THE PORTRAYAL OF THE
HISTORICAL MUSLIM FEMALE ON SCREEN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADC American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
AH After Hejira
BCE Before Common Era
CAPS Computer Animation Production System
CBMI Commission of British Muslims and Islamophobia
CE Common Era
CGI Computer Generated Imagery
DC Detective Comics
INSTED In Service Training and Educational Development
JLA Justice League of America
MENA Middle East and North Africa
MWSA Muslim Women Scholar-Activists
NGO National Grassroots Organisation
NICM North Indian Classical Music
MP Member of Parliament
UMNO United Malay National Organisation
WWI World War One
WWII World War Two
GLOSSARY

*Alap* a form of melodic improvisation played at the opening section of a typical North Indian classical piece of music that introduces and forms the raga

*Amān* Islamic religious covenant

*Barani* overcoat

*Boli* a reeded wind instrument

*Burqa* a garment covering the entire face and body with a mesh screen to see through

*Chemise* a dress or long shirt that is often worn with a *silwaar*

*Choli* bodice

*Dhoti* a piece of material tied around the waist and extending to cover most of the legs, traditionally worn by men of the South Asian subcontinent

*Duputta* a long scarf worn around the head and neck

*Fatwa* a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognised authority

*Fiqh* Islamic jurisprudence

*Gat* a fixed, melodic composition in North Indian classical music via the vocal and/or instrumentation

*Hadith* records of the statements made by the Prophet Muhammad

*Hajj* Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca

*Harmonium* a small compact portable organ

*Hejira* the Muslim calendar that dates from 622CE when the Prophet Muhammad moved from Mecca to Medina

*Hijab* a headscarf worn by Muslim women

*Hijabi* an informal term for someone who wears a headscarf

*Hurufiyya* arabic letters and words written in such a way as to create an image

*Ijtihad* independent critical examination of religious texts often in correspondence to Islamic Law
**Imam** a person leading the prayer in a mosque

**Jahiliyya** the state of ignorance pre-Islamic times

**Jihad** to struggle or to strive in the way of Allah (God)

**Khatak** a type of northern Indian classical dance

**Khazz** heavy silk brocade or plush velvet

**Khazazz** silk weavers

**Kurta** a long shirt or dress, commonly worn in the South Asian subcontinent, that is similar to a *chemise*

**Lute** a plucked stringed instrument with a long neck bearing frets and a rounded body with a flat front

**Madhyalaya** a medium paced tempo and time signature in North Indian classical music

**Mihrab** a niche in a wall, often in mosques, that indicates the direction of Mecca

**Muhajjabba** an Arabic term for veiling of women customarily practiced in order to maintain standards of modesty

**Niqab** a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear

**Nisa’ist** an Arabic translation for feminist with literal translation meaning womanist

**Pakhavaj** a double-headed drum, used especially in the northern part of India

**Patka** cummerbund

**Purdah** historical, customarily, practice of gender segregation of women in India

**Raga** one of the ancient traditional melodic patterns or modes in Indian music

**Ragini** an ancient system of classifying ragas in Indian music

**Santoor** a musical instrument from the South Asian subcontinent that is similar to the dulcimer. The santoor is played by striking a pair of small, spoon-shaped wooden hammers on its strings

**Sari** a length of cotton or silk elaborately draped around the body, traditionally worn by women from the South Asian subcontinent

**Shari’a** Islamic Law
**Shata tantric veena** the original name for the Santoor translates as having 100 strings

**Shenai** a musical instrument, similar to the oboe, made of wood with a double reed at one end and a metal or wooden flared bell at the other end

**Shi’a** a branch of Islam

**Silwaar** pyjama-like trousers or leggings that are a traditional form of clothing worn in the South Asian subcontinent

**Sufi** a Muslim ascetic and mystic

**Sunnah** the practice of the Prophet Muhammad

**Sufi** a branch of Islam

**Sura** a chapter of the Qur’an

**Tabla** one of a pair of small hand drums used in Indian music

**Tal** rhythmical pattern in Indian music

**Tafsir** Qur’anic exegesis

**Taharrush** a form of gang rape

**Tawhid** the onicity of Allah/the oneness of God

**Tritantri Veena** a three-stringed instrument precursor to the modern-day sitar

**Ummah** the Muslim community as a whole

**Veena** an Indian stringed instrument that has four main and three auxiliary strings
ABSTRACT

Representations of the Muslim female are value-laden synonymous with the act of veiling. Veiling has fuelled political, social and academic debates and this study contributes to the ongoing conversation alongside identity formation by examining the image of the Muslim female on-screen with due attention given to animation. The image of the Muslim female is drawn in all manner of directions from that of the belly-dancing beauty to the ‘bundle in black’, the latter often associated with terrorism, particularly post-9/11 and the consequent ‘War on Terror’. There is another direction that proffers an idealised image of the good daughter and dutiful wife against that of the fallen woman. Such constructs I argue tend to rid the Muslim female of her agency. This thesis examines how and why various representations of the Muslim female have emerged and changed, whilst some aspects have remained stagnant over time, thus positioning on-screen representations within their historical context.

This project goes beyond traditional academic methods of critical analysis in reading film. The hybridised role of the researcher-animator enables the study to offer a critique from that of the spectator, but with the added vantage point of the practitioner with a set focus on the making of meaning. The interdisciplinary approach incorporates film theory, specifically concerned with representations of race and gender. The work of Muslim women scholar-activists informs and inspires the practice in reclaiming the status of the Muslim woman. Their approach lies within three trajectories being gender-sensitive interpretations of the Qur’an, a recovery of Muslim women’s history and a critique on representation. Their approaches fall in line with the aim of this project to reclaim the historical Muslim figure on screen, whereas animation provides an attractive yet versatile mode of production to carry out such a task.

Key questions guiding this study are: why are current and existing portrayals of the historical Muslim female problematic? Why do these portrayals need to be addressed? Why does an alternative approach to the portrayal of the historical Muslim female need to be devised and put into practice? Finding the answers to these questions lie in the undertaking of the practice. The practice consists of the first two episodes of a five-part series titled Sultan Razia, and as the title suggests the animation is based upon a legendary historical Muslim female figure, who ruled the Sultanate of Delhi between 634-638 Hejira/1236-1240CE. This project is an example of how theory works in practice and vice-versa to determine an audio-visual practice that re-inserts the Muslim female into a history that breaks away from established clichés.
DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

Anwer Shab

(1933-2014)
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim

The aim of this practice-based-research project is to reclaim the historical Muslim female figure in animation. The urgency for such a study is located within the context of Britain, during the early 21st century, particularly post 9/11 and the consequential War on Terror, with prevailing portrayals of Muslim females in the mainstream media. To narrow the scope of this project, regarding the umbrella term ‘media’, the thesis’ focus is on screen with due attention given to animation. My main argument is that current representations tend to strip the Muslim female of her agency. This argument is guided by the following three key questions: Why are current and existing portrayals of the historical Muslim female problematic? Why do these portrayals need to be addressed? Why does an alternative approach to the portrayal of the historical Muslim female need to be devised and put into practice?

Available to view alongside this thesis are two 15-minute episodes, from Sultan Razia entitled ‘Episode 1 – A Warrior on Horseback’ and ‘Episode 2 – The Rule of Shah Turkan’. These episodes form part of what will be a five-part series, providing a biographical account on the legendary historical figure Razia, a female Sultan who ruled the vast Delhi Sultanate from 634-638AH/1236-1240CE. The practice takes the form of a stop-frame animation as a means to set controlled conditions to examine and put into practice the making of meaning, in order to recover and reflect upon the image of the historical Muslim female on screen and the choice of aesthetic practices.

1 See ‘Appendix A: Sultan Razia - Episode Guide’ at the back of this thesis.
Animation as an expressive cine dialect evokes an attractive way of illustrating an image of the Muslim woman. Paul Wells identifies the potential for animation as site for resistance to commercial mainstream animation techniques and aesthetics, highlighting that:

many studios worldwide have insisted upon using their own indigenous fine arts traditions, mythologies and cultural imperatives in order to differentiate their own work from what may be regarded as a diluted form of American artistic and cultural imperialism. Chinese animation, for example, is often characterised by calligraphic approaches; Czechoslovakia recalls its long tradition of marionette theatre in its puppet animation; and Russian animators prioritise the cut-out and drawn forms in their work. (Wells, 2002: 2)

The appeal of animation is the ability to create and express personal, socio-cultural and national concerns via the use of traditional cultural aesthetics. This practice serves as a form of historical recovery pertaining to both the geographical location and the era of Razia’s reign. The use of aesthetics is to capture the culture and customs of the people of the time, in order to deliver an image steeped in cultural history.

This study’s locus falls on the relationship between practice and theory throughout the entirety of the animation production process, from pre-production through to post. This project examines how the theory informs the practice and vice-versa, with a special focus on the visual recovery of the historical Muslim female. The practice is an experimental animated series, which is testing the parameters of practice-based-research and thus each episode offers an academic audio-visual approach to the medium. Thus, both scholars and practitioners are the target audience for this work. The interdisciplinary nature of this practice-based-research project may appeal to scholarship across academia, pertaining to animation, film, history, theology and cultural studies. This thesis could also be of assistance to fellow scholars and practitioners to use as a guide, to explore, challenge and advance upon the study of representational audio-visual practices.
1.2 Origins

Initially, this project began as a response to the images of Muslim women provoked by the British veiling debate of 2006, sparked by then elected Labour MP for Blackburn and Foreign Secretary of State Jack Straw. Straw wrote in his column for *The Lancashire Telegraph* on how he had found communication to be awkward with women who wore the *niqab* (the full-face veil), as he was unable to see their facial expressions (Straw, 2006). Straw’s comments spun a web of controversy around the wearing of the veil and the issue of veiling was brought into the spotlight. The debate had such an impact that images of veiling became somewhat ubiquitous appearing in art, literature, documentaries, radio shows, newspapers, magazines, television, even scholarship.

The question of whether the veil should be banned was opened to public opinion by the British press. Associated meanings derived from the symbolism of the veil came into play for both Muslims and non-Muslims and a passionate debate ensued. Arguments against veiling, especially the covering of the face with the *niqab*, vary with concerns touching upon national security, communication, voluntary apartheid, patriarchal religious oppression and respecting the laws, customs and traditions of the host country, as discussed within Chapter 2.

Framed within a post-9/11 climate and the threat of terrorism, the veil is viewed as a threatening garment, especially in public spaces like airports, train stations, bus stations, shopping centres, hospitals, law courts, schools and banks (Bribosia and Rorive, 2014: 171). The veil provokes a similar discussion to that of the debate around British youth and men wearing hoodies, where there is a shared unease of not being able to see the face and the assumption that something threatening is being hidden (BBC Radio 4, 2003). The veil akin to hoodies, motorcycle helmets and balaclavas, which cover a person’s face, makes it impossible to identify individuals and therefore is open to abuse (Nawaz, 2013).
Debates on the veil echoed across Europe, the most high profile being the French Government’s prohibitive policy introduced in 2004 towards the wearing of religious symbols in public, which underlined the effort to eradicate the veil (Scott, 2007: 1 and Modood, 2005: viii). One side of the debate became framed within the human rights rhetoric of the freedom of religion and the freedom of expression, whereby Muslim women were holding onto their right to veil as a religious identity (Bribosia and Rorive, 2014: 169). Thus, the veil came to symbolise and be representative of Muslim women everywhere. Whereas, arguments founded against the veil appeared to replace the autonomy of the Muslim woman, with the British press providing hardly any visual evidence to suggest otherwise.

1.3 Perspective

Identifying as a mixed-race Anglo-Pakistani British Muslim female, from a working-class background, I could not relate to or identify with the version of Islam shown across front page headlines and images of heavily veiled Muslim women on screen. Far too little attention was paid to the Muslim woman as an active participant in society and the Islamic faith. Where were the stories of Muslim women having a pivotal role within the Islamic faith, be they related to the Prophet Muhammad, his friends or as Sufi Saints that I was so familiar with? Not failing to mention the Muslim women who pose as agents to their own cause, adorning the pages of history in conjunction with the Muslim women of today, living both very ordinary and, in some cases, fascinating lives in the public sphere as doctors, teachers, mothers, athletes, scientists, artists, and parliamentarians, to mention but a few vocations.

The Islam which appeared to be presented by the mainstream press, seemed to be a world away from my own personal experience. For the Islam I grew up with was and continues to be is based in mysticism and spirituality, spilling into art, music, dance and poetry. Thus began my research journey into representations of the Muslim female in order to fully question whether images of the Muslim female were with or without foundation and
compare representations portrayed by various forms of audio-visual materials. All these debates and questions have shaped this practice-based-research project.

In order to remain objective, it is necessary for me to be aware of my own cultural identity and status in regard to the research process, so that the work is not hindered by possible personal biases, worldview and political beliefs without reason. Therefore, how do I as a Muslim woman approach the study of the representation of Muslim women for this research project? Many academics (like Mohja Kahf, Fatema Mernissi and Amina Wadud) researching representations within the margins of race, gender and religion acknowledge that they write from a perspective based upon their ethnic identity and the role it plays in their research. Richard Dyer’s (1997: xiv) concern for academic writing is the unacknowledged position of speaking of whiteness. Dyer elucidates that this is part of the condition and power of whiteness, where white people claim and achieve authority for what they say, by not admitting or realising that for much of the time they speak only for whiteness. Just as Dyer recognises the dangers of normalising whiteness, even though I identify myself as a British Muslim woman, amongst other facets, I cannot claim to speak for or on the behalf of all Muslims.

Arguing from a multicultural perspective is mediated by the interaction of a complex set of status variables, such as gender, social class, education, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, religion and region (Merriam et al., 2001: 411). This multi-centric approach may be described as being layered or multi-layered that mirrors the many facets of a person’s identity and the society at large (Durham and Kellner, 2001: 341 and Saukko, 2003: 106). In effect, all social layers create a layered meaning of the text, whether the work is produced by its author or its interpretation by the reader and so forth, creating multiple narratives with multiple levels of interpretation (Lawler, 2008: 48).
Issues surrounding difference arise, especially when attempting to stress the heterogeneity of a categorised group of people. Whereas, a view on a ‘common culture’ set within a colour and culture of blind praxis, omits cultural experiences, diversity, agency and individualism, which may be viewed to normalise and set a certain standard of socio-political conformity, besides limiting the space for inter-cultural dialogue (Couldry, 2000: 135 and 142). A multi-centric approach to research bears similarity to that of intersectionality. Intersectionality as an analytical method is used to understand and analyse the complexity in the world, in people and in human experience (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 1). Within intersectionality difference serves as a tool to recognise various forms of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1991: 1241).

Difference applies to academics and artists working within their own communities and the world at large. The work of Mernissi and prominent Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi, both of whom have influenced this project, has received criticism for its approaches toward Muslim female agency. For example, Marnia Lazreg (1994: 36) explains that these scholars, based upon their ‘experience’, are often taken to represent the countries that they come from. Their books are received as convenient sources of information with affirmed roles of indigenised purveyors of legitimacy with a wide audience overseas. Within their home countries local women, many of whom are illiterate, have hardly heard of them or feel that they have not much in common with them (Ibid.). Therefore, these scholars write from a level of privilege. At one end of the scale, Mernissi and El Saadawi do not fit the oppressed Muslim woman stereotype and at the other end, their work may be used to illustrate the oppression women face in predominantly Muslim populated countries. In this vein, their scholarship may be viewed as serving the interests of socio-political power systems, within a post-colonial albeit a neo-colonial setting, as is discussed later in this project with the work of Edward Said.
I disagree with Lazreg, for these scholars apply a nuanced reading to their studies by acknowledging their own social status. They take into consideration the varying social status’ of the Muslim woman positioned within contemporary society and throughout history, not only on a local scale but a global one too, to tackle the very real problems numerous women have to face in society. For example, Mernissi (2001) in *Scheherazade Goes West - Different Cultures, Different Harems*, indicates how women in the US and in Muslim countries both subscribe to forms of patriarchal oppression through the use of female bodies, as a result of the male gaze and societal pressures put upon gender roles. For many years academia has been void of such voices. Even today, outside the field of study one would have to actively search out these scholars and their work. Within academia, their success was not instant and often ignored, like their predecessors before them.

A consequent result of their academic success has opened the gates for others to follow, like Lazreg, to add further critique and explain the limitations of their work. Lazreg’s argument can even be applied to her studies on the condition of the Muslim woman. Lazreg’s argument attempts to strip these scholars of their agency, hard work and scholarship. Furthermore, if Lazreg’s argument is applied to that of European academics and the common man, for example, how many prisoners would be familiar with the work of Michel Foucault’s (1977) *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*? Again, this point links to the impact of scholarship and the usefulness of such work to those affected by the subject matter along with the target audience, which will be discussed in due course.

Lazreg’s comments on ‘experience’ and the difference found within a multi-layered and intersectional analytical lens draws attention to the complexity of power-tensions found within race, gender and class. The same approach may be applied to viewing representations of the Muslim female. For example, the identification of being a Muslim creates a connectedness between Muslims, whilst also categorising Muslims within a religious group,
which Muslims often refer to as the *ummah*. However, at the same time, each is different from one another and are further fragmented by race, class and variations of Islam, such as Sunni, Shi’a, Sufi and innumerable schools of thought. On an individual basis, each Muslim will act according to what they believe, be it for either spiritual or personal reasons, or both.

Therefore, reflecting on my own cultural identity and experience takes into account that writing from a layered perspective opens the door to examine the multifaceted complexities belonging to representations of the Muslim female. Not addressing the current socio-political climate, from various angles of the debate, would inadvertently create a utopian view of the world with a one-sided biased ill-informed argument. There are many factors to consider, be they religious, political, economic, geographical and social, which too encompasses the theoretical and its developments in academic thought through the ages, when reading representations.

### 1.4 Framework

The practice is informed by and takes its cues from Said’s (1978) opus *Orientalism* and the pioneering work of Muslim women scholar-activists (MWSA). From amongst these studies the representation of the Muslim female has already been questioned and established. Their research methods and findings form stepping stones that enable the possibility for this project to generate new knowledge by crossing the divide between text-based studies into the realm of audio-visual practices. Simultaneously, the method of practice-based-research allows this project to contribute to existing knowledge within the field of Muslim women’s representation.

Orientalism as an analytical method is fundamental to the examination of representations of the Muslim female. Said’s study of 19th century European literature, written during the height of colonialism, addresses and critiques images of the historical Muslim female pertaining to
the period. This image is rendered within the qualification of the Oriental female. Within Said’s method, the Oriental female reveals itself as a visual metaphor to offer a reading on the formation of political power and domination (Said, 1978: 6). This concept is paramount for my central argument as evidence of the audio-visual processes at work that either reinstate or erase the Muslim woman and her agency. This strain of Orientalism creates an analytical cornerstone to generate a reading on representations of the Muslim female within audio-visual media positioned within historically specific socio-political contexts.

The Oriental female sits alongside a further two strains of thought. Within the first, Said acknowledges that to conclude the Orient as essentially an idea or a creation without a corresponding reality is wrong (p.5). This position takes into consideration alternative sources. In this manner, a broader picture is offered to fully comprehend the subject under analysis. For this project, this approach is adapted to correspond with the study of animators, their films and their location in an effort to provide a nuanced reading on the texts studied.

Finally, the third strain draws recognition to the fact that there has to be an element of truth behind the myth for it to work. According to Said, referring to the structure of Orientalism as nothing more than a set of lies and myths, even if the truth be told, cannot be simply blown away (p.6). In this vein, the image requires an element of truth in order to relay meaning, be it either to enforce or challenge stereotypes. The main problem lies with how images supporting certain political beliefs become ingrained and indoctrinated into both civic and political society, be it through civic institutions like schools, at one end of the scale and at the other, political institutions like the army and police, whose role is direct domination (Ibid.). The embellishment of the myth creates a foundation to view how the image of the Muslim female works within formations of power indoctrinated into society through visual practices.
The work of Foucault is vital to Said to uncover how power works within representations between what may be described as the West and the East. Said distinguishes between the Orient, the Other or the East with the Occident as the West, referring mainly to Britain and France, because of their expansive empires beginning from the 19th century until the end of World War Two (WWII), and then the USA with the rise of neo-colonialism (Burney, 2012: 24). Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar defined as ‘us’ with Europe and the West, and the strange as ‘them’ applied to the Orient and the East (Said, 1978: 43). In this way, the Orient helped to define Europe by offering a contrasting image (p.1). For power to be established, the creation of an Oriental Other requires an immutable dichotomy between Western civilisation and Oriental backwardness (p.249). For the countries under occupation, this image provided a site of resistance within the precedence of reclaiming their National identity underscoring the fight for Independence (Badran, 1995: 12). In this manner, audio-visual practices contribute to a reading on how representations of the Muslim female support certain political agendas.

Post Said’s Orientalism, Foucauldian discourse has become key within academic practice when questioning representation. Foucault (1969) (1978), in The Archaeology of Knowledge, brings into question a method of developing new disruptive histories and in The History of Sexuality he creates an understanding toward systems of power and domination. Stuart Hall (1997) combines Foucault’s discourse on history, knowledge and power to reflect upon the condition of society, specifically focussed on racial representation. In reading textual representations the discourse applies these questions: who is being represented by whom and why, who or what is included, excluded, marginalised or even reconfigured through means of representation? ‘An engagement with these concepts allows one to think about the ways in which, dominant narratives posed by a society, are often underlined by issues of power’ (Dudrah, 2010: 31).
This project being situated within today’s socio-political power-structures draws attention to why current and existing portrayals of the Muslim female are problematic. The main problem lies in that women’s bodies are being used to support certain power structures that rids the Muslim woman of her agency and her voice, as explained previously with the application of Orientalism. Therefore, the work of MWSA is vital to this project. The implementation of their work alongside an analysis on the representation of the Muslim female, particularly within animation, is an attempt to bring to the fore the issues, debates and challenges that encompasses the work of both scholars and filmmakers, at a local, National, International and Transnational level.

Furthering my argument on portrayals of the Muslim female are leading MWSA, Amina Wadud, Fatema Mernissi and Mohja Kahf. These scholars utilise their personal experience of Islam and conduct their studies from a Muslim woman’s perspective. Their distinct revivalist scholarly approaches offer a sense of agency belonging to that of the Muslim female that sets the blueprint for this practice-based research project to follow. These approaches are gender-sensitive readings of the Qur’an, a recovery of Muslim women’s history, and a critique on Muslim women’s representation.

For example, religious Islamic scholar Amina Wadud (1999) recovers the woman’s voice from within the Qur’an, in her seminal piece, Qur’an and Woman – Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective, in order to challenge male-interpretations of religious texts damaging to the status of women and that of Islam. Sociologist Fatema Mernissi (1993) in The Forgotten Queens of Islam uncovers the diverse roles women have played throughout history to illustrate historical Muslim female leadership. Finally, poet, novelist and literary scholar Mohja Kahf (1999) in Western Representations of the Muslim Woman – From Termagant to Odalisque, critiques the representation of the Muslim woman, within both religious and literary texts of ages passed, is essential to reveal the power structures at play in the creation of the image of
the Muslim female. Furthermore, Kahf’s literary work is of interest to this practice-based-research project by offering an example of the convergence of theory and practice to examine how the creative practice might exhibit historical recovery of the Muslim female. The work of MWSA evidences and lies in sync with the relationship between theory and practice alongside concepts of impact with the dissemination of research.

The use of a Medieval royal Muslim female is framed by their work as the story of Razia evokes a sense of religious and historical agency. Instead of creating a fabrication, a historical figure anchors the reality that Muslim women have had prominent roles within society. Employment of gender-sensitive readings of the Qur’an is an effort to construct Razia’s spirituality and religious knowledge in order to challenge patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. For example, for the Amirs to maintain their power they use the Hadiths, to counteract Razia’s argument taken from the Qur’an. Hadiths are stories about the Prophet Muhammad collected from the words of men and women, whereas the Qur’an is believed to be the Divine word of God, therefore using Hadiths against the Qur’an could be argued to be favouring the words of men over that of God.

Towards the end of Episode 1, the Prime Minister tells Razia that she cannot be Sultan for she is a woman, for it is stipulated in the Hadith that ‘a nation which entrusts its affairs to women cannot prosper’. Razia’s response reflects upon the concept that this Hadith is not found or supported by any verses from the Qur’an. Razia’s argument is drawn from the research produced by Wadud, Mernissi and Kahf, in order to illustrate Muslim women’s agency on both a political and spiritual level. Therefore, Razia’s story enables the opportunity to illustrate how Muslim women use the Qur’an to maintain gender equality.²

MWSA argue that a patriarchal system derived from male perspectives and interpretation of religious texts has proved detrimental toward the representation of Islam and that of the Muslim woman (Badran, 2002 and Wadud, 1999: 80). The problem bleeds into the wide dissemination of material by both conservative and fundamentalist groups that portrays the Muslim woman as subordinate (Mernissi, 1996: 95). Although, conservative and fundamentalist groups may disagree with each other on just about everything politically, they both agree on women’s place in society (Ibid.). These hard-line views on the Muslim woman are widespread through a variety of media, whether highlighted by International news reports or by the fundamentalist groups themselves. The success of fundamentalist literature is in its rapid translation into a variety of languages as well as well-organised distribution and dissemination of printed material around the world at affordable prices (p.104).

Mernissi questions why ground-breaking studies, which illustrate women’s participation are not given the same wide readership as conservative and fundamentalist groups’ work. Not only is there historical evidence of women as active agents, women themselves are actively involved in providing a commentary on women’s agency, which in both circumstances, is not widely distributed, republished or translated. The quandary surrounding the circulation of *nisa’ist* research, a term that Mernissi adopts to mean feminist in Arabic, from the word *nisa* (women), which produces first-class scholarship on Muslim women, is because researchers tend to be isolated working within difficult conditions (p.93 and p.104). The output of the research often fails to reach the media for a range of reasons being a consequence of academic jargon, the use of Islamic languages, and the publication of research within obscure collections, which are often out of print (p.104).

To challenge the role and status of the Muslim woman, in their own society and in the world at large, Mernissi suggests that women can learn something from the effective way fundamentalists use the media to circulate their ideas throughout Islam. In this vein, Mernissi
calls for a recovery of historical texts that elucidate women’s engagement with Islam and society to be translated into various languages and put into mass publication through a variety of media, including visual media for wider dissemination (Ibid.). This is whereby using practice-based-research may answer Mernissi’s call toward the wider dissemination of research. The use of practice-based-research contributes to *nisa’ist* scholarly work, by examining existing images of the Muslim woman in order to generate a visual that exhibits Muslim women’s agency and visually challenge patriarchal and political structures that are detrimental toward the Muslim woman’s condition and that of Islam.

### 1.5 Impact

Practice-based-research, via visual practice and animation, provides the versatility in presentation, exhibition and distribution to disseminate research to an audience within and outside of academia. Traditional academic platforms include conferences, journals, screenings, lectures, reading groups, ateliers, student showcases, exhibition and festivals, whether organised by students or lecturers. Such platforms allow freely a discussion of ideas to generate knowledge and foster critical feedback. In addition, further outreach includes the practice to be available to view via the Internet, public screenings, home video, film festivals, exhibitions, and terrestrial and non-terrestrial broadcasting. Showcasing and distributing the creative practice lies within both a local level, from public screenings and workshops at libraries and community centres to an International level with a focus on the art of storytelling via traditional aesthetics.

Jayne Pilling (1992: 5) and Maureen Furniss (2009: 1) confirm that animation has an unlimited potential as a medium for communication and flows from many sources, for instance the Internet, digital and satellite television channels, with some channels completely designated to animation, like Nickelodeon, the Disney Channel and the Cartoon Network. Means of communication include advertising, training materials, gaming, scientific applications and
theatrical features, to mention but a few (Ibid.). Therefore, animation provides various platforms, which might enable an alternative voice on representations of the Muslim female unleashed into the public domain. As an academic animation and independent production, this project may be limited in its ability to rival news media corporations or get airtime on children’s channels. However, as the examples show, there are many platforms by which this practice-based-research project may be viewed and discussed.

For the animation that accompanies this thesis, the preferred mode of distribution would take both separate and sequential actions for educational purposes, especially with the set-up of focus groups and public audiences, respectively. The educational appeal of this project may continue to reach an adult audience, be it a specialist interest milieu, via exhibitions and film festivals. Curated film festivals and exhibitions both advertise and receive exposure for the themes raised within the showing of work. For example, the International Museum of Women online exhibition *Muslima* objective and campaign is ‘to inspire cross-cultural dialogue that will break down myths and stereotypes and build understanding’. The exhibition provides a platform ‘to support the voices of Muslim women worldwide who are leading the movement for change and challenge misleading stereotypes that hold women back and foster discrimination and injustice’ (*Muslima*, 2013).

Like exhibitions, film festivals provide an arena that support practitioners by showcasing work, with some specifically catered toward animation, genre, short and feature-length film, the socio-political, religious, cultural, regional and feminist issues. The reception for film festivals are largely defined by theme and therefore often audience members tend to share a common interest (Film Festival Research, 2015). The fostering of relationships and spectatorship within the film festival setting may allow audience members to obtain information and films to later share with their respective communities. The appeal for audience attendance is the possibility to see a premiere showing of a film, viewing a film that
cannot be seen elsewhere, besides the possibility to network, meet filmmakers, critics and film stars (Ibid.). Film festivals offer a potential platform for this academic piece of work to meet an audience, across a range of interests pertaining to themes the practice encompasses.

Furthermore, this project may be of use to those working within the field of human rights and agency within and outside of Muslim communities. For instance, future prospects and collaborations might take place with International and National Grassroots Organisations (NGOs), like Musawah, SAHR (Strategic Advocacy for Human Rights) and SIS (Sisters in Islam). These esteemed organisations look for diverse ways to deliver gender-sensitive interpretations of the Qur’an, a visual means of explaining *Shari’a* Law and the sharing of women’s stories, in order to provide the public with assistance and service provision, whilst also being involved with policy development that relates to the human condition.

For the distribution of the creative practice within the public domain is to be done in two steps. The first is entry into film festivals in an effort to increase awareness of the project. The second is the distribution of the animation via the Internet. Currently, the Internet offers the opportunity for artists not to be reliant upon others to publish or showcase their work. Internet connection provides the animation to be readily available for anyone to watch, anytime from anywhere. The animation can be made available for download and digital copies made for those who do not have Internet access.

The aesthetic with the use of intertitles and soundscape is an attempt to give the animation a wider outreach, for the intertitles can be translated into a variety of languages. The preferred mode of reception would be on a cinema-scale screen and speakers for the audience to appreciate the visual aesthetic and accompanying soundscape, rather than on a

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3 Links to their websites are available in the Bibliography.
small screen with inbuilt speakers. However, the main advantages of distributing the animation via the Internet is that the animation is readily available, which further answers Mernissi’s call for the dissemination of *nisa’ist* research.

The practice is further complicated as this project deals with the subject of Islam and the use of aesthetics. The approach to the practice takes into consideration how to portray gender-sensitive interpretations of the Qur’an. The use of a historical Muslim female figure is mindful of the controversies that arise from the depiction of religious figures. The illustrative figures of the Prophet Muhammad by Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergard and French satirical paper *Charlie Hebdo* serve as a reminder of a violent cultural religious backlash.

Even Kuwaiti Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa had problems with trying to distribute his comic book *The99* (2007-2013), which was released in 2011 as an animated series. The name *The99* is drawn from the 99 attributes of Allah. This concept was met with resistance by religious conservatives with Saudi distributors stating that the comic was personifying Allah (*Wham! Bam! Islam!,* 2011). Not only was Saudi Arabia the only place to resist Al-Mutawa’s work, along with death threats received from the Daesh, the animation was met with resistance in the US which led it to be withdrawn from American television screens (*Peyser, 2010* and *Kuwait Times, 2014*). US children’s channel The Hub, part of the Discovery network with Hasbro, a supplier of children’s toys and merchandise, intended to air the show. *The New York Post* called for the show to be cancelled due to concerns of the imposition of Islamic values on children of all faiths (*Ibid.*).

Despite resistance to *The99*, the comic books and animation have broken the international market. The animation was aired in Europe, the Middle East and Australia during 2012. To this day *The99* are available to be purchased and viewed by audiences online. Not only did President Obama support Al-Mutawa’s approach to the use of comic books and animation
to bridge the gap between East and West, but so too did Detective Comics’ (DC) *Justice League of America* (*JLA*) (Al-Mutawa, 2015). Together the *JLA* and *The 99* team up to stop the invasion of Earth in a six-issue miniseries (Ibid.). The comic book provided an alternative outlet for his work to reach a market outside of the Middle East.

Unlike Al-Mutawa, who applies powerful Godly attributes to his characters which in turn creates a group of superheroes, my practice focuses on interpretations of the Divine word of God through the Qur’an. The similarity between Al-Mutawa’s project and my own is the potential of animation to challenge stereotypes. Al-Mutawa continues to say that *The 99* is an attempt to battle extremism and provide a progressive version of Islam across cultures (*Wham! Bam! Islam!*, 2011). Besides challenging stereotypes, *The 99* was written as a counter to a sticker book called the *Intifada Album*. Al-Mutawa had read a newspaper article on a Palestinian man, who had claimed to have sold the *Intifada Album*, in its thousands, to children in the West Bank. In this sticker book were bloody images of Israeli occupation alongside heroic images of religious martyrdom. Whenever, Al-Mutawa was to pitch his idea he brought along this newspaper article to illustrate the importance for children in the Arab world to have new superheroes, rather than being sold extreme ideas on martyrdom (Al-Mutawa, 2010 and *Wham! Bam! Islam!*, 2011).

The image of a Muslim female protagonist might resonate with Muslim children, especially girls who may like to identify themselves with the story of a Muslim princess, which represents their own ethnic group or culture. Jack Shaheen points out that, even young children are subjected to racist stereotypes within cartoons, as:

> Muslim mothers, too, strive to shield their children. Citing scores of old motion pictures being telecast on cable systems, along with cartoons, re-runs of television dramas and sit-coms, plus newly created TV programs and TV movies-of-the-week, they fear the stereotyping has become more pervasive than ever.

(Shaheen, 1997: 27)
Existing work on female stereotypes on screen discuss the impact on the self-image of young girls. Maya Gotz et al.’s (2005: 133) study on the effect of television on the fantasy worlds of children revealed that girls would put themselves in the centre of their fantasies. The girls would emancipate themselves from the traditional and limited female characters provided by the media, like Disney’s princesses, for instance. The girls would be the victors in their narratives, in control of the action. Gotz et al. claim that the diversity of female role models does not meet the realities of opportunities for self-actualisation available and actualised by girls (Ibid.). Therefore, children’s activity as a spectator differs to the narrative on screen.

Aforementioned, the practice is an academic animation, therefore aspects of the practice may not suit a child audience. For example, the reading of intertitles may be lost on a child audience and violent scenes may be deemed inappropriate by censorship boards, spectators and parents alike. The creative practice deals with taboo subjects, like polygamy. This is evidenced by the violent beheading of Qutbuddin’s mother by Shah Turkan. Furthermore, Qutbuddin’s eyeballs rolling on the floor may not be appropriate for a child audience. ‘Episode 2, Act 2 - Scene 4c’ would possibly be required to be cut or a reshoot to the account suggested by Rafiq Zakaria:

Her [Shah Turkan] hand-picked tribunal found both mother and son guilty. The mother was sentenced to be hanged; the son, to be blinded in both his eyes!

(Zakaria, 1966: 37)

The reason the animation differs to Zakaria’s account is due to creative licence for the physical making and combination of the events to be merged into one scene. The beheading is subject to a discussion on violent stereotypes pertaining to that of Muslims, besides the use of adaptation to combine the events to tell the story within the same space of time.
The area of investigation on audience reception is where this project’s borders lie and would be an area for further exploration, via the use of focus groups and their responses to the animated practice. The making of this animation sets the foundation to be able to take the research findings and utilise them in a practical sense, if requested or commissioned to make an animation specifically aimed at child audiences. However, for now, the thesis’ focus is on the production process of the animation, in regard to the portrayal of the historical Muslim female on screen.

This project has been years in the making, even before embarking upon this PhD, I began examining widely images of the Muslim female and Islamic art creating scrap books, whilst simultaneously generating a collection of photographs and audio work in which family members posed.4

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4 Whilst working on this project, I have created a research blog available to view at: http://sabinashah.blogspot.co.uk/ and uploaded video work, along with rough cuts, to: https://www.youtube.com/user/PhDSultanRazia

Image 3 – Frame taken from the MPhil animated sample *Sultan Razia* (2011)
Upon commencing the MPhil, the idea of utilising animation to explore the making of meaning became apparent. The making of *Sultan Razia* was explored alongside the work of MWSA. For the analysis, a sample animation was produced that set the PhD in motion. A further four years have entailed to finalise this PhD study and craft the animated episodes.

Customarily, film analysis as an academic method is conducted from the view of the spectator and rarely that of the filmmaker. In this manner, the project contributes to further knowledge on the hybrid role of the researcher-filmmaker. This synthetic stance provides a technique to test existing knowledge, in an innovative and creative fashion, with a view to expand upon perspectives on visual representations of the historical Muslim female on screen. This hybrid methodology gives way to a hypothesis in which I propose that instead of treating theory and practice as two separate entities, they are intertwined and inseparable. John W. Creswell’s (2003) *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, Carole Gray and Julian Malin’s (2004) *Visualising Research – A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* and Hazel Smith and Roger Dean’s (2009) *Practice-led Research, Research led Practice in the Creative Arts*, are major contributions for the conceptual underpinning of my hypothesis.

The animation process itself is a time-consuming labour-intensive practice. Making this stop-frame animation covers pre-production planning, the physical making of sets, props and puppets, to the editing process and selection of sound. I have mainly worked on the production alone with some help given by family members with the making of the costumes and stage. Scholarship dealing with animation may need to consider the position of the practitioner. Not only is the academic standard of textual analysis required, which is necessary for most projects analysing film, but necessary to inform and reflect upon the practice.

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5 The MPhil animated sample may be viewed online: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3bDJ_17M_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3bDJ_17M_4)
Image 4 – Making the puppets’ heads for Sultan Razia (2017)

Image 5 – Dressing the puppet for Sultan Razia (2017)
The adage labour and time to create stop-frame animation is itself a significant challenge for students (Donati, 2007: 23). Even big-budget films that use single-cell and stop-motion 3D model animation take a long time to produce. For example, Disney Pixar’s *Toy Story* (1995) took three years to make with a crew between 100 and 150 animators (Ibid.). Jason Donati (2007: 23) in *Exploring Digital Cinematography* presents a calculation that it would take 300 plus years to produce *Toy Story* by an animator working alone.

*Sultan Razia* bears some similarity with the animated work of Nick Park and the Aardman production company, due to set and puppet building along with photographic image capturing techniques. Park’s first animated feature, *A Grand Day Out* (1989), took nearly seven years to complete (Wallace and Gromit, 2017 and BFI, 2017). Therefore, working with episodes makes this project manageable and provides the possibility of the animation to be screened in stages or as a feature length film upon completion. Episodes offer the spectator a choice to either watch a 15-minute episode or a 75-minute feature animation.
1.6 Chapter Outline

To explore the making of meaning inherent to this practice-based research project on portrayals of the historical Muslim female on screen, this thesis has been organised in the following way. ‘Chapter 2 - The Image of the Muslim Female on Screen in Britain from 1950-2017’ lays out the socio-political terrain on which this project stands. The reading incorporates Said’s discussion on Orientalism with Foucault’s discourse, which sets up this project to examine representations of the Muslim female, within a neo-colonial context. The reading examines popular culture as an aesthetic language to describe a contemporary Other. Informing the critical analysis is Laura Mulvey’s (1975) concept of the ‘male gaze’ besides bell hooks’ (1992) critiques of representations of women of colour within cinema. Their work provides an example of how dominant social structures are delivered by mainstream television and cinema.

The following ‘Chapter 3 - The Historical Muslim Female on Screen’ approaches how the Muslim female has been approached by filmmakers and animators as an historical subject. The chapter is presented by the means of three case studies. Textual analysis is applied to animations that are similar to the subject content of Sultan Razia, in the way of aesthetic and historical recovery, pertaining to the royal Medieval Muslim female. Films for analysis are Lotte Reiniger’s silhouette The Adventures of Prince Achmed (1926), Disney’s cell Aladdin (1992), and Michel Ocelot’s ‘computer generated imagery’ (CGI) Azur and Asmar – The Princes’ Quest (2008). The analysis further questions whether inadvertently or deliberately, either employ or reject, Orientalist audio-visual tropes in their portrayals of the Muslim female.

These animations take their cues from the Medieval 1001 Nights, which aligns itself with the image of the Oriental female provided by Said. Said’s model of the Oriental female provides a method to compare and contrast images of the Muslim female against and how her image translates onto screen. An extension of Said’s work pertaining to cinema, with a focus on
The Nights, let alone themes of Orientalism and the portrayal of the Other, is a vast endeavour with an array of film titles, as evidenced by the work of Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) *Unthinking Eurocentrism – Multiculturalism and the Media*, Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (1997) *Visions of the East – Orientalism in Film*, Marina Warner (2011) *Stranger Magic - Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* and the film title encyclopaedic study by Shaheen (2001) *Reel Bad Arabs – How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Thus, a selective analysis of texts, with a focus on historical Oriental females in positions of power, have been used to drive the discussion on the portrayal of the historical Muslim female on screen.

Said’s strategy is comparable to that of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ (1978) study *Myth and Meaning – Cracking the Code of Culture*, which questions how myths come into play forming certain beliefs within different cultures and societies. Often, an established myth takes on the form of a recurring motif or trope, be they employed subconsciously or not, within audio-visual materials. Besides a reading of the Oriental female, a critique on the Medieval film genre within screen history is offered. Further light is shed upon the Medieval Muslim female by Kahf’s analysis on how the image of the Muslim female has shifted over time. A contradistinction is made between films and animations portraying the Muslim female from a variety of locations and historical periods by both Muslim and non-Muslim animators.

During the past 10 years, animations from predominantly Muslim populated countries appear to have come into their own. However, be it either through lack or a slow rise of academic scholarship on animation in African countries provides an opportunity for studies in animation to be developed in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Mali, Cote D’ivore, Niger, Chad, Senegal, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Somalia and Gambia. Further study in this vein may also include countries where the religious population is evenly split like Tanzania and Eritrea, besides countries where Muslims are the minority mostly in countries located in the South. An analysis may also include predominantly Muslim countries like
Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Krygystan, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, for instance. Thus, the scope is wide on the discussion on the construction of the image of the Muslim female. The project focuses on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, mainly due to scholarship by Mohamed Ghazala (2011) in *Animation in the Arab World – A Glance on the Arabian Animated Films since 1936* and by Stefanie Van de Peer (2013) in ‘Fragments of War and Animation: Dahna Abourahme’s *Kingdom of Women* and Soudade Kaadan’s *Damascus Roofs: Tales of Paradise*, being available and animations are easily accessible via both Internet and satellite viewing.

Films under analysis include animations that narrate religious stories belonging to that of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. The reading phrases the question on how animators aesthetically approach the religious subject. The content analysis includes how women are represented with Richard Rich’s cell *The Great Women of Islam* (2012). In addition, I analyse how animators illustrate female agency and Islam via the use of female protagonist characters with animations, such as *The Great Women of Islam*, *The99* and Haroon Rashid’s animated TV series *Burka Avenger* (Geo ‘Tez, 2013-). For all the animations, I ask who is the intended audience and why and what representations are at work when reading the historical Muslim female on screen. The final reading on all the animations under review bears a similarity with Jacques Derrida’s (1967a) (1967b) concept of ‘trace’ in *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*, whereby a reading of texts reveals nuances, gaps, incoherencies and even contradictions within themselves.

The outcome of the analysis mediates a reflective approach toward my own practice discussed in ‘Chapter 4 - Historical Recovery’ and ‘Chapter 5 - Sultan Razia as the Medieval Muslim Female’. I traverse and argue my way through the conversations offered to critically inform, examine and reflect upon the making of the creative practice, in order to engage with
debates on representations of the Muslim female on screen. As a result, the investigation into the relationship between theory and practice becomes a contributing factor in shaping the entirety of this research project, especially in conducting and carrying out the empirical approach and data collection. The chapters relay the animation process and the making of visual meaning as informed by the previous chapters and that of Wells (1998) *Understanding Animation* and C. Richard King et al. (2010) *Animating Difference – Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*. These texts serve as an example and as an implied method to reading representational practices within animation.

The versatility of the medium provides further room for expression and subversion in the generating of meaning (Wells, 1998: 187). In this way, Chapter 4 serves as a reflection on how the practice and the choice of aesthetics, for example the puppets, the design of the mise-en-scène, the use of intertitles, and the music score, contribute to the audio-visual recovery of the historical Muslim female. The content of Chapter 5 has a specific focus on Razia as a female figure in undermining certain clichés associated with the Medieval royal Muslim female figure. The analysis includes a reflective visual reading on how the narrative structure and the mise-en-scène all contribute to the core aim of reclaiming the historical Muslim female through animation.
2

THE IMAGE OF THE MUSLIM FEMALE ON SCREEN IN BRITAIN

2.1 Socio-Political Representation

This project alongside the creative practice may be viewed as part of a recent growth of work, not only within academia but also within audio-visual practices, which attempt to reclaim the image of the Muslim female. Representations of the Muslim female are wide and far-reaching from television shows, films, documentaries, airport literature, radio broadcasts, magazines, newspapers, music releases, fine art, theatre, graphic novels and comic books. At one end of the scale some images may be argued as delivering a stereotype, whereas at the other end, the image of the Muslim female may pose as a counter to such stereotypes. Hall (2000: 17) explains that identities must be examined in context of the discourses in which they are created. Identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse and emerge within the play of specific modalities of power. Be it the constructed stereotype or the nascent in art-work and studies pertaining to that of Islam, Muslims and the Muslim woman’s condition falls in line with Hall’s analysis on the formation of identity within certain political and social constructs.

Muslims living in the UK have a long history most notably spanning across the Medieval trade networks to that of the 19th century colonial subject. Coinciding with the end of the British Empire, the post-war years with the migration of people mainly from former British colonies, such as parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia, did ethnic and religious diversity become a visible part of the nation’s fabric. Radio, television, film and print began

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6 Literature evidencing creative movements surrounding Islam and Muslim identity are: Herding (2013), Tarlo and Moors (Eds.) (2013) and Janmohamed (2016).
to capture, document and present itself as a reflection of the times offering an image of the diaspora, amongst which the Muslim female also features.

2.2 1950 – 1979

During the 1950s two simultaneous events occurred in the UK, one was the mass migration and settlement of Caribbean, Asian and African citizens from the former colonies of the British Empire and the other was the installation of television sets in the homes of the general populous (Mercer, 1989: 1). Television catered to the new arrival of South Asians in Britain with programmes like *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* (Make Yourself at Home) (BBC1, 1965-79) and *Nai Zindagi Naya Jeevan* (New Life) (BBC1, 1968-82). These magazine television shows were part of an integrational project to assist minorities to settle and adjust to the British way of life (Malik, 2010a: 124). For the British populous, television programmes also acknowledged minority groups. The first sit-com to be broadcast in colour was *Curry and Chips* (LWT/ITV, 1969). The show’s all-star cast, including Spike Milligan in brown face playing the main Pakistani character Kevin O’Grady, employed racial humour, which was a by-product of the time, to set up a multicultural scenario with a view to highlight racial tension (Malik, 2010b: 95). *Curry and Chips*, perhaps served as a precursor to the casting of South Asians in *Mind Your Language* (LWT/ITV, 1977-86), which went further to recognise intra-Asian difference (Huq, 2013: 79).

For a couple of episodes (Better to have Loved and Lost, 1978 and What a Tangled Web, 1979) the Muslim female was brought onto the screen as the wife of one of the show’s main characters Ali Nadim (Dino Shafeek). The first encounter with Rehana Nadim (Gail Playfair) who dresses in the Pakistani traditional *silkwaar chemise*, displays shyness by turning and covering her face with a scarf when meeting Ali’s night school English teacher Jeremy Brown (Barry Evans). This episode surrounds the subject of polygamy whereby Ali and his wife consider the option of having a second wife to bear children. The legality of such a marriage
leaves the idea disbanded and Rehana discovers she is pregnant anyway. In a later episode, the secrecy Rehana exhibits in the organisation of a surprise birthday party for her husband, leaves him feeling a little suspicious. These episodes pose as an example of how the show gets its gags, ranging from the mispronunciation of the English language alongside British idioms lost in translation, to the strangeness of both foreign and British customs. Whatever the race, gender or religious belief of the overtly exaggerated characters, each is poked fun at.

Documentaries of the period, such as Special Enquiry (BBC1, 1952-57), World in Action, (Granada/ITV, 1963-98), This Week (Thames/ITV, 1956-92) and Panorama (BBC1, 1953), amongst an exhaustive list, reported on the social effects of immigration, whilst giving a voice to the diaspora and the British white populous (Malik, 2002: 39). Enoch Powell, MP for Wolverhampton, had a major impact on public debates on race, immigration and national identity (p.45). The patriotic modality of racism was brought to the fore with The Great Debate – Enoch Powell and Trevor Huddleston (LWT/ITV, 1969) and The Question of Immigration (BBC Radio 4, 1973). Powell’s divisive views on race, branding people of colour as the ‘enemy within’, whilst upholding a sense of national pride and identity may be viewed as having a profound effect on an approach to television writing and performance.

Television shows, such as ‘Till Death Us Do Part (BBC1, 1965-75) and a later release called In Sickness and in Health (BBC1, 1985-92), On the Buses (LWT/ITV, 1969-73), Love Thy Neighbour (Thames/ITV, 1972-76), Rising Damp (Yorkshire TV/ITV, 1974-78) and It Ain’t Half Hot, Mum (BBC1, 1974-81) began to employ a subversive use of comedy in television. Despite the lack of political correctness emanating from the use of language that denominated race, the performance carried a form of satire, where bigotry was exposed and exploited as the subject of ridicule (Malik, 2002: 93).
Trends in TV programming and filmmaking that was prevalent before the 1950s and continues today is that of travel and tourism alongside the colonial film. Shompa Lahiri (2001: 209) argues that during this period films like *Gunga Din* (1939) and *Kim* (1950) created a sense of nostalgia for the British Empire. Jeffrey Richards (2001: 129) points out a reworking of the Imperialist hero also came into play upon the break-up of the British Empire. For example, *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) was portrayed as an Arab nationalist, desiring freedom and self-government for the Arabs (Ibid.). Furthermore, a counter-cinema presented an alternative image to colonialism. For instance, within art-house milieus often foreign based alternatives were made available. The fight for Independence was portrayed by *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), whereby women were illustrated as being very much part of the resistance. For British audiences Empire was no longer just out there as a mystical exotic place that England could lay claim to and define itself against, the Empire had now come to the UK to stay (Grady and Hemstrom, 2013: 131).

2.3 1980 - 2000

Between 1980-2000 the tone towards South Asians shifted from the subject of immigration to that of British Asian identity with naturalisation and the second generation born in Britain, reflected by documentaries such as *Here Today, Here Tomorrow* (1979) and *I'm British but…* (1989). Besides British print and screen media, the entertainment tastes of the elder generation had become available. For a while, print media written in Urdu was in circulation with Pakistani-based newspapers *The Jang* and *Awaz* (Ahmed, 2005: 110). Music records and Bollywood film screenings in select cinemas along with the arrival of cassettes, video tapes and satellite television with channels such as Zee TV enabled audiences access to an International film, television and audio market. Local radio stations like Sunrise Radio, established in 1989, catered for the music and entertainment tastes of the demographic, later followed by the BBC with its Asian Network radio channel in 2002 (Berry, 2003: 290 and
Dwyer, 2006: 365-366). From amongst such a hybrid backdrop of both British and Asian culture, the second generation created an alternative media, which reflected their identity.

Contemporary British Asian and Black literature reached both the small and big screen. The work of Hanif Kureshi and Zadie Smith, respectively, led to *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), *The Buddha of Suburbia* (BBC2, 1993) and *White Teeth* (Channel 4, 2002), all of which present Muslims living in Britain. These films marked the emergence of British Asian film and television production, which was inclusive of the Hindu and Sikh experience with *Masala* (1991) and *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), whilst *Goodness Gracious Me* (BBC1, 1998-2015) pulled on a sense of humour befitting to the British Asian experience. Further films released, such as *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) and *East is East* (1999) focussed upon British Asian Muslims in particular.

A familiar face on British television, British Asian screen media and Bollywood film is Zohra Sehgal. From a Muslim background, Sehgal evidences a long screen career spanning the post-war years into the late 2000s, playing a variety of roles, such as the colonial subject, albeit Muslim female native, in *The Indian Tales of Rudyard Kipling* (BBC1, 1964) and *The Jewel in the Crown* (Granada/ITV, 1984). In *Doctor Who* (BBC1, 1963-) Sehgal was the strange Other as an attendant to Ping-Cho. The story was a re-visioning of Marco Polo and his encounters with Mongol leader Kublai Khan. In a later series, she played Sheyrah a servant to Barbara Wright (Jaqueline Hill), based upon the Crusades with King Richard and Saladin.⁹ The portrayal is suggestive of a nostalgia for a past Empire (Grady and Hemstrom, 2013: 125).

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Sehgal’s on-screen presence mirrored the diverse cultural society that Britain had become with cameo roles in *Mind Your Language*, *The Doctors* (BBC1, 1969-72) and *The Bill* (Thames/ITV, 1984-2010), just to mention a few titles. The changing face of television alongside the arrival of British Asian screen media gave her prominent roles in *Tandoori Nights* (Channel 4, 1985-87), *Little Napoleons* (Channel 4, 1994), *Firm Friends* (ITV, 1992-94), *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) and *Anita and Me* (2002). In later years Sehgal was often cast as the elderly auntie, grandmother figure, illustrative of extended family dynamics in some Asian households.

Family dynamics is a key component to British Asian cinema and as such the image of the South Asian female widened. The majority of the films already mentioned, in regard to British Muslims, illustrate the bulk of characters, including women, to be straddling a tight rope between cultural tradition and British life. Inter-racial relationships and marriages featured, whilst offspring struggled with their identity of either being British born or mixed-race. The image of South Asians and British Muslims alongside identity politics between first and second generations exhibited the hybridisation and a pluralistic formation of identity. The film medium provided an opportunity to relay taboo subjects, such as racism, homosexuality and promiscuity from within and outside of the South Asian community, and the idea of arranged marriage was often sought by the elder generational characters as a solution.

The satirical use of comedy often added to British Asian films, without which might render an approach to filmmaking similar to the directorial work of Tony Richardson and Ken Loach with the kitchen sink drama of 1950-70s. The kitchen sink drama, also known as British new wave, predominantly focussed on the lives of the working classes, revolving around crumbling marriages, the drudgery of unskilled work, sexual orientation, stymied aspirations, backstreet abortions, disenfranchised youth, homelessness, gender, class and race
discrimination (Mitchell, 2016). The semblance of a multicultural Britain was further reflected in soap operas like *EastEnders* (BBC1, 1985-) for instance, where the focus too lay on family dynamics and often the turbulent breakdown of relationships.

The cracks between what it meant to be British and Muslim began to show with the Salman Rushdie affair of 1989 with the release of his novel *The Satanic Verses*. The affair had a massive impact on cultural debate presenting a clash between cultures (Poole, 2002: 139). For many Muslims, the novel ridiculed the Prophet Muhammad and Islam. Television news images showed Muslims taking to the streets in protest, from Bradford to countries across the world, where copies of the book were burnt in defiance (Geaves, 2005: 69). Some of the news stories marked the behaviour as symbolic, akin to the Nazi book burning campaign of WWII (Pipes, 1990: 225). A further clash presented itself, when Iranian leader Ayotollah Khomeni issued a *fatwa* that carried the death penalty against Rushdie for blasphemy (Mondal, 2013: 59). Values as belonging to the Muslim world appeared to be in opposition to those of the West.

Whilst many British Muslims were calling for their religious beliefs to be protected, the British government defended Rushdie’s right to free speech (Morton, 2013: 48). At that time Home secretary Douglas Hurd presented a list of values:

> Respect for the rule of law is a fundamental principle for which Britain stood... So too were freedom of speech and expression, and the toleration of different opinions... But we are entitled to expect everybody in this country to accept these ideals, and all leaders of communities here to give them their full-hearted support.

(Hurd as cited by Elgamri, 2008: 119)

British ideals of free speech and tolerance led Rushdie, a figure in the arts, and his work *The Satanic Verses* to become a symbol of the British establishment. As a result, the affair created a quandary surrounding identity questioning what it meant to be British and Muslim.

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Matthew Alford’s (2011: 71-88) analysis on *True Lies* (1994), *Executive Decision* (1996), *Air Force One* (1997), *Rules of Engagement* (2000) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001) reveals that these war genre films carry neo-colonialist undertones. These films obtained their research or funding from the Pentagon and, therefore, may be viewed to endorse foreign policy and narratives set by the US government. Alford’s study uses Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s Propaganda Model, which consists of five filters being concentrated ownership, the economic importance of advertising, the centrality of the government as a source of information, the ability to issue flak, and a dominant ideology of a superior West to that of a backward overseas, indicative of acceptable established power systems (p.72). The final filter is akin to Said’s explanation of dichotomies to establish power within European colonialism. Therefore, these films may be viewed as advocating US military presence in the
Middle East, indicative of hegemony, foreign interests and policy that coincide with a cultural framework for the war against terrorism.

2.4 2001 - 2017

After September 11, the image of Islam, Muslims and particularly that of the Muslim female, became fixed within the frame of terrorism in order to validate the consequent ‘War on Terror’. The Muslim female became a focal point for US home and foreign policy (Scott, 2002: 4). Joan Wallach Scott (2002: 8) explains that the US administration justified the war in Afghanistan and Iraq under the pretext of women’s emancipation. A particular vision was created to suggest that these women were victims and in need of saving by the West (p.9). Whereas, pre-9/11 the rights of women living in these countries were of no concern to the Bush administration (Ibid.).

America’s civilising mission in Afghanistan draws a parallel with European colonialism and the operation of domination in the guise of the mission of salvation (Ibid.). The US government’s standpoint to protect the Muslim female echoes Leila Ahmed’s (1992: 243-245) focus on the British consul general of Egypt, Lord Cromer’s objective of maintaining superiority over the colonised. Ahmed draws attention to the role of colonial officials in shaping discourses on women’s rights. Colonialism incorporated women’s rights to challenge the condition of women in Islamic societies, in order to attack and undermine those societies under its domination. The rhetoric criticised Egyptian men for upholding practices that degraded their women (El Guindi, 1999: 181). Cromer’s argument ventured to infiltrate and convince the Egyptian people to embrace civilised Western domination (Al-Ali, 2000: 27 and L. Ahmed, 1992: 243). The oppression of women in the colonies by their men folk was used ‘to render morally justifiable its project of undermining or eradicating the cultures of the colonised people’ (L. Ahmed, 1992: 151). Female emancipation as a political tool is revealed
for in England at that time, Cromer was the founding member and President for the Men’s League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage (p.153).

Just like the European colonialists, no one in the Bush administration offered world unity as a way out of the crisis (Scott, 2002: 5). Instead binary oppositions were instilled, whereby ‘alliances of good against the axis of evil, Western secular rationalism against Islamic religious fundamentalism, modernity against primitive tribalism, reason of state against the forces of terrorism’ (Ibid.). The saving of the Muslim woman was installed to be used as a reason to occupy or justify war upon another country. In turn, a hierarchy was created whereby the rights afforded to the Western female was superior to that of the Muslim female, rather than a subject of war-torn conditions.

Wadud (2000: 3) explains, within the context of modernity and a global community, that when Muslim identity is weak in the face of external pressures women are closely guarded not only from perceived and real external threats but also from flexibility and change. Muslim women’s liberties are in flux depending on both political pressure and globalisation. The culture and beliefs belonging to women from Muslim countries is undermined as they do not subscribe to the Western model and restrictions are put upon women from the local community if viewed as complying with such a model. In both circumstances agency is denied and reclaiming identity and participation in society, be it within both a secular and religious framework, becomes a crucial strategy to maintain the liberties and freedoms afforded to the Muslim female.

The use of the female body to reinforce systems of power and domination is not a new concept. Within the field of screen analysis, studies on gender have become routine post Mulvey’s (1975) ground-breaking use of psychoanalysis in ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, which brings attention to patriarchal structures through film form. Mulvey’s
discussion is significant to reading the portrayal of gender on screen, particularly as scopophilia contributes toward the on-screen sexual objectification of women via the male gaze. However, Mulvey’s work is limited when it comes to reading further formations of power, specifically concerning race and gender within a post-colonial context. Where Mulvey’s analysis is lacking, Shohat (1991) and hooks (1992) fill in the gaps to not only offer a reading on representations within mainstream cinema but that of a counter-cinema too.

Shohat’s (1991: 19) thoughts on feminist film theory conveys the concept of womanhood to be universal as it does not articulate the contradictions and asymmetries provoked by (post)colonial arrangements of power. Coinciding with concepts of power, hooks amongst others, take heed of the workings of representation within film.10 hooks pioneering essay ‘The Oppositional Gaze – Black Female Spectators’ (1992) responds to Mulvey’s critique on the gaze with concerns toward black women’s spectatorship and film criticism. Black female spectatorship of watching Hollywood cinema was to differ and deviate from the majority of white feminist film criticism spanning from Mulvey. For hooks, feminist film theory was rooted in an ahistorical psychoanalytical framework that suppressed the recognition of race. The method failed to notice the whiteness of the image, the signifiers of racial and cultural difference, the relative absence of people of colour, especially women, and when present on screen the construction of stereotypes enforced racial power relations.

Within Hollywood film history, stereotypical characters emerged that Donald Bogle (1973) identifies as toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies and bucks. Representations created by those in control of the media produced images that degraded, dehumanised and devalued people of colour, with recurrent visual tropes as infantilisation, criminality, the subservience of the martyred token black man and the censoring of relationships between black male heroes and

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10 Scholars writing on race and gender in film are Bogle (1973), Burchill (1986), Shohat and Stam (1994) and Dyer (1997).

Supporting roles, pertaining to black womanhood, enhanced and maintained white womanhood as the object of the phallocentric gaze (hooks, 1992: 119). The white female and her body served as a comparison between representations of people of colour on screen. Black women were often type-cast as full-bodied mammies seen to be serving white women. Women of colour, be they Latina, the tragic mulatto, or the Oriental female, were eroticised, oversexed and whorish (Hunter, 2005: 31). Their dark features signified the parallel lives to that of the virginal white female character. Within romantic storylines these women often required rescuing from dark-skinned men by the white male hero (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 156). Even the use of lighting techniques and light coloured costume enhanced the image of the white female in order to create a distinction (Dyer, 1997: 142). Representations came to reflect a caste system with symbolic positions of power and privilege based upon gender, skin-tone and body shape.

Knock-on effects of dominant cinema created an internalised racism where people of colour saw the world through the hegemonic white lens (hooks, 1992: 1). Black cinema took its cues from the mainstream and enforced patriarchal interpretations of the male gaze onto black women. In reference to establishing a Black woman’s filmmaking practice that counters such stereotypes, Gloria J. Gibson-Hudson concurs:
The Black woman, as presented in mainstream cinemas, is a one-dimensional depiction. Black women are shown as sex objects, passive victims, and as “other” in relation to males (black and white) and white females. Worldwide, Black women’s images are prescribed by narrative texts that reflect patriarchal visions, myths, stereotypes, and/or fantasies of Black womanhood. Consequently, these representations limit the probability of an audience seeing Black women figures of resistance or empowerment.

(Gibson-Hudson, 1994: 43)

Black women were seen as inferior to their Black men. The Black male gaze reinforced an image of sexual passivity and further silenced the Black female.

A similar treatment may be given to the representation of the Muslim female on screen by means of gender. Gönül Dönmez-Colin (2004: 1-15) in Women, Islam and Cinema study on cinema from Iran, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia explains that the image of the female has been constructed. For example, family is pivotal in establishing the microcosm of a social system. Family functions to define the role of woman based on their relationships with men. Moral and religious values have been of primary concern for producing family entertainment, whilst in films these values also shape the image of the female (Ibid.). The image of woman has a narrow span from that of the good wife and daughter to that of the fallen woman.

The male gaze appears to be universal alongside a film industry to be dominated by men as both Dönmez-Colin (2004: 15) and Hollywood film director Jane Campion point out. For instance, Campion claims the industry to be inherently sexist, stating that time and again women do not get their share of representation (Furness, 2014). Filmmaker Julie Dash (1992: 25) explains her experience of the Hollywood film industry as mainly white men telling her ‘an African American woman’ what her people wanted to see. As a result of such limited representations of the female body, women from around the world have sought to challenge a male-dominated industry and provide a counter-cinema.11

11 Women’s world cinema is illustrated by Butler (2002), Hillauer (2005), Martin (2001) and White (2015), from amongst a myriad of titles.
Film studies has moved forward in acknowledging race and difference. For example, hooks (1996: 206) critiqued E. Ann Kaplan’s edited selection of essays in (1990) *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, to lack perspective from a person of colour point of view. hooks’ critique perhaps put the wheels in motion for Kaplan’s (1997) later engagement with post-colonial themes in *Looking for the Other – Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*. Decolonizing the gaze is a trend within the work of many female filmmakers of colour, as evidenced by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (1997) *Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora* and Jacqueline Bobo (1998) *Black Women Film and Video Artists*. Their work illustrating methods of subversion to be found in relation to the practice.

Unlike film studies, the film industry remains stagnant in its representation of women and within Hollywood this includes the Muslim female despite a spurt of female centric narratives, as will be discussed in due course. Within Hollywood, female centric narratives have not progressed in their acknowledgement of the female Other on screen. Amal Abdelrazek (2007: 6) observes that American society tends to lump all women from Muslim countries into the Arab category and view all Arabs as Muslims and to consider all Muslims as practicing a particular rigid kind of Islam. The interchangeable Arab/Muslim female on screen falls under three main categories being that of the ‘exotic belly-dancer’, the ‘terrorist’ and the ‘bundle in black’ (Sabry, 2011: 40). Each of these stereotypes contribute to establishing hierarchies based upon race, gender and religious belief.

Recent release *Whiskey, Tango, Foxtrot (WTF)* (2016) provides an example of the female subject within a neo-colonialist frame that coincides with the political image of the female Other. A recurrent tagline amongst characters throughout the film is initially spoken between journalist figures Kim Baker (Tina Fey) and Tanya Vanderpoel (Margot Robbie) whilst in Afghanistan. The conversation evidences white women measuring themselves
against that of Afghan and Pakistani women with Tanya posing as the epitome of female beauty marked by her fair physical features and body shape:

Kim: What are you here, like a fifteen?
Tanya: Yeah
Tanya: In Afghanistan, you are a serious piece of arse…
Kim: thank you, oh - that's nice
Tanya: Because, you are what, what like a seven, six, seven, out in New York? Here, you're a nine, borderline ten… it's called Kabul cute

The conversation delivers the image of the white American female to that of her Afghan counterpart. The phrase can either be read as indicating the absence and invisibility of the Afghan woman as the ‘bundle in black’ or just simply considered unattractive in comparison to US standards of beauty.

Baker rids the Afghan woman of all agency in her belief that it is her mission to report on the destruction of a girls' school by the Taliban. By not speaking to NGOs, activists, teachers and pupils in the area Baker silences them, only she speaks to deliver the call for emancipation. Baker's silencing of the Afghan female voice fits L. Ahmed’s (1992: 10-11) example of colonial rhetoric, whereby dependency and subordination never serve in the best interests of the protected for they rule out participation. The consequence is that agency is denied and voices silenced that might have something different to propose (Ibid.). The narrative belonging to that of the female reporter bears resemblance to Dyer’s (1997: 29) observation on the white woman’s role as being that of privilege and subordination, in relation to the operation of white power in the world. As bearers of whiteness it is fitting that they exercise power over non-white people of both sexes (Ibid.). This is evidenced by
Baker’s interaction not only with Afghan females but also with Afghan male officials who either lust over her or are there to serve her.

Similarly, *Sex and the City 2* (2010) draws upon the ‘bundle in black’ whereby fully-veiled Muslim female characters typify oppression. Muslim women demonstrate their agency with their love of designer fashion, which is suppressed under their abayas. A common trait amongst *WTF* and *Sex and the City 2* offer comparative portrayals, based on race to signify the white female as a desirable subject within an Oriental setting. Furthermore, *Sex and the City* (Channel 4, 1998-2004) has been called out for its lack of representation of people of colour particularly in a cosmopolitan setting like New York. This led Tina Andrews to create a counter with a focus on the African-American female experience with the short, animated series *Sistas ‘n the City* (2003). Thus *Sistas ‘n the City* illustrates the potential of even low-budget animation to subvert and resist representations of race and gender.

Post-9/11 many scholars have analysed the image of Islam, Muslims and the Muslim female within the media. For example, Julian Petley and Robin Richardson’s (2011: xv) data collection on the British press between 2000 and 2008 highlight that 36% of stories on British Muslims were about terrorism, 22% focused on religious and cultural differences between Islam and British/Western culture, 11% covered Islamic extremism, and 26% presented Islam as dangerous, backward or irrational. Furthermore, the data revealed that common nouns used in relation to British Muslims were *terrorist, extremist, Islamist, suicide bomber* and *militant*. Common adjectives were *radical, fanatical, fundamentalist, extremist* and *militant*. The use of the nouns and adjectives illustrate there is little diversity on the image of British Muslims within British news stories, specifically concerning the years following 9/11.

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12 Anderson et al. (2011) and Sadar (2014) offer an example of studies on the representation of Muslims in the press.
A concern for both scholars and government think-tanks has been the effect of British news media and Hollywood film on public opinion in shaping xenophobia and Islamophobia with recent work to include a focus on social media. In this manner, Islamophobia complies with Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and underlines Said’s claims on cultural leadership, whereby predominant ideas come to be ingrained and indoctrinated into both civic and political society (Said, 1978: 7). Prior to 9/11, in 1996 a study on anti-Muslim sentiment by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI) was commissioned by MP Jack Straw to assess the extent of prejudice against Muslims (Jawad and Benn, 2003: xiv). The report was entitled ‘Islamophobia a Challenge for us all’ and was published by the think-tank the Runnymede Trust (1997), who continue to draw upon its relevancy within today’s socio-political climate (Holloway, 2016). From the findings, the Runnymede Trust concluded that Islamophobia was one of the chief forms of racism in Britain (Modood, 2005: x). The report highlighted the varying forms of racism experienced by the Muslim community, exemplified by the following visual summary:

![Islamophobia, a visual summary](image)

**Figure 1: Islamophobia - A Visual Summary (The Runnymede Trust, 1997: 11)**

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13 Scholarly work focussing on Islamophobia to mention but a few are Allen (2010), Esposito and Kalin (Eds.) (2011), Kumar (2012) and Zempi and Awan (2016).
As the visual diagram suggests, a guise of Islamophobia found within the media and in everyday conversations is prejudice. Front-page headlines and news stories that depict images of a violent Islam and the Muslim female within the frame of a backwardness oppression may contribute toward Islamophobia found within British public attitudes. The extent of Islamophobia in Britain post-9/11 has led to an increase of Muslims being violently attacked in public spaces, especially Muslim women with the identifier being in the form of the veil (Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014: 26). Furthermore, mosques have been attacked, ranging from minor vandalism to arson and firebombs with Muslim homes also being targeted (Ibid.).

This socio-political climate and related representations has led many Muslim women to comment, respond and reclaim the image of the Muslim female and that of Islam in both creative and academic ways. The concept surrounding dominant narratives on the Muslim woman’s condition is suggestive in the titles of Gisela Webb’s (2000) essay, ‘May Muslim Women Speak for Themselves, Please?’, Katherine Bullock’s (2005) edited book, *Muslim Women Activists in North America – Speaking for Ourselves*, Fawzia Afzal-Khan’s (2005) choice of essays, poetry, journalism, religious discourses, fiction and plays with *Shattering the Stereotypes – Muslim Women Speak Out* and Sarah Hussain’s (2006) edited collection of creative literary pieces and essays in *Voices of Resistance – Muslim Women on War, Faith and Sexuality*, all demonstrate that Muslim women are demanding to be involved in discussing the issues that affect them and their communities. These texts evidence the fact that Muslim women are taking the reins in the debate on the Muslim woman’s condition. They represent themselves in an intelligent, objective and accurate manner drawn from their familiarity with and insight into their affiliated culture.
Within this field, both Mohja Kahf’s practice and academic work lies, offering her diasporic voice and religious belief through poetry and novella. Kahf’s (2003) *Emails from Scheherazad* presents a wide selection of poems that capture anecdotes on her wearing of the *hijab*, immigration and stories of return, macho men and chivalrous men, humanitarian crisis and Muslim female empowerment. For example, ‘My Body is not your Battleground’ takes note of how women’s bodies are used to validate war that rids the female of her agency. Kahf’s (2016) newest publication *Hagar’s Poems* utilises her academic approach to historical recovery of female leaders and religious figures from the Qur'an. Furthermore, Kahf’s poem ‘The Fires Have Begun’, being an internal reflection on the collapse of the Twin Trade Towers, has gone beyond the page and projected onto the façade of New York Central library by visual artist Jenny Holzer (2005). Text and visual based pieces appear to be in abundance from around the world with female leading artists, Lalla Essaydi (No Date), Zineb Sedira (2010), Laila Shawa (2012) and Rania Matar (2017), exploring themes around the Muslim woman commonly associated with veiling, Orientalism and localised issues to those on a global scale.

As previously mentioned, reclaiming the image of the Muslim female may too lie within film. For instance, many Iranian women filmmakers, also within the diaspora, have scooped up awards for their films, like Samira Makhmalbaf and Sherin Neshat, to mention a few. Their films are often shot from a woman’s perspective focusing on the local socio-political issues faced by female protagonists. Makhmalbaf’s (2003) *At Five in the Afternoon* focuses on a young woman who dreams of becoming the first woman Prime Minister of Afghanistan. Not only is she ridiculed due to her gender it is her economic situation that in the end relinquishes such a dream. While, Neshat’s *Women Without Men* (2009) follows the lives of four women amidst the Iranian protests of 1953 with the reinstatement of the Shah of Iran by the British government. The film presents narratives of each woman dealing with prostitution, forced
marriage, polygamy and unrequited love. Both these films question the rights available to women in Iran and Afghanistan.

Whereas, Marjane Satrapi’s animated feature *Persepolis* (2007), based on her biographical black and white penned graphic novel, gives insight into living in Iran during the 1979 Revolution and her experience of moving to and living in Europe. Satrapi illustrates the cultural depth of Iranian identity with accounts on Zoroastrianism amongst a myriad of religious and political beliefs, customs and traditions to offer an image of Iran from outside of the frame of Islam and the State. Alongside her accounts on Switzerland and France, Satrapi gives a complex reading on Iranian identity with a nuanced reading of a place based on her lived experience rather than that of imaginative fiction.

In contrast, Farida BenLyazid’s Moroccan feature *Bab al Sama Maftouh* (*A Door to the Sky*) (1989) is based on Muslim women’s spiritualism. The feature illustrates Nadia’s (Zakia Taheri) Sufi spiritual awakening. Nadia visits Morocco from France to be with her father during his last moments. Gradually she abandons her punk style and the idea of the West as a site of liberation and decides to remain in Morocco (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 165). Under Nadia’s supervision the palatial family home becomes a women’s shelter. This female space now becomes a site for liberation via Qur’anic teachings that encompass women’s history, spirituality, prophecy, poetry, intellectual creativity and social and political leadership (Ibid.).

The film contains three directions of approach in relation to MWSA. Characters find liberation written within the Qur’an to end their struggle with varying forms of patriarchy within the public and private sphere. They discuss religious female figures and the film opens with a reference to Moroccan historical figure, Fatima al-Firi, who founded the world’s first university in 859. The film provides a varied portrayal of the Muslim female characters, some religious, some not at all, as they go about their daily lives. The stigma attached to
homosexuality is illustrated by fellow female characters in their attitude toward the gay character Bahia. Nadia challenges their reactions and her view towards homosexuality is in a similar vein to Wadud’s employment of pluralism and equality to rival homophobia within a religious framework (Wadud, 2011).

The British Muslim community appears to have transformed with the younger generations and their approach to religious identity, as illustrated by Shelina Janmohamed (2016) Generation M – Young Muslims Changing the World. Many British Muslim females are representing themselves and expressing their identity in creative ways. For example, Hip-Hop female duo Poetic Pilgrimage and comedian Shazia Mirza, are a couple of examples from an extensive list of entertainers, musicians and visual artists, as the website for Muslim Museum Initiative (2017) indicates along with Muslma (2013) the online exhibition of artwork produced by Muslim female artists. As children of the diaspora, the Muslim community and British society, their artwork and fashion expresses a response to the socio-political issues surrounding Islam and in reclaiming their identity.

Post-9/11, the spate of terrorist attacks escalated around the world and the outcome of the Arab Spring of 2011, has currently left Syria fractured and war-torn. Extremist activity brought new threats to Britain emerging from within the category of British born Muslims through association with the 7/7 attacks on London and the murder of Lieutenant Rigby. Extremist behaviour labelled British Muslims as the ‘enemy within’ by the British press (Oborne, 2008 and Fortier, 2008: 98). The label echoing Powell’s earlier concerns toward immigration. Recycled terminology homogenised British Muslims that fed the anxieties and phobias about immigration with the rise of cultural diversity going unchecked. Similar arguments paved some of the way for Britain’s departure from the European Union with Brexit.
The ‘enemy within’ has been addressed by British cinema and television programming with *Yasmin* (2004), *Britz* (Channel 4, 2007), *Four Lions* (2010), *The Infidel* (2010) and *My Lad* (2010). These films are mirrors to specific historical moments as they all form a response to 9/11. Whilst *Four Lions* adds comedic value that parodies the 7/7 British born terrorists from Dewsbury, *Britz* centres upon two siblings Sohail (Riz Ahmed) and Nasima (Manjinder Virk) who are drawn in radically different directions in response to 9/11. Sohail becomes a member of MI5 to try and stop terrorism, whereas Nasima trains to become a suicide bomber. Themes of terrorism are cinematically subverted in Sami Khan’s short *My Lad*. The film’s story is based on a grieving Muslim father (Stewart Scudamore) preparing for his son’s (Tariq Jordan) funeral. In a shabby building, images of wires and glass bottles situated within a trashed room deceives the spectator to imagine something untoward is happening within the space. As the plot unfolds a photograph of father and son reveals that his son died whilst serving in the British army.

Akin to *Britz*, *Yasmin* illustrates two siblings being pulled in different directions. Yasmin’s brother Nasir (Syed Ahmed) becomes an extremist to fight overseas with dreams of martyrdom, despite the Muslim community and their father Khalid (Renu Setna) shunning extremism at their mosque and home. The film’s focus is on Yasmin’s struggle with her identity as British, Pakistani, Muslim and female. Based in the Yorkshire town of Keighley, Yasmin (Archie Panjabi) separates her existence into two opposing spaces, one consisting of a Western space of work and social life and the other within the traditional South Asian space of home and family (Peart, 2013: 33). This is evidenced by her dress, for when at home she wears Pakistani *silwaar chemise* and *hijab* but once she has left the house she removes her headscarf and changes into Western attire of jeans and a shirt.
Following the broadcast on the falling Twin Towers, Yasmin receives stares and comments from her work colleagues. The words ‘Taliban Van’ are written on the minivan she drives for work and a note left in her locker reads ‘Yasmin loves Osama’. When her home is raided by the police and she is arrested with suspected acts of terrorism, the circumstances lead her to reflect upon her faith (Bolognani et al., 2011: 165). The outcome of the events leaves Yasmin’s identity no longer polarised but transfigured to a self-acceptance of being British, Muslim and Pakistani. This gives the film its ending, where Yasmin walks down Bradford Interchange showcasing in her outfit her religious, cultural and social identity, covering her head with a dupatta rather than a hijab and wearing quintessentially denim (Ibid.).

Whilst British Asian television and cinema continued to flourish, the struggle with British Muslim identity along with multiculturalism and mixed-race relationships were also being drawn upon within films, such as Love + Hate (2005), Mischief Night (2006), Bradford Riots (2006), West is West (2010) and Everywhere and Nowhere (2011). On television, the concept of Muslim identity was propelled to the fore with the family sitcom Citizen Khan (BBC1, 2012-16). Despite an aesthetic akin to the comedy shows of the 1950-70s the image of the Muslim female was diversified within the family dynamics of the household.

In Citizen Khan, Mr. Khan’s beloved youngest daughter, the heavily-made up, shapely Alia (Bhavna Limbachia), lives a life of pretence under her hijab. The hijab provides a means for Alia to give the performance as a good daughter in front of her father, whilst it conspicuously hides her love of popular culture. For instance, her hijab conceals her revealing clothes, an iPod that she listens to on the sly, whilst inside the cover of the Qur’an she keeps her teenage magazines (Huq, 2013: 79). Alia’s image reflects Ehab Galal’s (2010: 12) statement on the great social capital related to the wearing of the hijab that when a woman wears skinny jeans, a tight top, colourful scarf and full make-up it is considered socially mubajjabba (an Arabic term for veiling customarily practiced to maintain a standard of modesty) commonly referred
to as a *bijabi*, even if religious scholars denounce her dress as a travesty to the notion of the *bijab*. In contrast, the non-*bijab* wearing elder daughter Shazia (Maya Sondhi) is the conventional daughter, which goes unrecognised by her father. Whereas, the mother Mrs. Khan (Shobu Kapoor) is the voice of reason (Ibid.).

Just as *Citizen Khan* illustrates the heterogeneous identities of Muslims so too does recent documentary *Muslims Like Us* (BBC1, 2016). Akin to a social experiment, the documentary features ten British Muslims brought together to live under one roof for ten days. These Muslims range in age, gender, race and sexual preferences, each convey a very different approach to Islam, from extremely liberal to deeply conservative. What emerges is a clash of ideas and insight into the lives of these particular individuals.

Individuality is illustrated by the visibility of Muslim women in the public eye. Women, like former MP and activist Salma Yaqoob, Baroness Warsi, journalists Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Yvonne Ridley, Lauren Booth, Myriam Francois-Cerrah and Sara Khan from NGO group Inspire, are often called upon to cast their opinion on socio-political events. Some of these female figures along with TV personalities like Zeinab Bedawi, who began as a newsreader during the 1980s, Mishal Hussain, Fatima Manji, Samira Ahmed, Saira Khan and *The Great British Bake-Off* winner Nadiya Hussain, have been granted their own BBC documentaries and television shows on satellite channels, like RT News, Al Jazeera and British Muslim TV.

Throughout the past 20 years, the image of the Muslim female may be argued to be continually pulled in two directions: that of individuality and freedom in contrast with an oppressed stereotype. This is best evidenced by documentary films. For example, documentaries aimed at English speaking audiences, such as *Half the Sky* (2012), *Saving Face*

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14 A similar finding is evidenced by Al-Mahadin (2013).
I wasn’t always dressed like this (2013), Honour Diaries (2013), Girl Rising (2013), A Girl in the River – The Price of Forgiveness (2015) and Sonita (2016) to mention but a few, focus on the violence that some Muslim women have to face.

Whereas, the approach in the documentary work of Kim Longinotto does not present the Muslim female as a victim but examines female agency within societies governed by Shari’a Law. For example, Claire Hunt and Kim Longinotto’s Hidden Faces (1990) examines female agency within Egyptian society, illustrative of struggles with patriarchy, alongside class, regional and religious frictions amongst women, who work together to create alternative institutions. In addition, Divorce Iranian Style (1998) and Sisters in Law (2005) explore how women challenge patriarchal norms by using Shari’a Law to claim justice for women in Iran and Cameroon, respectively. These documentaries are illustrative of Muslim women’s agency and how knowledge of the Qur’an and subsequently Shari’a Law can be used to aid women’s rights, whilst simultaneously highlighting the errors with patriarchal interpretations.

The polarised image of Islam and the Muslim female continues within the presentation of documentaries. For example, Muslim Driving School (BBC2, 2010), Islam Unveiled (Channel 4, 2015), Muslim Drag Queens (Channel 4, 2015), What British Muslims Really Think (Channel 4, 2016) and Ex-Muslim (ITV, 2016) focus on a conservative Islam and the camera work provides a view from the outside looking in. Whereas, Women in Black (BBC2, 2008), Make me a Muslim (Channel 4, 2013) and The Muslim Pound (BBC1, 2016), position a narrator or presenter from a Muslim background to serve as a guide for the audience to give an insider’s view on liberal Islam. The image of the Muslim female on screen appears to be one of contradictions with the development of television programming, British cinema and audio-visual practices.
2.5 Veiling

The veiling debate of 2006 proceeded to offer an image of the Muslim female with the discussion remaining as prevalent as ever with commentary following the French prohibitive stand on the Burkini, since the Bastille Day Nice attack by a Daesh supporter (Dearden, 2016). Ten years ago, an aspect of Muslim female representation and identity surrounded the subject of the veil. In the press, veiled Muslim women are commonly presented as invisible victims of a patriarchal oppression and as a visible danger for British security and identity (Sadar, 2014: 59). News stories have reported on men who have evaded police by wearing the full-veil to veiled women vigilantes hiding weapons under their veils to protect themselves and their communities against the Daesh overseas. Recent images of the veiled Muslim woman continue to be pervasive with televised open debates, such as The Big Questions (BBC1, 2007-) and Britain’s Niqab – A Woman’s Right (Channel 4, 2013), which put Muslim women on the stand about their lifestyle choices.

Recently the image of the Muslim female has shifted to coincide with the war in Syria and Iraq. Satirical sketch ‘The Real Housewives of ISIS’ from Revolting (BBC2, 2017) nods in the direction of the mundanity of reality television shows, whilst providing a contemporary image of the Muslim female Other. The show has kicked up a fuss on social media sites due to its insensitivity towards the wars in Syria and Iraq and thus dehumanises those affected (Horton, 2017). The sketch illustrates the relationship between four young British women, wearing black abayas and hijabs, and their domestic life in the Levant region. Suicide vests, semtex, shackles and social media postings are part of the joke.

Just as politically incorrect is the dark satirical animation Monkey Dust (BBC3, 2003-05). A recurring sketch illustrates the lives of four young adults from West Bromwich, Birmingham,

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fighting for *Jihad* but only at a convenient time, like after the FA Cup final. Wearing a *hijab* and ill-fitted pair of spectacles, Mrs. Khan, the mother of two of the young lads, enters the sketch often by bringing snacks for the boys or returning home from food shopping. Mrs. Khan’s character is tricky to pin down through the archetype of a mother’s role found within comedy. Her nonchalant attitude does not take the seriousness for her sons’ call for *Jihad*. For example, coming home from the shops she comments:

Hello lads, you can do your *Jihad* now but I will need the table in 20 minutes to set your tea out.

Her script revolves around food and good manners. Both *Revolting* and *Monkey Dust* show the Muslim female as complacent. This positions a Muslim call to arms, commonly referred to as *Jihad*, as ordinary. The *hijab* may incidentally signal and categorise the Muslim female as the Other and ties the representation, as that of the wife and mother, to religious fundamentalism.

Arguments surrounding the veil are imbued with its symbolic meaning. Scholars state that on the one hand, the Western world views the veil as representative of the backwardness of Muslim women (Bullock, 2003: xv; Najmabadi, 2005: 134 and Scott, 2007: 4). For many non-Muslims and Muslims alike, the veil symbolises oppression. On the other hand, the veil for the Muslim woman is a marker of identity and used as a sign of modesty and piety as suggested by Islamic culture (Scott, 2007: 294 and Cooke, 2001: 131). Arguments surrounding the veil make the subject a complex area of study because of its political-social and religious connotations.

An important part of the conversation on the veil speaks of multiculturalism having failed in Britain alongside the rise in fundamentalism and the supposed Islamisation of Britain (Sadar, 2014: 60). A recurring question persistently raised by politicians is on the integration of
Muslims, often constituted as a monolithic community (Bhimji, 2012: 144). For example, during the 2006 veiling debate, Conservative MP David Davis viewed the veil as a form of voluntary apartheid (Davis, 2006). Davis questioned Muslim integration and whether Britain was developing into a divided society (BBC News, 2006a). To support his argument, he turned to the Cantle Report, which was commissioned by the Home Office to investigate the 2001 race riots in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham (Cantle, 2001). The topic of integration being reflected in Mischief Night and Bradford Riots. Davis believes that it is by daily contact that people may overcome their differences (Davis, 2006). Within this argument, the veil exhibits anti-social behaviour, not only against Muslims for which the veil is an identifier, but also for Muslims being seen as not wanting to be part of or interact with those outside of their respective community. In this manner, the Muslim female becomes a symbol of the Other living in Britain, as the framing of integration appears to exclude other minority groups living in the UK or class-divided neighbourhoods.

For Fazila Bhijmi (2012: 144) the word ‘integration’ remains undefined and misunderstood. Bhijmi argues that in the public imagination ‘integration’ refers to a withdrawal of religious rights, such as the right to pray during office hours, the right to wear the hijab or the niqab, and the right to build mosques with money provided by the State. The result is the incorporation of Muslims into a falsely constructed homogeneous society (Ibid.). Thus, the veil becomes a signifying marker that endorses a view on the Islamisation of Britain. For Muslims, integration into non-Muslim societies can be argued to be a criterion under the Islamic religious covenant of amān (March, 2009: 188). It includes conditions for Muslims residing in non-Muslim lands to do no harm to non-Muslim interests and respect the laws of these lands (Ibid.). Therefore, there is a fine line to cross between religious expression and Muslim adherence to the cultural mores of non-Muslim countries.
Along with the harem, veiling is not of Islamic origin but a prominent feature of the social organization of gender and status. In ancient Greece, Rome, Persia, India and later, Medieval Byzantium, all predating the arrival of Islam during the year 610, veiling was used as a status symbol to distinguish the upper-classes from the lower-classes and working women (Melman, 1992: 60; El Guindi, 1999: 3 and Bullock, 2003: 86). Simultaneously, the veil came to symbolise a religious hierarchy whilst signifying piety, modesty and purity (Hume, 2013: 17). As a symbol of modesty and chastity the veil became integrated into the nun’s habit and the wedding dress of many cultures.

For many Muslim women, the veil is worn out of modesty coinciding with faith but also that of identity. The hijab renders the body sacred, chaste and desirable (al-Mahadin, 2013: 13). Galal (2010) in ‘The Muslim Woman as a Beauty Queen’ explains that the image of the Muslim female as a woman of faith, their lifestyle choices as a citizen, their role as an obedient daughter and dutiful wife, altruistic nature as a practicing Muslim is further endorsed by television programmes available to view on Islamic satellite channels. As such an idealised image of the veiled Muslim female is created, as aforementioned with the parody of Alia within Citizen Khan.

Of late, modest fashion has become very much a part of modern culture and consumerism (Lewis, 2015: 3). From small businesses to the fashion houses of Coco Chanel and Dolce and Gabbana, filtering into high street shops like H&M with the employment of hijabi models, fashion too has tapped into a market that is inclusive to the Muslim consumer.16 Nadiya Hussain is quite a regular on the front cover of women’s magazines like Good Housekeeping and television guides. Thus, the Muslim woman is now more visible in the mainstream, especially concerning consumer culture. The veil being chosen and worn in all

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manner of styles, whilst retaining its marker of religious identity and as a form of expression, now lies within the remit of the secular and that of the consumer, a concept which is explored by the documentary *The Muslim Pound*.

Whereas, some Muslim women find wearing the veil to be empowering and liberating from modern culture (Takolia, 2012 and Sanghani, 2014). This statement is Orientalist in its nature, for those speaking for the veil assume religion as the determinant force in people’s lives, whilst they discuss and romanticise upon an historical Islam that liberates women (Bullock, 1999: 9). Bullock (1999: 9) explains that despite claims that women have the right to own property within Islam, in actual practice women may not be entitled to this right. This approach mirrors Orientalist romanticism, for they tend to ignore the very real oppressions that some Muslim women have or currently face (Ibid.). However, one may argue that with a return to the foundations of Islam, Muslim women may be able to maintain and argue for their equal rights from within the Islamic doctrine.

Whether veiling is required in Islam is a grey area amongst Muslims, based upon individual interpretations of the Qur’an. El Saadawi on *BBC Newshour* (2015) argues that the *niqab* should be prohibited. She believes that the veil is a political symbol and has nothing to do with Islam, for ‘there is not a single verse in the Qur’an explicitly mandating it’ (Ibid. and Naseef, 2004). This view renders the veil as a symbol of political resistance alongside religious interpretations to which the matter of unveiling also contributes. The veil is a consistent theme within discussions on modernisation spurred on by 19th century European colonialism and resistance. In some Muslim countries, like Turkey, even though never colonised, anti-veiling campaigns were presented as emancipatory and a sign of modernity (Cronin, 2014: 3). In opposition, unveiling became symptomatic of a loss of cultural integrity. Whereas, the coloniser’s insistence to cease the wearing of the veil provoked women to continue to wear it as a visible sign of resistance against the coloniser (Oliver,
Therefore, veiling is used for political reasons to support and establish formations of power.

History appeared to repeat itself, during the Iranian revolution of 1979 women wore the veil as a symbol of solidarity between fellow Iranians and as a symbol of resistance against the Western influenced Iranian monarchy, as the veil had been banned by Reza Shah in 1936 (El Guindi, 1999: 174). Anti-Shah and anti-West nationalist women expediently veiled in protest to show that they had their own culture, identity and heritage during the revolution (Cooke, 2001: x). However, nothing could have prepared them for the veil’s legal imposition. The veil once worn by Iranian women in national unity, became a compulsory uniform that represented the country’s religiosity, when the religious clerics came to power. Under the clerics, the enforcement of the veil embodied Iran as an Islamic state that would not be persuaded by foreign influences (Ibid.). In this case, the veil came to signify the rejection of Western culture.

For some, veiling, particularly the *niqab* and *burqa*, are not viewed as being necessary and seen as a rejection of progressive values. For example, British journalist, and self-proclaimed leftist liberal, anti-racist, feminist Muslim, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, has voiced her concerns on the wearing of the veil, during several television programmes, radio broadcasts and newspaper articles. Of Ugandan Asian descent, Alibhai-Brown’s views on veiling are inspired by her mother’s generation, where women cast aside their veils for female liberation. Scholars (L. Ahmed, 2012 and Cronin, 2014) further establish a global movement in the removing of veils for female empowerment that took place during the first half of the 20th century. Alibhai-Brown continues to say that despite some of the men in Uganda disliking the removal of the veil, the women’s staunch move was supported by their local *Imam*

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(religious leader). In this way, the choice of whether to veil or not serves the interests of the woman.

Interpretations on the varying modes of attire for women are taken from Qur’anic Suras (verses), *Sura an-Nur* *ayah* (line) 31, *Sura al-Abzab* *ayah* 59. English translations and interpretations of these verses vary from, head covers, veils, cloaks and garments to be used to cover the chest and private parts.\(^\text{18}\) Recent interpretations when combined with certain *Hadiths* (stories relating to the Prophet Muhammad) has led some clerics to say that the whole body apart from one eye should be covered (*BBC News*, 2008). At best, Qur’anic verses describe a method in which women might not be subject to the male gaze and sexual advances. At worst, some men have taken the interpretation to endorse a rape culture often against unveiled women or women in public spaces, for example the New Year’s Eve 2015 Cologne attacks and *Tabarrush* (a form of gang rape) during the Egyptian uprising of 2011 (*Daoud*, 2016: 65 and *Badran*, 2016: 55).

Asghar Ali Engineer (2005: 208) explains that women lost in the *Hadith* what they had gained in the Qur’an. Through their research, Mernissi and Engineer point out there are more fraudulent *Hadiths* than authentic ones, which will be evidenced further, in consideration of religious interpretations of texts, within the creative practice, as will the discussion on the veil. The veil as a visual trope is elaborated on in the following chapter building upon the ‘bundle of black’ to the exotic female ‘belly-dancer’. The image of the Muslim female ties in with *Said’s* discussion on representations of the Oriental female and the development of tropes from beyond that of early cinema, a reading of which informs the making of the creative-practice in its presentation of the veil and the historical Muslim female on screen.

\(^{18}\) A compared literal translation was taken from *Pickthall* (1996), *Bakhtiar* (2009) and *Al-Mehri (Ed.)* (2010).
3.1 Case Study 1 - Lotte Reiniger and Early Cinema

Reiniger is currently acknowledged to have produced the world’s first surviving animated feature *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* made in 1926 (Lingford, 2015: 21). For a long time Reiniger was forgotten and her films lost but since a copy of *Prince Achmed* was rediscovered and restored by the British Film Institute in 1988-89, the animation has become established as a classic of silent cinema (Warner, 2011: 391). Thus, Reiniger may even be considered as having produced the first image of the Muslim female within feature animation.

Documentary film director John Isaacs captures Reiniger crafting the silhouette film in *The Art of Lotte Reiniger* (1970) as does filmmaker Katja Raganelli (1999) in *Lotte Reiniger – Homage to the Inventor of the Silhouette Film*. Armed with a pair of scissors, Reiniger cuts out dense black shadow puppet figures and individual body parts from cardboard. These pieces are tied together with wire hinges allowing the movement of the figures to be manipulated. Assisted by her husband, Carl Koch, they created a trick table to capture the movement of the puppets. The table consisted of a glass surface, which was lit from below with two lightbulbs. The animation was worked upon the glass in a formation of layers. Tissue paper was used to create the backgrounds whilst the silhouette figures formed another layer above. A camera, attached to a wooden frame overhead, captured the scene below.

The technique may be viewed as having adapted two Victorian pastimes being the toy theatre, which is often made from paper cut outs, and the silhouette portrait, which was an inexpensive way to capture a person’s likeness, often cut from stiff card (Reiniger, 1970: 13-14 and Warner, 2011: 391). Both techniques serve as a precursor to that of the animated film and portrait photography. Although the silhouette film may share Victorian aesthetics,
Reiniger’s cut outs bear resemblance to the silhouette figures on ancient Greek pottery, along with the art of paper-cutting, having its roots in 19th century Polish Wycinanki and Chinese Jianzhi, a technique that followed the invention of paper in the 2nd century (Reiniger, 1970: 14; Horniman Museum and Gardens, 2009 and Yang, 2012: 29). The cutting of thin materials, such as silk, foil, tree bark, and hide, can be classified as a skill stretching far back into antiquity from which the art of the shadow-play had emerged (Ibid.).

The cutting of materials, particularly leather, is a method in which puppets for the shadow-play are made. The Indonesian art of Wayang Kulit and the Turkish Karagöz offer an example of shadow-puppetry having survived through the ages (Currell, 2007: 17-32). The shadow-play was popular during the Medieval period being performed by street entertainers from Japan to Baghdad, Djakarta to Cairo (Warner, 2011: 397-398). The theatrical art-form entered Europe through the live arts of finger games, puppet theatres, magic lanterns and related devices and diversions staged by travelling showmen (Ibid.). The design of Reiniger’s film with the puppets and their costumes, for example Dinarzade and Peri Banu’s intricate headdresses and full-length gowns in Chinese traditional fashions, evidences a tradition of historical visual practices and past-times from the Orient spreading to Europe and as such maintains a form of aesthetic revivalism.

Reiniger’s animation revives the magical fantastic Orient of The Nights with its synthesis of ‘The Ebony Horse’, ‘The Story of Janshah’ and ‘Aladdin’, also referred to as ‘The Magic Lamp’, along with Dinarzade, Scheherazade’s sister, who serves as a love interest to Aladdin. However, the story of ‘Aladdin’ along with ‘Ali Baba’ are sometimes referred to as ‘an orphan story’ because no original Arabic text has survived. The earliest copy of the story is to be found in Galland’s translation of The Arabian Nights (Lyons and Lyons, 2008a: vii and Said, 1978: 64). The origins of The Nights stories appear to be somewhat vague. This may be due to the text being orated by professional storytellers, which may account for the lack of paper
copies and the origins of the stories, differing chronologically and geographically (Pinault, 1992: 13). There is some indication that *The Nights* began as a modest book between the 13th and 14th centuries, which developed into a tome, whereby scribes added stories that did not belong to the well-known prose works of Medieval Arabic literature (Mahdi, 1995: 8).

What is established within the history of the text is that an Arabic manuscript *Alf Layla wa-Layla* (1001 Nights), comprising of three volumes arrived in Paris from Syria for Antoine Galland, who offered the first translation of the tales in 1704 (Mahdi, 1995: 21). For many years, Galland searched for a complete copy from the Orient and when one did not materialise, he created the missing segments himself (Mahdi, 1995: 1-11; Kabbani, 1986: 48-68 and Warner, 2011: 13). Hence, the invention of Aladdin, Ali Baba, Prince Achmed and his two sisters (Irwin, 1994: 17). Therefore, these stories may be framed within the realms of European envisioning of a fantastic Orient.

The phenomenon of the Orient continued into the 19th century with Sir Richard Burton’s translation *Arabian Nights Entertainments* in 1885 (Irwin, 1994: 29). During the height of colonialism and within the European public sphere, *The Nights* were thought to reflect the society and culture of the Arab and Muslim peoples and thus the book to be taken seriously as a form of study (Sabry, 2011: 23). The popularity of *The Nights*, along with its appropriated title *The Arabian Nights*, spanned across scholarship and cultural appropriation, surmises a readership to have classified and homogenised a whole group of peoples spread far and wide across the near to the far East (p.xi). Such an approach towards the study of both Arab and Islamic culture underlines Said’s Orientalist concerns towards cultural hegemony in establishing an image of the Other (Said, 1978: 6).
Said’s analysis renders Burton’s approach to the Orient to be highly stylized simulacra, elaborately wrought imitations of what a live Orient might be thought to look like (p.88). Sexual obsession and racism came together in Burton’s footnotes (Irwin, 1994: 34). Therefore, the Orient became an imagined sexual playground for the Occident. Amongst sexual taboos was homosexuality that went against the prim nature of the bourgeoisie (Irwin, 1994: 36 and Aldrich, 2003: 5). Robert Irwin’s (1994: 167) analysis of *The Nights* concludes that one can use its texts, be it via selective quotation, to argue that homosexuality was widely approved of or indifferently accepted, to even outright abominated. In addition, interpretations of *The Nights* differ as the Edinburgh Review characterised Galland’s version as being for the nursery, Lane’s for the library and Burton’s for the sewers (p.36).

Reiniger appears to have a different interpretation to Burton’s text and approach to homosexuality. The scene ‘Der Scheintote Chinese’ (Seemingly Dead Chinaman) was omitted from *Prince Achmed*, not only due to running time, but some men were nervous about its content (Moritz, 1996: 18-19). The scene was inspired by Burton’s essay ‘The Sortadic Zone’, which expressed how important homosexual relationships were in the world of *Prince Achmed*. Reiniger’s close friendships with homosexual men and women saw how they suffered from stigmatisation (Ibid.). Reiniger liked how love between members of the same sex was depicted as a natural occurrence within *The Nights*. Her aim was to portray homosexuality as casual and honest. The kiss between the Emperor and Ping Pong may have even been the first happy kiss between two men shown in cinema. She wanted the kiss to happen calmly midway through the film, so that children and those, who themselves, may be homosexual could see it as natural and not be shocked or ashamed (Ibid.). Reiniger’s interpretation does not enforce notions of homosexuality and Empire in the play for power but may be argued as cutting-edge in her portrayal of homosexuality for the times.
Just as William Moritz finds Reiniger’s approach to homosexuality respectful so too does Shaheen (2001: 52-53) in Reiniger’s portrayal of Islam. Shaheen reads the final frames of the film to serve as an example, whereby the visual and intertitle reads:

The voice of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer, rose from the minarets…
There is no God but Allah, no safety and no refuge save in Allah, the Glorious and the Great.

Reiniger illustrates an understanding of the Islamic faith, for the intertitle itself offers a reading from the Qur’an, an example would be the first verse entitled Fatiba.

The image of the female varies within Prince Achmed. There is a powerful witch who defeats the evil sorcerer, which makes her the hero of the story. In a palace on the magical islands of Wak Wak women lust over Achmed. Peri Banu, the ruling princess of the Wak Wak islands and Achmed, alongside Princess Dinarzade and Aladdin, all form part of the romantic storyline. Taking a reading from Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons (2008a) (2008b) (2008c), the characterisation of the female figure within The Nights written text varies from wives, maidens, artisans, concubines, slaves, prisoners, princesses, sorcerers and mythical beings, like djinns and ifrits, along with varying degrees of intelligence, physicality, sexuality and age.

In a few stories, some women are highly educated, others speak of cunning old women, and some women even become kings, whilst others are fearful warriors (Irwin, 1994: 158). Female characters are either dutiful or disobedient toward their male partners, including adulteresses, and some women bear no concern for their male equivalent, whatsoever. A couple of female characters may be viewed as no more than mere objects, who may be bought, sold, given away, and even offered as gifts. Besides polygamy and being held in harems, further characterisations include some to suffer physical abuse and are even killed. The range of female characters is diverse.
Rana Kabbani (1986: 87) explains that the tales were originally recounted to an all-male audience desiring bawdy entertainment. The stories were crude and reaffirmed xenophobic biases, denigrated local minorities and reflected a certain mode of apprehending women as a consequence of a repressive patriarchal society. Kabbani arranges depictions into two categories. The first illustrates the majority of females as demonesses, procuresses, sorceresses and witches. They are cruel, fickle, faithless, lewd, vengeful, lecherous and conniving. Some take pleasure from inflicting pain and devise various methods in which to torture a man. Many of these female characters are wanton and adulterers, often cheating on their husbands with the grotesque undesirable caste of black male eunuchs and lepers.

The second group of women are pious and prudent. Virgins end up being corrupted, whereas wives and mothers lack any libido with their beauty being of no threat to society. They are often good kind women of no consequence to the storyline. From within the text, even Scheherazade, who narrates these stories to her husband King Shahriyar, falls into this group. Scheherazade sides with the King against her own sex in order to keep her head. She is exemplary in her domesticity, a dutiful daughter, considerate sister, loving and caring wife with her learned steadfast ways are only to please and placate her husband (p.89). Female characters for Kabbani are subject to a patriarchal narrative based on a system of hierarchies where women and people of colour are the lowest denominator.

An alternative reading reveals the female characters to go against the grain of both a colonial and patriarchal mind-set. Scheherazade, the female character responsible for narrating the stories poses as a literary example of a Medieval Muslim royal female via her marriage to Shahriyar. Somaya Sabry (2011: 46) outlines Scheherazade’s agency in choosing her destiny to marry the Sultan, despite her father’s reservations. In the original Arabic text, her intellectual abilities foresee the narrative as one which is empowering through the manipulation of text and Shahriyar’s desire, both of which she is control of (Ibid.). Whether
the stories are the creation of Scheherazade’s imagination or simply recitation, both instances illustrate the intellectual seduction of the storyteller.

Dependent on her cunning and guile being up to the task, Scheherazade is able to save not only herself from the King’s deadly wrath, but also put an end to the death sentences of possible future wives, thus she may be viewed as heroic. The tales are at first a form of entertainment, but are also carefully crafted to engender underlining messages about morality and justice (Yamanaka and Nishio, 2006: 240). Scheherazade’s moralistic stories, alongside her empathetic nature, alters her husband’s perspective towards women and in good fairy-tale fashion, they both lived happily ever after and so too did the kingdom.

Where Kabbani speaks of The Nights as serving a male audience, Mernissi (2001: 1-10) portrays the female characters as having self-determination as would be narrated to female listeners. The oral tradition enabled a subversive interpretation of The Nights, whereby the most tyrannical of despots are reduced to powerlessness, as is evidenced by Scheherazade’s narrative hold on Shahriyar. This agency lies in the harem, which Yasmina, Mernissi’s grandmother, viewed as a prison that women were forbidden to leave. Yasmina glorified travel as a means for a person to educate and empower themselves and hence her favourite story as told by her heroic Scheherazade is ‘The Tale of the Lady with the Feather Dress’.

Yasmina’s version has a feminised title to that of The Nights recognised version ‘The Tale of Hassan al Basri’. The story reads of Hassan who from a ship notices the graceful movements of a large bird on a beach. The bird removes its dress made of feathers to reveal a beautiful naked lady:
She had a mouth as magical as Solomon’s seal and hair blacker than the night… She had lips like corals and teeth like strung pearls… Her middle was full of folds… She had thighs great and plump, like marble columns… But what captivated Hassan Basri most was what lay between her thighs: a goodly rounded dome on pillars borne, like a bowl of silver or crystal.

(Mernissi, 2001: 6)

The sexual description highlights some men’s instinctive lure to female sexuality and beauty, whilst also functioning as a form of erotica. Hassan steals the dress, depriving the lady of her wings, whereby he takes her captive and marries her. Over the years she bears him two sons but she never stopped looking for her dress. When she finds the feathered dress, she takes her sons to her home on the island of Wak Wak, but leaves her husband a note saying that he could join her if he has the courage to do so. However, no one then or even now knows where this mysterious island lies (Ibid.).

In this feminised version Hassan never finds them, whereas the documented story reads of the adventures Hassan has in finding his wife and sons and their return to Basra to live happily ever after (Ibid. and Lyons and Lyons, 2008c: 261). For Yasmina, there are many lessons to be taken from this story, the first is that when a woman decides to use her wings, she takes big risks and when she does not use her wings at all it hurts her. The main message is that a woman should live her life as a nomad. She should remain alert and ready to move, even if she is loved. For the story teaches that love can even engulf a person and become a prison (Ibid.). Mernissi’s account evidences that The Nights were of value to a female audience being passed on through the generations.

Reiniger employs a masculine reading of this story. Peri Banu is the voyeuristic pleasure of the male gaze belonging to Achmed evidences the enforcement of patriarchy by way of Mulvey’s (1975: 37) discussion on scopophilia. Upon seeing the mysterious bird-like creatures land by a lake, he hides himself beneath a bush. The creatures remove their feathered gowns and voyeuristically Achmed watches Peri Banu disrobe and bathe in the water. He hides her feather cloak, leaving her naked, and chases her until she passes out
from exhaustion. Whilst unconscious he carries her off on the magic horse to a mountaintop in China. When she wakes she sobs at the thought of being taken away from her home. On seeing Peri Banu clearly distressed, Achmed returns her feathers and at this gesture Peri Banu falls in love with him.

Reiniger’s princesses are not only subject to the male gaze of their heroes but also the whims of an evil sorcerer. The action follows the adventurous male hero where the female lead is in need of rescue, for the villain has kidnapped Peri Banu to cast his revenge on Achmed. The sorcerer hoodwinks the Princess to sell her as a slave to the Emperor of China. When she refuses the Emperor’s sexual advances the Emperor arranges her marriage to the court jester as a punishment. Not only does the scene complicate the idea of homosexuality between the Emperor and the jester but the treatment of Peri Banu presents her as a sexual commodity that can be bought, sold and exchanged at the will of her captors. Upon her rescue, the film gets its closure by Peri Banu renouncing herself from being the leader of the spirit world in order to be with Prince Achmed. Following the defeat of the sorcerer and spirits of Wak Wak, Aladdin is reunited with Dinarzade and together with Achmed and Peri Banu return to the siblings’ palace. The rescue fantasy leads to female liberation being identified with heterosexual love and marriage. Even though, aspects of *Prince Achmed* may be critiqued with concerns on female representation, the intricate silhouettes, landscapes and the arabesque intertitles may be viewed as a labour of love for Reiniger.

Reiniger evidences a filmmaking process that attempts to go beyond stereotypes, specifically concerning race, after the making of *Prince Achmed*. Production on *Prince Achmed* began during 1923 in Berlin, where it was also screened three years later (Warner, 2011: 393). Thus, positioning the film within a few years after the dismantling of the German Colonial Empire, as a consequence of World War One (WWI), and ten years before Adolf Hitler became the leader of Germany. The historical events that were to unfold from Nazi Germany, led
Reiniger to step away from aspects of characterisation, which she had used in *Prince Achmed*. Warner (2011: 401-402) explains Reiniger’s iconography, with its occasionally racialised, cartoonish aspects, betrayed the prejudices of her times. The Chinese and African features of her witches and goblins, and the exaggerated Semitic profile of the enchanter became uncomfortable stereotypes in the post-war period.

To make her fairy-tale shorts, Reiniger recycled footage and figures from *Prince Achmed*. The magician lost his hooked nose and became a cuddly, comic figure from Western nursery law, then he was turned into a mad scientist with a bobble nose and bighorn-rimmed specs. The magician’s original appearance had changed meaning since the sinister characteristics of *Nosferatu - A Symphony of Horror* (1922), where accidental stereotypes emerged to define the enemy within that was used to promote anti-Semitism. Heroic figures underwent a transformation, for instance Aladdin, with his slender elongated limbs, high-domed cranium and tight curly hair was made to appear slightly younger, shorter and sturdier with a snub nose and loose wavy hair in a remake of Aladdin with *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* (1954). These changes indicate that Reiniger was stepping away from generic characterisation due to the Nazi’s appropriation of character design to describe race (Ibid.).

Reiniger’s choices on characterisation differ to that of composer Wolfgang Zeller who scored *Prince Achmed*. Zeller was involved from the outset of the project and wrote the music to create special sound effects comprising of the flute, glockenspiel and marching pieces (Reiniger, 1972: 2). Reiniger’s trick-table even had a device, where Reiniger could turn the music score on rollers, to synchronise the movement of the puppets with the music (Warner, 2011: 392). At a later stage of the production process the music was recorded by an orchestra. The score compares to that of European classical music with its orchestration and instrumentation. Horns and strings either add grandeur to the scene or accompany the characters’ emotional qualities, for instance the melody which accompanies the evil wizard
bears similar qualities later to be found in the sinister ostinato of the *Jaws* (1975) theme tune. Even though Zeller was not a member of the Nazi party, he remained in Germany during WWII and fought on the frontline (Boch and Bergfelder, 2009: 547). He was recalled to compose for Nazi propaganda films, most notable *Jud Süss* (Jew Suss) (1940) and after the war scored for the anti-racist *Ehe im Schatten* (Marriage in the Shadows) (1947), both having very similar soundtracks (Shandley, 2001: 82). Therefore, Zeller appears to compose in response to the action and personalities of the characters on screen, to which the stereotype of the Jew was subject to during WWII.

Prior to WWII, the Russian Jewish Frenkel Brothers residing in Egypt were to produce the first animated figure from the MENA region with the recurring *Mish-Mish Effendi* (1935-1951). Three years later, the Frenkel Brothers and the Egyptian Ministry of Defence produced *Mish-Mish Effendi and the National Defence* (1939) in support of the war effort against Germany (Ghazala, 2011: 3). Patriotic propaganda was the norm for many animations and films of the period (Wasko, 2001: 19 and Beck, 2004: 78-115). The animated adventures of Mish-Mish do not deviate from the majority of animations of the time with its black and white penned aesthetic, humour, exaggerated stereotypes of black characters or portrayal of female characters. For example, Mish-Mish’s girlfriend, Baheya, appears to resemble Betty Boop with her bobbed haircut and flapper dress sense in early episodes like *Mish-Mish in Mischief* (1939). However, *Mish-Mish* keeps to Arabic traditions with its use of music and Baheya’s occupation as a belly-dancer, which was a common feature within early Egyptian cinema (Collins Dunn, 2013).
3.2 Early Cinema and the Oriental Female on Screen

Over the years, the image of the Egyptian female performer was to shift from that of the savants to that of the ‘fallen woman’ (Van Nieuwkerk, 1998: 21). The traditional art-form is annexed within the passages of cultural Egyptian history, only to be re-appropriated and re-interpreted into constructing an image of the exotic female Other, a feature within both European and Hollywood screen media, which coincides with Saidian myth.

Said draws an image of the Oriental female based on Flaubert’s encounters with Egyptian courtesan Kuchuk Hanem:

Flaubert paints Hanem as an ahistorical, submissive female figure. The exotic, erotic and sensual qualities of the Oriental female became personified by Hanem’s demeanour (Burney, 2012: 33). Hanem appeared in many of Flaubert’s novels and via his authorship, an image of the Orient and the sexually submissive female was passed onto his readers (Said, 1978: 6 and Burney, 2012: 33).

Whilst Hanem poses as a symbol of the Orient, Flaubert’s master narrative is representative of 19th century colonial thought. The Oriental female, a visual metaphor for the feminisation of the Orient, simultaneously signifying the relationship of power and dominance between the Occident and the Orient. In colonial discourse, the feminisation of the Orient left her weak and sexually passive, as something to be desired and possessed (Burney, 2012: 34).
Within this context, the land of the Orient becomes the main character to be appropriated by the colonial gaze. The image of the Oriental female sets the foundation for the male-power fantasy. The stylistic sensuality of Gustave Flaubert’s writing sets an archetype of motifs and associated tropes of the Orient that often recur in Western popular culture.

The turn of the 19th century, simultaneously experienced colonial expansion, the advent of cinema, the arrival of sexual liberation, the phenomena of the Orient and the burgeoning of WWI (Shohat, 1991: 20 and Studlar, 1995: 107). The Lumière Brothers went so far to create travel documentaries, such as *Indochine: Enfants Annamites Ramassant des Sépèques Devant la Pagode des Dames* (Indochina: Children Gathering Rice Scattered by Western Women outside a Pagoda) (1903), *Départ de Jérusalem en Chemin de fer* (Leaving Jerusalem by Railway) (1897) and *Le Bey de Tunis et les Personnages de sa suite Descendant l'escalier du Bardo* (The Bey of Tunisia and his Council Members descending the steps of the Bardo) (1904), to offer but a few examples from a list of international locations (Parrill, 2006: 436-467 and Creed and Hoorn, 2011: 230).

However, the image of the belly-dancer had begun to catch the imagination of many filmmakers and the dance was captured, re-enacted and re-imagined for film. For example, Thomas Edison’s documentation of female dancers and actresses’ performances in *Princess Ali* (1895), *Fatima’s Coochie Coochie Dance* (1896), *Little Egypt* (1896) and *Ella Lola* (1898), along with the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company’s *Princess Rajab Dance* (1904) were amongst the first to re-enact the dance for film. *Fatima’s Coochie Coochie Dance* was censored by Edison regarding the movements too provocative for US audiences, despite their delighted reaction and the availability of pornography in the far more risqué back-room parlours (Geltzer, 2015: 9-10).
Stories and myths about the Orient inspired visual storyteller Georges Méliès to make films, such as *The Indian Sorcerer* (1896), *Dancing in a Harem* (1897), *Egyptian Fantasy* (1903), *The Palace of the Arabian Knights* (1905), *The Genii of Fire* (1908) and *Oriental Black Art* (1908). These are selective titles from a mass array of films offering the fantastic, made equally exaggerated and magical. His films pertaining to the Orient pigeonhole his work to subscribe to Orientalist despotism. Shaheen (2001: 14) explains Méliès to have served up dancing harem maidens and ugly Arabs, whom ride camels, brandish scimitars, kill one another and lust over the Western heroine, ignoring their own women. The imaginary of the harem and the rape and rescue fantasy from European colonial literature had made it onto the screen.

Shaheen’s view concurs with Said’s analysis on cinema that conveys the Arab as lecherous, bloodthirsty and dishonest. He appears as an oversexed degenerate, capable of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous and low. He is a slave trader, camel driver, money-changer, colourful scoundrel. The Arab leader (of marauders, pirates, native insurgents) can often be seen snarling at the captured Western hero and the blond girl, both of them steeped in wholesomeness (Said, 1978: 287). The consequent effect of such representation on the Arab female is that of sex or repression. However, early cinema was to offer an alternative approach to Islam and the image of Arabs with Douglas Fairbanks’ *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924). The film opens with the words ‘Happiness must be earned’ written in the stars, which sets out the achievement for the protagonist hero, to be followed by an intertitle with a verse from the Qur’an. Ahmed (Douglas Fairbanks) mocks devout Muslims but towards the end of the film realises the error of his ways. The princess remains to be rescued from the Mongols but the audience’s sympathies are to lie with the Muslim hero.
3.3 Historical Female Figures from the Orient as Femme Fatale

Arising from early filmmakers, an image of historical Abrahamic and religious female figureheads from the Orient came to signify the female Other. Many films and television programmes have revived these Abrahamic stories, along with William Shakespeare’s (1606) ‘Anthony and Cleopatra’ and Oscar Wilde’s (1894) ‘Salomé’, to offer their own interpretations via adaptation. Portrayals of Salomé have been produced in 1918, 1922, 1923, 1953 and 2013, besides a myriad of Cleopatra titles with the most auspicious version being by director Cecil B. DeMille in 1934, followed by Caesar and Cleopatra (1945), Serpent of the Nile (1953), Carry on Cleo (1964), Anthony and Cleopatra (1972) and of course the huge budget epic starring Elizabeth Taylor in 1963. Also the Queen of Sheba dominates the screen with The Queen of Sheba (1921) and Solomon and Sheba (1959) to mention but a couple of titles.

Urvi Mukhopadhyay (2014: 107) explains that portrayal of Cleopatra does not illustrate the leading lady as innocent. She is not powerful in terms of political or military might, but through her ability to subjugate the opposite sex, particularly the leading male figure succumbing to her sexual vigour. On the one hand, the continuance of their stories may be read as authoritative females in charge of both their bodies and sexuality, thus subverting subjugation and demoralisation. On the other hand, these female characters, often falling to the feet of their male counterparts, may be viewed to undermine female leadership. In this vein, a view on historical female figures is no different to arguments posed against female leadership within some Muslim communities.

For Said (1978: 180) legendary female figures like Cleopatra, Salomé and Isis held special significance with their image enhanced, pre-eminently valorised and richly suggestive. Nineteenth century literary texts harbour an imagery of exotic places, the cultivation of

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19 As illustrated by the work of Hatchuel and Vienne-Guerrin (Eds.) (2009) and Hatchuel (2011).
sadomasochistic tastes, and a fascination with the macabre, with the notion of the ‘Fatal Woman’ (Ibid.). Her sexual prowess triggers the colonial desire to dominate over a land that is willing to be taken. Within popular Orientalism, figures like Salomé and Cleopatra were popular within Orientalist 19th century trends (Doane, 1991: 1), making way for the on-screen femme fatale.

Cinema came to present itself as a moral panic because of female sexuality and sexual liberation. During the initial years of the 20th century, Britain was hit by ‘Salomania’ whereby middle-class women would hold female gatherings to re-enact Salomé’s dance of the seven veils taken from Vaudeville renditions (Studlar, 1995: 107). Fashion and costumes by designer Paul Poiret, came to redefine the female body and feminise the male (Wollen, 1986: 17-18). Oriental despotism posed as an opposite to an absolutism in the political order of things that was to be read in male female dynamics performed on stage and screen. The Orient became the site of which scientific, political and sexual fantasy could be shamelessly re-enacted and paranoias about the other and society put on show. To reinforce the idea of despotism, whereby citizens have no more rights than women and slaves, the portrayal of the seraglio became crucial to the scenography of the Orient. The decadent Oriental femme fatale on stage, her desirable gaze and actions toward the male, enforced the libidinal power of the woman to portray a world out of control (Ibid.).

Orientalist ideas were put into popular sexual discourse with the release of The Sheik (1921) starring Rudolph Valentino. Flappers were parading as Shebas and their boyfriends role-playing as Sheiks (Studlar, 1995: 102). Whilst some women were enjoying sexual empowerment and liberation, Shohat and Stam suggest that the film is another product of the (Western) male gaze (p.168). Acting as the Id, the hero allows the heroine to overcome her sexual repression, but the real purpose of the narrative is to permit the male viewer to project his unthinkable sexual fantasies into an exotic imaginary space where women are
defenceless, playing off the masculine fantasy of complete control over the Western woman without any intervening code of morality (Ibid. and Studlar, 1995: 102).

An early Cleopatra film was released in 1912, starring Helen Gardner and directed by Charles L. Gaskill. This was soon followed by Theda Bara’s lead role in both Cleopatra (1917) and Salomé (1918), whose performance as the Oriental female coined the phrase the femme fatale and that of the Vamp, the term suggestive of a woman who uses her charm or wiles to seduce and exploit men (Card, 1994: 183). The serpent label was used to define Bara’s performance (Shaheen, 2001: 28). However, a reading could subscribe to the symbolic meaning of ancient Egyptian deities or the poisonous asp, iconic to the story of Cleopatra, to give an alternative meaning to the performance.²⁰

The snake became repetitive to the image of the East, be it through dance performances. For example, in Fritz Lang’s The Indian Tomb (1959), a semi-nude Debra Paget conveys a devotional serpent dance for Hindu Goddess Shiva. The dance of the snakes is performed in Universal Pictures production Cobra Woman (1944) and by the movements of Ray Harryhausen’s animated model the ‘Serpent Woman’ made for The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958). The hybrid combination of the snake and the female form resonates with the image of the chimera Medusa. The image is reflective of Freudian theory on the Dark Continent as a site of sexual exploration and the head of Medusa indicative of castration, which further feminises the Orient (Doane, 1991: 65 and 209 and Shohat and Stam, 1994: 149).

Silent cinema was subject to many films being heavily censored in Great Britain. The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC, No Date) cut sequences from both Cleopatra (1912) and Bara’s rendition because of the seductive, predatory, sexually aware female characters

(Smith, 2005: 52). To summarise, the BBFC requirements span from religion, violence and sex to homosexuality, disrespecting the King, Empire and British Officers. Therefore, silent cinema and film censorship both appear to reflect the trends in society, albeit moral panics and political social norms, all coinciding with sexual liberation and colonialism.

US censorship was tightened with the Motion Picture Production Code, known as the Hays code, which was put into full force during 1934, but spanned from 1930 until 1967 (pp.59-61). The Code oversaw both queer and inter-racial relationships to be excised from the screen (Dix, 2008: 245 and Shaheen, 2001: 427). Despite censorship, by basing their films on the respected work of Shakespeare’s *Cleopatra and Anthony*, filmmakers could project the Orient as a site whereby sexual fantasy could be played out through dance and costume, whilst hypothetically present inter-racial relationships (Hatchuel, 2011: 150). The Code reflected US racial segregation. Lead characters were cast as white with the brunette being representative of the black female. For example, *Cleopatra* (1934) harbours colonial overtones whereby the Roman court consists of scoffy aristocratic Englishmen, as too are Solomon’s Israeli palace dignitaries in *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), who laugh at the idea that Rome could ever be ruled by a Black Cleopatra. Their attitude points towards Cleopatra as being incapable to rule due to the colour of her skin and her gender. These gentlemen too are subject to Hollywood conventions and in this manner, type-casting and censorship have created a white-washed history with limited diversity shown on screen.

Continuing from the beginnings of European and Hollywood cinema, filmmakers use white stars in brown face, for instance *Two Arabian Knights* (1927), *Gunga Din* (1939), *Harum Scarum* (1965) and the *Carry On* films. Many films are not intentionally made to be offensive, however the audience is left with fabricated creations (Addison, 1993: 139). Shohat (1991: 32) explains that by casting Western stars as Orientals lends itself to the post-colonial gaze. Parody and spectacle of the Orient undermines any active historical role belonging to the
Orient. However, the talents of Sabu and Omar Sharif, amongst a list of actors, the traditional Indian dances of Sujata and Asoka and respected actors, like Anthony Quinn, in lead roles, blurs the line of racial representation corresponding with Derrida’s concept of trace. The study of texts may be examined to reveal nuances, gaps, incoherencies and even present contradictions within themselves.

The Oriental femme fatale along with the eroticised image of belly-dancers and veils came of service to the war effort. Films of an ilk: Arabian Nights (1942), White Savage (1943), Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (1944), Cobra Woman (1944) and Sudan (1945) had a formula that was reproduced in either low budget incarnations or upgraded with biblical epics like Solomon and Sheba (1959) and Cleopatra (1963) (Bernstein and Studlar, 1997: 11). Film producers, for instance Lichtman and Wanger, labelled these films as ‘T and S’ movies, abbreviated for ‘tits and sand’ (Ibid.). These films catered to the American home-front and young adolescent males who may have aspired to enlist for service in North Africa (Ibid.). The lure of the sultry burlesque dances of the seductive Oriental female selling the dream of the erotic pleasures to be found overseas.

The voyeuristic pleasure belonging to the male gaze is apparent in many films pertaining to The Nights and in portrayals of historical female figures from the Orient, like Cleopatra, Salomé and the Queen of Sheba. In contrast to Mulvey, E. Ann Kaplan (1983) points out in ‘Is the gaze male?’ that by rejecting such a gaze, a reading of female empowerment might be offered, just as the previous reading of Scheherazade proves. This is particularly resonant within the concept of deconstruction, which presents a challenge to dichotomies in order to provide a nuanced and sometimes contradictory reading of texts towards what they may appear to be representing.
3.4 Orientalism and its Effect on the Medieval Muslim Female on Screen

A re-visioning of history in film encompasses that of the image of the Medieval Muslim female. Kahf (1999) offers a critique with comparative analysis of literary texts, such as poems and stories on the Muslim female over four periods of foreign encounters, spanning across the Medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Romantic eras. Kahf’s main focus of study is on the mobilisation and development of the image of the Muslim woman currently viewed in Western society, specifically the US, where she is based. According to Kahf’s analysis, the tone of literary texts on the Muslim woman tend to differ depending on the period in which they were written (p.3). Representations appear to be products of specific moments and developments in culture.

Due to the animated practice recovery of a Medieval historical Muslim female, Kahf’s analysis of Medieval texts is of particular interest in order to form a comparative study toward modern Medieval representations. The Muslim woman rarely takes centre stage within texts from this period, as would happen with 19th century literature (p.22). The characterisation is often of a queen or a noble woman who either inflicts harm upon the hero or assists him in times of difficulty. These forthright women speak for themselves and in doing so transgress the boundaries of traditional femininity (p.4). Their lack in decorum is suggestive of the failure of their parents’ religion to enforce gender roles (Ibid.). The basic plot of the Medieval text is:

A high-ranking noble woman becomes attracted to a Christian man imprisoned by her father or husband and aids him in a battle between Christians and Muslims. At the end of the battle, the lady converts, transfers the father’s or husband’s treasures to the Christians, embraces a more passive femininity, and becomes part of the European world.

(Kahf, 1999: 4-5)

The Muslim woman is portrayed as a powerful figure. These high-ranking women are sometimes described in physical size as giantesses and in other circumstances, described as wanton and full of intimidating sexuality (p.74). The outcome of the text is to tame the
Muslim woman and subdue her to a femininity that reflects Western society, not to liberate her (p.4). In contrast to Said’s feminised reading of the Orient, the Medieval Muslim female is masculinised, only to become feminised and submissive to European forms of patriarchy.

In terms of their political context, these texts coincide with the golden age of Islam, when Muslim countries prospered and excelled in technology, science and trade. Their success was a source of resentment by the Medieval Christian West. As the West could not compete, the texts describe the Islamic world to either be of assistance to the development of the West or a constant threat (Ibid.). However, when power lies in the balance, as it did during the Renaissance, the image of the Muslim female changes.

Breaking away from Christianity as a form of authority, the Renaissance was the time of Reformation and secular governance in the West (p.55). Between 1492-1699 Muslim Europe was in decline with the fall of Granada, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia (p.56). No longer was the Muslim world seen as a threatening and powerful force as the power balance between the two worlds slowly shifted. However, the West did not have the power or means to subdue the East and the intellectual trend of humanist thought saw Muslims as human beings (Ibid.). Within this threshold, the narratives of Muslim women fared better than those belonging to the Medieval and the later periods of Enlightenment and Romanticism (pp.4-5). The Muslim princess of the Renaissance was a helpless damsel made feminine and beautiful within the same gender constraints of her Western counterparts. These princesses loved and honoured their male heroes, whether they were Muslim or Christian, and stood by their men blindly under whatever circumstances (Ibid.).

The emergence of Orientalist thinking that was to ascend from the late Renaissance came to re-manufacture the past (Said, 1978: 7). Re-visioning created Medievalism as a genre and during the 18th century romantic fiction delivered the Saracen and the Crusader, which
offered an exoticism that the Renaissance had condemned (Gamin, 2005: 17). During the 19th century, Medievalism was constructed as an escape from the present, only to be framed within political terms of socialist utopianism and conservative paternalism (Ibid.). The paternalist re-visioning aligned itself with colonialisit projections of power and dominance over the Other.

Many scholars have embarked upon the task to examine the portrayal of the Middle-Ages on screen.21 The scope of this anachronistic genre is wide with debates covering authenticity, the use of sound, idiomaticity, the presentation of time, the use of motifs, female representation and themes coinciding with Orientalism. These films are frequently read as a metaphor to comment upon present day socio-political events. The Medieval Other is commonly evidenced within films that narrate the settlements of the Moors in Europe and the Crusades as a Holy War between Christians and Muslims undertaken in modern day Palestine/Israel, for example El Cid (1961) and Kingdom of Heaven (2005). The drama is mainly confined within that of courtly romances with a display of castles, jousting competitors, knights and musical minstrels. Such tropes are at work in animations set in the Middle-Ages, like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Sleeping Beauty (1959), Brave (2012), The Sword and the Stone (1963) and Robin Hood (1973).

Often missing from the Medieval landscape is the Muslim woman. However, there are a few exceptions, for instance King Richard and the Crusaders (1954a) based upon Sir Walter Scott’s (1825) novel The Talisman, The Black Rose (1950), which gives an account of Thomas B. Costain’s (1945) historical novel of the same name, The Mighty Crusaders (1958), an adaptation of Torquato Tasso’s (1581) prose Gerusalemme Liberata (The Liberation of Jerusalem) and El

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“Naser Salah el Dine” (Saladin – The Victorious) (1963), which incorporates the contemporary work of Naguib Mahfouz (Al Nahhas, 1991: 164 and Goble, 1999: 414 and 454). Each of these visual renditions illustrate the Medieval Muslim female very differently.

For Finke and Shichtman (2010: 203), King Richard, directed by David Butler, provides an illustration of Hollywood Orientalism culled from the pages of Said’s Orientalism. The only time the Muslim female appears in King Richard (1954b) is within Saladin’s harem. In the transference of the scene, the unconscious hero Sir Kenneth of Huntington (Laurence Harvey) lies on the ground attended by his love, Lady Edith Plantagenet (Virginia Mayo). The cross-dissolve between scenes reveals that upon waking Kenneth is lying in the arms of Saroub (Mylee Andreason), a Saracen female in a diaphanous veil and an elaborately adorned headdress. To further the eroticism, the camera pulls back to reveal Saladin (Rex Harrison) sitting on a throne of pillows and a cut to a long-shot shows that these are the only two men present in a room full of veiled women, apart from the semi-clad belly-dancer. The belly-dancer, herself a site of eroticism, whilst in a backbend appears to be offering her genitals to Saladin, which further creates an impression of Oriental despotism (Ibid.).

The cut between scenes not only pits an image of the wholesome white female and that of the exoticised Saracen but draws a comparison between the Christian and Muslim treatment of women (Ibid.). The harem adds another twist to the representation of the Muslim woman. The setting cements the homosocial relationship of the male characters through the exchange of women (Ibid.). However, the harem does not form part of Medieval European literature. The harem began as the seraglio in 17th century European literature (Kahf, 1999: 5). The veil was not applied to Muslim women alone and whilst the European slave trade flourished some French texts mention the Muslim slave woman (p.55). During the 18th century the female sex slave, the harem, and the veil set Western minds racing and the image of the Muslim female became established (p.5). Dichotomies came into play and the Muslim
woman was illustrated by Western texts as either being abject, angry, virginal, victimised and oppressed (Ibid.). Thereby, the film exhibits the Orientalist theme of seduction through the harem.

Besides *King Richard’s* representation of the Medieval Muslim female falling in line with 18th century texts, so too does the opening of director Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Crusades* (1935). The capture and enslavement of white Christian women provides a cause for Europe to mount a crusade upon the Holy land, which is now governed by the Muslims. The contrapuntal history provided by director Youssef Chahine’s Egyptian film *El Naser Salah el Dine* (1963) illustrates the Muslim woman as a refugee after being expelled from her home by the crusaders. Muslim women are amongst those murdered on pilgrimage when their caravan is sacked by French authority Reynald (Ahmed Louxor) and his men. Both versions use the trope of liberation and rescue via the female body as a site to validate resistance to be it either to European occupation or Arab rule. For instance, Chahnine’s image of the Muslim woman is as mother, wife, elderly, young, pious and innocent, whereas European female characters exhibit a greed for wealth and religious fundamentalism as armed crusaders. Female status and women’s role within society is utilised to illustrate an opposition to European occupation, be that of Medieval Jerusalem or a post-colonial Egypt. In this way, the film offers an image of secular resistance to European hegemony in the form of pan-Arab nationalism of the 1950-1960s (Finke and Shichtman, 2010: 207). Thus, the Medieval Muslim female contributes to a reading of a political present for the period in which the film was made.

Lines of representation between that of the Oriental female and Medieval Muslim female are blurred by director Henry Hathaway’s *The Black Rose* (1950). The Black Rose is the alias of a mixed-raced English Mongolian, Maryam (Cecile Aubry), who has escaped Mongol warlord General Bayan’s (Orson Welles) harem, dressed as a boy called Muhammad. As a site of
exchange between Bayan and the hero Walter of Gurnie (Tyrone Power) and through Western style romance, Maryam is liberated. Whereas, the Italian film *The Mighty Crusaders* (1958) follows a similar storyline to that illustrated by Medieval texts. The royal Medieval Muslim female takes centre stage in this film with Princess Erminia from Antioch (Lividia Contardi), Princess Clorida of Persia and Princess Armida of Damascus, each exhibiting diverse qualities, but all fall in love with Christian crusaders. For example, the costumes of the female characters reflect their characters. Erminia wears modest dresses as does Clorinda, when she is not in her masculine garb or fighting gear. Whereas, Armida wears transparent veils and elaborate accessories, and even in her private quarters a belly-dancer entertains a small group of women. Erminia and Clorinda may be viewed to exhibit Christian ideals of modesty and manners, in contrast to Armida’s seductive and wicked nature belonging to that of the Saracen.

The Muslim prisoners of war are treated kindly by the Crusaders and as such Erminia falls in love with one of her captors Tancredi d’Altavilla (Francisco Rabal). However, a chance meeting between Tancredi and skilled Saracen warrior Clorinda creates a love triangle, whereby Erminia’s advances are rejected. Armida presents herself as a manipulative weapon to break the ranks of the crusaders by capturing the heart of Rinaldo d’Este (Rik Battaglia), whom she takes prisoner and due to her cunning Rinaldo spurns her love. Rinaldo is rescued by Tancredi who poses as a messenger sent from Clorinda. When battle finally commences between the two opposing armies, dressed in their combat gear and helmets that make them unrecognisable to each other, and the audience, Clorinda and Tancredi go head to head in a sword fight next to a pool of water. Tancredi plunges his sword into Clorinda’s heart and her helmet falls off. In a dying embrace Clorinda asks Tancredi to baptise her. Throughout the film, Erminia remains loyal to Tancredi and during the final scene the two are seen together celebrating the Crusaders’ victory.
The film bears some semblance to *Opera dei Pupi* (Puppet Theatre) of Sicily due to its chosen narrative adaptation. This popular marionette show’s origins lie in the 19th century but often re-enacts 15th century texts on the crusades, including *Gerusalemme Liberata* and 11th century *La Chanson de Ranson* (The Song of Roland), a poem which is based upon the deeds of 7th century Frankish Emperor Charlemagne alongside his noble paladins in their crusade against the Saracens (di Carpegna Falconieri, 2013: 330). The play forms part of the Sicilian identity with a history that includes the eviction of the Moors from their land (Ibid. and UNESCO, 2008).

Egyptian fine artist Wael Shawky has created a trilogy of films using marionettes for a screened installation. The films offer a perspective of the Crusades based upon accounts by Arab historians (Nottingham Contemporary, 2011). The first instalment *Cabaret Crusades - The Horror Show Files* (2010) uses 200-year-old Italian marionettes and therefore can be viewed as an alternative to that offered by Sicilian puppet theatre. His sequels use custom-made ceramic marionettes made by the artist (MoMA PS1, 2015). The strings convey an idea of political manipulation and control. For Shawky, part of the motivation to make the work lies in how history has been re-written, re-interpreted and manipulated (Ibid.). The film has a few female characters, notably Zurmururu, the Princess of Damascus, who has her son killed, in a ruthless political bid to stop him from handing over Damascus to the governor of Mosul. A film that also uses marionettes is *Strings* (2004). The symbolism of the strings that fall from the sky carries a different meaning for warrior female character Zita (Catherine McCormack) as she explains the inter-connectedness between the marionette figures. Although a fantasy film, the mise-en-scène reads of Medieval Europe through its architecture, weaponry and costume design.
3.5 Case Study 2 – Disney’s *Aladdin* and Globalisation

Model animation armatures and techniques, which may be viewed to have evolved from puppetry, have enabled filmmakers to realise and capture the fantastic, as the work of Ray Harryhausen exhibits. Creatures from the mythical Orient are brought to life, aforementioned with *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* and its subsequent sequels. The same can be applied to Karel Zeman and his craftsmanship of combining live-action with animation. His aesthetic approach shifting to that of combining 2D and 3D animation techniques. Some of these animations, inspired by a wide selection of stories from around the world, are based on Medieval texts from countries once classified as the Orient. For instance, *Poklad Ptačího Ostrova* (The Treasure of Bird Island) (1953) is based upon an Iranian fairy-tale and *Pobádky Tisíc a Jedné Noči* (Tales of 1001 Nights) (1974) offers a visual interpretation of Sinbad the Sailor, amongst a few Sinbad voyages that Zeman continued to make.

Further features set in a similar location are cell animations, *La Rosa di Bagdad* (1949), which when dubbed became *The Singing Princess* (1952) and *The Thief and the Cobbler* (1993) that took over 30 years to produce. Heavy cuts were made to the unfinished film creating *The Princess and the Cobbler*, also known as *Arabian Knight*, that had destroyed animator Richard Williams’ vision for the film (Osmond, 2010: 206). From Egypt, *The Knight and the Princess* (1998) was put into production, however it was never completed due to lack of funds (Ghazala, 2011: 7). Whereas, *The Singing Princess*, which took seven years to produce and the first animated feature from Italy, is aesthetically similar to that of Disney’s Medieval princesses, particularly that of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The narrative reads of a happy kingdom and the Princess Zeila (Julie Andrews), the sole surviving heiress to Caliph Oman III of Baghdad (Arthur Young), is to choose her future spouse. The evil sheikh Jafar (Stephen Jack) and his sorcerer Burk\(^2\) have plans to take over the land via marital union between Jafar and Zeila.

\(^2\) Some actors are uncredited.
The hero of the story is Zeila’s poor snake-charming friend Amin (Patricia Hayes) accompanied by his magpie friend Calina. Together with the wisdom of Fatima and the magic genie of the lamp, the mischief of Jafar and his sorcerer comes undone, thus restoring Calina’s health, bringing back to life characters from stone, the dwarf-like civil servants are no longer babies and the dissolution of the magic ring on Zeila’s hand, which holds the magic power to make Zeila believe that she is in love with Jafar, is broken. The magic of Aladdin’s lamp returns Amin’s ethnicity to that of fair skin removing the curse of being Black.

These cell animations, amongst many Nights re-visionings, features a narrative that tends to employ the classic Hollywood cinema style, which is often referred to as a syuzhet. The basics of the classical syuzhet usually presents:

- a double causal structure, two plot lines: one involving heterosexual romance (boy/girl, husband/wife), the other line involving another sphere – work, war, a mission or quest, other personal relationships. Each line will possess a goal, obstacles, and a climax.

(Bordwell, 1985: 19)

Classic narrative conventions have the male as the maker of meaning and the female as the bearer of meaning (Mulvey, 1975: 40). The storyline creates lead females to be objectified, as they become the hero and villain’s object of desire. Within classical Hollywood style there is a decisive victory and goals accomplished, which leads to a strong degree of closure with the lovers living happily ever after (Bordwell et al., 1985: 102). The syuzhet may be regarded as shifting from traditional folk-tale narratives is identified by Vladimir Propp (1968) in *Morphology of the Folktale*.

The storyline of *The Singing Princess* is not too far removed from Disney’s *Aladdin* (1992). The story follows the heroics of the male protagonist being the poverty-stricken Aladdin (Scott Weinger) and the added pressure of the Sultan’s only child, Princess Jasmine (Linda Larkin), to wed before her 16th birthday. The insurmountable youthful beauty of the princess makes
her a worthy love-interest, which does not go unnoticed by the villain and whose fixation for leadership through matrimony presents a challenge for the hero.

*Aladdin* follows the conventional narrative along with aspects of the male gaze, whereby the male is the main figure with whom the spectator identifies with, controls events and articulates the look within the film (Mulvey, 1975: 41). Aladdin is led by his desire to live in a palace in which Jasmine is part and the same desire may be applied to Jafar’s greed for ultimate power. Jasmine becomes an object to be desired by these two male competitors. The voyeuristic pleasure belonging to the male gaze is apparent when Aladdin from a vantage point sets eyes on Jasmine for the first time. Seated on a market stall’s awning “Wow” gasps Aladdin, to which the camera cuts to a close-up of Jasmine’s face, as she draws her abaya’s hood back over her head, which has for a brief moment fallen. To escape the palace Jasmine uses the *abaya* to hide her identity but the hooded cloak only accentuates her beauty before an infatuated Aladdin. Jasmine’s body is further eroticised by the blue belly-dancing costume she wears. When Jafar kidnaps Jasmine, her alternative revealing red number accentuates her sexual objectification and a transparent yashmak that covers her mouth, symbolises her silencing. The hyper-sexualisation of Jasmine is underlined by associated meanings that enforce Jafar’s evil intentions. Jasmine’s imprisonment is not that different with the use of the veil in *The Cell* (2000), when Catherine Deane (Jenifer Lopez) is a sexual captive in the mind of a comatosed serial killer.

The erotic East continues in *Aladdin* made significant by the harems where scantily clad women reside with ravenous libidos for the hero. Shohat and Stam point out that such images have women exposing more flesh than they conceal (p.149). The veil on semi-naked young women becomes eroticised and does not bear any resemblance to the modesty that for many Muslim women the veil symbolises. Women who are fully covered and donning
the *hijab* are flirtatious, unattractive older working-class women. This is contrary to the status symbol of full veiling of the upper classes of the past.  

Disney’s animation techniques have come under scrutiny for objectifying the female form. Rotoscoping techniques were applied to create fluid movements for Princess Jasmine, which eclipsed Aladdin as the main character, and he was redesigned to be more appealing (Griffin, 1994: 207). Rotoscoping is used for female lead characters, Snow White being the best example to contrast with the stiff movements of her Prince Charming. Sean Griffin (1994: 207) proposes that animation techniques create performances of gender. Rotoscoping toyed with proportions that exaggerated the female form and for Griffin the creation coincides with Mulvey’s concepts of fetishisation (p.208).

In comparison to animations of the time, Snow White (Adriana Caselotti) is rather tame if compared to Betty Boop, who was subject to the Hays Code due to themes of drug use and sexual innuendos and thus the then ban of *Ha Ha Ha* (1934) (Austen, 2002: 65). Whereas, the later arrival of film noir femme fatales in animation upped the sexual ante with the curvaceous Jessica Rabbit (Kathleen Turner) from the hard boiled *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1998) akin to Ralph Bakshi’s animated creations, such as Holli Would (Kim Basinger), Lonette (Candi Milo) and Raven (Michelle Phillips) from *Cool World* (1992) and television series *Spicy City* (1997). These characters by design are sexually suggestive and subjects of fetishisation that tie into Mulvey’s theory on the male gaze geared toward an adult audience. However placid or sensualised either way an image of the female form is created to suit the film’s narrative purpose.

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23 As aforementioned on p.73 of this thesis.
Jasmine sits within a new breed of Disney princesses espousing from the 1990s to early 2000s cultural phenomenon of the riot-girl (grrrl) movement and girl-power. The concept of girl-power was taken from the underground feminist punk scene and brought to the mainstream by British pop-group The Spice Girls, which constructed and marketed a new idea of femininity, pertaining to that of empowerment and self-representation (Harris, 2004: 140). Jasmine tends to speak her mind and challenges her objectification by her male consorts. Much to her dislike, pseudo-feminist Princess Jasmine hears talk from Aladdin when he says to the Sultan “I will win your daughter”. Jasmine in response addresses the audacity of these men in deciding her future as if she is like a prize to be won. Erin Addison’s (1993: 8) view on the male characters’ treatment of Jasmine verifies her as legal tender, the currency traded in the economy of male relationships, a trait as aforementioned with Prince Achmed and King Richard.

As precious commodities, the princesses are kept in palaces only to be stolen by an evil villain for the hero to win victory over, which renders the princesses as prisoners. Jasmine’s emancipation lies in experiencing a world outside of the palace, which is underlined via the visual metaphor of beautiful caged birds set free by the princess. When Jasmine does sneak out onto the city streets, she is to be cared for by the chaperoning hero. Jasmine’s athletic ability, outspokenness, wealth and longed-for independence, which coincides with girl-power, only adds to her attractiveness to Aladdin. Despite Jasmine’s emancipatory qualities, liberation is through Aladdin and the prospect of true love. Whilst deviating from the image of the Oriental female, Jasmine still falls in line with the patriarchal system that surrounds her through heteronormative romance. Jasmine’s choice lacks the possibilities of female leadership (Addison, 1993: 19). She is not given the options to be the Sultan herself, to contract her own, politically advantageous marriage alliances or choose to marry at all. Instead, the power of the Sultanate and the title of Sultan are to pass straight to Aladdin (Ibid.).
The design of the characters and the narrative has been studied by a few scholars within the frame of neo-colonialism situated within the political arena of the first Gulf War. In *Animating Difference*, King et al. (2010: 5) explore how animated films project ethnicity, sexuality and gender to politicise characters, scenes and stories. Character design subscribes to formulaic heroes, heroines and villains that offer stereotypical representations of gender and ethnicity that adhere to strict dichotomies (Ibid. and Wasko, 2001: 139). For *Aladdin*, animators anglicised the film’s heroes. Jasmine’s features are based on animator Mark Henn’s sister’s high school graduation photograph and the design concept for Aladdin, initially inspired by the boyish charm of Michael J. Fox, came to adopt the features of Tom Cruise (Culhane, 1992: 39 and 62). All the other Arabs are ruthless, uncivilised caricatures with large bulbous noses and sinister eyes (Shaheen, 2001: 57-58). The Anglicisation of the heroes alongside the presentation of Arabs creates a line of difference.

To make *Aladdin* a digital ink system, the ‘Computer Animation Production System’ (CAPS) was designed to replace labour intensive cell gouache painting. Preproduction for *Aladdin* was well underway by 1990 when the drawing process was to begin. The film’s aesthetic was founded on musical theatre, Islamic architecture, Persian miniatures from 1000-1500, various Victorian paintings of Eastern cultures and coffee-table books on the Middle East. Also American artists, Disney past animated films from the 1940s and 1950s and Alexander Korda’s *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) inspired the aesthetic (Culhane, 1992: 9 and 88-89). Rasoul Azadani, the concept designer for the cinematography, for a research trip went to his birthplace of Isfahan in Iran to take photographs to envision an environment for Agrabah (p.56). While special effects to create magical illusions were motivated by Arabic calligraphy (p.112). In a pick and mix manner, animators combined traditional art practices of the Middle East with the identifiable aesthetic style of Disney animations.

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24 Scholars such as Addison (1993) and Nadel (1997).
Jafar’s animator, Andreas Deja relays that he was inspired by Al Hirschfeld’s use of lines for caricatures of Hollywood stars (p.88). Jafar’s slender features are akin to Disney villains, such as Maleficent and Cruella DeVille. The design may be traced back to Reiniger, for Walter Ruttmann, who assisted with background effects for *Prince Achmed* was sought after by Disney due to his association with Reiniger’s project. Ruttmann worked on *Snow White* animating the queen, borrowing heavily from the facial and bodily expressions of the villain in *Prince Achmed* (Warner, 2011: 394). Through type-casting a parallel between good and evil became tied to the representation of Arabs and Muslims, as had once been associated with the Jew.

Jasmine personifies the damsel in distress role alongside the rape and rescue trope. This topos forms a crucial site in the battle over representation (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 155). Dichotomies are evinced by characterisation of the hero associated with Western culture, whereas the defeated sorcerer symbolises a foreign, often Islamic, threat. The female personifies a means to generate moral justification for changing Islamic culture (Addison, 1993: 19). The romance enables Jasmine to marry in an accepted American fashion opting for one form of patriarchy over another steeped in tradition, rather than offering her own independence. Alan Nadel’s discussion on Jasmine draws to a similar conclusion by explaining:

> Her desirability as the exoticised Eastern princess is valorised by her desire to cast off Eastern ritual, law, and custom. The attempted escape is not merely from the palace but from its authority as the site of Eastern power, sexualised by the princess politicised by Jafar. From the film’s perspective, as the princess’s plight makes clear, the only appropriate desire is to be empowered as the colonised subject of Western discourse.

(Nadel, 1997: 191)

The trope coincides with Scott and Ahmed’s explanation of how images of Muslim women in need of saving have been used throughout political history to solicit occupation and invasion of Muslim countries.
Sound enhances characterisation, for example all the characters native to Agrabah, speak with different accents. Jafar has a threatening foreign accent, whilst lead characters Aladdin and Jasmine don wholesome American voices. The Sultan (Douglas Seale) is presented as a bumbling old fool with a British accent. The soundtrack is an amalgamation of Oriental leitmotifs and predominantly show-tunes that continue in the vein of Disney’s animated musical features. To describe the film’s setting, the opening song differs to the tracks sung by the protagonist characters. The melodic structure is recognisable as belonging to the Orient with the use of scale and instrumentation, due to repetition within films exhibiting an exoticised East, often found within the melody played by the snake-charmer, who is also symbolic of the Orient.

The Oriental leitmotif is cut intermittently into the film score to not only serve as a reminder of the setting but distinguish between the characters and action on screen. Theodor Adorno (1952: xxi) explains that leitmotifs are little more than calling-cards within film that may illustrate the female Other. Tropes work for scoring gender, for example softly played violins accentuate the emotional states of both Princess Jasmine from Aladdin and Peri Banu from Prince Achmed. Sound acts as a signifier to underline emotions within the mise-en-scène. In this fashion, sound along with sound-effects can heighten the action, create a sense of magic or add to the whims of parody.

Agrabah is a cliché, full of dodgy merchants, sword-swallowers, Indian rope-tricks, snake-charmers, and bed-of-nails entertainers that illustrate no sense of cultural depth or authenticity. These clichés led the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) to administer their complaints on the film’s representation of Arabs (Griffin, 1994: 211). The complaints led to the lyrics of the film’s opening and closing theme tune being changed for the animation’s later release on video. The original lyrics read as:
Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place,
Where the caravan camels roam,
Where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face,
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.

The altered lyrics replaced “Where they cut off your ear if they don’t like your face” with “Where it’s flat and immense and the heat is intense”. In this way the following line, “it’s barbaric but hey, it’s home” refers to the landscape rather than the culture (Ibid. and Fox, 1993). The lyrics were part of composer Ashman’s vision of Aladdin and, alongside fellow composer Menken, he created the lyrics in keeping with Hollywood’s treatment of Arabic themes. Griffin (1994: 211) critiques the score to encompass a parody of Hollywood’s typical treatment of the exotic Orient. Despite the clichés that made it to the final-cut, stereotypes were toned down from its initial draft. The genie was changed from being Black to a non-ethnic specific blue. Aladdin and Jasmine’s skin colour was toned down to shades of tan and the arc of the nose was discussed (Ibid.).

Because of ADC’s reaction to its US release, Aladdin was named in Entertainment Weekly (2006) as one of the most controversial films of all time (King et al., 2010: 141). However, representations in Aladdin with its release in predominantly Muslim countries, appears to be of little concern. According to Timothy R. White and J. Emmett Winn (1995), the International release of Aladdin in South East Asia, particularly Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, experienced hardly any controversy pertaining to the representation of Islam and Muslims. Only the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement (ABIM), an orthodox conservative group, urged the government to ban both the film and soundtrack, due to its lyrics. The controversy was picked up by a Malaysian English newspaper The Jakarta Post but not by the national press. Neighbouring countries and critics praised the film for its craftsmanship, inventiveness, values and morals. An Indonesian critic did comment that the
film presented a distorted view of the Arab and Islamic world, done in a colourful, yet heavy-handed way. However, the critic asks why Hollywood could not do the same for Indonesian folk-tales. In comparison, the Brunei newspapers reported on the ADC demands and Disney’s response to change the lyrics, nevertheless the film raised no concerns within the country (Ibid.). Therefore, the film was well received in these Muslim countries.

To summarise White and Winn, there are four main reasons why the film did not create any controversy for audiences in South East Asia. Firstly, a reaction may have been stirred if representations were specifically targeting Muslims rather than Arabs. Secondly, in regard to Malaysia, the film’s content was nothing out of the ordinary. Popular Malaysian films are often overly melodramatic and *Aladdin* ticked all the boxes with its romantic love songs, attractive characters and some mild violent scenes to keep the audience on their toes. In comparison, Malaysian period films are violent with characters suffering amputations, being speared, beheaded or burned alive, and sometimes in the name of Allah. The third reason is due to *Aladdin* being a viable money-making commodity. The popularity of Disney with children in South East Asia allowed for significant revenues through advertising. In some cinemas, actors were dressed as characters from the film, contests for children were held, free cinema tickets to see *Aladdin* were offered as prizes, family tickets were discounted together with offerings of free sweets and a benefit screening for orphans (Ibid.). Strategic marketing geared toward a family audience foresaw the film’s success.

Disney’s control of the film market in South East Asia is similar to that of Europe with the largest distributor being Disney’s Buena Vista with whom smaller national cinemas struggle to compete (Neupert, 2011: 124). Within the frame of the post-colonial, White and Winn explain that the British withdrawal from Malaysia was relatively peaceful in 1957. As a possible consequence, Malaysia has not prioritised its film industry and without Hollywood products there would be so few films to show that the theatres would go out of business.
Furthermore, the ruling political party, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), foresaw the banning of the film as a step too far and did not want to create domestic ill-will. In contrast, the violent claim for independence from the French colonialists in Indonesia, received in 1947, may have created a thriving cinema on its home soil. Indonesia is protective of its cinema and has had a great deal of conflict with Hollywood’s attempts to dominate exhibition and distribution (Ibid.). Unlike Malaysia and Europe, Indonesia has a prospering film industry.

*Aladdin* was the highest grossing film of 1992 in the US (Mojo, 1992). Its success gave way to a television series (1994-1995), whereby the second sequel *Aladdin 2 – The Return of Jafar* (1994) and its instant release straight to video served as the first episode, which continued to be re-run on several Disney cable and satellite channels. Eventually, the characterisations were toned down with ADC’s input for the sequel *Aladdin 3 – King of Thieves* (1996). Disney’s involvement with ADC illustrates how animation power-houses are too concerned about representation, be it in respect of political correctness in order to have access to a global market.

3.6 Case Study 3 – Michel Ocelot and Multiculturalism in Animation

Whilst stereotypes provide shortcuts to character development such representations become problematic when set within historically specific contexts. These creations become significant due to their appeal to young audiences (Wasko, 2001: 139). Kahf’s (1999: 1) discussion on the permeation of the oppressed Muslim woman stereotype in society offers the animated children’s series *Heathcliff the Cat*, where a fat sheikh-cat kidnaps Heathcliff’s girlfriend-cat and takes her to his Harem to be his 21st wife. This image carries all the tropes of Orientalism, with the veil, the rich sheikh and the harem. The cartoon image subscribes

25 Perhaps worthy of note is that the episode Kahf refers to is not *Heathcliff the Cat* per sae, but its spin-off, the *Catilus Cats*. The reference to this episode is *Harem Cat* (1984).
to Shaheen’s concerns that such stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims are being projected onto young children.\(^{26}\)

*The Nights* has remained a consistent theme on stage and screen, offering an exhaustive list of interpretations. Within animation *The Nights* has a global appeal spanning from Japanese animé to television re-runs and classics, such as *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sindbad the Sailor* (1936), *Popeye the Sailor meets Ali Baba’s Forty Thieves* (1937), Mr. Magoo in *1001 Arabian Nights* (1959), *Lippy the Lion and Hardy Har Har in A Thousand and One Frights* (Hanna-Barbera, 1962), *The Pink of Arabee* (1976) with the Pink Panther, *Bugs Bunny 3rd Movie - 1001 Rabbit Tales* (1981) and *Scooby-Doo in 1001 Nights* (1994), which also features Yogi Bear and Boo Boo.

Animated series appear in Hindi and Tamil, such as *The Arabian Nights in Hindi* (2013) along with popular Japanese animé character Doraemon starring in *Doraemon: Nobita’s Dorabian Nights* (1991), also dubbed in languages from South Asian subcontinent, English and many languages besides (Ching, 2001: 298). Animés range from the risqué *Sen’ya Ichiya Monogatari* (A Thousand and One Nights) (1969) directed by Eiichi Yamamoto to the somewhat recent television series *Magi – The Labyrinth of Magic* (Unknown, 2012-2014) with manga style kick-ass female characters. Not failing to mention the intermittent Hollywood animated features, like *Sinbad – The Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003), which offers an example of the evolvement of strong female leads, pertaining to the era in which it was made. These films and television programmes are indicative of *The Nights* to have bled into and merged with the traditions and aesthetics of a variety of cultures.

The fluctuating image with its political message is spread and repeated for so long at sundry sites in sundry forms that the image is given credibility. Political speeches, newspaper

\(^{26}\) As previously discussed within pp.34-35 of this thesis.
accounts, stand-up comedians, fashion magazines, through repetition and ubiquity produce and recycle familiar clichés (Nadel, 1997: 185). Saifuddin Ahmed’s (2012) study on the influence of media portrayals of Muslims and Islam on adolescents based in India, revealed that those with Muslim friends found the media to be negative towards Islam and Muslims. The results from the sentiment analysis conveyed that Western media showed greater negative sentiments with Fox News, BBC and the New York Times being the most negative in their coverage.

As aforementioned, many artists have formed a response to representations of Arab and Muslims and the same may be said of animation. The past 20 years oversees a rise in cultural diversity being included within the animated frame and is evident in the work of Michel Ocelot. Ocelot, a child of a French post-colonial diaspora having returned to France from growing up in Guinea, created the Princes’ Quest with a focus on the relationships between North Africa and France (Ocelot in Film Education, No Date). From the outset, Ocelot considered the story to be about two foster brothers with very clear-cut positions, one rich, one poor and then imagined them swapping roles over the course of the story (Ibid.). The narrative draws upon a story that Ocelot had heard of a British gentleman, who had after 30 years rediscovered his nanny living in Lebanon (Neupert, 2011: 137). Despite the language divide she treated him like her own son (Ibid.).

Within the final film, the boys’ relationship is formed through milk kinship because Asmar’s mother, the widow Jénane (Suzanne Nour) is a wet nurse to Azur (Leopold Benedict). Azur and Asmar (Frederick Benedict) squabble and fight but have a strong brotherly bond. The boys are separated when Azur’s father (Keith Wickham) sends Azur (Steven Kynman) away to be schooled, which ends Jénane’s employment. Azur’s father forces Jénane and

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27 As discussed between pp.62-65 of this thesis.
Asmar (Nigel Pinkerton) to leave his property without their belongings. Later in life, the young men are to meet again as competitors in the quest to find the Djinn-Fairy, and end up fighting side-by-side. The storybook setting, comprising of a Medieval world, wild seas, colourful landscapes, fantastic creatures and magical fairies was a major success, selling 1.5 million tickets at the box office in France (p.139).

Impressed by the images created on the computer along with his love for the simplicity of the silhouette, Ocelot combines a mix of aesthetic practices using ‘computer generated imagery’ (CGI). His previous silhouette films are *The Three Inventors* (1980) and *Princes and Princesses* (2000). Ocelot combined CGI and the silhouette to make the television series *Dragons and Princesses* (2010) that when compiled made the feature *Tales of the Night* (Ibid.). Intermittently, the silhouette aesthetic is applied in *The Princes’ Quest*, although there is no evidence to suggest that Reiniger’s animations were an inspiration to Ocelot’s silhouettes, the move to CGI enabled a recovery of aesthetics, albeit through imitation.

Ocelot claims that he strived to be historically and geographically accurate, and not to take liberties with the creation of the images, especially as there are no images of North Africa between antiquity and the 16th century due to religious bans (*Film Education*, No Date). Ocelot visited Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, with camera in hand, to research the costumes of the region. Scarce material evidenced Sultans wearing traditional clothing consisting of *burnous* (a hooded cloak) and a turban. Research on botany and botanists inspired Ocelot to incorporate plants with a geometrical structure (Ibid.).

CGI evolved Ocelot’s animating techniques to allow for complex designs of the arabesque, besides allowing for the sparkle and sheen of costumes, jewellery and architecture, whilst drawing a vision from the art of Persian miniature painting to the screen (Bendazzi, 2016: 105). Human bodies are crafted in 2D, garments are flatly rendered without cloth simulation
and the faces and hands of the characters are in 3D (Osmond, 2010: 37). The technique is imitative of miniature painting, whereby prior to the 15th century the illusion of depth and realistic lighting cues were voluntary. Persian artists were unconcerned with monocular perspective and Ocelot is also not interested in creating 3D imagery. Thus, his characters retain their bold, uniform colours and flatness of the silhouette (Neupert, 2011: 138).

The golden age of Persian miniatures spanned across the 11-14th centuries. Like cell animations, the form required gouache paint filled in a sketch made from a red or black pencil drawn onto a prepared sheet of paper covered with a thin layer of plaster and acacia gum (Loukonine and Ivanov, 2014: 1-20). Persian miniature painting, like the development of Arabesque geometry, is based on Islamic principles. The ruling monarchs of the period commissioned artists to capture their lifestyle with many of them not bothered by what Islam allowed or did not allow (The Hidden Art of Islam, 2013). The ruling-class had the authority of their kingdoms, not the religious clerics. However, some artists faced a dilemma when requested to illustrate the human form as they did not want to ire the clerics. The dilemma led to the one-dimensional aspect to the art-form with the rejection of light, shade, shadow and perspective, with the foreground equal to that of the background, in an effort not to comply with the true likeness to that of God’s creation (Ibid.). To please both the court and the caliphs the innovative miniature painting was created.

Disney artists working on Aladdin and Ocelot are not the only animators to be drawn to miniature painting. For example, celebrated artist Ali Akbar Sadeghi pays tribute to the aesthetic in Flower Storm (1972) to tell the story of the relationship between two Medieval towns. In The Role of Each Fret (2013) Maryam Farahzadi animates pre-existing Persian miniature figures to depict the reunification of two lovers. Whereas, musician Homayoun Shajarian’s anachronistic music video for Ba Man Sanama (2014) mirrors his music that draws upon traditional Iranian classical musical practices (Shajarian, 2014). US based performance
artist Amy Khoshbin’s piece Protest (2014) employs a combination of Persian miniatures and Mesopotamian reliefs to draw a comparison between the past and today’s world. These Iranian artists offer but a small sample of artists drawing upon their heritage to create their animations.

From Persian miniature painting and literature Ocelot revives the mythical creature Simorgh. The giant bird is also found in The Nights as the Rukh in the stories of Sinbad. Ocelot admits to finding both Galland’s and Roger Khawam’s modern translation of The Nights enchanting (Film Education, No Date). However, his animation stands alone with its narrative and invention. The Scarlet Lion is a creature of Ocelot’s making as is the Djinn-Fairy, for his efforts to represent the Djinns was a problem as they are not depicted within traditional imagery (Ibid.). The initial drawings for the characters developed into a storyboard, which took a year in development. The planning of cinematography with the framing of the characters’ principal positions, background, dialogue indications and camera movements with a reduced crew took a further two years. The production took another year and a half with post-production comprising mainly of editing taking a few months (Ibid.). The film’s genesis occurred before 9/11 and whilst drawing the opening scene on the television the animation crew saw the fall of the Twin Towers. At that point Ocelot felt that this animation had to be made (List Film, 2008 and Zahed, 2009). Despite the film’s Medieval setting, Ocelot was thinking about the current political situation.

The film covers cultural conflicts whilst simultaneously undermining them illustrated by Azur’s meeting with crippled beggar Crapoux (Nigel Lambert). On his quest to find the Djinn-Fairy, a shipwreck leaves Azur washed up upon a shore. The sky is grey, so is the ocean, and the brown rocks make a bleak landscape. The mise-en-scène reflects Azur’s emotional state in which he speaks of not only being lost, but he has lost everything too. Following distant voices speaking Jénane’s language, he finds a group of amputees wearing
rags all huddled around a cooking pot and when he approaches them they run away in fright. Azur comes across a shack where a poor family throw stones at him and run away, leaving an old infirm man behind. Azur propositions the old man who speaks of the superstition that those with blue eyes are cursed and bring bad luck, spitting in disgust at Azur’s feet.

With no-one to help him, a hungry Azur eats the meat on a rotting animal carcass and then falls asleep. His thoughts turn to how this foreign place smells bad, the people are crippled, malicious and ugly. Everything is ugly, including the animals and the countryside. His opinions of his nanny become jaded and his belief in the Djinn-Fairy is dashed, saying that he should have drowned. These dismal surroundings are the last image he sees. In the morning, some people approach a sleeping Azur, who thinks that the people are going to beat him. He realises that as long as he does not open his eyes they are not going to hurt him for they do not know that his eyes are blue. From now on he is blind and unbeknownst to him enhances his other senses to succeed in the quest.

Azur stumbling over the rocks at his feet cannot see that the dull landscape has changed to one of grass and mountains. Crapoux, who hides his blue eyes behind a pair of goggles, watches on and approaches Azur saying that they need to form a defensive alliance, for like him he too is a foreigner and in this land the locals do not like foreigners. When Azur speaks of his nanny, Crapoux retorts that she had no business being in their land anyway. Crapoux climbs onto Azur’s shoulders to lead him on his journey and as they near a forest Crapoux spots a silhouette of a black cat. Crapoux tells Azur to turnaround but Azur does not take heed to such superstition and continues into the forest.

The rich colours of the forest paint a picture of majestic fruit-bearing palm trees that provide a green canopy. The scene is enhanced by instrumentation with chimes and strings reflecting the wonder of the forest. Crapoux describes this as an ugly place and spits in contempt. His
reaction is the same upon seeing a graceful gazelle, saying that they do not have rabbits here, as if the latter was superior. He retorts on the irrigation canals for they do not have rain and the silhouette of a woman who sings accompanied by a flute, Crapoux calls noise, as they do not have proper tunes. Walking by Princess Chamsous Sabah’s grand palace, with its gold intricately designed guarded door, Crapoux explains that princesses are locked away and surmises that she is as ugly as sin like all the women here, whilst he begs for money from beautiful women, with adornments in their hair, fine clothes and tattoo markings on their faces, filling their wares at a decoratively mosaicked water-fountain.

In this vein, the scene continues as they proceed through the streets, offering a visual of people dying brightly coloured fabrics with decorated plates, urns and vases are for sale in the shops. The muezzin’s call to prayer adds to the ambience of the place. What Crapoux describes as a nag is a strong black steed, adorned with decorative saddle and its rider just as grand in his red finery and feather in his cap, unseen by Azur, is Asmar. Black musicians in fine clothes play to a well-kempt audience in a decoratively tiled room, where a dark-skinned lady in a headscarf gives the beggars, Azur and Crapoux, lamb couscous. The hustle and bustle of the spice market is full of colour, fruit and vegetables, a couple of donkeys and a mix of people. Women and men intermingle as they get on with their business, some wearing cloaks, with their hoods up, some down, some women wear the hijab, whilst hairstyles vary and others wear headdresses. Ocelot’s image is a stark contrast to of the clichés found in Aladdin’s market-place, as are the costumes.

The case study animations all feature enormous palaces, a bustling population, surrounded by hot barren desert sands, which could be argued to illustrate an Orientalist view of the MENA. Shohat and Stam discuss the Orient visualised desert trope as topographical reductionism (p.148). The Orientalist setting of the barren land and blazing sands metaphorise the exposed hot uncensored passions of the Orient; in short, the world of the
out-of control I (Ibid.). The climate and arid landscape does not play into the whims and the desires of the characters in *The Princes’ Quest* for Ocelot breaks away from such reductionism by offering a varied landscape, as does Reiniger with mountain views, lakes and forests.

The plot for *The Princes’ Quest* follows the classical syuzhet with the action following Azur, whose adventure might be applied to Eurocentric travel narratives to exotic lands, a trope suggestive of penetration (p.145). Both Azur’s and Asmar’s quest is to rescue and marry the Djinn-Fairy. Azur marks her as a desirable commodity for he comments that he is to rescue, liberate and win the Djinn-Fairy. The narrative does not have a villain and the obstacle is by the way of problems for the hero to solve. On the one hand, Azur continues to lead the action for the characters are mere appendages to help him succeed in his quest to marry the Djinn-Fairy. Chamsous Sabah, whose very young age relinquishes her from being a chased female, functions to serve the protagonist by providing the necessary artefacts to assist him with the quest and reach his goal, simultaneously harbouring to the infantilisation and paternalism trope. However, she is not a stolen figure and is incredibly intelligent, despite her age.

Therefore, one might argue that Ocelot breaks the mould, for Azur requires assistance and is dependent upon those around him in order to succeed and when he is blind his gaze is denied. Thus, Azur leading the action is compromised. Ocelot breaks the Euro-American figuration of the Orient, akin to Freud’s Dark Continent, where Muslim women embody fecundity, sexual promise, sensuality and desire, with his characterisation of Jénane and Chamsous Sabah. Neither of these female characters are in need of rescue, as both possess the knowledge and the power to wield their own destiny, which Jénane states in her words to Azur:
Listen my son, I know two countries, two tongues, two religions, and so what others know, I know twice over. Whilst others might shrink over eyes that are blue or black cats, I press on and I win.

Within the case studies, Princess Chamsous Sabah is the only princess who shows an active interest in politics. She speaks of how all the men in her family have been killed in battle or by each other and continues to say that because she is a girl nobody thinks of killing her. Azur responds that maybe her enemies will come to understand to which she replies, “then it will be too late, I’ll be stronger and I will have them killed”. By no means is Chamsous Sabah passive. The trope of the feminised Orient is further complicated with racial diversity be it cultural depth on display or by partnering Azur with the Djinn-Fairy and Asmar with her Caucasian European cousin the Elf-Fairy. In the end, the Djinn-Fairy is not a passive prize for Azur, but has chosen to liberate herself from her crystal cage. Again, Ocelot undermines clichés.

The six years in which the animation was in production the French government put a ban on the wearing of conspicuous signs of religious affiliation in public schools, during 2004. The law was aimed primarily at Muslim girls wearing headscarves (Scott, 2007: 1). The headscarf was considered inimical to French custom and law for three key reasons. Firstly, veiling violated the separation of church and state. Secondly, wearing the veil evidenced the differences among citizens rather than producing a nation united as one and indivisible. Thirdly, for some the veil was seen as an accepted norm of the subordination of women in a republic premised on equality, alongside being a symbol of Islam’s resistance to modernity (Ibid.).

*The Princes’ Quest* press release captures Ocelot’s view on veiling that coincides with the sign of the times on ideas of imprisonment, by stating that ‘women should fight against it [veiling]. It’s not religion it’s slavery’ (Andrews, 2006). Addison (1993: 10-11) explains within English...
translations of the *hijab* to include both the customs of veiling and seclusion. Seclusion refers to the segregation of the sexes not to isolation or imprisonment as it appears in *Aladdin* (Ibid.). Like Jasmine, Chamsous Sabah dreams of experiencing the world outside of the palace. Chamsous Sabah stands on observatory apparatus that reaches high above the ground, with the sky set behind her, proclaims her own condition “and no longer will princesses be locked up in palaces!” When she sneaks out of the palace she is cared for by Azur.

Ocelot explains that living in a cosmopolitan city like Paris, the population is culturally diverse (Al Jazeera, 2008). The fairy-tale setting and story incorporates this diversity not only in its visual but also with the use of sound. Language plays a pivotal role in the film to express a cross-cultural dialogue. Ocelot refused to subtitle the Arab dialogue for in reality there are no subtitles, a person has just got to manage (Ibid. and Neupert, 2011: 137). Opening the film is Jénane, singing a lullaby in Arabic to her suckling babes. The lullaby with its lyrics, orchestration and tempo set the tone, story and plot for the film and is a recurring melody. The score was composed by award-winning film-composer Gabriel Yared. Besides Yared’s accomplished film career, Ocelot felt that Yared would be ideal due to his French Lebanese background (*Film Education*, No Date).

There appears to be no material concerning Yared’s approach on composing for *The Princess’ Quest* per se. In an interview, in reference to animated feature *The Prophet* (2014) based upon Lebanese author Khalil Gibran’s 1923 book of the same title, Yared does discuss his approach to scoring animation. Yared explains that he has never heard such beautiful orchestration as was used during the ‘golden age’ of animation (Laws, 2015).\(^{28}\) Besides reading the script, along with discussions with the film crew and his excitement for things

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\(^{28}\) The ‘golden age’ of animation often refers to the US studio cartoons, mostly seven or eight minutes in length, that were commonly part of theatre programmes between the 1930-50s (Barrier, 1999: ix).
that do not exist made to exist, for inspiration he draws upon sound pioneers, such as Scott Bradley, Carl Stalling and Oliver Nelson (BFI, 2013). Their influence may be heard within Yared’s use of rapid rising and falling notes that crescendo to accompany the action on screen. The technique made significant with Sigmurgh’s flight and the run of the Scarlet Lion. Bradley and Stalling, whose scores heightened the comedic action of Tom and Jerry and Loony Tunes via instrumentation and tonality, although not to this comical effect, Yared too captures the magic and atmosphere of Ocelot’s creation through such means.

The music captures the diversity and fusion of cultures through orchestration and rhythm. Drums, oud and flute synonymous with the MENA play alongside universal stringed instruments, and brass and woodwind instruments commonly associated with Europe. The drums enhance the pace, the use of brass lends to both foreboding and royalty, with percussion evoking the magic of the fairies. Music within film has been met with some scrutiny, often pertaining to that of Orientalism and the use of Western music in foreign lands. Shohat and Stam explain that ethnic perspectives are transmitted not only through character and plot but also through sound and music (p.209). The cinema not only manipulates a point of view but also a point of hearing. In colonial adventure films, often the natives are heard through the ears of the colonisers, who gaze over landscapes accompanied by the sounds of native drumming played in a threatening and libidinous manner signifying savagery and racial paranoia. Non-diegetic and diegetic sound is pertinent to spectatorial identification for narrative continuity that shape and heighten the audiences’ emotional responses and sympathies (Ibid.). Through fusion, whereby instruments and scoring work harmoniously together, Yared has created a shared space, which matches the coexistence of ethnicities. His score serves as an indication to Shohat and Stam’s concept on a polycentric multicultural approach to sound, the music being both within and between cultures (p.220).
3.7 Historical Revival and the Rise of the Muslim Female Superhero

Animations from the MENA have come into their own during the past 20 years, being born from the television studio animation departments, established to create commercials and title sequences, to a celebrated medium with the formation of film-festivals (Ghazala, 2011: 1). The list of animations from the MENA is exhaustive from the fresh-faced Lebanese approach with Hani Bayoun, Chadi Aoun, Zena Assi, Jad Sarout, Lena Merhej and Ely Dagher and animations, such as Beirut (2006), Zeid and Leila (2009), Paintings in Motion (2011) Waves '98 (2015) and S.A.M.T (Arabic for Silence) (2016) to the work of female animators like Razam Hijazi and Sulafa Hijazi with The Thread of Life (2005) and The Jasmine Birds (2009) from Syria. The lives of Muslim females are accounted for with animation firsts from Palestine with Fatenah (2009) by Ahmed Habash and Mohamed Ghazala’s Sabma (2006) commissioned by NGO the Yemeni Women’s Union (YWU) to International releases such as The Prophet (2014) and The Breadwinner (2017). Let alone work evinced by the diaspora and the arrival of the Internet only adds to the list of animated films available to view.

Amongst the prominent rise in animation is an image of the religious Muslim female along with stories from the Qur’an and Hadith. Richard Rich’s The Great Women of Islam (2012) relays female figures within the Islamic tradition. For MWISA Islamic texts relay the narratives of many exemplary female figures and their involvement with the establishment of the Islamic faith. For example, Bilqis - the Queen of Sheba, Hagar - Prophet Abraham’s wife and mother of Ishmael, Maryam (Mary) - the mother of the Prophet Isa (Jesus), Khadija bint Khuwaylid - a successful businesswoman, the first Muslim and the only wife of the Prophet until her death, Fatima bint Muhammad - the pious daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and A’isha bint Abu Bakr - who contributed the most Hadiths after the death of her husband, the Prophet Muhammad, to mention but a few.29

29 The origins of the Queen of Sheba are vague but set down within Abrahamic beginnings (Wood, 2014). From the Beast to the Blonde, Warner (1994) tries to uncover who the Queen of Sheba was. At a simplistic
In addition to these religious figures, the Islamic branch of Sufism holds many Muslim women ascetics, poets and scholars in high regard, as Camille Adams Helminski (2003) documents in *Women of Sufism – A Hidden Treasure*. Besides the women named in the Qur’an, many of whom are to be found within Abrahamic religious texts, and the ascetic women in the years which followed the Prophet Muhammad, the women associated with the Prophet and their participation in early Islam contributed towards the development of Islam and set an example for Muslims to follow (Kahf, 2000: 159).

*Great Women* narrates the story of Nusaiba bint Ka’b al Najariya, whom took a shield and sword to defend the Prophet Muhammad at the Battle of Uhud (3AH/625CE) and Asma’ Bint Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, the sister of A’isha, who provided provisions for the Prophet whilst he sought refuge in a cave. The film’s aesthetic borrows from Rich’s previous feature *Muhammad – The Last Prophet* (2002) that depicts the story of the Prophet akin to Moustapha Akkad’s epic *Muhammad, Messenger of God*, also known as *The Message – The Story of Islam* (1977). Just like these films, *Great Women* does not show the Prophet Muhammad.

Depicting images of the Prophet Muhammad and any revered religious figures is an area of protest. The publication of Muhammad cartoons in Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* and the terrorist attack on French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* have ignited sentiments worldwide concerning freedom of speech and blasphemy laws on par with the Salman Rushdie Affair. To create *Muhammad – The Last Prophet* and *The Message* that offer a visual approach sensitive to Islam and the representation of religious figures, vigorous screenings and meetings were held with religious academics and authorities (Hart, 2001: 118 and Bakker, 2009: 190). The visual retelling of any religious story is required to be approved by an

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reading *Sheba* gives rise to *Sibyl*, as her first name and as uttering the words of God. These utterings all captured on the Hollywood screen, redeems her character from the possible tragic end of being stoned to death as a harlot in *Solomon and Sheba* (1959).
ecclesiastical board (like Al-Azar University’s religious scholars). The board issues guidelines, one of which ensures images are not offensive to the doctrine. Within Sunni tradition the image of the Prophet and his close companions are not to be replicated (Ibid.). Inventively, Akkad and Rich relay the Prophet Muhammad’s historical narrative, via the use of a camel and Ali’s zulfiqar (two-pronged sword) made visible within the action to signify the Prophet and Ali’s presence. The cast’s reactions toward the camera respond to the Prophet’s off-screen presence.

*Great Women* relays Hind’s (Henrietta Carol) conversion to Islam. Hind’s Muslim female servant (Catherine Lavin) narrates the story of women involved with the faith and in this manner the film cuts to the individual stories of Nusaiba bint Ka’b al Najariya (Allison Yale) and Asma’ Bint Abu Bakr As-Sidliq (Kat Cressida). The film illustrates how these women were honoured and revered by the Prophet and their influence on the role of women in Islam. Not only does the animation illustrate Nusaiba as a skilled markswoman and a brave warrior but she too demonstrates gender equality within Islam and the Qur’an that had changed from a patriarchal society and limited freedoms for women pre-Islam. For example, Nusaiba on astounding the men with her great marksmanship quotes the Prophet: “Women are just as valuable as men” to which a male character replies, “So the Prophet says, but it is not written and if it is not written in the Qur’an, then, well?” The remark leads her to search through the Qur’an. Nusaiba explains to the Prophet that everything is written for men and women are not mentioned at all. In the following scene, Nusaiba’s friend Bara (Jeff Celli) informs Nusaiba of the Prophet’s latest revelation where women share equal rights and responsibilities with men has been written in the Qur’an.

A step away from the narratives based on the *Hadiths* pertaining to the female companions of the Prophet is *Maryam Al-Maqadasa* (The Blessed Saint Mary) (2007). This film presents the Qur’anic story of Mary (Shabnam Gholikhani) and the Prophet Jesus. In this Iranian
film, the talking baby Prophet omnisciently can be heard and all the film’s characters are visible. This may be because Iran is predominantly Shi’a and devotional images of the Prophet Muhammad, Ali, Hassan and Husayn (Prophet Muhammad’s grandsons and Ali’s sons) are permitted. However, there is an edited version of this film where a golden glow is used to cover the Prophet Zakariya’s (Parviz Hosseini) face.

Tropes and themes within these religious films differ to Orientalist themes. Rich’s animations do not parody the characters, unlike the voices used in Disney’s *Aladdin* that assign racial stereotypes to their characters. The Prophet as the male protagonist is never seen and the female characters illustrate their own agency, especially Nusaiba for her efforts in calling to attention gender equality within Islam. Islamic religious films pertaining to the Prophet have developed a religious gaze that relays the story via the characters near to the Prophet, be they female or male. The gaze is detached from gender due to the narrative recovery of the Prophet Muhammad. However, all the Muslim female characters wear the *hijab*, therefore portraying a specific image of veiling and religiosity.

Religious stories may be included within the frame of a revival of ancient, lost and erased cultures. For example, *The Memory of the Shadow* (2005) by Libyan artist Madghis Madi, also a resident of Morocco and Canada, uses a similar aesthetic to Ocelot’s silhouette. Madi revives Berber hero Jougurtha from 105BCE with the dialogue spoken in Amazigh, being the language of the Berbers (Ghazala, 2011: 35). Algerian animation *L’ami y’a bon* (*The Good Friend*) (2005), by Rachid Bouchared, provides an alternative historical account to the heroics often associated with WWII with the execution of African soldiers by French colonial officials. Both these animators with the use of aesthetics and historical narratives create culturally specific animations.
In *Damascus Roofs and Tales of Paradise* (2010) Soudade Kaadan offers a glimpse into the architecture and people’s memories of Damascus. Her sister’s (Nadine Kaadan) watercolour images transposed onto still images of architectural sites reimagines these spaces in their former glory and makes visible the memories of the narrator. Whereas, the Palestinian struggle is captured by Dahna Abourahme’s *The Kingdom of Women – Ein El Hilweh* (2010). The Israeli destruction of Palestinian historical archives has left hardly any material for Lebanon or Palestine to use as historical references (Van de Peer, 2013: 170). Surviving family photographs are juxtaposed and animated upon alongside drawings by Palestinian artist Naji Al-Ali, whose drawings serve as a replacement archive. With Lena Merhej’s help, his is a constructed Palestinian identity in cartoon motion (Ibid.).

Identity is a focus point of animations, be they commercial or independent, illustrate the economic, cultural, political and religious differences across the MENA region. In the Emirates, the industry is booming with CGI proving to be a popular medium for production (p.19). *Freej* (Emirati slang for neighbourhood) (2006) and the aim of *Mansour Cartoon* (2013) is to preserve Emirati culture during these times of globalisation (Mansour Cartoon, No Date). The popular family show *Freej* bridges the gap between the past and the present and transcends any stigma attached to the social status of the female. The animation follows four elderly ladies and their approach to life in the fast-paced modern-day Dubai. These female characters wear henna on their hands and a golden *niqab* type face covering, known as a *burqa*. This face covering is typically worn by older married women. The tradition has faded amongst the younger generation opting for the less expensive *niqab* (Al Khan, 2007). Not all female or background characters are elderly or wear face or hair coverings, which further diversifies Emirati and Arab culture. The female characters are given freedom of movement, intermingling with tourists, foreign residents, including their adventures overseas, very rarely are they accompanied by a male companion that keeps in line with tradition.
Just as animations in the UK reflect a multicultural society with the emergence of characters displaying a wide-range of ethnicities to *Rastamouse* (2011-) that delivers an image of the Caribbean community, animations from the MENA have also worked on representations of race to improve racial relationships within society. For example, *Bakkar* (1998) focuses on the adventures of a Nubian boy (*Cairo Cartoon, 2015a and 2015b*). The animation is so popular that to date 252 episodes have been made and screened across the MENA (*Egyptian Streets, 2015*). The series progresses beyond Egyptian societal norms and the visual stereotypes once applied to Black people, for example soap adverts making them white and the dumb eunuch of the Frenkle Brothers’ animation of the inter and post-war period.

From Jordan, *Ben and Izzy* (2008) has been created for an International market via the show’s protagonist characters and the use of the English language. Ben is from the US, Izzy is Jordanian and Yasmine is a desert genie, who takes the form of a young girl akin to the boys’ ages (*Ghazala, 2011: 17*). The animation provides an educative experience about the relationship between Arab and Western culture with history presenting a union between cultures. Whereas, Qatari Al Jazeera’s animated series *Saladdin* (2008) produced in both Arabic and English continues to carry clichés identifiable with Disney’s *Aladdin*. Thus, *Saladdin* falls in line with Orientalist themes of a Euro-American cinema of the past being created in the MENA.

Many of the animations mentioned from the MENA illustrate national identity of the Muslim or Arab female, through characterisation and dress. Female characters appear to have self-determination whether they are lead or secondary characters and their social status, be they married or not. From further afield, a prime example of Muslim female subversion within animation is captured by Geo TV satellite broadcast of Haroon Rashid’s *Burka Avenger*.

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30 In context with female animators from the MENA, Cairo Cartoon being one of the leading animation companies in the region was established by Mona Abou El Nasr in 1990 (*Cairo Cartoon, 2015a and 2015b*).
Billed as the first ever animated series produced in Pakistan, and the first episode titled Girls’ School is Shut, arose from children being targeted by the Taliban for going to school, whereby 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai was shot on a school-bus in 2012 for her advocacy for education.

In *Burka Avenger*, the protagonist is school teacher Jiya, who is trained in the secret martial art of *takht kabbadi*, where books and pens are used as weapons in conjunction with advanced acrobatic moves. Fighting with books and pens metaphorically illustrates ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’, which instils the importance of education and the right for children to go to school. Episodes appear to be inspired by Pakistani news and political problems, for the outbreak of polio and the pollution of drinking water also feature to offer a few examples. Rashid states the animation does not only centre around a girls’ school but aims to teach children about the values of tolerance, equality and other social issues in Pakistani society (Rashid cited by *BBC News*, 2013). In this vein, Rashid’s talk on moral values from within a predominantly populated Muslim country, like Pakistan, does not appear to be any different to that of the UK.\(^{31}\) In regard to veiling, Jiya does not wear a veil but her alter ego dons the *burqa* to conceal her identity, as is true of most superheroes. Jiya’s outfits are not constrained within tight sexy clothes as found within some American comics and Hollywood screen products tailored toward the male gaze. With her kick-ass moves, the presentation of the veil from a symbol of oppression is subverted. To summarise, *Burka Avenger* provides an alternative image of the Muslim woman, by including activist agency against extremist structures, like the Taliban, whilst also questioning environmental concerns and political corruption.

\(^{31}\) A conversation that relates to British moral values and religious values on pages 51, 57 and 75 of this thesis.
*Burka Avenger* is representative of a type of Muslim female superhero that has emerged from print media, like the female characters in *The99*, from around the world since 9/11. Al-Mutawa’s female superheroes have different nationalities, ages and display a range of personality types, which carries into their dress. For example, Battina the Hidden, whose real identity is Rola Hadramy is from Yemen, wears a full-niqab. Her magic gemstone gives her the ability to blend into any background and become invisible. There is *bijabi* Sharifa Samsudin from Malaysia, alias Mujiba the Responder, whose stone grants her the collective wisdom of mankind. The unveiled Amira Khan is from London, but whose family descends from Pakistan, is Hadya the Guide with a talent to track people and objects. Further female characters include Libyan Aisha Mokhtar alias Samda the Invulnerable, Portuguese Mumita the Destroyer whose name is Catarina Barbosa, Noora the Light who is Dana Ibrahim from the UAE and the villain Sphinx, whose identity and origins are unknown.

Al-Mutawa shows these female characters to be on par with the male characters, working side-by-side, but also in accordance with customs deemed Islamic. For example, the team often works in a group of three, whereby a man and a woman are never left alone with each other (*Wham! Bam! Islam!,* 2011). Even the dress of both male and female characters proved a challenge to artists brought in from Marvel and DC. They were not used to drawing superheroes in loose clothing, as is customary within Muslim tradition, and had to step away from the commonly used spandex clad superhero.

A reading on the portrayal of the Muslim woman within illustration would require a thesis of its own as there are a myriad of characters to discuss. Many of these female figures have been created to undermine oppressive stereotypes often associated with Islam and Muslims. For instance, webcomic *Qabera* (Muhammad, 2013) illustrates a *bijab* wearing superhero fighting against both Islamophobia and misogyny. *Qabera* forms a response to the sexual
molestation of women during the Tahrir Square protests and the take down of anti-Islamic feminist group Femen.

Coming out of Pakistan are unveiled gritty female heroines Bloody Nasreen (Zaidi, 2009) and webcomic Raat (Haris, 2016), who fight terrorism and gang lords with an underlining argument against misogynistic practices.32 Lebanese webcomic Malaak – Angel of Peace (Modlodge, 2006) and Sudanese inspired Drawn (El Shoush, 2013) illustrate the culture and customs of particular geographies outside the realms of Islam. In line with debates on the sexualisation of the female form can also be applied to Egyptian comic books, Aya – Princess of Darkness (Kandeel, 2002) and Jalila – Protector of the City of All Faiths (Kandeel, 2006).33 Whereas, Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) India’s biggest selling comic book publisher covers historical Muslim female leaders hailing from India. Furthermore, The Adventures of Iman (Khorebi, 2007) and webcomic Sufi Comics (Vakil and Vakil, 2009) cover the religious and spiritual with illustrations following Islamic protocol (XPRESS, 2007).34

Within the European-American market hijab wearing superheroes can be found with spaceship navigator Fatima and Hadiyah the High Chancellor, consecutively, in both sci-fi titles The Midas Flesh (North, Paroline and Lamb, 2014 and 2015) and Help Us! Great Warrior (Flores, 2016). DC have delivered Iranian Salima Baranizar (Englehart and Staton, 1988), Turkish Red Cross superhero Selma Tolon (Vaughan and Scott, 2000), Tunisian Sala Nisaba is demigod Istar (Truman and Turnbull, 2000) and mixed-race Lebanese and American Sira Baz is a secondary character to her superhero brother Simon Baz, the Green Lantern (Johns and Mahnke, 2012). Whereas Marvel has given Princess Azir of Halwan (Claremont and Broderick, 1975), Muslim female superheroes via the X-Men with Algerian born Monet St.

32 Further references on Bloody Nasreen are BBC News (2014) and Salian (2014).
33 The sexualisation of the female form found within comics from the MENA region is covered by Hankins and Thornton (2014: 344).
34 WISE (Women’s Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality) (No Date) sheds light on Rima Khorebi’s comic.
Croix (Lobdell and Bachalo, 1994) and Dust (Morrison and van Sciver, 2002), whose alias is Soorya Qadir from Afghanistan, created by Grant Morrison, who is considered one of the great writers within the comic book world.\footnote{Further critiques on these female characters are offered by Muslimah Media Watch (2008) (2011).}

There are two Muslim female characters, who have really taken a lead within the Marvel Universe being Faiza Hussain alias Captain Britain (Cornell and Kirk, 2008) and Kamala Khan, the current Ms. Marvel (Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, ABC News (2016) have recently teamed up with Marvel to tell the story of Madaya Mom. The black and white illustrations are based on actual text messages sent by a mother who lives in the Syrian besieged town of Madaya. Artist Dalibor Talajic explains that he draws the strip from angles that are quite distant from the action in an effort to capture, in the abstract, how those outside of the conflict are themselves distant and do not really care for this war that is happening far away. For Talajic, superheroes are not defined by their powers or physique, superheroes are everyday people like Madaya Mom, whose essence is pure whilst she continues to find the strength to be human (Evan, 2013).

Faiza Hussain and Kamala Khan offer an example of concepts surrounding identity of what it means to be either British or American from a Muslim Pakistani background. Originally from Essex, Faiza works in London as a medical doctor for the ‘National Health Service’ (NHS). Faiza takes on the role of Captain Britain and wields the sword Excalibur from Arthurian legend. She enjoys a cup of tea and likes a spot of cricket, which might be deemed as being quintessentially British. However, with a post-colonial lens on the world, some of these past-times have been adopted, shared and enjoyed by many a Pakistani household, or for that matter many households, whether they be in Britain or elsewhere. Captain Britain, espouses nationalism and identity further fragmented by religion, ethnicity, class and gender.
Faiza’s identity, citizenship and birth right undermines oxymoronic thinking to having to be either British, Muslim or Pakistani for she encompasses them all, via character design. This is also the case of Kamala Khan.

There is a religious element within Ms. Marvel with readings from the Qur’an, which shape her superhero decisions. The comic includes current debates held within the Muslim community about the segregation of the sexes and improved prayer spaces for women in the mosque. A consequence of such discussions has led to the rise of the women’s mosque movement in Egypt, as documented by Saba Mahmood (2005) in the Politics of Piety, the recent establishment of a women’s mosque in America (The Women's Mosque of America, 2016) and Denmark (Hafiz, 2013; France-Presse, 2016 and Sherwood, 2016). The argument extends toward mosques to be all inclusive and a safe welcoming space for everyone, despite their gender, beliefs and sexual orientation.³⁶

Khan has been used as a symbol of free speech to challenge Islamophobia and racism at street level in the vein of graffiti. Slogans, such as “Free speech isn’t a license to spread hate” and “Stamp out Racism” accompany her image to cover over Islamophobic advertisements on San Francisco buses (Letamendi, 2015). The solution here to hate speech, which is promoted in the guise of free speech, is by producing oppositional free speech. In this manner, the activist statements carried by many of these Muslim female superheroines may have come to represent a saviour of the times, providing a symbol of hope, concerning human rights and freedoms, harnessed by the female form.

³⁶ As is the case with the Inclusive Mosque Initiative (2016).
4

HISTORICAL RECOVERY

4.1 Locating a Subject

The recovery of the historical Muslim female for the animation is inspired by Muslim women scholar-activists (MWSA). A key theme in their work is revival with a recovery of the female voice from within the Qur’an and the recovery of Muslim women’s history. The approach sets the foundation for the practice to build upon with the search for a historical Muslim heroine, whose story might translate on screen an audio-visual reading of Muslim women’s agency.

From amongst an extensive literature search of titles suggestive of Muslim women’s involvement within Islam, history, agency, arts and sciences, there were three routes the screen practice could follow, that of a religious holy figure, a historical female or even a combination of both. Although there is an abundance of religious female figures, to employ such a visual narrative is problematic because approval by a religious authority might be required, as discussed previously with the making of animated films, *Muhammad – The Last Prophet* and *The Great Women of Islam*. Religious advisory is necessary for the aesthetic and story to accurately portray Islamic teachings. If the film or animation does not adhere to these guidelines, distribution may be halted by the censorship boards of predominantly Muslim populated countries. This was the challenge that arose for al-Mutawa and the distribution of *The99* with the characters’ names and their powers being thought to emulate Allah and therefore viewed blasphemous by some religious authorities. For some time, the superheroes al-Mutawa created for Muslim children were unable to meet their audience (*Wham! Bam! Islam!*, 2011). Thus, the route to use a historical female figure was an effort not to further complicate the practice.
Departing from both religious sources and religious visual representations of Muslim female figures on screen, a female protagonist was sourced from historical texts. Many scholars have spent years of research to unearth images, texts and stories to evidence a history of Muslim women, spanning a variety of vocations, such as pilots, artists, doctors, scientists, revolutionaries, barristers, religious clerics, businesswomen, sportswomen, teachers, military and political leaders. Instead of compiling an audio-visual piece that evidences a wealth of female figures, the scope was narrowed to focus on one historical figurehead.

From amongst Mernissi’s (1993) *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* a protagonist character for the practice was located. Mernissi offers a vivid portrayal of Muslim women leaders that ruled their Empires as Heads of State, referencing the Mamluk Queens - Radiyya Sultana and Shajarat al-Durr; the Mongol Queens - Turkan Khatun, Padishah Khatun, Tindu, Absh Khatun and Dawlat Khatun; the Island Queens of Indonesia and the Maldives - Khadija, Myriam, Fatima, Nur al'Alam Nakiyyat al-Din Shah, Inayat Shah Zakiyyat al-Din Shah and Kamalat Shah Nur’. Besides these official Queens, Mernissi discusses women who turned the tables on political affairs, through guile and bravery, with concubines sent as assassins to kill powerful men or as pirates waging battle against Spanish fleets sent to conquer the Moors.

The decision for Radiyya Sultana (Arabic for Razia Sultana) as the protagonist for the creative practice is due to resources. To gather further information on these Queens would require a similar lengthy research journey to that of Mernissi. For instance, the swashbuckling adventure of Sayyida al’Hurra, an Andalusian pirate is an image far removed from the ahistorical image of the Muslim woman. However, to retell Sayyida’s story would be difficult, as sources are few (Mernissi, 1993: 19). A requirement would be to travel to the places where

these historical figures lived, in order to gather and survey evidence, which could finally develop into an audio-visual project. Therefore, at this present time, the developments of certain narratives pose some difficulty, whereas academic and historical sources on Razia are already established and readily available in the public domain.

4.2 Puppetry

Historical recovery in this project is manifold, which includes not only the development of the narrative but also the aesthetic. To recover the historical Muslim female on screen, the aim for the visual was to revive traditional art practices, whilst offering a visual that was historically accurate. Animation was a means to research and put into practice traditional aesthetic practices, such as puppetry, alongside the reconstruction of sets, costume design, calligraphy and the orchestration for the soundtrack as according to historical sources.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Reiniger discovered the ancient art of shadow-puppetry to have its roots in Asia. Similarly, the earliest puppets are to be found in modern-day Pakistan that houses the ancient civilisation of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, which offers animated archaeological relics, such as a terracotta bull, with a detachable head that can be manipulated by a string and a terracotta monkey that slides up and down a rod, dating back to 2500BCE (Varadpande, 1987: 63 and Ghosh and Banerjee, 2006: 14). Therefore, Indian puppetry predates the Medieval story of Razia. The implementation of shadow-puppetry and three-dimensional models bears a resemblance to the ancient art and traditional form of entertainment in India, the puppet play, which includes a variety of forms, like shadow, glove, rod, and string (Ghosh and Banerjee, 2006: 9). For the practice, the models have a similar aesthetic to that of the Indian rod and string puppet. The painted papier-mâché faces provides a wood-like texture and the costumes covering over their frames, conceal the functional moves of the puppet.
There is a dearth in the literature to whether puppetry was a feature during Razia’s reign of the Delhi Sultanate. However, there are three reasons to assume that puppetry was practiced in the region. The first is due to the spread of puppetry from India, where the Sultanate was located, and the use of puppetry in neighbouring countries. Sampa Ghosh and Utpal K. Banerjee (2006: 20) explain that between the 11th and 13th centuries shadow-puppets were shown in the royal palaces of Iran and China. From India, shadow-puppets had reached Egypt by the 13th century, where it became a popular form of entertainment (Duggan et al., 2016: 836 and Behrins-Abouseif, 1995: 39).

The second indicator is the aspect of fairs and festivals. Historians claim that during the era of the Delhi Sultanate, forms of entertainment were fairs, festivals, gardens, swimming, animal-fighting and wrestling. The upper-classes were fond of dicing, hunting and the royal pastime of polo (Brijbhushan, 1990: 28 and Chandra, 2007: 50). This aspect leads onto the third with a look into religious festivals, which puppetry has been tied to throughout the ages. In India, regular narratives are based upon the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, along with the Puranas, which are stories from ancient India that in their entirety form the Vedas (Jurkowski, 1998: 32). In some instances, puppet theatre offered by Muslim performers has a focus on comedy and trick puppets (Foley, 2016: 181). Across Northern India through to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, puppetry is used as a form of satire (Ibid.). The ancient practice of puppetry and its continual development further supports the claim of an aesthetic recovery.

38 The origins of the shadow-puppet as touched upon on pp.75-77 of this thesis.
39 Worthy of attention is that the Mamluk slaves in Egypt ceased power between 1250-1517. They were a separate ruling force to that of Mamluk India with the Delhi Sultanate, who reigned between 1206-1290, as evidenced in the work of Lane-Poole (1903), Nicolle (1993), Behrens-Abouseif (1995) and Duggan et al. (2016).
The practice uses the puppets’ actions, narrative and costume to subvert the ahistorical image of the Muslim female. This project’s approach to animation fits Wells’ (1998: 199) description on the creation of a female aesthetic. Wells explains that resistance to representations of the female body go beyond that of sexualised design, like Betty Boop for instance. Animation enables a space to explore conventions and codes, in order to create an alternative. The medium can be inexpensive and once the location is secured the animator can have full control of the production process. Outside of the commercial arena, animation offers infinite radical possibilities with an experimental and bold approach (Ibid.).

Like British female animators that have come before, specifically those animating during the 1980s, who sought animation to find an alternative means to portraying women and women’s issues (Ibid. and Law, 1995: 21), this project too recognises the shift from woman as object to that of subject. Hence, a focus on Muslim female agency delivered by a female protagonist character. Jayne Pilling (1992) in *Women and Animation* and Wells (1998) illustrate British female animators, some more than others, to have an abstract approach to form. Joanna Quinn through her hand-drawn sketches manipulates the female body and exaggerates male sexuality in *Girl’s Night Out* (1986) and *Body Beautiful* (1990). Exaggeration is possible by the hand-drawn medium itself. Quinn’s observational strategies enables her to capture the everyday, scrutinise the material world and challenge assumptions and orthodoxies about the figure or form (Wells, 2009: 18 and National Science and Media Museum, 2009). Candy Guard too captures the everyday experience of British female womanhood in her hand-drawn sketched animations. Unlike Quinn, who subverts the male gaze to that of the female, Guard’s characters in shorts of an ilk like *Wishful Thinking* (1990), which led to television series *Pond Life* (Channel 4, 1996) play out the stresses in trying to conform to societal standards of female beauty (Law, 1995: 32).
A focus on the woman’s condition is key to many animations of this era, spanning from narcissism to enlightenment from the delights of materialism in Alison De Vere’s *The Black Dog* (1987) to that of domestic abuse with Marjut Rimminen and Christine Roche’s *The Stain* (1991) and the subject matter of fertility and female relationships in Caroline Leaf’s *Two Sisters* (1991) for instance. The creative practice differs from these animations in its form and content, whilst addressing the female condition, albeit religiously specific. Hand-drawn animation, in its abstraction as well, was not considered a means to tell the story of Razia, as the intricacies of drawing each frame I thought would be beyond my abilities and puppets was a skill I could work on by myself.

Via the use of puppets meaning can be made and events re-enacted. In a creative way, puppetry can be used to address social and political issues of race, colour, creed and sexuality. The puppet play becomes an eloquent and symbolic echo of the human condition (Ghosh and Bannerjee, 2005: 37). This is visible within the practice, for the characters have a certain role to play. For instance, Razia illustrates Muslim women’s agency, the Amirs signify a patriarchal order, Shah Turkan adds another layer to issues of veiling and female administration and the townspeople offer a cultural hub of racial diversity and talent through art, science and local business. Further, Kathy Foley outlines the role of the practitioner in puppet theatre as a form of representation:

How can a single person experience full human potential, expanding beyond the circumstances of one’s life? If born to low status, how can one know what it is to be royal; if male, female; when young, how can one understand age? And if we only dimly comprehend other humans, how can we pretend to know other beings – animals, plants, gods, or demons? In South Asia and Southeast Asia for over a thousand years, people have solved these conundrums using the puppet as a tool. The lively doll theatre traditions found throughout this region today are the legacy of artists who shrank the cosmos into a miniature world of figures. The vast expanse of the earth could be reduced to the few feet of a puppet stage. The puppeteer’s lamp became the sun, throwing light on myriad who, in their nobility or baseness, represented the world. The greatest stories ever told could be sung with one voice and battles that shook the world could be fought by two hands.

(Foley, 2001: iii)
The use of animation is reflective of an artistic engagement with the creation of meaningful artefacts. A puppet has the ability of acting and presenting somebody (Ghosh and Banerjee, 2005: 13). Puppetry since its inception has been a form of entertainment for the masses (Ibid.). The availability of powerful electronic media like television, video, film and now the Internet makes canned puppetry far-reaching. The medium has a diverse appeal, catering to both children and adults from all backgrounds. This may be evidenced by the employment of puppetry and animation by advertising agencies, recognising the power of the medium’s outreach.

4.3 Aesthetic Recovery put in Motion

The opening title Sultan Razia, which is also used to mark the episodes, incorporates shadow-puppetry as does some of the scenic backdrops. Traditional to Indian shadow-puppetry, an oil lamp casts the puppets’ silhouettes against white saris that make the screen. The puppets are made from buffalo hide, the animal usually dying from natural causes in keeping with the Hindu faith (Currell, 2007: 18). For Sultan Razia, a canvas screen is incorporated into the stage design to serve as a backdrop to the main action. Each of the buildings and trees used for the landscape are made from cut out black card and coloured tissue, which are then taped to the screen and backlit by 1000-watt Kaiser video lights. Using a Canon EOS 40D DSLR, the digital stills create the individual frames of the animation. Part of the production process includes the stills to be transferred to Adobe Photoshop, where further effects are added, like brightness and contrast and the use of layers applied to the frame, a technique of which is similar to cell animation. Once an entire scene has been through this process the still frames are then imported into iMovie’s editing timeline.

40 The shadow-screen is called the ‘Screen of Death’ in China, ‘Fog and Cloud’ in Java, the ‘Curtain of the Departing’ or the ‘Hour of Death’ in Turkey and the ‘Screen of Dreams’ or ‘Veil of the Omnipotent Secret’ in Arabia. In some Muslim countries, puppet-plays are held every evening during the holy month of Ramadan with every puppeteer knowing at least 30 different stories to tell (Ghosh and Banerjee 2005: 25).
‘Episode 1, Act 1 - Scene 1a: A Warrior on Horseback’ offers an example of not only puppetry but an incorporated technique akin to cell animation with the compilation of layers. The sky serves as one layer, the second layer is the shadow-puppet backdrop that comprises of paper trees edited with a digital still of the ground consisting of artificial grass and a pathway made from gravel. Mixed amongst this layer are buildings such as the palace and Qutb Minar, a towering 13th century Indian monument (Eyewitness Travel, 2008: 6). The third layer consists of trees, made from stiff card covered in brown fabric and coloured paper for the leaves and flowers, which pass behind Razia. Razia on horseback is the fourth layer with the final foreground layer containing trees juxtaposed in front of Razia, to make the visual appear that the warrior is riding through the forest.
Image 8 – Completed frame taken from *Sultan Razia* (2017)

Image 9 – Replicating the horse’s movements for *Sultan Razia* (2017)
Rather than create armatures, which is a skilled, delicate and time-consuming process, artist mannequin dolls set the frames for the puppets. To capture the movement of the horse, the work of Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) was a point of reference.\textsuperscript{41} Within cinema history, Muybridge is recognised for his pioneering work on capturing the movements of people and animals, especially horses (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979: 465). The replication of the horse’s movements enabled the individual frames when played consecutively to create the illusion of movement. A similar method was applied to create the movement of people by studying animation handbooks, besides recreating movements myself and asking others to pose, before capturing the motion.\textsuperscript{42} The movements provided a means to convey both character and emotion.

The combination of puppet theatre and animation bears some similarity to the concepts offered by Hannes Rall (2011) in ‘Tradigital Mythmaking: New Design Ideas for Animation’. The aim for ‘Tradigital Mythmaking’ was to create new concepts for animation based on Asian mythologies and artistic traditions. The concept was akin to the recovery of the historical Muslim female and the geographically inspired artistic approach inherent to the location of that character. Rall’s approach breaks away from the common use of US and Japanese adopted aesthetics, be it Disney, Pixar and manga techniques, applied to animations in South East Asia. As Chapter 2 reveals, this was the case with many animations from the MENA region. However, despite the aesthetic, animation served as a means to preserve aspects of their culture.

\textsuperscript{41} Muybridge’s (1957) post-humous publication was used for the horse’s movements.
\textsuperscript{42} Animation handbooks, such as Williams (2001), Shaw (2004) and Webster (2005).
For Rall, the means of preservation is manifold, which not only includes the culture and customs of a region, but its fairy-tales, myths and legends, whilst also preserving artistic traditions and methods that are to be creatively crafted and captured by the means of animation. The implementation of tradigital techniques is an innovative way to generate knowledge about a culture and in relation to this project that of Islam and the Muslim female via its story and tradigital aesthetic. The mix of animation, puppetry and historical narrative simultaneously serves as a form of recovery and preservation, whilst creating a new approach on the representation of the historical Muslim female. However, lacking from Rall’s study is the use of sound, which would arguably contribute to cultural expression.

4.4 Sound

The recovery of aesthetic practices includes sound. In the traditional Indian puppet play, a drum or a bell is commonly used to attract an audience for the show (Ghosh and Banerjee, 2005: 249). Often live instruments, such as the harmonium, drums and cymbals, accompany the action on either the stage or screen (Currell, 2007: 18). Music and instrumentation creates another dynamic to the personalisation of the puppets. Besides the human voice, the boli, which is a reed instrument, is sometimes used to give voice to the puppets (Kothari, 1968: 63 and Liu, 2016: 181). Instrumentation is employed as a form of emphasis or mimicry, like crying or fighting (Ghosh and Banerjee, 2005: 248). From scene to scene the music differs to suit the action (Ibid.). To some extent the practice does incorporate some traditional aspects of the use of sound, but also deviates and omits some of the practices, such as the use of the harmonium, human voice, boli, and bell for very different reasons.

The harmonium is a disputed instrument for Matt Rahaim (2011) in ‘That Ban(e) of Indian Music: Hearing Politics in the Harmonium’. The small portable organ was introduced to India by the British, during the late 19th and early 20th century (Wade, 1979: 178 and Rahaim, 2011: 663). The instrument was condemned and banned from All-India Radio from 1940 to
1971 and is only provisionally accepted on the national airwaves. The attempt to banish the sound was an attempt to define a national sound for India distinct from the West (Rahaim, 2011: 657). Therefore, even instruments formed part of the resistance against colonial rule. At the same time, the instrument was appropriated into the culture of Northern India via cultural art forms. Besides the puppet play, the *harmonium* became intrinsic to the devotional *Qawwali* music (Qureshi, 1986: 58). A new sound was created to reflect the traditional customs of the people. However, the principal reason for the *harmonium* not to be included in the soundtrack is because its arrival is post-Razia, by at least 300 years.

The reason for the voice to be omitted from the soundtrack is for the visual and sound, be it through sound-effects and music, to relay the story rather than rely upon dialogue between characters. The term ‘soundtrack’ comprises of dialogue, sound-effects, music and silence with perpetual properties like volume, pitch and timbre, along with sound manipulation and mixing (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979: 350-353 and Théberge, 2008: 51). For the purpose of this study, dialogue is not to feature within the use of this term, as it is not used within the creative practice. A concept of which furthers the use of sound and the making of meaning beyond that of voice work, which is often open to parody and characterisation linked to the formation of racial stereotypes.43

Furthermore, omitting the voice enables the animation to be translated via the insertion of intertitles rather than having to redub any vocals, as a means to possibly widen spectatorship. Daniel Goldmark’s (2013: 14) study on cartoon music noticed that when the dialogue vanishes the vocabulary for cartoon music and sound-effects becomes nuanced and value-laden, with the entire story working well without it. This argument corresponds with Sergei Eisenstein’s term the ‘synchronisation of the senses’ to describe the use of sound as an

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43 As mentioned previously on pages 110, 125 and 128 of this thesis and with the work of Shohat and Stam (1994: 215).
expressive quality to unify both image and sound (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979: 348). Spoken dialogue is not necessary to convey the story or capture the mood on screen as this can be done using the soundtrack.

Sound-effects has proved to be a contested area in both animation and that of the silent film era. For instance, MGM’s composer Scott Bradley was dismissive of traditional sound-effects, which he believed had become clichéd in cartoons with slide-whistles and various noisemakers (Goldmark, 2005: 65). Similarly, the bali, a reed wind instrument, is omitted because of its lively, somewhat humorous sound, akin to a kazoo, which might undermine the tone of the animation. Whereas, Stephen Bottomore’s (2001: 130) analysis of reviews by film critics from the silent film period commented upon how added sound-effects might help clarify a film’s plot, in reflection of the overzealousness of the Foley artist. Comments included the use of inappropriate tools to accompany the image, the sound and image being out of sync with one another, or the sheer volume of the sound-effect distracting the spectator from the action. The sound of horses’ hooves, produced by coconut shells, was the cause of several complaints. The objection was that the sound was the same, no matter the surface the horse was seen running over (Ibid.).

An approach to the soundtrack uses concrete recordings, sourced from editing software and online sound libraries, rather than using imitation to avoid parody. The sound-effects for the alternative gaits of the horse underlines Razia’s horse-riding skills, the pouring of the wine supports Ruknuddin’s debauched nature and the Amirs’ applause illustrates their support for Ruknuddin’s ascendancy to the throne. The rise and fall in volume of the horse’s gait, along with the sound panning from right to left, offers a sense of spatial distance (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979: 370). Whereas, birdsong, crickets, walking on gravel and the howling wind create a sense of location and atmosphere. In contrast, the excited clapping of Ruknuddin and the sound of a sword being removed from its sheath to execute
Qutbuddin’s mother, adds to the horror and violence of the execution scene in ‘Episode 2, Act 1 - Scene 4c’. For the diegesis, some sounds are not sought, such as the greeting kiss that Razia gives her father on the forehead and incidental sounds like rustling is omitted, so as not to detract away from the image on screen.

A further omittance from the tradition of the puppet play is the use of the bell. The sound of the bell may have been used to mark the opening of the animation, but deemed unnecessary for the home viewing format. Nevertheless, keeping to traditional practices, a bell could be used to gather an audience before a public screening. In a different vein, the sound of a bell is intended to mimic diegetic sound for ‘Episode 3, Act 1 – Scene 1c: The Palace Gates’. The scene incorporates the bell installed by Razia’s father, Sultan Altamash, into the set design, being based upon Mernissi’s citation taken from Ibn Batutta:

“To hasten the administration of justice and allow the oppressed to ask for help, he [Sultan Altamash] decided to have a bell installed at the palace “he set up two marble statues of lions on two towers at the gate of his palace, and round their necks were two iron chains with a huge bell. The oppressed person would shake the bell in the night and the Sultan on hearing the sound would instantly look into his case and administer justice.”

(Mernissi, 1993: 95)

In the animation, Razia and the townspeople ring the bell to ask for an audience with Sultan Ruknuddin. The soldier informs them to leave, as they are not safe from the wrath of Shah Turkan (Ruknuddin’s mother and Razia’s step-mother). This animated sample of the ringing bell gives support to the use of sound-effects to fall in sync with the visual act of recovery. However, the sound and image of the bell is one of interpretation as the bell and palace no longer exist.44

44 Sultan Altamash is also commonly spelt and cited as Iltutmish.
Another convention for sound-effects is to relay and heighten the mood of a scene. David Sonnenschein (2001: 25) explains that such an alchemy, of seemingly incongruent sound and image juxtapositions, might be used to propel the audience into the next scene with a greater sense of anxiety, curiosity or humour. This technique is called narrative cueing whereby sound used in advance provides the audience with advance knowledge (Ibid.). In this manner, the merging of ‘Act 1 – Scene1c: The Will of Sultan Altamash’ with ‘Act 1 - Scene
2: A Thirst for Power’ in Episode 1, uses sound to assist with the narrative and create suspense.

In this transition, silence is just as vital as sound. Bordwell and Thompson (1979: 348) explain that a silent passage can create tension, forcing the viewer to wait in anticipation for whatever sound will emerge. On screen, the transition captures the onset of nightfall, from the view from the balcony, to visually correspond with the end of Sultan Altamash’s life. The sequence cuts to a wide-shot camera angle positioned from above as the music fades out. In silence, a shooting star crosses the night sky suggestive of his soul ascending to the heavens. The scene fades to black into a cross-dissolve with a starry sky imitative of the cosmos, which too fades to black. The sound of the howling wind fades in to fill the void and set the unnerving tone for the next scene in which a secret meeting is held between Shah Turkan and the Prime Minister. Their underhandedness ensures Ruknuddin’s Sultancy against the wishes of the late Sultan Altamash. Here sound is used to convey their wickedness.

A few scholars, filmmakers and composers have discussed the dynamics of silence within a soundtrack as expressive, meaningful, symbolic by filling the imagination to what is not being said or heard.45 The use of sound-effects or noise tends to be universal, such as a banging of a door indicates anger (Chatterji, 1998: 107). Whereas, some sounds are culturally specific, for instance in India, the female’s marital status is tied to the image of the bangle. Therefore, the jingle or the sound of bangles breaking holds meaning. Shoma Chatterji (1998) explains that spatial silence is near to non-existence in Indian film. Due to the musical trademark of Bollywood film, directors are under the impression that if a film was to use silence, the audience would assume that the projection was broken (Ibid.). I disagree with this statement because Indian films do use silence for dramatic effect. For example, director Ramesh Sippy

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45 Texts covering the use of silence in film are Burt (1994), Sider et al. (2003), Beck and Grajeda (2008), Kenny (2011) and Robertson (2015).
incorporates silence within *Sholay* (1975). The female lead, Basanti (Hema Malini), has her song and dance interrupted by glass being smashed on the rocks before her feet. Without a single word being said, the montage and silence illustrate that she is to dance on the glass. The ‘synchronisation of the senses’ is achieved and thus is somewhat universal in its making of meaning.

Within the creative practice, the silence accompanying the death of Sultan Altamash is poignant for a couple of reasons. The music used for the scene is *Raga Bhairavee Thumree* (1967) played on the *sitar* (Vilayat Khan), the *shehnai* (Bismillah Khan) and the *tabla* (Shanta Prasad). This *raga* evidences the principle of call and response, akin to conversations, which is a common characteristic of Indian classical music (Sonnenschein, 2001: 112). *Thumree*, as a genre of *raga*, may convey romance, love, separation and devotion (EMI, 1969 and Kumar, 2003: 9). The choice of music is to mirror the bond between Altamash and his daughter. The oncoming silence emphasises Altamash’s transcendence from the physical world and Razia’s emotional loss. Lighting, cinematography and the puppet’s actions contribute to the audio-visual syntax. The replication of human movements express mood and gives personality to the puppets.

For example, Shah Turkan’s quick exit upon his death establishes her self-interest, paving the way for the following scene. Razia’s close physical proximity to her father and her breathing suggests that she is upset at his passing. Tajuddin’s bowed head exemplifies the sadness of the moment. The audio-visual arrangement reflects that music lies in the realms of being an emotional signifier, signalling to the spectator, the invisible and inaudible, the spiritual and emotional processes of the characters portrayed (Sonnenschein, 2001: 155). All these elements point towards my argument on the use of visuals and sound to relay a story rather than be reliant upon characterised dialogue. Even though the voice is omitted, the
creative practice adheres to traditional aspects of the puppet play whereby sound is used to support the action on stage or screen.

4.5 North Indian Classical Music

The use of North Indian classical music (NICM) coincides with conveying mood, along with denoting the time of day and falls in line with the act of aesthetic recovery with music and instrumentation pertaining to that of the 13th century Delhi Sultanate. Indian classical music is principally based on melody and rhythm, not on harmony, counterpoint, chords, and modulation associated with Western classical music (Shankar, 2009). To create new meaning about the historical Muslim female on screen, the choice in music breaks away from the Oriental leitmotif and the use of sound to create either racial or gendered stereotypes of women. In comparison with 12th century Northern India, compositions were sometimes ascribed gender, raga being masculine with its feminine counterpart ragini (Jairazbhoy, 1971: 91 and Widdess, 1995: 14-15). The concept of the raga-ragini system continued into the 15th century, a practice rarely used today.

The raga-ragini system inspired Indian miniature painting known as Ragamala. The term raga, itself, translates as to add colour and be moved by emotion (Holroyde, 1972: 277 and Widdess, 1995: 40). Ragamala paintings, with poetic supplements, illustrate a raga or ragini in human form, including Hindu deities, often holding instruments. The colours and setting are a visual reflection of the symbolic mood set by the musical composition (Massey and Massey, 1976: 123 and The Met Museum, 2014). Alain Daniélou (1980) provides an account of each style of musical raga (the word ragini being dropped) with their human form descriptions, story, setting, clothing, and their assigned instruments, animals and props, aligned within an allotted time of day, season and weather conditions. Denoted to each raga is instrumental tuning, the ascent and descent of the scale, key notes within them, the mode and scale type, along with the expression of individual notes rendered symbolic for the
melodic development of the compositional storyline. However, some of the associations with specific ragas have developed over time. For instance, before the 16th century, scales were not amongst the classification of specific ragas (Widdess, 1995: 33). Nevertheless, ragas provide an endless source of material to which visuals may be constructed and vice-versa.

The origins of Indian music lie with the legends of gods and goddesses who were supposed to be its authors and patrons (Popley, 1921: 7). Over the centuries, the music transformed, especially with foreign invasions and Muslim conquests of India (Widdess, 1995: xi). The cultural crossroads of Northern India retained the ancient flavour of Indian music, yet continued to flourish (Gautam, 1980: 16). Before the 13th century, the development of certain styles and names of ragas was regional (p.26). However, Sunil Bose (1990: 48) claims that the system of Indian music or Hindvi music, as it once was called, was generally the same throughout the country, during this period. Due to the location of Delhi Sultanate, the soundtrack implements NICM rather than employ the Carnatic music of South.46

Daniélou (1980: 15-17) provides not only a chronological list of Medieval musicologists’ study on Indian music, but authors spanning across antiquity to the modern period. The greatest of these Medieval authorities is Sarangadeva, circa 1210-1247, who happens to coincide with Razia’s lifespan. Sarangadeva lived at the court of the Yadava dynasty of Devagiri in the Deccan. Even though Sarangadeva was based in the South, his work the Sangita-Ratnakara (The Gem in the Ocean) which deals with musical form, notation and composition, shows many signs of his contact with the music being played in the North (Popley, 1921: 15; Holroyde, 1972: 79 and Widdess, 1995: 161). The rise of the Muslim

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46 Peggy Holroyde (1972: 83) explains that the Carnatic is rigid compared to a North Indian composition. The formalism seems to hold it in thrall. Whereas, in the North various gharanas (styles) handle a raga very differently, which in turn create a variety of compositions attributed to a single raga type. The South and the North agree on the fundamentals but the nomenclature base of ragas and tulas differs. The North has brought into the main current temporal element, while in the South the leading composers are preoccupied with the writing of mystical religious songs (Ibid.). Unlike the North, South Indian ragas are not attached to a time of day (Pesch, 1999: 106).
Empire, during the 12th century, had a profound effect on the subsequent development of Indian music (Widdess, 1995: xi). Richard Widdess notes that:

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the 12th C. resulted in an influx of polychord lutes into a musical culture dominated by monochord stick-zithers (the ancient harps and short lutes having disappeared by this period); Indian musicians transferring from monochord to polychord instruments may have continued to play the melody on one string, the top string, simultaneously striking the second string as an intermittent drone.

(Widdess, 1995: xi)

Widdess’ information pertaining to instruments of the period, including long-necked lutes, is in search for the beginnings of the drone. The drone did not become fully established until the 15th century, since then it has become a congruent and distinct feature of Indian music (Widdess, 1995: 4 and Wade, 1996: 44). From this reference, some of the instrumentation and the possibility on how to apply a drone for the soundtrack could be ascertained.

The different types of instrumentation were further informed by how music developed proceeding Razia’s reign. A few decades after Razia’s death, North Indian music went through a renaissance (Hazrat Amir Khusro, 2016). Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) is a leading figure in this evolution, with the application of Sufi mysticism feeding into his poetry and music, which foresaw the development of Qawwali music (Qureshi, 1986: 1). A possible commonality that Khusrau and Razia share is that his father was a Turkish officer under Sultan Altamash and his mother was the daughter of Rawat-i-Arz, who was Sultan Balban’s minister (Ikram, 1964: 116). Khusrau worked as a musician and statesman for several Sultans, including Balban of the Mamluk Dynasty and Alauddin of the Khilji Dynasty, which overthrew the Mamluk Sultanate in 1290 (Lane-Poole, 1903: 89 and Popley, 1921: 16).
An accomplished musician in Indian music, Khusrau fused Persian elements to his music (Wade, 1979: 94). The adaptation of instrumentation, such as the tabla and the sitar is attributed to him (Rosenthal, 1928: 37). By striking a pakhavaj in two, Khusrau created the two drums synonymous with the tabla (Holroyde, 1972: 83 and Massey and Massey, 1976: 43). To write his compositions, Khusrau worked on a three stringed tritantri veena, known as sehtar in Persian (Holroyde, 1972: 83). In correspondence with ancient Sanskrit texts the word veena was loosely applied to any string instrument (Ruckert, 2004: 69 and Wade, 1979: 90). The principles of the sitar are similar to that of the veena, but less cumbersome, for it has no curved neck or gourd attachment (Rosenthal, 1928: 37). Along with the lute, the veena would have been in existence, both types of instruments being a precursor to the modern-day sitar.

The discovery of Khusrau’s musical invention had an effect on the practice, as the tabla made for a scene was abandoned and a pakhavaj was made in its place. The instruments within ‘Episode 4, Act 2 - Scenes 4c-5e: Landscape’ are an attempt to keep the visual historically accurate with the pakhavaj, veena and bansuri, an ancient Indian flute (Doraiswamy, 2013: 26). The male dancer performs a basic form of khatak, a term denoting the classical dance of Northern India with its roots reaching back at least to the 13th century (Walker, 2014a: 553 and 2014b: 131). Kathak translates as ‘to tell a story’ or ‘storyteller’ and the dance is laden with meaning through physical gestures and movement (BBC Arts, 2015). Dance, just like the soundtrack, has the potential to relay a narrative rather than be used specifically for eroticism that became synonymous with belly-dancing.

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47 To recreate the dance moves, I referred to Kenrick Cheeks (2013) ‘Kathak Dance made Simple, Volume 1’.
48 The reflection of the eroticisation of the belly-dance, is as discussed, throughout this thesis, for instance on pages 58, 87, 89, 95, 99, 101 and 105.
Image 12 - Tablas made for the practice but replaced with the *pakhavaj*

Image 13 - *Pakhavaj* player in *Sultan Razia* (2017)
The reading on Indian music prior to and proceeding Razia’s reign, offers a glimpse into the instruments and musical arrangements of the period. No revivalist music projects appear to exist in relation to the 13th century. Hence, an option is to develop a music score, working alongside an ethnomusicologist, composer, musicians, and craftsmen, who are equipped with knowledge on the music and instruments pertaining to the era. Through sound, a tailor-made film-score by the use of notes and scales, could relay the story of Razia, in correspondence with the action, setting, narrative and story on screen, in order to fully adhere to the act of recovery. This technique would offer a fresh approach to screen composition by drawing on the elements of the raga and the revivalism of instruments to create an audio-visual that would allow for an audience to hear, see and sample music from the past.

Currently, the music used within the practice is a compiled score of contemporary improvisations to serve as an example of how ragas may be used to create an audio-visual dialogue. For the soundtrack, the choice of ragas pulls on traits in accordance with the era, such as the region, instrumentation, the use of the drone, time of day and setting. However, some aspects of the ragas chosen do not fall in line with the period. For instance, the tabla
features within the majority of the tracks as it is commonly used with NICM. Although not historically accurate, the tabla serves as an example of a sound not too far removed from its predecessor the pakhvaj. Similarly, the sound of the sitar bears some resemblance to the veena and lute from which it had evolved.

Choosing a raga began with the time of day, season and content of a scene that in turn provided the name and type of raga to be sought. The practice follows a linear narrative progression taken from historical texts, such as Tabakat-i-Nasiri, a voluminous piece written by Minhaj ud-din, who was the principal historian for the Mamluk Sultanate of Delhi and historical studies on the royal lineage.\textsuperscript{49} For example, documented is the death of Altamash as Monday 20\textsuperscript{th} month of Shabaan 633AH (29\textsuperscript{th} April 1236), Ruknuddin’s Sultancy Tuesday 21\textsuperscript{st} Month of Shabaan 634AH (30\textsuperscript{th} April 1236), his death Sunday 18\textsuperscript{th} month of Rabi-ul-Awwal 634AH (9\textsuperscript{th} November 1236) and Razia’s death 24\textsuperscript{th} of the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal 638AH (13\textsuperscript{th} October 1240) (Brijbhushan, 1990: 11-13 and 21). The intertitles present the passing of time mirrored by the mise-en-scène incorporating lighting and gradual colour changes transitioning from morning to night. From the historical dates, the progression of Razia’s narrative could be formulated into days, months, seasons and years.

Daniélou’s accounts on specific ragas informed the selection for the soundtrack, as a raga may be defined by its title. The most descriptive of raga titles featured within the practice is Raga Marwa – Gat in Madhyalaya Teental (1996) performed by Satish Vyas on the santoor and appears on the DVD menu. As the song title suggests, Gat is the main body of the melodic composition, which often follows the Alap, which is the introduction to a piece of Indian classical music (Holroyde, 1972: 266-270). Madhyalaya sets a medium pace tempo and the time signature or rhythmic structure is Teental, tal referring to the beat (Massey and Massey,

\textsuperscript{49} Minhaj ud-din is also referred to as Minhaj al-Siraj.
Customarily *Raga Marwa* is played from late afternoon until sunset (Daniélou, 1980: 243) and, therefore, fits the lighting effects in the title’s still frame, akin to dusk.  

The choice for this *raga* was solidified by its instrumentation with the *santoor*, being akin to mono-chord stick-zithers used during the 12th century. Like the zither, the Persian named *santoor* has many strings, a hundred to be precise. In ancient Sanskrit, *shata tantri veena* translates as *veena* of a hundred strings (Sharma, 2010). Thus, positioning the instrument to have its roots in antiquity.\(^5\) Thus, the history of the *santoor* rendered the instrument as an appropriate fit to the era.

The same assessment was applied to each of the *ragas*, alongside research into each of the instruments used within a composition with further selection aligned with custom and tradition. For example, the use of the *shehnai* in ‘Episode 1, Act 1 – Scene 2c: Sultan Ruknuddin’s Procession’ with *Raga Vrindawani Sarang-Shehnai* by Bismillah Khan. The *shehnai,*

\(^5\) There is evidence in Buddhist frescoes painted from the 5th-7th centuries BCE in the Ajanta caves that the ancient harp-type veena was being replaced by a stick-zither type of veena (Wade, 1996: 44).
which is a reed aero-phone instrument bearing likeness to the oboe, is believed to have reached India some time before the 12th century (Deva, 1978: 104). *Shehnai* comes from the Persian word *shah*, meaning king and *nai* meaning flute (Massey and Massey, 1976: 134). Thus, translates as either ‘the king of instruments’ or ‘the instrument of kings’ (Deva, 1978: 104). The *shehnai* is often used for ceremony and celebration (Massey and Massey, 1976: 135; *BBC News*, 2006b and *The Independent*, 2006). For that reason, the music appeared to suit the pomp and pageantry of the procession celebrating Ruknuddin’s appointment as Sultan.

Image 16 – Still frame of Sultan Ruknuddin riding an elephant in the procession *Sultan Razia* (2017)

The formation of specific *ragas* may be lost on some audience members, as the music departs from conventional codes of Orientalism and the clichéd leitmotif. However, not all music is composed in the same way in order to introduce and engage the listener to alternative ways of hearing (Kassabian, 2001: 8). This concept is apparent with the compositional fusion work of Yared for the *Princes’ Quest*. Similarly, NICM is an effort to draw the audience into the animated world of *Sultan Razia*. Returning to the concept of ‘the synchronisation of the senses’ where image and sound transcends both language and cultural barriers. In this way, the practice provides a new way of hearing and viewing both animation and film that is
historically specific. If the meaning remains lost, within the signifying codes and practices of NICM, upon the viewer, the use of intertitles is an attempt to fill the gaps where the audio and mise-en-scène may be lacking in its mode of story-telling.

4.6 Intertitles

From the days of silent cinema, intertitles have been used to convey information, particularly dialogue, unable to be expressed by the action on screen, musical accompaniment or the talents of the Foley artist (Dick, 1990: 19). With the arrival of sound, the intertitle did not completely disappear. Commonly, an intertitle sets up the scene. This is apparent with films taking place within fairy-tale and Medieval settings with a piece of parchment or an opening of a book, which mimic an aesthetic of Medieval English text, as found in The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938) and Disney’s Robin Hood (1973). In a similar vein, Reiniger applies Arabic characteristics to the Latin alphabet to emulate the setting of Prince Achmed, alongside arabesque patterns.

Saul Bass, from amongst an array of talented animators and artists, sets the bar for animated intertitles with the pace, movement and transition of the line and text, usually located within a film’s opening credits. Just as iconographic is the signature opening to George Lucas’ Star Wars (1977) that offers a futuristic adventure within the confines of “a long time ago”. The punctuation, font, size and layout of the text is designed to suggest, symbolise and emphasise the content of words they exhibit (Naficy, 2001: 123). The text is made equally meaningful by written letters, notes, newspaper headlines, signposts, street signs and plaques, all serving as an example of graphic information belonging to the function of the intertitle (Ibid.).

Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1927) uses intertitles to symbolically illustrate the formation of power. The opening scene of clustered high-rise buildings set within pyramid formations cuts to interspersed transitioned images of steel mechanical equipment. Further cuts show a clock
on a wall that upon 12 o’clock, an industrial whistle blows. The first intertitle reads ‘shift change’. The sequence cuts to two long lanes of workers slowly marching in sync to exit and enter a huge lift. Once the workers are in the lift the intertitle reveals the words, scrolling down the page to read ‘Deep below… the earth’s surface… lay the worker’s city.’ The intertitle imitative of the movement of the lift taking the workers to their city deep below ground. The sequence continues to show the workers mournfully heading home. The following intertitle fades in with words forming into a pyramid shape to scroll up the screen reading ‘As deep as lay the workers’ city below the earth, so high above it towered the complex known as the “Club of the Sons” with its lecture halls and libraries, its theatres and stadiums’. The following scene illustrates the decadence of the elite’s life style high above the ground. Lang’s use of intertitles not only set the scene but symbolically convey the power structures at play, working from the top down in the shape of a pyramid.

Alternative cinemas, including accented cinema, have continued to experiment with on-screen titles as an expressive, narrative and calligraphic component (Naficy, 2001: 123). This is apparent in Laura Marks’ (2011) ‘Calligraphic Animation: Documenting the Invisible’. Marks examines the animated form of Arabic calligraphy in contemporary art and design, based on Islamic traditional art practices, such as calligraphy and Hurufiyya, where Arabic letters and words are written to create an image.51 Over the past couple of years, calligraphic animation has made it onto UK television screens with calligrapher Ruh Al-Alam’s commissions for The Hidden Art of Islam (BBC2, 2012) and Ramadan Diaries (Channel 4, 2013). The title sequences are a reflection of the Divine subject content of these documentaries. For Marks, analysis on calligraphic animation, shifts the locus of documentation from representation to performance, from index to moving trace (p.307). In other words, one aspect of this concept is the latent power of letters and words that lie dormant in texts, which

51 Karim Sultan (2016) offers some examples of Hurufiyya.
can be released via the process of animation. As a form of representation, letters and words are always in the process of becoming.

For the practice, intertitles are used to set the scene and elaborate information. The text, written in English, has been designed to imitate 13th century calligraphy to serve as a mode of recovery. Arabic calligraphy is further incorporated into the opening title, sets and Razia’s warrior costume. The font is informed and motivated by the sacred texts on exhibition at the British Library (2007) with Sacred and artefacts in the British Museum. Furthermore, the calligraphic inscriptions adorning the walls at Qutb Minar, which was built as a marker of sovereignty commissioned by Sultan Aibak in 1199 and continued to be built by his successor Sultan Altamash, serve as a specific visual reference to the architecture and Arabic font to the locale and period of Razia (Eyewitness Travel, 2008: 8). To make the intertitles, I used two fonts, Aceh Darusalam by Adien Gunarta and Arafat Ibn Blady by Barmee, both available to download from the Internet. These fonts offer an Arabic quality to English lettering. In Photoshop, I merged, manipulated, erased and painted over these already existing fonts to create a new style, similar in appearance to the religious inscriptions on the walls of Qutb Minar.32

For the making of calligraphic animation Marks defines the processes of index. On the one hand, the index applies to the metaphysical for what lies beyond a bank of letters and words to their emergence on screen. On the other, animation as an aesthetic that is able to index the hand of the animator, includes all the unnamed people involved in the process of making the words appear on screen. For instance, those involved in making the computer software enabling the generating of meaning. Marks explains the process can only go as far as the people who wrote the programs on which a particular artwork relies for it indexes their

32 In this thesis, Image 15 offers an example of the final manipulated font design.
mistakes and limitations too. In this way, calligraphic animation serves as an index of human activity (p.310). This concept may be furthered, to apply to all manner of material items and objects. In this project, the concept might include all aspects of the mise-en-scène and the soundtrack, for instance the labour and production of materials for the sets and puppets, to the technology to capture the varying elements to the generating of light and electricity. The inter-connectedness of human activity combined with the natural elements may be viewed to be connected to a single source, be it a void or Divine, depending on what a person may believe.

Calligraphic animation provides a means for interpretations of the Qur’an, the Divine and the portrayal of religious figureheads to be devoid of complications assigned to figurative art. In comparison to Al-Matawa’s approach to the 99 names of God, being a source of inspiration for his superheroes, Moroccan contemporary artist Mounir Fatmi’s *Face, the 99 Names of God* (1999) provides an alternative approach to illustrate Divine qualities through animated calligraphy. Fatmi displays the names, for instance *al-Tawwab* (the Relenting), *al-Nutqam* (the Avenger), *al-Ba’ith* (The Ressurector), *al-Mumeet* (the One who brings death), *al-Zāhir* (the Manifest) and *al-Bâtin* (the Hidden) alongside their translations into French (Marks, 2011: 308). None of the words on screen are animated, each word in succession fading in and out of a momentarily green blank space, whereas the translations in gold and white cross-fade into each other. The colours are symbolic to Islam, especially the use of green, as it is the colour of the family of the blessed Prophet Muhammad (Nasr, 1987: 54).

The words enable the viewer to imagine God for themselves rather than provide figurative representation (Fatmi, 1999). For Marks, the video suggests the fundamental of all transformations, that from individual entities to a single Source. To gaze upon all these names together is to gradually look into the infinite, impossible thing, the face of God (p.308). The potential of animation and filmmaking techniques bring to light the omnipotent and latent
qualities of Islam to the fore. Religious aspects of this practice-as-research project are intertwined with the intertitles with recitations of the Qur’an being delivered in this way. In keeping with aesthetic recovery of the traditional puppet play, the background for the intertitle is like that of a shadow-screen. On the canvas, words and images appear and disappear. Through this performative transition the power lies in the delivery of the words on screen. The process of relaying gender-sensitive interpretations of the Qur’an establishes their existence, via means of indexing. Thus, the act of Muslim women’s agency is imbued on the audience. The latent power of Qur’anic text, being the Divine word of God, to empower women is released. The metaphysical power of the words become manifest only to return to whence they came.

4.7 Map

The map does not use Arabic font for legibility purposes and remains the same as the original copy taken from Cuthbert Colin Davies (1953) *Historical Atlas of the Indian Peninsula*. The map of the Delhi Sultanate opens Episode 1 to situate the setting for the series. Animated waves differentiate the land mass from the ocean. Like the intertitles, the map is transposed onto a
canvas background. To make the ocean CGI was used, which is a different approach towards the creation of movement to that used within *Sultan Razia*. CGI was a time-saving method rather than having to create the effect by hand.\(^{33}\)

Geographical maps in cinema have been identified by Shohat and Stam as a trope associated with colonialism (p.145). Since the Renaissance, European cartography has included titles, captions and drawings of places and characters. Artistic conventions personify the world’s continents as female, while individualising them as Moorish or barely clothed and the Americas as the naked savage (p.147). Historical maps from the MENA and Central, South and South East Asia regions appear to differ. Like European maps, they are aesthetically intricate, but lack metaphorical illustrations. At most, maps from the Muslim world illustrate cities, mountainous terrain and boats.\(^{54}\) The former offers an image of European mythmaking of various countries to that of the latter with an interest in world trading offered Arabic text.

In European and Hollywood cinema, maps continue to imbue metaphorical meaning coinciding with aspects of adventure. Cartography serves as a treasure map to relay the hero’s movement in his quest to unearth riches unbeknownst to the primitive residents (pp.145-146). Shohat and Stam evidence this trope of cartography in films, such as *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) and *King Solomon’s Mines* (1937) (1950) (1985), to mention but a few titles. In contrast, the map for the practice sets the location whilst giving reference to nearby regions to provide further scope on the diverse cultures residing in the continent at the time. In this manner, the illustration of cultural diversity in the region at that time

\(^{33}\) Damon Kearns kindly created the image of the ocean using a piece of software called Blender. From the full motion render he sent me eight still frames, which I then put into Photoshop to make and animate the image of the map.

\(^{54}\) *1001 Inventions* (2015) offers examples of medieval maps from the Arabian Peninsula.
steps away from Said's recognition of the homogenisation of cultures pertaining to the Orient as is often found within colonial texts.

### 4.8 Historical Recovery and the Mise-en-Scène

Colour factors into the mode of storytelling. Intertitles change from a brightly lit to a dully lit canvas to suit the content of the sinister scenes. The set design reflects the personalities of the characters. The chambers of Shah Turkan, Ruknuddin, the Prime Minister and the dungeon are imitative of dark grey stone, cut from light weight polystyrene, and apart from the dungeon floor, tiles are imitative of black marble. Their darkly coloured costumes and the choice of black, red and yellow bear significance to the portrayal of these characters.

The Prime Minister’s costume bears resemblance to Jafar’s in *Aladdin*, as does the choice for Razia to wear blue is like Jasmine and that of Ocelot’s Djinn-Fairy, rendering the practice to instil traditional filmmaking conventions, although the presentation of their costumes is very different. At a basic reading, usually characters dressed in black denotes evil and white is good (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979: 187 and Dix, 2008: 32). From simple forms of characterisation was a concept that became applicable to the portrayal of race and gender within film and filmmakers reclaiming the meaning from such images.\(^55\) The colour choice in *Sultan Razia* is further problematised when put in context with the function of storytelling. Within Islam, colours have developed attributed meanings. Black plays an eminent role in Islam in that, along with green, it too is associated with the family of the Prophet Muhammad (Nasr, 1987: 54). In this vein, the Prime Minister masks his power-hungry intentions in his black tunic, which aligns itself with deceitful practices of religious interpretation to gain power.

\(^{55}\) This conversation relates to race and gender as discussed on pp.54-56 and p.59 of this thesis.
Shah Turkan’s dress, unintentionally may conform to certain stereotypes, particularly as that of a threatening and menacing character. Her head to toe black veil conceals a long red dress, full-length embroidered jacket, jewelled belt and lace slippers along with an embroidered headband, encrusted with jewels, lace gloves and kohled eyes, all form part of the costume design to symbolise her high-status and wealth. In this scenario, the veil acts as a type of power-dressing and thus, Shah Turkan acts as an interpretation of the high-status act of veiling of 13th century India. Furthermore, historical texts (Nigam, 1968: 28 and Mukhopadhyay, 2014: 105) on Shah Turkan as Head of the Harem and the Amirs’ dislike of Razia not observing purdah may be used as a reference for Shah Turkan’s wearing of the veil.
In contrast to the dark colours used for the characters, sets surrounding Razia are often presented in white marble or stone. Razia’s closest companions like Altamash and Tajuddin wear green, blue and white. The colours of Altamash’s costume, apart from the use of gold, were used to align with the revered colours in Islam (Nasr, 1987: 54). Furthermore, within Islamic architecture, light is not limited to one particular colour and symbolises states and levels of cosmic existence. For example, ‘white is the symbol of Being, which is the origin of all existence’ (Ibid.). A visual reading of colour provides alternative meanings and translations in accordance with the cultural beliefs of who may be making or watching the animation.

The costumes are subject to historical recovery but as with all the elements of making the animation are a matter of interpretation, when genuine artefacts do not exist.56 The costumes are not as elaborate as those used within Aladdin or The Nights films influenced by the fashions of Paul Poiret. The costume design is a reflection on the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate to be a mix of two cultural sensibilities being of indigenous and Persian influence (Pathak,

56 Zahra Shah assisted with the making of the costumes and props.
The Muslim rulers of Delhi modelled their lifestyle on that of the Turkish and Persian upper-classes, who predominated in Western and Central Asia (Agrawal, 2003: 44).

Satish Chandra (2007: 49) explains that there were no significant changes in the style of dress worn by men and women of the period, the dhoti and the sari remaining the normal dress in most parts of India. Indian garments, such as saris, dhotis, patkas (cummerbund) and turbans, often had shining decorative borders, consisting of silk being woven with gold and silver thread, a special feature of Indian brocades (Agrawal, 2007: 21). In Northern India, men wore a jacket and women the choli (bodice). Khusrau mentions the word barani to suggest an overcoat, which was made for the elites from either wool or silk with embroidered sleeves (Pathak, 2008: 37). The overcoat being worn by many of the male characters in the animation.
Chandra supports this reading by explaining that the upper-classes wore long coats, trousers and shoes (p.49). Cotton was the material commonly used, whereas the upper-classes also wore silk and fine muslin. Jewellery formed part of the attire, with men and women wearing gold bracelets and earrings set with costly stones (Ibid.). Moreover, Mernissi (1993: 97) offers a reading on Razia’s death, in which she was murdered for her fine clothes studded with jewels. Thus, costumes for the characters may be rendered from the information gathered. The élites in the animation wear either silk or cotton clothes, embellished by embroidery and imitation jewels set into their silwaar chemise, cummerbunds, jackets and headdresses, representative of the class and caste system of the time.

Creative licence is given for the armour worn by Razia and the palace guards, due to the lack of information on Mamluk, Turkish, Persian and Indian armour before the 17th century (Robinson, 1967: xi). Ideas for the costumes were sourced from the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the John Rylands Library, the Internet, Persian miniature painting, Iranian poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi’s (977-1010) epic Shahnameh (Book of Kings) and historical texts offered by academic scholarship to grasp an idea of the textures, patterns and materials used. Written texts provide a foundation to develop the armour.57 Jamila Brijbhushan in Sultan Raziya – Her Life and Times a Reappraisal references Minhaj’s description of a battle between two Mamluk Amirs and their soldiers fighting for suzerainty of Ghazni explains that:

When the battle commenced, both these champions dismounted, fastened up the skirts of their coats of mail and entered the fight. When the elephants of Bahram Shah made a charge, each of those champions attacked an elephant. Getting beneath the armour of the animals, with their poniards, they ripped open the bellies of the elephants... Just before the engagement, Alaud-din donned a crimson-coloured satin surcoat over his armour. When asked the reason for this he replied, “For this reason that, in case my body be wounded by an arrow, lance or sword, the redness of my blood, by means of crimson surcoat, will not show upon my armour” …

(Minhaj as cited by Brijbhushan, 1990: 54-55)

57 For instance, Robinson (1967), Hamadani (1992: 89), Jackson (1999: 269) and Tekeli (2016), all offer insight into historical types of armour.
According to this reference, beside the combatants donning chainmail and armour, the elephants wore protective clothing during battle too. Minhaj (No Date: 756) mentions horses to be saddled and in Turkey 13th century stone reliefs evidence soldiers in mail and helmets (Tekeli, 2016). Also, mail in large pieces was laid over quilted fabric on horses (Robinson, 1967: 118). Historical sources on the Delhi Sultanate, a history of mail spanning across the ages with both ancient and Medieval Persian Empires and the influence on Persian culture, especially with the elite classes in Northern India, render the costumes and the horse’s protective clothing not entirely out of keeping with the era.

Besides costumes, fabric is used for the soft furnishings of the set, with beds, rugs, curtains and cushions. The textile industry has a long history in India that can be traced back to antiquity with the use of cotton and silk (Agrawal, 2003: 21). During the 13th century, Southern Indian regions Malabar and Chola washed and dyed fabrics, which were then exported (p.16). Even the Egyptian Mamluks were wearing fabrics imported from India (Mayer, 1952: 14). What is more, brocades produced at the royal workshops of other well-known Muslim centres in Syria, Egypt, Turkey and Iran were exported to India (Agrawal,
2003: 94). In the time of the Delhi Sultanate, the Sultans had employed 4000 silk weavers, called *Khazzaz* in their royal workshops (p.28). The term *khazz* was used for heavy silk brocade as well as plush velvet made from silk and wool (Ibid.). Due to the lack of textile examples from this period, architectural decorations offer an idea of decorative motifs used. Arabesque, trellises, floral scrolls and calligraphic decorations were the salient features of the Sultanate motifs (p.93). These are features that have been used for dressing the set and informing the fabric shop to illustrate the bustling trade.
Image 23 – Sultan Ruknuddin’s chambers in *Sultan Razia* (2017)

Image 24 – Sultan Altamash’s chambers *Sultan Razia* (2017)
Arabesque design on doorways and tiles for Ruknuddin’s chamber were scanned into the computer from Syed Jan Abas and Shaker Salman’s (1995) *Symmetries of Islamic Geometrical Patterns* to draw upon 13th century Islamic design. Some of the images hold inaccuracies, for example the balcony is a stock image taken from the internet that bears some resemblance to the pillar formations of *Qutb Minar* and the background behind Sultan Altamash’s chamber is recycled imagery from a previous project. In most instances, the background is blurred not only to offer a depth of field but make the background non-descript. Whereas, on the walls of the Sultan’s chamber and the mosque mirrored plaques adorn the Arabic *Hurufiyya* script that individually read *Bismillah* (In the name of God), *Allah* and *Muhammad*, as an indication of faith.

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58 The stock image is by Eve Livesey and is referenced under Film Credits proceeding the Bibliography.
4.9 Violence

Female characters Qutbuddin’s mother, Shah Turkan and Razia, all meet violent deaths unlike Sultan Altamash, who dies relatively peacefully in his bed. The story of these three Queens surmises Mernissi’s statement in reflection of female leaders as some of those: who received the reins of power by inheritance; others had to kill their heirs in order to take power. Many themselves led battles, inflicted defeats, concluded armistices. Some had competent viziers, while others counted only on themselves. Each had her own way of treating the people, of rendering justice, and of administering taxes. Some managed to stay a long time on the throne while others scarcely had time to settle down. Many died in the manner of the caliphs (either orthodox, Umayyad, or Abbasid) – that is, poisoned or stabbed. Rare were those who died peacefully in their beds.

(Mernissi, 1993: 3)

The execution scene, towards the end of Episode 2, illustrates Shah Turkan commanding the executioner to blind an 8-year old Qutbuddin and put his mother to death. Shah Turkan’s actions are a response to the Amirs’ discussion on removing Sultan Ruknuddin from the throne. The execution is to serve as a warning by Shah Turkan to the Amirs, for they too may meet a similar fate, if they continue with their acts of treason.

Indirectly, the scene deals with polygamy. The controversy surrounding Razia’s appointment to the throne does point to the fact that Sultan Altamash did have multiple wives and concubines, a practice of which subscribes to the harem being a common feature of the ruling classes (L. Ahmed, 1992: 107). At one point, Razia’s mother, Turkan Khatun, was Altamash’s chief wife, whilst Shah Turkan would have been his concubine (Sharma, 2016: 196). Information on Turkan Khatun is scarce and little is known of her life. Whereas, Shah Turkan appears to have risen through the ranks of the harem to become Altamash’s chief wife but this does not mean Altamash was monogamous for he had fathered Qutbuddin with one of his other wives. Thus, Qutbuddin was also heir to the throne and his young age made him a likely candidate for leadership as a puppet Sultan to the Amirs.

\[59\text{ As of yet, I am unable to find a resource on Qutbuddin’s mother’s name.}\]
Shiva Nigam (1968: 28) explains that once in power Shah Turkan tortured favoured women in the harem. Some she even murdered along with their children to ensure her son remained on the throne (Zakaria, 1966: 37 and Nand, 1989: 58). This is captured by Shah Turkan having Qutbuddin blinded and his mother executed, in order to suppress any opposition toward Sultan Ruknuddin. In this instance, the harem is not a place of sexual pleasure but a site where hereditary power is born, maintained and manipulated. The harem in this context is shown by the violence of the scene, from the moment the mother and child are taken from their beds to the beheading. Their torture and death does not portray Islam as a violent religion but rather the trappings of political power.

Like most animations, Sultan Razia can be criticised for its display of suffering and violence if viewed by a young audience. Animation has come under scrutiny for illustrating acts of violence, ranging from animation classics like Tom and Jerry and the Loony Toons’ characters to that of Japanese animé and the violence illustrated in Watership Down (1978). According to Anja Höing and Harald Husemann’s (2016) reading of director Matthew Rosen’s animated features Watership Down and The Plague of Dogs (1982) draws attention to the disnification of animals and violence within animation, a concept based upon studies by Steve Baker (1993). The crux of the argument, which is of interest to the creative practice, is that violence is hardly ever instigated or carried out by the heroic protagonist characters. This too can be applied to Razia, who as a warrior is capable of afflicting violence, however the audience does not witness her in battle, whether she be fighting the Mongol hordes or quelling rebellions from the Amirs.60 Whereas, an intertitle will read of the execution of Shah Turkan and Sultan Ruknuddin as a result of a court ruling, rather than Razia and the public being seen to support the death penalty. While, one of the reasons to have the execution scene is

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60 The final episode is set up with the Amirs planning a coup d’état against Razia. From this scene, there is the option to either develop a battle scene in accordance to historical texts or an adaptation of an assassination as the ending currently stands. Therefore, it is not outside the realms of possibility for the animation to be adjusted.
to establish character traits. For example, Shah Turkan’s centrality in the execution scene indicates her authority and Ruknuddin’s movements with his excitable clapping suggests that he is enjoying the situation. Qutbuddin’s bloodied eye sockets add to the horror of the situation, as do his removed eyes rolling on the floor.

Image 26 – Image of the Mongol horde in *Sultan Razia* (2017)

Image 27 – Frame of the eyeballs rolling on the floor in *Sultan Razia* (2017)
Steven Kirsh (2006: 162) explains that within animation the more that violence deviates from reality the less likely it is to be taken seriously. In light of humorous elements found within animation, Kirsh considers violence to signal to the viewer that the seriousness of the event is to be downplayed. Thus, cognitive transformation occurs in which the grave material might be considered whimsical (Ibid.). Whether the same may be said of the execution scene in Sultan Razia is questionable and without further research into responses from focus groups leaves this critique open.

Jørgen Stensland (2001: 87) expounds upon two types of research pertaining to screening violence, one is catharsis whereby watching violence has a cathartic effect and the other is learning theory, whereby children are affected by their environment, which is specific to child audiences. The results often illustrate that boys tend to get violent, girls get scared and aggressive children tend to seek out aggressive material (Ibid.). Cartoons have the highest amount of violence than any other type of programming (Kirsh, 2006: 159). However, death is rarely animated and violence is used to set the moral tone of an animation, often staged between good and evil (Ibid. and Höing and Huseman, 2016: 106). In this vein, the scene is rather risqué with its illustration of torture and the beheading. Despite how far the violence may be removed from the viewer in Sultan Razia, due to the period the animation is set or the presentation of violence, the scene may request self-censorship. Depending on whether the animation was specifically called upon to accommodate a child audience, the cutting of the entire scene could be done and replaced with intertitles to relay the narrative.

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61 As mentioned throughout this thesis, the practice is a result of integrating theory into practice and vice-versa. However, such a project as this one has the potential to be developed into a piece of animation that could cater to a child audience, which fits alongside Kahf and Shaheen’s concerns on the images of Arabs and Muslims on young children, as discussed on pp.34-35 of this thesis.
The violence does not quell in the creative practice, for Razia was to meet an untimely and violent death and thus sets the planned ending for the episodic series. Historical accounts of Razia’s death remain inconsistent, for instance Jamila Brijbhushan (1990: 20-21) provides several accounts of Razia’s death in Sultan Razia – Her Life and Times: A Reappraisal. One account suggests that when returning to Delhi to recapture the throne, the Hindus seized and killed Razia. Brijbhushan also includes the historic expeditions of the Moor, Ibn Battuta to India, on which Mernissi’s (1993: 13) text is based. Ibn Battuta documents the life of Sultan Razia, 100 years after her death, and in this version Razia flees the battlefield and is killed by a peasant for her jewelled attire.

Brijbhushan is skeptical of Ibn Battuta’s account for his interpretation is hardly noted for its accuracy, especially regarding the love affair between Razia and Yaqub. Salman Asif’s (1998) children’s book Razia – Warrior Queen of India, also refers to Ibn Batutta but the ending offered has an arrow strike Razia through the heart during a battle in an effort to reclaim the Empire that has been usurped by the patriarchal Amirs. This ending is included in Rafiq Zakaria’s (1966) Razia - Queen of India, ACK’s (2009) comic Sultana Razia and Mahzar Dehlvi (No Date) Urdu children’s book Razia Sultana. Peter Jackson’s (1999: 47) research on the political and military history of the Delhi Sultanate relays a similar narrative. Jackson explains further that Razia was deposed in favour of her brother Bahram Shah. She was imprisoned and killed in a vain bid to recover the throne (Ibid.).

In conjunction, the search for a female protagonist ending has proved problematic. The death of heroines in Hollywood cinema, either by self-sacrifice or murder, may be read in two ways. Firstly, as women unable to handle the power given to them and secondly that there is no place for strong women in society (Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines, 2012). Razia’s death might evince such ideas, however as illustrated by the death of Sultan Altamash, her life and death may be illustrated as a continuum that leads onto
Therefore, death does not need to appear as final as the Hollywood reading suggests. Within a Qur’anic framework death could appear as a phase of passing from one world into the next, as illustrated by the shooting star of Sultan Altamash. Unlike self-sacrificing Hollywood heroines, Razia does not give up and politically challenges the structures of power around her. The perceived series ending is to illustrate the Amirs’ assassination of Razia, by firing an arrow that pierces her heart, for to construct a battle scene is beyond my current limitations. In the practice, Razia’s death, just like her legend, may too symbolise the continual fight for gender justice and racial equality.

62 This concept is further explored in the following chapter with the directorial work of Kamal Amrohi on p.187 of this thesis.
63 For many people in India stuck within the rigid caste system, Razia came to symbolise freedom and equality. Hence, the evolvement of the storyline to illustrate mixed-raced relationships within Bollywood films made in honour of her and the available literature that pays reference to her. Razia’s grave became a shrine with people all over India asking for blessings. Whilst on his travels, Ibn Batutta came across this shrine, which was a dome built over her grave, and mentions that the people had made her a saint (Mernissi, 1993: 97).
SULTAN RAZIA AS THE MEDIEVAL MUSLIM FEMALE

5.1 Sultan Razia in the Public Domain

Razia’s story is legendary in India, where she reigned the Sultanate of Delhi, between 1236-1240, which was a vast Empire at the time. As a historical political figurehead, Razia has been documented and re-imagined across platforms, ranging from print media with newspaper columns, travel brochures, children’s books, comics, history books and encyclopaedias documenting world leaders to film and television. For the practice, the visualisation for this Muslim female sultan bears a similarity with the majority of texts, which define Razia as a warrior trained in martial arts and her stance toward people of all genders, castes, races and religions within society. Within visual representations, such as the comic book ‘Sultana Razia’ (2009) by Amar Chitra Katha, recent television series Razia Sultan (&TV, 2015), which is available to view via satellite and the Internet, and Bollywood epics Razia Sultan (1961), directed by Devendra Goel, and Razia Sultan (1983), directed by Kamal Amrohi, offer an image of Razia that shares visual similarities but also provide a very different characterisation to that of the practice, mainly via the narrative.

Filmed in black and white, Goel’s Razia Sultan opens with an intertitle, which is written in English with an air of an Arabic font that reads, ‘the main characters of this picture are drawn from history but the plot and incidents are fictitious’. In this manner, the film gives way to creative licence upon historical events. Upbeat music and lyrics, which speak of the Divine, accompany the montage. Images of the Kaaba in Mecca and camels crossing the desert illustrate the Muslim pilgrimage of Hajj. The sequence cuts to Delhi in India with a still of Qutb Minar. Whilst Altamash (M. Kumar) is talking with his moustachioed sari-wearing son,

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64 In this thesis, Image 17 offers a map of the Delhi Sultanate during Razia’s reign.
Phiroz (Agha), a good-natured slapstick character, flying arrows pierce the palace floor. Enter Razia (Niruparoy) donned in masculine garb and weaponry ready to go hunting. Thus, in this scene, cross-dressing establishes the personalities of these characters that toy with gender expectations.

Razia illustrates her martial arts skills in a couple of scenes, such as Altunia’s playful ambush and a sword-fighting duel between Razia and the Prime Minister. The romantic storyline between Razia and Altunia is emphasised by popular musical numbers ‘Chali Jaati Chabliya Matkati’ (She’s Got a Spring in her Gait), ‘Aaja Re Deewane Lagi Dil Ki Bujhaane’ (Come Crazy Beating Heart) and ‘Dhali Jaya Raat’ (The Night is Singing). The exploits of Seemab (N. A. Ansari), the power-hungry Prime Minister, forms part of the narrative. Altamash, having been severely wounded by Seemab, from his deathbed declares Razia to be his heir. As Sultan, Razia is met with resistance by the Amirs because of her gender. Yaqub (Kamran), a slave of the royal household, proves his loyalty to Razia, who promotes him to ‘Commander of the Amirs’. During the final scenes, Seemab is tried before Razia for all his crimes, including the kidnap and murder of Nuri, which leads to his death from a swashbuckling duel with Altunia. The film closes on Razia with Nuri’s grieving family, whereby her empathy evokes Razia as the people’s princess.

The use of colour film for Amrohi’s Razia Sultan hosts opulent palace sets and costumes suggestive of the grandeur and wealth of the Delhi Sultanate. Adding to the film’s overall aesthetic is the film’s title in English, which uses a font that is similar to Urdu with the employment of diacritical accents. The film begins with the camera focussed on a dark purple sky and with a slow downward tilt reveals the sun setting behind Qutb Minar. This creates a silhouette of the monument that provides the film’s location. As part of the opening

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66 Yaqub is also referred to as Yaqut.
titles sequence, the image fades to black and cuts to Razia, a doe-eyed Hema Malini, wielding her sword on horseback outside the palace, wearing a white *silwaar chemise*, a silver armoured bodice and a helmet with a red transparent cloth, which covers her nose and mouth. Razia steers her horse toward a bare-chested Yaqub, played by the handsome Dhamendra Deol donning black face, who takes her sword and kneels on one knee to assist her dismount. The frame freezes and an omnipotent female voice over, presumably a reflective Razia speaking from on high, speaks these words in Urdu, as the English subtitles read:

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Beauty is my forte,
Love is my character,
Though I am a flame,
But, outlook is of fire fly [sic].
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These words summarise Razia’s character as a beautiful, passionate person looking towards the light. The sequence cuts to the first act with Shah Turkan (Veena) speaking of the relationship between Razia and her Somali equerry, Yaqub, to which Altamash (Pradeep Kumar) replies only to acknowledge his own Turkish slave past.67 For the film’s main feature, the romantic plot is established immediately, which reflects a love to go beyond that of caste and race, whilst, simultaneously, the poem offers a sense of leadership and agency given to Razia.

The film’s opening is somewhat like that of the practice. For example, *Qutb Minar* sets the location and era, an armoured Razia on horseback establishes her warrior like competency and Yaqub is present to take the horse. The costumes are similar too, with Razia’s armoured outfit and Yaqub’s costume imagined to be that of an equerry, wearing buckled boots, a cotton chemise, sweatband, waistcoat and *silwaar*. The act of historical recovery for the

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67 In a similar vein, the recognition of slavery is brought to the fore within the creative practice, as is discussed later within this chapter of this thesis on pp.188-189.
practice evidences a break from that of a romantic plot line belonging to both Bollywood and Hollywood. In Bollywood, the Medieval, amorous speculation of the relationship between Razia and Yaqub, positions Razia’s reputation to be in ‘need of saving’. Hence, a luridly romantic scenario is produced that transforms this warlike sultan into a beleaguered heroine (Gabbay, 2011: 49). The ‘forbidden love’ plot line ties in with the conceptualisation of the sexualisation of female characters in support of the male character’s bravado, as found within Mulvey’s critique on Hollywood cinema.

Amrohi’s interpretation remains consistent with the majority of narratives, whereby Razia’s father is a benevolent Sultan who bequeaths his dutiful daughter as heir presumptive for he recognises his son Firozshah’s (Shandaar Amrohi) decadent ways. His wickedness is illustrated by the kidnap of women for his sexual pleasure, whilst the power-hungry Shah Turkan (Veena) hides her son’s sins by deceitfulness and bribery. The villain in this story is Altunia (Vijayendra Ghatge), whose marriage proposal Razia rejects because she is in love with Yaqub. Yaqub has trained Razia to be a great warrior, and in a few scenes Razia illustrates her prowess by brandishing a sword and shield, sometimes on horseback, whilst dodging arrows and fighting soldiers. When Razia does become Sultan, she renounces the niqab and her costume changes to that of a turban and similar attire to that of the Amirs, with a cummerbund tied around a long silk tunic worn over a silwaar. Thus, the adoption of masculine dress by Razia is also made apparent in this film.

Amrohi continues to challenge gender expectations arising from heterosexual normativity. Cut from Amrohi’s film is a homoerotic sequence, which is accompanied by the song ‘Khwab Ban Kar Koi Aayega’ (Someone Appears in my Dreams). Razia dreams of her slave lover Yaqub, which has Razia impulsively act upon these fantasies with her female servant (Parveen Babi). These two figures caress and share a hidden kiss behind a feathered fan on a birdlike gondola, which, consequently, heightens Razia’s sensuality. Even though the scene does use
a lot of creative licence, it is daring in its portrayal of gender and sexuality for the time in which it was made (Srinivasan, 2013: 193-205).

The soundtrack has a major role in relaying Razia’s narrative. The opening music for Razia Sultan, designed by Khyyaam, is just as epic as the film with its full orchestra of instruments, comprising of violins and trumpets, alongside Indian stringed, horned and reed instruments, as well as percussion, in the way of drums and crashing cymbals. Like Razia Sultan, both films have popular Indian musical numbers featured throughout. Bollywood film does not commonly use leitmotifs as calling-cards because the popular Indian song is the primary vehicle to represent fantasy, desire and passion (Ganti, 2004: 81). Therefore, via Bollywood musical numbers, the Medieval Muslim female is subject to Bollywood narrative conventions, just as she is to that of Hollywood.

Towards the end of the film, a battle ensues between Razia and Altunia and she is taken prisoner. Enter the hero Yaqub who fights Altunia whilst Razia watches on. The theme of female captives as presented by Orientalist readings differs as she is rescued by Yaqub, who embodies the divide between race and class. Razia mounts a horse and together they flee Altunia’s clutches. Altunia’s soldiers chase and throw spears at the couple, as the horse rides away from the camera into the dusk. A spear strikes Yaqub through the back, which also penetrates Razia, who sits in front of him on the horse. A cross-dissolve transition into painted patterns that resemble the cosmos is shown, whilst an omnipotent voice speaks of a place in heaven for Razia and Yaqub to reside under God’s protection. Thus, ending on a spiritual element.
Bollywood interpretations on Razia include a religious aspect to their films, as evidenced by Razia Sultana’s Hajj opening sequence and the omnipotence presence in Razia Sultan. Both the films also include Islamic greetings and phrases within the dialogue between characters. Furthermore, a scene in Razia Sultan opens with Razia reading the Qur’an, which captures her faith. Her reading of the Qur’an is not paramount to the story, for when she has finished her silent reading, she receives a letter from Yaqub. Thus, the romantic storyline continues. In comparison, the mosque sequence, set for Episode 3 of the practice, and the reading of the Qur’an in the sample piece, was and is a means to set the tone of the animation. For instance, Razia’s prayers are indicative of her faith and her relationship with God and within the sample, a very young Razia’s recitation of the Qur’an is an effort to endow her character with theological reasoning for her later years.68

The first recorded representation of Razia on screen was Razia Begum (1924). The silent film no longer exists but excerpts regarding the film represent Razia as the ultimate femme fatale who indulged in a relationship with her black subordinate (Mukhopadhyay, 2014: 112). This critique is just as pervasive as Hollywood interpretations of historical female figures from the Orient, along with a stigma attached to mixed-raced relationships, when viewing female figures in the role of leadership. However, a shift was to occur within Bollywood cinema with its narrative structure concerning that of race and caste, as Parciack (2008: 226) explains that the structure commonly addresses the non-cinematic reality of caste, class, and gender-based conflicts. Razia’s relationship with Yaqub fits such a narrative structure. Their relationship defies that of a caste system, which further fuels the Amirs’ rejection of Razia’s leadership, whilst her gender is also regarded as inappropriate.

68 In this thesis, Image 3 is a still frame from the MPhil sample piece and Image 25 is a still frame from the mosque sequence in Sultan Razia (2017).
The slave within these visual texts is a stark contrast to that depicted by Oriental themes.\textsuperscript{69} The alternative version of slavery is based upon a caste system rather than that of sexual deviancy, along with the image of the Black male leper slave within the \textit{The Nights}. Slavery is brought to the fore, in what will be ‘Episode 4, Act 2 – Scene 4b: Razia as Sultan’, with the appointment of Yaqub as the ‘Amir of the Amirs’. The Prime Minister challenges Razia on her promotion of Yaqub on the grounds of caste to which Razia reminds him that they too, as Mamluks, came to Delhi as slaves.\textsuperscript{70}

Interwoven into Razia’s dialogue, concerning race and caste, is Kahf’s (2006: 35-36) approach to the subject matter in the novel \textit{The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf}, which highlights that these things do not matter to God. Kahf illustrates the heterogeneity of Muslim women via the story’s characters, with their interests, jobs and cultural backgrounds. The storyline includes Muslim women as historical figureheads and readings of equality from the Qur’an, as the

\textsuperscript{69} This conversation is in light of Oriental themes covered in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{70} Themes of slavery and race in Razia’s story that is also conveyed in Amrohi’s interpretation as is discussed earlier on p.185 of this thesis.
conversation between Uncle Taher and the children in attendance at the Mosque Sunday school illustrate:

“God don’t look at your skin color. How come?”
Hakim’s hand shot up out of his heavy parka. “Because it’s only one God created everyone, so all men are equal.”

“That’s right,” Uncle Taher said…
Tayiba raised a mittened hand. “What about women?”

“All men are equal,” Uncle Taher said. “It’s just the way we talk.”

“So men and women are equal too?” she said.

“God don’t care whether you a man or woman, anymore than He look at black or white,” Uncle Taher said.

“The Qur’an says, ‘God don’t suffer the reward of anyone’s deeds to be lost, male or female.’ None of that matters with God.”

When Uncle Taher asks the children, who was the first Muslim? After an array of answers, eventually a child says Khadija, to which Uncle Taher responds:

“The Prophet’s wife, Lady Khadija. And who was number one in the deen after the Prophet’s death, that everyone went to with their how-come questions?”

“Aisha!” Khadra said, with a triumphal glance at Hakim.

“That’s right. And who was the person closest to the Prophet’s heart?”
This time Hakim’s hand went up first. “Fatima,” he said…

The backdrop, of the mosque, and the portrayal of Muslim characters provides the arena for Islamic teaching. In this manner, Kahf integrates a revival of religious female figures and ideas on equality, in relation to race and gender, which all feature within the discussion. The discussion on equality ties in with Razia’s appointment of Yaqub and her decision to abolish the levy on non-Muslims, which further angers the Amirs.
Razia owed her rise to her father Sultan Altamash, who was a slave that rose to power via his own merits (Mernissi, 1993: 92). After rigorous military and comprehensive religious education, the Mamluks were given important posts within the military hierarchy. They were presented to the sultan at a ceremony to mark their entry into the military elite, that in itself was one of the most powerful aristocracies of the Muslim world. For centuries, Turkish slaves served the palaces that had enslaved them but eventually succeeded in supplanting their masters (Ibid.). Evidenced throughout the Tabakat-i-Nasiri, belonging to the period of the Delhi Sultanate, authored by Minhaj-ud-din and Usman (No Date) is the purchase of slaves by Sultan Altamash. These slaves were bought to rule as governors and assist Altamash in matters pertaining to the Delhi Sultanate.

The reign of the Mamluk dynasty in Northern India lasted from 1206-1290. However, Muslim presence had been in the region since 711, with the conquest of Sind and Multan by Muhammad ibn Qasim. This region was later to be ruled by the Ghaznavid Empire in 998, which covered Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Delhi in North India and the Ghurid Empire proceeded in 1151 (Lane-Pool, 1903: 14; Ikram, 1964: 2 and Chandra, 2007: 65). Hence, the region has a depth of cultural practices and customs sprouting from historical invasions, resistance and encounters.

The visualisation of Razia within ACK’s ‘Sultana Razia’ (2009) is based upon Zakaria’s (1996) Razia - Queen of India. Both texts guided the practice, with the development of the script and the storyboard. For instance, Zakaria intertwines a Sufi element into the narrative, whereas the comic offers a visual for storyboard development. However, Razia’s spirituality is not covered in the comic but it does portray her as a brave Indian female heroine, wherein the cover and opening page Razia is illustrated as a skilled horse rider. ACK (2009) have many titles of historical and religious Indian female figures and Razia’s image in comparison to other warrior queens, like Chand Bibi, Rani Abbakka, Rani Durgavati, Rani of Jhansi and
Rani of Kittur, all carry similar traits. Only their weaponry differs that lies in keeping with the eras in which these Queens lived. The illustrations visually convey power and authority belonging to that of the female characters, by the space they occupy within the image and the weaponry they use, a concept of which might be tied to post-structuralist thinkers alongside Hall’s (1997) *Representation - Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. In this vein, ACK’s portrayal of India’s national heroes presents itself as a stark contrast to that of Said’s study of the Oriental female. Both representations evidence different portrayals when questioned in line with Foucauldian discourse. To reiterate, Foucauldian discourse considers representational practices surrounding concepts of whom is being portrayed by who and why.

The plot line for ACK’s ‘Sultana Razia’ is similar to that of the creative practice, which subscribes to ‘cause and effect’ as an approach to narrative filmmaking (Bordwell and Thompson, 1990: 69). The death of Sultan Altamash and his Will for Razia to become heir, rather than his debauched son Ruknuddin, sets the cause for the conflict. A conflict of interests lies with Altamash’s wife and Ruknuddin’s mother, Shah Turkan, and the Amirs, who appoint Ruknuddin to succeed, and, as aforementioned, to take power they argue that Razia’s gender is not befitting that of a Sultan. Ruknuddin’s pleasure seeking ways displeases the Amirs and Razia’s popularity with the people of Delhi leads Shah Turkan to conceive of a plot to kill Razia. Shah Turkan has her servants dig a ditch in the riding ground for Razia and her horse to fall in to. Yaqut bears witness to the plot and informs Razia and in turn they inform the people of Delhi. At the riding ground the townspeople call on Razia to be Sultan. As Sultan, Razia creates a stable infrastructure, which might subscribe to a resolution of the story line. However, in spite of Razia’s good work, the Amirs plan to have her deposed. The coup d’état sees to her death with an arrow striking Razia through the heart.

References for these Queens span from Amar Chitra Katha (2009a)-(2009f) in the Bibliography.

Foucauldian discourse as covered on p.26 of this thesis.

As captured by Image 28 in this thesis.
As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Bollywood films and television series incorporate Razia’s love life as the main narrative, for either romantic purposes or to illustrate a political alliance. This feature of Razia’s story has been omitted from the practice to condense the storyline, whilst also solely focussing on Razia’s actions as a political figure. As Sultan, Razia created a political infrastructure that undermined a patriarchal caste system to establish equal rights, as is the scope for Episode 4, with the abolishment of the non-Muslim tax and the establishment of places of learning and businesses for the people of Delhi.74

![Image 30 – Test frame for the school sequence in Sultan Razia (2017)](image)

74 Found within this thesis and taken from the practice are Images 14 and 22 that further illustrate Sultan Razia’s patronage of the arts and local businesses.
Image 31 – Sample frame taken from the sciences sequence in Sultan Razia (2017)

Image 32 – Test frame for the artist sequence in Sultan Razia (2017)
Underlying themes found within visual texts remain consistent with the creative practice, such as the portrayal of the power-hungry Prime Minister and Razia’s masculine warrior-like apparel that aims to subvert gender expectations. The main differences between the comic and the creative practice lie with certain omissions. For example, Altamash’s return from Gwalior, illustrated at the beginning of the comic, and the loving relationship between Altunia and Razia, along with their death on the battlefield, are features omitted from the practice. The reason to omit the trip and the love affair was due to the lack of historical evidence for the latter, whilst also condensing the storyline. Another difference is Razia’s costume, which in the comic changes from a green sari to that of a kurta and red turban once she is made Sultan. In concurrence with ACK, there is historical evidence to suggest that Altamash had intentions for Razia to be his heir, prior to his trip to Gwalior, and that Razia’s adoption of masculine clothes was highly likely when she became Sultan.75

Razia’s clothes and royal title are all a means of subversion to indicate power. Visual and academic texts on Razia differ in their presentation of her name, being that of either Sultana or Sultan. Like the films, the practice uses Razia, for Radiyya is the Arabic translation of the Indian name Razia, sometimes spelt Raziya. The option to use the spelling ‘Razia’ is because her home and residency was in India and she was not of Arab but Turkish descent from the Mamluk slave class. The name change enables cultural depth rather than lumping the Muslim female within the Arab category.76 The royal title is evidence of gendered language. For example, to use either Sultan or Sultana for the opening title aligns itself with scholarly arguments on the use of feminine forms within language. There are two sides to this debate. One argument is to drop the use of the feminine form so that words might signify gender neutrality (Badran, 1995: 180). However, to drop the feminine and opt for a masculine form may substantiate an acceptance for a patriarchal society. To keep the female form of words

75 Historical evidence as found within Jackson (1998) (1999) and Gabbay (2011).
76 As discussed within Chapter 2 of this thesis on pp.58-59 and p.76.
evidences women to have been actively involved in society (Freedman, 2002: 307). However, the adoption of masculine titles tends to be the case with Medieval Indo-Persian Queens.

At length, Alyssa Gabbay’s (2011) essay, ‘In Reality a Man: Sultan Iltutmish, His Daughter, Raziya, and Gender Ambiguity in Thirteenth Century Northern India’, analyses Razia’s personification as belonging to a certain paradigm of the female successor. Gabby explains further that by cross-dressing and associating themselves with traditionally masculine symbols, titles and imagery, Muslim women could raise their socio-political status and be considered worthy of achieving or maintaining sovereignty (p.52). Titles along with cross-dressing, to some extent, enabled women to achieve political status. Visual portrayals that illustrate Razia’s masculine dress, do not only assist with gender subversion, but also denote power and authority when she is Sultan. The epithet of Sultana was and is generally used to denote the wife, sister or consort of the Sultan (Moore, 1992: 393). For these reasons, the probability of Razia adopting the title as Sultan is likely, for it indicates that she reigned absolute.

The creative practice too draws upon these traits as touched upon and covered throughout this chapter. Opening the episodic series with Razia as a warrior on horseback establishes the action of the film to follow the female lead. The rider’s movement in unison with the horse, along with jumping the wooden log in the way of the path, illustrates the warrior to be a skilled rider, besides serving as a visual metaphor for the hurdles Razia is going to have to face via the evolving plot line. Under-riding the opening sequence is both racial and gender subversion, relative to audience expectations of the Muslim woman. The gold costume is gender neutral with grey netting, to imitate chainmail, covering the warrior’s face. Only on close-up is the rider’s gender suggested. The weaponry, with a sword and shield, are props that might enforce the assumption of a masculine figure. These weapons illustrate
that she has the tools and capabilities to fight and defend herself, which goes against the
trope of rape and rescue.\textsuperscript{77}

This scene shares some similarities with Julie Dash’s \textit{Daughters of the Dust} (1991) opening sequence, which visually subverts racial assumptions. Dash’s use of a long shot captures black men steering a boat with an on-board passenger, donned in a fancy long white dress, large veiled hat and gloves. Only when the camera moves closer toward the passenger, the spectator sees that she is a black woman. Scholar and filmmaker Toni Cade Bambara writes that, in this manner, Dash intends to heal our imperialised eyes (Bambara in Dash, 1992: xii).

Creative licence is given to the design of the armour worn by Razia, the horse and the guards that coincide with subversion and to add meaning as conveyed by the mise-en-scène. To elevate Razia’s status, the gold warrior costume, with the talismanic qualities of Allah written in Arabic embellishing the chest-plate, is used to suggest both royalty and that of a high-ranking soldier, in comparison to those soldiers outfitted in grey. The helmet and chainmail too covers the soldiers’ faces, apart from their eyes. This is an effort to continue an approach toward gender neutrality, where the men, like the women, are also veiled.\textsuperscript{78}

The act of men veiling is not as commonplace as that of the Muslim female. Fadwa El Guindi states that there is enough evidence to suggest that the Prophet Muhammad himself covered his face, as discussed on the radio programme \textit{Heart and Soul: Men who Veil} (BBC World Service, 2007). The image of a veiled Prophet in Persian miniatures may be done out of respect but at the same time may coincide with the Prophet’s use of the veil. El Guindi continues to mention that Arab poets and warriors on horses and camels would also veil. By

\textsuperscript{77} In this thesis, Image 8 is taken from the film’s opening scene, wherein Razia is portrayed as a skilled horse rider and warrior.

\textsuperscript{78} In this thesis, Image 20 further illustrates the armoured costumes as worn by Razia and the soldiers.
not acknowledging the act of men veiling and solely focussing on veils worn by women, only half of the story is told, and thus readings on the veil is often limited (Ibid.).

Razia’s warrior costume lends itself to her legend and that of Indo-Persian Queens. Gabbay underlines Razia as the warrior daughter who transcends gender distinctions and becomes, essentially, a man once she ascends the throne (p.45). According to Stanley Lane-Poole (1903: 74-75), Razia did her best to prove herself equal to a man, wore a manly dress and showed her face fearlessly as she rode her elephant at the head of her troops. But nothing could convince the Turkish chiefs that a woman could or should lead them (Ibid.). Minhaj, although critical of Razia’s presence in court without a veil, mentions her attire composing of a male tunic and a turban as a headdress (Mukhopadhyay, 2014: 105). Ibn Battuta describes Razia as not only to rule like a man but also drew trust and support from her subjects (p.104). Razia’s cross-dressing and warrior conviction even inspired musician Amir Khusrau to write a poem:

![Armoured costumes in Sultan Razia (2017)](image-url)
For several months, her face was veiled,
Her sword’s ray flashed, lightening-like, from behind the screen,
Since the sword remained in the sheaths,
Many rebellions were left unchecked,
With a royal blow, she tore away the veil,
She showed her face’s sun from behind the screen.
The [lioness] showed so much force,
That brave men bent low before her.


Esami, a 14th century Medieval historian, like Ibn Battuta also comments on Razia 100 years after her death, is of the opinion that Razia’s deposition was due to her donning of male attire and performance as a man (p.56). He asserts that her riding out among the people in male clothing caused “everybody from the lowest to the highest” to become suspicious of her (Ibid.). Such a statement might be suggestive toward attitudes viewing transvestism as a threat toward social hierarchies. In relation to Razia, it is unlikely that scandal arising from her assumption of male attire led to her deposition (Ibid.). Jackson (1998: 186) observes that although the Turkish slaves, who surrounded her father, brought Razia to power, they likely did so with the idea that they would be able to manipulate her. The Amirs plotted to get rid of her as they were unable to control her.
For the animation, apart from the warrior costume, Razia does not don male clothing, even when she becomes the Sultan. She is not dressed overtly feminine either, wearing a *silwaar chemise* and a *dupatta*, which sometimes covers her head. Razia is dressed in this way to illustrate the various degrees of veiling, by both male and female characters. In retrospect,
Razia wearing a headdress would have been appropriate to illustrate diversity, challenge gender norms and further the act of historical recovery.

Besides dress, adding to the symbolism of power and authority was the royal mint. Razia’s first act of sovereignty was to have coins minted in her name (Mernissi, 1993: 89). On some of the coins the text read, ‘Pillar of Women, Queen of the Times’ that evokes Razia as a modern representative of women and female leadership of the era. On other coins, Razia adopts the title ‘Bilqis’ (the Queen of Sheba), therefore offering an indication of reverence towards the religious figure. Razia’s acknowledgement of Bilqis is in keeping with MWSA interpretations of Bilqis, spirituality and female leadership found within religious texts. This view differs to readings on the Oriental femme fatale on screen, which often comments upon female leadership as being absurd, like in Cleopatra (1934) and Solomon and Sheba (1959).  

Image 36 – Sample frame of coins suggestive of Razia’s royal mint in Sultan Razia (2017)

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79 This context of the historical Oriental female is as discussed within Chapter 3 of this thesis.
As acting ‘Heads of State’, Shah Turkan and Razia both exercised administration. Shah Turkan with her signing of paperwork, meetings with the Prime Minister and her authority to carry out the death sentence, marks her as a force to be reckoned with. El Guindi illustrates feminine structures of power, equally relevant to the relationship status to be held by royal females, by stating that:

The princesses, or the daughters and sisters of sultans, also bore the title of sultan, and they practiced monogamy. Their husbands could not have another wife. The sultan's mother, who was in origin a slave, could in her new status hold audiences with state officials, travel publicly around the city (properly veiled), endow mosques and support charities, engage in politics, and statecraft.

(El Guindi, 1999: 30)

This reference indicates that power does not necessarily belong to the male alone or even outright, as historical sources suggest. As is the case with Shah Turkan, the mothers of the Sultans were the real rulers. Shah Turkan, despite her humble beginnings, began life in the royal household as a concubine, which gave way to her marriage to the freed slave Sultan Altamash (Sharma, 2016: 73). Shah Turkan, herself, would have been a freed woman upon giving birth to Ruknuddin. Thus, her children were given the same rights and privileges as those born of a free mother, including the right to the throne (Mernissi, 1993: 57).
historical evidence undermines Orientalist tropes of slavery, polygamy and veiling, whilst also undermining any reservations about female leadership. Either way, female administration provides a means to illustrate women as leaders, not only in society, but also that of Empires.

5.2 Religious Interpretation and the Practice

From the outset of making the practice, the trajectories of MWSA influenced character development and the narrative. MWSA reaffirms that the principle of equality for all human beings lies within the Qur’an (Badran, 2002). As a method to maintain and re-establish human rights, the Qur’an is employed to challenge what has been identified by scholars as a patriarchal and often a religious order (Ibid.; Cooke, 2001: 128 and Wadud, 1999: 80). Consequently, the practice of equality has been impeded or subverted by patriarchal ideologies and practices, which the historical story of Sultan Razia, itself, is subject to, as illustrated by the Amirs’ preference for a male to ascend the throne.

The theme of equality and meritocracy is illustrated by Wadud’s (2008) paradigm of Tawhid (the unicity of Allah/the oneness of God). The paradigm stresses equality between the sexes, to challenge patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. By presenting two models, a patriarchal model contrasted against Tawhid paradigm, Wadud demonstrates a direct challenge, by using Qur’anic discourse against the generally accepted male religious hierarchies.
For Wadud, the patriarchal model is untenable, as the dominant model does not give females direct access to Allah. Males are placed below Allah and above females, which categorically violates the notion of creation and khilafah (agency). This form of agency is the responsibility taken for moral actions in this life in reflection of the hereafter. In contrast, the Tawhid model is drawn directly from the Qur’an’s foremost and most important logos of God that asserts the unicity and omnipresence of Allah. The aligned dots represent either male or female with the horizontal line of reciprocity. The roles, unlike the patriarchal model, may be exchanged without the loss of gender being superior over the other, whilst Allah remains integral.

Comparing the patriarchal model against the Qur’anic principle of Tawhid, Wadud is able to argue for women to be considered as human beings, not subordinate to man but equal as Muslims, as no person may intervene between a Muslim’s direct relationship with God. This model is consistent within the practice, especially with the development of the characters and the narrative. Sultan Altamash’s behaviour towards his daughter is illustrative meritocracy, along with the belief of equality between the sexes, whereas the Amirs’ response
to Altamash’s Will is evidence of a patriarchal model. The lust for power sets up the scene whereby Ruknuddin is announced Sultan. His enthronement is based upon interpretations of religious texts manipulated to support patriarchal entitlement. Both of these themes are prevalent with the characterisation of the Prime Minister and his behaviour toward Razia, whereas Razia demonstrates gender-sensitive readings of religious texts in opposition to his patriarchal mischievousness.

Hermeneutics used to be common practice for women during the early Islamic centuries (Sonbol, 1996: 9; Graham-Brown, 1996: 11 and Armajani, 2004: 86). Since Islam’s conception, independent study of religious sources has been encouraged within Islam. Interpreted perspectives of the Qur’an commonly referred to as *Tafsir* (Qur’anic exegetis), *Ijtihad* (independent critical examination of religious texts often in correspondence to Islamic law) and *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), are all part of the classical Islamic sciences (Ramadan, 2004: 57). Jurisprudence scholar Mai Yamani (1996: 2) concurs that reinterpretation of the Qur’an is not a new practice. From the time of Revelation to the present, the Qur’an has been interpreted and reinterpreted, including exegesis drawn by women (Ibid.). Studies appear to suggest that Muslim women have been devising their own form of agency for hundreds of years. *Sultan Razia* serves as a reflection of the historical practice of the Islamic sciences through Razia’s actions and choices, especially in challenging the misuse of the *Hadiths* by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister employs the *Hadith*, ‘a nation which entrusts its affairs to women cannot prosper’, to challenge Razia’s ascendancy. Razia’s response reflects upon the concept that this *Hadith* is not found or supported by verses from the Qur’an. Mernissi (1987) (1993) draws attention to this *Hadith* in both *The Veil and the Male Elite* and *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*. When asking “Can a woman be a leader of Muslims?” she has been met with the response “those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity!” (Mernissi,
1987: 1). The Hadith collections document the Prophet Muhammad’s actions and what he said. Along with the Qur’an, the Hadiths contribute toward the making of Muslim laws, ethics and values (Ibid.).

Through their research, Mernissi and Engineer point out that there are more fraudulent Hadiths than authentic ones. On the one hand, the Hadiths were compiled two to three centuries after the Prophet’s death and underwent further changes through the passages of time. Whereas, the Qur’an was compiled during the Prophet’s lifetime and is, therefore, taken as the word of God. Thus, Hadiths require verification. To establish the authenticity of a Hadith, it is necessary to check the identity of the companion of the Prophet who said it, in what circumstance it was said and with what objective, as well as the people who passed it along (p.3). With the assistance of religious scholars and her own research, Mernissi discovered that this particular Hadith, ‘those who trust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity’, only came into existence after the ‘Battle of the Camel’, which occurred post-Muhammad.80

The battle was between A’isha the Prophet’s widow and his son in law, Ali. Only after A’isha’s defeat was the Hadith recalled and first mentioned by Abu Bakra. He is the only person to have heard the Prophet say this when the Persians named Kisra’s daughter to rule, which occurred 25 years before the ‘Battle of the Camel’ (p.53). Therefore, there are several factors that make this Hadith questionable. As mentioned previously, Abu Bakra was the only person to hear this statement. He recalled the Hadith 25 years after the Prophet had supposedly said these words. Furthermore, Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab had Abu Bakra flogged for giving false testimony when accusing a well-known person of having sex outside

80 The exact date the Prophet Muhammad was born is not exactly known but generally accepted as the year 571 and 632 is recognised as the year of his death (Rodinson, 2002: 38 and Esposito, 1988: 40). Whereas, the ‘Battle of the Camel’ took place during 656 (Jardim, 2014: 53). This battle often lays claim to the sectarian division of Islam between Shi’a and Sunni Muslims, whereby the Prophet’s widow, A’isha, and his son in law, Ali, waged a war against each other (Ibid.).
of marriage. Simultaneously, when scribes asked for stories about the Prophet they were warned not to delve too deep into the narratives of Abu Bakra (pp.49-60). Thus, false testimony, along with his reputation, tarnishes his character when documenting this Hadith. In addition, this Hadith was documented by Al-Bakhari, as number 4425, 200 years after the death of the Prophet (Ibid.).

This Hadith conflicts with verses from the Qur’an, especially with the story of Bilqis, who saves her nation from ruin (Wadud, 1999: 42). By acknowledging Bilqis, Razia performs an act of recovery of a religious historical female figure, to challenge the Prime Minister’s use of the Hadith. For within the Qur’an, Bilqis is presented as a resourceful leader of a nation, which, itself, presents a contradiction to the opinion that regards female leadership as inappropriate. Bilqis is the Qur’anic example Wadud provides for the diverse role women have played in society. Bilqis’ epiphany towards God serves her as a wise and independent figure of peaceful politics and religious practice. This is further supported by her abdication of the throne, rather than pursuing a violent bloody battle that she and her people were destined to lose (Ibid.).

An androcentric interpretation, including Orientalist film revisionism, on the Queen of Sheba, states that this story demonstrates that a woman cannot be a leader, instead of using Bilqis as a universal model that all leaders might strive to emulate. Wadud explains:

The Qur’an shows that her judgement was better than the norm, and that she independently demonstrated that better judgement. If her politics were feminine, then her faith was feminine, which, by implication would indicate that masculinity is a disadvantage. Her faith and her politics may be specific to females, but they both were better. They indicate one who has knowledge, acts on it, and can therefore accept the truth. This demonstration of pure wisdom exhibited in the Qur’an by a woman can hopefully be exhibited by a man as well.

(Wadud, 1999: 42)
In a similar vein, the puppet’s actions and the use of intertitles offer a visual dialogue between Razia using the Qur’an and historical sources to debunk the Prime Minister’s use of Hadith. However, her comments, along with Tajuddin’s reiteration of Sultan Altamash’s Will, just falls on deaf ears, as the Prime Minister returns to initiate Ruknuddin’s Sultancy.

To summarise briefly, Razia’s faith is not only illustrated by her recitation of the Qur’an, but also her practice, as conveyed within the mosque sequence, the scene pertaining to Razia and the Prime Minister’s discussion of the Hadith and Razia’s costume. Whereas, the power and authority held by both Shah Turkan and Razia, alongside the design of the mise-en-scène, is illustrative of female leadership. By adapting the historical story of Sultan Razia, the animation brings to the fore the three trajectories of Muslim women’s agency, which to reiterate are gender-sensitive interpretations of the Qur’an, a recovery of Muslim women’s history, and a critique on the representation of the Muslim woman. Thus, with the three strains re-enacted, this project has met its aim in reclaiming the historical female figure in animation.
CONCLUSION

This study set out to reclaim the historical Muslim female figure via animation. My argument pertaining to current representations that rid the Muslim female of her agency was made credible by the neo-colonial denigration of the Muslim Other found within US cinema and a re-visioning of the contemporary Muslim Other found within British television. The argument was taken even further by television programming of the MENA region and Eastern European countries with the image of the Muslim female as a good wife and dutiful daughter along with the idealised concept of Muhajabba, providing a stark contrast to that of the unveiled fallen woman, as illustrated by Dönmez-Colin and Galal, and parodied within Citizen Khan.

The reading imparts why such portrayals need to be addressed. Studies by Zempi and Chakraborti, the Runnymede Trust alongside Mernissi’s call for visual nisa’ist research suggest that constructed images form a prejudice against the Muslim woman, be it within the confines of Islamophobia or societal pressure to conform to an image of womanhood. Mernissi’s call could be viewed as coinciding with Said’s use of Gramsci’s hegemony that addresses how images of the Other come to be indoctrinated into society.

The problem with representations are that they are projected by audio-visual mediums. Further scope on audiences, came to reveal that the image of the Other, via the medium of animation was projected onto young audiences. In this manner, the concept of the Other is imprinted upon the human psyche from an early age, as Shaheen and Kahf recognise. Whereas, Muslim countries, especially from the MENA region, have begun to take notice of what children are watching and are now creating animations that reflect their own culture, stepping away from the US mass-market of popular children and family viewing animations.
Up and coming animations offer a variety of images from that of Rashid’s *Burka Avenger* and al-Mutawa’s superheroes to the elderly women of *Frej*. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that it is problematic to situate the image of the Muslim female within the finite category of the oppressed stereotype, when a burgeoning counter-image is present within literature, film, art-work and Muslim female figures in the public eye.

What binds all representations of the Muslim female is that they evidence a dialogue, between each other and on political-social affairs, of which this project is also part. Reading representations is a complicated task as all readings are subject to interpretation. This is also an argument posed by MWSA concerning Islamic religious texts that go beyond just male and female readings but that of *Ijtihad*. Thus, readings are pulled in all directions, depending on the lens being used to view the material. This was not quite the black and white answer I was expecting when asking why current and existing portrayals of the historical Muslim female are problematic.

Orientalism enabled a view on how power is constructed within literature and on-screen. The lens did not falter in establishing how Eurocentric and US images established superiority over the Other, as Hall defines as ‘the West and the rest’. Film theory has gone far to provide a lens on reading the female with Mulvey’s ‘male gaze’, hooks’ ‘Black looks’, and Shohat’s ‘decolonizing the gaze’. Nonetheless, the progression of Hollywood female-centric narratives continues to mark, in general, the Caucasian US female as superior to that of the Muslim female. The reading supports hooks’ view on the ahistorical image of the Black female, which now has shifted to the Muslim woman.

However, the application of Orientalism becomes limited and contradictory when applied with the male gaze in reading the animated case studies. The failure in the method lies in an analysis of counter-narratives, traditional storytelling conventions and interpretation. For
example, *Prince Achmed*, a product of early cinema coincides with the phenomena of the Orient being very much in vogue, spun from European translations of *The Nights*. Reiniger’s incorporation of the classical syuzhet, the trope of rape and rescue, the adventurous male hero and Western orchestration all point to Orientalist themes discussed by Shohat and Stam. There is little evidence to suggest otherwise due to the strength of Orientalism as a method.

As an academic-animator one has to step back and view the aesthetic practice and the actions of the animator to get to grips with the making of meaning. The amount of work that went into creating *Prince Achmed* with the invention of the trick-table that provided the space to create each single frame, where individual movements of the silhouette-figures were manipulated against a backdrop, not failing to mention Reiniger’s making of the silhouettes themselves, suggests the high level of skill required to produce such an animation. Her reflection on characterisation as a result of WWII illustrates her efforts to maintain a standard of racial diversity. The backdrop of the Orient enabled Reiniger to openly illustrate the taboo subject of homosexuality and the witch defies gender conventions as a powerful female figure, who is the real hero of the story. Therefore, Reiniger reveals the flaws within European attitudes towards homosexuality, race, gender and religion.

The lens of Orientalism equally leaves the creative practice open to scrutiny. Razia as a character may be read as illustrating a ‘saviour complex’. However, it is with the support of the people that she becomes Sultan of the Delhi Empire. This bears resemblance to how Ocelot’s hero Azur requires the help of those around him to succeed in his quest. The subject of the veil and the colours of the costumes, if not read in context with historical recovery and an understanding of colours within Islam, complicates the reading. Therefore, my own practice is subject to Derrida’s trace.81 The trace is present due to the element of truth

81 Derrida’s concept of trace is as mentioned on p.41 and p. 95 of this thesis.
behind the myth as presented by Said. The animator-researcher once again must step back and reflect upon the purpose of making the practice, and like Reiniger, the process becomes a labour of love.

This practice-as-research project is bespoke in its creativity and its implementation of MWSA. The most obvious finding is that by reclaiming the historical Muslim female an image of the past is created and the Muslim female is re-inserted. By applying historical recovery pertaining to the aesthetic practices of the Delhi region, I learnt how traditional forms of music and dance create meaning that differ to that of Orientalised notation and movements. Historical sources offered a glimpse into the past that not only illustrate that Muslim women in all actuality have been rulers of nations, but also that of the vibrant culture and customs of the time, which through practice can be recreated, albeit subject to creative licence.

This project does not stand alone in reclaiming the image of the Muslim female as verified throughout this thesis with a myriad of work by scholars and artists. Simultaneously the act of reclaiming includes the shaping of identity, which modest fashion is part. Similarly, this study found British Asian and Black British cinema to be consistent with the multicultural landscape of Britain, born from 1950s immigration. All these forms of expression coincide with Hall’s theory on identity being created within modalities of power. This study has found that reclaiming identity and representations of the Muslim female are inseparable. Both are subject to and responses to socio-political situations, whereby power is constructed and agency is created.

The concept of power was explored even further in Chapter 3. One of the key findings was Kahf’s reading on the image of the Muslim female to have changed over time depending on where the balance of power lay between Muslim countries and Christendom. Kahf’s analysis
enabled a view on how Hollywood cinematic re-visionings pertinent to that of the Medieval Muslim female have more in common with European 19th century literary texts than of those actually from the Medieval era. The reading ties in with Said’s metaphorical stance on Flaubert’s Oriental female, which does not only define the female body as sexually submissive and ahistorical, but also of the Orient as a colonial site for plunder and adventure. The study showed that such an image was applied to historical female figureheads, including Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba. The finding illustrates that patriarchal interpretations of religious texts and Hollywood representations both view female leadership to signify the failings of a nation. These interpretations are damaging because they reduce the status of the female, her participation and role in society, denying her potential, ability and equality as a human being. This is why an alternative approach to the portrayal of the historical Muslim female needs to be devised and put into practice.

The only downfall to working with hand-crafted stop-motion animation alongside research is the time it takes to produce. Even for fully-fledged animators including big animation studios like Disney, as all the case-studies proved, their films took years to make. The task of producing a final stop-frame feature animation is beyond the limits of this particular project with the amount of work that goes into producing a single frame. To make and compose the film-score for this project would, itself be an area for future development, as aforementioned in Chapter 4, whereby the soundtrack could be worked to recover Medieval Indian music to revive a lost sound. Just as research into the visual elements has been developed, created and analysed, the development of the film-score would require the same treatment. As a researcher-animator, sound is just as pertinent to the making of meaning, a feature that is often overlooked by many scholars working within the realm of screen-studies. As mentioned in Chapter 1, fashioning the animation into episodes enables the animation to be released in intervals and the arrival of the Internet means that filmmakers are no longer limited, when considering means of distribution. Outside of limited screenings in art-house
cinemas, very rarely does mainstream cinema provide theatrical releases of films from across the world or opens itself up to a counter-cinema. Therefore, the current freedom of the Internet provides the opportunity for alternative film to reach a wider audience.

The dissemination of research has the possibility to be used to document methods of impact reporting upon effective modes of distribution and reception. Such a study might include the Internet and various forms of new media viewing experiences as a potential site of resistance. Further study could also address Muslim female spectatorship. This project would require the use of quantitative methods via surveys, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups to generate an understanding and response to how Muslim women feel when viewing cinema, television and online animation.

From undertaking this practice-based-research project, I take away with me an alternative way of researching, representing, making and seeing. The outlook for The Portrayal of the Historical Muslim Female on Screen lies not only here in the present, with a look to the past, but with a possible means to make an advance toward future representations. In this way, this study generates and adds to new audio-visual dialogues, which can provide an alternative representation of Islam and the Muslim female, whilst also contributing towards the sharing of research, ideas, knowledge and one another’s culture.
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FILM CREDITS

- Balcony Stock Image


- Fonts


- Music

Raga Bhairave Thumree / Thumri Bhairavin - Bhairavi Malika

Raga Bhairavi

Raga Malkauns - Alap

Raga Marwa - Gat in Madhyalaya Teental

Raga Vrindawani Sarang- Shehnai / Brindavani Sarang
By Ustad Bismillah Khan. (No Date).

- Sound Effects


All other sounds are available with iMovie software.

- Further Credits

Please refer to the Acknowledgements section at the beginning of this thesis.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SULTAN RAZIA - EPISODE GUIDE

Episode 1 – A Warrior on Horseback/The Will of Sultan Altamash

Act 1 – Scene 1a: Warrior on Horseback - Forest
Act 1 – Scene 1b: Warrior arrives at the Palace
Act 1 – Scene 1c: The Will of Sultan Altamash
Act 1 – Scene 2a: A Thirst for Power
Act 1 – Scene 2b: A Nation Cannot Prosper
Act 1 – Scene 2c: Sultan Ruknuddin’s Procession

Synopsis: Razia tends to her dying father Sultan Altamash. The Sultan bequeaths that it is his Will for Razia to become heir to the throne. Altamash’s wife and Razia’s stepmother, Shah Turkan, disputes the Will and requests that their son, Ruknuddin, be the heir. The Sultan replies that their son is too reckless to rule the Empire. Proceeding the death of Sultan Altamash, the Prime Minister uses the Hadith, which states ‘a nation cannot prosper under the leadership of a woman’ to dispute Razia’s succession. Razia challenges the Hadith, by using verses from the Qur’an, but her words only fall on deaf ears and the Amirs appoint Ruknuddin as the Sultan.

Aim: The episode establishes Razia as a skilled horsewoman, but also that of a dutiful and loving daughter. Altamash’s feelings towards his daughter is in the acknowledgement of her capability to be Sultan, due to her own merits. However, patriarchal interpretations of religious texts that establish power over the female and go against the Qur’an underlines the episode with the actions of the Prime Minister and the Amirs’ appointment of Ruknuddin.
Episode 2 – The Rule of Shah Turkan/The Reign of Sultan Ruknuddin

Act 1 – Scene 3a: Disgruntled Amirs

Act 1 – Scene 3b: Sultan Ruknuddin’s Chamber

Act 1 – Scene 3c: Shah Turkan - Taxes

Act 1 – Scene 4a: Soldiers outside the Harem

Act 1 – Scene 4b: Inside the Harem

Act 1 – Scene 4c: Execution

Synopsis: After a few months, the Amirs realise that Ruknuddin is irresponsible. They begin to talk of appointing Qutbuddin, the youngest brother of Ruknuddin and Razia. Shah Turkan, upon hearing of the Amirs’ intentions, has Qutbuddin blinded and his mother executed.

Aim: Despite the appointment of a male Sultan, power and authority is wielded by Shah Turkan, who by cunning and guile pulls the strings of the Court via her puppet son. She may not be Sultan in name but she is the one who has the power and authority over the Empire.
Episode 3 – The Rise of Razia/The Fall of Sultan Ruknuddin

Act 2 – Scene 1a: Mosque
Act 2 – Scene 1b: Street Scene
Act 2 – Scene 1c: Palace Gates
Act 2 – Scene 2a: Shah Turkan at the Window
Act 2 – Scene 2b: Servants Digging and Yaqub
Act 2 – Scene 3a: Razia Asleep
Act 2 – Scene 3b: Razia holds a Meeting

Synopsis: Razia and the townspeople discuss the actions of Shah Turkan, especially the rise in taxes implemented by her. Thus, they seek an audience with the Sultan to discuss the levy and his actions towards Qutbuddin. The guard sends them away for their own safety. From her window, Shah Turkan watches the scene below. Due to Razia’s popularity with the people of Delhi, Shah Turkan hatches a plan to kill Razia. At the command of Shah Turkan, her servants dig a ditch at the horse riding ground, which Yaqub happens upon.
Aim: Razia’s faith is brought to the fore with her performance of the evening prayer at the mosque. The conversation between Razia and the townspeople unites them. This unity, along with Razia’s trusted friendship with Yaqub, is illustrative of a people’s struggle against a caste system, set by those in power. The caste system is contradictory to the racial equality as specified within the Qur’an and this concept shapes the episode.

Still Frame Storyboard for Episode 3:

Episode 4 – Razia as Sultan

Act 2 – Scene 4a: Razia at the Riding Ground
Act 2 – Scene 4b: Razia as Sultan
Act 2 – Scene 4c: Razia looks out of the Window
Act 2 – Scene 5a: Landscape School
Act 2 – Scene 5b: Landscape Science
Act 2 – Scene 5c: Landscape Musicians and Dancer
Act 2 – Scene 5d: Landscape Fabric Shop
Act 2 – Scene 5e: Artist
Synopsis: Shah Turkan’s plot, to have Razia killed, is revealed and Razia becomes Sultan with the support of the people. As Sultan, Razia appoints Yaqub as the ‘Amir of the Amirs’, which does not bode well with the Amirs, due to the colour of his skin and slave status. Razia ends the levy on non-Muslims, which further irks the Amirs. Razia also invests in public services to create a strong infrastructure.

Aim: The episode is to illustrate Razia as a fair and just ruler by investing in people. The sequence calls upon Islamic teachings that respect equality between people, alongside kindness and friendship toward non-Muslims.

Still Frame Storyboard for Episode 4:
Episode 5 – An Arrow through the Heart

Act 3 – Scene 1a: Razia Unveiled looks out of the Window

Act 3 – Scene 1b: Power-hungry Amirs

Act 3 – Scene 1c: An Arrow through the Heart

Synopsis: The Prime Minister continues to challenge Razia on her behaviour, via veiling and *purdah*. Razia’s reign is not going to end soon for all remains well in the Sultanate under her charge. Therefore, the Amirs and the Prime Minister plot a coup d’état, which oversees Razia assassinated by an arrow that strikes her through her heart, whilst out horse-riding. The scene fades to black and into a cosmos that is to be representative of the heavens wherein a shooting star travels across the sky.

Aim: Despite Razia’s just and fair leadership and the people being happy with her rule, the Prime Minister continues to try and find flaws with her leadership, all founded on gender segregation. Thus, going against the nature of *Tawhid* and equality between the sexes and Allah. The only way for the Prime Minister and the Amirs to maintain power is by eradicating Razia. Their actions are selfishly motivated rather than being tied to religion.

Still Frame Storyboard for Episode 5: