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THE MAKING OF A MEMSAHIB: CULTURAL OTHERNESS, THE MISE EN SCENE AND BOMBAY CINEMA

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ABSTRACT :



Attempts to explore the 'Otherness' of white women in Hindi cinema often falter when it comes to post-Independence Hindi cinema since the post-colonial milieu offers no sustained corporeal presence of white women. However, there are other registers apart from the narrative where pseudo-white identities can be evoked and resurrected. Departing from conventional approach of looking for white women in vamps, cabaret dancers of Hindi cinema, this paper seeks to adopt a critical perspective on the strategies of the mise en scène to explore cinematic practices that intersect to 'produce' white women in post-Independence Hindi cinema. The cinematic homespace as conjured up by the mise en scène occupies a crucial position in articulating 'whiteness' in post-colonial Bombay cinema as a form of cultural capital marked by taste, distinction, and consumption.

KEYWORDS: *Hindi Cinema – Memsahib – Otherness - Bombay Cinema – White women.*

SPACE AS THE REGISTER OF OTHERNESS

An insurmountable impediment to film scholarship on white woman in post-Independence Hindi cinema is the absence of the critical object of the study: the white woman herself.

Recent scholarship on white women or women with mixed racial heritage has largely restricted itself to examining the corporeal presence of the Anglo-Indian or the cabaret singer, thereby obscuring the range of representations that the colonial white *Memsahib* has generated, invoked and inspired in Hindi cinema.

While Priti Ramamurthy (2006) has explored the representation of white women in pre-Independence Hindi cinema through the 'Modern Girls' narratives of the Inter-war period in which female actresses with Caucasian features and mixed racial heritage were often portrayed as 'rebellious, even libidinous wives, who … exercised individual autonomy and freedom to choose partners' (2006, 202-203). Other film scholars like Kasbekar (2001), Thomas (2005), Gangoli (2005), Dark (2008), Majumdar (2009), Nijwahan (2009) have explored the cultural 'Otherness' of the white Western woman / Anglo-Indian[1] female / Christian female / pseudo-white [Hindu] female in Hindi cinema, but through strategies that overlook the role of mise en scène as an important register for constructing cultural 'Otherness'. This omission is crucial since there are other registers apart from narrative development and denouement where identities can be evoked and resurrected. The configuration of domesticity,

[1] The term Anglo-Indian refers to the 'domiciled community of mixed descent, who were formerly known as Eurasian, country born or half caste' (Blunt 2005, 1).

leisure and the homespace as conjured up by the mise en scène occupies a crucial position in espousing 'whiteness' in post-colonial Bombay cinema.

The mise *en scène* can 'portray the character's fetishistic fascination in sublimated and symbolic fashion' (Elsaesser 1991, 79). This article will explore avenues through which on-screen white identity is registered on brown women through 'the *mise en scène*, and other stylistic issues [which] are keys to unlocking the mysteries of meaning in apparently simplistic forms' (Klinger 1994, 16). Mulvey notes the *mise en scène* can offer 'a kind of cinematic commentary or description, inscribing into the scene significance that goes beyond the consciousness of characters' (2005, 231). This paper seeks to interrogate the strategies of the *mise en scène* that intersect to 'reproduce' white women in/for Hindi cinema, by bringing into focus the profilmic space - 'the slice of the world in front of the film camera' (Kuhn and Westwell 2012, 333). A systematic scrutiny of the *mise en scène* and its organization 'can be a productive strategy in textual analysis and can also provide a basis for phenomenological inquiry into filmic space and the cinematic experience' (Kuhn and Westwell 2012, 165).

I posit that since the post-colonial Hindi cinema has had no Caucasian white women to offer, an emphasis on 'whiteness', as opposed to explicit white bodies will enable us to experience a supple understanding of white female subjectivity projected on-screen in the Hindi cinema. While 'white' refers to a racial category defined by Caucasian biological markers and physical traits, 'whiteness' as a social construct is relational, to be understood as the binary opposite of normative Hindu femininity. By the term 'Whiteness' I refer to the subjectivities connected with the colonial English Memsahib's material, corporeal or symbolic attributes as constructed by the Indian intelligentsia. But more on this later.

I posit that grounded in specific aesthetic and spatial strategies of postcolonial Bombay cinema, the motifs of the white woman's cultural 'Otherness' are reflected within the realm of leisure activities, private space and domesticity of the Hindi films' heroines. And the 'modern woman' of the Hindi cinema who appeared in the early post-Independence milieu incorporates a variety of aesthetic appropriations from the colonial English *Memsahib*. The pre-existing image of the *Memsahib* is mined and recycled from the collective unconscious of the spectatorship which associates the visual tropes of luxurious *objet d'art* and artifacts with the white woman.

I posit that overlaid with melodrama and employing heavily repetitive strategies of the *mise en scène*, many Hindi films of the 1950s and the 1960s manifestly helped to articulate whiteness on screen. Pullulating with songs set amidst shallow river beds or hillocks, exotic hill stations, manicured gardens and secluded bungalows that overlook painted cut outs of exotic scenery are camera movements that pan across vast, open, undulating, empty space to fetishize it. These cinematic techniques became a recurrent stylistic principle for Hindi film makers like Pramod Chakravorty, Subodh Mukherjee, Shakti Samata and the early Nasir Hussain. Pictorial effects and the architectural arrangements of the *mise en scène* both compensates for the limited range of cinematic representations available to *auteurs;* simultaneously it becomes the principle means through which the cultural Otherness of the leading lady is reflected. It is reasonable to assume that the cultural meanings attached to the *mise en scène* in films such as *Mr. & Mrs. 55* (Dutt 1955), *Ziddi / The Stubborn* (Chakravorty 1964), *Jab Phool Khile / Whenever The Flowers Bloom* (S. Prakash, Jab Jab Phool Khile / Whenever the flowers bloom 1965), *Budtameez / The Ill-Mannered* (M. Desai 1966), *Aaye Din Bahar Ke / Spring Days are Here* (Jhalani 1966), *Hamraaz / The Confidant* (B. R. Chopra 1967) portend the aesthetic sensibilities of colonial English*ness*. However instead of focusing on a single moment, it is my interest to tease out the nuances of the intersection between spatial strategies and (pseudo)white female subjectivities in previously unexamined ways.

SPACE AS CULTURE, CULTURE AS SPACE

How did the post-Independence Hindi cinema sought to represent the white woman's subjectivity in her absence? Or how does the strategy of space created within the filmic frame construct the 'Otherness' of the white woman for Hindi cinema?

'Space and place have been important in various academic disciplines as both fields of analysis of inquiry as well as concepts of analyses' (Schroder 2006, 21), since space is as much a product of social relations as it is produced by it. Fanon has demonstrated that 'psychical and bodily spatiality

cannot be adequately understood apart from the environing space of the social world' (Sullivan 2004, 10). Foucault has explored the use of the prison-space as a form of control through societal institutions - 'to punish less, perhaps; but certainly, to punish better' (Foucault 1991, 82). Cultural practices and space have a symbiotic relationship since one needs the other to reinforce itself. We eat in the dining space just as we lounge in the drawing room. Space as an ontological presence and culture as a social practice share similarly organized structural principles both in terms of differences and similarities. Much like the ideas of 'Self' in a culture, space is defined by what it excludes, partitions and / or isolates. One is located [not only] in a certain place but that the particular place is set apart from and opposed to other places (Gupta and Ferguson 2001, 13). Space imitates the structural principles of culture through its dichotomy of inner/outer domains. Again, like culture, space is not static but rather dynamic in the sense that it is 'influenced and partly instigated by those who move in and through them' (Schroder 2006, 22). The social/spatial difference between the sacred (places of worship) and the profane (toilets, washrooms) is maintained by communal *fiat*. Societal boundaries are continually drawn 'to distinguish between those who belong and those who, because of some perceived cultural differences are deemed to be out of place' (D. Sibley 1992, 107). The home is a zone of exclusivity, preventing the inside from spilling into the outside, and as a manifestation of the selfhood, 'home is not about inclusions and wide-open arms as much as they are about places carved out of closed doors, closed borders and screening apparatuses' (George 1999, 18). Culture and space exclude as much as they include. To extend the discussion further, the 'Self' and the nation are also animated by their desire to maintain their corporeality and inherent space. If the self is about 'defending boundaries of the inner body … against residues – excrement, dead skin sweat and so on' (G. Sibley 1995, 8) the nation is based on the exclusionary concept of people and culture.

The Nation as Corporeal Entity

The nineteenth century saw the development of two coextensive discourses; the deployment of culture linked to geographical places in which Indian culture became attached 'to landscape and territory' (Srivastava 2007, 86). Partha Chatterjee's (2010) *Ghaire/Baire* or the Inner/Outer domain as a discourse posits that for the Hindu patriarchy one way of making the colonial experience less traumatic was to create the inner/outer domain. While the outer domain was the realm of liberal values, the inner world of the home and the hearth was the realm of spiritual domain. A striking feature of the Indian nationalist discursive practices has been the 'pervasiveness of familial and gendered imagery' (Sinha 2012, 218). Coterminous with it was the imagination of this landscape with the sufficiently de-sexualized Hindu woman. The Hindu female came to bear the burden of 'the nascent nation [which was] cartographically presented to its subject-citizens…as mother, woman, goddess' (Ramaswamy 2001, 97). If western imperialism imagined the uncharted territories of Asia, Africa and the Americas as 'porno-tropic' – 'a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears' (McClintock 1995, 22), the Indian nationalist discourse endowed the incipient nation with anthropomorphic possibilities and imagined it as a quasi-religious Mother figure or *Bharat Maa* / Mother India.

Therefore, individual autonomy and sexual agency repressed in the Hindu woman was projected onto the cultural 'Other' – because 'of all the figures in the colonial scene – it [was] only the white woman whose identity was available – for the Indian man – as relatively open, mobile, malleable' (Roy 1998, 123). By the 19th century, various cultural affiliates of the White *Memsahib* such as disobedient house wives and independent girls became the principle metaphors in Indian literary traditions for conjuring up the Hindu dystopic images of *Kaliyuga* (the age of vice). These images would find resonance in post-colonial Hindi cinema. The Colonial English *Memsahib* and the brown woman imitating her became, 'a kind of a folk devil on whom [were] placed all the anxieties and fears generated by a rapidly changing increasingly alien social order' (Sarkar 2005, 266). Indian women who were alleged to be 'arrogant, lazy, immodest, defiant of authority and neglectful of domestic duties' were often pejoratively described as 'bibi (dandy), beshya (slut) or the *memsahib* [my emphasis]' (Chakrabarty 1993, 9). Nationalist narratives sought to disown Hindu female sexuality and even the vibrant medieval Hindu aesthetics of erotic rituals such as those of the *Kamasutra* were passed on to

'nature and fertility cults of the past … assuaging cultural anxieties' (Guha-Thakurta 1997, 100). Only a sufficiently desexualized and domesticized Hindu woman could negotiate modernity and venture into the outside world.

Sanjay Srivastava (2007) concisely notes that with the coming of the cinema, Indian culture could be cinematically visualized through landscapes, once again problematizing the locus of Hindu women as 'many of these spaces of Indian culture were public spaces, i.e., defined as not home' (2007, 86). To square off this quandary, Srivastava suggests, Lata Mangeshkar's virginal, adolescent girl's voice became the crucial facilitator of postcolonial Hindi cinema that could disperse Hindu woman's threatening sexuality into places outside domesticity. Heightened visibility afforded to the sensualized Hindu woman in Hindi film songs picturised in natural locations could be 'thinned out' through Lata Mangeshkar's adolescent-girl voice. Complementing it was the corresponding broadcast policies of the then All India Radio which, 'sought to bar singers and musicians from the courtesan culture - anyone whose private life was a public scandal' (Lelyveld 1995, 57). While this may well account for the Hindu woman, how did this cinematic arrangement of space deal with the threatening sexuality of the cultural 'Other' – the White Woman of Hindi cinema? If the Himalayas, the Ganges could double up as embodiments of cultural nationalism, how could the White woman be represented topographically in the Hindi cinema?

The fading away of the White women

The mythopoesis regarding the colonial white women being narcissist, arrogant and conceited moved from the farces, plays and novellas of the colonial era Indian littérateurs to the Hindi film screen. In late colonial Indian cinema, the white woman and her cultural approximations - women with mixed racial heritage were flagrantly eroticized and sensualized in cinematic narratives that mostly revolved around 'worldly and wicked themes' (Ramamurthy 2006, 197). Colonial Indian cinema conjured these white women - as 'sexy and provocative, long-limbed… [sporting] bobbed hair, lipstick, plucked eyebrows, mascara and painted nails' (Ramamurthy 2006, 200). However, a number of reasons account for the disappearance of the white woman / woman with mixed racial heritage such as Patience Cooper, Renee Smith, Effie Hippolet, Bonnie Bird, Winnie Stewart and Beryl Claessen from the Hindi cinema. The introduction of sound required singing talents that few Anglo-Indian actresses possessed. With the nationalist freedom movement at its pinnacle in the 1940s, entertainment itself had shifted from the realm of the fantastic to social realism drawing curtains on the Anglo-Indian film stars. Majumdar notes that Hindi cinema wanted a 'retrograde conception of an Indian-ness harking back to a phantasised, pre-colonial, edenic Indian essence to be now recovered in post-colonial times' (2009, 170). Offering guilty pleasures, the Anglo-Indian actresses who played transgressive roles of 'Modern Girls' disappeared 'in the face of a more strident anticolonial cultural nationalism' (Ramamurthy 2006, 198). Instead, fashioned by the discourse of nationalism Hindu actresses like Devika Rani, Durga Khote, who emerged at this time were mostly identified with the domestic sphere. As Vasudevan reasons, it was 'as if the screen, constituting am imaginary nation space, require[d] the fulfillment of certain criteria, before the actor/actress could acquire a symbolic eligibility' (Vasudevan 1995, 322).

Post-Colonial White Subjectivity

Partha Chatterjee (2006) observes that the Indian Renaissance did not lead to full articulation of liberal values, and had been accepted by the Hindu patriarchy under colonial duress, largely to prevent further colonial ingress into the inner domain. The unresolved nationalist resolution of the women's question was carried into the cinema, only to be reanimated by the menacing themes of westernization of the Hindu women in Post-Independence India, exacerbated through the Hindu Code Bill. For those who advocated the bill were branded as 'modern, westernized and not good Hindus' (Som 2007, 256). These cultural anxieties, engendered by the discourse of Nehruvian modernity, surfaced in allegorical terms in narratives throughout the 1950s and the 1960s in the Hindi cinema. In the absence of the actresses with mixed racial identities, cultural 'Otherness' could be (re)presented by / through mise en scène. The hotel dance floors, swimming pools, hill stations, lawns and gardens, restaurants and hotels, golf courses, fashion and craft shops, railway carriages and other spaces deemed as the 'Other' of the

home, emerged as sites of new sexual economies in Hindi cinema, pullulated by the white women's proxies. Post-Colonial Bombay cinema could reanimate the white woman through geographical specificities.

The Hill Stations as the 'Othered' space

I will dwell at some length here to elaborate on the persistent presence of the hill stations in the Hindi films and its place within the imperial scheme of spatial strategies. In *Andaz / The style* (Khan 1949), *Dil Dekho / Try losing your heart* (Hussain 1959), *Jab Pyar Kisise Hota Hai* (Hussain 1961), *Professor* (Tandon 1962), *Phir Wahi Dil Laya Hoon / I have brought back the same heart* (Hussain 1963), *April Fool* (Mukherji 1964), *Aaye Milan Ki Bela / The night of union* (M. Kumar 1964), *Ziddi / the Stubborn* (Chakravorty 1964), *Jab Phool Khile / Whenever flowers bloom* (S. Prakash, Jab Jab Phool Khile / Whenever the flowers bloom 1965), and *Jaanwar / The animal* (Sonie 1965), the hill stations, sufficiently sanitized of all subaltern presence, becomes the site of love and longing and romantic encounters between the lead pair, thus reiterating some of the fundamental tenets of urban modernity introduced in colonial India. In these films the hill station, in itself, is a spatial expression of social exclusivity. We must explore the hill stations against the understanding that it was 'the heart of British effort to define and defend the *boundaries* [my emphasis] that set them apart from Indians and that sustained their identity as agents of superior culture' (Kennedy 1996, 226). Beginning as the British cultural enclaves for lonely English housewives who escaped from the searing heat of the plains, because 'the *Memsahibs* wilted under the heat much more rapidly' (Kennedy 1996, 120), these hill stations later became, 'the colonial equivalents of Bath or Brighton, cliquish resorts where rakish officers, vampish ladies, ambitious bureaucrats, and bored housewives engaged in endless parties and gossip' (Kennedy 1996, 1). With the onset of the colonial regime, these hill stations came to be identified as 'political headquarters and military cantonments, centers of power from whence they issued and executed orders with an Olympian air of omnipotence. Hill stations, in effect, served both as sites of refuge and as sites for surveillance' (Kennedy 1996, 1). Concomitant with these were cultural anxieties about moral slippages and sexual transgressions of the Colonial Memsahibs in the serenity of the hill stations, 'so much so that even Maud Diver's *The Englishwoman in India* (1909) one of the first systematic and prominent defences of the memsahib, operated with the premise of a lax female morality in the colony and only sought to explain or contextualise it' (Sen, 2002, p. 19).

Imparting seclusion and isolation to the lead pairs these hill stations cinematically reiterate the *Memsahib's* proverbial aloofness which minimized all social contact with the outside world and discounted encounters with people from other classes and ethnicities. Films like *Andaz* (1949), *Jab Pyar Kisise Hota Hai* (1961), *Professor* (1962), *Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon* (1963), *April Fool* (Mukherji 1964), *Ayee Milan Ki Bela* (1964), *Ziddi* (1964), *Jab Phool Khile* (1965), *Jaanwar* (1965), *Aaye Din Bahar Ke* (1966), *Sawan Ki Ghata* (1966), *Hamraaz* (1967), *Patthar Ke Sanam* (1967), *Jhuk Gaya Aasman* (1968), and *Mere Humdum Mere Dost* (1968) recreate a *mise en scène* in which the 'outside' is an undulating surface of hillocks, manicured gardens, shallow riverbeds, which doubles up as a place of romantic *liaisons*. And the homespace of the female leads mimics the English bungalow - 'the standard residential unit for members of the British colonial community' (King 1975, 41).

The *mise en scène* reveals meticulous authorial strategies of imparting Englishness, and presents a symbolic geography which has a certain history above and beyond the diegetic space. These homes ensconced in cozy hill stations, isolated from their immediate surroundings and *sans* neighbours, reimagine 'the exclusive leisure and recuperation center for British colonist in India, Malaya and Singapore' (Leong-Salobir 2011, 87). The homespace of the lead actresses in *Andaz*, *Ziddi, Jab Pyar Kisise Hota Hai, Aaye Din Bahar Ke, Professor* epitomizes the yearnings of the Anglo-Indian middle-class gentry who 'sought to recreate…a part of England and English culture even in the remotest stations and to ignore the teeming 'native' life existing outside' (Sen 1997, 360). These bungalows constructed in the regency[2] style boasting of wrought iron balconies, bow windows, modern furniture, the ubiquitous piano, mantelpieces above fire places, framed photographs, secular paintings on walls, nude Greco-

[2] Regency refers to the period from 1811-1820 when the Prince of Wales was regent.

Roman miniatures, paper covered walls, standing clocks, book cases and flowers on the dinner table showcase a profound but acquired sense of bourgeoisie taste of English households that hark back to colonial times. Such paraphernalia serve no purpose outside the colonial culture framework.

The cultural 'Otherness' of the homespace resonates through luxurious settings, uniformed domestic servants, elaborate tea serving rituals, dinner sequences and leisure activities. This colonial arrangement of homespace is reinforced with an onscreen army of gatekeepers and doormen, who police the walls and or the dense hedges around homes of the female leads which emphasizes social exclusiveness and evocatively resurrects the white *memsahib* in cinematic settings. With the bungalow sequestered off from its own surroundings it becomes a hill station within a hill station – the *sanctum sanctorum* of English civility where dinner is served by liveried servants and the visitor is invariably sent packing to the guest room as and when he arrives. This is further supplemented by the profusion of luxurious *curio* of colonial origin that litter the screen. In *Budtameez* (1966) a snooker table is placed centrally in the living space of Shanta's expansive bungalow. The placement of the board in the foyer / anteroom is anything but arbitrary or inexplicable. In *Aaye Din Bahar Ke / Spring Days Are Here* (1966) Kanchan's home is a large imposing British-style manor house. Again, consider *Ram Aur Shyam / Ram and Shyam* (Chanakya 1967) where the modern Anjana (Waheeda Rahman) lives in a home with open bedrooms and a lounging area tastefully done in psychedelic pop art of the 60s, projecting the ideals of a more contemporaneous English domesticity. The interior is marked by columns at the entrance which leads into a vast lounge and behind the seating place is a well-manicured garden with water-fountains, wooden footbridge, nude idols mounted on pedestals, neatly clipped shrubs arranged in formal landscapes with clumps of painted trees in the background. The richness of these *objet d'art* overrules their practical use. Breakfast is wheeled in; the cutlery is brought into service, and Anjana digs in with the fork in the left hand and knife in the right hand.

The exclusivity of the exteriors is secured by the architectural layouts of the bungalow and its interiors are complemented by secular artworks and furnishings that insinuate English*ness*. Windows and balconies open to painted cutouts of the outside world and reinforce the illusion of separation. Residents of the bungalow rarely engage with the locals, and chance encounters with the natives are marked by song sequences where the camera appropriates an imperial ethnographic gaze and fetishes the subaltern 'Other'. Consider for example the song "Koi Ayega/Someone will come" picturised on Neena (Kalpana) and Rita (Parveen Choudhary) in *Professor* (Tandon 1962), the song "Raat Kaa Samaa Jhume Chandramaa / Night time and the moon dances" in *Ziddi / The Stubborn* (Chakravorty 1964), or the song "Zara Haule Chalo More Saajna / Walk a Little Slowly Beloved " in *Saawan Ki Ghata / Monsoon Clouds* (Samanta 1966), that marks the female lead's controlled contact with the Subaltern 'Other'. With all the references to dust, grime and poverty suitably excised, the frame presents the picturesque hill station of tourist destinations, and cinematically reproduces the *Memsahibs* of civil lines and cantonments.

Of Servants and Nannies

For *Andaz*, Neena is lavishly draped in gowns and jodhpurs and her hair is stylishly bobbed, in the fashion that was then the height of Hollywood sophistication. Engrossed in horse riding, arranging sumptuous garden parties, or organizing discreet dates for her female friend Sheila (Cuckoo) with Dilip (Dilip Kumar), Neena (Nargis) is Maud Diver's stereotypical Anglo-Indian girl [whose] domestic duties are practically nil' (Diver 1909, 16). Life for the female leads in *Andaz*, *Memsahib*, *Ziddi*, and a host of other films centered in hill stations released around the 1950s and the 1960s is typical of colonial Memsahib: 'a ceaseless flow of callers… tennis, riding, and garden parties…dances and dinners [which] reduce to a minimum her few invaluable hours of rest' (Diver 1909, 15).

Pertinent to note is that during colonial times, the proliferation of servants was clear evidence of social elevation and economic prosperity for the newly arrived colonial *Memsahib*. Indian domesticity became important to the English households since 'they were able to assume a social position [in India] unreachable for them in Britain' (Stevenson 2013, 307). This was especially true for British women in India, 'who as Memsahibs would have had much larger households to run [in India] than in Britain, often with servants for the first time' (Stevenson 2013, 307). With their uniforms, the domestic servants

in *Andaz* (1949), *Memsahib* (1956), *Jab Pyar Kisise Hota Hai* (1961), *Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon* (1963), *Aap Ki Parchhiayan* (1964), *Jab Phool Khile* (1965), *Ziddi* (1964), and *Budtameez* (1966), diligently reenact scenes of colonial domesticity of the *Raj* (colonial) era and as metonymic representations signify the abstract notions of the colonial order of segregation.

Dussart notes that in colonial England, deference rituals required 'that servants should be neither seen nor heard [which] combined to reduce them to an existence in which their value was defined only by their fulfillment of a service role' (Dussart 2015, 716). And in the post-colonial Hindi cinema, the servants, serving within the large palatial lounges amidst dinner parties and well-manicured gardens speak only when spoken to. With servants who maintain anonymity in the presence of the Lord of the House, these narratives suggest a transposition of the colonial onto the native, thereby connotatively indicating self-assertion and appropriation of upper class English lifestyles on the part of the Indian gentry. This is in line with Fanon's observation that, 'the primary Manichaeism which governs colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization' (Fanon 1961, 30).

The kitchen remains forever out of bounds for the camera. Shanta in *Budtameez* (1966) and Asha in *Ziddi* (1964) are like the 'self-assertive, imperialist Memsahibs who brook no nonsense from natives of all classes' (Sen, 2002, p. 135). Shanta's and Asha's treatment of their nameless domestic help in *Ziddi / The Stubborn* (1964) and *Budtameez* (1966), Rita's (Nanda) treatment of the boatman Raja (Shashi Kapoor) in *Jab Phool Khile* (1965), Seema's (Sharmila Tagore) mockery of her manager Rasila Lal (Sundar) in *Saawan Ki Ghata* (1966) present a certain paternalistic role in domestic relations vis-à-vis their servants, and is consistent with the eighteen-century advice manuals written for the newly arrived Memsahibs in the subcontinent which argued that 'the law of the household should be those of the Medes and the Persians and the first faults should never go unpunished' since 'the Indian servant is a child in everything save age' (Steel and Gardiner 2010, 3).

Recall instances of comic digressions of the clumsy domestic servants and the buffoonish managerial staff played by veteran character actors and comedians like Mehmood (*Ziddi*, *Patthar Ke Sanam*), Dhumal (*Ziddi*), Sundar (*Aaye Milan Ki Bela*, *Budtameez, Sawan Ki Ghata, Aan Milo Saajna*) and Rajendranath who cinematically reiterate the imperial narrative on domestic servants and provide comic relief through their ineptitude and unintelligent behaviour.

Reminiscent of the Indian middle class's obsession with 'the internal discipline of the European home' [which] was seen as a key to European prosperity and political power' (Chakrabarty 1993, 5), Neena (Nargis) in *Andaz*, Meena (Meena Kumari) in *Memsahib,* Anita (Madhubala) in *Mr. & Mrs. 55* (1955), Asha (Asha Parekh) in *Ziddi* (1964), Shanta (Sadhana Shivdasani) in *Budtameez* (1966) have been raised on the rigorous discipline and civility of the English households and a strict regimentation of Protestant ethics of time and punctuality. Their homes are manned by an army of governesses, nannies, housekeepers, cooks, stewards, gardeners, and chauffeurs. Dinner is served by liveried servants regally dressed in *pugrees*. Songs are marked by picnic outings and the inevitable piano sing-along songs of love and longings followed by the announcement of betrothment by the presiding patriarch of the house. What we see unfolding across these films is space and the objects placed within the frame come to acquire a consciousness of their own, their task being to accommodate and reflect a pervading sense of colonial Englishness surreptitiously filling in for the white Memsahib absent in the frame. The female leads are forever caught in a vicious circle of a *Sisyphus*-like task of socializing at dinner parties, singing songs arranged around pianos and swimming pools. Raised in this privileged arrangement of individual space, the on-screen female leads grow up into veritable, haughty *Memsahibs* of the nineteenth century.

Ageing Patriarchs

I turn to the ageing patriarchs who are rarely given much credence but their addressivity has certain important functions to fulfill in the narratives. The reigning patriarchs Sardar Roop Singh (Mubarak) in *Jab Pyar Kisise Hota Hai* (Hussain 1961), Colonel Kapoor (Krishan Dhawan) in *Phir Wahi Dil Laya Hoon* (Hussain 1963), tea estate owner Thakur Mahendra Singh in *Ziddi* (Chakravorty 1964), retired judge Rajabahadur Murty Sagar (Brahm Bhardwaj) in *Budtameez* (M. Desai 1966), the wealthy

Deewan Janki Das (Raj Mehra) in *Aaye Din Bahar Ke* (Jhalani 1966), factory owner Rao Saheb Gangadhar (Nazir Hussain) in *Ram Aur Shyam* (Chanakya 1967), the Army contractor Mr. Verma (Manmohan Krishna) in *Hamraaz* (B. R. Chopra 1967) are cast as imperial paterfamilias, projecting the nuances of British imperialism through their unremitting commitment to the rigorous Victorian standards of punctuality and discipline of industrial capitalism.

These patriarchs come from the westernized professional classes which had aligned themselves with the imperial order and were the greatest beneficiaries in the successor post-colonial state. Their dapper three-piece suits worn at breakfast and dinner tables, black smoking pipes, elegant timepieces tucked away in their waistcoat's upper pocket, an occasional cravat laced around the neck are reminiscent of the English gentleman, who could embody colonial authority by 'literally and symbolically representing the power of the empire' (Mohanty 2006, 59). The ageing Hindu patriarchs almost always formally dressed even in their leisure times are modeled on the Gora Sahibs or the 'all dressed up nowhere to go' White men in colonial services who, 'were uniformed and "on duty" at all times' (Mohanty 2006, 59). Material possessions, as Pierre Bourdieu infers, are a principle means of asserting one's class or laying claim to another. Bedecked with novelties, Graeco-Roman statues, well-furnished libraries stocked with leather bound volumes, secular paintings inside sprawling mansions and villas, homes with circular drives and manicured gardens offer a splendid way of integrating the domestic with the imperial, presenting tangible evidence of the circuits of exchange between the inner-outer domains that Partha Chatterjee talks about.

As marginal figures in the narrative, these patriarchs should not be divorced from the larger discourse of identity formation. The patriarchs in *Andaz* (1949), *Ziddi* (1964), *Ram Aur Shyam* (1967), *Budtameez* and *Hamraaz* (1967) exude English gentlemanly like persona through their peaked lapels, shawl collar, bow-tied dinner jackets and jackets with patches on elbows. Their homes become the means out of which they fashion their Anglicized identity. The liveried domestic helps' presence serves to mark their patron-employer's gentility, wealth and cultivation. These patriarchs successfully reproduce the life of an Englishman presumably without having ever visited England, and invite wider comparison with the Imperial collectors – 'men on the margins of the British empire, neither soldier nor bureaucrat but who could buy their way into English gentility by self-fashioning themselves as cosmopolitan gentleman connoisseur by accumulating material wealth, objects and property' (Jasanoff 2004, 110). Scenes of sumptuous dinner parties, elaborate lunches and exquisite tea drinking rituals that appear in these films point to a distinctive form of aesthetic subjectivity and is reminiscent of the 'upper crust' of the British society which defined itself with more eclectic markers of taste and distinction.

While this is not to suggest that the stylish and luxurious novelties must always consciously inflect Englishness, but nevertheless the centrality of the piano in the anterooms, the fireplaces, mantelpieces point to the perversity of Bourdieu's distinction of taste. In self-reflexive ways, the novelty of the miscellaneous curios cannot be divorced from their cultural context. The cultivation of this refined bourgeoisified aesthetic sensibility is contingent not only upon class distinction but also upon whom this class seems to model itself on. The presence of secular paintings simultaneously with the absence of the ubiquitous *puja ghar* (prayer room) in the households of these aspiring Englishmen and pseudo-Memsahibs underlines their rhetorical strategy of positioning themselves as cosmopolitan colonial élite. Mobilizing all the visual tropes of colonialism from furniture to table and its manners, their private living space are pullulating with porcelain and metalwork in late Gothic Revival; neoclassical inspiration preserves English cultural heritage in a post-colonial India.

The Memsahibs and the Swimming Pools

As a visual metaphor the swimming pool deserves greater significance since it is crucial for understanding and situating the white woman and her proxies within the overall context of identity. If the Himalayas and the Ganges could double up as ontological embodiments of the Indian nation, the white woman became associated with disreputable, licentious public spaces - places of leisure and vacations, most importantly the swimming pool, which symbolically became a metaphor for repressed desires and clandestine activities. The swimming pool, prohibited to the subaltern during colonial times

emerges as the most visible site of social exclusion in the cinema of the 1960s. As architectural structures, swimming pools were distinctive imperial leisure space designed to bridge a crucial gap between the public and the private space. The swimming pool combined private moments of hygiene with outdoor leisure activities and were positioned publicly for a private purpose. While there were other specifically imperial spaces like the railway stations, bus *addas*, post offices, clubs, resorts, and *Dak* bungalows, the swimming pool with its resort-like character and easy accessibility that permitted both sexes to swim together became a virtual racially segregated leisure society where the patrons could ignore the traditional conventions of being dressed in public. This underscored its sexualized character and turned swimming pools into a sexually charged public space unlike, say, a post office or a bus *adda*.

This is how the swimming pools symbolized most explicitly, Western degeneracy, sexual profligacy and outright lethargic leisure, reminiscent of the indolence of the white *memsahib* of the colonial era. As a place out of bounds for Indians, the swimming pool with its architectural artificiality and social exclusivity becomes the 'Other' of nature, such as the bathing *ghats*, culverts, rivers, and ponds. Divorced from the discourse of hygiene, the swimming pool in Hindi cinema is transformed into a site of decadence, vice and criminality, where devious schemes of corruption and smuggling are hatched by suave smugglers and sophisticated black marketers. It also doubles up as the site of unrequited desires and unregulated passions for the dumb-brunette Asha (Madhubala) of *Mr. & Mrs. 55* (Dutt 1955) where she unabashedly makes advances towards Ramesh, her matinee idol, leading to the song "*Thandi Hawa Kali Ghata / Cold Breeze, Dark Clouds"*. The swimming pool again emerges as the site of illicit rendezvous between Rita Christina (Saira Banu) and the millionaire Monto (Sajjan), followed by the song "*Aa Gale Lag Jaa / Come Embrace Me", in April Fool* (Mukherji 1964). In *Budtameez* (M. Desai 1966), the swimming pool becomes the site of sexual humiliation of Shyam (Shammi Kapoor) who is chastened and ridiculed in the song "*Surat Haseen, Lagta Hain Deewana / Pleasant Face, But Looks like a Crazy"* by Shanta (Sadhana).

CONCLUSION

Like the white woman herself the imperial geographic constellation of secluded bungalows, cordoned off civil lines, cantonments, far-flung hill stations, segregated recreational clubs, parks and gardens, churches, marching grounds and swimming pools were closely guarded and cordoned off from the prying brown gaze and rendered inaccessible. They 'served to impress Indians with the power and authority of the British' (Metcalf 2005, 176). As material representation of the Empire, these colonial structures often seemed to have little or no relationship to their topographical context and prefigured segregation and racial indifference that became central to colonial identity. 'The buildings and the urban designs associated with the colonial enterprise … was a product of a political and economic system as well as a social and cultural setting for Anglo-Indian ways of life' (Desai, Desai and Lang 2012, 4). To maintain social exclusivity embodying essential English*ness*, this notion of distance, social or otherwise was extended to the realm of leisure activities. This social exclusivity, part of the colonial legacy is what the Hindi cinema draws upon. The recurring image of the (pseudo)white woman framed within the topographies of bars, clubs, foyers of five-star hotels, racecourses, stadiums and the swimming pool served to emphasize her Otherness. Placing the white woman in these 'Other' geographies became a way of organizing differences with the normatively imagined Hindu woman.

The *memsahib* is a floating signifier, 'a vague, highly variable, unspecified or non-existent signified' (Chandler 2002, 227), a word that points out to no particular object and has no agreed upon meaning; Hindi cinema's articulation of whiteness is a continual dramatization of an absence. In the absence of white women in primary roles, Hindi cinema could resort to the allegorical mode, and seek representations through a variety of displacements, so arbitrary that its referent no longer carries any specificity. *Aan* (Khan 1952), *Memsahib* (Talwar 1956), *Jab Phool Khile / Whenever Flowers Bloom* (S. Prakash, Jab Jab Phool Khile / Whenever the flowers bloom 1965), *Khandaan / The Family* (Bhimsingh 1965), *Budtameez / The Ill-Mannered* (M. Desai 1966), *Sawan Ki Ghata / Monsoon Clouds* (Samanta 1966) are unique cinematic instances in the sense that they resurrect the white woman without her corporeal presence through the arrangement of mise en scène . Nevertheless, the Memsahib of Hindi

cinema is like the familiar slave figure of Hollywood – 'a recurring persistence…who may have faded. But their traces are still to be observed, reworked in many of the modern and updated images' (Hall 2011, 84). The lead actresses like Nargis, Madhubala, Asha Parekh, Sadhana, Nanda, Sharmila Tagore may masquerade as pseudo-white woman and represent the 'Other' but since this whiteness is a transient cultural appropriation, it can be resurrected and revoked simultaneously. They can be tamed and re-appropriated back into the fold, marking their *gharwaapsi* or homecoming into normative domesticized Hindu femininity in the denouement.

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