities within Britain that can lead people to identify with unlikely heroes like Saddam. Perceived injustices in global and regional (political) system are powerful forces that have worked in favour of other who have been vilified and pathologised in 'the West' for not recognizing the 'world order' or the west's monopoly on international violence. What many political figures ranging from Saddam Hussein, Hassan Nassrallah and Osama Bin Laden through to Winston Churchill, Richard the Lion heart and Franco share is both a bloody legacy and an ability to use rhetoric and action to cast themselves in terms of masculine ideals: defiance, steadfastness and autonomy which consequently construct them as authentic, legitimate and worthy of respect.

Narratives of living through the Gulf war(s) in London should be seen as situated expressions of subjectivity that are reconstructed from experiences conditioned by discursive structures of subjection. Ahmed's account clearly demonstrates that racism and violence at school led him to use Saddam as a trope for his resistance, exemplifying his own battle for autonomy and honour in the playground. For his part, Jamal's attempts to make sense of the war were motivated as much by maintaining relationships based as it was on code(s) of masculinity. And Sham's poem about the execution of Saddam clearly has more to do with the disappointments of the dissolution of the Iraqi state, the 'kangaroo court' through which Saddam Hussein was processed and the continued domination of the Middle East by Western powers.

The Saddam trope is neither the result of an "Arab identity," unconscious cultural mimesis or a radically conscious hybridity but the recitation and narration of masculinity at a particular stage of a life course in relation to particular historical circumstances where one is *subject to* and the *subject of* violence, power, nationalism, inequality and subordination. Where violence is imposed upon the individual or the collective, subjects, largely instrumentally seek survival through similarity, solidarity and resistance. The ideals of masculinity and the practice of race-gender othering replete in these accounts are as much part of *being a man* or being '*one of the lads'* on a racially mixed south London housing estate (see Back 1996) as they are part of learning to be an Arab man in London during the Gulf war.

Gendering through different normative structures produces certain kinds of 'men' and 'women' at particular historical moments, yet how exactly these processes take

place requires further investigation. In the following section I look more closely at how young British-born or raised women learn how to be an 'Arab woman' or in other words how they are 'gendered' and 'raced'.

Learning to be an 'Arab woman'

In her account of growing up in Detroit in post-war America Alixa Naff writes that "There was nothing in Detroit to impede Americanization except what my parents placed in its path, namely the native traditions they bought with them from ... Syria" (Naff 2000:108). Naff's personal account of her adolescence emphasises the role of the family in impeding her assimilation. In his study of kinship and community among Arabs in Detroit Andrew Shyrock argues that "Everywhere the Arab immigrant families turn" they see values in the society in which they live, particularly those related to sexual freedom and individuality, encouraged at the expense of their own. Their collectivist sensibilities, their ideas about male and female, their ways of marrying and raising their children are consistently portrayed as backward and immoral. The result for the newly arrived immigrants, is a classic double bind" where the family traditions that make "us" superior to "them" become the values that are used to stigmatize Arabs, particularly the children of immigrants who are forced to negotiate this terrain daily in the contact zone of the school (Abraham & Shyrock 2000:112).

While the narratives that follow also see the family as an important factor in punctuating and limiting the ability to experience similarity with the 'mainstream', they are also revealing of the racialised structures in society and the role that discursive and corporeal boundaries play in embedding early and sometimes lasting feelings of otherness. An important difference between the context in which Naff found herself in America and those I present from London is the prevailing institutional approach to racial, ethnic and cultural difference. This is not to suggest that assimilation is better or worse than 'multiculturalism,' (which is a separate discussion) what I stress in this section are some of the consequences which social axes of power and institutions of subjection like the 'ethnic families,' School and the prevailing logic of ethnic governmentality might have on the way in which subjectivity is experienced and articulated.

For many Arabs raised in London during the 1980's and 1990's school seems to have been the primary contact zone where society beyond the family was experienced and where discontinuities between minority and majority and indeed between different minority groups were confronted (Patthey-Chavez 1993; Lave, 1988; McDermott, 1987). As Basit and Shain have shown, school teachers in some settings see the Muslim family in terms of "cultural pathology" which is restrictive and oppressive and conversely construct school as an alternative liberating environment of equality and freedom (Basit 1997(a); Basit 1997(b); Shain 2003). In both cases the tendency to use generalised, stereotypical views of the Muslim family on the one hand and British society on the other seems all too predictable.

A good example of this is Dahlstedt's analysis of the 'partnership' initiatives initiated by state schools to engage local ethnic 'communities' in Sweden. 'Immigrant parents' are 'measured' and exhorted to adapt to an imagined 'Swedish normality,' in order to become 'responsible' parents and equal partners. Schools, one of the technologies and institutions of governmentality, produce healthy, wealthy, happy and in relation to the children of immigrants, integrated citizens. The ethnic home is often characterised disrupting and undermining this process of socialization and population management (2009). The dualistic bind that is created by the 'school' vs. 'ethnic family' overlooks the way in which these structures (home, school and wider society) are experienced in concurrence and not in isolation to one another in the everyday lives of young people. Here I argue for sequential readings of regulatory ideals and the institutions behind them which together circumscribe intelligibility. To further explore how subjects are 'gendered' and 'raced' I explore three narratives of school from British- born or raised 'Arab women'.

Suad has a mixed family heritage with roots in Syria, Palestine and Jordan, although she sees herself primarily as being Jordanian. Her parents moved to London in the late 1970's where she was born. Like so many others she had found a job in the Arab economy in London, in her case on the Middle East desk of a financial consultancy in 'the City'.

Suad   *My Dad and Mum they came to London and they didn't know anything about the education system, but I have done whole thing Church of England, Roman Catholic, I've done International Schools that are non-religious and I did an Arabic Islamic school so I've done the whole sector.*

Originally I went to an American convent school in Kingston, My mum and grandmother had both been to convent schools in Jordan so it was kind of a family tradition. The whole discipline thing was very important. Then I went to KFA (King Fahad Academy), then to ISL (International School of London) and then from the age of thirteen I went to an English School in Surbiton, a Church Of England School - until I went to Uni'. I was the only Arab in my class at Surbiton. I felt completely isolated so when I went to Uni' I was yearning to meet Arabs, I mean that was one of the first things you know. I was really sick and tired of English people who always judged me and treated me differently because I don't 'go-out' and get drunk, I always felt invisible, I didn't fit in.

Ramy   *Really, tell me about that, why didn't you fit in?*

Suad   *Because everyone was English and we were 15 years old and everybody was losing their virginity and getting drunk and sleeping-over and going clubbing and I couldn't do that and then I was bullied because of all that and you know, so I've always had that issue. My parents weren't religious or anything, just socially conservative. I got to the point where I would just switch-off and say you know what? I'm not going to let that bother me. I was the only Arab girl up until 6th form, actually there was another Arab girl there but she denied it.*

Ramy   *Why would she do that?*

Suad   *Nobody thought that she was an Arab because she didn't conform to their stereotype of what an Arab is – she wasn't dark enough, didn't wear Hijab and wasn't wearing Gucci, she was just normal you know. Maybe she didn't want to be different; but I mean her name was so Iraqi for me it was obvious; I think she just didn't want the hassle. Anyway in the 6th form three other Arab girls joined and we were suddenly like the "Arabs" and it was all hugs and kisses. We all became so cliquey together because we had all gone to English schools; one was from Syria, one from Lebanon and one from Iraq and each one had gone to an all English school, so for us to all*

get together and it was fun you know. I am still in touch with all of them you know. Finally I had someone to identify with, we all had the same problems, the same restrictions we couldn't sleep-over, we couldn't have boyfriends or drink so it was great cause finally I wasn't alone. We would speak to each other in Arabic which was cool and it drove everyone crazy [laughs]. At English school as long as there are other Arabs or internationals its fine.

Ramy   *What if there isn't?*

Suad   *I don't know, but I mean I really didn't enjoy being around WASPs'*

Ramy   *What's a WASP?*

Suad   *White Anglo Saxon Protestants. There were only a handful of "ethnics" you know, like there were two black girls in the school and they were known as the "Black twins" that kind of thing. I used to think of myself as English. I always used to say I was English. And then because of the way I acted I think some people assumed I was English or at least half English, that one of my parents was English, until one day a group of girls in my class, I'll never forget this, they said to me "You are not English, you are not Anglo-Saxon, you are British" that really was like, it made me feel like nothing cause whatever I did wasn't good enough.*

The complex demarcations of inclusion and exclusion at school seem here directly related to the unresolved and contested meanings around national and cultural identification and belonging in Britain. Suad seems to have actively sought identification with her peers by miming an authentic, ethnic and cultural 'Englishness' (see Cesarani, 1996; Kumar 2002). Conscious that her narrative is a situated reconstruction which seeks to report her racialisation or Arabisation at school in a way that frames her current estrangement from Englishness as someone else's doing; Suad's narrative emphasises the extent to which she herself had internalised the notion that she *was* English or that her behaviour and presentation meant that she could convincing pass-for English. However Suad's physical appearance as well as her name seem quite insurmountable obstacles to her passing-for English, or as Bhabha puts it [she] "is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not be

English" (1989: 320). The way in which Suad frames this experiences in her narrative not only prompts a discussion of identification, desire and mimesis which, I will turn to in the conclusion to this chapter, but equally displays strong associations with racial passing. As Adrian Piper describes, even when successfully passing for White is achieved, the awareness that recognition and equality is predicated on such superficial colour identification is in itself a blow:

> "A benefit and a disadvantage of looking white is that most people treat you as though you were white. And so, because of how you've been treated, you come to expect this sort of treatment, not perhaps, realizing that you're being treated this way because people think you're white, but rather falsely supposing that you're being treated this way because people think you are a valuable person." (1992: 25)

For Suad, being unable to pass-for English and being ascribed (what in her eyes was) a subordinate political Britishness marked her ultimate exclusion and the futility of a certain kind of mimicry. Suad's dissatisfaction with being seen as British is interesting, particularly as more recent research points to a far broader acceptance of 'Britishness' by immigrants and their British born children because of its recent reinvention as an inclusive, citizenship-based identification (see Kumar 2002, Ware 2007). However what this points to is the way in which notions of citizenship and belonging are formed in relation to each individual's experiences which vary sharply in relation to life course, generation and context (see Lister et al 2003).

While Suad is quite clear on the ways in which her peers emphasised difference in their relations with her she was less willing to articulate the role that family values and structures had on her school experiences. So using my own experiences I asked her

Ramy   *Didn't you create any space to play in? So that you could be part of the social scene at school a bit more. I mean I had to come up with all kinds of wild excuses just to try and have a normal social life and I didn't have a "normal" social life, but I still fought to create a bit of space.*

Suad   *It was my parents, I mean my parents were so controlling and I'm the only girl in my family and you know I can't even come up with that stuff I'm really bad at it you know and they can see straight through me. And I kind*

> *of somewhere along the line in my life I just gave up I was just like ok look 'khalas istaslimt' (That's enough I surrender).*

Suad's narrative suggests that her school as an institution had a far less prominent role than peers who are constructed as the main agents of othering. While the mainstream culture of going-out, getting drunk and having sex, seem to be uncritically associated with British culture, what is perhaps more interesting for the notion of performativity is that the inability to 'do' or recite this behaviour becomes a basis for the construction of difference and boundaries. While she does not appear to be explicitly critical of her peer's behaviour she resents the fact that she was judged negatively by them for not being able to take part. Importantly, Suad does not perceive the restrictions placed upon her by her parents as being rooted in religion, but rather in their social conservatism. Articulated in this way Suad appears to be suggesting that the difference she experienced was not necessarily rooted in irreconcilable religious differences. Nonetheless Suad's narrative shows her to be *subject to* and the *subject of* competing discourses of womanhood, 'youth culture' and 'ethnic culture' none of which she is able to reiterate or recite perfectly. Importantly, my questioning of her attempts to reconcile these two spheres (which I must admit frames the family as the more consequential force of subjection which must be evaded) shows that she fails to do what many young people may opt for, namely the ability to balance both by leading a 'secret' life based essentially on false alibis which, in some cases enable the subject to appear to recite more perfectly the demands of peers and parents. As Zainab's narrative (below) goes on to show, the false alibi, often described as 'living two lives' can allow the subject to *appear* to recite the competing demands of different norms of womanhood more completely, but does not resolve the strain that these structures of subjection place on the subject.

Over a number of interview session Zainab and I explored the family structures and discourses that prevented her from taking part in mainstream social life during her schooling. Zainab's parents are Egyptian and arrived in London in the late 1970s. She was born in London and had grown up in the same neighbourhood in Ealing her whole life. Zainab had attended all-girls school throughout her primary and secondary education. Before turning to some of her early school experiences I would like to first return to the themes of 'living two lives' which she experienced during secondary school at Queens College in Harley Street.

Zainab *That was the biggest eye opener. There was no uniform they promoted individuality to the maximum and all the girls there were rich, they weren't middle class they were upper class. When I first went there I was like "Oh my god, how am I gonna compete?" But it was ok, I just became me, there were a few Arabs there but not in my class, and I didn't really socialise with them. I'm telling you that place was different, everyone was drinking and smoking, I didn't take part in that. It's so stupid but it was such a big deal. All the girls had done everything and I was clueless. Obviously some of the girls in my class were seeing guys and they were like trying stuff but I was still watching and observing. But when I got to the school I discovered, like loads of the girls were on hard drug and they were like on the class-A's and going to these clubs all coked-up, very pretentious, always had the latest everything and I just found that… Oh my god. But I actually loved that place cause I really became myself but I never used to socialise with any of them at all, I knew, I couldn't. I don't know how I managed it for 2 years, 'cause they were always going out late and I didn't even want to ask my parents. But I let loose in my way own way. I was so sheltered. I just think that our generation is so fucked up*

Ramy *Why do you say that?*

Zainab *It was so difficult growing up, we all have these psychological issues. I was definitely clearly two different people, until now, not so much now because the two different people are becoming one person, but at school I was like Zainab who's Egyptian but she's... The thing is like when I was at Queens nobody knew my private home arrangements, they didn't know that my parents wouldn't let me go out or see guys and stuff, they didn't know all that, I didn't let anyone know that side of me.*

Ramy *You hid it?*

Zainab   *Yeah they saw the side of Zainab which was trying-out this and experimenting with that, I used to make out that I had some Arabic party to go to so I couldn't go out with them, so they thought I was having this amazing social life, like this oriental thing going on and that's how I made it out.*

Ramy   *Were you embarrassed?*

Zainab   *Yeah of course I was amongst all these girls who were just like so cool, what an amazing life they have, they meet people and I wanted to be, I didn't want to show them that because I was Arab or Muslim it was stopping me having a social life. Cause that's basically, that's what it was. I wanted to show them that I was normal. I mean that first year of college I fell out of character, I became someone who wasn't me, even my mum said that "You know Zainab you have never given us problems you are not gonna start now." The thing was, loads of people, loads of our younger people they do stuff but they get caught. I never got caught so I could keep up the image of being the good Egyptian, Arab girl but at the same time try new things. So I was always the misaal (Mithal – example/ role model) in our Egyptian crew. Yeah and loads of people were really 'mita'adeen minni' (had a complex about me) 'cause they thought I was an angel but I really wasn't I just hid everything and never got caught. I know how to behave here and I know how to behave there. That's the difference between me and other girls they just get caught. I mean it's totally normal, it has to happen… to want to try things, like my parents can't say to me like you know you can't do this because you are not from this culture… but you have to realise that I am, I am from this culture in a way and I want to try this.*

   It's the whole double lifestyle thing and the fact that you are supposed to live, like our parents expect us to live in this society and not be influenced by it. It's because of our parents, I'm gonna blame the parents. Not only, but they don't understand that it's impossible not to be influenced by this culture we live and breathe it all the time we watch it on the TV, walking in the Street, it's always there and even if you've got

the religion even if you go to Egypt every summer it's not enough like if your parents tell you don't do this you will go through a phase where sooner or later you have to try it. The thing is people have different thresholds; I had a very high threshold.

Zainab and Suad's narratives display interesting similarities. They both describe childhoods where their parents are gripped by moral panic regarding the society that their children are being raised in, often expressed through tight restrictions on the child's interactions both within and outside the school context. Important for the notion of gender performativity, Suad and Zainab's narratives show the heterogeneity of gendering in that they are not only subject to injunctions to be a heterosexual women, but further they must satisfy many types of 'womanhood' which are marked by culture, race, class and religion. They adopt different approaches to the challenges of negotiating different cultural expectations and discursive structures. Unlike Zainab, Suad is not able to create the same kind of space for herself because she is unable to be untruthful with her parents, a strategy which many young people constrained by parental restrictions adopt to try and manage their stake inside and beyond the family. Writing on second generation Arab-Americans, Jon Swanson argues that immigrant children often remain strong in terms of managing the different expectations and life worlds they inhabit. "This can be a source of considerable role stress for, in contrast to their parents, who are enculturated in only one cultural tradition, they are brought up simultaneously in two markedly different worlds. On the one hand they are socialised according to the norms and expectations of their parents and on the other they are acculturated to the expectations of a wider cultural context represented by their peers, teachers and the media" (Swanson, 1996: 243).

In order to manage her marginality with both her peers and parents, Zainab has to invent a fictitious social life based on her ethnic difference which allows her to present herself (to peers) as being autonomous and having an exotic, separate and appropriate Arab social life. She explicitly describes this as living 'two lives' or 'being two different people' and believes there to be negative consequences to this dualism which, in her estimation not everyone is able to manage without being caught. Transgression of what are perceived as discrete or essentialised cultural norms has tangible consequences. In her opinion the ability to successfully live two separate lives is in part at least to do with individual "thresholds" as she puts it, and an ability to perform

appropriately in both spheres. It is between the discursive structures and corporeal and material practices which her peers and her parents reiterate that Zainab finds herself, affirming Foucault's position that subjectivity is based on subjection. While this resistance to and transgression of codes and values can easily be celebrated as evidence of multicultural or hybridity by thinking in terms of performativity and subjection it becomes part of a project of social intelligibility and cultural survival.

Zainab squarely blames "the parents" for this situation. Though her frustration is understandable, we should not discount the influence of structural and societal discourses in the way she has chosen to express herself. Basit(1997) argues that "teachers, social workers and youth workers who encounter Asian children often refer to the contradictions these children are thought to face by being trapped `between two cultures' (see also Watson, 1977). This vocabulary has become so widespread that some young British Asians have also adopted it, as people instantly sympathise with them when they ascribe their difficulties in terms of 'cultural conflict' (Ballard, 1994). Indeed, Suad's narrative of managing the conflicting expectations of her parents and her peers is described as 'surrender' to her parents' will which, is arguably a projection of ambivalent attitudes towards the family. As Shyrock points out, "Americans often describe the family as a source of stress, an obstacle, as emotional baggage ... a context that one must get out of to be happy, successful and well adjusted" (Shyrock 2000: 590-599). I had myself framed my own understanding of self, family and society within the between-two-cultures and identity crisis paradigms (see page 3). These approaches have been widely criticised and yet continue to be influential as a common sense identity based explanation to the challenges of negotiation that the children of migrants face. However as Brah (1996, 2006) Alexander (2006) and Ahmed (2006) note the 'between-two-cultures' and 'identity crisis' paradigms have (amongst other things) been used to pathologies immigrant cultures, constructs static and over determined cultural communities and frame youth struggle within a binary of ethnic family vs. society in a manner that underemphasizes wider struggles in situated societal contexts like anti-racism. These critiques are important when considering the indeterminable complexity structure and agency intersect. While I have no intention of representing the people producing these narratives of Arab womanhood within a deterministic frame where their agency is discounted, their narratives contain the traces of subjection and power at particular times in their lives where their ability to resist and subvert are limited.

Women and mothers are crucial actors in the reproduction of gendered norms of patriarchy. Although in other interviews Zainab's father played an important role as the main figure of authority in the family, in her narrative of school he is largely absent, instead her mother appears, as Mervat Hatem suggests, as "the primary caretaker(s) .... [and] powerful enforcer(s) of the rules and social embodiment of femininity" (1999: 193). While Basit argues that some South Asian girls in Britain might "want more freedom, but not too much" (1997: 36) suggesting a degree of autonomy in how and why they comply to particular gendered discourse; Hatem reminds us that "compliance with these rules cannot be assumed but has to be secured either through consent or coercion, or a combination of both. One could not however exaggerate their autonomy and/or power" (Hatem1999:193).

It is commonplace to read that women's narratives reflect their gendered "identities" and that women's narrative have particular characteristics which understate personal accomplishments or prioritizing family relationships (Grieger 1986; Sangster 1998; Thompson 1999). The theoretical framework that I have adopted does not sit comfortably with these characterisation of pluralized "identity" or essential 'gender identity'. Women's narratives are constructed in particular ways not because of gendered identities but because of gendered discourses and the different structures of subjection which shape the possibilities and styles of their narrative in different contexts. Thus women's narratives should be interpreted not as indicators of innate gendered interior but as reflective of the way in which gendered, classed and raced discourses and structures frame the possibilities of social intelligibility and (re)citation. In the case of Arab girls at school in London, their narratives show the way in which family, community, gender and race discourse have all shaped their sense of self and other. Suad and Zainab show that they do not simply possess a 'gendered identity' but that particular processes, interactions and discourses during adolescence began their respective journeys of becoming an 'Arab woman'. Their narratives suggest that becoming an 'Arab' woman' was in many ways about not becoming an 'English' woman. Sequential readings of 'gender' and 'race' are apt as in practice they are discursively fused to create essentialised oppositional 'cultural' repertoires which cannot be bridged in practice without always being marginal in both. What I am suggesting therefore is that rather than having to choose between seeing these negotiations as either the result of life between-two-cultures on the one hand or a radically paradigmatic cultural hybridity on the other, a performative approach allows

me to account for both structures of subjection and at the same time acknowledge agency and subjectivity as an inherent outcome of the imperfect and unpredictable outcomes of the repetition and reiteration of discursive and bodily practices.

This is unpredictability is well demonstrated by Noura; narratives of school from both male and females display similar components like being the 'only Arab,' a position of isolation which is alleviated by the arrival of other Arabs with whom bonds of solidarity and practices of resistance are experienced. However, for some, meeting other Arabs at school was not a simply a matter of engendering a common 'Arab-ness'. For Noura meeting other Arabs at school in London highlighted the different and contesting constructions of 'being' Arab. Noura was 13 years old when she and her Iraqi parents moved to Britain from Syria. Her initial encounters with "Britain" and "English people" was primarily through her daily interactions at a school in south west London which she described as "100% white and posh," "cold and impersonal".

Noura *I didn't stay long at that school, a couple of months later my parents moved into London and I changed to a school which was probably about 5% English and the rest were from all over the world.*

Ramy *And how was that move for you?*

Noura *Oh it was wonderful, it was brilliant [laughs]. Basically I really liked the fact that there were lots of Arabs, I could see them I could hear them and really it was mixed and it was my first experience of people from India or Black people so this was quite interesting 'cause I was observing a lot. That first day you know everybody asks you where you come from, because that's the done thing you know, everybody comes from a different place. The change from one school to another was great, it was exciting, interesting and I developed a fantastic affinity to Africans because they were the middle ground for me, I loved them. My best friends were from Africa and they bridge the two cultures so they are a lot more kind of neutral in their interactions and you know men and women but they also have a lot of values and respect that we have and a lot of respect for religion. But they don't carry the ideas that Arabs have, the up-tightness of Arabs, and the things you begin to see when you are*

outside that (Arab) environment. I think I always saw those things because of my family. What I found that was interesting was the whole cultural vibe that was going on. You had the Arab groups which tended to stay with each other, you had the English groups the eastern Europeans and they all just hung out like that. Some people did mix but they were more like the first generation British who had been here for a while and maybe only spoke English.

Ramy   *And how did you navigate that?*

Noura   *Becoming an individual creates problems because if you made friends with people who were from your country they want you to be exactly the same as them in everything. You know if they are like 'muhajabat' (veiled) then you have issues you know because I was like a real Arab girl not somebody who has grown up here with parents who are really religious. I mean I was more Arab than they were but they couldn't see that, they thought I was too English. Like some Iraqis who I met at school expected you to act in the same way that they do. Like for example I made some Arab friends some Egyptians, some Lebanese but for example I don't really care if what I eat... like I was eating something and this girl came up to me and said by the way that food that you are eating is not Halal but don't worry, God is not going to punish you because you didn't know. And I was like "I really don't care."*

Ramy   *And they associated that with you being more English?*

Noura   *Yeah, I mean when you are young the picture is not complete. But my main problem was that I was culturally more Arab than them, I can read and write and dance and speak different dialects and they can't - but for them it was all about religious values and not cultural values. Growing up here with other Arabs you can't come out and say you don't believe in religion and its particularly Arab friends that are uncomfortable with your opinions. But eventually you don't discuss it with people. So at School you had to manage all these different relationships and*

> *contradictions of like loving Arabs and being Arab but at the same time*
> *hating the kind of expectations and some of the values that people just*
> *expected you to be a certain way.*

Once Noura had moved to an inner-city school the comfort of hearing and seeing Arabs seemed to have quite quickly given way to the realities of negotiating her inclusion and intelligibility among her Arab peers. The values and norms that her British-raised Arab peers associated with 'being' or 'doing' Arab-ness were quite different from her own. 'Their' Arab-ness was framed within the relationship between 'being' Muslim and 'being' Arab while Noura's is framed within a secular notion of Arab-ness based on language (reading and writing) and cultural performances (dancing). For her British-raised Arab peers Noura's disregard for religious observance made her unintelligible within their own understanding of what it mean to be or do Arab-ness at school. Unable to accept Noura's recitation of a particular kind of (secular) Arab-ness her Arab peers cast her as being "too English" the opposite of 'being Arab' in their contextual discursive economy. Noura believed that she was a 'real Arabic girl' implying that her peers did not understand what 'real' Arab-ness meant. Both Noura and her peers seek to recite and reiterate authentic Arab-ness as strategies of social intelligibility within a school environment which is marked by the valorisation of ethnic identification. In both cases the imperfect repetitions are considered to be failures of 'true' Arab-ness. The deconstructive gesture here is to suggest that what we seek to understand are not amorphous 'identities' or ways of 'being', but inherently imperfect and unpredictable recitations, all with absolutist claims to identitarian authenticity. In reiterating Arab-ness there seems to be what Derrida refers to as the constant possibility of communicative failure, indeed this seems as relevant for the communication of Arab-ness among peers as it does between generations. Returning briefly to Zainab account of a school entrance interview at the King Fahad Academy she says:

> *'I can remember my mum shouting down the corridor "lauw sa'alooki bita'rafi*
> *lugha Arabiah ulilhum aywa" (If they ask you if you speak Arabic say "yes") and*
> *in my head I was like "why are they going to ask me about cars" [laughs].'*

Zainab's mother intended to refer to *'al-lugha al-arabiyah'* the 'Arabic language', however Zainab's understood '*Arabiah*' to refer to the colloquial Egyptian for 'Car'.

She had to learn what her mother meant. In a similar sense Noura had to learn that Arab in London was different to Arab in Damascus. Seeing these interactions and enunciations through the lens of performativity show them to be contextually recited versions of Arab-ness that have acquired a naturalized effect through their recitation, a set of doings rather than a pre-given or stable ethnic and cultural "identity".

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the narratives of school and adolescence demonstrate the way in which becoming an 'Arab man' or an 'Arab woman' is learnt through subjective recitations of and between structures of gender and racial subjection. In some of the narratives there is a sense in which difference and otherness is imposed but then subverted and used as a coping mechanism. The arrival or presence of other Arabic speaking students at school allows young people to construct boundaries on their own terms, where speaking Arabic becomes a form of resistance, where strength is drawn from common restrictions and where the lines between playground masculinity and 'ethnic' masculinity are blurred. Although I would argue that these narratives show the way in which sites of migration create situations of *everyday pan-Arabism* these narratives also show that Arab-ness is not about absolute sameness between Arabs, indeed they expose the sometimes ambivalent discursive relationship between different notions of *Arab-ness*.

These narratives provide important insights into the possibilities for a sequential reading of performative 'gender' and 'race'. One of the things that struck me most was the way in which Ahmed, Zainab and Suad described a desire to identify with being 'English' which was rejected or undone through interactions with peers. This is perhaps most apparent in Suad's narrative where she describes doing or miming 'Englishness' so well that she believed she 'passed-for' English *"Until one day a group of girls in my class, I'll never forget this, they said to me "You are not English, you are not Anglo-Saxon, you are British" that really was like, it made me feel like nothing cause whatever I did wasn't good enough"*. This part of Suad's narrative refers to crucial components of performativity, namely the relationship between identification, desire and mimesis, which are part of the psychoanalytic schema in Butler's reading of Freud and Lacan, and a central feature of hetronormativity (Butler 1990, 1993).

Hetronormativity is a forced *identification* with 'being a woman', this is accompanied by a *desire* to live up to the norms of femininity on the part of women which, in the symbolic order of hetronormativity is coded as positive (Butler 1990). For Rottenberg the difference in the way that *'identification'* and *'desire'* are configured in the schemas of 'gender' on the one and hand and 'race' on the other, represents the principle problem for the project of extrapolating performative 'race' from performative 'gender' (2003: 444). Rottenberg juxtaposes Butler's notion of gender performativity with Bhabha's approach to mimicry. In the colonial situation mimicry emerges as a strategy for the enactment of colonial power and knowledge whereby the colonizer demands that the other approximate, through mimesis, the norms of whiteness. In so doing the colonised do not "re-present" whiteness but rather repeat and imitate. Colonial discourse moves between the recognition of cultural and racial difference and its simultaneous disavowal in order to maintain the fiction of its own superiority. The non-white subject is simultaneously encouraged to live-up to norms of whiteness while always being excluding from ever embodying them "truly" (Rottenberg; 2003: 440). However, Rottenberg's assertions that mimesis in relation to gender on the one hand and colonial mimesis on the other are inherently dissimilar seems to flatten Bhabha's work which equally sees imperfect mimesis on the part of the colonised as creating critiques which are disturbing for the coloniser. Suad's miming of 'English-ness' seems to speak to Bhabha's assertion that miming whiteness, that superficial identification with colour, is more to do with the promise of a common humanity and recognition, a recognition that the colonial relationship places out of reach. Where one mimes whiteness, one may appear white, but will never be white enough or, as Suad puts it, however good her miming of Englishness was it "wasn't good enough".

In contrast to 'gender' within the structures of hetronormativity, being 'raced,' the forced *identification* with being non-white is not coupled with a *desire* to be or live up to the norms of non-whiteness. Instead, social systems marked by race, force subjects to identify as "non-white" but simultaneously compels and encourages the desire to be the enigmatic other (whiteness). As Fanon puts it "the black man wants to be white" (1952: 9). Hall argues that "Blacks could gain entry to the mainstream but only at the cost of ... assimilating white norms of style, looks and behaviour" (Hall, 2003: 279) suggesting that the appropriation of whiteness is not one motivated by *desire* but by the need to be socially intelligible (ibid). Indeed the 'secret Arabs' or 'Arabs in denial' that both Roula and Suad describe seem to want to 'pass-for' non-Arabs in order to survive, in order to

avoid associations with those who are invaded and conquered in the international order and consequently in the playground, or to avoid being stigmatised by the signification of Arab-ness prevalent in Britain - dark, veiled, bearded and undeservedly wealthy.

To date, attempts to use the notion of gender performativity and hetronormativity to inform an understanding of race, ethnicity and culture have been criticized for not mirroring the features of identification, desire, encryption, melancholia[74] and the project survival on which the idea of gender performativity is based[75]. I argue that these critiques, although insightful, somewhat miss the point. The structures of racial subjection cannot, nor should they be expected to, mirror perfectly those of gender subjection. The sequential readings of "being raced" and "being gendered" which Butler calls for can only be made possible by counter exposing these forms of hegemony not forcing them to be either one and the same or unrelated.

These narratives provide the initial signs of the possibilities of a performative reading of 'racial' and 'ethnic' relations but cannot on their own cover the ground needed to extrapolate performative race from performative gender. In the coming chapters I will continue to explore these possibilities through other cultural sites and practices.

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[74] A discussion of melancholia and nostalgia can be found on page 243 and a discussion of Freudian melancholia and its use with cultural studies and ethnic/race relations literature can be found on page 252.
[75] I discuss the concepts of identification, desire, encryption, melancholia and the project survival on which the idea of gender performativity in detail in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Five

Going for *Shisha*: performative space

Introduction

A large proportion of the time spent with participants during my fieldwork took place in *Shisha* Cafés. Indeed, "going for *Shisha"* seemed to be the most common day–to-day context in which young men in particular, but also young women socialised. Since their emergence in the early 1990's in places like Queensway and Edgware Road, *Shisha* cafes have opened-up all over west London. The *Shisha* café has become a global phenomenon described by Chaouchi as "*Shisha*mania" (2006: 199). Despite its renewed commercialisation in the region and spread beyond the Middle East, *Shisha* cafes have attracted little attention outside medical journals discussing the health effects of smoking molasses tobacco. The *Shisha* (Narghile, Waterpipe or Hookah) itself (as an object) has come to be an important part of 'Arab' material culture in the diaspora however, it too has been largely ignored.

For many young Arabs in London the *Shisha* cafe is an important site of everyday sociability where 'Arab culture' and Arab-ness are practiced and achieved. In this chapter I consider the role of *Shisha* cafes (in London) as performative social spaces where 'gendered,' 'classed' and 'raced' 'Arab' subjects and 'others' are produced. I argue that by looking at the way in which *Shisha* cafes are used it is possible to come closer to an understanding of the ways in which 'Arab-ness' in London is practiced and achieved through imperfect recitation of norms. Importantly, these sites of ethnic sociability also demonstrate the double-edge of valorising ethnic distinctiveness which, in this case manifests itself in competition and boundary production around particular 'ethnic' and classed objects, spaces and practices.

(Q)ahwah: coffee and coffee houses

A brief consideration of the development of coffee houses in the Middle East helps put the contemporary *Shisha* cafes of London into context. The word *Qahwa* means 'coffee,' the same word is used to describe the drink as well as the place in which it is consumed. Coffee is the glue with which many social relationships are reinforced or initiated. It plays an important part in Arabic culture and has come to symbolise hospitality, sobriety and Bedouin Arab culture. City centres, traffic roundabouts and thoroughfares in the cities of the Arabian Peninsula are adorned with giant coffee pots surrounded by small (shot like) coffee cup(s) or *Finjan* from which the drink is consumed.

When coffee and coffee houses emerged in the late fifteenth century they were the subject of significant religious controversy and attempts to ban its sale and close down the establishments in which it was consumed. Religious literalists and conservatives believed that coffee was an intoxicant and coffee houses places of idleness and disrepute (see Hattox, 1985). Coffee houses became synonymous with late nights, the consumption of drugs, prostitution, street entertainment, music, storytelling and idleness. Nonetheless, coffee drinking and coffee houses spread throughout the Middle East. Unable to stamp them out, the religious establishments in Cairo, the Hejaz, Aleppo and Damascus eventually came to co-opt some coffee houses providing them with a sense of respectability and legitimacy.

Coffee houses were popular across the social spectrum where different establishments came to cater for different classes and groups in society. Historically coffee houses have been seen as Muslim spaces, an alternative to the *Tavernas* which were run by non-Muslims and served alcohol. "This is not to suggest that Christians and Jews did not frequent coffee houses ... but that they would be regular habitués of a coffee house with a predominantly Muslim clientele" (Hattox 1985: 98). Istanbul, Damascus and Baghdad were famous for their 16th century grand coffee houses frequented by elites and merchants and set amidst gardens, water features and tree shaded areas in the most important parts of town (ibid: 81). In other cities like Cairo coffee houses became a feature of working-class residential areas where they act as the principal public space.

Coffee houses bought about changes in socialisation and hospitality. Instead of entertaining guests at home where one would be expected to bring their resources to

bear, men could now display their generosity and nurture social relations through the coffee house. However, an important feature of this type of sociability it is "undertaken with just any men, but rather with social equals" (Almedia, 1996: 91). Therefore, as social space the *(Q)ahwah* is marked by considerations of class, affluence and social status. Equally important, both past and present is gender. The coffee house or *(Q)ahwah* is still coded as a male domain, women, married or unmarried, are rarely if ever found passing the time or socializing in a traditional coffee houses in the Arab world. The *(Q)ahwah* thus resembles institutions like the *Kafenio* in Greece and the *Taverna* in Portugal which have been described as the principle spaces for male sociability and the nurturing of both emotional and instrumental friendships (Cowan 1991; Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991; Almedia 1996). As such along with the *Kafenio* and Taverna, the *(Q)ahwah* should be seen as a performative space where the codes and norms of masculinity and social hierarchy are enacted.

While the coffee house is celebrated as having been an important site for artists and intellectuals in the 19th and 20th centuries,[76] they have been far more influential as every-day sites of sociability where men pass-time with backgammon, chess, dominos and cards, exchanging news and gossip and making business deals. Coffee drinking itself has become far less central to the definition of the *(Q)ahwah* where nothing on the menu is as important as the *Shisha*.

The *Shisha*: material culture and signification

While the *Shisha* has been given some attention from visual anthropology in reference to 19th Century orientalist art it has been given little attention in terms of its role in contemporary material culture. Chaouchi argues that anthropologists and sociologists studying the Middle East and North Africa have been wary of giving the *Shisha* too much attention for fear of being seen as academic "aristocrats" who have the luxury to travel and spend time investigating aspects of the banality of everyday culture at the expense of research on the more existential political and economic matters

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[76] In the 19th century Muhammad Abduh and Jamal El-din Al-Afghani famously frequented *Al'Barlamaan* (Parliament) cafe which witnessed the birth of the *Nahda* (Renaissance) movement in Egypt. The Nobel Prize winning writer Naguib Mahfouz and his contemporaries would sit at *Riche* and Zahret *El'Bustan* cafes in Cairo. Similarly in Beirut the *Faisal* Cafe in front of the American University was frequented by Adonis, Youssef Klal and other writers who together produced the famous Arab literary journal *Sh'aar* or poetry.

(Chaouchi, 2006: 179). His brief survey of work on the *Shisha* compares its status on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean where he argues that on the *Côté nord* the issues of immigration and Islam have dominated research of the day-to-day lives of Arabs in Europe while on the *Côté sud,* cafes and sociability are perceived as a relatively unusual and bold topic for research and one linked to Orientalist scholarship (ibid).

People aim at making an impression on others by behaving in certain ways, and by adorning themselves and arranging their surroundings in particular ways (Veblen 1899; Goffman 1959; Barthes 1977; Bourdieu 1984; Baurdrillard 1996). The signification of the *Shisha* is analogous to that of the Cigar. In their study of the rise of cigar consumption in America in the 1990's Callison (et al) argue that in film, cigarette smoking is practiced "as much by the powerless and wretched as by mighty heroes and evil villains" (Callison et al 2002: 1331). Cigarette smoking, then, might seem incapable of lending any particular class distinction for those who seek to enhance their self-representation. In contrast the characteristics associated with cigar smoking are wealth, self-confidence, aggression, hardiness, creativity, power and accomplishment. Like the *Shisha*, Cigar smoking is a gendered activity and "until recently, few women dared to break into this province of male behaviour. "Women smoking cigars might well be perceived, therefore, as especially daring and power oriented. On the other hand, they also might be deemed unscrupulous, if not reckless, but so with a touch of sophistication" (ibid: 1333). As the discussion that follows suggests *Shisha* smoking in London is similarly encrypted with gender, class and cultural symbolism.

Following Baudrillard (1996) I argue that the *Shisha*, like the Oriental carpet (see Spooner 1986), retains functionality and relevance in modernity while at the same time displaying characteristics of antiquity and marginality. Marginal objects are seen in contrast to those that are purely functional, they "answers to … demands such as authenticity, memory, nostalgia and escapism. These objects are experienced as signs and are characterised by their authentic presence and special psychological standing …serving a purpose at a deeper level" (Baudrillard 1996: 75). Although Baudrillard concentrates his exposition on non-systematic objects like antiques, he argues that his premise might be applied equally well to other varieties of marginal objects. While it is tempting to classify these items as survivors of the traditional symbolic order they are actually objects with a double meaning because they play an active part in modernity.

There seems little doubt that the banal *Shisha* used by millions of men (in public) and women (in private) in the Arab world has additional layers of signification for the British-born or raised Arab in London or indeed the cultural tourist. Baudrillard argues that marginal objects are often part of a 'neo-cultural syndrome' where the quest for *authenticity* represents a quest for an *alibi* (being elsewhere). It therefore has a particular function in the practice of cultural authenticity in the diaspora. The *Shisha* has to some extent become fetishized; it is given meaning through its relationship to other objects like the coffee pot, arabesque furniture, carpets, belly dancers and the aesthetic of the exotic 'orient' more broadly. These meanings in turn inform its consumption. For Baudrillard "man is not 'at home' amid pure functionality," marginal objects "symbolize an inward transcendence, that phantasy (*sic*) of centre-point which nourishes all mythological consciousness – that phantasy whereby a projected detail comes to stand for the ego, and the rest of the world is organized around it. The phantasy of authenticity is sublime, and it is always located somewhere short of reality (*sub limina*)" (Baudrillard 1996: 79). Baudrillard reading is not only refreshing for the absence of the term "identity" but also the way in which materiality is implicated in the process of making the self and others and, I would argue, places material culture within the reach of discursive performativity. Chaouchi argues that the *Shisha* represents a lifestyle. "The goal is not to smoke to satisfy a dependence or calm anxiety but to take time to talk, listen and share" (Chaouchi, 2006: 181). However, I argue that *Shisha* cafes and *Shisha* consumption in London requires a deeper reading where the ideologies behind lifestyles are uncovered.

In London the *Shisha* has transcended the (Q)ahwah scene and is arguably (along with belly dancers) the most potent visual symbol of Arab culture. It has found its way onto the menus of mainstream and ethnic restaurants, it is a must for dinner parties organised by Arab societies at UCL and King's, it can be found on flyers advertising Arabic parties and can be consumed at exorbitant prices in the VIP sections of trendy nightclubs in London's west-end (before the smoking ban)

Spending time with people at *Shisha* cafes revealed a whole repertoire of meaning, techniques, and know-how related to *Shisha* use among British-born or raised Arabs. Aficionados discuss how the contraption works and describe its workings with confidence to novices. Then there is the skill of how to adjust the *Shisha* in order to obtain the best results, whether placing ice or rose water in the glass bowl improves flavour, whether to use traditional coals or modern briquettes and even how to place the

coals. Which hose you prefer, Egyptian or *Shammi*? How to share and pass the hose without causing offence, what kind of tobacco you choose - modern flavours or traditional apple? I was shown an astounding array of *Shisha* collections from sports bags packed with *Shisha* components, to aeroplane-luggage style, portable *Shishas'* nestled carefully between specially crafted foam compartments and electric *Shishas'* that can be plugged into a car lighter socket.

The thick plumes of aromatic smoke that are blown from the *Shisha*, its design and shape, represent the exotic aesthetic of 'otherness,' enticing and intriguing, especially so in a 'western' setting. Among the reasons for its mystique is the association with the consumption of drugs like opium and hashish which has been a principle contributor to the image of the coffee house as places of disrepute, idleness and vice (see Hattox 1995). In London the imagery of the *Shisha* is still able to conjure-up images of self-indulgent oriental leisure and the consumption of *Shisha* by young Arabs suggests that it is an object through which they publicly stake a claim to ethnicity, difference, authenticity and status – arguably oriental*ising* themselves in the process.

While this may seem to single out young people in the diaspora as the principal seekers of authenticity and tradition, the search for authenticity through *Shisha* use is not exclusive to diasporic settings, or to specific generations of migrants or their children, but is a characteristic of *Shisha* consumption *per se*. As Koning demonstrates the choice of *(Q)ahwah sha'bia (*common/ popular coffee house) or western-style coffee shop among young Caireens reveals particular orientations towards class, tradition and gender (2006).

Journey into a *Shisha* cafe in London

> *As I enter the cafe Wa'el's hand greets mine and pulls me into an embrace, he says "Marhab ya abu'l shabab" (literally "Welcome father of the boys/youths") and gives me three firm pats on my shoulder. I don't know him that well but I see Wa'el (Abu Isa) about three times a week since I started my fieldwork. He works behind the counter at 'Downtown café' taking food and drink orders and managing the till.*
>
> *I move on to greet Mohammed Ali, a short and thin Damascene whose job it is to ensure that everyone has a Shisha and that it is well fired with fresh coals.*

Mohammed Ali's is definitely the harder of the two jobs. Both Mohammed and Wa'el work illegally, we never discuss their papers, it would be rude to intrude uninvited on such a matter but their working conditions seem well designed to exploit their legal vulnerability. Wa'el has been in London for nearly three years, he is a Palestinian from the squalid and dehumanising refugee camps of South Lebanon where Palestinians are prevented from practising over fifty vocations and professions for fear that it might make their stay in Lebanon permanent. His Father was killed at the age of 26 by Israeli soldiers during their invasion of Lebanon in 1982. He has a catalogue of stories of loss, tribulation, death and discrimination. Yet, despite the tragedy, he always has a smile on his face especially when he talks about 'Lebnaan' it's joie de vivre and his plans to return there on holiday.

Mohammed Ali is a sadder character to describe, in his late 30's he is a more recent arrival and seems to find it hard to adapt to his new environment. He speaks no English at all and struggles to pronounce simple greetings and phrases; nonetheless he always asks "Keif biqulu bilenglezi" ("How do they say in English?"). Sometimes I type words and phrases phonetically into his mobile phone where he now has a limited but useful English vocabulary. Wa'el is linguistically the better equipped of the two and therefore deals with the 'ajanib' (foreigners) drawn in by the sweet smell of the Shisha smoke drifting onto the Street outside or the sign above the food counter "still open" late into the night. Needless to say Mohammed and Wa'el do not own a stake in the café, they are part of London's informal Arab labour economy which restaurants and café's exploit unabashedly. The café owner can sometimes be seen in the café smoking Shisha and playing cards with his friends, he has owned a number of other cafes around town which tend to change management quite frequently often as a result of disputes with business partners.

Mohammed Ali spends most of his day preparing the tobacco that rests in clay crowns at the top of the Shisha. It's a dirty job; the tobacco is sticky and pungent, so much so that it will give you a headache if you breathe it in all day. His fingers are stained a reddish colour as a result of handling the tobacco without gloves. He cleans and refills the glass water bottles that form the base of the Shisha as well as performing the menial tasks expected of anyone who works in a Shisha café, cleaning the pipes of the Shisha, the toilets and the rest

of the café. His body looks like it can't take much more, his face taut and wrinkled from the smoke, making him look much older than he is. Part of his job is to inhale intensely to light the Shisha before passing it onto the customer meaning that on six nights a week he breathes in copious litres of the thick moist and aromatic smoke. His clothes don't seem to change much from day-to-day, he is slightly dated wearing black denim from head-to-toe, his hair in a crew cut with a classic Ba'athi-style moustache, wide and bushy, attesting both to his masculinity and recent arrival in the UK.

Mohammed and Wa'el are important, they are the first people you encounter when you enter the cafe, their only reason for working there is misfortune but they play a crucial if unconscious part in the authenticity of the place and the acting-out of social roles and rituals relatively new to London. The café stays open, and Mohammed and Wa'el awake, as long as there are customers to serve, there is no such thing as closing time.

Field note: 17th April 2006, 11pm

I spent a lot of time in a number of cafes across west London which bought with it a sensitivity and awareness of those who work long and underpaid hours for some to socialize, perform and consume and others to profit. In the early 1990s when these cafes first started to appear in London they were not regulated beyond normal (food and beverage) licensing laws, operating below the radar of government regulation for over a decade. Before regulation took effect boxes of '*Nakhla*' molasses tobacco which is smoked on the *Shisha* and the water pipes themselves were regularly bought into Britain in suitcases on flights from the Cairo. The growing popularity of these cafes and their corresponding viability as businesses caused an explosion in *Shisha* cafes in London, particularly in the years preceding the announcement of the ban on smoking indoors (2007). The ban was a blow to café owners many of whom have been forced to close down. Many cafe owners around the country have joined the 'Save the *Shisha* campaign' which seeks to mobilise and lobby local councils for an exemption on the grounds that *Shisha* is not only a business but a cultural right. Those who have been able to have taken the *Shisha* onto the pavements outside their cafes, building awnings, installing heaters and paying increased license fees. The regulation of tobacco molasses and the imposition of import duty, customs and excise, VAT and health warning labelling, has caused the price of one kilogram of tobacco molasses to increase from

under £20 to £180.[77] While the pockets of business and consumers have been hit and the government has acquired a new source of revenue, it is arguably people like Mohammed Ali, Wael Abu Issa, Ra'id and Abu Laban, whose wages are little more than £30 a day, who bear the brunt. The drive to keep many *Shisha* cafes open means that increasingly it is the exploitation of vulnerable illegal migrants, who are here today and can be deported tomorrow, that keeps a large number of these businesses in profit.

The Coffee shop that I have spent the most time in is called '*Downtown cafe'*, an oddly American name for an Arabic *Shisha* cafe in West London. Situated just off Baker Street and Marylebone High Street, the London Central Mosque in Regents Park and the residential areas around Church Street Market and Harrow Road with their high concentration of Arab migrants are a short walk away (to the North and West). Westminster University which has a large number of students of Arab origin is less than five minutes away and Edgware Road is half a mile to the (West). Downtown cafe is a middle of the range café, it is not particularly well decorated but an attempt at recreating some kind of 'Oriental' or Arab aesthetic has been made. MDF lattice work poses as *Arabesque 'Mashrabiyah'* lining the walls alongside pictures of pre-war Beirut in the 1960s. Red upholstered benches line the walls all the way around the space, possibly the best use of the limited space but also reminiscent of the way that a traditional *Majlis* is arranged. A seating area hidden behind the counter is available and ideal for couples or mixed gender groups who want to stay out of sight of the public. These areas are common in restaurants in the Arab world where they are known as "family area". There is a food counter where Arabic meze are displayed and fresh juices and hot beverages are available. Arabic pop music (mostly chosen by the staff) plays on a cheap stereo that is precariously perched on a makeshift shelf; a flat screen TV hangs on the wall beaming in Arabic satellite channels showing titillating video clips from one of the numerous versions of Arabic Music Television or football matches from the Saudi or Egyptian leagues. At times of war and crisis this background ambiance is replaced by rolling news from *Al-Jazeera* or *Al-Arabiya*, depending on the political leanings of the owner and patrons. The café front is made almost entirely of glass so that the goings-on are visible to all passers-by and importantly so that the outside is visible to those inside, the closest one could get to the Mediterranean cafe society in London. I often watched

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[77] http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/budget2009/bn85.pdf accessed on 05/03/2010 at 15:56

as passers-by peering in, sometimes hesitating or exchanging words about the curious smelling cloud of *Shisha* smoke that hangs from the ceiling each night.

Outside the café you can see anything from a Lamborghini to a BMW; less prestigious cars are typically parked around the corner out of view. Despite the seeming affluence of many of the patrons the café itself is shabby, which is confirmed by the state of the toilets which are tiny and consistently unclean. However its shabbiness is part of its appeal and the atmosphere or the "*jaww*" intended. It is an everyday café, low on style but affordable, comfortable and informal enough to visit many times a week.

On an average night the *(Q)ahwah* is busy with the sound of card games and backgammon. Groups of men sit four or five to a table playing *Tarneeb* the Arabic equivalent of Bridge. The game is taken extremely seriously by those playing, you can hear people arguing, huddled over card games where occasionally money is at stake. Masculinity can be heard and felt in this atmosphere as cards are flung down on the tables and backgammon chips crackle as they strike the wooden boards signifying the metaphorical capture of the opponent.

Figure 16: A scene from 'Downtown café' in London –author

Figure 17: A scene from a (Q)ahwah in Cairo

Tea with mint is popular and so are cold fizzy drinks. Mango and guava juice sit side by side in the refrigerator with iced teas, and the standard *Schweppes* ensemble. *Fairuz* and *Lazeeza*, non-alcoholic malt drinks, with their beer-bottle aesthetic are also popular signs of the modern, yet religiously informed, lifestyle choice. It is rare to see someone drinking the traditional coffee from which these establishments take their name; they are more likely to be drinking tea with mint or a diet coke.

Shani, an overpoweringly sweet fizzy drink (produced by PepsiCo for the Middle East market) evokes memories and reinforces shared tastes and experiences among some of the patrons. Its dated logo and design stand in contrast to the other canned drinks lined up neatly in the dispenser, even the ring-pull remains preserved in recycle-unfriendly form. Aziz remembers the drink from his childhood growing up in Kuwait, Basil and Ameen from their childhood holidays in Egypt and Syria respectively. It seemed that in many cases the drink was consumed for nostalgia and not only a fondness for its taste. When it is plucked from the fridge, a relatively rare occurrence, it must be followed by a conversation of remembering "*Shani man, old Skool*".

The dispensing refrigerator, with its glass door, sits on the left hand wall by the door, regulars serve themselves from the refrigerator, what has been consumed is calculated later. The group of young men that I have been socialising with were just such a group of regulars. They had come together partly through meeting at school and university and partly out of chance. They had started hanging out in Downtown café some months before, having moved their custom here with the manager who had left another café in

the Maida Vale area about a mile to the North West after a dispute with his business partner-wife. Two of the friends lived less than a mile away while the other two lived about 8 miles away meaning that either taxis or lifts home were required quite regularly. Nonetheless, the café was conveniently located just off the A40 western corridor, so that with a car, the journey home for Basil, Aziz and I, would take about half an hour. The group spent a lot of time at the café usually congregating between 8 and 9pm to smoke *Shisha*, play cards and chat. *Shisha* and drinks were always ordered in Arabic, but the conversation between the friends usually continued in English punctuated by Arabic banter or phrases.

I tried to establish why they choose to go to the *Shisha* cafe and why that one in particular? *"If you're not into pubs, where else can you go?"* said Basil, other responses included *"to smoke Shisha"* or as Ameen put it *"It's chilled here you can relax catch up with the boys and plan the weekend"*. Basil's reference to 'pubs' was a response that I would come to hear quite regularly. However, in relation to this group of young men and the extended friendship networks which they were part of, there was a complex evaluation of the class and cultural signification of places they would socialise in and how these reflected upon them. For example, upon further questioning and observation it appeared that they avoided 'pubs' not because they served alcohol but because they were coded as 'English' working-class spaces. They were on the other hand quite happy to spend time in 'Bars' which they associated with American culture and in their words 'internationals,' a category of people which they saw themselves as a part of.

The conversations this group of young men had at the *Shisha* cafe were everyday, almost banal and revolved around organising group holidays, 'girls', marriage, the previous weekend's activities, football, work and the associated banter that can be expected among a group of males. They were all in their late twenties and held down jobs with 'good career prospects' in multinationals, banking, architecture and construction. Somewhat conservative, none of them drank alcohol or had a steady girlfriend. Although they had all graduated and started working, they all lived at home with their parents. The notion of "moving-out" was never a topic of conversation, all of them had lived at home during University and the idea that one would live at home until marriage or migration seemed to be the natural order of things. Despite the seeming harmony of their home and personal life, the group of friends spent time in this and other cafes because there was "nothing to do at home". For mainstream society their lifestyle choices may seem odd for a group of seemingly successful young men of their

age - no girlfriends, no sex, no drinking, no drugs and no overt desire to experience these things through the independence gained by living outside the family home, all central components of popular notions of adult-making in Britain. Family life at this age seemed more about particular obligations rather than rules. They were expectations in terms of helping with family finances (or at least achieving financial independent), keeping an eye out for a good marriage partner, meeting family and social obligations, making sure that allowances were made for "family days" (usually a Sunday) where meals would be shared and time spent with parents and siblings.

Although they were all adults this period of life seemed to place them on the verge of adulthood, a kind of limbo or waiting area, prior to full manhood which would realised upon marriage. A strong network of male friends through which codes of *brotherhood*, loyalty, solidarity and interdependence are practiced, seemed to be an essential vehicle through which this phase was experienced, among this and other groups I spent time among. This in-betweeness is an extension of what the Osella and Osella describe as 'college culture'. 'In the absence of external structures of validation for their passage towards manhood, the boys turn inwards to the peer group' (1998: 191) and the *Shisha* café becomes 'a space of male-male relations,' a day-to-day arena in which sociability and masculinity outside the home and beyond parental control takes place (see Chopra 2004 et al). It is important to take into consideration that an array of alternative spaces could be chosen for this day-to-day socializing, a bar, a pub, a normal café or bistro. However, *Shisha* cafés provide a particular kind of coded social space, not just masculine, but Arab, nostalgic, authentic, ethnic and distinctive, meanings generated principally through *Shisha* consumption.

Smoke, leisure and shame.

I found that most young men I spoke to smoked cigarettes and *Shisha*, however while they hid the fact that they smoked cigarettes from their parents, they felt no need to hide their *Shisha* smoking habits in the same way. I asked Shams, who was in his early twenties at the time, about whether his parents knew that he spent so much time in *Shisha* cafes?

Shams	*Yeah they're used to it, I just say I'm going to 'Shayish' (to smoke Shisha) or I'm going to the "(Q)ahwah with the shabāb (youths/ boys)*
Ramy	*Do they know you smoke Shisha?*
Shams	*Yeah yeah*
Ramy	*Do you think they mind?*
Shams	*No not really, my parents have seen me smoke Shisha before*
Ramy	*Do they know that you smoke cigarettes?*
Shams	*Well kind of, I never smoke in front of them or in the house out of respect and that. My mum found my cigarettes and of course she lost it... that was a while ago, but still you gotta be careful."*
Ramy	*So you couldn't say to them "I'm going out for a cigarette"?*
Shams	*No man, come on you know how it is!*
Ramy	*What do you mean man? How come you can tell them that you smoke Shisha but you gotta hide your cigarettes?"*
Shams	*It's different, it's 'ayb (shameful) to smoke cigarettes in front of your parents*

Although my fieldwork was principally with young people I did interview some older migrants like Mustapha who was in his late 60's and had come to Britain in the mid 1970's from Cairo. I asked him if he ever spent time in coffee houses as a young man. (Translation from Arabic *"Yes of course"* he replied *"... we used to play backgammon with my friends and smoke Shisha, we would pass a lot of time at the (Q)ahwah"*

Ramy	*And did your father know that you went to these places*
Mustafa	*No*
Ramy	*Why not? What would happen if he found you sitting at the local (Q)ahwah?"*
Mustafa	*He would be very upset and I would be in trouble, it is not a very respectable place to be, not like the Naadi (sports club), the Naadi is ok, you can say "I was at the Naadi," you cannot really say "I was at the (Q)ahwah".*
Ramy	*Why's that?*
Mustafa	*Because 'ayb' (it's shameful)*
Ramy	*And did he know that you smoked cigarettes?*

Mustafa   Of course, it was normal in those days for men and some women to smoke

'Ayb is a notion widely used in order to demarcate what is socially unacceptable to say or do. What these two extracts suggest is that the acceptability of both the *(Q)ahwah* as a social space and different types of smoking have changed over time and possibly place and context. On a scale of illicitness and shamefulness smoking *Shisha* and spending time in a coffee house is today far more acceptable than smoking a cigarette in front of your parents. In fact young men and to a far lesser women, seemed not only relaxed about telling their parents that they spent time in *Shisha* cafes but, intentionally advertised it as a way of indicating to their parents that they were engaged in an authentic and culturally intelligible 'Arab' activity or past time. Young people seemed to understand that their parents would accept their choice of frequenting *Shisha* cafes because they saw it as an acceptable substitute to the site of everyday British socialisation: the pub. By spending time in *Shisha* cafes young men indicated that they were not just men but Arab men.

It may be assumed that the *Shisha* café is somehow an islamically acceptable alternative to British pub-culture. However, much of what goes on in a *Shisha* café is islamically dubious, particularly for the emerging ideologues of Islamic reformism. In recent years a number of *Fatwas*[78] have argued that smoking in all its forms is *Haram* (religiously prohibited). These opinions are based on the principle that any activity that damages the human body (and therefore life itself) is forbidden. Passing time (wasting time), chatting (idle talk), playing games, listening to music or smoking *Shisha* are all frowned upon within these orthodox discourses and interpretations which cast these activities as un-Islamic and unproductive. This seems to revive 16th Century critiques of the coffee houses, this time through the logic of 'a nation in decay' whose adherents should be engaged in projects of renewal and restoration.

I wanted to know how Basil, Aziz, Ameen and Mahir negotiated these nuances. They all prayed regularly and seemed in many ways committed to an Islamic lifestyle. They tended to play down the theological problems with smoking (of all types) instead incorporating smoking into the daily rhythms of being a Muslim. For example, like

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[78] A *Fatwa* is a non-binding legal opinion, it does not, as is often thought, automatically denote criticism or censure. A *Fatwa* can also authorize and legitimise activities and approaches. Typically there are a number of *Fatwas*' for a given issue, often they are contradictory (some legitimising while other forbid). Muslims can choose which opinion to follow or reject at their discretion, although many do not appreciate the notion of choice of opinion or the non-binding nature of a Fatwa, instead seeing their preferred or adopted Fatwa as a authoritative and obligatory for all.

thousands of other men, they would head to a *Shisha* café after the extended evening prayers (*Tarāwih*) during Ramadan or more commonly would agree to meet at the cafe after '*Salāt al-Maghrib*' (after the sunset prayer). Indeed smoking was not the only exception to a perfect reiteration of an Islamic lifestyle. "The boys" openly acknowledged that they went clubbing, (although they didn't drink) most dated regularly (but abstained from premarital sex), and they had no problem socializing in places that served alcohol, all seemingly contradictory with reformist readings of an Islamic lifestyle. Where drinking was involved Aziz for example insisted publically that he did not drink but confided in me that sometimes he discretely ordered spirits with mixers which made it appear like a soft drink. His main concern was censure from "the boys" and fear for his reputation as drinking was one of '*al-kabā'ir*' (Greater sins) but also significantly, a sign that one had become 'English'. Thus while they flirted with what are often seen as 'religious' and 'secular' lifestyles there were limits: alcohol, sex and drugs.

Such fleeting between what are *policed* as discrete lifestyles was by no means uncontroversial. The mixing of these different social worlds in this way is framed at best as contradictory and at worst as *Haram* (prohibited) by young people who adhered more strictly to Islam. For young people who define their 'identity' and practices exclusively through Islam, there are implications for being a Muslim beyond normative attitudes and regular worship so that their social world and the physical spaces and activities in which they can engage must be islamically legitimate. I met a number of young men with these opinions like Sulayman and Tamer who had spent a lot of time in *Shisha* cafes in their late teens but had gradually pulled away from the scene as their lives became increasingly determined by faith and religiously motivated community activism.

Tamer had joined or was associated with a global youth movement established by the TV evangelist Amr Khalid called 'Life Makers' (*Sūnā' al-Hayat*). 'Life Makers' has a particular notion of leisure-time which argues that in light of the current state of the *Ummah,* Muslims do not have the luxury of leisure time. Thus young Muslims are encouraged to use their 'spare-time' in productive social initiatives. The movement's main objective is *"To encourage our men and women, both young and old, to have effective and beneficial roles in serving our countries. Their roles must be productive,*

useful and influential".[79]   In the words of its patron, the 'Life Makers' movement seeks to engender *"seriousness"* among its followers, *"Flirtatiousness, in other words, shallowness, in other words, triviality. All of those are but symptoms of a hard kind of shackle spreading within many aspects of our daily lives."*[80] A principle goal in the 'Life Makers' project is combating of smoking generally and *Shisha* smoking in particular, because unlike cigarettes it is imbued with a sense of cultural acceptability and tradition.[81] I would argue therefore that attention should be drawn to the nuanced relationship between 'Arab-ness' and Islam and that to a significant extent the *Shisha* café scene, along with other practices I will turn to in subsequent chapters, are an alternative to the 'Islamic scene' and not necessarily part of it. As Tariq Ramadan has argued "Arabic may be the language of Islam but Arab culture is not the culture of Islam" (Ramadan 2005).

Among the most problematic aspect of the *Shisha* cafe for those whose notions of social organisation are defined by Islamic ideologies, particularly those around gender segregation, is the increasing visibility of women in some *Shisha* cafes. On one hand some object to the disruption of traditional notions of (male) public and (female) private spheres. On the other hand there are objections to the very fact that young men and women mix in these unsupervised settings.

It is increasingly common to see women, sometimes veiled, socializing and smoking *Shisha* in some *Shisha* cafes around London. I argue that this stems in part from a desire by some young Arab women in London for public spaces of ethnic performance. As Almedia and Cowan have noted in relation to the *Kafeteria* in Greece and the c*afe* in Portugal, the increased presence of women in *Shisha* cafes is not an unproblematic or linear matter of the emancipatory opening of these spaces by women. In the following section I return to the sequential reading of how both gendered and raced subjects are produced through the reiteration of the *(Q)ahwah* in London.

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[79] http://amrkhaled.net/articles/articles62.html
[80] http://amrkhaled.net/articles/articles69.html
[81] http://amrkhaled.net/articles/articles70.html

Which café? 'Gender', other Arabs, 'race' and class

The fear of being seen

The boys have already arrived and are sitting around a table playing 'Tarneeb' (Bridge). I settle in, order a Shisha and a mint tea, I notice Basil and Mahir whispering, smiling and giggling... what's "going on boys?" "Yabni (Son) look at that table over there, wooo huneeeeeys. See that one with the curly hair? I bet she's Egyptian". Aziz interjects "guys shut up! they can hear you! You don't want them to leave do you?" Aziz looks at me, "These guys are so uncivilized, I think you should go and talk to them, we've got a table at Aura (night club) this weekend" he says with a cheeky smile, I can't help laughing. The boys are very excited and as I look up away from the card game I can see that the group of girls have not gone unnoticed in the café. They have caused quite a stir. They are definitely welcome and I have a feeling that the flow of all the card games taking place around the room has been disturbed. Basil can't help himself, he shouts out to the guy taking care of the coals tonight "Abu Laban, il gama'a dol shakluhum ayzeen fahhm" (Those guys over there look like they need some embers). We all burst into laughter and high-fives ... the girls on the table manage to muster a somewhat reluctant smile.... The excitement is over, back to the card game.

Field note: Tuesday 7th November 2006

While it is not uncommon to see women in *Shisha* cafes in London, their presence is still novel and mostly an exception. *Shisha* cafés in London are neither segregated nor gender neutral spaces. Over a number of months spent at Downtown café I noted how college-aged girls would sometimes come into the café in the early evening. They would never enter alone, instead they would wait for friends to arrive in order to avoid entering unaccompanied or *"the walk of shame"* as a young man at the *Red Sea* cafe put it to me. There was of course no physical danger involved in being in the café alone, only the gaze and judgement of the men inside. One way of mitigating the rampant gossiping and curiosity created by the presence of women was if she was accompanied by a male. Qais and Laila, both British-born Palestinians in the early twenties, had been

dating for just over a year and were regulars at Downtown cafe. I asked Laila how she felt about spending so much time in a *Shisha* café. She gave the by now customary response *"where else are we supposed to go?"* and said she didn't mind. The café gave her and Qais the opportunity to spend a few nights a weeks in each other's company in a kind of home-from-home atmosphere for the price of a *Shisha* and cups of tea. Even though Qais was known to some of the male groups who regularly used the cafe he was never drawn into card games or conversations, the couple were usually left to each other's company. There was a sense of respectability that they were choosing to spend time together in the cafe under the watchful eyes of others, in a way, proof that they were doing nothing wrong.

While this kind of courtship is acceptable, couples must maintain control over their behaviour in these environments. They may sit together, arms around each other but must observe the boundaries of intimacy and propriety - no public displays of affection. To cross these boundaries would not only have repercussions for the female but also interestingly on the establishment itself as a "respectable" and safe place for women to be seen in. I wondered if Laila felt intimidated by the overwhelmingly male environment? She didn't go into great detail *"No not really, I prefer it, men are less hassle, I just find girls, especially Arabic girls, really fake I find it really hard to find a girl who's on the level, I mean everyone has that element of fake-ness. I just hate that whole gossiping atmosphere. I can only trust a few of them. I mean I have a lot of Arabic girlfriends but I don't trust them. Maybe cause I'm very similar to them and I actually hate it about myself"* she laughed.

Laila's response characterizes female relationships as problematic, competitive and unreliable; the opposite of male company which is conversely straightforward and revolves around loyalty and solidarity. Her response shows the pervasive appeal of gendered discourses which are often disparaging about so-called female characteristics. Importantly, her response acknowledges the cafe to be a male space but plays down the extent to which her feelings of being comfortable stem from her boyfriend's standing among the other regulars, immunizing her from their gaze and curiosity.

Being accompanied by a male is not always a guarantee that young women will feel protected from the moral scrutiny and curiosity in *Shisha* cafés. I got to know Suhaila and Tahreer, two young university students of mixed Arab background. One night I arranged to go to the cinema with them and a large group of their friends at the Odeon on Edgware Road. After the film the group debated where we should go to have *Shisha*

Fahd, a mutual friend, suggested that we go to a*l-Dar* which was quite a well-known café right in the middle of the Edgware Road *"I feel I get treated well there, the service is good"* he offered. Suhaila and Tahreer quickly objected, *al-Dar* was too public for them, and they didn't feel comfortable *"being seen in there"* so they suggested another café called *Fatoush* a Lebanese place at the other end of Edgware road which had a seating area downstairs out of sight of the Street. *"There's a downstairs and we know some of the guys there, they treat us well and give us 'ḥalwiyat' (sweets) for free. We could go to 'Abu Ali' but it's a bit 'bee'ah'"*. *Bee'ah* is Egyptian slang (literally 'environment') denoting something or somewhere that is down market, common or vulgar. The reference to *bee'ah* demonstrates the way in which not only a place but its clients are understood in terms of orientations towards class and taste and importantly the way in which association or socialization involve a careful evaluation of the way that particular settings and people correspond to notions of respectability and taste (see Koning 2006). In this case 'Abu Ali' an Egyptian café may have been perceived as less sophisticated than a Lebanese café with the corresponding association with liberalism and chic. The considerations regarding the type of *Shisha* place to go to are therefore reflective of a wider set of concerns with class, taste and their implications for, among other things, the consequences of women smoking and socializing with males in public.

When we arrived at *Fatoush* Suhaila and Tahreer were greeted by the waiter who clearly knew them as regulars, there was a group of young males that the girls knew sitting at the far end of the café, they waved at each other in acknowledgement. The waiter asked the girls where they would like to sit *"Taht"* (downstairs) they replied almost in unison. The narrow staircase gave way to a reasonably sized space which had a number of booth-like seating areas.

Suhaila and Tahreer sat down and looked at each other and then at Fahd and I. *"God they must think we are such slags, we come in here with different guys, it must look bad"* said Suhaila, Tahreer interjects *"So what! I hate hypocrites, these people are normal but they want to appear like angels in front of the community, why do they have to put on such a show"*. Cowan (1991) draws our attention to Abu Lughod's (1986: 158) observation that the acknowledgement of the fear of being watched can be seen, in and of itself, as a claim of virtue. Unlike Laila at *Downtown Café* Suhaila and Tahreer's social life involved in different mixed groups. They were aware that the lack of attachment to one particular male would attract attention and possibly have implications for their reputations. The respect and protection from the gaze and judgement of others

which Laila enjoyed based on her attachment to one male is contrasted with the fear for reputation and the implication of promiscuity sensed by Suhaila and Tahreer.

The waiter arrived at the table to take our order, we agreed to share *Shishas* which the girls would choose *"Wahd 'enab w wahd shamam w arba' shay"* (one grape and one melon and four teas) very modern choices of flavours, now part of a plethora of tobacco flavours ranging from 'Coca Cola' to cherry, with apple being the traditional flavour. When the waiter returned with the *Shishas,* he automatically offered them to Fahd and I, but Fahd declined, offering the *Shisha* to Tahreer and saying *"ladies first"*. Getting a *Shisha* going often takes relentless lung power to heat the coal to the point where it begins to make the tobacco smoke, a task usually left to the coal bearer who removes the tip and inhales deeply straight from the hose, a sign of good service, and among male friends sometimes denoting intimacy and knowledge of the *Shisha* and consequently masculinity. Fahd's gesture demonstrates the way in which codes of etiquette are mixed, stretched and borrowed. He forfeits the opportunity to display masculine prowess and knowledge of the *Shisha*, opting instead for a gesture of gentlemanly Victorian politeness. His gesture is neither intelligible in one or the other cultural sphere but only in the sequential and situated imperfect recitation of both.

I asked the girls how they felt about *Shisha* cafes as social space. They both clearly enjoyed smoking *Shisha*. Suhaila told me that she had one at home and that she and her flatmates regularly used it, even if they were just sitting round the TV. But it wasn't the same as going out and socializing in the atmosphere of the different cafes. Their main concerns seemed to revolve not around being seen in public *per se* but around being judged in particular ways. *"My dad knows that I come to these places, he doesn't have a problem with it so why should anyone else?"* Suhaila described the considerations that she and her friends took into account when choosing a *Shisha* café. They would avoid certain places that were just too male or where they felt like they were being *"perved"* over. Another serious consideration was the cleanliness of the toilets. Ideally they chose places where they could sit out of sight of the prying eyes of other Arabs on Edgware Road. *"I don't want to bump into one of my dad's friends or anything like that, that's why we come here because it's out of sight, not right in the middle of it all"*.

In the context of London the "family area" of a café is rarely if ever used by families and is instead used mostly by visiting groups of females or couples. The hidden areas of contemporary *Shisha* cafes resembles the spatial contrasts Cowan noted in relation to

the *Kafenio* and the *Kafeteria* in Greece where the *Kafenio* spills onto the pavement, the *Kafeteria* is hidden away to protect young people from the judgement of the village.

Suhaila and Tahreer, like many other young women trying to navigate traditional preoccupations with public, private spheres and gendered spaces have found some *Shisha* cafes where they can smoke and socialize and others that are riskier. Their experiences emphasize the way in which the *Shisha* cafes in London are still predominantly a male domain into which women are making inroads but where they remain fundamentally disadvantaged even though its main users are other young British-born or raised Arab (males). Cowan discusses women's fears of "being watched" at the *Kafeteria* in similar terms as an acknowledgement of the "very real dangers a girl faces to her reputation and to her person, in a patriarchal society" (1991: 76). The notion of urbane liberalism vs. rural conservatism is challenged by the parallels that can be drawn between the gendering practices and discourses in a *Kafeteria* in rural Greece and a *Shisha* cafe in urban London. Similar to the *Kafeteria* in Greece and the *Café* in Portugal, the *Shisha* café in London has opened up a traditionally masculine space to women, challenging commonly held notions of gender. "However, the simple opening of masculine space to women may not mean equality in gender ideology" (Almedia 1996: 93).

Shams, who had earlier discussed attitudes towards smoking described the increasing visibility of women in *Shisha* cafes in London as *"a form of resistance"* believing that it was an important part of the project to change attitudes towards women and mixed gender socializing among Arabs. However, not all attitudes were as progressive, for the friends at *Downtown Café* there was little consensus regarding the increasing visibility of women at *Shisha* cafés as a conversation with Basil and Ameen showed.

Basil: *Why shouldn't girls come to the Shisha café? I mean we bring girls here all the time, they like it and it's a nice place to chill, good music, Shisha, food.*

Ramy: *What about if a girl is wearing Hijab and smoking Shisha?*

Ameen: *'La ma biseer' (no that can't/ shouldn't happen) if she is wearing Hijab she should respect the Hijab more. If you are wearing Hijab that's it you have to behave in a certain way, I don't know 'A'ib yaani' (it's shameful I mean)*

Ramy   *If your wife didn't wear Hijab would you bring her to the Shisha café.*

Ameen   *No!*

Ramy   *Why not? We go to smoke Shisha with women all the time.*

Ameen   *Because (laughs) no, my wife, it's different. It's a place for me and my friends, what's she going to do here? 'Ya'ni' (I mean) there is no need. Ramy you idiot just because we live here doesn't mean that we have to do everything like 'the West.'*

Basil   *I would, why not, it's great if you can socialize with your wife and your friends and if she wants to smoke Shisha she can. He's just one of those typical bloody Syrians, extremist, terrorists!*

Ameen   *Oi you' masri,' (Egyptian)' hū'mar' (donkey), everybody has their way.*

The *Shisha* café was not a legitimate public space for Ameen's hypothetical wife. This resonates with Cowan's work in Sohos where the *zaphioplatio* (sweet shop) was seen by men to be a legitimate space in which a husband and wife could socialize in public, but not the *Kafenio*. Koning also found sharp distinctions in Cairo in relation to the '*Naadi* (sports clubs) which are coded as family space, lending legitimacy to gender mixing, and contemporary western cafes which are considered beyond the family domain and relating to unsupervised gender mixing among young people (2006) Ameen went on to describe how going out with his wife could involve going to the cinema or a restaurant or even a café like 'Starbucks' or 'Nero' but not a *Shisha* café which clearly for him was still exclusively as a space for masculine sociability and where ultimately there were no guarantees for his wife's reputation and consequently his honour. For Ameen at least this distinction also seemed to place the women that we did socialise with in *Shisha* cafes in one category and marriageable women in another. Importantly the corporeal act of wearing the *Hijab* is shown to discursively circumscribe bodily performance and delimits what can and cannot be done. 'Arab women' whether veiled or unveiled have no 'Arab public space' of their own and are seen as visitors from the private familial sphere who enter the domain of male public sociability at their own risk. With a somewhat fixed notion of the 'East' and 'Arabs' Ameen suggests the transgression of traditional gendered roles, practices and spaces is something that is done by 'the West'. *Shisha* cafe in London are not only a space for sociability but a

space where the discursive norms of 'Arab' and 'Muslim' masculinities and femininities are imperfectly reiterated and a nexus where the traditional division of male public and female private spheres is at once reproduced and undone. *Shisha* cafes are not only sites which produce gendered subjects; equally they are sites where the class and ethnic fractures within 'Arab' ethnicity are reflected.

Our kind of place, our kind of people

I headed towards the café by car and arrived at around 8:30. The phone calls and email had been exchanged all day between us. It was a beautiful day and the sun was still shining. It's that time of year where London is at its best. As I pulled up the boys were gathered around Ameen's car chatting. I joined them "what's up shabab (boys)". The café was packed both inside and out, it was full of Khaleeji (Gulf) men Basil was characteristically the most irritated, he had gone to speak to one of the staff to empty a table but it was early evening and those tables wouldn't be free for hours. "It's like an invasion, "dirty Arabs" he said, "360 degrees of Khaleeji-ness" said Aziz. I suppose they felt that it was their regular and as such they had some kind of right or priority. "Edgware road?" I asked, it was a rhetorical question, I kind-of already knew the answer. "Naa man - Arabs, Somalis and 'Pakis' forget it, let's go to St Christopher's Place" said Mahir.

Field note: 17th August 2006

Basil went to speak to one of the staff to try and get him to reserve a table for us in future, and although he was met with all the right verbal assurances it was clearly not going to work. The *Khaleeji* customers stayed for hours and were more forthcoming with their spending. "The boys" from Downtown café were displaced during the summer months and I suspect, not wanting to appear to have no standing in the café they chose to avoid it altogether for the remainder of the summer. The issue was not only that the cafe was full, on other nights and in other cafes I had noticed how the 'race,' class and nationality of other patrons was seen as an encroachment on a particular kind of space. The negative stereotypes of Gulf Arabs that emanates from 'internal' Arab discourses which produce *'Khaleejis'* as crass, uneducated, backward or

'Bedouin-like' (pejorative) in their behaviour and tastes, and discourses produced and consumed in Britain which associate Gulf Arabs (rightly or wrongly) with excessive shopping, being abusive to their staff (drivers, nannies and maids), prostitution and gambling, seemed to converge in the perception of these middle-class British-born and raised Arabs and in particular affected their attitudes towards Edgware Road which is often seen as being at the heart of 'Arab London'

The relationship between British born and raised Arabs and the *Khaleeji* aesthetic is complex. At times an association is coveted and at other times resisted. Shams told me a story about a friend of his, who he described as coming from a lower-middle class family or as he put it *"normal and hardworking people".* His friend happened to work quite hard in his late teens and had managed to save up enough money to buy an expensive and impressive car at quite a young age. With the help of his car the young man presented himself as a member of a wealthy *Khaleeji* family to *"white"* friends and particularly to *"white girls "*at university, clearly seeking to capitalise on the aura of limitless wealth that is associated with the people of the Gulf. On the other hand for Basil the term 'Arab' was negative *"If you say 'Arab' to an English guy you know he is thinking of a guy in a white nightie with a chequered towel on his head and an oil barrel under his arm, I don't want people to think that's what I am so I say I'm Egyptian".* Ameen was more nuanced pointing out that among Arabs the term is positive but for the rest of society 'Arab' is negative, *"They don't really understand what we mean when we say 'Arab'".* In the context of London in the summer "Arabs" meant *Khaleeji's*. It did not refer to other kinds of Arabs or Arabs permanently settled in Britain. Although many young men and women from the *Khaleej* take the opportunity of being in London to remove their national dress and wear western clothes, they remain highly visible especially so to Arabs settled in London who seem acutely aware of their presence and areas of activity.

Sensitivity towards sharing space with others perceived to be different in terms of class and nationality extended to young South Asians and Somalis in particular. As I sat in Kensington Park just a stone's throw away from Edgware Road, with Hussein a 23 year old who was born in Iran and raised in London, I asked him how he related to Edgware Road:

Hussein	*"I mean we used to hang out on Edgware Road when we were younger but it's really gone downhill. Nowadays you're more likely to find Asians on Edgware Road. Anyway, how much Shisha can you smoke!*
Ramy	*"So why do you think Asians go to Edgware Road and Shisha places these days, Do you think it might be cause it's Islamic - no alcohol and so on?*
Hussein	*No man, it's not cause they think it's Islamic! They know it's Arab and they love Arab culture and the women! They all want Arabic girlfriends. I've seen it myself at Uni' they want to learn Arabic lines so that they can get with an Arab girl.*
Ramy	*Seriously?!... but why do the Arabs react so badly to it?*
Hussein	*I don't know man, they just don't like it. I mean at Uni', I've seen it happen, when a Shisha place started filling up with 'Stanis'' (Pejorative Asians) the Arabs just stop going there.*
Ramy	*Why are Arabs so anti-Asian? You're Iranian have you ever experienced anything like that from Arabs.*
Hussein	*No not really, I mean I grew up with them, I don't speak Arabic but being Iranian is cool, I get respect for it.*

There is often a detectable ambivalence between young British South Asians and Arabs in London despite their shared 'Islam'. Many Arabs, even those who are observant Muslims are often disparaging about their South Asian co-religionist whose lack of Arabic is often taken to mean that they cannot truly understand Islam. This view was expressed to me explicitly by Tamer and Sulayman who were both observant and members of the Suna' al-Hayat reformist/ activist group (see page 162). Despite the inherent doctrinal contradictions, they made a point of not attending mosques or Friday prayers where the congregation was predominantly British South Asian or where the sermon was delivered in Urdu. For his part Tamer had offered the following in response

to my questions about being British and Arab as we sat on his car outside the Mosque attached to the Qatari Embassy Medical section in Collingham Gardens *"Look if there's one thing I could say to them it's that we are not all Pakis"*. I took 'them' in this case to refer to the British media or public and the 'we' to refer to not just 'Muslims' but implicitly to 'real Muslims'. British South Asian origin of the 7/7 bombers and the dominant South Asian face of Islamic 'revivalism' in Britain are used as part of a discourse that some Arabs in Britain subscribe to that "it is the Asians" or 'Pakis', who do not really understand Islam and who are responsible for the current negativity with which Muslims are seen in Britain. This narrative not only excludes the role of 9/11 (in which it was claimed that all the bombers were Arab) in the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment but is a case of a flagrantly selective narrative designed to frame British South Asian Muslims as the cause of a deep seated an complex fear of Islam and Muslims and indeed a total lack of understanding of the differences in practices language between Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi Muslims (groups which are in and of themselves extremely heterogeneous) which are collapsed by using a trope from British racist discourse 'Paki'.

Conversely, I had spoken with a number of South Asians who were disappointed by the persistent Arab-centric approach to Islam adopted by many of their Arab coreligionists which, in their estimation went against the universalism and anti-racism in Islam. Furthermore the cultural and leisure practices of (some) Arabs seemed in many occasions to take some British South Asian Muslims by surprise. One young man I met at SOAS who had grown up in the Midlands described being shocked by how *"unislamic the Arabs were"* when he arrived at University in London. It seems that there is often a presumption that the people who carry the language in which the Quran was revealed will be the most faithful adherents of Islam and often a mistaken connection is made between 'Arab culture' and 'Islamic culture'. However, in relation to the sharing of social space, I argue that the most prominent markers of difference for the young Arabs I socialised with were based on the intersection of 'race' and 'class' and not religion which they seemed largely to disregard as a point of similarity. Hussein's account had struck a chord with an email 'forward' I had been sent called "Edgware Road lol[82]":

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[82] "lol" is an email or SMS expression used to abbreviate the words 'laughing out load

"E-Road (as it's known by regulars) soon became popular with Pakistanis and more recently with P-Diddy clones (aka Somalis). Over time something quite remarkable happened. The non-Arabs had slowly begun (for want of a better word) to metamorphosise into Arabs – This spread of Arab culture amongst non-Arabs was nothing short of astonishing. Pakistanis were using words like "yalla", "akhi" and "habibi" in their regular conversations. The tea towel scarf was now being worn with Shalwar Kameez ... the song "Habibi dah" was on everyone's play list ... men fantasised about one day marrying a fair skinned Arab girl and made plans on how they would take up residence in Dubai once they graduated. The trend continues today and has gotten to the stage where many have deluded themselves into believing that they actually ARE (sic) of Arab extraction, making up some outlandish story about his/her great grandfather was one eighth Syrian or that the "Ahmed" in their surname somehow proves their Arabian heritage... Morons. You see normally you have to be careful when making gross generalisations about people en masse, but in this case the generalisations are completely justified. Take for example, the now famous E-Road rude boys. They normally hang around in groups of about 300, making an already crowded road an absolute chore to get around. They adorn almost without exception the standard Chavistani (sic) attire. Hoodys [sic] , baseball caps, low riders and Persil white Adiddas [sic] trainers, fake silver chains are also common. Their sole purpose in life is to roam around the Street looking for their female counterparts (Hojabis[83]) who they will invariably greet with the words "whagwan sister" before proceeding to one of the multitude of classless Arab cafes where they will practise smoking near perfect rings"

Some middle-class British-born or raised people of (certain) Arab origins seem here to be concerned with creating or enforcing perceived 'race,' ethnic and class hierarchies distinctions between themselves and others with who they increasingly share spaces and social practices. Unlike young Arabs, young British South Asians and Somalis are characterised as working-class which is reinforced by the observations regarding their

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[83] *Hojabi* is a pejorative combining "Ho" west-coast American slang for "Whore" and *Hijab* and is often used in reference to young teenage females who are veiled but are seen to behave in 'contradiction' to the bodily ideals of Islamic *Hijab*.

dress and vocabulary. It is also a reference to the perceived working-class backgrounds and material disadvantages of a large proportion of both South Asians and Somalis. These evaluations are common even though the overwhelming majority of Arab migrants from Egypt, Morocco, Iraq and Algeria are equally working-class and materially disadvantaged.

Distinction and aesthetic intolerance thus corresponds with notions of class, nationality, race, culture and ethnicity. As Bourdieu argues "a habitus ... amounts to rejecting others as unnatural and therefore vicious. Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent. Aversions to different lifestyles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between classes: class endogamy is evidence of it. The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated. (Bourdieu and Nice 1980: 253-4).

However the censure goes beyond class, as Trieneikens (2002) argues the notion of cultural capital as outlined by Bourdieu should not be restricted to the categories of high and low culture, but should include popular and community-based cultural capital. "Ethnic groups may use one form of cultural capital with a currency in the wider world, while a separate kind of cultural capital establishes status within the group itself" (Hall 1992 in Trieneikens 2002). The practices and discourses of othering to which *Khaleeji* tourists, Somalis and South Asians are subjected suggest that for some British-born or raised Arabs, *Shisha* smoking and *Shisha* cafes have come to represent their 'ethnic identity' to the extent that sharing it with ethnic and class 'others' is seen to infringe or alter the signification and distinction this past-time represents. Perhaps these anxieties stem from the fear of being 'confused' with *Khaleeji's (Arab 'others')* or British South Asians and Somalis (Class and race 'others') who are all proximate but distinctive "Arabs" or "Muslims". These practice throw into relief the vulnerability of the notion of (Arab/ Muslim) "groups" and 'communities' which might be better understood in terms of sub-cultures and niche networks that operate (sometimes antagonistically) within these umbrella terms.

Groups and subcultures which are sometimes difficult to differentiate solely on the basis of 'race' or class are often more readily distinguished on the basis of leisure preferences (Gottdiener 1991). Importantly, these leisure practices are both 'raced,' 'classed' and stringently policed. The middle-class boys at Downtown cafe were just as reluctant to spend an evening at the *Red Sea cafe* in Uxbridge road where Somalis, Egyptians and Iraqis wile away the hours chewing *Qat* leaves and smoking *Shisha* in

rather unkempt surroundings which they would described as 'Ghetto,' as they would be sharing space with *Khaleeji* tourists or young South Asians on Edgware Road.

Shisha cafes have gone from being marginal ethnic form of consumption (among "Arabs" in London) to one that has drawn in paying consumers from beyond. "*Shisha*mania" as Chaouchi describes it, is the result of the crossover of tourists, migration and trade, and the intensification of these processes has altered the signification of the object and practice of *Shisha* smoking itself which in some senses supports Bourdieu's emphasis on 'the market' as the driving force of the fluidity of the system of hierarchical taste. For some the commoditization, commercialization and democratisation of the *Shisha* has added layers of meaning and identification with 'Arab culture' among a larger group of people while for others its growing popularity is seen as an encroachment and infringement on objects and spaces that are used to reinforce personal and collective 'identities'. I argue that the censure of Somalis and Asians on Edgware road is not a reference solely to their perceived class and place in the racial hierarchy of Britain but perhaps equally a reference to a failed "Arab-ness" which, as the email forward suggests is based on attempts by some 'non-Arabs' to employ the discourses and practices of perceived Arab-ness which in turn is rejected by (some) 'Arabs' on the grounds of race, ethnicity and class. On the other hand the censure of Khaleejis, British Somalis and South Asians by some young Arabs seems to speak directly to Al-Rasheed's (1995) research among Iraqi Assyrians who felt insulted when they were confused for their Iraqi Kurdish and Arabs compatriots. It seems that in contexts where group distinctiveness is a form of symbolic, social and economic capital the desire to *police* the boundaries of these groups and subcultures is powerful and can involve the exclusion of those who are ethnically, culturally, geographically or religiously proximate can be more vehement than when space is shared with those who constitute the 'other' in more straightforward ways.

I should point out that such desires to police Arab-ness in London while common, were not shared by all. Nevertheless these anxieties are perhaps the strongest indications of the emergence of a limited middle-class Arab niche network in London where one must be from a certain generation, from certain Arab countries (and not others), be upwardly mobile, have the trappings of wealth and display particular dispositions towards taste, religion, race, gender and rules of socialisation.

Conclusion: the journey from (*Q)ahwah* to *Shisha* Café

Koning's ethnography of middle-class use of modern coffee shops in Cairo presents us with the contra-flows of orientation, allegiance, taste and signification in the context of the local and the global. While western-style coffee shops were on the rise in Cairo, Sohos (Greece) and Pardias (Portugal) in the early 1990's providing a space where female sociability and the consumption of western tastes, styles and sounds were possible; we find that at the same time in London the *Shisha* café with its "traditional" Arab aesthetics, sounds, past-times and codes of behaviour was growing in popularity among the British-born or raised children of Arab migrants. Choosing between styles reflects a specific stance or orientation where the adoption of local styles represents an allegiance to traditional networks and forms while the adoption of cosmopolitan styles represents a withdrawal from those networks (Ferguson 1999). For Koning the choices of "local" and "cosmopolitan" coded spaces in Cairo represent "repertoires that are taken up in personal strategies and performances that signify specific choices, allegiances and modes of belonging in a local context" (Koning, 2005: 132). What does this say about London? Does the choice of 'Arab' spaces of sociability over 'British' ones suggest a rejection of the 'local' or does it in fact point to a conformity within a particular system where one is constructed from a very early age as 'ethnic' with corresponding expectations that one will do 'ethnic' things? For young people *doing Arab-ness* in London, certain practices and culturally coded spaces and objects are arguably part of a project of cultural survival (not preservation) because recognition and social intelligibility within multiculturalism is often achieved by being ethnically and culturally distinct.

There are many different types of *Shisha* cafes and locales in which different types of 'Arab-ness' marked by generation, class, race, nationality, and aesthetics are practiced. *Shisha* cafes in London can be seen as situated reiterations of the traditional (Q)ahwah which for many young Arabs raised in London is an easily accessible way of consuming and doing Arab-ness. In reciting this social institution, going to particularly 'classed', 'raced' and 'gendered' social spaces, playing particular games, drinking particular drinks, listening to certain types of music and importantly smoking *Shisha*, Arab-ness is achieved both as a notion of 'cultural essence' or 'centre point' and also as a position within wider society. *Shisha* cafes show themselves to be performative spaces

for the recitation of an array of norms and structures of subjection – gender, race, class, and ethnicity. However, rather than simplistically concluding that the children of Arab and Muslim migrants are, through their choices of social space, orientating themselves to their 'homelands,' these practices should be seen in relation to the context in which they have arisen and as the product of the particular generational, class, race and ethnic configurations in London at a particular time.

Chapter Six

Dancing 'class,' 'gender' and 'ethnicity'

Introduction

I had heard that there was an 'Arab scene' around the different colleges of the University of London, in particular at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Kings College, University College London (UCL), Imperial College, Queen Mary and Westfield (QMW) and Westminster University which each had an 'Arabic society'. Before I began my fieldwork I had assumed a great deal about what I might learn from theses societies. Based on the accounts of Arab societies at British universities I had collected from archives I expected to find politicized societies whose members would be preoccupied with issues like the invasion of Iraq, the on-going conflict in Palestine and the position of young Arabs in Britain in relation to the 'War on Terror'. How wrong I was, when I went about looking for the Presidents of these Societies to get first-hand accounts of what activities they organised, one after another they described frustration and resignation about how their members never encouraged any discussions or debate around the political issues of 'the Arab situation'. 'Arabic Society' members seemed almost exclusively interested in organising dinners, parties, football teams and belly dancing classes (mostly taken up by non-Arab women). The parties and dinners were orientated towards conspicuous displays of ethnicity, class, sexuality and courtship. In this chapter I consider some of the ways in which young people produced and reproduced notions of 'Arab-ness' in relation to class, gender and the notion of *being* Arab (in London) through their social events and with a particular emphasis on practices around dance.

Emirs and Emiras: partying with the stereotype of Arab wealth

Within the generation, nationality and class defined Arab niche network I have suggested exits in London, one must aspire to a particular idea of taste. Exclusivity and status play a significant role in the choice of locales, venue and activities for young people engaged in the 'Arab' social scene where prestigious and expensive night clubs in London's West-end are preferred. While the stereotype of the wealthy Gulf Arab is often the source disdain among these young people in particular contexts, in the night life of these young British-born or raised 'Arabs' it appeared to be an association they would wilfully covet and exploit. Even for those with limited financial resources the temptation to project an image of Arab oil wealth seems difficult to resist. I met Hassan at an Eid celebration in January 2006, at the time he was 21 year old and studying at SOAS. His Palestinian parents had raised him and his brother on the borders of Essex and East London where they went to school, an experience he described in overwhelmingly negative terms. They were 'the only Arabs' at school and had experienced considerable physical and racial abuse from both teachers and students in what he described as a predominantly "white working class and conservative" environment. When he arrived at SOAS Hassan drifted towards other Arab students but soon discovered the limitations of identifying with people on the basis of a shared Arab-ness.

> "I spent my first year at SOAS as juxtaposed and polarised as you like, so much so as to make 'Black Adder' seem like daily life. It's unbelievable and I spent my first year hanging around with people who not only had been to private schools but had been to the most prestigious educational institutions that one could go to in this country. I spent my first year with a group of students, mainly Arabs who had been to St Paul's School and who had been to Dulwich College and to Reed School and I found that the things that we did have in common were that we were Arab or that we were ethnic or the fact that we both went to University but I felt that the big difference between us wasn't based on our ideas of race, ethnicity or politics, it was based on our economic situation ...
>
> We went clubbing a lot. Not from my own pocket because I was mixing with people who were going out to the best clubs in London who were going

out all the time, every night, who were in the habit of spending in one night what I would consider spending in two or three weeks and it was very interesting and fun but it wasn't life, it wasn't reality for me it was an alien world.

I think, to put it widely if I'm going to talk about the Arab community at SOAS, I don't think that the important part about the Arab community in SOAS is that they are Arab or the fact that they are Islamic or English or otherwise. For me the important thing about the community at SOAS is the socio-economic background of the students. For me I feel different from Arabs at SOAS not because I am secular, not because I am not Islamic or Christian enough because a lot of them are like that. I think it's because I haven't had the same material upbringing and the material chances that these people have had. I think I identify more with someone who went to a comprehensive, from an English working-class background, I think that is my major friction at SOAS with Arabs."

Hassan's reference to 'Black Adder' candidly refers to living with the pretence of affluence. While some Arabs in London are indeed wealthy, the majority tend to play on the association of Arab wealth and for some like Hassan, who come from less affluent backgrounds, inclusion within this category becomes an unrealistic illusion they cannot maintain. His experience mirrored my own as a teenager growing up in London where I felt that in order to socialize with other Arabs I had to be rich or at least pass-for rich which I failed to do convincingly. Tamara offered the following explanation:

"I know we hate that stereotype but when you go into that club you forget that you hate it and you just play on that stereotype. In the clubs when the Emirs (Princes) and the Princesses and all of that lot come over in the summer and they go to the clubs they are not the ones making a big deal out of themselves, I mean they will drop 30k (thousand) in a night but they are not the ones dancing on the tables or you know like doing all of that stuff. So like if you went into the club you wouldn't actually be able to point out the Prince – it's the people around them… Um, I think it's because we all know how Arabs are. You know you have this whole obsession with celebrity we have that "show" of Arab society but it's more on a micro-level, it's like

going back to the village and gossip and how everyone knows everyone else's business and all of that. I see it in these clubs, they don't really have the money, it's just when they go to these places they look like they have money. You can become famous and look glamorous and wealthy like you are someone, in a bigger pond you are no one. And the sad thing is that a lot of these girls and a lot of these guys you sit with them and they are completely normal. It's just when we all socialise together in a club or anywhere else they get arrogant and they act like they are all oil barons that rule the world.

Nabeel a 21 year old who had grown up in west London described some of his early experiences with the Arab scene as a teenager.

"I used to go to a lot of Arabic parties. We used to go to lots of nights at 'Levant' or this place called 'Embassy' ya'nni (I mean) 'Tantra' zaman (a long time ago), loads of different spots. There were lots of Arabic nights at this club called 'Mayfair' which was a very well-known club zaman (a long time ago) there were always loads of Arabs and Iranians, Mayfair was the spot it was propa (really) expensive. A lot of the time there is a type of crowd where you get taken into this, you get labelled, people want to be seen and to be known by other people in the community. Everyone has a tag on them, you've got the Khaleeji's who are disgustingly rich sitting sipping champagne and then you've got the girls around them 'blinged' out gold-digging and then you got us lot, the rowdy group of Arab boys from London who are dancing, trying to pick up women it's just typical Arab scene. Yeah we are that type of society, we love to label people, to see people and be seen in the best places and it all stems from the societies that we are from its all about prestige and it's like 'standard' you are gonna label people and we label each other as Arabs, and in the end you just don't want to mix with them, it's very superficial."

In chapter two I suggested that the settled Arab community had been overshadowed by the prominence of the image of 'playboy princes' and 'terrorists' in the British public imagination. However, as previously noted (in chapter three) the negative stereotype

around *Khaleeji* wealth is not exclusive to Britain or 'the West'. Tourists from the Gulf have generated as much negativity and curiosity in the Arab world, where urban legends about the *Khaleeji* tourists who think they can buy anything and anyone are rife, particularly in countries like Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco which receive large numbers of tourists from the that region (see Wynn 2007). Poole's earlier point in relation to the way in which Islamophobic media constructions of the Arab oil sheikh in the 1970s served and referred to particular political and economic circumstances becomes relevant here. While today Islamophobia in the media is related largely to signifying Arab and Asian Muslims as 'religious extremists,' the accounts provided by Hassan, Tamara and Nabeel draw us back to the particular modality of power in discourse and the temporal persistence of the meanings which they create. Signifying Arab-ness is a process which largely takes place beyond the control of these young people who are by and large recipients of particular meanings related to the 'ethnic identity' into which they have been subjected. This is not to suggest that they are passive recipients, indeed in the behaviour of some young Arabs in London seems to reproduce these stereotypes quite consciously, re-appropriating the stereotype of wealth in order to project power, influence and exclusivity in particular settings. This form of resignification and reappropriation has become an important strategy for receiving and coping with meanings that are beyond one's control, particularly in relation to 'ethnic' and 'racial' 'identities,' whether it be the legends and myths around black masculine hyper sexuality (see Herdt and Howe 2007: 27-35), or in this case the boundless wealth of the exotic Arab other. As Hutnyk (2009) and Gilroy's (1993) work on the culture industries and commercialisation of 'ethnic' and 'racial' 'identities' suggest, the fact that black men can play on the stereotype of physical and sexual prowess or Asians on the aura of the exotic culture does not signal the demise of the equally profitable and pervasive stereotypes of backwardness and savagery. These highly contextual and instrumental approaches to the power of signification should therefore be seen in relation to managing stakes within discursive economies.

Equally, as Wynn argues, the stereotypes of *Khaleeji* tourists and relationships that are consequently generated between different kinds of Arabs within the Middle East and North Africa "can only be understood in the context of Arab identity politics, labour migration and the regional political economy" (Wynn 2007: 127-169), an assertion which resonates in relation to London. However, within the context of London, one must also take into account the influence of ascription and the assumption of a common

Arab-ness between highly heterogeneous groups of people which allows British-born or raised Arabs to be associated with or to pass-for wealthy *Khaleejis*. Passing-for 'a wealthy Arab' in the eyes of non-Arabs holds with it the possibility of gaining from the signification of limitless wealth and helps place young people within a hierarchy of class in London from which they may (momentarily) benefit. It also shows the way in which the imagining of an 'Arab ethnicity' in London is a process based on the intertextuality of discourses and economic processes that are both local and global but always realised and articulated in situ.

As the following sections go on to suggest it is not only the reiteration and re-articulation of stereotype of Arab wealth that are recited in London. The conventions of Arab sociability and sexuality are themselves recited in relation to local and global discourses and in relation to situated projects of 'ethnic identity' making. In the next section I explore how Arab-ness for migrant-students at British universities in the 20th century was largely about regionalist politics, in the 21st century University going British-born or raised Arabs avoid divisive politics and instead collectively recite culturally informed sexual-politics as the basis of a common Arab-ness.

'No sex [ual -politics] please, we're' Arabs

Yasmin, President of the Arabic Society at UCL in 2006 described the overwhelming male orientation of society activities '*There are so many men and when we organise parties and dinners they complain to me that there aren't enough girls at the parties, crazy! It was like they thought it is a dating agency, well it is a dating agency I guess."* In similar terms Deena (former) president of the UCL Arabic society recalled: *"The guys wanted football, but we (female administration of the Society) really wanted to have debates and events to do with politics ... but we just had so much resistance from them (guys). It was a typical Arab thing, I mean I used to look at other societies and I used to just think why can't we be like that?.*

With similar assumptions to my own Yasmin pointed out *"I don't understand how you can be Arab and not interested in Politics but they just weren't"*. While there has been a general decline in student politicization and militancy at universities in Britain, as I have suggested in Chapter three the violent and divisive history of Arab politics in London led many parents to condition their children to fear and stay away from

anything political, particularly in relation to 'Arabs'. The SOAS Palestine Society was and remains the only Arab-related University Society that has remained consistently politically active with year round debates, lectures, seminars, conferences, and an annual film festival. While Arabic society events seek to cover the costs of these events the parties and gigs organised by the Palestine Society at SOAS are used to raise money or awareness of the Palestinian and other Arab causes.

Figure 18: Collage taken from the webpage of the Arabic society at UCL.

According to the accounts that I collected, University Arabic Societies were characterised not only by their lack of engagement in Arab politics but also a difficult relationship with Islamic societies. University 'Arabic societies' are based on the idea of being ethnically or culturally Arab while 'Islamic societies,' largely run by students of South Asian origin, are based on the idea of Islamic universalism and strict adherence to gendered roles and norms. Mixed gender parties, the promotion of *Shisha* smoking and belly dancing are the dominant activities of Arabic societies and seemed to cause the most significant antagonism between Arabic and Islamic societies. According to Deena, members of the Islamic society '*would find out that we were having a party and they would get all twisted up about it, they would say like "I thought you were better than this". There were a couple who I chatted with a few times and, you know attended some events, and when they get to know you they are like "Oh actually you are quite conservative, you don't drink, you don't go clubbing that much, you are actually very*

similar to us, your parents are strict, we thought you were a complete 'slapper'" Just because I was hanging out with guys, these guys are just friends they are like my brothers a lot of them are older than me and they look out for me, we are not doing anything, it's all in public you know, we are having lunch or something.

Gender segregation and the policing of female sexuality are central regulatory ideals for being a good Arab and Muslim woman, albeit with different degrees of adherence. Deena narrates all the components of an idealized discourse of Arab femininity: the ability to socialise in mixed gender groups, but at the same time maintain her honour and reputation as a good 'Arab girl' by not drinking too much or being seen to have too much freedom and importantly seeing the world in terms of kinship ties. In her discourse suspicion regarding the nature of her mixed gender friendships is neutralized by presenting male friends not as potential sexual or romantic partners but as protective brothers, reciting a formal gender configuration in which sexuality is central yet must be consistently renounced. The consequences for being seen to transgress these gendered 'Arab' and 'Islamic' regulatory ideals is the stigma of being seen as sexually available and therefore disreputable and ultimately unfit for marriage. Shams described his experience of attitudes towards women in the Arab and Muslim social scenes at university in the following terms:

"In the Arab Society at UCL you got two types of guys that wanna go to these things (Arabic parties). Like one girl told me "it's an Arab speed-dating society" so they're looking for the nice pretty Arab girls – two common minds with two common interests can meet. Then you have another group of Arabs, men, who are like they will not talk to girls although they'd like to, they're quite religious – you know. There was this barbecue event we tried to organise and these religious Arab guys who were also members of the Islamic Society refused to have girls at the event and there was uproar. The girls said "No we're coming" I mean for God's sake the Society President is a girl, are you gonna organise an event where she is not invited? It's so stupid! And then they (religious Arab guys) said ok we'll have a compromise, we'll have two tables one for the guys and one for the girls and we can come over to your table but you can't come over to the boys table. It was ridiculous! I was disgusted!

Girls are really paranoid about how they are seen and judged, I don't like that, seriously I don't! I don't like the way they are put in that position. I know a lot of girls, I like Aad'it'hum (sitting with them/ amongst them) I like 'cotching' with them (Afro-Caribbean slang for 'hanging out with). You need their company sometimes and some of the religious Arab guys didn't like me cause' I was known as a guy who had a lot of female friends. I didn't really enjoy my time at the Arab society but I went to the events just to make a statement. It's typical of our political affairs– we just don't always get along. [Pause] In the end of the day the girls want to meet Arab guys. It doesn't matter if she fancies a Black guy or a White guy. Cause of family or because of their own personal preferences perhaps, they need Arab men they need to look for a potential suitor. Where else are they going to find one?"

The regulation of gender segregation is expected as much of men as well as women. Sham's narrative shows that there are also social consequences for men who interrupt the recitation of this norm. Shams's account supports Balassar's argument that "young people's knowledge of the meanings which 'family' holds for their elders is a powerful influence on their actions ... Rejecting the home world is the most difficult act imaginable" (2006:7). Norms relating to gender, family and class are recited through narrow notions of endogamy which limit the possibilities of their choice of marriage partner. Consequently marriage suitability seems to present itself as a set of very public as opposed to private criteria that must be satisfied.

The Arab social scene at university and among young professionals are the contexts in which the inscribed norm of reproducing a "respectable Arab family" are experienced. Peer groups in these contexts often seem to become a moral community, stepping into the shoes of parental control by policing the border of what constitutes legitimate and intelligible 'Arab' behaviour. However, within these networks competing and contradictory demands are made of young Arab women by young Arab men. While men repeatedly stressed that they were looking for an Arabic girl who wasn't "too Arabic" or "too English" they seemed to dismiss many of the "girls," as they are often described (A reference to their (presumed) virginity and pre-marital status therefore their pre-woman hood), who they socialised with at clubs and parties. Many believed that they would never meet a woman they could marry at a club or party while

others insisted that they would not consider any female they had slept with as a potential marriage partner. Young Arab women seemed perfectly blameworthy; while celibacy would be considered as representing virtue and frigidity equally, a normal sex life would be tantamount to promiscuity, lead to the loss of reputation and a sign that ultimately she could not be trusted with her sexuality. In many cases young men would actively court Arab girls within these social scenes, while planning on marrying what have become known as take-away' brides from their countries of origin.

Like many other migrant groups British-born or raised Arabs are conditioned from an early age to think of their public personas and reputations in terms of their effect on marriage which is a constant pre-occupation and motivation in socializing. Boundaries between 'ethnic' and 'native' others are often centred on the control of female sexuality. In the case of Italian-Australians Baldassar notes how 'Australian girls are there to be used while Italian girls are to be respected' and married (1999: 12). According to the Christian 'Mediterranean honour and shame maxim' as described by Peristiany (1965) and Bottomley (1983) women are accorded a spiritual and emotional superiority to men which, at the most abstract level takes the figure of the virgin mother (Mary) as its ideal (Baldassar 1999). Yet simultaneously women are seen to have an innate voracious sexual appetite which requires constant male regulation. Naber finds similar constructs imposed upon Arab-American women who are forced to negotiate the terrain between the discursive constructs of "Arab virgin vs. American(ized) whore" (2006:92). Accordingly for Arab-American Christians 'what distinguished "us" from "them" or *al-Arab* from *al-Amerikan* (the Arabs from the Americans)... was a reiterated set of norms that were sexualised, gender specific and performed in utterances such as "*banatna ma bitlaau fil lail*" (our girls don't stay out at night)" (ibid:93). The way in which young Arab women negotiate the demands of an idealised Arab womanhood through acts of social comportment makes the Arabic social scene, at university and beyond, fertile ground for an analysis of the way in which notions of being Arab are imperfectly and contextually reproduced. The gestures and codes of this disavowed cult of sexuality where the competing demands of feminine sexuality, comportment and control are, I argue, most clearly inscribed in bodily performance of Middle Eastern dance.

Raqs (Dance): expression, comportment and sexuality

Kings College London Arabic and Iranian Societies
Middle Eastern Cruise II – Celebrating Sadeh Festival
Wednesday 15th February 2006
Swan Pier (Blackfriars Bridge) 7:30pm

I board the boat and make my way upstairs to the top deck where most of the activities are taking place. The DJ had set himself up and draped an Iranian flag over the table with the (CD) decks. He is dressed in low cut jeans with a large chain hanging from his belt loop and a crisp baseball cap, worn 'Street-style' with the tag still attached and the front visor still wide and fresh - no creases. There were no surprises in terms of the music which is usually a mix of hip-hop, RnB with some Iranian and Arabic thrown in, the staple diet of these events. It makes for a strange mix, Arabic pop music is painfully romantic, kitsch and staggering in the innocence of its themes. It is governed by market forces in the Middle East where the censor's scissors work overtime and the consuming public expects an idealized representation of forbidden love - true love. It teaches a certain type of romance to the younger generation where love takes precedence over lust and sexual desire. Hip-hop and RnB could not be more contrasting in its explicit lyrics and themes which almost seem diametrically opposed to the Middle Eastern pop song and yet they are simultaneously enjoyed by these young people who see themselves as connected to them both. 'habibi bahebak' (darling I love you) hand-in-hand with 'Bling', 'Ice', 'Scrubs' and 'Hos'

The environment is sexually charged. Men are openly grabbing Women by the waist (including some of the veiled). It seems they feel it's a safe enough setting to enact their sexual desires and frustrations; many are definitely not behaving like 'good Muslims'. The music jolts from the serenading movements of Arabic dance music to bumping and grinding of RnB, people rubbing up against each other and getting carried away. "That's not what we came here for, we came to dance to Arabic music that's the whole point, and there aren't enough Arabic people. The atmosphere at an Arabic party would have been better" said Reem (female). "Look!

They're all over each other, ya'nni 'ayb b'gad (I mean it's shameful, seriously). This like Asian looking guy just tried to grab me by the waist, eh il araf da! (How disgusting is that!)".

Half way through the evening the hip-hop is interrupted by the heavy drums of some traditional Baladi (country/ folk) music and one of the party organisers Hazem (male) makes an announcement over the mic in a distinctive Arab- London-American accent "We have a beautiful girl who is going to show us her belly-dancing skills, its Louise from 'Kings', a big round of applause!". Louise, in her early 20's with pale skin and long auburn hair is dressed in a two piece belly-dancing outfit or badla (suit) with her midriff, arms, shoulders and legs bare. She starts to make her way around the dance floor, supposedly belly dancing. She compensates her lack of technique with an extremely sexualised dance. The males are attentive and clapping her on, they seem impressed by this version of 'Baladi' (folk/country). She is shaking everything with little left for the imagination. Some of the girls look on, visibly unimpressed and making no effort to hide it. I asked Reem, do you think that an Arabic girl would volunteer to do that. "Tab'an La'!" (Of course not!) came the answer abruptly. "It is definitely not an option for an Arabic girl to dress up as a belly-dancer 'Ayb awi (it's completely shameful), can you imagine what people would say!"

Although her signification is far from unproblematic, the belly dancer is one of the principle symbols of Arabic culture in London, she is the sexual trope of oriental 'ethnicity' and is used unabashedly for commercial profit through parties and restaurants in London. Almost all the belly dancers at the Arabic restaurants in London are non-Arabs. Although Arab women dance *Baladi* (country/ folk dance) on the dance floor with male and female friends it is seen as disreputable to dance for a crowd in a setting like this in a *badla*. The two piece sequined belly dancing outfit seems to be something for mostly non-Arabs to indulge in.

The origins of the *badla* lie at the heart of this contestation. The traditional village form of *raqs baladi* (folk dance), an almost stationary solo improvisation performed to family and friends while wearing numerous layers of clothing, was transformed to a cabaret style display "that borrowed freely from the all-female image of Middle Eastern dance produced by American film corporations" (Shay and Sellers Young 2005: 20).

The two piece costume popularized by Hollywood was soon adopted for commercial purposes in Cairo's cabarets and casinos to satisfy the western tastes of Arab elites and curious tourists. The transformation from *baladi* to "belly dancing" or "danse de ventre" took place in the late 19th century. Sol Bloom "the Music Man" bought the "Algerian and Tunisian Village troupe" to the 1893 *World's Columbia Exposition* in Chicago.

> *"The dancing girls gave performances in a 1,000-seat hall. Their great specialty was the danse de ventre. When the public learned that the literal translation was "belly dance," they delightedly concluded that it must be salacious and immoral, and the paying crowds poured in. Bloom states that the danse de ventre, while sensuous and exciting, was a masterpiece of rhythm and beauty. Almost immediately, though, the dance was imitated in amusement parks around the country, and became associated with debasement and vulgarity as a crude, suggestive dance known as the "Hoochy-Koochy." (Roth 2000: 4)*

The renowned Egyptian dancer Tahia Carioca was famous for "being able to dance on a single tile" a reference to the bodily control and homage to traditionalism in her dance. However the form of dance popularized by "belly dancing" classes at universities and likewise popularized for commercial purposes by restaurants and clubs is the cabaret form. The antagonism presented by the *badla* and the body beneath and between its *text*ile[84] affirms the centrality of the body and the fabrics through which it is expressed. For many non-Arabs and Arabs alike the *badla* and its aesthetic at first sight appear to signify the Orient perfectly. However its genealogy quickly reveals its *mestizo* character. The politics of the *badla* creates interesting parallels with Butler's observations of drag. While the east-west nature of the *badla* might lead it to be seen as a 'hybrid' I suggest that it is better seen as a form of cultural (rather than gender) drag. For Butler the power of drag is not that it is a radically transgressive paradigm but that ultimately it parodies and undermines normative gender. The *badla* parodies Orient and Occident, representing bodily freedom for some and ironically the ultimate marker of bodily regulation for others, a celebration of free and natural female sexuality and its simultaneous and unabashed objectification and commoditization. The *badla* at once a

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[84] By textile I mean to refer to the way in which the textile and fabric which make the badla

repertoire of bodily and material signification parodies and undermines both strict separations between oppositional eastern or western genders or Arab and western "cultures", in other words the *badla* parodies both. For the non-Arab female like Louise at the Arabic boat party, the *badla* may signify cultural worldliness and an expression of confident female sexuality, but the inherent communicative failure in signification can mean that while she feels a connection and affinity with Arab culture through the *badla* and belly dancing it simultaneously cast her as 'female-other', 'moral-other' and sexual object to an Arab audience.

Reem's reference to what people would say is not concerned with the solo nature of the dance but the wearing the revealing *badla* or (uniform/ suit). Traditional *baladi* dance rarely involves the revealing outfit. At weddings women will be singled out and taken to the dance floor by elders to dance *baladi* sometimes simply wrapping a scarf around their hips to emphasise the movements of the dance as other stand around and clap her on or join in. Although this display is public it is seen as legitimate because it is coded within the familial sphere and the reproduction and celebration of marriage. In contrast the Arabic party exists on the margin of the formal family sphere where peers police the reproduction of gendered norms and evaluate each other in terms of marriage-ability. Marriage itself is often practically beyond these young men and women in their late teens and early twenties. However, marriage represents the future, the next phase in their lives and therefore marriageability is about practicing and performing the gendered values that create a respectable and therefore eligible partner, a project which precludes performances involving the *badla* however good natured or 'cultural' they might be.

Adra argues that few Arabs will perform belly dance in environments that include foreigners and makes a brief mention of *Raqs Sharqi* (Eastern dance) at Arabic parties in the diaspora where he finds that

> "[T]here has been some accommodation to social change and global influences. Currently mixed gender groups of friends and relatives can be seen dancing at the elite nightclubs without loss of respect, at least by their peers. This dance however does not include the same pelvic isolations that would be performed at home among intimates or at gender segregated parties. An adaptation of belly dance that combines small hops and the footwork of traditional local line dances with an elaboration of arm movements, minimising shoulder and pelvic shimmies are performed to Middle Eastern music. This is the variation of

dance often performed in mixed gender parties in Arab cities as well as in the diaspora, especially in Europe and the United States" (2005: 38).

Indeed I found that in more mainstream clubs or bar settings where British-born or raised Arabs share social space with non-Arabs *raqs baladi* is used to enforce and emphasise cultural boundaries and reinforce exotic authenticity, particularly by women. *Raqs Sharqi* is "regarded as an indigenous activity which is difficult for outsiders to copy well" (Adra, 2005: 37). Arab authenticity, femininity and control are deployed by some British-born or raised Arab women to counter the perceived advantage of sexual availability that non-Arab girls are assumed to have. The ability to dance *Baladi* or *Sharqi* and to display the correct levels of intensity, play and humour, directing flirtatious shimmies and gazes at friends and not directly to prospective partners are ways in which females use their cultural knowledge to show that they have acquired notions of Arab femininity correctly. In the context of London, Arabic parties are very rarely exclusively Arab but attitudes towards the presence of non-Arabs at parties that are advertised as "Arabic" are mixed.

> *Arabic Night at Pangea Mayfair: 06/04/06*
> *A text message had gone round a day earlier advertising the night*
> *DJ Mike from Buddha bar Beirut.*
> *Mixing the best in Arabic/R&B /House*
> *10 pm til late @ Pangea, Mayfair.*
>
> *£15 at the door, exclusive club scene thing going on, drinks at the Bar £8. I met Noor and we coordinated with the Tala and Aseel to meet just after 10 at the door. There were a lots of non-Arabs in the queue, Noor and Tala say "hwaya Ingleez" (lots of English people) with both surprise and a little disdain. This is the feeling you get at many Arab events, that the expectation is that you are going somewhere to socialise with Arabs and that the mixed crowd of Arab and non-Arab makes it almost dishonest to promote the event as an 'Arabic night'. The usual suspects are there; the kind of late 20 something professional transnational crowd that you see when there is an Arab related social event in the affluent locales of west London.*

The music is mostly western interspersed with Arabic, the music is less pop and more instrumental Arabic music mixed with the electronic beats and the bass of 'house music'. There were a large numbers of non-Arab men and women; particularly a large group of English girls who were scantily dressed and getting progressively drunk as the evening went on. The Arabic girls balance out their competition by really going for it Baladi. They know what to do, how to move and many mime the words. This is a serious performance which shows the English girls, to be lacking in something… it is a staking out of cultural territory and also a reaffirmation of their authenticity… not only reaffirming identity but also giving confidence. This creates an interesting effect in terms of the role of Arabic parties as a place for Arab men and women to meet or at least an opportunity to see and be seen by other Arabs. Men who are more opportunistic may make the most of this themed event of which they are an authentic Arabic part to take someone home, probably not an Arabic girl though.

There is an interesting variation in this 'Arabic night', usually these events are symbolised by the image or person of the belly dancer. While a belly dancer did make an appearance just before midnight she was preceded by something different which I have not seen before. Something for the girls as it were - three Chippendales, naked from the waist upwards wearing Ghutra and Agal (traditional Bedouin head dress). They were there right from the start of the night and made their way around the club carrying trays of tequila shots which they tried to sell, mainly to females.

Once again it is a non-Arab body which is used as a medium through which to sexualise Arab-ness. Symbols of Arab sexuality or Orientalist fantasies are needed for all of these events but they are rarely enacted by Arabs themselves… which of these middle class Arab men would go half naked and wear a Ghutra and Agal?

Dalia (female) is dancing away, I approach her a few minutes later and we start chatting. She tells me that a guy came up to her and tried to touch her as she was dancing Baladi…"Wahid Hindi! (An Indian guy) ya'nni (I mean) I didn't come to this place to be touched up by someone like that … no offence. Ya'nni wahid zay dah! (I mean someone like that)You can look but you can't touch"

Because he is Asian he is perceived as unsuitable in all ways, on top of this he breaks the codes of behaviour that operate at these parties. Most of the people present are accustomed to socialising with each other it is very unlikely that anyone would have touched her, even if he was flirting with her, unless she was openly known to be in a relationship with him (or a close male friend). These young people constitute a moral community with codes of behaviour that regulate male/female interactions and flirtation. Outsiders may believe this to be just to be a "normal" albeit ethnic London club-night where the same sexual opportunism can be played out. In so doing they break the conventions of legitimate behaviour and in turn as used as a way asserting that the event is not Arab enough.

In separate parties and separate settings, one a university and the other a group of young professional Arabs, females make a point of rejecting the advances of South Asian men who are cast as ethnic and class 'others' regardless of their actual class status. The censure of British South Asians by some (men) within the shisha café scene and here by women in the party scene appears to show the intersection of racist discourses from both British and Arab contexts in relation to British South Asians and South Asians more broadly. The censure is informed not only by local British racial discourse but equally by the way in which South Asian migrant workers in the Arab Peninsula are the subject of economic exploitation, racial segregation and discrimination. It is hardly coincidental that the period of my fieldwork also corresponded with an unprecedented level of travel by young British born or raised Arabs to Dubai and in some cases settlement there. I had undergone this move myself and returned unable to live in inherently racists and apolitical society where hierarchy is reproduced by capitalist relations. I found that both in Dubai and in London many of those raised in London in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods now living in Dubai would rather quickly adopt racist attitudes in particular towards South Asians. Indeed in terms of Ignatiev's discussion this racism was not fuelled by competition over the same jobs or labour market but simply by the characterisations of South Asians as occupying low paid, low status jobs. Taking full advantage of being both British and Arab in Dubai many seem to have to have found themselves elevated in the racial and socio-economic hierarchy, perhaps not to the status of white European immigrant or 'local' Emirati's but

nonetheless in a position to benefit from the economic and social stigmatisation of others. The rejection of the advances of South Asian men (British or otherwise) seems to have been a common trope in the Arabic party scene and one which reflected the importance of these parties and gathering for the reproduction of particular notions of group belonging where reputations and 'standards' were important in relation to courtship.

These events provide no anonymity within which to experiment socially or sexually, which might be easily achieved by simply going to a club where there are likely to be no Arabs at all. They are contexts in which notions of what it means to do Arab-ness are recited and displayed for others to see. Thus drinking alcohol, which is controversial for some, is acceptable as long as you are not seen to be drunk. Flirtation is acceptable but sexuality beyond a certain boundary, usually marked by touching, is unacceptable.

Following on from the discussions and narratives of learning to be an Arab woman in chapter four the Arabic party with its mix of 'Arabs' and 'non-Arabs' emphasises the way in which different modes of femininity operate. Arab women tend to see the stereotyped 'English girl' as being sexually available and unconcerned about their reputation. The perceived norms of "English" behaviour create the oppositional other against which being an Arab woman is measured and made intelligible. These different modes of gender suggest that gender performativity should be subject to disaggregation. Hetronormativity contains elements of universality, however as Babyan and Najambadi note it also functions with particular configurations of desire, subjectivity and marital structures which are various and culturally contingent (2007: 23). Different gendered discourses call into being different ways of being a woman, in this case around notions of sexual availability, reputation, marriageability, culture and ethnicity. Ideologies of the "Arab woman" and "English woman" here centre on being reputable vs. disreputable, free and sexually-liberated vs. confined and sexually-repressed. 'The adjacent and familiar others' (Barth 1994:13) of "diaspora space" make it difficult to represent "English girls" as indigenous-others and "Arabic girls" as ethnic-others (Brah, 1996: 209). Yet the shared but distinct configurations of hetronormativity to which these women are *subjected* seem to create divisive strategies of moral othering between them, reinforce Butler's assertion that gender and race work together to produce the socially intelligible subject. Busby's assertion that gender and the body are understood differently in 'Euro-American' and 'Eastern' contexts is tested by these interactions in London where the subject is at once produced between and through the stylised bodily

acts and gendering and racialising structures of both 'Eastern' and 'Euro-American' discourses. In other words 'English girls' and 'Arabic girls' are (re)produced through bodily acts and the recitation of race-gender norms in particular contexts and to particular audiences which do not necessarily correspond comfortably with notions of the embedded orient and the disembedded occident.

The theme of race and gender has further historical roots in relations to Middle Eastern dance. As the ethnographic notes above suggest, the bodies physically adorned to sexualise 'Arab culture' at parties in London, be they male or female, are rarely 'Arab'. The genealogical perspective suggests that far from being a unique cultural adaptation in the diaspora, there is a degree of historical continuity in the use of ethnic and social 'others' to embody, enact and represent the gestures and codes of sexuality in Arab or Middle Eastern dance. Under the Ottoman *Millet* system non-Muslims or members of 'distinct' ethnic and tribal minorities in the Middle East were associated with or assigned particular roles in the division of labour; and in some cases non-Muslims were exempt from certain laws, norms and restrictions that applied to wider Muslim society.

Numerous travel accounts from Istanbul and other parts of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th Centuries suggest that female and male dancers and public performers in the Middle East came almost exclusively from cultural or ethnic minorities like the Gypsy tribes of the *Ghawazi* and *Bahlawanaat* in Egypt and the *Qawlia* in Iraq who were known for their male and female dancers. "Since a Turkish man would not deign to be a public performer" male dancers at the time were often ethnically Greek, Armenian or Jewish (Jansen: 84 in Karayanni (2004: 28)). I found that none of the British-born or raised Arabs with whom I spoke had any historical awareness of the historical *roots/routes* of the dances which are now used with confidence to signify traditional and popular 'Arab culture'. Nonetheless, what remains fascinating is that along with the actual form (belly dancing) the anxieties over public and private spheres, gender, sexuality and comportment have been transported and reiterated over time and space as have the strategies of using 'social-others' to enact them publically. In the following section I will consider how observing young Arabs in London imperfectly recite *Raqs Sharqi (oriental dance)* and *Raqs Baladi (Country/folk dance)* disrupts and interrogates notions of Arab masculinity as much as it inscribes defines notions of Arab femininity.

Male dancing and gender ambiguity

Night out at Ayoush, James Street

15th July 2006

We had agreed to meet at Ayoush an up-market Egyptian restaurant, bar and café on the corner of Wigmore Street and James Street. It was well within the imaginary boundaries of Arab London. Levant a similarly themed venue is about 100 meters away. Round the corner on Baker Street were some Arab financial landmarks like the National Bank of Kuwait, its Camel logo signage protruding out onto the pavement. It is early summer and Khaleeji men and women heavy with shopping can be seen emerging from Selfridges and Oxford Street. James Street, narrow and densely packed with cafes and restaurants is quite unique in that almost all the cafés and restaurants that line it have pavement seating, a rare taste of café society in London, perfectly continental or Arab - somewhere where you can see and be seen.

At Ayoush the walls are lined with pictures of Egyptian film stars and singers from the early to mid-20th Century, the golden age of Egyptian cinema. It is quite tastefully decorated in a mix of Pharonic, Moroccan and Egyptian themes. The crowd is cosmopolitan. Downstairs there is a bar and dining area which has been the venue of a number of birthday parties and get-togethers. A small dancing area is set among five alcoves where groups sit and eat a variety of Arab cuisines from Moroccan clay tagine pots and ornately decorated plates and glasses.

Basil was a regular at Ayoush he had made friends with the staff, Jezel the Brazilian belly dancer and the family that runs the restaurant. As we sat downstairs at the bar watching diners eating Egyptian/ Lebanese food from Moroccan-style earthenware (a combination typical of London's Arab foodscape) Basel passed me a Tabla (goblet drum) and urges me to play as he and some of the boys take to the dance floor singing along with the music, a mixture of Lebanese and Egyptian pop. I can't help notice the gender parody and play in the way 'the boys' are dancing with each other –

Basel with his rather full build suddenly stops and shakes his chest from side to side just centimetres from Yaseen mimicking the way that professional female dancers lean back and forth swaying and shivering their breasts. Yaseen bursts into laughter as does the Egyptian bar man who looks at me and says 'he's such a joker'. Shortly afterwards Basel tells me that the belly dancer would arrive any minute "she's so fit! She's from South America!" The DJ faded the music from Arabic pop to the earthy drum beats of Baladi (folk/country) as Jezel appeared making her way down the stairs to the dining area/ dance floor wrapped in a silk shawl and dressed in a revealing sequined two piece dancing outfit, a scarf wrapped tightly around her hip bones.

As she danced using complex movements of the arms, hips and abdomen typical of contemporary commercial Baladi dancing we backed up against the bar surrounding her in a circle, clapping and cheering her on. Jezel made her way around the tight space gracefully in time to the music, trying to get male and female guests to join her on the dance floor. The mixed clientele are usually always too intimidated by the dance and the dancer to take part. Although Baladi is traditionally an improvised solo dance which until the mid-20th century had no formal style it has taken on a format which requires agility and expertise. Jezel manages to persuade a non-Arab woman in a party hat, in the middle of her meal, to dance with her. She held her hand as she reluctantly got up and shyly move her hips and made the shape of an 8 using her arms and hands, she quickly turns bright red as Jezel effortlessly moves her hips and shoulders to the beats of the Tabla. Basel needed no further encouragement, he knew that in order for the show to be successful and fun someone had to accompany Jezel, he joined her on the dance floor returning the flirtatious dance moves she presented, he got up-close but never close enough to touch, mimicking shimmies of her shoulders and breasts, his hands raised to shoulder height, his gaze never set straight at her, instead he looked up at the ceiling or at his friends and only fleetingly at her.

Basil seemed unaware that with his composure and gestures he was stepping in and out of contemporary conventions of masculinity and femininity encoded in *raqs sharqi*.

I began to note the different way in which dance in the social events and venues of Arab London reflected particular gender ideologies. During a subsequent visit to *Ayoush* I saw Mohammed, an Egyptian member of staff accompany Jezel and other belly-dancers in entertaining the customers. For these performances Mohammed would dress in the traditional clothes of a male from the Egyptian countryside; a white scarf wrapped around his head a *Sidiri* (waistcoat) showing through the open buttons of his *Jalabiyah* (traditional gown). His main prop was a thick cane about a meter and a half in length which he would swing round and balance as he danced. The stick is a trope of masculinity and is typically carried by men as a weapon and is sometimes used in a ritualized display of fighting and dancing called *Tahteeb* where men posture and cross, swing and gesture with their cane. When dancing with females the cane is often used to manipulate the female dancer, placed around but not touching the dancers' hips as the couple move around the dance floor, the male dancer leading and controlling, almost taming his female dance partner. This duet is very much part of the traditional village genre which encourages self-expression but at the same time demands limitation and control.

In contrast to the way in which Basil accompanied Jezel, Mohammed's dance is overtly masculine and avoids the movements characteristic of performances of professional female dance, in fact Mohammed's dance is not belly dancing at all. The overt masculinity in Mohammed's dance is encrypted with notions of a strict separation between masculine and feminine which, far from being authentically Arab is largely related to European gender sensibilities that were imposed by law during the colonial era. During fieldwork I found that in clubs and parties around London where Arabic pop music or traditional *baladi* were played most young Arab males danced using the conventions of female folk dance as opposed to the male forms.

Anthony Shay argues that in the post-independence era in Egypt a re-fashioning of folk dance took place whereby this improvised folk genre was formalized creating clear distinction between male and female dance forms which sought to provide a level of gendered respectability to the folk genre. This was felt to be necessary as part of the project of nation-building to which folklore is so instrumental. The creation of strictly gender defined roles in folklore dance by post-independence choreographers was designed to counter the historical stigma attached to public Middle Eastern folk dance that developed during the European colonial era when the British banned male and female Street dancing (Shay 2005).

Up until the early 20th century Street dancers were commonly seen in Cairo, Damascus, Bukhara and Istanbul entertaining people outside bars and coffee houses. These performers occupied a dual space as popular Street entertainers performing a genre rooted in play and humour and the exotic dancing Orientals of European fantasies. As female performers, the *Ghawazi* were set apart from the *Awalim* who enjoyed high status, dancing only in all-female gatherings, or if males were present, silhouetted behind a wooden lattice or *Mashrabiyah*. *Awalim* (sing *"Almah"* literally "learned") performed almost exclusively for the rich and at court. They were considered to be accomplished artists and reputed more for their vocal performances of folk songs and poetry rather than their dancing (Valassopoulos, 2007). In contrast the G*hawazi* (female) and *Khawalāt* (male) who performed for public audiences for money were stigmatized as disreputable, of low status and "correctly … seen as sexually available" (Shay 2005: 55, Mathee, 2000: 139).[85] Despite their association with homosexuality and prostitution male and female Street performers were popular and took part in public celebrations like the *Moulid* (Festivals venerating local saints) which attracted large audiences. They were reputed for their beauty, athleticism and the humorous sexual references in their displays and performances. Above all they were best known for their dancing which in the case of *Khawals* (male) is considered to have been close to "contemporary belly dancing techniques … What is important to grasp is that the performances of the male and female professional dancers were almost identical" (Shay 2005: 66).

The arrival of European travellers and subsequently European armies was to bring an abrupt end to these popular forms of public entertainment. The *Ghawazi* were banished from Cairo in 1834 by Muhammed Ali in an attempt to keep this aspect of 'Arab' culture away from curious European travellers. Some *Ghawazi* tried to remain in Cairo, posing as *Awalim*, but many were discovered and subsequently publically flogged before being expelled. The expulsion dealt a serious blow to the fortunes of the *Ghazzeyeh*. They went on to settle in the towns of Upper Egypt however business in the countryside was never as lucrative as the city (Karayanni 2004)

Likewise male dancers were also the subject of persecution in particular during the colonial period. The relentless homophobic censure of the Victorians who banned male

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[85] *Khawals* were grouped together with the *Ghawazi* and their counterparts the *Bahlawanaat* (*Bahlawan* now denotes 'clown' in modern usage) and came from distinct tribal groups with Gypsy roots called the *Nawar*. The meaning of the term *Ghawazi* is contested, some believe the term to mean "Invader of the heart" while others believe it to come from the word *Ghawa* which means to "be enamoured by"

Street dancing on the one hand and the adoption of European notions of gender and sexuality by post-colonial elites in the Arab world on the other were the main causes of the disappearance of male Street performers and dancers (Shay, 2005; Shay and Sellers-Young 2003; Menicucci, 1998; Dunne 1998) Today in the modern Egyptian vernacular the word *Khawal* is used exclusively as a pejorative description for homosexual males, in particular those who take on the passive role in a homosexual act (Karayanni 2004).

During fieldwork I attended numerous Arabic parties and social gatherings where I observed young males performing what can only be described as belly dancing. Some choose to adopt more reserved and less sexualised movements or restricted themselves to clapping, a legitimate and polite response to dance and music. However, many young men seem comfortable taking the diagonal stance, raising their hands above their shoulders and using their hips, chest and hands to dance. Their performances are fun, sometimes skilful and almost always intentionally humorous; it is very rarely intended to be overtly sexual or sexy. In some cases males who dance using what is now understood as a female form are celebrated for being able to dance Baladi with more aptitude than women. Shay argues that the belief that male dancers are imitating or parodying female dance is mistaken and borne out of tendencies among commentators to apply 19th century Eurocentric approaches to sexuality. However the practical realities of cultural learning lead me to be less certain than Shay about the issue of parody among young men in the diaspora. Female *Baladi* dance is by far the most prevalent, visually accessible and publicly performed type of Middle Eastern dance; it is celebrated in a way that male forms are not. Formalised male dance is rarely seen or portrayed and has yet to become as profitable or commercial. There are almost no contemporary male dance celebrities in the Arab world whilst there are plenty of female stars. Parody, play and mimicking are visibly a part of amateur male performances at social occasions, not because of adherence to or knowledge of pre-colonial attitudes and forms, but simply due to the heuristic realities of repetition in contemporary diaspora settings. Belly dancing has eclipsed other forms of popular dance and has become one of the few positive *signs* of Arab-ness in the wider world, being the discursive opposite of the male, bearded, religiously dogmatic and dangerous Arab terrorist.

Males of Arab origin who freely "play" using this dance form in London's night spots still seem to consider it inappropriate to dance as intensely or with as much

humorous abandon in the presence of parents or unfamiliar peers. Gendered boundaries of expression and gesture still play a part in regulating propriety and performance while humour and parody seem to inoculating males against homophobic censure.

Similar patterns of gender ambiguity in Middle Eastern dance can be seen at Iraqi weddings and celebrations where females, and to a lesser extent males, dance *Qawlia to Chobi* (music), characterised by a small drum wrapped around the upper torso. In contrast to the *Baladi* style in Egypt which focuses on the performers' use of the hips and abdomen and chest, the *Qawlia* dance involves the female dancer using her hair to dance by swinging her head in a circular or diagonal (8) motion. Shimmies of the shoulders and hops are also part of the repertoire. Females sometimes dance facing each other swinging their hair in rapid motions and gesture towards each other, jolting their bodies forward. Young Iraqis who dance to this music at weddings and events in London exercise a degree of self-censorship parodying and referring to *Qawlia* in their movements as opposed to fully engaging in this vibrant and energetic dance. *Qawlia* as with belly dancing is coded as female, nonetheless young men cite and enact the moves of *Qawlia* usually with large doses of humour and play. *Qawlia* sits in stark contrast with male dances in Iraq where performances are usually highly formalised and cite tribal masculinity using props like swords and guns.

Conclusion: choreographing ethnic and gendered subjects

In this chapter I have presented ethnographic material which draws attention to the relationship between discursive forms of gender and racial subjection and actual material and cultural practices, in this case in relation to the sexual politics in socialising and 'ethnic' dance. They show gender performativity to be neither exclusively discursive nor exclusively embodied, neither the preserve of west or east but a culmination of both. Importantly, gendering and the strategies used around dance, gender, sociability and sexuality are shown to take place in relation to racialising practices where male and female ethnic 'selves' and 'others' are constructed.

Dance provides insight onto notions of 'Arab culture' generally and 'diasporic Arab culture' in particular. The popular dances of *Ouled Naïl* of Algeria and the *Guedra* of Morocco, Belly dancing of the *Ghawazi* and the *Qawlia* of Iraq have emerged from marginal, often stigmatised groups to become the basis for contemporary national folk

dances that represent national 'culture'. These in turn have been eclipsed by the cabaret forms of belly dancing which is an American fusion of western and eastern dance forms and genres which was appropriated by the Egyptian film industry in the early 20th century and subsequently is now seen by countless Arabs and non-Arabs as the visual icon of 'Arab identity'. The colonial and the post-colonial create an ambivalence which I suggest is best illustrated by the problematic of *text*ile in the *badla* at once a perfect *sign* of the orient and yet simultaneously disavowed and elusive for the 'Arab femininity' it claims to represents. Shay and Sellers-Young (2005) relate how for some Arab-Americans the use of belly dancing to represent Arab-ness is problematic because of the way in which it frames the 'Arab world' through phantasmic exotic-otherness. In London we find that young Arabs, through a desire to utilise dance as an expression of 'ethnic identity' in a way orientalise themselves. In the following chapter I turn to some of the visual representations and tropes used by young Arabs in London for self-representation which, like belly dancing implicates them in visual discourses of self-Orientalism but, as I argue throughout this thesis, these should be seen as performative reiterations of 'ethnicity' within a system in which there are strong social forces which lead individuals to fashion themselves primarily through notions of ethnicity, colour, origin and culture.

Chapter Seven

Reclaiming the Orient through the diasporic gaze

Introduction

"I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think"
– Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1981

During fieldwork I searched for the visual footprints of British born or raised Arabs in London. I found very few examples of visual expression that could be attributed to British born or raised Arabs. I often came across these images I present here by chance while spending time with people in *Shisha* cafes or on university campuses, overall they are limited in their number and context and therefore cannot be described as a corpus or a visual movement, instead they are fragmentary objects of expression and representation.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes is concerned with the philosophy and method of visual representation, arriving at the "curious notion" that a universal approach to the visual might be replaced by "a new science for each object" a *'mathesis singularis'* (Barthes 1981: 8). The images I gathered in London fall between the singular and the universal, their composition at once refers to subjective intention and are framed within a particular political context, yet intertextuality and iterability places them in relation to a contentious body of representation, that of Orientalist art. They offer an ethnographic dimension to the debates in art history and post-colonial studies on Orientalism in visual representation. Importantly they provide insights onto the project of cultural survival through re-appropriation which 'ethnic minorities' must engage in their semiotic encounter with hegemonic discourses of their other-ness. I argue that on the one hand these images are grounded in resisting negative representations of Islam, 'Arabs' and 'Arab culture'. On the other hand they are conspicuously nostalgic, a means of (re)citing, (re)imagining and (re)presenting Arab-ness in ways that can foster ethnic-pride in a 'multicultural' setting. What is fascinating is that this is achieved by employing the tropes and minutiae of the timeless and exotic Orient of the colonial

imagination. The meanings within this imagery speak directly to the components of performative theory, identification, desire, mimesis and melancholia, which I will go onto discuss in my concluding chapter.

Semiotics encounters: the belly dancer and the terrorist

The image of the female belly dancer (see figures 19, 20, 21) is used with regularity on flyers advertising 'Arabic parties' organised by the Arabic societies at universities in London like UCL, SOAS, LSE, Imperial College and Queen Mary's as well as other Arab themed events organized by club promoters. The belly dancer is a readymade aesthetic; eroticism and mystery do not have to be worked onto her image by club and party promoters because the belly dancer is already in her Orientalist form a mysterious, erotic and sexual "creature". I was able to locate most the images used to promote Arab themed events in London in their original form on the internet where they are freely available. From a rigidly east/ west perspective these images might therefore be seen as the fashioning, by young Arabs, of an ethnic self-image through the Orientalist aesthetics of erotic, exotic and commodifiable Arab female body.

Figure 19: Poster advertising an LSE Arabic Society party.
Haughton Street, London 18/01/07
Source: Author

Figure 20: Poster advertising an "Arabic Mediterranean Party" 12th April 2006.
Seen at Downtown Café, Paddington Street London. 03/04/06
Source: Author

Figure 21: Poster advertising Kings College (London) Arabic and Iranian boat party
15/02/06.
Source: Author

The belly dancer seems a natural choice of image to promote the 'Arabic party' scene, she is feminine, graceful, skilled, sexual, exotic and beautiful, adjectives largely absent from the contemporary (and dominant) economy of signs, both pre and post-911 and 7/7, where "Arab", "Muslim" or "Middle Eastern" signifies backwardness, aggressive and oppressive masculinity, religious fundamentalism, terrorism and war. The belly dancer corresponds sharply not only to a generalized imagery of the (masculine) Arab world but also with the image of veiled and oppressed Arab and Muslim woman. In comparison the belly dancer presents herself as free, sexual and confident, her body acting as the locus of her expression, a perfect antidote to the hegemonic, and panic stricken, western imagination.

Daniella Gioseffi interprets dancing and belly dancing in particular as a "site of female power" (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005: 15). The 'liberating' and 'sensual' reception of cabaret style belly dancing has contributed to its adoption as a popular hobby in Europe and the United States among non-Arab women of all ages and sizes. In recent year's R&B music and hip-hop, the mainstay of Arabic club nights and parties have also incorporated the belly dancer into their lyrics and videos.

Hey ladies drop it down
Just want to see you touch the ground
Don't be shy girl go Banaza
Shake ya body like a belly dancer

Girl shake ya body body
With somebody body
Whatever you do don't break your body body
After the party party
Grab a hottie hottie
In the back seat of your Mazaratti-ratti
Jiggle jiggle it to the left (ah ah ah)
Jiggle jiggle it to the right (ah ah ah)
Jiggle it to the front then jiggle it to the back
And jiggle jiggle it all all night (ah ah ah)

"Bananza Belly Dancer".
By American R&B Rapper *Akon* – 2005

Plate 1: Jean Leon Gerome. The *Almeh* (with pipe). circa1873. Oil on Canvas 53 x 40.5 cm. The Najd Collection, ©Mathaf Gallery, London

The contemporary belly dancer to whom young Arabs and non-Arabs are attached owes much to the stylised iconography of the *odalisque* and the *Almeh* (Danseuse) of 19th Century Orientalist art and literature. The use of Orientalist tropes in the diaspora is not limited to London or the early 21st century. Arab-American musicians in 1950's and 60's New York and Boston "cleverly adapted emblems and symbols of the Orient and popularised a new musical style rooted in their own indigenous traditions. Although the trademarks of Orientalism helped them to achieve unprecedented success, it served to enhance the foreignness of these Arab and other Middle Eastern immigrants and their families – placing them in an imaginary world that was exotic even to themselves." (Rasmussen 2005: 172).

I argue that the imagery (re)used by young Arabs in London to represent their 'ethnicity' lies within the Orientalist genre of paintings and imagery and adopts its technical conventions of representation. The loaded nature of the terms "Orientalist" and "Orientalism" make this claim controversial as it suggests that young Arabs in London have unwittingly or cynically embraced the *phantasmic* and objectifying motifs

of European Orientalism; that Orientalism has infected the "Oriental" mind, creating an alien self-image based on essentialising "Western" discourses. While the imagery is undoubtedly Orientalist in terms of its artistic genealogy, it is not necessarily to be read as *Orientalism* in the pejorative sense; they are attempts to visually recite a situated impression of 'Arab culture' in response to a particular negative discursive and visual economy and within the context of multicultural praxis.

Later in this chapter I present a selection of images from two photo shoots called 'Folklore fashion' published in the first and third issues of '*Sharq*' (East) magazine in 2005. The magazine was the first of its kind produced by British-born or raised Arabs in the name of a hyphenated "British-Arab Culture". The composition of these photographic images and the props and tropes which they deploy, display striking similarities to European Orientalist paintings and photography produced throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. By looking at the images from *Sharq* and the posters for Arabic parties I seek to unsettle some of the arguments used by scholars of art history and Arab post-coloniality regarding the nature of Orientalism in the visual arts and how Orientalism should be identified, analysed and understood.

The alternative reading that I will attempt owes much to an emergent body of literature in art history that has sought to rethink the canon of Orientalism in the visual arts (see Celik Z, 1996). Recent works on Orientalism have advocated its periodization and the acknowledgement of the heterogeneity in both literary and visual Orientalism (see Lowe, 1991; McKenzie, 1995). Orientalist representation has been de-aggregated into romantic-realist, *phantasmic,* impressionist and indigenous shades (see Benjamin, 1997; Beaulieu and Roberts M, 2002; Baer, 1999; Cappadona, 2005). The effect of gender, race and desire, power and political-economy are now being written into the interpretation of visual renditions of 19th century *popular Orientalism* (see Lewis R, 1995; Weeks E, 1998; Black J, 2006; Vogel L, 1972) these *post-Orientalism* works attempt to revise the colonial, literary and artistic past. Here I attempt to introduce the post-colonial and post–migration present into this debate. The on-going simplification of Orientalism which, through popularisation, is often reduced to a simplistic category of condemnation populated with binaries of east-west, coloniser-colonised, them and us, is complicated by the visual *self*-representations of British-born or raised Arabs in London, leading to questions about the power of signification and its role in producing intelligible 'ethnic' subjects.

Re-appropriating the Orient: between structures of subjection

Although London is famous being the home-from-home of Arab publishing, there is not a single publication that focus on Arab life in Britain. An exception to this is *al-Urwa* (The Bond) the monthly newsletter of 'The Arab Club of Britain' a 'first generation' institution established in 1980 which seeks to bring together Arabs living in Britain. *Al-Urwa* has largely failed to attract attention to itself as a community forum in the way that other community publications have (e.g. the Jewish Chronicle). Each issue of *Al-Urwa* contained a one-two page section called *Urwat al-Shabab* (The Bond of the Youth). However, *Urwat al-shabab* seems to be virtually unknown to British born or raised Arabs. In 2005 a group of self-styled 'British-Arabs' launched *Sharq (East)* magazine. It was the first publication to be produced by British-born or raised Arabs in London and aspired to cover the 'British-Arab cultural scene'. This act of self-labelling clearly takes its reference from the logic of multiculturalism, and was possibly the first time that the hyphenated label "British-Arab" was consciously deployed in this way. The first issue of *Sharq* was published in January 2005 with the following vision statement: *"The Sharq vision is simple. With more people emigrating to the 'West' and continued negative publicity surrounding the regimes and people of the 'East', Sharq aims to support integration whilst encouraging people to embrace, take pride in and promote the uniqueness of their heritage and culture"*. The 'From the editor' note at the front of the first issue is insightful and shows a highly self-conscious negotiation with the language and logic of contemporary 'ethnic' Britain: *"We are hybrids – united by our language, our parents, our loss, our heritage, our distant cousins, our summer holidays. We are not a race and therefore not easily identified. We must therefore identify ourselves. We need to let go of our history to embrace our future. They can co-exist if we let them. If we let go of our guilt."*

The opening statement is reflective of so many of the themes which have been explored in this thesis from the celebration of a paradigmatic hybridity advocated in the culture industry (Chow 1998; Hutnyk 2000), to the collective Arab culture of despair and the emphasis on race within British multiculturalism. This type of community publication was long awaited and many greeted its launch with enthusiasm. While the magazine adopted the broad and inclusive label 'British-Arab' it was largely centred on middle-class Arab life in west London and quickly turning into a glossy lifestyle magazine which showcased beautiful and successful people from the middle-class Arab

scene. The magazine which sought to base itself on subscriptions was sold in a handful of newsstands and five star hotels in the West End. *Sharq* failed to secure a large enough readership to sustain itself with publication ceasing less than a year after it began. Like so many previous attempts at launching a local Arab community publication (Arab Star, *Hahoona*, Local Arabia) it was unable to gain a wide appeal or fashion itself as a platform of expression.

Although it was short-lived, *Sharq* was an important indicator of the developments taking place among British-born and raised Arabs. For the purposes of the discussion of visual representation it provides a unique set of images related to the project of 'ethnic pride' and 'visibility' it set out to achieve. In the first and third issues of the (monthly) magazine *Sharq* ran two photo shoots called '*Folklore Fashion*'. The publication of the photo shoots so early on in the life of the publication affirms the importance of the visual in the project of self-representation. The first photo shoot opened with the title *"Folklore Fashion – Young British-Arabs model the finest traditional costumes from the Arab world"*. The second photo shoot two months later had more to say *"Folklore Fashion II - These young Arab professionals, who hold careers in fields ranging from finance to production, in prestigious international companies, seem far removed from the lifestyles these outfits represent. Yet, they model traditional costumes from various Arabic countries with pride"*

Plate 2: (Previous page) Folklore Fashion (photo 1) p. 58 Issue 1 © Sharq Magazine 2005Caption reads "*Omar wears Moroccan dress, Yahia wears Lebanese dress*". Each individual in the photo shoot is asked to describe what drives them. Omar (top left) says *"My desire is to be my own boss and run a successful business – Omar Hamouda 27, Service Advisor BMW Holland Park"*

Plate 3: (Previous page) 'Folklore Fashion I' (image 2), p74 Issue 1. © Sharq Magazine 2005.Caption reads *"Sharif wears traditional dress from the Gulf, Nura wears Palestinian dress"* Sharif's (left) Mantra reads *"Seeking justice for those denied it - Sharif Nashasheebi, Journalist, Chairman, Arab Media Watch."* Nura's (right) reads "The Pursuit of a happy and fulfilled life - Nura Nashasheebi, 25, Medical Sales Representative, Merck Sharp & Dohme Ltd.

Plate 4: 'Folklore Fashion I' (Image 3), p. 80. Issue 1. © Sharq Magazine 2005.Yahia's (right of frame) mantra reads *"Success – Yahia Kanj, Company Director Silverwings Automotive Repairs*.
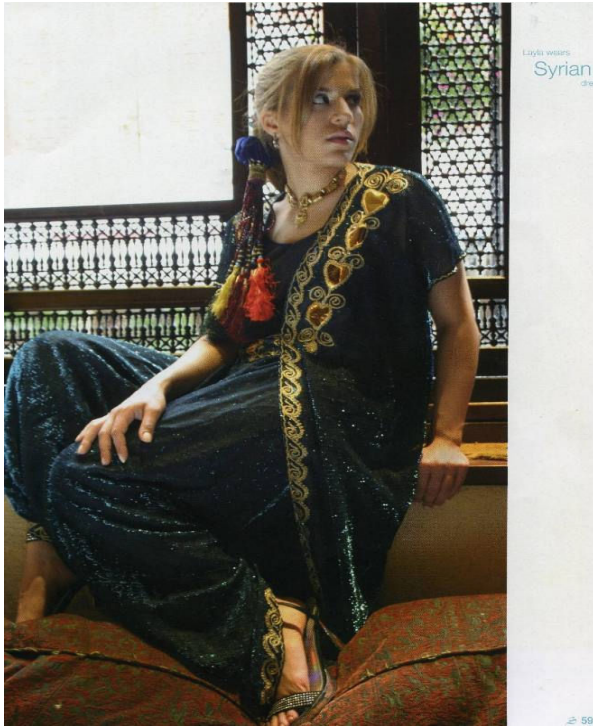
Plate 5: 'Folklore Fashion 1.' (Image 4) p. 59. Issue 1. © Sharq Magazine 2005. "Layla wears Syrian Dress" Her mantra reads *"An innate desire to want to do better and be successful as an Arab, a woman, a daughter, a sister, a friend, and an academic – Layla Maghribi, 20, Student of European Social and Political Studies with Italian; University College London".*

Plate 6: Folklore Fashion II. (Image 5) p. 50. Issue 3. © Sharq Magazine 2005. "*Jamil wears a Palestinian housecoat over a cotton galabiya*". "*Jamil Abu-Wardeh – Producer, Showtime*". "*What motivates you?*" "*Smiles*".

Plate 7: 'Folklore Fashion II'. (Image 6) p. 48. Issue 3. © Sharq Magazine 2005. *"Nadim Nassar. Services Officer, Petrofac International". "Your ideal partner in three words". "Kind. Smart. Genuine." "Nadim wears a traditional Yemeni Outfit accessorised with Headdress and Jambiyya (dagger).*

The extent to which these compositions share the '*stadium'* (Barthes, 1980: 35) of 19th Century romantic Orientalism critiqued by Nochlin (1983) in *The Imaginary Orient* and Alloula (1989) in *The Colonial Harem* is striking. Rosenthal insists that "Orientalist art should not be confused with Oriental art: it (Orientalist art) represents the European artist's view of an unfamiliar culture, rather than a view of that culture from within" (Rosenthal 1982: 8). These photographs of "young British-Arabs" problematize Rosenthal's binary. The people depicted in the photographs and the team behind the photo shoot, have no claim to being either entirely European or entirely Arab, they are inconveniently both. Is their gaze that of well-informed Europeans or the "authentic" Oriental eye from within?

Although the photographs have been taken in London, no trace of London is to be found. Only feet away, the modern city of London has been excluded for the sake of nostalgia and the picturesque. Nochlin argues that one of the principle characteristics of Orientalist art is that time always stands still. There is in effect an absence of the present or the future were often painted out, making invisible the dynamism and change that

was affecting societies in the Middle East (see Nochlin 1983: 30; Celik 2002: 26). In many ways these contemporary photographs go further than 'time standing still,' they actually go back in time to a pristine mythical golden-age of Arab civilization and decadence. Orientalist paintings from the 19th century were largely 'picturesque'. As with all picturesque art including representations of peasant life in France or workers in industrial Britain, the representations are idyllic, rarely depicting the poverty, hardships and conditions of squalor in the urban-proletarian or rural-agrarian life. Other features of Orientalist art which are detectable in these contemporary self-representations are the themes of decadence and authenticating use of props and surroundings. The disrepair shown in the architectural detail of many Orientalist paintings refers to the critique of the decadence of Arabo-Islamic societies. In similar fashion "Oriental" subjects were often composed in repose. This was intended to symbolise the idleness of Arab people. Both Orientalist paintings and their successor Orientalist photography rarely, if ever, show scenes of work or industry. "These people – lazy, slothful, and childlike, if colourful – have let their own cultural treasures sink into decay" (Nochlin 1989:39). The Hookah as Alloula calls it (*Shisha*, Narghile, water pipe) has always been central to all depictions of 'the East,' whether painted or photographed. It is an allegory for so much of what 'the West thought of 'the East.' The leisurely, aromatic and sometimes illicit practice was the perfect metaphor for idleness and lazy sensuality, diametrically opposed to the industrious Europeans.

6284 SCÈNES ET TYPES. — *Mauresque dans son Intérieur.* — LL.

Plate 8: (Previous page) Moorish woman in her quarters (*Mauresques dans son interior*). One of the postcards selected by Alloula for analysis in *The Colonial Harem.* Inlaid tables, copper platters, coffee pots cups and the hookah – the essential components of an orientalist visual composition

Through photographic illusion the scattered fragments of history are bought together as a coherent object "Arab culture" and "Arab civilization" resources for the *economies* of the imagination. The world or "lifestyle" which these renditions refer to, are, as Barthes introspective reflections on photography suggest, *habitable:*

"An old house, a shadowy porch, tiles, a crumbling Arab decoration, a man sitting against the wall, a deserted Street, a Mediterranean tree (Charles Clifford's "Alhambra"): this old photograph (1854) touches me: It is quite simply *there* that I should like to live. This desire affects me at a depth and according to roots I do not know: warmth of climate? Mediterranean myth? Apollinism? Defection? Withdrawal? Anonymity? Nobility?"
(Barthes 1980: 38)

The details of clothes and props in the images are the "raw materials of ethnological knowledge" they are designed to say "this is what people wore, these were their surroundings" (Barthes, 1980: 28). The images from the Folklore fashion shoot are unequivocal in their meanings; they are a willing suspension of reality for the sake of "identity" and "ethnic pride". Predicated on loss, they seek to recover that which has largely disappeared and yet is repeatedly coveted medieval and authentic Arab civilisation. They are *mask* and *theatre,* value laden, loaded with intentionality and composition. However they continually present us with problems of legitimacy posed by the canon on Orientalism in art, in which Alloula argues, we find:

"Everywhere the same inlaid table is covered with the same copper platter on which stands the same cups that are so awkward to drink from. All this paraphernalia, combined with such poverty of imagination, turns the metaphor into a schema - worse, a stereotype. But that is the expression of a rather banal and yet deadly fate that is very familiar to the postcard. Just like the coffee from which it is inseparable, the hookah, the second symbol of the inner harem, repeats with even greater insistence the stereotypical

reference to the Orient. It clumsily completes it. There is no Orient without the hookah."(1989: 74)

The aesthetic in these photographs are arguably loyal reproductions of the European view of the Orient. Characters are shown in repose, there are no scenes of work, and in characteristic Orientalist fashion subjects appear leisurely and their surroundings decadent. Inlaid tables, copper platters, *Shisha*, cigarettes, soft furnishings and *Mashrabiya* (wooden lattice) are all used as settings and props to both authenticate and symbolise Arab-ness in the same way that Alloula laments in reference to French colonial postcards.

The *punctum* in the *stadium* of ideological Orientalism is the "success" of these individuals and their assiduousness on behalf of "prestigious international companies". This neo-liberal validation through the notion of the economically productive citizen seems to parallel Brown's (2010) observations in relation to attempts by British Muslims publications to speak back to Islamophobic representations and 'securitized caricatures'. As with the case of sociability around *Shisha* cafes in chapter four, fashions and aesthetic orientation in the Arab world and the Arab diaspora seem to flow in opposite directions. While middle class Arabic lifestyle magazines in the Middle East abound with images of Arabs in the latest western fashions and interiors as testament to their inclusion in (a European) modernity. Arabs in London draw on the folkloric Arab past to make the same kind of self-validating visual statements about themselves within the context of multicultural and ethnic London.

It is tempting to pick these photographs apart and cast them as *auto-Orientalism.* The much anticipated magazine was discussed around dinner tables and in the *Shisha* café, I was not alone in making an association with these images and fiction. *"It's just too glossy... It's fake, come on, since when would that lot wear any of that stuff, they wouldn't be seen dead wearing that stuff in real life – nobody wears that stuff anymore"* said Basil who knew some of the people in the photo shoot. At a regular *salon* in north London for young Middle East orientated *politicos,* heads shook with disapproval *"it's so Orientalist,'* yet to stop there seems all too simple and convenient.

As suggested earlier, understanding the context of production is vital to understanding the extent to which it might adhere to a Saidean Orientalist ideology. I interviewed Fadwa who was raised in London to parents of mixed Arab backgrounds.

She described herself as the editor of *Sharq magazine* and "creative director" of the "Folklore Fashion*"* photo-shoots.

Fadwa: *If it was just photos of people wearing national dress it wouldn't have a meaning, what it has is the age, name and company that they work at. Sadly a lot of people took that as us trying to date-match people, which we had no intention of doing, it wasn't our purpose. What we were trying to say was, look at this girl who works for 'Lehman brothers' and look at her take pride in her national dress. She is an Arab, she is so proud of being an Arab that she is wearing her national dress and it wasn't orientalist in the belly dancing kind of way, this is national dress that they genuinely wear and on a fashion level it covered so many level in the magazine. On a fashion level it looked good, on a visual level and then the whole point of the magazine introducing Arab society to each other in Britain. Not because people want to date each other but for me, let's say for one of our male readers to be able to say "look at that girl, she might have my mentality, she might have my thought" I mean not just about male-female. Maybe a British Arab girl who thinks "God I'm too British" has a bit of confusion with her identity who may look at the photos and think "God, she works for Lehman brothers and she is 25 and she is wearing an Arab outfit" and so she can feel proud of that identity.*

Ramy *What is the Arab outfit meant to symbolise, what is it meant to do?*

Fadwa *Acceptance and pride in our heritage. I have no problems with wearing jeans and a t-shirt. Here I don't expect to wear national dress in this society because it is not the done thing. But it symbolises and is representative of our entire identity. That is the idea. That visually what we can do is have this outfit that symbolises our heritage our background, and we didn't just do it with the outfits we did it with the location and the props.*

Ramy *Tell me more about that.*

Fadwa: *Momos' It was established and is currently owned and run by a successful Arab who bought Arab cuisine to the UK, well North African cuisine to the UK and everybody loved it. Just as the Asians were very successful in bringing the curries, he did the*

same with North African cuisine and people love Momos' and when they talk about Momos' they don't talk about "that Arab place", they just talk about the food. It's just very positive and even if we would have a fashion show with these clothes, westerners would say how beautiful they are. So the idea was that it visually represents our culture - but so does this Rap Artist in Denmark Majid who is Arab and he actually Raps about Arab political issues which is partly why I adore his music. But ultimately he also represents our culture and our music. He doesn't have the, his music isn't culturally Arab or historically Arab because he uses western beats but ultimately he is an Arab but visually he doesn't look it so we would write a profile about him, but here we are saying look she is not oppressed, let's say one of the girls in the photo shoot., she's not oppressed she is not wearing a veil she is not wearing a skimpy outfit she is not either- or, she is not extreme west and she is not extreme east but she is proud enough of her culture to wear this outfit and she works for Lehman brothers, so she is a success and she is comfortable, it's almost like a skin, an Arab skin and visually straight away you see that it represents something, this is her showing her Arab skin, which is great, it's all about what we are doing, promoting pride.

Ramy   *Tell me about the props*

Fadwa   *They are props that you would find in Arab cafes in Arab countries. So again just visual when I go to Syria and go to a café it would look like that scene. Perhaps not as glamorous but it would look like that scene. So it's sort of supposed to be comforting and also remembering that some of our readership was not Arab, a nice visual. It's particularly popular with English people they are old, they are beautiful, so some people just like I was referring to before some people will look at these photos and think beautiful. I want people to look and think beautiful*

Ramy   *Why do you feel the urge to do that?*

Fadwa   *Because everybody should take pride in their history and culture and not feel the need to hide it.*

Ramy   *Do you feel that people have had to hide it?*

Fadwa   Yeah I think they have. Particularly the wealthy Arabs in London they have no interest. Those who became wealthy, there is a feeling that they left that primitive stuff behind. They see it as primitive and now that they are wealthy all they want to do is go out on shopping sprees on Bond Street and that is class. Well no, it might be class in this culture but class in the Arab world exists but it exists in a different cultural format. So a wealthy guy, although nowadays a lot of the Arab countries have adopted the western cultural class system. But back in the day say the wealthy Egyptian wouldn't say I want a Saville Row shirt and belt to show that I have succeeded. They would just get a silk Jalabiyah, so that is the idea. It doesn't mean if you want to raise yourself that you adopt a western approach which, I have no problem with Western culture, but I don't want people to look down upon Eastern culture, and not to see the East as primitive and the West as progressive. Every society has their progressive and their primitive and it has got to the point where actually when we talk about progression and modernisation we only talk about the West and the East is primitive.

Ramy   Who was the photographer?

Fadwa   Amy Gordon

Ramy   What role did she have in the way that the photo shoot was designed or executed?

Fadwa   She was the photographer, not the creative director so she is a great photographer and she took care of lighting but

Ramy   Who was the creative director?

Fadwa   Me and mum actually. Mum because she is the fashion expert and me because I was the editor. In fact I really did the creative directing for most of our photo shoots ...if you do go to the old town in Syria or Egypt or wherever that is what it looks like, we do have inlaid tables and we do have Shisha and the soft furnishings and it's beautiful just like when you go to a bar, like a hip bar in

London, great sleek architecture that is what defines them - what defines us culturally, now in terms of interiors, is this look and its lovely and its beautiful to the extent that many western interiors are now copying them. I remember, and this I found odd from my dad – in my old flat I completely rebuilt the bathroom, stripped it down and had a flat bath, it was really more like a walk in shower like a Hamam Maghribi - it was a rough beige tiling it looked Moroccan and my dad said to me "oh God why have you gone for this primitive look?" and for me, for my Dad everything he has taught us I thought that was an odd reaction from him. But I think it was probably the fear of Orientalism in the negative sense. But for me I thought it was gorgeous and beautiful and on top of that practical and that's something I love and take pride in and prefer to a white slippery bath, it's an interior, its art and our art is different to art here and it's not something that shows us to be primitive. The sad thing is that when the Arabs see – now we are way past the Orientalism of the 19th and 20th century and the westerners actually appreciate our art now and they are adopting it in their homes and restaurants and bars. Now that the Arabs see that, they are taking pride in it and liking it. But they had to get the acceptance of the westerners before they say "Oh actually yes yes we like it, it's something good" … When the west adopted it then the Arabs started wearing it, but we knew about it before, the west didn't know about these designs because they hadn't travelled there to the countries – but we had, but why weren't we wearing it before? Because Dior and Galliano and whoever said they were good so these people wore it so there is this capitalist consumerist mentality that the wealth Arabs follow.

Fadwa's account is rich and helps put the images in context by paying attention to the discursive and institutional contexts in which she places the production. Fadwa's account gives weight to the notion of the inherent nature of communicative failure in the use of signs; authorial intention carries with it no guarantees (Derrida 1972). She is unable to control all the possible meanings that her reiteration contains. Her account and the way that materiality is used in this visual representation to signify a metaphysical self allows us to explore the relationship between materiality, identification, desire and mimesis within the framework of performativity.

One of the main concerns that Fadwa expresses in her account is the desire to address negative representations. Here the double burden of being subjected to the traditional characterisations of colonial Orientalism as well as those expressed through

contemporary culture production in 'the West,' where countless novels, film scripts and newspaper column inches are replete with a post-911 Islam-anxiety, is apparent. Middle Eastern writers, poets and artists have long been engaged with the task of debunking European fantasies about the romantic and phantasmic Orient and we might ask how Fadwa's contemporary rendition compares to other visual attempts to speak back to Orientalism?

The (late) nineteenth century Ottoman painter Osman Hamdi Bey's trained in France under the technical supervision of Jean-Leon Gerome, among the most notorious of the Orientalist painters of the time. Hamdi Bey used European techniques of oil on canvas and followed similar themes and subjects which made his art easily identifiable as part of the 'Orientalist' school; however, the underlying purpose of his work was to critique mainstream Orientalist paintings. In a similar fashion to British-born and raised Arabs, Hamdi Bey addressed "the major themes of Orientalist painters from his critical stance as an insider on the outside" (Celik, 2002: 23). The principle difference between Hamdi Bey's corrective messages and that implicit in the *Sharq* photo shoot is that Hamdi Bey's paintings were a reflection of life during his time – while the Folklore fashion shoot shows no resemblance or reference to the day-to-day life of a British-born or raised Arab in London, or indeed to the contemporary use fashion in the Arab world.

Plate 9: Osman Hamdi Bey. "From the Harem" c.1880.Oil on canvas 56 x 116cm.© Eczacibasi Virtual Museum (Turkey) www.sanalmuze.org

Plate 10: (Previous page) Osman Hamdi Bey "Koran Instruction" c. 1890.Oil on Canvas 80 x 60. The Najd Collection. © Mathaf Gallery London.

In contrast to the constructions that convey fanaticism, exoticism, and even violence in Gerome's series of paintings on Islamic worship, for example, Osman Hamdi presented Islam as a religion that "encouraged intellectual curiosity, discussion, debate, even doubt". The subjects in his paintings are commonly seen in discussion, holding books, listening attentively and importantly they are shown upright "as an expression of their human dignity" (Celik, 2002: 23). Similarly his painting *'From the Harem'* is one of a number compositions of Ottoman female life. He normalises the Harem, taking it away from the erotic imagination of European artists and depicts women to be reserved and their lives somewhat mundane. There are no Hookahs, mysterious black slaves or nudity. Instead washing hangs overhead, the women are covered and they sit on woven straw flooring, hardly exotic. Other paintings by Hamdi Bey show women reading, walking freely in the Street, all in an effort to undermine the cliché of the Oriental woman as a captive sex object.

Azouza Mammeri the Algerian painter of the early twentieth century also developed his skills as an artist by "drawing and painting in the French manner, a tool of visual communication addressed primarily to Europeans". Benjamin describes Mammeri as

having an "Oriental identity" that was engaged in an "Occidental activity" (Benjamin 2002: 59). Mammeri's tendency to emulate European artistic styles ultimately meant that he enjoyed less acclaim than his contemporary and fellow Algerian, Mohammed Racim who is described as a "hybrid" for his adaptation of the "15th and 16th century Persian school of art to Algerian and Andalusian subjects" (Benjamin, 2002: 45). The techniques of Persian miniature art was not indigenous to North Africa, but by using an "Islamic" style of representation and artistic production, Racim, whose paintings and illuminations were seen in s*alons* in Europe and Algeria, seemed to be able to claim integrity as an indigenous "Oriental" artist.
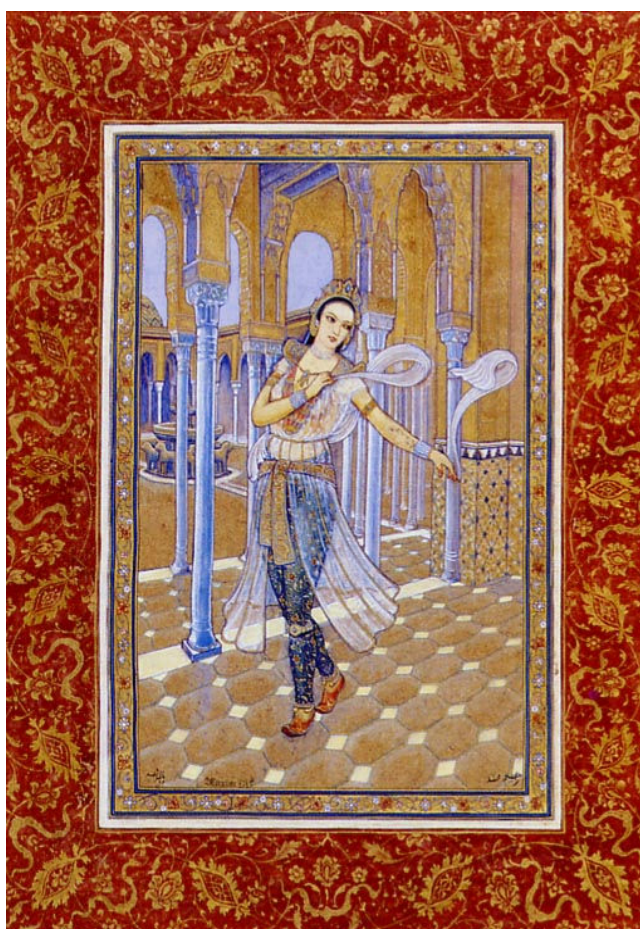

Plate 11: Mohammed Racim. Dancer (Danseus) c.1922. Gouache heightened with gold 24.5 x 18 cm. Private collection of Lynne Thornton, Paris.

It was not only Hamdi Bey, Mammeri and Racim who were producing paintings that challenged the *phantasmic* notions of mainstream Orientalist artists and art buyers in Europe. Reina Lewis (1996) revisits the paintings of Henrietta Browne whose scenes

from Constantinople produced more 'objective' compositions of 'Oriental' life and subjects, upset the erotic and sexually imaginative tastes of buyers in London and Paris.
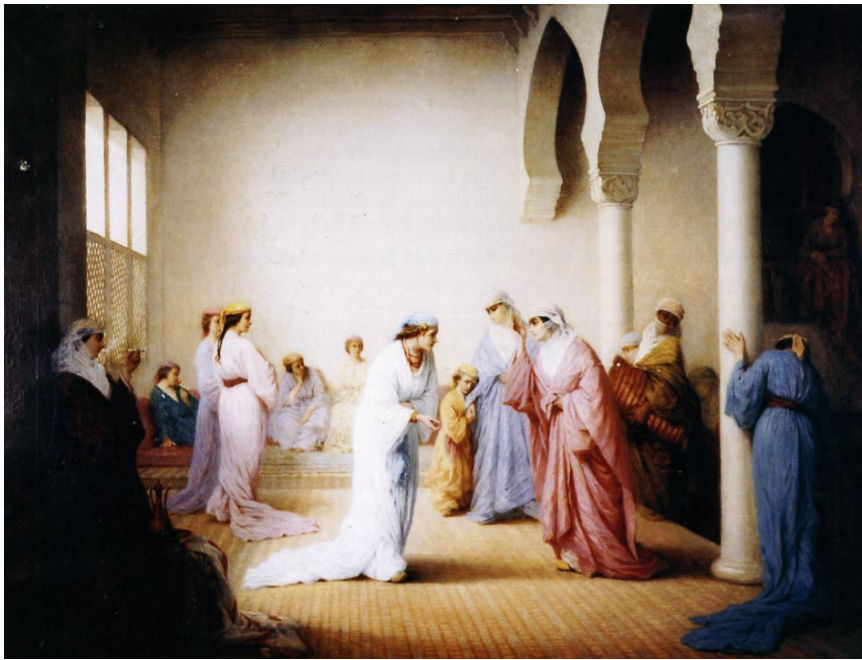

Plate 12: Henrietta Browne. 'A Visit' (Harem interior; Constantinople) c. 1860. Oil on canvas 86 x 114 cm (present whereabouts unknown)

The ways in which Racim and Mammeri have been evaluated by art history are instructive to some of the reactions to the *Folklore Fashion* images produced in London. The photo shoots contains so many paradoxes; they take their cue from high art but reproduces in the form of photographic popular culture. Unlike the sober realism of Hamdi Bey the photo shoot uses all the tropes of European orientalist imaginary, the picturesque, leisurely and exotic. It is difficult, even somewhat unfair, to compare the work by Mammeri, Hamdi Bey Racism and Browne to the Folklore fashion shoot. These Artists were consciously and professionally engaged in an attempt to undermine romantic and phantasmic Orientalism in European art and the ideology that it helped to reinforce. The Folklore Fashion shoot is concerned with contemporary popular portrayals of Arabs and seems unaware of the relationships it creates with 19th century romantic Orientalism.

The relevance that the *Folklore Fashion* photo shoots have is not necessarily therefore that they are intentionally Orientalist but that romantic Orientalism has in fact been reinterpreted by a particular generation as positive, an evaluation that sits in stark contrast to the arguments and evaluations of post-colonial diasporic intellectuals in

reference to the genre of Romantic Orientalism (see Alloula 1989 Kabbani 2006; Djerbar 2006; Salhi 2006). Fadwa insists that the material features of these compositions, the clothes, the inlaid tables, soft furnishings and *Shisha* are a genuine part of the Arab aesthetic. She goes on to stress that the costumes, props and location are representative of "our entire identity" describing the aesthetic as an "Arab skin" which can be worn to signify cultural pride and belonging.

The objects of Arab material culture should not be excluded just because they have been negatively formulated in the canon of visual Orientalism. John McKenzie argues that in many cases in Orientalist art "tiles and wooden lattice *Mashrabiyah*, are lovingly portrayed, not only because they presented technical problems of pattern, texture and light, but also because they represented architectural adornment that could be and were adopted in the West" (1995: 65). McKenzie is a vociferous opponent of Edward Said's thesis on *Orientalism* and his analysis seems more in tune with Fadwa's observation that "*what defines us culturally now in terms of interiors is this look and it's lovely and it's beautiful to the extent that many western interiors are now copying them*". McKenzie questions the relationship between European representations of the Orient and the European colonial project. In much 19th century Orientalist art he sees a genuine admiration, fascination and interest on the part of European artists who, he believes, depicted a proud and colourful visual environment in the Arab and "Oriental" world:

> "Thus, the Orientalist painters expressed both sublime fear and a sense of liberating themselves and their art; both admiration for the outward forms of an alien religion and anxiety about its inner meanings; both fright at cultural difference and an admiring fascination with characteristics their own societies had repressed. Above all they held out a programme for renewal to their own highly urbanised, excessively industrialised and overripe societies (McKenzie 1995: 65).

McKenzie's observations could not be more relevant, the commentary that accompanies the photo shoot clearly inserts the models into the "highly urbanized, and excessively industrialized and overripe" context of contemporary London. Arguably the models in the *Folklore Fashion* shoots are engaged in the prototypical European middle-class preoccupation described by Baudrillard in *The System of Objects* as 'restoration' (Baudrillard 1996).

It is important to consider the nature of power relationships in the production of Orientalist imagery. Orientals who were painted and photographed in the past are often seen as passive, silently accepting the process of visual rendition. Both the *Folklore Fashion* shoot and the images of belly dancers provide us with opportunities to complicate and question the 'victimhood' often attributed to 'Orientals' who are presumed to be the consumer/victims and not the producers/initiators of these visual discourses.

Fadwa's account shows us that her 'Western' photographer played only a small part in the way the images and subjects were composed, essentially filling the role of a technician. It was in fact Fadwa, in her role as diasporic 'Oriental' who dictated how her 'Arab' subjects were to be represented. This is very similar to assertions made by Celik (1996) and Weeks (1998) who both provide accounts of 'Orientals' actively engaged in the production process, sometimes at the expense of the desires and imagination of the western painters and photographers employed to execute the image. *"Zeinab… stamped her foot and said… that the portrait must be done according to her wishes, or –"not at all" – I could not risk the "not at all"*. (Mary Adelaide Walker, 1886. cited in Beaulieu and Roberts 2002: 1). Zeinab, an Ottoman noblewoman insisted that she be painted wearing the latest fashions from Paris and not, as Mary Adelaide had hoped, in traditional Ottoman costume which Adelaide desired. As Beaulieu and Roberts note, the fact that we are surprised that the 'Oriental' subject does not correspond to western notions of the 'compliant odalisque' reveals the extent to which the idea of a passive and predictable 'Oriental' has "saturated our understanding of this period, even in those post-colonial accounts critical of this western mythology" (Beaulieu and Roberts, 2002: 2).

Emily Weeks (1998) account of David Wilkie's portrait of Mohammed Ali Pasha demonstrates how Mohammed Ali used the technical ability of European Orientalist artists to fashion his own propaganda through portraits and artworks that fulfilled his own self-image and served particular political ends and strategic designs; much in the same way that Fadwa describes the photo shoot to have specific political messages about Arab self-image, to counter what she calls "negative publicity".

Perhaps more importantly, Benjamin draws our attention to the contemporary post-colonial taste for romantic Orientalist art amongst Arabs and other former colonial subjects. He observes that "for students of Orientalism raised in the tradition of Edward Said, the Arab taste for Orientalist art seems paradoxical" (1997: 32). In fact since the

mid-1970's the market for Orientalist art has been revitalised and driven by buyers from the Middle East. Benjamin describes how the Orientalism inherent in some paintings of the 19th century seemed to appeal to Arab buyers because it satisfied their 'pan-Arab impulses'. In turn the *Folklore Fashion* shoot showcases costumes from almost all the regions of the Arab world against an Andalusian and Umayyad backdrop. The photo shoot arguably perhaps goes further in its advocacy of pan-Arab cultural ideals as the models in the photo shoots wear 'Arab' costumes from nation-states and regions other than their own. Benjamin's account and the aesthetic favoured in the fashion shoots suggest that Arab collectors and the diasporic Arab gaze have a preference for the hyper-realist finish and detail popularised by Gerome, the arch Orientalist. The realism of some of these paintings has been their principle attraction as Brahim ben Hossain Aloaui, Curator of Contemporary Art at the *Institute du Monde Arabe* describes:

> "That image of the Orient which set the Occident dreaming in the 19th Century returns something to those Orientals [sic] who also seek an image of their past. They find in this painting a world on its way to disappearing: this Orient that is highly coloured, shimmering, this Orient of Arabesques, of costumes and the richness of forms is in the process of being eclipsed by a much more modern world. The image that was fixed by the Occident in the 19th Century - the Orientals are now attempting to recover it." (Benjamin 1997: 33)

Aloaui's observation might lead us to suggest that the Orientalist world created and captured by Occidentals is far closer to the self-image that Arab identify with than the Arab present. It is no coincidence that the 19th Century Orientalist representation corresponds to a (perceived) pre-capitalist, pre-colonialist Arab and Islamic world. "Back in the day" as Fadwa describes it, provides a sovereign and autonomous aesthetic in which the referents of self, taste and signification were "indigenous" not, as they are today, based on a mimetic emulation of European tastes. As the Arab-American poet Annemarie Jacir's suggest the glory and achievements of Arab medievalism are central to collective Arab self-understanding:

They told me the
Arabs named the stars
algol, sirius, aldebaran …

My mother's olive shaped eyes
sandaled feet
led me into centuries
of vast empires
forgotten treasures
Now, only ruins remain

This was the summer
I bathed in olive oil
and sat on the sidewalks
of Jerusalem eating
pistachio ice-cream
with the old man
whose ancient face tried
to explain to me that we fought
with our hearts and
not our heads - therefore
we would never win.

I am dead to my tribe
I will never learn all
its salty secrets
So tonight I want to sleep
With vega, deneb, altair…
Because they will disappear
In the morning sun,
And only ruins remain

Pistachio Ice Cream (date unknown), by Annemarie Jacir (in Handal 2001)

The autonomous Arab aesthetic represented in Orientalist art is the encrypted object of melancholia, which manifests itself through nostalgia. Like melancholia, the inherent contradictions in nostalgia is that it "combines bitterness and sweetness, the lost and found, the far and near, the past which is over and gone, from which we have been or

are being removed … renewed … more enchanting and more lovely" (Ralph Harper 1966 in Wilson 2005: 23). Nostalgia is as much about the collectively as it is about individual biographies and does not require actual experience or grounding in reality (Wilson, 2005:36).

The question I find myself asking is why use images of a somewhat distant and *phantasmic* past to validate a place in the present and perhaps the future of multi-ethnic London? Nostalgic communication provides a means of symbolically escaping a present cultural conditions that does not correspond to an individual's or a collective's sense of its 'true self'. Does the flight into nostalgia represent a loss of faith in the Arab future, the characteristic postmodern condition (Jameson, 1985) and do these pastiche images used by British-born or raised Arabs show them as incapable of producing serious images and texts which give people meaning and direction? (McRobbie 1989)

I argue that this nostalgia which is here visual, but elsewhere literary, political and cultural (see Berque 1983; Salhi 2006) is a consequence of the unresolved relationship between *Arab-ness* or 'otherness' and European modernity. It is an extension of the debates on mimesis regarding how Oriental or Occidental one must be to take a rightful place in modernity that took place during the *Nahdah* and continue today. Since those early debates the perception, gaze and evaluation of "westerners" is a constant reference and consideration in Arab self-consciousness. Mohammed Ali and the Ottoman courtesan Zeinab are both insistent on presenting themselves as modern Europeans, a reference to their historically situated notions of belonging. In 21st century London what Fadwa seeks is the same kind of commonality and recognition from the European other through the adornment of 'ethnic-chic' (see Tarlo 1996: 311)

Fadwa repeatedly makes reference to what westerns might think of the Arabs and is determined to show them that Arab culture is worthy of admiration, that "it is beautiful". This need for recognition is reminiscent of Franz Fanon's use of the Hegelian 'master slave dialectic' where "the demand for recognition itself becomes a symptom of the pathology of colonisation" of the mind, "the former slave wants to make himself recognised" (Fanon 1967: 217). While the relationship between the Arab world and Europe is dissected and analysed in formal analysis and academic debates, what folklore fashion shoot demonstrates is the way in which these debates on subordination are to be found in the day-to-day of postcolonial settings.

Conclusion

Taking the configuration of mimesis identification and desire in gender performativity as a starting point I argue that one is forced to identify within the multicultural construct with a notion of their 'ethnic otherness,' in this case their *Arab-ness*. While one must identify as 'Arab,' there is nothing but negativity attributed to that identification in the contemporary discursive economy in which these young people live which conflates Arab and Muslim and assigns to the latter a catalogue of, by now well know pejoratives.

This gives way to a number of mimetic options which to a large extent reflect the ideological debates of the *Nahdah*, (i) (the project of Europeanization) to abandon the Arab 'identity' altogether, which is what Fadwa suggest that "wealthy Arabs" do in London, (ii) to renounce European modernity which is perceived as the retreat into or the resurgence of Islam (i.e. the project of restoring the Islamic status quo) or (iii) as Fadwa does in the photo shoot and the discourses she deploys, to seek validation through recognition. Validation or recognition of the legitimacy, beauty and common humanity of 'Arab-ness' is established through the logic of multiculturalism and the parading of colourful foods, clothes and sounds through a somewhat superficial celebration of otherness, providing ethnic recognition and capital within a hierarchical multicultural system of signification but skirting around the deeply embedded and most complex aspect of subaltern belonging, namely the hegemony and collective subordination that persists in this ostensibly 'post-colonial' world (see Chow 1998 Hutnyk 2000). Importantly, the economic productivity and conspicuous deployment of class within these visual narratives also serves to say "we are successful middle-class taxpayers too". The class position and orientation towards secular pan-Arab-ness of these "young Arab professionals" means that unlike others in Britain their attempts to speak back or stake a claim to their 'identity' within multi-ethnic London is made through the validation of 'Arab' culture and not Islam. The total absence of the *Hijab* or references to Islamic aesthetics or Architecture in these visual renditions is no coincidence. In contrast to Tarlo's recent work on the way that politics, faith and fashion are expressed through contemporary Muslim fashion in London (2010), Fadwa's project is not one of legitimating Muslim visibility but of asserting the ideals of secular, middle-class pan-Arab-ness. Arguably, although the discursive economy of

negative images is characterised broadly under the umbrella term of Islamophobia, it seems that what is sought by these young middle-class Arabs is a distinction between Islamic and Arab subjectivities within the multicultural spectrum.

The material objects, laden with signification value which Fadwa refers to as an "Arab skin" are here cast as the very fabric of contemporary Arab "identity". Yet, it is only after they become acclaimed in 'western' notions of aesthetic taste that they are ready to be re-appropriated. Hutnyk asks "what do we make of the process by which once unassimilated aspects of culture – say body piercings, *bindis* or spicy food – have been integrated within mass commercial culture" (2000: 121). Before we can resort to comfortable notions of cosmopolitan hybridity we must interrogate the very real political and economic processes behind this which seem so skilfully to silence the political grounds on which cultural transgression and reappropriation are founded.

The shifting strategies of the mode of production, benefits from a the reification of homeland, the framing of hybrid forms in terms of marginality and centre (Gilroy 1999) and the development of identity specific forms of marketing (Hall 1991). "Is the aestheticisation of cultural 'quirks' according to capitalist rationality (that all differences can be equated at the market) something that can be fought and won at the level of 'cultural struggle'? Surely all that is fought for at this level is authenticity – and not material redress and transformation" (Hutnyk 2000:121)

Objects like the *Shisha*, the inlaid table, the ethnic costume, colours and fabrics provide easily accessible worn worlds and interiors that relate to notions of ethnicity and belonging. Adorning oneself and surroundings with the material objects of ethnicity is a far easier basis on which to stake a claim to it than one based on literature, poetry, experience or unapologetic political confrontation. For British-born or raised Arabs, Arab-ness can become an identification that is put on and taken off, that is purchased on holiday and arranged in a living room, a material ensemble, but one that ultimately cannot escape the meta-narratives of the Orient and the Occident and one that reflects how ethnicity should be normatively experienced in a multicultural setting.

Can the use of the belly dancer as a trope for the Arab party or the reappropriation of Romantic Orientalism by young Arabs in London be seen as stemming from a radically free or paradigmatic hybridity or as the result of free choice or agency? Returning to performativity, Butler (following Derrida) argues that the repetition of signification is a regulated process. These visual exchanges should I argue, be seen in relation to the structures of subjection and the violent force of semiotic representation and

subordination of the 'Arab–other' that has been so central to the story of the contemporary West. The belly dancer and romantic Orientalism are in fact the result of no choice at all. Within the framework of multiculturalist capitalism, hybrid cultural production and semiotic othering, these fragments of meaning are barely resistance, instead they are the affirmation of the de-politicisation of struggle at the altar of the market and the logic of corporatist ethnicity. One cannot overlook the extent to which they are adopted under a melancholic duress where nostalgia and a phantasmic past offer the only avenues for positive self-identification, the ultimate testament to the continued, albeit, reconfigured prominence of Orientalism as an affliction of both 'East' and 'West'. The performative matrix in which 'being ethnic', and doing Arab-ness in London is as Butler describes "a project of survival," not a confirmation of the reality of 'ethnicity' or paradigmatic nature of hybridity's third spaces (Bhabha 1994: 36), but one that shows ethnicities in all their colours and colourlessness as parodies of each other. In the concluding chapter which follows I suggest that the ethnographic material I have presented provides avenues to the sequential reading of gender, race and class within a performative matrix.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

'Doing gender' but 'being ethnic': transposing performativity

I began with a simple motivation, to understand how one might become an 'Arab' or do Arab-ness in London. In chapter one I sought to address a gap in research regarding the continuities and discontinuities in the ways in which 'Arabs' have featured in literature on migration and diaspora. This reading suggests that while Arabs as a group have been excluded from the discourses of multicultural Britain because of the persistence of a race-relations paradigm, ill-suited to include such a racially and geographically broad set of migrants; their exclusion is as much to do with the contested and troubled nature of Arab affinity and collective interests which, have prevented Arabs from reciting the norms of 'ethnic community' within a multicultural context.. Indeed the analysis I present in relation to migration from nominally Arab states to Britain suggests that the highly diverse set of political and economic forces leading to multiple migrations over an extended period of time make it difficult to speak of Arab migration as a coherent whole. While early Arab migrants may have remained politically or communally disengaged because of a belief that they were sojourners, new migrants from the Arab world (arriving between the mid-1990s and the present day) who represent the majority of Arabs in Britain, have had little time for the luxury of Arab identification and political action as they have struggled to settle and survive in their new setting after violent dislocations.

By investigating the *idea of the Arabs* (chapter one) and the *critical junctures* in the history of Arab migrants in London (chapter three) on one hand and the contemporary social practices of young people (chapters four, five, six and seven) on the other; the basis on which people living in London might identify as Arab shows itself to involve both continuity and change. Arab London in 2010 is a far cry from Arab London in the 1970s or even 1980s. While political ideologies still play a part in the understanding of Arab-ness, the actual experience of *everyday Arab-ness* in the playground, when grocery shopping or socialising in a *Shisha* cafe or an Arabic party seem to play a more prominent role today. While it is tempting to suggest that once Arab-ness was about political ideology today it is about lived experience, I cannot overlook the way in which reiteration activates all past meaning and connotations, albeit within different contexts.

The notion of pan-Arabism remains potent but is now articulated sporadically on demonstrations and during crises.

Leaving aside the idea that people *are* of a given race, ethnicity or culture, which implies that these categories are "proper objects" that represent essential 'identities' I have attempted to move towards the idea that gender, race, class, ethnicity and culture are discursive and corporeal things that we "do," processes within a performative matrix. In chapter four I sought to uncover the experiences through which one is made an 'Arab man' and 'Arab woman' by looking at the reconstructed narratives of growing up in London. These narratives suggest that far from possessing an 'Arab identity' there are particular events, discourses and experiences at particular points in people's lives where they are sequentially produced as 'Arab men' and 'Arab women' through the discursive and corporeal modalities of power around race and gender subjection. This involves processes across the mirage-like boundaries of ethnic groups so that one's 'Arab' masculinity is constructed through the feminisation of an Arab/ *Khaleeji* 'other' and ones Arab femininity may be about distance from those who are veiled and religious as much as it is about not be(com)ing an 'English woman'.

The process of be(com)ing Arab continues as young people begin to socialise in the performative 'ethnic' and gendered spaces of the *Shisha* cafe (chapter five) and the Arabic party (chapter six) in which new yet traditional version of 'Arab-ness' are produced by signifying the ethnic and classed 'self' through objects, practices and discourses which exclude others. These practices neither fall straightforwardly into either Arab, Muslim or British cultures but seem in their complexity to cite and parody all imperfectly. This assertion seems to be affirmed by the paradoxes around middle eastern dance and the complex visual signification of Arab-ness (chapter seven) which are at once, authentic and yet fabricated, colonial yet indigenous, resistance yet Orientalism, the result of structures of subjection and the struggle to find subjectivity through their imperfect and contextual reiteration. Arab-ness in London is ultimately a mode of communication which contains within it the constant possibility of miscommunication.

Drawing on this ethnographic material I seek to think through the possibilities of a discursive approach to Arab-ness in London by taking the notion of performative gender as a starting point from which a broader set of normative structures of subjection like race and class can be sequentially analysed. However transposing performativity to different structures of subjection is no straightforward task. The project of extrapolating

performative 'race' from performative 'gender' has met with theoretical criticisms like those of Rottenberg (2003) and Bell (1999) who argue that the modality of performativity in relation to gender and race are inherently dissimilar. While it is increasingly accepted that gender is a mode of *doing,* ethnicity and race remain largely forms of *being*. Performative gender relies on a particular configuration of identification*,* desire, mimesis, melancholia and encryption framed within a project of survival and social intelligibility. Here I argue that the ethnographic material I have presented in relation to (be)coming Arab in London lends itself to the theoretical structures of performativity.

Butler's reading of the Freudian and Lacanian categories of identification and desire is a central feature of hetronormativity, a forced *identification* with 'being a woman'. This is accompanied by a *desire* to live up to the norms of femininity on the part of women which, in the symbolic order of hetronormativity is coded as positive. Rottenberg argues that in racialised systems the forced *identification* with being non-white is not coupled with a *desire* to be or live up to the norms of non-whiteness. She argues, based on Bhabha's analysis of colonial mimicry, that in racial systems those forced to identify as "non-white" are compelled and encouraged to desire the enigmatic other (whiteness). In the colonial situation mimicry emerges as a strategy for the enactment of colonial power and knowledge whereby the colonizer demands that the other approximate, through mimesis, the norms of whiteness. In so doing the colonised do not "re-present" but rather repeat and imitate. Colonial discourse moves between the recognition of cultural and racial difference and their simultaneous disavowal in order to maintain the fiction of its own superiority. The non-white subject is encouraged to live up to norms of whiteness while always being excluding from ever embodying them "truly" (Rottenberg; 2003: 440). However, I argue that we cannot assume that this configuration of identification and desire under colonialism is the only configuration available in relation to racialised difference. 'Post-colonial' migrant settings like London have given rise to new ways of managing race. The narratives of young people growing up in London suggests that within the context of a segregationist multiculturalism of 'groups' and 'communities' in competition over recognition and resources there are assumptions, imperatives and incentives for people to behave, feel and desire their non-whiteness – in other words to conform to the racial and cultural division of society into 'ethnic groups'. Indeed other possibilities for the issue of identification and desire are just as available as demonstrated by Harrison-Kahan in her

work on the changing dynamics of the racial passing tropes in more contemporary American literature where blackness is cast as the ideal desired identity reversing the racial dynamic of more traditional passing narratives (2005). Similarly in three post-passing narratives Michele Elam finds that monoracial complacency has been replaced by ironic "mestizo imperative." (2007: 765).

Furthermore as Suad's narrative of identification at school suggests those who are *identified* as non-white and show their *desire* for whiteness by reciting white norms of style, looks and behaviour, can face censure for transgressing raced and cultural boundaries. While at the same time the accounts of hidden or secret Arabs at school suggests the appropriation of whiteness or passing for white is not one motivated solely by the *desire* of whiteness but by a project of survival within a system of signification where Arab-ness remains inherently negative and stigmatised. We therefore cannot discount the role of either colonial or post-colonial configurations of racial identification and desire on the one hand or the numerous systems of gendered identification and desire on the other which all have as their consequence subordination and conformity.

Insightful though it is, Rottenberg's analysis runs the risk of fixing hetronormativity and the configuration of identification and desire, de-contextualising and de-historicizing it instead of seeing it as a contingent and ever adapting structure. In fact the belief that hegemonic structures are in a constant processes of being (re)made lies at the heart of Butler's antagonism with Bourdieu's alleged structural determinism. There is no single configuration of hetronormativity that is pre-cultural or pre-discursive, nor is there one universal way through which gender subjection is achieved. In *Intimate Selving in Arab Families*, Suad Joseph alludes to the unevenness of gendered identification and desire when she recalls how *"Mama called me "stubborn" when she was angry. Baba thought he was complementing me when he said I was as strong as a bull…Baba said to me "Su, be a man! Don't be afraid of nobody. Be a man!"* (1999: 75). Here Joseph alludes to the way in which gendered discourse in many Arab contexts encourages women to identify with what are considered "masculine characteristics" like generosity, fearlessness, dutifulness, and loyalty while at the same time also embodying all that is feminine.

Some like Boyarin and Boyarin (1993, 1996) have attempted to work with Butler's link between mimicry and the project of survival by arguing that the repetition and mimesis of non-hegemonic norms or mimesis is a mechanism of Jewish cultural

survival in the diaspora. They argue that "mimicry across a generational boundary is attractive, comforting even, but also, to differing degrees, and particularly as one reaches adulthood, a matter of felt need within contexts" (Bell 1999: 151). For the Boyarins' "felt need within contexts" takes place through transnational movements that bring those in the diaspora in to contact with each other and with those from "the homeland", with whom they share cultural codes, signs and practices, which requires the learning and the mimicry of culture (ibid 152).In this ethnography the *Shisha* cafe is arguably one such nexus of mimed practices and transnational connectivity, however far from being a non-hegemonic the culture that is mimed in new contexts is used as a vehicle for the enactment of hegemonic gendered norms as well as racial and class othering.

As Bell (1999) argues, I believe correctly, the Boyarins' approach is too functionalist and concerned with cultural reproduction in a way that the mimesis in gender performativity is not. Indeed the notion that Jewish or Arab 'culture' (or any other set of cultural norms) are non-hegemonic seems to totally disregard the way in which discursive power is experienced as multivalent so that culture itself is often an agent and structure of subjection and not simply about free choice or resistance to western hegemony. The Boyarins' valorisation of 'culture' as radically counter-hegemonic overlooks the way in which norms like *being* a 'Jewish Woman' or an 'Arab Man' materialises a body, not only investing it with cultural norms but animating and contouring the subject (Butler 1993). Cultures are powerful discursive forces through which the body is disciplined making it intelligible to particular 'moral communities' and within particular ontologies of naturalised difference. For Butler gender mimesis takes place within the context of power relationships and is set against the backdrop of melancholia. Mimicry is a regulated mode of conformity that lacks the celebration and respect for 'culture' and 'generation' described by the Boyarins'. Gender mimesis is about the survival of the self in a gender regulated culture and here I seek to extend that logic more broadly so that gender, race and class belonging are mimed in part because of the force of *subjectification* they engender and the social, psychical and bodily consequences of their outright rejection. Through their continued interpellation and reiteration through stylised repetition of repertoires of gender, cultures, races and ethnicity are given the appearance of interior substance and a natural existence.

Bell objects to the move from performative race and gender on the grounds of 'territoriality' and 'encryption'. She argues that mimesis as mode of cultural survival in

the diaspora involves the idea of territoriality or an "imagined home" which does not apply to gender. However the role of territoriality or an 'imagined home' for diasporic subjects seems far from certain. As one person put it to me *"we are real Arabs, homeless and nomadic, nowhere is home"* Many participants I spent extended periods of time with realised that their 'home-land' was a place they had never and would never visit or experience. Experience of the 'homeland' or even estrangement from it, often leads to the undoing of the very notion of 'home-land' and embedded forms of belonging are replaced by a reflexive acknowledgement of the homeland as a mental rather than a physical space.

Bell also argues that the notion of "encryption," which Butler borrows from Freud in order to illustrate the way in which homosexuality is encrypted and always under erasure in the psychic structures of heterosexuality, is absent from ethnic relations arguing, I think too hastily, that "in the case of ethnicity, it is more difficult to assert that there is an encrypted other, a comparable knowledge that, accurate or inaccurate or distorted, faithful or unfaithful, for the identification to take place" (Bell 1999: 154).

I argue that the narratives and practices that this thesis uncovers shows encrypted others are replete not only in Arab/non-Arab relations but indeed within Arab-Arab relations which are often framed by melancholic formations. Freud only ever alludes to gender and melancholia in his work, nonetheless psychoanalytic readings of melancholia have been theorised in relation to gender formation in the work of Butler (1990, 1993) Silverman (1988, 1996) Scheiesari (1992) and it is unclear why the same kind of theoretical licence cannot be extended beyond gender to 'race' and class. For what is the project of Franz Fanon and the post-race movement if it is not the undoing of this encrypted and embedded racial other in self-understanding? In the case of class and taste the classed and aesthetic other is not only violently rejected but is central to the aesthetic definition and sense of self of particular groups and networks.

In Freud's essay *Melancholia and Mourning* the ego copes with the experience of losing another human being that it has loved by incorporating the lost other in the very structure of the ego by "taking on attributes of the other and sustaining" the other through magical acts of imitation (Freud 1922). The loss of the other, whom one desires and loves, is overcome through the specific act of identification that seeks to harbour that other within the very structure of the self.

There are also culturally instituted forms of melancholia outside the ego model whereby particular narratives of the imagined 'nation' create loved but lost times, places

and power configurations which are incorporated in the very fabric of the imagined collective-self. This thesis shows that in the case of those who identify with the label 'Arab,' the pre-colonial Arab golden-age is a constant point of reference. The feted Arab golden-age is manifest most strongly in this ethnography in the relationship between young Arabs and ethnic aesthetics within multiculturalism but has far deeper *routes* which lead to the confrontation with Europe.

As I argued in the discussion of *the idea of the Arabs* (in chapter 1), the very notion of the Arab *Nahdah* (renewal), pan-Islamism and the Arab discourse of despair have come about through an entanglement with European modernity. In order to appreciate the depth of this encrypted relationship one must recognise that for over a hundred years European values and models of social organisation and government have been emanated and advocated as a way for Arabs to take their place among "the civilised nations". Taha Hussayn, argued that "We must follow the path of Europeans so as to be their equals and partners in civilization, in its good and evil, its sweetness and bitterness, what can be loved or hated, what can be praised or blamed" (Hourani 1962: 330). Preceding Hussayn, Rifaa' al-Tahtawi believed that European states (particularly France) were the standards to which Arabs could aspire, so that in order to be modern one had somehow to become European. Makdisi argues "the goal of the process of modernisation as it was formulated by al-Tahtawi is therefore impossible; it means becoming the other" (Makdisi; 1995: 183 see also Makdisi 1992, 1998).

This ambivalence within narratives of Arab 'civilisation' is not detached from encounters in the 21st century multicultural global city, where during numerous conversations with young Arabs born or raised in London I was reminded that *"While we were discovering science, anatomy and astrology these Europeans were still living in caves"*. Europe is at once the principle vector, yet one that is erased and disavowed. It is not an exaggeration to say that what the Arab world and 'Arab people' continue to covet more than anything else is recognition from Europe. It is perhaps for this reason that there remains a deep attachment to what Abdallah Louri describes as an "exaggerated medievalization obtained through the quasi-magical identification with the great period of classical Arabian culture" (Louri 1974: 156). This self-image, not only constitutes a mythical vision of the past but importantly also frames visions of the present and the future best summarised in the words of Sabiha Khemir as '*waiting in the future for the past to come'* (1994). The project of 'ethnic pride' around which some Arabs in Britain have started to rally requires something to be proud of. The Arab

golden-age or 'back in the day' as it is sometimes referred to, represents assumption of unity, autonomy, sovereignty and power, all lacking in the story of the contemporary Arab world. The irony is that material mediums through which young Arabs in London identify with the magical golden age are largely the literary and artistic recreations of the orient by Europeans.

Cheng suggests that "melancholia alludes not to loss *per se* but to the entangled relationship with loss" (2001:8). She argues that "what Freud does not address in his essay, but what must be the consequence of this psychical drama, is the multiple layers of denial and exclusion that the melancholic must exercise in order to maintain this elaborate structure of loss-but-not-loss" (ibid 9). Collective melancholia is made available through reification and abstraction, but no more so than the reification and abstraction involved in the making of the pathological ego-id itself.

To further counter Bells assertion that the encrypted other is absent in ethnic and race-relations we need only turn to the subaltern and post-colonial studies tradition. As Bhabha asserts "the 'other' is never outside or beyond us, it emerges forcefully within cultural discourse when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously between ourselves" (1994: 4). Gilroy argues that Britain suffers from a postcolonial melancholia where, the fantasy of omnipotence based on reading of the Empire coupled with an "island race notion of self" are constructed as lost, but are not yet mourned. In this postcolonial malaise "incoming strangers [who} are trapped inside our perverse logic of race, nation and ethnic absolutism not only represent vanished empire but also refer consciousness to the unacknowledged pain of its loss and the unsettling shame of its bloody management" (2004:110). "Later groups of immigrants may not, of course, be connected with the history of empire and colony whatsoever. However they experience the misfortune of being caught up in a pattern of conflict that belongs emphatically to its lingering aftermath" (ibid) In these words Gilroy does not exclude anything or anyone, 'New Commonwealth', 'New migrants' and the British born generations that followed; all become components of an underlying post-empire melancholia.

"The immigrant is now here because Britain, Europe was once out there; that basic fact of global history is not usually deniable" (Gilroy 2004: 115). In many ways the insistence that we now live in a Europe *After Empire* seems misplaced. Europe and its contemporaneously more effectual ally the United States are still 'out there' nowhere more than the Middle East. Indeed the tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees who have arrived in Britain after 1991 and since 2003 are a direct result of the British state still

"being out there", pursuing its interests with the enduring burden of the civilising mission at the forefront of its justification, the very embodiment of the melancholia that Gilroy speaks of.

Young Arabs in London are therefore subject to both the melancholia of post-colonial Britain as well as the yearning for the quasi-magical Arab golden age each of which rely on the encrypted other as its nemesis and ultimate cause of its undoing. Rottenberg and Bell address important theoretical points but, in so doing they may have dismissed the reach of performativity too hastily, taking the un-constructing of gender performativity to be a finality rather than a mechanism for deconstructing subjectification more broadly. By prying open identification and desire, mimesis, melancholia and survival their relevance to structures of subjection beyond hetronormativity are made visible. While race and hetronormativity are not identical in the ways that they discursively construct the subject they are sequentially and consequential interrelated. As this ethnography suggests the process of making gendered subjects in 'multicultural settings' is rarely without parallel practices and discourses of being raced and classed. Discourses and practices do not just produce 'women' and 'men 'but, classed Arab, English, Muslim, Black men and women.

The notion of "The Arabs" and, by implication, the belief in "being Arab" comes with no guarantees of objectivity or fixity. The contemporary notion of Arab-ness is one that has emerged through continuous reiteration and citation, and through interaction with other socio-political and cultural structures and movements, all of which have moulded and shaped its meanings, there is very little that is singular, arboreal or authentic about this process. Through its situated reproduction, Arab-ness, like all structures and norms, has shown itself to be both hegemonic and yet fragile, the result of imperfect repetition and transgression. As such it is a category of identification, solidarity, commonality, hegemony and contestation in the making, always subjected to the process of becoming through different times, places and mediums of expression. In its contemporaneous and situated reiteration in London it produces that which it names the 'British-Arab' a result of political context, historical discourses, battles over signification and identification framed by ideologies of arboreal culture and belonging. The way in which young people in London recite Arab-ness could give way to a now all too common characterisation of London's Arab culture as hybrid. However, revelling in the mainstream political language of hybridisation, like that of 'identities' potentially obscures these terms and the processes behind them. As Werbner asserts "all cultures

are always hybrid ... to speak of cultural mixing makes sense only from inside a social world. Hybridity is meaningless as a description of 'culture' because it 'museumizes' culture as a 'thing' (1997: 15). This might be further emphasised by turning to Butler's observation of drag and the way in which it shows all gender identities to be parody. Nonetheless drag in Butler's work, like hybridity has been interpreted as a paradigm for transgressive performance or subversive behaviour (Butler 1993). A careful reading of drag finds it to be simply a performance, like all others; it is a reading of drag within the terms of reference of a hetronormative matrix which renders it as radically transgressive. There is, as Butler asserts a "desire for a kind of radical theatrical remaking of the body ... out there in the public sphere. There's a desire for a fully phantasmatic transfiguration of the body," a remaking that exists also in relation to the unyielding and persistent logic of races and cultures (1993). Could it be that all places, times and positions are and have been such parodies that are simply not recognised or represented as such?

I have tried to show that developments in the theorizing of gender and identity can be connected with post-race theory and governmentality to provide a robust, processual, non-foundationist critique of the taken-for-granted notions of nation, race, gender, ethnicity and culture which dominate scholarship. If these forms of "identity" are anything at all they are textual enunciated citations which enact wider imagined communities and traditions. By deploying the notion of performativity and exploring its theoretical structures I argue that we can gain insights into the way in which "identities" and "ethnicities" are practiced in so-called "multicultural" settings which I argue are fundamentally embedded within systems of racial governmentality, which provides a performative imperative to racial and ethnic identifications.

Performativity can be seen in relation not only to cognitive and discursive structures, but also the way in which materiality and material aesthetics contribute to the repetition of racial, ethnic and cultural identifications. This is not to suggest an exclusively phenomenological approach to materiality where 'the body' or 'the homes' are privileged sites of material meaning. In the case of young "Arabs" it is also through, café's, *Shisha* pipes, music, flags, jewellery, postcodes, clothes and imagery that Arab-ness is materially performative.

It is beyond doubt that there are recitations of Arab-ness in London that diverge significantly or reject totally the analysis that I have presented, "we cannot assume or resume the genres which constitute the relationships to which lives are devoted and

through which people feel fulfilled" (Miller, 2008: 290). Indeed there are no guarantees that a particular class, or gender or race configuration will produce the same reiterative response from one person to another. However, what we can do is put these in their rightful place, not as natural and incommensurable class, gendered, raced, cultural or ethnic ways of being that require policing, but as phantasmic and inherently discursive and material acts that are continuously done and undone. Autoethnography seems quite relevant here, I began this research with ideological and emotional convictions regarding the notion of 'being Arab' which have, through the narratives, practices and texts of others, been exposed to intense scrutiny. Furthermore, my motivation for understanding 'what it means to be Arab' was the result of sorrowfulness within my own family not scientific curiosity *per se*. Yet in the process I feel that a certain kind of 'science' has been undone. I have no relief from that sorrowfulness, different kinds of questions now pose themselves. Even so, I have asked and addressed question I had not anticipated and have engaged with theoretical approaches and perspectives I would have instinctively avoided, this research has therefore been an emotional and philosophical, personal yet collective journey.

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