“Taste is Eternal”: The Kashmiri Shawl, Women, and Imperialism

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Abstract

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In the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, the Kashmiri shawl was one of the most valued and enduring pieces of clothing a British woman could possess. Its luxe fabric and intricate *boteh*, or Paisley patterns, attracted British consumers, who used the accessory to formulate an understanding of South Asia and British imperialism. Literary scholars and art historians have devoted attention to how shawls in British art and print culture reflect broader topics such as class and Empire. Meanwhile, historians have situated the Kashmiri shawl in a global context and outlined its trajectories.

This thesis combines these approaches while also following the shawl's movement within British society by considering how shawls circulated between women and on the second-hand market. In an effort to demonstrate how the Kashmiri shawl, a fashionable garment of South Asian origin, came to embody the changing character of British womanhood, this thesis argues that Kashmiri shawls were powerful symbols of imperialism and wealth which British women used to express their agency and identity. In doing so, this work also sheds light on nineteenth-century concerns surrounding female sexuality and the instability of racial and cultural identity within an expanding British Empire.

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Introduction

Charles C. White's 1840 adventure novel *The Cashmere Shawl: An Eastern Fiction* opens with its narrator's encounter with an enchanted piece of stationery with the ability to speak. In a pivotal moment, the blank paper reveals that it was once a Kashmiri shawl and relates to the reader its thrilling journey to Britain. White's novel delivers a story of twists and turns to instruct and delight the Victorian parlour and, in turn, endows the shawl with an unmistakable Oriental allure. The success of White's novel resides in its ability to isolate the shawl from the doldrums of the British sitting room and imaginatively restore it to what Walter Benjamin would consider its authentic context — that is to say, the region of Kashmir. Authentic Kashmir shawls were unique because they were made with the underfur of the white ibex that inhabited remote parts of the Himalayas. This material made these shawls much more durable than ordinary goat fur and increased their value. Women of all classes aspired to own Kashmiri shawls as these accessories were light, warm, and fashionable and stood out thanks to its distinctive *boteh* or Paisley pattern.

The Kashmiri shawl occupied a unique space in Victorian culture: it was at once a commodity, a fashion item, and a symbol of Britain's growing imperial power. The long nineteenth century was for Britain a moment of national identity-making and global restructuring, and it is, therefore, essential to consider how the shawl responded to the century's developments. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the historical and cultural conditions which enabled a luxury item like the Kashmiri shawl to convey notions of British imperialism throughout the long nineteenth century. As such, this thesis argues that Kashmiri shawls were symbolically charged items that British women used to express their agency and identity. Such an investigation aims to provide a clearer understanding of how Victorian consumers negotiated

the shifting meanings of foreign goods and better understand the British public's understanding of Empire through the items they consumed. At the same time, this thesis assesses the shawl as the cultural and economic product of a nineteenth-century global world rather than as a commodity caught solely between India and London.

Before venturing any further, it is worth clarifying what is meant by the term "Kashmiri shawl." The word "cashmere" is derived from the former spelling of "Kashmir," the South Asian region that produced these desirable products. "Cashmere" most often designated a soft and expensive type of wool, much like the soft textile we know today.[1] Speaking to the evolution of this term, Paul Sharrad explains that Oriental mystique played a role in marketing the term "cashmere." He notes that "from a Western perspective, 'shawl' means something worn, usually by women, 'cashmere' turns the humble knitted shoulder drape into a luxury fashion item."[2] There were no consistent names for the Kashmiri shawl in the nineteenth century. The most common name for the accessory was "cashmere shawl," and the terms "Thibet shawl," and "India shawl" were sometimes used to elevate the value of imitations.[3] For the sake of clarity, this article will use "Kashmiri shawl" as an umbrella term encompassing the rarified garments from Kashmir and surrounding regions. These terms, of course, obscure the fact that Kashmir manufactured and exported a multitude of high-quality shawls with different names and styles.[4]

[1] John Irwin, *The Kashmir Shawl,* Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum Monograph, no. 29. (London: H.M. Stationery Office 1973), 4.
[2] Paul Sharrad, "Following the Map: A Postcolonial Unpacking of a Kashmir Shawl." *Textile* 2, no. 1 (2004): 66-67.
[3] Suzanne Daly, "Kashmir Shawls in Mid-Victorian Novels," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1(2002): 247.
[4]John Forbes Watson, *The Textile Manufactures and Costumes of the People of India* (London: G.E. Eyre and W. Spottiswoode, 1866), 122.

All at once a lucrative commodity, a fashion item, and a symbol of Britain's growing imperial power, the Kashmiri shawl occupied a unique place in Victorian culture. Britain's rising middle-classes and flourishing consumer culture provided the garment with the necessary environment to endure as a luxury commodity for almost a century. Women's attraction did not go unnoticed by British industry that responded to this demand for Kashmir shawls by manufacturing affordable imitations in Edinburgh, Norwich and Paisley. In fact, Paisley became so renown for its production of shawls, the boteh pattern became more commonly known as "Paisley." As a result of this explosion in production, shawls soon became essential sartorial items for British women of all classes and elucidated British women's agency and desires. This lasting popularity was not merely a whim of fashion. As Philippe Perrot asserts, "Sign or symbol, clothing affirms and reveals cleavages, hierarchies, and solidarities according to a code guaranteed and perpetuated by society and its institutions."[5] The shawl was responsive to decades of colonial expansion and grafted imperial ideology onto British bodies; therefore, its status in British imperial culture is worthy of consideration. For one, it was an article of clothing worn by women both inside and outside the home and was appropriate in both the public and private sphere. It was also a South Asian accessory whose production, trade, and transport depended on the complex interweaving of different geopolitical entities. These elements combined to imbue the shawl with symbolic power in British culture. Arjun Appadurai argues that luxury commodities make up a "special register of consumption," whose "principal use is *rhetorical* and *social*, goods that are simply *incarnated signs*."[67] Kashmiri shawls were

[5] Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth-Century.*, trans. Richard Bienvenu (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 8.
[6] Arjun Appadurai "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 38.
[7] Emphasis original.

metonymic of the Indian Subcontinent because these accessories expressed the wealth and romance of the Mughal courts in addition to Britain's economic and military power in South Asia. As such, luxuries such as the shawl reinforce cultural norms and regulate social relations. The shawl's cultural relevance, therefore, offers insight into the construction of imperialist white womanhood vis-à-vis the colonized Indian subject.

Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*[8] was among the first to appreciate the Kashmiri shawl's presence in nineteenth-century culture as the product of capitalism, consumerism, and French colonial power in Egypt and Algeria. In a few brief sketches, Benjamin identifies telling sources and paths of investigation that subsequent scholars of nineteenth century France have since pursued. The cultural valence of the Kashmiri shawl has been the object of critical attention since 1973 when John Irwin introduced readers to *The Kashmir Shawl* and 1987 when Monique Lévi-Strauss published *The Romance of the Cashmere Shawl* .[9] Lévi-Strauss draws on Walter Benjamin's descriptions of shawls in his *Arcades Project* as a point of departure and devotes significant attention to the cultural dynamic between France and the Orient[10] as well as to how this relationship manifested itself in the shawl's formal and aesthetic qualities. Lévi-Strauss' work is very much an object-focused work of scholarship, which aligns with anthropologist and cultural critic Arjun Appadurai's approach to material culture. Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things* calls upon researchers to situate objects and commodities within their respective cultural

[8] Walter Benjamin. *The Arcades Project*., trans., Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. (Cambridge MASS: Belknap Press, 1999).
[9] Monique Lévi-Strauss. *The Romance of the Cashmere Shawl*. (Mapin International, New York, 1987).
[10] I employ the term "Orient" in Edward Said's sense of term meaning "the place of Europe's oldest and richest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other." see Edward Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1.

contexts and follow objects' trajectories over time. Such a process, in Appadurai's view, is useful to measure their social and political currency.

More recently, scholars have begun to problematize Empire through objects, for they supply a more nuanced understanding of how Britons understood their Empire. Although context is crucial to interpreting an item's function and meaning, both an object's formal and sensual qualities are essential to understanding how humans interact with materials and commodities. An analysis of Empire through objects allows for a more nuanced interpretation of how Britons made sense of imperialism. While some sources contend that empire consisted of a chiefly political endeavour that had minimal impact on civilian populations, Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, argue that Empire permeated all aspects of life despite not always garnering widespread enthusiasm. These scholars emphasize the different scales of Empire and how metropolitan citizens possessed varying degrees of awareness about how their own lives intersected with larger imperial and commercial ambitions. Deirdre MacMahon and Janet C. Myers' collected volume *Textures of Everyday Life in Imperial Britain* explores the different scales of Empire by narrowing the purview of inquiry to the imperial resonances of commonplace objects in the middle-class home. Much like Hall and Rose, McMahon and Myers agree that Victorians in the late nineteenth century accepted the political reality of Empire without interrogating its actions at a time when imperialism and global trade buttressed middle-class daily life. This thesis is in consensus with these authors and recognizes the nuances of imperial power dynamics.

One of the weaknesses in the aforementioned approach is the binary distinction between the British metropole and its colonies, which has become increasingly outmoded and can at times

obscure the intricate web of relationships that bind peoples and nations.[11] In the realm of literary criticism, Lauren E. Goodlad invites scholars to adopt the concept of a "Victorian geopolitical aesthetic" which is crucial for contemplating Victorian imperialism and culture in a global context.[12] For this reason, Goodlad contends that Victorian cultural products should be read through an international and geopolitical lens that avoids privileging a metropolitan viewpoint.[13]

In a similar vein, Nupur Chaudhuri's work on British women in India, *Western Women and Imperialism*, demonstrates how British women in India acted as ambassadors for Indian goods by disseminating, popularizing and inscribing meaning upon Kashmiri shawls in Britain. The assertion that colonial women, rather than merchants, commodified Kashmiri shawls is significant as it firmly establishes women as active purveyors of imperial ideology. Michelle Maskiell, for her part, explains the Kashmiri shawl's lifecycle by way of the colonial political and economic structures, which dictated the item's availability to consumers. Likewise, Chitralekha Zutshi uses the shawl as an example to argue that Britain understood its Empire and its geography through the commodities a place produced. Zutshi comes closest to offering an account of how consumer demand for shawls engendered popular support for colonial expansion, which she accomplishes through a careful investigation of Kashmir's political and economic leadership throughout the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century. This contribution notwithstanding, Zutshi is primarily concerned with the shawl's economic value as a consumer

[11] Charlotte MacDonald. "The Intimacy of the Envelope," in *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire,"*ed. Ballantyne and Burton.(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
[12] Lauren M. E. Goodlad. *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic: Realism, Sovereignty, and Transnational Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
[13] Goodlad,33.

product and does not evaluate how retailers ascribed value onto the shawl to make it a desirable commodity.

Edward Said's pioneering works *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* acted as vital catalysts for new thinking in the realm of literary criticism. Most relevant to this research is "thing theory," a strain of nineteenth-century literary criticism that acts upon the impulse to disentangle the meanings of objects which litter the pages of British literature.[14] Crucially, this theory situates objects within a capitalist framework, which, despite revealing how goods are disseminated, reduces them to only being the subjects of power relations and economic trends. Marjorie Garson's brief chapter on the role of the Kashmiri shawl in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* is revealing as it suggests that Victorians understood certain individuals are more worthy of possessing shawls than others.[15] This implication, in turn, raises important questions about who is worthy of imperial wealth and power. Speaking to this point, Suzanne Daly's *The Empire Inside* builds upon thing theory's contributions as she explores the meanings of various commodities in mid-century British novels.[16] The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed numerous social and political changes, yet Daly does not consider how South Asian goods resonated with British readers both on and off the page. In this respect, Susan B. Hiner's work *Accessories to Modernity* is the most successful in assessing the shawl's cultural value.[17] Hiner

[14] In recognition of Victorian culture's intense interest in objects and things, literary scholars coined the term "thing theory" to describe the study of objects in Victorian realist fiction to extrapolate meanings about characters and nineteenth-century commodity culture, see Jennifer Sattaur. "Thinking Objectively: An Overview of 'Thing Theory' in Victorian Studies." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40 (2012): 347-357.
[15] Marjorie Garson. *Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity, and Social Power in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
[16] Suzanne Daly. *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011)
[17] Susan B. Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

explores the multivalent meanings of women's fashion accessories in nineteenth-century France, more precisely, how items such as shawls, ombrelles, fans, and handbags expressed at once, modes of idealized femininity, transgressive sexuality, economic class, as well as imperial narratives of domination and white supremacy.

The aforementioned scholars have all sought to prove that although empire was an inescapable feature of British life, material culture and "thing theory" can elucidate how different social groups understood and related to British imperialism. Although scholars have already bestowed considerable attention upon the Kashmiri shawl, this thesis contributes to the existing body of scholarly work by devoting attention to works of literature in which shawls are characters in their own right. This thesis also utilizes primary sources which have heretofore received little acknowledgement such as women's letters and police records. To accomplish this task, the thesis will use Toolika Gupta's "clove model" which approaches the historical study of fashion and clothing through an analysis of an item's physical and material properties, its etymological history, its consumption, as well as its literary and visual presence. [18]

Chapter one considers the imperial conditions under which the Kashmiri shawl acquired its oriental allure. This chapter uses Walter Benjamin's notion of aura as a point of departure to understand why the shawl commanded such desire and veneration in the first half of the nineteenth century. A close reading of *The Cashmere Shawl: An Eastern Fiction,* in addition to British art and literature, will provide a solid basis for analysis. Not only do these works establish

[18] Toolika Gupta. "Clove Model-Proposed methodological model for research in craft and fashion history." Presented at NIFT International Conference in New Delhi, February 2018.

the shawl as a desirable commodity, but they also illustrate how racial difference lent authenticity and eroticism to the shawl.

Chapter two relies upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of taste and social distinction to demonstrate the shawl's cultural and economic capital. I argue that Kashmiri shawls and their imitations enabled British women to express identity and class affiliation through distinction. This section unpacks the use of shawls in novels, most notably in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* to show how this accessory item provided an indication of women's moral worth. The section will then transition from figurative interpretations of shawls in art and literature and turns instead to their actual movements throughout Britain. A look into how women purchased and gifted shawls, as well as the shawl's status as a target of theft and petty crime, will establish a sense of how British women negotiated the shawl's shifting cultural, social, and economic value. The chapter then culminates with a discussion of the 1851 Great Exhibition, the socio-political climate that made such an occasion possible, and the event's role in shaping attachments to Empire and consumer culture.

The final chapter assesses the cultural impact of the 1857 Indian Rebellion on British culture and how it altered perceptions of the Kashmiri shawl. Political and economic conditions in Kashmir along with social changes in Britain caused the shawl to lose its fashionable status. In this section, I apply Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity to the shawl to demonstrate how uneasiness about race and imperialism came to be projected onto the shawl and shed light on the cultural changes that led many women to cast their shawls aside. A reading of Victorian print culture will reveal how shawls contributed to Britain's aesthetic and textural landscape and better explain how imperialism in India left its indelible mark on British daily life. As a result, the

shawl is an invaluable vector through which historians can trace the evolution of the British public's attitudes toward India, Empire, and shawls themselves.

Chapter 1—Dressing-Up: Kashmiri Shawls and the British Body

"If you wish to judge of an Indian shawl, shut your eyes and feel it; the touch is the test of a good one."[19] These were the words of Mah Munzel ul-Nissa, recorded in Fanny Parkes' 1835 journal. Both women were wives of men in the British army[20] and, as a result, became inadvertent ambassadors for South Asian cultural products.[21] Mah Munzel ul-Nissa continued her explanation of Kashmiri shawls by lamenting that "such shawls as these are not made at the present day in Kashmir; the English have spoiled the market."[22] The two women extolled Kashmiri shawls' aesthetic virtues, yet also suggested that authentic Indian textile work was inaccessible to British consumers.[23] In the latter's eyes, Britain had tainted the shawl not only by manufacturing cheap imitations of Indian craft but also because Kashmir's shawl industry had begun to design shawls expressly for British consumption.[24] Parkes' writing declared that a shawl's quality could not be determined based on its looks. Rather, it was the more primitive and feminine sense of touch that could discern its quality and authenticity.[25]

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[19] Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs and White Mughals: The Journals of Fanny Parkes.*, ed. William Dalrymple (London: Eland, 2012), 477.

[20] Begum Mah Munzel ul-Nissa was a Muslim princess who married British soldier William Gardner. Together, she and her husband adopted a lifestyle that blended British and South Asian customs. Fanny Parkes (1794-1875) was a writer and orientalist who accompanied her husband to India. Parkes immersed herself in Indian culture and socialized with Mughal elites. Through her writing, Parkes was instrumental in constructing British readers' image of India.

[21] Nupur Chaudhuri, "Shawls, Jewelry, Curry and Rice in Victorian Britain". In *Western Women and Imperialism*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press,1992), 232.

[22] Parkes, 477.

[23] Sections of this chapter appeared in Katherine Amelia Carberry. "Dressing Imperialism: The Cultural Significance of the Kashmiri Shawl in the Age of Imperialism." *Global Histories: A Student Journal* 6, no. 2 (2021).

[24] Michelle Maskiell, "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000" *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 48. 1

[25] Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 125.

This accessory, like all clothing, was a fraught and dynamic object that reflected how its wearers interacted with an increasingly global world. By examining the history of the Kashmiri shawl in Britain, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that imperial violence and female sexuality were mutually constituted in the discursive realm of British literary culture. The Kashmiri shawl became a symbolically and sexually charged accessory in literary fiction and because of its connections to both the Orient and British femininity. These connections, in turn, were gleaned from British women's subordination to men in British society and India's subordinate position as a British colony. More specifically, the purpose of this section is to argue that the shawl revealed nineteenth-century concerns surrounding female sexuality and the instability of white racial identity within an expanding British empire. The shawl's South Asian resonances appealed to British female consumers who harnessed its symbolic and visual language to partake in the ethos of imperialism and conquest for themselves.

Kashmir's shawl industry had flourished

The asymmetry of imperialism meant that nineteenth-century Britain prospered at the expense of those labouring abroad. In essence, all Britons, even those marginalized by class or gender, participated in imperialism and colonization. British women came to endorse these violent practices in part because of the range of consumer goods that imperialism made available, and, as Krista Lysack has suggested, the pleasure produced through imperialism.[26] Thus, the pleasure of amassing and wearing Kashmiri shawls helped to convince Britons of the benefits of imperialism. Chitralekha Zutshi goes as far as to declare that the British public became aware of Kashmir "through its most celebrated commodity—the Kashmiri shawl."[27] In

[26] Krista Lysack, *Come Buy Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women's Writing* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008), 16.
[27] Chitralekha Zutshi. "'Designed for Eternity': Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain" *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 429.

other words, Britain understood the different corners of its empire through the commodities they produced. The shawl's waxing and waning popularity throughout the first half of the nineteenth century highlighted the inter-connectedness of competing political and territorial entities such as Britain, France, and India. As a result, British women's responses to this foreign accessory illustrate how race, class, and eroticism became inscribed upon clothing and how those connotations were intentionally mobilized for personal gain.

The years between 1780 and 1850 witnessed an increase in global migrations, international trade, and the proliferation of visual and print culture. These new experiences undoubtedly informed how Victorian Britons interpreted the world. Print and visual media are especially useful to this study as they provide glimpses into Victorians' social world. Texts such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* have demonstrated how cultural forms were crucial purveyors of imperial ideology, which reinforced the notion that Britain was racially, culturally, economically, and technologically superior to other nations.[28]Therefore, journals, letters, novels, and artwork are relevant in assessing how race, class, and eroticism became woven into the Kashmiri shawl's cultural meaning. The shawl's sexual overtones and its proximity to the body establish it as a fetish object that alluded to both the imperial conquest of foreign territories as well as the sexual conquest of white European women.

Imperial Panache and Dressing Women's Bodies

In the first half of the nineteenth century, shawls were emblematic of the imperial competition between Britain and France. Although the Kashmiri shawl did reach Western Europe in the eighteenth century, it achieved widespread popularity during Napoleon's First

[28] In *Orientalism*, Said argues that the Orient is a place that exists in the Western imagination. He explains that European writers represented the Middle East, India, and East Asia that affirmed Western superiority.

French Empire. Initially an honorific garment worn by high-profile South Asian men,[29] Kashmiri shawls became fashionable in Europe after Napoleon and his army brought them from Egypt as spoils of war.[30] In the British case, men returning from the Indian Subcontinent acquired Kashmiri shawls for their female relations.[31]The Kashmiri shawl and the white empire gown[32] united to create the neoclassical silhouette associated with the nineteenth century's early decades. This fashionable combination was a rejection of *ancien régime* dress and, according to Claire E. Cage, "affirmed rigid gender categorizing and reified femininity, but was also appropriated by women to play a role in the construction of modern subjectivities."[33] Women adopted shawls to be modern and active participants in their countries' recent territorial acquisitions. Their respective countries also used shawls as part of a display of imperial power.

For both women and the nation, Kashmiri shawls enabled a process of self-fashioning. Sartorial decisions were some of the few afforded to Victorian women; therefore, the authority over one's appearance enabled women to express their desires and how they wished to interact with the world. In 1865, *Blackwoods' Magazine* even went as far as to describe clothing as one of women's only true possessions.[34] Clothing and accessories were, in essence, an outward

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[29]Maskiell, 32.

[30] Kashmir had traded shawls throughout the Middle East and the Levant since the 1550s and Napoleon's campaign in Egypt (1798-1801) granted him access to the Kashmiri shawls avaible to Egyptian consumers, see Guilia Calvi. "Imperial Fashions: Cashmere Shawls between Istanbul, Paris, and Milan (Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries)," in *Dress and Cultural Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cornelia Aust, Denise Klein and Thomas Weller, (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019) 160.

[31] Maskiell 38-39.

[32] First adopted by the French Queen Marie-Antoinette and made popular by the Empress Joséphine Bonaparte, the white empire gown was a light and flowy dress made of muslin cotton. The dress was a clear departure from the structured silhouettes of the eighteenth-century. This revolutionary garment evoked images of Ancient Greece and Rome while also possessing an unmistakably modern character. Today these dresses are most commonly associated with Britain's Regency Period, see Naomi Lubrich. "The Little White Dress: Politics and Polyvalence in Revolutionary France," *Fashion Theory*, 20 no.3 (2015): 273-296.

[33] E. Claire Cage, "The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797-1804" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 194.

[34] "Dress." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 97,1865.

declaration of one's inward character. Thus, the shawl's popularity indicated not only women's sense of individuality, but women's consumer practices also signalled their active participation in imperialism. British women also mobilized the shawl to cultivate prestige because this accessory was metonymic of Empire, conquest, and power. Wearing one, therefore, was a statement of a person's wealth, status, and, by extension, their nation's access to the Middle East and India. Along with the prestige of belonging to an Empire, the Kashmiri shawl also provided its wearer with social distinction, a state in which elites' tastes and consumption patterns became the benchmarks of good taste.[35] Owning such a rarified item, therefore, suggested that a woman had wealthy and well-travelled male connections. These standards and displays of taste, in turn, allowed individuals of different classes to be distinguished from one another. Even within the same social set, shawls could establish a hierarchy between women and act as potent symbols of social capital. Thus, shawls highlight the importance of conspicuous consumption to maintain one's social position.

The accessory's sexual connotations also made it an instrument of seduction, which women could deploy to achieve upward social mobility. For instance, Emma Hamilton's *Attitudes*, a series of Classically inspired dances with shawls, famously helped her achieve fame and marry into the British gentry.[36] For women, shawls represented a worthy investment because they retained their economic value and could easily be pawned if a woman fell on hard times.[37] Shawls survived most of the nineteenth century's fashion cycles but peaked in popularity in the middle of the decade. The records of Messrs. Kilburn, Kershaw, & Co., indicate that the

[35] Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge MASS: Harvard University Press, 1984).
[36] Helen Slaney, "Pots in Performance: Emma Hamilton's Attitudes" in *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 63, no. 1 (2020): 114.
[37] Chaudhuri, 235.

company imported its largest volume of Indian shawls in 1862.[38] By the 1870s, the Kashmiri shawl began to fall out of favour due in part to the Franco-Prussian War,[39] which disrupted French trade routes and economic troubles in Kashmir exacerbated by the interference of the British government.[40] Nevertheless, shawls were still available for purchase in British department stores well into the 1880s.[41] The popularity of this foreign accessory is significant and, therefore, worth considering. The Kashmiri shawl was perhaps the most enduring accessory item that a British woman could possess, and for much of the century, authentic Kashmiri shawls were a challenge to acquire.

European consumers undoubtedly attributed mystical and primitive qualities to Kashmiri shawls, yet this portrayal of shawls belies the considerable breadth and complexity of the shawl industry. Parvez Ahmad conjectures that the region of Kashmir had been producing shawls since ancient times, however, a more structured industry took shape under the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin (1395-1470)[42] Although scholars do not know what these early shawls might have looked like, scholars do agree that the boteh (meaning "branch") pattern grew in popularity following the Mughal conquest and Emperor Akbar's considerable patronage of the industry.[43] The knowledge of shawl-weaving was passed from father to son and many skilled *bafs*, or weavers,

[38] *Kashmeer and its Shawls* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1875), 61. In this specific instance, "Indian shawl " refers to a range of shawls from Northern India which included those produced in Kashmir. In 1862, Messrs. Kilburn, Kershaw, & Co brought 15, 860 shawl pieces to Britain.
[39] Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 86.
[40] Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir,* 95.
[41] Maskiell, 49.
[42]Parvez Ahmad. "Shawl Industry and the Insitution of Daghshawl in Kashmir (1846-1947)." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 2005-2006*, 66 (2005-2006): 809.
[43] Maskiell, 33.

travelled to Srinagar to find employment in shawl workshops which proved more lucrative than agricultural work.[44]

In the eighteenth century, Kashmir's new Afghan rulers made significant changes to the administration of the shawl industry by instituting the Dagh-shawl department which levied considerable taxes on shawls at every stage of their production, fixed shawl *bafs*' salaries and forbade them from leaving the valley of changing employer, and outlawed the independent sale of shawls.[45] Although weavers were paid a pittance, the workshops' overseers and the region's shawl merchants amassed considerable fortunes selling these accessories throughout the world.[46] It is important to note that at no point in its imperial history did Britain exert direct control over Kashmir and as a result did not regulate the shawl industry's labour conditions. Foreign consumers, however, be they from Western Europe, India, Russia, or the Middle East did exert some influence over the shawl industry because most designs were tailored toward the preferences of different markets.[47] In other words, a cultural dialogue emerged between Kashmir and Britain as part of the nineteenth-century shawl trade.

Shawls and Conquest

In the winter of 1773, the newly appointed governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings (1732-1818), was sick with a fever while onboard the H.M.S. *Duke of Grafton*, a ship bound for India. During this bout of illness, a new acquaintance of his, Mrs. Anna von Imhoff, nursed him back to health. Imhoff was travelling to India with her husband, but a romance had developed between

[44] Abdul Majid Mattoo. "Shawl Industry in Kashmir in the Mughal Period." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1975*, 36 (1975): 270.
[45] Ahmad, 810.
[46] Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85.
[47] Maskiell, 46.

her and Hastings. Upon arriving in India, Anna von Imhoff divorced her husband, married Warren Hasting, and adopted the new name, Marian Hastings. Marian Hastings' second marriage and sexual transgression would establish her as the object of scorn in Britain.[48] Before long, Marian Hastings became infamous for her over-acculturation to Indian ways and her over-accumulation of luxuries. This opinion persisted into the twentieth century and historian P.J. Marshall wrote about Marian Hastings, "The most persistent of all rumours repeated about her was that she was avaricious, had not been above accepting gifts from Indians, and had amassed a sizeable fortune on her own account by the time she returned to England."[49] Marian Hastings' luxurious possessions diverted attention from Britain's exploitative and extractive dealings in South Asia and instead reinforced notions of frivolous femininity and conspicuous consumption. As Romita Ray explains: "Male ownership was therefore couched in female vanitas, a clever way of accentuating the sumptuary instead of the economic by adhering to the gendered staging of jewelry as a means of enhancing feminine beauty."[50]

Warren Hastings contributed to his wife's collection of South Asian luxuries by providing her with much desired Kashmiri shawls. On the 11th of October 1781, Hastings sent an excited letter to his wife, describing his new gifts to her, "The shawl commission which you gave to Johnson is executed. I have not seen the shawls; but Cashmeereemall has brought me others of his own taste, which are beautiful beyond imagination; and I have countermanded the shawl handkerchiefs ordered in your letter. Why should I provide paltry things for you, when I carry

[48] Tillman W. Nechtman. Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain. New York: Cambridge University Press 2010), 196.
[49] P.J. Marshall. "The Private Fortune of Marian Hastings," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Volume 37, no. 96, (1964): 245–253.
[50] Romita Ray, "All that Glitters: Diamonds, and Constructions of Nabobery in British Portraits, 1600-1800," in *The Uses of Excess in Visual and Material Culture, 1600-2010*, ed. Julia Skelly. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 33.

with me inimmitables?"[51] Despite calling Kashmiri shawls "inimmitables," Hastings wasted no time trying to replicate this rarified garment in Britain. Like Philippe Ternaux after him, Hasting attempted to ship shawl goats to Europe in the hopes of manufacturing shawls of equivalent quality in European factories. But the East India Company also took an interest in manufacturing shawls with European technology in South Asia. A Madras Commercial from December 18, 1821, reveals the company's ambitious plan to sell "an article of finer fabric than has hitherto been produced in this country"[52] and requested permission to export the cloth to Britain in time for the London season. The ability to distribute shawls was attractive to the company because French traders controlled much of the shawl trade, possessing shawls to sell was, therefore, an exercise in consolidating colonial power.

Possession was central to the shawl's appeal, as was evident in European women's lust for them. On January 24, 1839, the French Countess de Bourke wrote to her English friend Anne Lister thanking her for the gift of an Indian shawl: "Your shawl, my dear Ms. Lister is making many conquests… I have never worn anything so warm, nor so agreeable, it is as soft as a fur, and upon first seeing it many people believed it was the skin of some newly discovered animal."[53] De Bourke described how her new accessory was a success in Parisian society, and the word "conquest" was loaded with meaning as it implied at once a triumph in mondain society, romantic seduction, as well as territorial conquest in an age of imperialism.

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[51] Sydney C. Greer. *The Letters of warren Hastings to his Wife*. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and sons, 1905), 336.

[52] "Goats, shawl-goats despatched to England from Bengal." India office and Private Papers. IOR/Z/E/4/37/G178. British Library, London, UK.

[53] Letter from the Countess de Bourke to Anne Lister reads "Votre schalle ma chère Mme Lister fait beaucoup de conquêtes… Je n'ai rien porté de si chaud, ni de si agréable c'est doux comme une fourrure et dans le premier moment plusieurs personnes ont cru que c'était la peau de quelque animal nouvellement découvert," See, Countess de Bourke to Anne Lister, January 24, 1839. SH_7ML-1043. Lister Family of Shibden Hall, Family and Estate Records, Including Records of Anne Lister, Diarist (SH), West Calderdale Archives, Yorkshire UK.

In this sense, the Countess de Bourke's letter is in the same spirit as the French satire *Monologue du Cachemire*, a comic piece in which a young woman revels in the shawl she received from her intended, a soldier in Algeria.[54] Like de Bourke, the *Monologue du Cachemire*'s heroine deployed the idea of dual dominance while admiring the shawl. De Bourke describes that the woollen shawl appeared to its admirers to be the fur of a newly discovered creature, once more establishing a connection between Kashmiri shawls and the desire to possess the novel and the exotic. Susan B. Hiner describes how this process occurred in a French context. In her analysis of the *Monologue du Cachemire*, Hiner states that "when the symbol of conquest comes home to France, it is taken up by the fashion system and apparently seamlessly incorporated into a domestic economy."[55] Friendships like Lister and de Bourke's created emotional and cultural links between Britain and France, and Lister's gift of a rare Kashmiri shawl fed into the two nations' oriental fantasies. Wearing a Kashmiri shawl, therefore, enabled European women to feel like powerful actors in a dynamic global world.

In instances such as these, women's agency as consumers worried members of the public who wanted to establish clear barriers between British and South Asian culture. In addition to the connections between colonial, sexual, and military conquest, the Kashmiri shawl's proximity to women's bodies endowed the shawl with further sexual subtext. In the late eighteenth century, the British in India embraced Indian styles of dress, much to the discomfort of those living in Britain, who had a high stake in preserving hierarchies of racial and cultural difference. The assimilation of British colonizers into Indian society was a genuine concern for many members of British society, and nabobs, Britain's nouveau riches who had made their fortune in India,

[54] "Monologue du Cachemire," *La Silhouette, journal des caricatures* 3, 1830.
[55] Susan Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 80.

became the subject of ire and ridicule in Britain.[56] Nabob women like Marian Hastings, who adopted South Asian dress and customs, were construed as being greedy, un-English, corrupted by India.[57] British women who adopted Indian fashions were also perceived as having loose morals and unrestrained sexuality. They took on the visual and connotative attributes of the indigenous Indian woman, who "was exoticized and demonized in equal measure. Her sexuality was imagined to be wild and uninhibited but also ferocious."[58] These linkages between South Asian clothing and sexuality compelled British women to adopt Kashmiri shawls in a way that made explicit Britain's cultural dominance.

For British women in India, "going native" meant forgoing respectability and transgressing established sexual norms. Echoing this sentiment, Elizabeth Collingham notes that "a British woman in Indian dress laid herself open to the same sexual gaze which European men cast on Indian women."[59] Restrictions surrounding the adoption of Indian clothing and customs increased throughout the 1820s, as Britain came to see its involvement in India as part of a civilizing mission.[60] Added to these restrictions was the discouragement of interracial unions between white Britons and Indians, which threatened to undermine India's colonization, as it blurred racial boundaries and made white supremacy more challenging to uphold. South Asian clothing was thought inappropriate for British women to wear, yet the Kashmiri shawl was considered acceptable and desirable attire.

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[56] Similarly, Tara Mayer has argued that South Asian peoples' adoption of European clothing and material culture posed a threat to these cultural and racial distinctions, see Tara Mayer. "Dressing Apart: Indian elites and the politics of fashion on British India, c.1750-1850," in *Dressing Global Bodies: The Political Power of Dress in World History*., ed. Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello. (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2019).
[57] E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj c.1800-1947* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 37.
[58]Pashmina Murthy "Tropics of Sexuality: Sexual Excess and 'Oriental Vices' in the British Raj," in *Sexual Perversions, 1670-1890* ed. Julie Peakman (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 222.
[59] Collingham, 40.
[60] Collingham, 51.

Not only was the Kashmiri shawl an impressive statement of wealth, but its Oriental overtones also hinted at the risqué. The prohibition on interracial relationships and the adoption of certain Indian customs located Indian dress in the realm of the lascivious. As Anjali Arondekar asserts, Britain's colonies were "imagined breeding ground[s] for a spectrum of imagined sexual vices."[61] Through the Oriental fantasy associated with the Kashmiri shawl, British women gained access to the sexual potency of the South Asian woman who was fetishized and maligned in equal measure. Suzanne Daly argues that in British fiction, foreign luxury commodities like shawls had exotic and transformative properties that could transmute impoverished young women into sophisticated and marriageable versions of themselves.[62] Despite the Kashmiri shawl's ability to elevate British women, those worn by British women in India invited criticism because they suggested that the wearers had adopted too many foreign customs and posed a threat to British culture.

Kashmiri shawls and their European imitations similarly provided a window into Victorian women's desires and sexuality. Pre-Raphaelite painters employed the shawl for its allegorical purposes, particularly regarding female sexuality. Painted in 1853, William Holman Hunt's (1823-1910) *The Awakening Conscience,* for example, depicts a young woman as she receives a divine message urging her to break off an affair. In this scene, a Paisley shawl is loosely fitted around her waist to suggest her sexual laxity. As the mistress of a wealthy man, she is being seduced by the fashionable apartment, piano, and of course, a shawl. The loosening of the shawl as she stands up to leave her old ways underscores the fact that this scene is a redemptive moment for a person that audiences would have recognized as a fallen woman. The

[61] Anjali R. Arondekar. *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India.* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 105.
[62] Daly, 283.

shawl, therefore, functions as a fetish that can represent transgressive desires and behaviours. In her analysis of the piano, Laura Voracheck reminds scholars that fetish objects abounded in the nineteenth century. Building on Anne McClintock's work, Voracheck explains that "as the middle-class woman is constructed with a bodiless class-based sexuality," her sexual expression was then transposed onto everyday domestic objects.[63] Thus, shawls were a currency that not only expressed female desire but also enacted it.

This associative transfer of cultural attributes in relation to British women's agency was a salient element in William Makepeace Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair.* In this novel, Thackeray explored shawls' nuanced meanings and their links to female virtue and sexuality by way of the book's heroines Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley, who both conveyed desire and ambition through their sartorial choices. It is worth noting that Thackeray was born in India and had a half-Indian half-sister and niece that he tried to conceal from London society.[64] Thackeray's ambivalence toward the mixture of South Asian and British culture makes his perspective on South Asian products and transculturation, therefore, most useful to consider.

Kashmiri Shawls in British Fiction

Vanity Fair took place during the Napoleonic Wars, a time when South Asian culture heavily influenced British identity. However, the was published in 1847, when Britain had developed a clearer sense of its imperial identity. As in most of early Victorian literature, a gift of shawls was suggestive of romantic attachment. For instance, during Amelia Sedley's widowhood, she received financial support from her friend and admirer William Dobbin while

[63] Laura Voracheck, "'The Instrument of the Century': The Piano as an Icon of Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century" *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies* no. 38/39 (2000): 27.
[64] Susan Ray, "Thackeray and India: Re-examining England's Narrative of its Indian Empire." *Victorians A Journal of Literature and Culture*, no. 120. (2011): 36.

he was away in India. In one scene, Dobbin sent her family "…a pair of shawls, a white one for her and a black one with palm-leaves for her mother… The shawls were worth fifty guineas apiece at the very least, as Mrs. Sedley knew. She wore hers in state at church at Brompton, and was congratulated by her female friends upon the splendid acquisition. Emmy's, too, became prettily her modest black gown."[65] This gift implied an impending engagement between Amelia and Dobbin, and the Sedleys immediately recognized the value of shawls sent directly from India. Amelia's parents were quick to show the shawls to their acquaintances in the chaste and controlled church space. The pairing of the dark, sober gown with the Kashmiri shawl was the accoutrement of any classic Victorian heroine, a sign of moral fortitude and sobriety.[66]

While Amelia accepted the gift of a shawl from a person she considered marrying, her counterpart Becky Sharp, however, received shawls as gifts from the men with whom she was having extramarital affairs. The two heroines' actions reflected the shawl's dual meanings with regard to women. Thérèse Dolan has stated that in nineteenth-century French culture"the shawl became animated in discourse as a vexed metonym of respectability as well as venality."[67] Amelia was an example of how to correctly consume South Asian culture, while Becky offered a portrait of the dangers of over-acculturation. Meanwhile, Becky, whose mother was French, received shawls first from her new husband Rawdon and later from her lover General Tufto. The sexual and colonial connotations in this scene were salient: "Besides these, and the little mare, the General, her slave and worshipper, had made her many very handsome presents, in the shape of cashmere shawls bought at the auction of a bankrupt French general's lady, and numerous

[65]William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (New York City: Bantam Classics, 1997), 457.
[66] Suzanne Keen, "Quaker Dress, Sexuality, and the Domestication of Reform in the Victorian Novel" *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2002): 211.
[67] Thérèse Dolan, "Fringe Benefits: Manet's Olympia and Her Shawl" *Art Bulletin* 97, no. 4 (2015): 410-411.

tributes from the jewelers' shops."[68] It is significant that the shawls were not brought directly from India, but were instead purchased second-hand from a recently destitute Frenchwoman. This scene mirrors a later moment when Amelia sold her shawl to pay for her son's schoolbooks.[69] To Amelia, the shawl was more than an ornament because it allowed her to invest in her son's education. In other words, she used South Asian goods to secure upward mobility for her son rather than herself. Becky, by contrast, deployed expensive shawls to appear wealthier and secure credit to buy more items that she could not afford. The comparison of Becky and Amelia thus complicated the relationship between shawls and marriage but also reinforced an association with uncontrolled sexuality.

There existed a genuine concern surrounding women's consumer habits. Elizabeth Collingham explains the anxieties surrounding British bodies in Indian clothes by noting that "India was allowed to shape the body of the Anglo-Indian but only as long as it did not overwhelm it or make it unrecognizable as an essentially British body."[70] In the early nineteenth century, wearing garments like Kashmiri shawls represented dominance over India, rather than allowing Indian culture to alter Britain.[71] Becky's corruption was also visible in her teenage Orientalist fantasy of marrying a man in the colonial service and wearing the accompanying markers of status: "she had arrayed herself in an infinity of shawls, turbans, and diamond necklaces, and had mounted upon an elephant … in order to pay a visit of ceremony to the Grand Mogul."[72] In her daydream, Becky used her husband's money to purchase these luxury items. In reality, Becky found herself receiving patronage from a lover, one who had been to India, but

[68] Thackeray, 340.
[69] Thackeray, 541.
[70] Collingham, 33.
[71] Collingham, 34.
[72] Thackeray, 22.

who chose to buy her second-hand shawls instead. Rather than an elephant, she has "a little mare." Most importantly, she referred to the General as her "slave" and "worshipper," which conveyed a gendered power dynamic that evoked Orientalist clichés of sex and despotism. The term "tribute," in particular, paints Becky as a powerful entity who could exert power over the men that gifted her jewels and shawls. *Vanity Fair* contains more references to shawls than any other novel nineteenth-century British novel and Thackeray's use of shawls to explore women's sexual and economic agency as well as the treatment of Anglo-Indians in British society makes this novel a vital source for understanding the Kashmiri shawls' multiple meanings in British culture. Becky Sharp's greed and weakness for the shawl's Oriental mystique were detrimental to her and the men she ensnares. Thackeray makes the point that close proximity to Indian culture could also threaten Britain's national character.

Beyond the Kashmiri shawl's imperial resonances, India's geographical remoteness added another dimension to its cultural and economic value. The widening gulf between British manufactured goods and genuine Indian products thrust the shawl into the realm of the mystical and primitive. Additionally, the presence of imitations increased the perceived value of genuine Kashmiri shawls. For this reason, Walter Benjamin's concept of "aura" is helpful in understanding how Britons ascribed value to the shawl, how it became a coveted luxury item, and how it gained cultural capital. Benjamin describes aura as a work of art's rootedness in a particular time and place; a work of art's original context is what renders it valuable. Therefore, what is at stake when art is reproduced is the aura itself, that which makes a work of art unique. Benjamin further asserts that "the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being

embedded in the fabric of tradition."[73] The Kashmiri shawl's aura thus resided in its Indian origins and Kashmir's remoteness, both from a geographical and imperial standpoint.

Appadurai echoes this sentiment by declaring that "it is the aesthetics of decontextualization (itself driven by the quest for novelty) that is at the heart of the display, in high brow Western homes, of the tools and artifacts of the 'other'...In these objects, we see not only the equation of the authentic with the exotic object, but also the aesthetics of diversion."[74] Kashmir was a princely state and not under direct British rule, yet it produced desirable luxury items that attracted British consumers. Chitralekha Zutshi asserts that most Britons writing about shawls saw Kashmir's resources as ripe for extraction. Britons "advocated the actual opening up of British trade with regions of central Asia that yielded shawl wool, not only to gain access to the valuable shawl raw material but quite as much to allow 'scientific geographers' to penetrate this as-yet unexplored region to gather information that could then be made available to ordinary Britons."[75] This quest to acquire the novel and the exotic not only motivated colonization but also shaped British consumers' understanding of Kashmir and Empire.

The shawl's presence in British culture similarly evinced imperial and sexual ideologies, which were also articulated through the exoticized oriental body. Charles C. White's adventure novel *The Cashmere Shawl: An Eastern Fiction* contains a framing narrative wherein its Eastern narrator had been transformed from a goat into a Kashmiri shawl, and later into a sheet of paper. This narrator speaks through magic and relates their adventures throughout the Middle East and Kashmir. What separated this novel from better-known canonical works of the period was its lowbrow style and international setting. White's novel reached Victorian audiences in 1841

[73]Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations,* trans. Harry John (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 220.
[74] Appadurai, 28.
[75]Chitralekha Zutshi, "'Designed for Eternity': Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain," 431.

when British Orientalism was at a high point, and the First Anglo-Afghan War had begun. For this reason, White's story illustrates Kashmiri shawls as they existed within the British imagination. The works of British writers, such as William Makepeace Thackeray or Elizabeth Gaskell, deployed shawls to hint at aspects of a person's character or even British society more broadly. *The Cashmere Shawl,* by contrast, presented the shawl as a witness to history brought to life by the authenticating touch of others. The action takes place almost entirely in the Middle East, which provides ample material to discern how British consumers interpreted foreign commodities as well as their nation's imperial role. The former shawl introduces itself to the novel's narrator by detailing its origins:

> I was formerly one of the most costly shawls that ever issued from the looms of Islamabad. I have witnessed many singular adventures, both in the East and West. I have been the envied inhabitant of harems, palaces and bagnios. I have shaded the brows of Sultans, Pachas, Omrahs and Khans. I have girded the waists of Sultanas, Princesses, Khanums and Bayaderes. I have passed through many hands; enjoyed great glories, and alas— devoured infinite dirt. Until at length—O destiny! When worn out, soiled, tattered and thread bare as a half naked dervish, I was sold to a rag merchant.[76]

The former shawl's introduction to the reader is rife with Orientalist tropes (and movements) and reveals tensions between eroticism, authenticity, and power. The Kashmiri shawl had been a symbol of royal patronage and cultural capital in the Indo-Persian world throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, just as it was in Europe.[77] The novel corroborates the shawl's authenticity by connecting it to powerful Eastern individuals. For the British reader, its claim of having witnessed remarkable occurrences "both in East and West," implied worldliness, a knowledge of both cultures, as well as a proximity to the Western reader. Most importantly, the shawl's worldliness and contact with foreign bodies lent credibility to its narrative. Edward Said

[76]Charles C. White, *The Cashmere Shawl an Eastern Fiction, Vol.1*. (London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1840), ix.
[77] Sharrad, 74.

introduced the sexualized *other* as a defining feature of Orientalism in literature, and White's novel is no exception—his choice of words decisively grounded the shawl's authenticity and allure in its proximity to oriental bodies.[78]

Furthermore, White made the shawl a witness to an imagined and inaccessible Oriental experience. The shawl claimed that it was once the "envied inhabitant of harems, palaces and bagnios," private and feminized spaces that few could access, but nevertheless captured the European imagination. The shawl "shaded brows" and "girdled waists" of Eastern nobility, thus fueling the sexualized Orientalist fantasies of nineteenth-century consumers. The interest in harems and the women who inhabited them was a common feature of nineteenth-century cultural products. Art historian Joan del Plato has argued that the need to assert control over foreign women's bodies aligned with the projects to annex territories in Asia and the Middle East, noting, "at its most fundamental, the Western erotics offered by the harem picture is both an acknowledgment and a violation of the sanctity of Muslim private life."[79] These experiences provided the narrator, and by extension, its British author, with the necessary cultural authority to depict India and the Middle East, and the shawl thus became imbued with the bewitching touch of foreign bodies.

This attention to the shawl's encounters with physical bodies continued as it "passed through many hands." Touch evoked sensuality, but it was also a possible point of contagion. Hands were, in fact, a source of great physiognomical interest to nineteenth-century audiences as they were the conduit that allowed people to cast aspersions on a person's gentility and

[78] Said, *Orientalism*,188.
[79]Joan del Plato, "Dress and Undress: Clothing and Eroticism in Nineteenth-Century Visual Representations of the Harem" in *Harem Stories: Envisioning Places and Living in Spaces* ed.Marilyn Booth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 283.

proximity to physical labour.[80] For this reason, hands were sexually charged parts of the body, which Anne McClintock describes as "the organs in which Victorian sexuality and the economy literally touched."[81] The "many hands" the shawl referred to included romantic characters such as skilled Kashmiri weavers, the beautiful daughter of an exiled nobleman, princesses, Oriental despots, and Ottoman merchants all of whom contributed to the Kashmiri shawl's romantic and desirable aura.

The corporeality and mysticism associated with Kashmir served to make the shawl more alluring and worthy of interest. In another instance, the shawl narrator described his first owner Gulab, the daughter of an exiled Persian noble who grew up living a nomadic life in Afghanistan and Kashmir. The narrator described her toilette as she prepared to enter a forced marriage to the Khan. She dons "a shawl, which from its delicate quality must have been woven from the wool of some of my relations, was wound round her waist; a string of pearls, fastened by a beautiful Badakshan ruby, set in diamonds, was twined several times round her neck…"[82] Here, the shawl was paired with expensive jewels to evoke the luxury and splendour Britons imagined and expected of the Orient. The adornments on Gulab's waist and neck emphasized the coerced sexual transaction that was her upcoming marriage. Contained within the pages of British fiction was the notion that proximity to oriental bodies was alluring and authenticating, rather than carrying possible contagion, which some believed South Asian goods could transmit.[83]

Sensing Imperialism

[80] McClintock, 99.
[81]Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 99.
[82]White, 307.
[83]Suchitra Choudhury, "'It was an Imitashon to be Sure' The Imitation Indian Shawl in Design Reform and Imaginative Fiction" *Textile History* 46, no. 2 (2015): 205.

The link between touching and contagion was a crucial one. Concern surrounding contagion and the danger of over acculturation mirrored anxieties about female desire and Britain's shifting technological landscape. During the Industrial Revolution, large-scale manufacturing supplanted Britain's cottage industry and produced consumer goods with expropriated raw materials from British colonies. This new mode of production left many consumers wanting products that showcased skilled craftsmanship. Aviva Briefel has noted this occurrence, stating that "the talismanic power scribed to non-white hands in Victorian writings extended to their professed ability to fill in for the missing hands of British industry."[84] The touch of non-white hands was most desirable in luxury goods. By contrast, British consumers worried about foreign workers contaminating food items such as tea. This process led British marketers of empire tea to emphasize how their tea was untouched by Indian hands.[85]

Touch was, therefore, desirable only when it fulfilled orientalist fantasies rooted in an unequal relationship between British consumers and the imagined inhabitants of lands they sought to conquer. The proliferation of foreign goods threatened to overwhelm the body of English women who were thought to be the nation's moral arbiters. Women's desire for foreign commodities like Kashmiri shawls encouraged colonial exploitation, but also threatened to alter Britain from the inside. Krista Lysack also discusses "the imperial exhibitionary complex of luxury shops that sought to decontextualize oriental goods and thus prohibit women's identification with the forces of exploited labor by which these goods were produced."[86]As a result, capitalist consumerism sought to stabilize women's identification with foreign

[84] Aviva Briefel, *The Racial Hand in the Victorian Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51.
[85] Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 165.
[86] Lysack,19.

commodities "by constructing women as the consumers rather than the consumed."[87] Hence, shopping served the purpose of regulating female desire in a way that satisfied British women's desire to engage with a global world and reaffirmed Britain's dominance over colonized peoples.

At once a commodity, a fashion item, a sign of Britain's growing imperial power, and a symbol of women's sexual and economic agency, the Kashmiri shawl occupied a unique space in British culture. The shawl's numerous imitations and role in asserting taste and status gave way to concerns about the authenticity of the accessory and the women who wore it. Likewise, India's ancient history and vast cultural output threatened to overwhelm British cultural identity, as did the possibility of miscegenation. As British colonialism progressed, so did the interest in Oriental bodies. Because the Kashmiri shawl was an Indian garment with obvious connections to South Asia and British women, it serves as a vector for understanding Victorians' attitudes toward both women and colonial subjects. These attitudes are most evident when considering Indians' perceived ability to authenticate Kashmiri shawls, as Mah Munzel ul-Nissa did in Fanny Parkes' journal, as well as the power to corrupt British bodies and minds. The sensual associations between Kashmiri shawls and the exoticism of the East shaped how women valued shawls, in addition to how society understood the women who wore them. British women were able to wield shawls as weapons for social and sexual control, just as Britain sought to assert greater dominance in South Asia. This interplay highlights the interconnectedness of global trade, the spread of imperialism, and the discourse surrounding female and racialized bodies. At first glance, the Kashmiri shawl appears to be a beautiful and sensual object, but to British consumers, these same qualities threatened to corrupt their empire from within.

[87] Lysack., 19.

Chapter 2—Shawls and the Women Who Wore Them: Flourishing Consumer Culture

Dora Wordsworth's (1804-1847) shawl is frayed at the edges. A few loose strands of black thread stray from its tasselled fringe. The shawl was a blazing red when its owner was alive, accented with black and yellow. Over time the beautiful piece has faded, and its black threads have become more visible. Its pattern is ornate and features long, fluted Paisley patterns arranged symmetrically. A border two inches wide surrounds the shawls and evokes an oriental carpet. Despite its ornate design which evokes products from the Middle East and India, this shawl is not cashmere, but more likely the product of European factories scattered throughout Britain and France. When unfolded, the shawl is almost twice the height of a person. Some parts of the shawl are noticeably brighter than others. One corner seems much softer and has maintained its bright straw yellow and offers a glimpse of its former glory when it draped over Dora Wordsworth's, the daughter of the famous poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850), shoulders. The shawl displays the expected signs of wear and tear: pills, stray threads, and smalls holes, but most strikingly, one part of the shawl has a dark rectangle where much of the pattern has faded. The size and shape of the wear suggest that it was used to protect a book. The faded rectangle on Dora Wordsworth's shawl suggests that these accessories were not always used for ostentatious displays of wealth or as tools of seduction. Instead, women's use of shawls suggests that these accessories were precious aesthetic items with practical and artistic value which played an important role in shaping women's relationships and identities.[88]

Any history of the shawl's place in nineteenth-century Britain involves looking beyond the shawl trade and its global networks of manufacturers, distributors, and merchants. In other

[88] This author was fortunate enough to view the shawl at the Jerwood Library in June of 2019. "Shawl." GRMDC.E102. Jerwood Library. Grasmere, UK.

words, any assessment of the Kashmiri shawl's cultural significance must consider the shawl's life once it left the hands of merchants and shopkeepers. In *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai argues in favour of following an object's career and trajectory.[89] The different ways people manipulated and traded objects offers a wealth of insight into a society's values. Appadurai maintains that "demand is thus neither a mechanical response to the structure and level of production nor a bottomless natural appetite. It is a complex social mechanism that mediates between short and long-term patterns of commodity circulation."[90] The shawl's journey throughout the first fifty years of the nineteenth century provides a glimpse into British women's behaviour and values because of its associations with South Asia, femininity, and class.

During its first decades in Western Europe, the Kashmiri shawl denoted an exoticism and prestige that had developed concurrently with France and Britain's latest imperial ventures. For some, imperialism gave the British public access to foreign goods and territories, for others, it provided the opportunity to acquire wealth and social distinction. As previously discussed, Indian shawls symbolized wealth, power, connections, and ambitions that stretched beyond Britain's small island. While some made great fortunes in South Asia, others harnessed the opportunities made possible by the Industrial Revolution to increase their social standing. As a result, industrialization reshaped urban and rural Britain in pursuit of profit and technological progress. The rift between established elites, those who had amassed fortunes abroad and the growing industrial class helped to shape the cultural attitudes that informed the Kashmiri shawl's presence in Britain. As Britain established greater political and economic influence over India and its textile industry, mill owners in France and Britain developed new technologies to better

[89] Arjun Appadurai "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013), 5.
[90] Appadurai, 40-41

manufacture affordable imitations of Kashmiri shawls. Despite being a relatively new addition to European fashion and European industrialists swiftly responded to the consumer demand for boteh-patterned shawls. Within this climate, shawls loosened their symbolic ties to South Asia and came to signify changes to social life in Britain. As the consumer revolution granted greater access to consumer goods, women increasingly used clothing and accessories to express their personal, moral, and class identities in the public sphere. Thus, this chapter builds upon chapter one's assertion that British women used shawls to signal their active participation in imperialism by devoting attention to the shawl's circulation between 1800 and 1851. Through an analysis of British print and literary culture in addition to women's letters and diaries, this chapter will demonstrate that women used shawls as an expression of identity to signal affiliation with certain social groups and the moral and societal expectations placed upon them in a growing consumer culture. This chapter contributes to existing scholarship by devoting attention to the shawl's place outside of the retail sector by drawing attention to the shawl's ability to shape relationships between women and communicate societal expectations.

Fabricating the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution invariably altered how British people lived, worked, and consumed, however, over the past forty years, historians have sought to correct the belief that the first Industrial Revolution was one of the most significant events in British histories of consumption.[91] Historians such as James M. Blaut have criticized Anglocentric interpretations of the Industrial Revolution which assumed that the steam engine and machine looms spread from

[91] Kenneth.Pomeranz. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) and G.D.Snooks. *Was the Industrial Revolution Necessary?* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Britain to the European continent and subsequently to the rest of the world.[92] Historians of consumption have instead pointed to the profound changes to consumer behaviour that took place in eighteenth century Britain. Neil McKendrick's much-criticized yet highly influential book *The Birth of a Consumer Society*[93] drew from Thorstein Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption [94]to argue that a consumer revolution occurred in the eighteenth century. Thanks to the lifting of the sumptuary laws[95] which regulated the clothes a person could wear according to their social status, he argued that consumer behaviours became motivated by a desire to emulate elites. McKendrick received criticism from historians who believed that conspicuous consumption provided an overly simplistic account of British consumer culture while others have doubted whether a consumer revolution took place at all.[96]

More recently, however, historians have come to a consensus that there was indeed a consumer revolution in the eighteenth century which allowed for a steady progression toward the first and second Industrial Revolutions.[97] Judith Flanders has gone as far as to suggest that the consumer revolution created the need for greater manufacturing capabilities and, as a result, was

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[92] James M. Blaut. *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).
[93] Neil McKendrick and John Brewer, and J. H Plumb. *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
[94] In this work, Veblen articulates his concept of "conspicuous consumption" which suggests that consumption, shopping, and fashion operate as signifiers of one's class and status. More importantly, Veblen demonstrates how following the industrial revolution women became the leading purveyors of conspicuous consumption to denote the economic status of husbands and fathers. Veblen remarks that women's conspicuous consumption is rarely understood as idleness but rather as an essential component of household duties, see Thorstein Veblen. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*., ed. Martha Banta. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[95] Maxine Berg. *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.
[96] Berg, 27.
[97] In this author's view, histories of Britain's consumer revolution still do not devote enough attention to how enslaved and indentured labour contributed toward this new consumer society.

one of the catalysts of the industrial revolution.[98] Maxine Berg, in particular, was instrumental in shifting the attention from the sale and production of consumer goods to instead focusing on the eighteenth-century luxury debates and demonstrating that the influx of luxuries from Asia sparked intense debates in Europe surrounding consumption and class. Amidst the rise of affordable Asian goods and a burgeoning middle-class, many of Britain's elites felt threatened by their social inferiors' access to foreign luxuries such as porcelain, tea, and chintz. As such, the increased availabilities of these items incited fierce debates about the right to luxury and vice[99]and historians' examination of these debates and their effects on consumption practices have proven fruitful for understanding changes to lifestyles and behaviours in Western Europe.

The role of South Asian textiles, therefore, cannot be overstated when examining the development of Britain's consumer culture as well as the concepts of taste and distinction. Cotton was among the most important consumer products to reach Europe in the seventeenth century. The light and breathable fabric flooded shops throughout Europe and was soon crowned "fashion's favourite."[100] Like Flanders, Michelle Maskiell has noted that the demand for cotton accelerated technological innovation in Britain, which led to the development of machinery most notably, the spinning jenny, the flying shuttle, and the power loom, all of which served to circumvent Asian trade routes.[101] In *Empire of Cotton*, Sven Beckert outlines Britain's desire to manufacture South Asian textiles in Britain by describing how British merchants attempted to appropriate and replicate the high quality brightly-coloured Indian chintzes and calicos that

[98] Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London: Harper Press, 2006), 44.
[99] Berg, 28.
[100] Beverly Lemire. *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[101] Michelle Maskiell. "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000." *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 37.

British consumers coveted.[102] Jon Stobart has analyzed shop signs and advertisements in eighteenth-century Britain. Stobart concluded that despite being a foreign commodity, cotton quickly shed its association with South Asia and became a staple of English material culture. Cotton, therefore, did not need to rely on exoticism to sell.[103] Another South Asian textile worth considering is chintz. Michael Kwass has discussed chintz smuggling and the manufacture of counterfeit chintz in pre-revolutionary France.[104] When considering the history of South Asian textiles in Britain, the Kashmiri shawl is unique because it reached Europe in the final decades of the eighteenth century, long after tea, porcelain, cotton, and chintz. Additionally, with the exception of some shawl wool exported by the British East India Company, Kashmiri shawls were finished products that were suggestive of South Asian craft. As a result, the Kashmiri shawl became incorporated into British material culture and social life under slightly different circumstances.

Unlike cotton and chintz, the Kashmiri shawl and its imitations rose in popularity when Britain was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution and establishing itself as a global imperial power. To date, histories of consumption provide few examples of how foreign accessories like shawls shaped social practices. Likewise, literary analyses of Kashmiri and European shawls succeed in demonstrating how in novels, imperial meanings and character development are layered upon objects like shawls but fail to explore whether these same complexities existed in daily life. The difference between authentic and imitation Kashmiri shawls is key to

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[102] Sven Beckert. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), 50.
[103] Jon Stobart, "Taste and Textiles: Selling Fashion in Eighteenth-century Provincial England," in *Selling textiles in the long Eighteenth Century: Comparative Perspectives from Western Europe,* eds., Jon Stobart and Bruno Blondé (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 174-175.
[104] Micheal Kwass, "The Global Underground: Smuggling, Rebellion, and the Origins of the French Revolution," in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*., ed. Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

understanding how wealthy women used the accessory as a form of social distinction to set themselves apart from their social inferiors. Appadurai makes the important remark that "When the distance between consumers and producers collapses, the focus on exclusivity gives way to an obsession with authenticity."[105] Authenticity became a matter of increasing concern once quality imitations became available and the middle and lower classes could be perceived as owning luxuries. The fear that a woman could be mistaken for someone of a higher social station would persist throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century.

Weaving Indian Shawls on British Soil: The Birth of the British Shawl Industry

The authentic Kashmiri shawl was absent from most middle-class boudoirs. Instead, Edinburgh, Norwich, Paisley, and France supplied British women with silk and merino boteh-patterned shawls.[106] Once new paths to social mobility opened, clothing and luxuries became more widely accessible to all classes. Cities like Edinburgh and Norwich had begun manufacturing imitation boteh-shawls as early as the 1770s.[107] Technological innovations like the Jacquard Loom, invented in 1804, allowed French and British manufacturers to better replicate the complex woven and embroidered patterns of true Kashmiri shawls, themselves the product of an equally sophisticated manufacturing process.[108] These innovations allowed textile towns like Norwich and Paisley to thrive economically and adopt the boteh pattern into their local identity. Soon, imitation cashmere became a quintessential feature of Englishness much

[105] Appadurai, 44.
[106] Dorothy Whyte. "Paisley Shawls, and Others." *Costume* 4, no. 1 (1970): 32.
[107] Michelle Maskiell "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000." *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 44.
[108] Janet Rizvi and Monisha Ahmed. *Pashmina: The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond*. (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2017), 55.

like other South Asian items like tea and chintz. It is important to note that although factory workers manufactured the fibres and starches necessary to make shawls, most shawls were woven inside weavers' homes.[109] Although true Kashmiri shawls were beautiful and highly valued luxury items, locally-made imitations could be a source of national pride. In 1809, the popular fashion magazine *The Repository of the Arts* congratulated Britain's shawl industry on a recent innovation, a "new and curious article, which may be had of various colours, in the closest imitation of the real India shawl fabrique ever produced in this country, and reflects the highest credit on the skill, ingenuity, and industry of the manufacturer Mr. Smith of Norwich."[110] The desire to imitate and improve upon the Kashmiri shawl was powerfully felt and could make its wearer feel included in the progress of science and manufacturing; however, the British shawl industry's financial viability remained uncertain.

A closer look at Norwich's history of textile production suggests that the city's industrial activity was far from healthy. Norwich had been a pre-industrial manufacturing town that had produced a significant volume of textiles since the sixteenth century. However, by the nineteenth century, Norwich faced competition from newer industrial cities like Bradford and the textile powerhouse that was Paisley. The city had failed to mechanize at the same pace as its competition and needed to shift its production to meet more specialized consumer demands like shawls.[111] By the 1820s, the city manufactured niche products such as "silks, shawls, mourning goods and the short-runs of high-fashion materials."[112] Unfortunately, this adjustment was

[109] C.H. Rock, *Paisley Shawls: A Chapter of the Industrial Revolution*. (Paisley: Paisley Museum & Art Galleries, 1966), 30.
[110] "Allegorical Wood-Cut With Patterns of British Manufacture," *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufacture, Fashions, and Politics*. March 1809.
[111] Richard Wilson. "The Textile Industry," in *Norwich since 1550*, ed. Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 239.
[112] Wilson, 240.

insufficient for competing on the domestic or foreign market especially once duties on foreign silk were lifted in 1825 and the British economy experienced a recession.[113] Despite being a symbol of British technology and national pride, the British shawl industry was fragile and did not provide its wearers with the same degree of social distinction as its Kashmiri counterpart.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, print media increased in reach and prominence. As a result, women acquired greater access to print and visual media as well as information about fashion and its global context. These publications fed the public's interest in commodities and consumer products. During its three decades of publication, *The Repository of the Arts* extolled the qualities of Kashmiri shawls, while also devoting several pieces to promoting European-made imitations. In 1809, its first year of publication, the magazine featured the spread "Allegorical wood-cut with patterns of British Manufacture," which incorporated fabric swatches into the text and illustration. These fabrics, meant for men's shawls included "Anglo-Merino Wool," "Queen's silk," "Persian Double Silk," and "New Satin Twill." The Anglo-Merino Wool is a plain burnt orange and the magazine credits King George III with the importation of Merino goats to England which made this imitation Kashmir available to British consumers.[114] The magazine did more than disseminate fashion trends, the above passage reveals how British consumers took interest in the production and trade of the items they consumed. This is further evidenced by the fact that the same magazine issue features an article about Merino sheep and the history of sugar.[115] By the 1820s, Kashmiri and imitation shawls

[113] Wilson, 236.
[114] "Allegorical Wood-Cut With Patterns of British Manufacture," *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufacture, Fashions, and Politics*. March 1809.
[115] "History, Manufacture, and Properties of Sugar." *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufacture, Fashions, and Politics*. March 1809 and "Account of the Merino Sheep, and of Their Treatment in Spain," *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufacture, Fashions, and Politics*. March 1809.

appeared frequently within the pages of *The Repository of the Arts.* This interest in manufacturing persisted several decades later. Women's magazines frequently discussed the manufacturing of consumer goods, moreover, *The English Woman's Domestic Magazine* had a regular column entitled "Spinnings in Town" which discussed textile manufacturing from the perspective of a silkworm as well as an article comparing the manufacturing of shawls in Scotland and Kashmir.[116] The production of popular consumer items was therefore a source of great interest to British readers who used these texts to inform their understanding of their consumer society.

British consumers harboured ambivalent attitudes toward French and British imitations of authentic Indian shawls, especially as clothing became a less obvious indicator of class and status. Owning an authentic Kashmiri shawl suggested worldliness and connections to powerful men who had access to India's wealth. High-quality imitations, however, made a woman's status harder to discover. This ambivalence in discussions of women's morality and class position aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's notion of distinction. Bourdieu maintains that buying art reflects an individual's personal taste which is "closest to the most irreproachable and inimitable form of accumulation, that is, the internalization of distinctive symbols of power in the form of natural 'distinction', personal 'authority' or 'culture.'"[117] Thus, the Kashmiri shawl operated as a nexus of class, race, sex, and gender and is, therefore, well-poised to interrogate how Britons understood and responded to the idea of empire. Unlike more commonplace commodities such as tea, sugar, curry powder, or cotton, Kashmir shawls were aspirational luxury items that conveyed

[116] Toshirō Nakajima. *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*. Volume I (Osaka, Japan: Eureka Press, 2005), 31.
[117] Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge MASS: Harvard University Press, 1984), 282.

a range of varying ideas about gender and imperial power. The shawl was an accessory item and, by definition, a non-essential item. It was an expensive, but nevertheless, practical and durable item that a woman could wear in the home, at church, in town, or for an evening out. The shawl's ubiquity and proximity to women's bodies hinted at a person's personal taste and revealed multivalent meanings that Victorian Britons could decipher.

Clothing the Soul: Upholding Societal Standards Through Appropriate Consumption

Scottish satirist and philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), most likely thinking himself kind, wrote that the recently crowned Queen Victoria was "at an age at which a girl can hardly be trusted to choose a bonnet for herself; yet a task is laid upon her from which an archangel might shrink."[118] Carlyle's opinion that young women lacked the taste and self-awareness to appropriately dress themselves reflects a wider belief that women, the guardians of the nation's virtue,[119] needed to consume in a way that reinforced Victorian ideals of marriage and motherhood. Because a woman's sartorial choices were overt expressions of her personal tastes and identity, it was crucial that her appearance conformed with societal expectations. Therefore, clothing was largely considered to be an outward expression of a person's inward moral character.[120] This was especially true of the upper and middle classes who could afford to purchase new clothing. Moreover, clothing and accessories were among women's only possessions and, therefore, took on highly personal meanings. The importance of appropriate

[118] Julia Baird. *Victoria: The Queen: An Intimate Biography of the Woman Who Ruled an Empire.* (New York: Random House, 2016), 73.
[119] Helen Berry. "Women Consumption and Taste," in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 199.
[120] Soile Ylivuori. Women *and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities, and Power*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 82.

dress extended to working class, for whom appropriate clothing was less of an expression of one's character than a form of social security that shielded poorer individuals from losing their respectability.[121] Sharon Marcus stresses the importance of distinction and respectability stating: "For women who do not vie directly in the economic marketplace, fashion becomes a way to demonstrate facility with the rules of propriety that rationalize bodies in space and time."[122] Shawls were, therefore, symbolically charged items that hinted towards class and taste and participation in the joys of consumerism.

As the Kashmiri shawl became a mainstay of British fashion, so too did concerns surrounding their appeal to British women. While shawls were associated with matrimony, they also held negative connotations of coquetry and excessive spending. *The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* satirized a fashionable family whose physician prescribes consumer products as cures for their various ailments, "Water with sugar, can never hurt any one; and during the time his wife's taking that, and he his soda water, he will have forgotten his terrors and his illness, his wife will buy the shawl she was longing for, and his daughter will have learnt the new scotch dance; all that will be effected by the admirable skill of the physician."[123] Likewise, in 1843, *Punch or The London Charivari* also lampooned women's weakness for shawls by printing a calendar for the year which recorded events, namely women's insatiable desire for luxuries like shawls, "Ophelia expresses a strong desire for a pine-apple and a cache mire shawl. Mother-in law Spike says, 'She must have 'em.'Twits compounds for new potatoes

[121] Beverly Lemire. "The Theft of Clothes and Popular Consumerism in Modern England." *Journal of Social History*, 24, no.2 (1990): 257.
[122] Sharon Marcus. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 116.
[123] "Visit of a Physician to a Fashionable Family: From a Secret Scene in Modern Life," *World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons*, March 1829.

and a Victoria Paisley.'"[124] In the 1840s, when the demand for shawls reached a height,[125] periodicals depicted British women as desiring luxuries above their station and men as incapable of distinguishing high-quality craft from cheap manufactured items. A more extreme account of women's lust for shawls in *The World of Fashion* is a story about a woman's whose desire for an Indian shawl causes her husband's untimely death:

> I carried on a spirited attack upon my tyrant for five months; at the end of that time I took a fancy to an Indian shawl of such an extravagant price, that Cameleon's avarice conquered his fear for my health, and he peremptorily refused to let me have it. I had recourse to a display of hysterics, and feigned them so well, that he sent for the shawl immediately; but the effort he made in so doing cost him dear, for I verily believe it broke his heart. He never held up his head afterwards, and died in less than six weeks, of what the doctors termed a nervous disorder.[126]

That same year, *Punch* also published a comedic piece about a woman who faces the perils of trying to purchase an Indian shawl without a male companion. The piece highlights women's powerlessness in the face of the market and the men who operate it. Despite knowing the exact item she wants to buy, the female shopper is pressured into purchasing items other than the one she came in for, leered at by male customers, and finally accused of stealing. Only by pretending to know a man passing by is she able to escape.[127] The Victorian imagination, therefore, conceived of shopping as a dangerous pastime that could corrupt women who were more susceptible to commodities or trick respectable women into unwise purchases.

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[124] "May 18, 1843" *Punch of the London* Charivari *Volume the Fourth* (London: Bradbury and Evans,1843)
[125] Chitralekha Zutshi. "'Designed for Eternity:' Kashmiri Shawls, Empire and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain." J*ournal of British Studies,* 48, no.2(2009): 249.
[126] "Correspondence of the Adviser: A Wife for Pertinax Single," *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions, Manufacture, &c.,* October 1818.
[127] "The Unprotected Female is Tempted by a Rubbish Sale," *Punch or The London Charivari: Almanack for 1853*, London, Bradbury and Evans, 1853.

In December of 1819, Dr. Charles Lewis Meryon (1783-1877) had travelled to Switzerland in search of servants to accompany him and his employer, Lady Hester Stanhope (1776-1839), on their trip to Turkey, as the "bare mention of Turkey put half of them to flight without a word more."[128] The three servants he did succeed in recruiting demanded changes to their contract. One servant, in particular, Jeanne, "insisted in having a particular red shawl, which I bought for her, and she debited me with what she should have gained had she remained in the situation from which I took her from the hour of our departure, besides asking for an advance of 20 francs as earnest policy."[129] Meryon failed to see Jeanne's appreciation for the red shawl, however, throughout their travels, Meryon and Stanhope assigned value to and went to great lengths to secure authentic Kashmiri shawls. During a sojourn in Marseilles after leaving the Middle East, Meryon complained that he had to continue wearing a Turkish costume if he wanted to keep his Kashmiri shawls, "The only difficulty was about my cashmere shawls, which I am privileged to carry so long as my dress is an Oriental one, but I am told would be seized of."[130] Meryon's journal makes clear that in the early nineteenth century, both men and women were equally susceptible to the Kashmiri shawl's charm. Men's fashion abandoned the shawl with the arrival of train travel and men came to prefer coats, cloaks, and mantles.[131] For women, oriental shawls could be worn at all hours and in all seasons. The garment was considered modest and appropriate for travel, paying morning visits, and for evening wear. As far as

[128] Charles Lewis Meryon. *The Additional memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope: An Unpublished Historical Account of the Years 1819-1820*. Ed. Mark Guscin (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2018),21.
[129] Meryon, 20.
[130] Meryon, 68.
[131] Maskiell, 57.

women's fashion was concerned, boteh shawls were eternal and unlikely to exit Victorian fashion.[132]

The British public regarded women's consumption most positively when it was associated with marriage and motherhood. In 1829, *The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* published short fiction about a firstborn daughter's struggle to marry, declaring that: "a female has not fulfilled her destiny until she has submitted to perform the duties of a wife and mother … and the eldest should be the first to cast aside the fichu suitable to the young girl, for the Cachemire shawl of the mother of a family."[133] Shawls held strong symbolic ties to matrimony and motherhood. In France, middle-class and bourgeois women received a *corbeille,* a chest filled with the accessories befitting their status as a gift from their fiancé. Corbeilles were expected to contain jewels, fans, and Kashmiri shawls which excited fascination and disgust because it laid bare the transactional aspect of marriage.[134] In spite of criticism, this practice became so popular in 1843 that the *Liverpool Mail* lamented the British middle-class' adoption of "the interesting Continental custom of Presenting CASHMERES[135] to a Bride," but conceded that "[t]he Paisley and other Shawl manufacturers may rejoice at the change."[136] Likewise, in 1848, *The Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times* wrote "Nay, we have heard that some of our Parisian neighbours, whose hearts had withstood every persuasion of the tongue, had been induced to yield a hand to the lover who unexpectedly proffered for acceptance a Cashmere shawl."[137] These commenters feared that British women, who were commodities on the marriage

[132] Philippe Perrot. *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, trans., Richard Bienvenu (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 111.
[133] "A Daughter to be Married," *World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons*, April 1829.
[134] Susan B. Hiner. *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 57.
[135] Emphasis original.
[136] "Cashmere Shawls" *Liverpool Mail*, March 18, 1843.
[137] "Cashmere Shawls," The Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times, London, 29 January 1848.

market, were becoming too susceptible to the charms and seductions of the global marketplace. The fictional heroine Becky Sharp provides one of the best examples of a woman willing to stop at nothing to acquire wealth, status, and shawls. She acquires Kashmiri shawls by embarking on extramarital affairs and manipulating a wealthy widow. Becky Sharp reveals a true, albeit exaggerated concern that British women would or perhaps had already succumbed to the same moral laxity that, such contemporaries insinuated, allowed French women to be bought for the price of a Kashmiri shawl.

The promise of a shawl for an engagement treats marriage as a rite of passage and an inducement toward matrimony. Elizabeth Gaskell's (1810-1865) 1854 novel *North and South,* subverts this meaning by having its heroine Margaret Hale inherit a Kashmiri shawl at the beginning of the novel. Margaret, who could have never afforded such a shawl herself, receives a Kashmiri shawl from her aunt at her cousin's wedding day because the Indian shawl suits her so well. This aspect of the story suggests Margaret's worldliness, sensuality, and marriageability. She is impervious to the charms of luxury and the pleasures of shopping and commodities, and for this reason, is deserving of all the global marketplace has to offer. Speaking to this point, Marjorie Garson maintains that in *North and South* "Taste has been spiritualized by the chain that it transcends mere ownership: one is supposed to be able to 'possess' the beauty of an object without possessing the object itself."[138] Because Margaret is naturally gifted with good taste yet has no interest in consumer culture, the novel argues that she is most worthy of inheriting its riches.

Margaret's character development captures the tensions between members of the middle and upper classes as they adjust to their upward mobility which had been achieved through the

[138] Marjorie Garson. *Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity, and Social Power in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 294.

extractive violence of Empire in addition to the exploitation of the British working class and enslaved cotton workers in the United States.[139] These opposing genealogies of wealth are most evident when Margaret Hale and John Thornton first meet. In this scene, John Thornton, a Northern mill owner, is intimidated by the Kashmiri shawl draped around Margaret's body. Although he is the wealthier party, her shawl symbolizes the riches, power, and knowledge associated with Britain's presence in South Asia and serves to delegitimize the commodities Thornton is helping to produce. The tension between the different forms of manufacturing is central to Gaskell's work. Suzanne Daly contends that "*North and South* wants to value a past in which India's and England's textile industries are on equal terms as producers of first-quality handmade objects, but finally, in the resolution of the marriage plot (in which Margaret both inherits land and marries Mr. Thornton), it sides with Manchester."[140] In life as in fiction, the Kashmiri shawl invited comparisons between the manufacturing capabilities of Europe and South Asia. Authentic Kashmiri shawls excited female consumers while quality imitations were a source of national pride and a testament to the superiority of British manufacturing.

The shawl also held connotations of the maternal. Just as some of the young Rawdon Crawley's first memories are of sitting with his mother Becky Sharp in a carriage wrapped in shawls, in the novel *Mary Barton,* members of the working class frequently used shawls to protect and swaddle babies.[141] Similar examples can also be drawn from print media, in one example, the pairing of mothers and shawls functioned as a critique of self-indulgent women who neglected their children's needs. One story tells of a woman travelling in the shared female train compartment. The narrator claims she sat next to a mother who soothed a crying baby with

[139] Garson, 312.
[140] Suzanne Daly, "Kashmir Shawls in Mid-Victorian Novels." *Victorian Literature and Culture.* 30, no.1 (2002): 250.
[141] Elizabeth Gaskell. *Mary Barton.*, ed. Alan Shelston. (London: Everyman, 1996), 13.

a shawl: "the first thing they did was to hoist a large shawl between themselves and the rest of the party; which shawl, I fancy, was part of a temple dedicated to maternal rites, but a temporary measure evidently; as it was always put up when the little dear screamed the loudest, and fell down again in his placid moments."[142] The relationship between mothers and luxury items is a fraught one given that Victorian mothers were expected to not only consume responsibly and appropriately but also be self-sacrificing.

On the one hand, being a wife and mother was the most venerated role a Victorian woman could occupy and, therefore, could be worthy of possessing luxuries. On the other, British society worried that mothers, like all women, were susceptible to the lure of luxuries which could negatively affect their children. Speaking to this point, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that "Women had the capacity both through their physical presence and their moral influence to inculcate good taste in others, and by the 1840s good taste, the capacity not to be vulgar, was replacing salvation as the mark of special status…To be large, or loud, or strong, was to be ugly and carried with it notions of moral collapse as well as physical failure to conform."[143] Becky Sharpe's excessive shopping and gambling cost her the custody of her son. Conversely, her counterpart Amelia Sedley sold her shawl to fund her son's schooling. Over-indulging in luxuries could hinder a son's education, but it could also ruin a daughter's prospects in the marriage market. Susan B. Hiner notes that this dynamic is most salient in Honoré de Balzac's (1799-1850) 1835 novel *Le Contrat de marriage* in which giving luxuries like shawls to an unmarried woman spoils her chances on the marriage market: "Natalie does in fact already have everything in profusion, but her possessing them proves deeply problematic…Natalie had

[142] "Strictly Private," *The English Woman's Domestic Magazine Volume III* (London: Clarke and Beeton, 1854-1855).
[143] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 191.

been permitted the luxurious *toilette* of a *femme mariée*, and this had in fact ruined her chances of finding a husband, even as her mother had hoped to inspire only the most wealthy suitors for her daughter's hand."[144] British culture held women's consumption practices to a high standard, however, not all women and mothers were reprimanded to the same degree for consuming luxuries. The letters and diaries of women living in Victorian Britain suggest that as more quality imitations of Kashmiri shawls began to be manufactured in Britain and France, more women began buying shawls for themselves and their friends. Shawls, therefore, could be expressions of personal taste and friendship.

Men in the colonial service had first brought Kashmiri shawls back to England for their wives and mothers, yet as imitations became more accessible, giving and buying shawls was no longer reserved for brides and married women. For example, William Wordsworth's sister Dorothy never married, and yet she described wearing shawls as well as lending and borrowing items of clothing between friends. In a letter to her brother she wrote saying "Best love to Miss Weir—also to Joanna, and a thousand thanks for the shawl" and "the Landlady had no cloak to lend me, so I wrapped myself as well as I could in Mary's thin blue coat and my shawl…."[145] Wordsworth's letters demonstrate how the shawl acted as a tokens of friendship as well as reminders of loved-ones far away. Similarly, Jane Welsh Carlyle (wife to Thomas Carlyle) wrote in a letter to her husband that at the end of a long visit her host insisted on gifting her an Indian shawl among other items as mementos from her stay.[146] These gifts acted as physical reminders

[144] Hiner, 64.
[145] Dorothy Wordsworth to William Wordsworth, Bury St. Edmunds, 15 August 1810. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: Part I 1806-1811*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 245.
[146] Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle August 19, 1856. *The Carlyle Letters Online* [CLO], ed. Brent E. Kinser. Duke University Press, last updated 2019. The letter reads: "It would have touched you to the heart to see poor Jess Donaldson daundering about, opening drawers and presses to find something to give me. It was her chief employment all the time I was there. One day it was an Indian shawl; the next a

of sentimental and social ties between British women and solidified ties between imperialism and material culture.

In a letter to her friend Jane Welsh Carlyle, the novelist Geraldine Jewsbury (1812-1880) related the exciting news that she has unexpectedly received an authentic Kashmiri shawl. Jewsbury's letter lays bare several of the symbolic meanings Victorians projected onto Kashmiri shawls. She pokes fun at the shawl's association with matrimony and claims that the enthusiasm she has for her new shawl dwarfs any romantic feeling she might for any person:

> I have had — what? Guess. An offer of marriage? Never a bit of it. No man of my acquaintance has been so far abandoned by Providence. A lover, then? Still less. I am in no humour for human valentines; but what I have had is actually a real Cashmere shawl given me last week!! And upon my honour, a great many disagreeable things might come upon me which I should not feel now that I can wrap myself round with this mysterious and almost unknown production.[147]

The shawl's exoticism lent mystery to Jewsbury's everyday, and she confesses a playful belief in the shawl's protective and talismanic properties: "It is an immense size, and not at all to be called pretty, but it has occult properties far beyond beauty." She then describes visiting a shop to have the shawl cleaned where the shopkeeper, a "sober Scotchman," congratulated her on her rare and precious possession and bemoaned the fact that women rarely appreciated and beauty and craftsmanship of authentic Kashmiri shawls. Jewsbury left the shop even more pleased with her shawl but laughed at the shopkeeper's aesthetic admiration for the shawl and compared his impassioned defence of South Asian craft to "the lamentations after high art!"[148] Jewsbury's

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real lace veil; the [...]next[...] a diamond ring, and so on, till the last hour, when after my boxes were all packed, she suddenly bethought her that I used to like old china, and took me privately to the press that contained her long-prized Indian china…"

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148 Geraldine Jewsberry to Jane Welsh Carlyle, Undated 1844. *Letters of Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle 1812-1880*, ed. Mrs. Alexander Ireland. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892).

letter encapsulates some of the most prominent ideas about shawls, authenticity, and women's aesthetic judgement. As a member of an artistic contingent of British society, the pride Jewsbury takes in believing that she is among few women to appreciate a Kashmiri shawl suggests that she interpreted this moment as a validation of her sense of taste and cultural distinction.

Shawls and Shopping at Shibden Hall

Anne Lister's society in Yorkshire was varied yet the view from her stately home was not as exciting as the people and places she encountered in London and on the continent. Lister had risen from unremarkable circumstances to be a welcome guest in aristocratic circles. She was part of an inauspicious branch of the Lister family and following a series of tragic deaths, she became the wealthy heir of Shibden Hall and its land's rents. This degree of financial independence enabled Lister to adopt certain male-coded behaviours without suffering serious social repercussions. Many of these behaviours were sartorial and included wearing dark clothing modelled after menswear along with other male accessories such as a top hat and a cane. Lister famously recorded her life in diaries written in a cipher that combined ancient Greek and algebra. The details of Lister's life would have likely faded into obscurity had her nephew not found her diaries hidden away and decoded them. Lister's diaries provide historians with a wealth of information about queer history, working-class movement, and material culture and therefore create a detailed picture of nineteenth-century life. Much attention has been devoted to Anne Lister's liaisons with upper-class women such as Eliza Raine, Isabella Norcliffe, Mariana Lawton, Maria Barlow, as well as her church union with Ann Walker.[149] However, Lister's

[149] Chris Rouslton has examined how in her letters and diaries; Lister adopted a masculine persona as a means of opting out of a heteronormative marriage. Instead, she forged a new kind of union with women such as Eliza Raine, Mariana Belcombe, and finally Ann Walker. This last union, however, was not an entirely happy one. Like many nineteenth-century marriages, Lister and Walker's church union was in part economically motivated. Like the Ladies of Llangollen before her, Lister took advantage of society's

diaries and correspondence also reveal that she was highly attuned to fashion trends and possessed a keen understanding of how clothing and accessories, like shawls, circumscribed social relationships. Lister and her diaries have been the subject of much historical research because, as Jill Liddington, maintains that Lister's diaries contain "a dazzlingly rich mix of reading, observation and activity."[150] Her writing makes frequent mention of shawls and their role in shaping social situations and maintaining class distinctions.

Throughout Lister's diaries, women are described buying shawls for themselves as well as for female friends and relations. For Lister, shopping was not only a form of entertainment but also a means of reinforcing class identity and social status. In one instance, Lister describes her friend inviting guests over to see the new shawls she bought in London: "We called at Northgate. Saw Miss Ibbetson's fine shawls & silks she has just brought from London"[151] Gathering to discuss shopping and shawls was not uncommon, The Wordsworth Trust contains a dyed fabric sample for a shawl that Mr. Sinclair presented at a dinner party presumably so that the other party-goers could examine the sample and give their approval.[152] Buying shawls and admiring clothing and accessories such as shawls was, therefore, a social event.

Having one's peers approve fashion choices was one way nineteenth-century women ensured that their clothing appropriately reflected their social standing. Appearance was a major

belief that lesbian desire did not truly exist and established a legal partnership with Ann Walker. Lister's role in the marriage is coded as male since she assumed control of all of Walker's property thanks to the union's legal standing. See Chris Roulston. "Marriage and its Queer Identifications in the Anne Lister Diaries," in *After Marriage in the Long Eighteenth Century: Literature, Law and Society,* ed. Jenny DiPlacidi and Karl Leydecker (Camden: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 193.

[150] Jill Liddington. "Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, Halifax (1791–1840): Her Diaries and the Historians." *History Workshop Journal* 35, no. 1 (1993): 48.

[151] Anne Lister. "Tuesday 18 May 1824,"in *I Know My Own Heart: The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791-1840* ed. Pamela Whitbread (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 343.

[152] Sir John Sinclair. "Note with piece of shawl cloth." 1989.163.85.1829. Jerwood Library, Grasmere, UK.

concern to Lister who valued her proximity to the wealthy aristocrats, and in Chris Roulston's view, her conservative politics shielded her from homophobic attacks.[153] Lister's concern with performing class distinction surfaces in her diaries when she mentions how she and Marian would write to friends for advice on how to dress their aunt. Lister and her sister Marian looked after their elderly aunt and sought to ensure that their aunt should appear wealthy and respectable as befitted her status.[154] Lister had a vested interest in ensuring that this status went unquestioned. One person whom Anne Lister did not believe to be displaying taste correctly was her friend and neighbour Emma Saltmarshe. In her diary, Lister frequently derides Emma for her vulgar taste and inability to recognize and acquire the appropriate signifiers of her class. Emma's lack of a robust intellect, coupled with her lower social status made her at times an embarrassment to Anne, who believed Emma could debase her social capital. She disliked Emma's taste in clothes, complaining that friend bought her clothes in town rather than in London: "Emma seemed sadly vulgar as she was shewing me her new pelisse from town that did not fit, & was telling of fashion, & my heart sighed after some better & higher bred companion I could love. "[155] While travelling with the Saltmarshes she complains that they did not have any servants to help them at that Emma's shawl looked cheap: "They had no servants. Emma had a shawl on, an imitation Kashmeer [sic] & they looked rather like mercantile people…."[156] Lister's friendships demonstrate how shawls acted as potent symbols of social capital and how they

[153] Chris Roulston. "The Revolting Anne Lister: The UK's First Modern Lesbian," *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 17, No.3-4 (2013): 27.
[154] Anne Lister. "Wednesday 19 May 1824,"*I Know My Own Heart: The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791-1840* ed. Pamela Whitbread (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 343.
[155] Anne Lister. "Monday 31 May 1824"in *I Know My Own Heart: The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791-1840* , 344.
[156] Anne Lister. "Wednesday 22 May 1822," in *I Know My Own Heart: The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791-1840* , 186.

solidified or fractured relationships, either through gift giving or by a discrepancy in what two women might be expected to wear.

Lister's correspondence reveals that she gifted a number of shawls to her female friends Vere Cameron, Countess de Bourke, Lady Stuart de Rothsay, and Countess Zamoyeka.[157] These letters also counter the conventional assumption that shawls were only to be gifted to women by male relations. On January 19, 1835, Lady Vere Cameron wrote to Anne Lister: "How am I to thank you for the warmest + lightest shawl ever felt and with the prettiest coloured lining it was possible to put in!"[158] Much like Geraldine Jewsbury's account of receiving a Kashmiri shawl, Cameron's thanks extol the same virtues which were commonly repeated in women's magazines; the shawl's warmth, softness, and lightweight wool. Among the rich and connected, purchasing and indulging in foreign luxuries was permissible. Although upper-class women were not criticized for buying shawls, they were nevertheless participants in the same conscious and unconscious colonial fantasies as their middle-class peers and the act of buying, wearing, and displaying shawls were everyday practices that helped to consolidate personal and class identity.

The Shawl and Working-class Consumption

In December 1862, the police constables in Warrington, Lancashire, received a letter from a Mrs. Garnhaus regarding an ongoing burglary investigation. Mrs. Garnhaus did not write to them herself but instead had a servant draft the letter for her. The message was intended to remind the constables that several stolen items had not yet been retrieved and asked the

[157] Lister Family of Shibden Hall, Family and Estate Records, Including Records of Anne Lister, Diarist (SH), West Calderdale Archives, Yorkshire, UK.
[158] Letter from Vere Cameron to Anne Lister, Whitehall January 19, 1835. SH_7-ML-831. Lister Family of Shibden Hall, Family and Estate Records, Including Records of Anne Lister, Diarist (SH), West Calderdale Archives, Yorkshire UK.

constables to "please cause further investigation at all pawnbrokers and second hand clothe shops in your town as it is thought more of the property is disposed of there."[159] Shawls retained their economic value even after having been bought and worn. As a result, shawls were among the first items a woman might pawn or sell if she needed money.[160] Mrs. Garnhaus' letter also demonstrates the range of shawls available to British consumers by the middle of the century. The letter makes mention of four shawls that had yet to be returned, the first a Paisley shawl with a white, scarlet, green and blue pattern, and the second was a puce llama shawl, followed by two black cloth shawls one of which had been dyed and reassembled. Other cases of stolen shawls suggest they were valuable possessions worth keeping and worth pilfering and therefore provided women with fungible assets.

For most of the early nineteenth century, members of the lower classes wore second-hand clothing. In their criticism of Neil McKendrick's account of Britain's consumer revolution, Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold challenged the belief that the lower classes emulated their social superiors by directing attention to the clothing worn by domestic servants. They shed light on the fact that until the mid-nineteenth century, domestic servants did not wear uniforms. Instead, they wore clothing chosen by their employer that reflected their employer's taste and personal sense of style.[161] Domestic servants could also expect to receive hand-me-downs from their employer or inherit clothing in the event of their employer's death.[162] Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to

[159] "A Letter to inform the police that property is still missing." December 1862. CBWA/1/618.Warrington County Borough Council-1831-1938, Lancashire posters and Handbills-1831-1863, Lancashire City Council Archives, Preston, UK.

[160] In the early decades of its publication, *Le Follet* featured advertisements for second-hand shawls, which were very much in demand among customers who did not have connections with India or the ability to shop in Paris, see Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel. *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 237.

[161]Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold. "Consumerism and the industrial Revolution,' *Social History*, 15, no.2 (1990): 44.

[162] Fine and Leopold,45

conclude that those in service were eager to imitate those they worked for. Fine and Leopold stress that "The preference for cash (from selling hand-me-downs) over the pleasures to be had from keeping and wearing the master's old clothes suggests a definite limit to the allure of emulation."[163] Nevertheless, poorer women did want to wear clothing that commanded respect and testified to their dignity. People of all classes were eager to assert their agency and make their own sartorial decisions. Clothing was, therefore, a limited form of self-expression and identity for domestic workers as well as for the upper and middle classes. Despite the growing popularity of ready-to-wear clothing that had begun in the 1730s,[164] theft continued to reflect what poorer consumers valued and underscores the shawl's significance as a marker of respectability.

Police records throughout Great Britain devoted similar attention to stolen clothing. The staggering number of shawls stolen in Warrington was by no means unique. According to Beverly Lemire: "The choice of articles stolen stands as a measure of public perception of desirable, marketable commodities."[165] Those in need of money would pawn their clothes as evidenced in *Mary Barton* when the titular working-class character sets off to sell her desireable clothing:

> It was getting late, and that was so much the better. She went to a pawn-shop, and took off her finery in a back room. She was known by the people, and had a character for honesty, so she had no very great difficulty in inducing them to let her have a suit of outer clothes, befitting the wife of a working-man, a black silk bonnet, a printed gown, a plaid shawl, dirty and rather worn to be sure, but which had a sort of sanctity to the eyes of the street-walker as being the appropriate garb of that happy class to which she could never, never more belong.[166]

[163] Fine and Leopold, 45
[164] Flanders, 85.
[165] Beverly Lemire. "The Theft of Clothes and Popular Consumerism in Modern England,"258.
[166] Gaskell, *Mary Barton,* 237.

Clothing acted as security, and items like shawls retained their economic value for significant periods of time. In *Mary Barton,* Mary's aunt is a sex worker who borrows a shawl to appear more respectable. Although Gaskell is known for inviting sympathy toward the working classes, her novels undoubtedly contend with the mutability of social status. Likewise, in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, an uneducated Irish servant steals her mistress' Kashmiri shawl and uses it to obtain respectable work as a teacher on the Continent. The danger in this scene lies in the fact that simply by wearing an authentic Kashmiri shawl, a thief could masquerade as a lady and teach students in what was considered a lesser kind of English. Such instances cut to the heart of nineteenth-century anxieties surrounding taste and authenticity. The interest and anxiety surrounding commodity culture and societal status primed Victorian society for the commodity spectacle of the 1851 Great Exhibition when citizens would transform into consumers.[167]

Empire and Commodity Culture at the Great Exhibition

Amazed I pass
From glass to glass,
Deloighted I survey 'em;
Fresh wondthers grows
Before me nose
In this sublime Musayum!

Look, here's a fan
From far Japan,
A sabre from Damasco:
There's shawls ye get
From far Thibet,
And cotton prints from Glasgow
-W.M. Thackeray, *The Crystal Palace*[168]

[167] Herbert L. Sussman. *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation and the Rise of the Machine* (Santa Barbara CA: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 67.
[168] William Makepeace Thackeray. "The Crystal Palace," 1851.

These lines are taken from William M. Thackeray's (1811-1863) poem *The Crystal Place*, which he wrote in tribute to the 1851 Great Exhibition. The poem expresses admiration for the event and the novel items it had on display, yet Thackeray is intent on pointing out some of the unease surrounding the exhibition and the variety of people and items it attracted to Britain's capital. The poem contains a strong satirical strain and is written from the perspective of a working-class visitor who is describing his visit to his wife who could not afford a visitor's ticket. The short verses and simplistic rhymes coupled with the speaker's accent indicate a lack of refinement that was originally unwelcome at the exhibition. The speaker's admiration for these "wondthers" is comical given that many of the items on display were consumer goods and is suggestive of the kind of magical thinking which Jean Baudrillard argues is a defining feature of the consumer society.[169] Although Kashmiri shawls were in the Crystal Palace's India Pavilion, the speaker is instead taken by the "shawls from Thibet," a marketing term used to sell imitations of Kashmiri shawls.[170] The British public was indeed in awe of the Great Exhibition, however, discourse from this period was ambivalent towards the way in which the exhibition permitted different classes to meet one another.

The Great Exhibition shaped the Victorian understanding of empire, industry, craft, and by extension, the shawl. Originally intended as a large trade show to improve British manufacturing, the Great Exhibition grew to an unprecedented size, attracting industrialists and laypeople from around the globe.[171] When Queen Victoria inaugurated the exhibition on May 1, 1851, the event became a serendipitous advocate for capitalism and imperialism. Owen Jones

[169] Jean Baudrillard. *The Birth of the Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*., trans. George Ritzer. (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998), 31.
[170] Daly, 247.
[171] Jeffrey A. Auerbach. *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 107.

and his fellow organizers of the Great Exhibition promoted what they termed 'oriental styles' to reinvigorate British art and design.[172] Those who had prepared the Great Exhibition aimed to blend British manufacture with Indian design practices by offering to teach manufacturers about beauty and harmony in design.[173] In this sense, the Great Exhibition not only reshaped Britons' relationship to commodities and consumption but also altered the public's understanding of art and craft whereby Julie F. Codell argues, "craft became the site of converging ideological, visual and commercial assumptions."[174] Owen Jones is retroactively considered to be part of a cohort of Victorian reformers who sought to improve the lives of middle-class and working-class people through art and beauty albeit by different political methods.[175] By the 1840s, rather than catering to the sensibilities of the masses, men of taste wanted to educate the masses on how to desire and consume correctly and in doing so, improve the lives of working men and women argued for the importance of art and design in improving one's quality of life and relationship to broader society.[176]

When the Great Exhibition first opened on May 1, 1851, the cost of an entry ticket was one pound and the trade show succeeded in welcoming a large crowd of visitors on its first day.[177] Given the immense cost of production, however, the exhibition's organizers chose to lower the admission price to a guinea, and soon thereafter, to a shilling in the hope of

[172] David Brett. "The Management of Colour: The Kashmir Shawl in a Nineteenth-Century Debate." *Textile History* 29, 2 123-133(1998): 124.
[173] Julie Codell, "Imperial Exchanges of Goods and National Identities: Victorian and Swadeshi Views of Crafts under the Raj.," in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence*, ed. J. Anderson 311-319 (Melbourne University Press, 2009), 374.
[174] Codell, 374.
[175] David Brett The Management of Colour: The Kashmir Shawl in a Nineteenth-Century Debate. *Textile History* 29, 2 (1998):124.
[176] Flanders, 9.
[177] Auerbach, 145.

recuperating their losses.[178] This now meant that a much larger portion of the British public could visit the Crystal Palace and be exposed to Britain's imperial vision. Although the Great Exhibition was not created to disseminate imperial ideology, the staggering number of commodities from Britain's colonies and the sense of technological innovation between Britain and France gave shape to a clear sense of national pride and superiority.[179]

The competition between nations was palpable as Britain and France boasted of their imperial holdings in an ostentatious display of commodities. According to Lara Kriegel, "In 1851, the [Indian] subcontinent seemed to be a living museum which showcased 'industrial habits' preserved in their ancient forms…This continuity separated ageless India not only from the industrialized nations of Europe, but also from ancient societies such as Egypt and Assyria that only had 'ruins' to offer modernity."[180] The Victorian imagination did not allow for South Aisa to alter and evolve and the India display presented objects like shawls as part of an ancient and unbroken history. These displays of shawls contrasted with the machine-made imitation Kashmiri shawls, which were part of France and Britain's exhibits. This juxtaposition made Indian craft appear technologically inferior but also exotic and alluring. To British consumers, the shawl evoked the work of South Asian textile workers, which provided a contrast to the increasingly mechanized British manufacturing. The exhibition confirmed Britain's belief that it was technologically superior to India and, therefore, worthy of dominating it. In other words, for Britain, ownership of India and its symbols enabled it to compete with France and incorporate India's cultural prestige into the empire.

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[178] Auerbach, 147.
[179] Lara Kreigel, "Narrating the Subcontinent in 1851: India at the Crystal Palace.," in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Louise Purbrick (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001), 152.
[180] Kreigel, 158.

Along with xenophobic reactions to the number of foreign people in London, the British press was also concerned about the influx of working-class and rural labourers visiting the Crystal Palace. These fears stemmed, in part, from the recent memory of working-class uprisings such as The Gordon Riots in 1780, the French Revolution, Peterloo in 1819, the Hungry Forties, and the wave of workers' revolts that had spread throughout Continental Europe in 1848.[181] This anxiety surrounding the mingling of different classes is salient in the *Punch* cartoon entitled "The Pound and the Shilling," which depicts a wealthy family meeting its working-class counterpart. The contrast between the two groups is clear with one looking dirty and dishevelled, slouching while the other appears conventional and respectable. This illustration underscores the culture shock many visitors experienced as they met the "other half" of their country. To the nation's relief and the press' dismay, very little came of this encounter. The new industrial machinery and foreign consumer goods on display charmed rather than inflamed working-class visitors, as Judith Flanders notes, "the volatile mob had become the sedate consumer."[182]

The Great Exhibition not only warmed visitors to the idea of democracy, but also to imperialism. Another illustration from *Punch* shows industrial workers inside cases as part of exhibition to ask why industrial workers' contribution had not been included in the largest trade show of the century. The British workers in glass cases represent the forgotten labour of those who created the commodities on display which eerily anticipated displays and exhibits of colonialized peoples. The commodities on display confirmed the peaceful and benevolent character of British imperialism which visitors believed was leading other nations forward through trade.[183] Eager to impress visitors with its colonial possessions, imperial displays were at

[181] Flanders, 28.
[182] Flanders, 41
[183] Goodlad, 42.

the heart of the Crystal Palace and the famous Koh-I-Nor diamond at the centre for all to see.[184] The exhibit presented the colonies in a way that projected Britain's dominion over other parts of the world and reinforced imperial ideology.[185] This endeavour succeeded in attracting more interest in Britain's colonies evidenced by the fact that the Indian crafts were the most discussed element of the exhibition.[186]

The Great Exhibition reinforced imperial ideology and ignited an even greater interest in commodities and consumerism. As Auerbach contends: "The Great Exhibition taught British men and women to want things and to buy things, new things and better things. While it does not represent the birth of a consumer society, it may well represent its coming of age, as it put side by side the most dissimilar objects."[187] The transformation of exotic raw materials into consumer items had long fascinated the public. For instance, one magazine of this period admired how whale bones could be used to create delicate hats for women, "Fashion, upheld by coquetry and impressed by grateful feelings, has found in the ruins of these objects ornaments to charm us … and the eye will feel less wonder in looking at the monstrous cetaceous mass extended over the place Louis XV than in seeing on the sofa of some sumptuous boudoir, beside of an Indian Cachemire shawl and a veil of English lace."[188] The article praises the technological ability to transform raw materials into luxe British whalebone hats and corsets and ranks them among respected commodities like the Kashmiri shawl.

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[184] Kriegel, 167.
[185] Goodlad, 42.
[186]Thomas Prasch. "'A Strange Incongruity': The Imaginary India of the International Exhibitions," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 34, no.5(2012): 481.
[187] Auerbach, 121.
[188] "Newest Parisian Fashions: From the most Authentic Sources." *World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons*, September 1829.

To the disappointment and disbelief of the British public, the exhibition's organizers repeatedly stated that their intention was not to promote consumer products. Britain was experiencing the growth of commodity culture and at the time of the Great Exhibition, the ability to amass consumer goods was a clear marker of social distinction.[189] While Britain's accumulation of raw materials and increased manufacturing ability was evident, so too was the gulf between affordable manufactured goods and skilled craftsmanship. Speaking to this point, Michelle Maskiell asserts that: "The Great Exhibition enhanced an ideological link between the critique of Western industrial products based on poor design, and the celebration of Indian hand-crafted products because of their supposedly appropriate style of ornament."[190] The Great Exhibition undoubtedly endorsed the project of empire, but it also questioned who had the right to inherit the wonders and trinkets of the British empire.

The influx of South Asian textiles to Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was made affordable by the inequitable business practices of the British East India Company. For people living in Britain, these consumer products increased their material comfort and made the acquisition of goods a worthy pursuit. For women who had limitations placed on their self-expression and public behaviour, clothing and accessories became a socially acceptable vehicle of self-expression and a means of connecting with others. Accessories which were purposefully frivolous signalled a woman's sense of taste and her social distinction. Consumer pleasure generated interest in manufacturing and the marvellous process through which raw materials and machinery created the beautiful furnishings of bourgeois and middle-class homes.[191] Buying and wearing shawls not only enabled British women to feel as though they were participating in the

[189] Flanders, 26.
[190] Maskiell, 47.
[191] Flanders, 9.

march of progress, it also helped them to express class affiliations and personal taste within the confines of societal expectation placed upon their gender. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the shawl's status as an instrument of social distinction helped to solidify social conventions. The shawl's journey through the first fifty years of the nineteenth century demonstrates how a foreign item like the shawl came to uphold societal norms in Britain. British manufacturing's ability to produce convincing imitations of Kashmiri shawls and the triumph of the Great Exhibition secured the public's belief in their nation's technological and societal progress and, for a bit longer, would succeed in justifying colonial intervention in other parts of the world.

Chapter 3—Between Art and Object: The Kashmiri Shawl and the Indian Rebellion

In the 1876 Tory political satire entitled *The Pin in the Queen's Shawl* a stand-in for Prime Minister Disraeli[192] (1804-1881) seeks to convince Parliament of the need for a pin to be placed in Queen Victoria's Indian shawl. The story describes an inconvenient wind that is blowing the Queen's shawl away and, therefore, requires a pin to fasten it in place. The shawl is of course an allegory for India, which risks flying away due to political upheaval.[193] The pin symbolizes The Royal Titles Act, which Disraeli and his government believe will secure India's place within the British Empire.[194] What is striking about this story is the way in which India is allegorized as a shawl draped over the Queen's shoulders. In this imagery, the shawl is metonymic of India and its uneasy ownership is linked to the Queen's body. That the shawl belongs to Victoria is never questioned, but to keep it she needs a pin, or an act of parliament to secure her possession.

The Indian Rebellion of 1857 shattered Britain's certainty in the stability of its empire. The Indian Rebellion had resulted in violence in Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, and Jhansi. Although far more Indians than British were killed and injured, the British government and public interpreted this event as an affront to the nation. Scholars have frequently pointed to the British press' gendered reading of the Indian Rebellion. For instance, *The Times* in London took great

[192] More work attention could be devoted to how Benjamin Disraeli uses Kashmiri shawls and the Kashmir Valley to express political concerns about India in novels such as *Alroy* and *Tancred*., see Sheila A. Spector. "Orientalism in Disraeli's Alroy," in *Interrogating Orientalism*, ed. Diane Long Hoeveler and Jeffrey Cass (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006); Matthew Scott. "Disraeli and Scott: Oriental Aristocracy and the Tory Novel." *The Wordsworth Circle* 43, no. 2 (2012): 98–103; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 192.

[193] *The Pin in the Queen's Shawl, sketched in Indian ink on 'Imperial Crown,' from a Conservative stand-point* (London: Remington and Co. 1876).

[194] The Royal Titles Act of 1878 made Queen Victoria Empress of India in an attempt to prevent future rebellion.

pains to emphasize how the rebellion had defiled the bodies of white British women.[195] Claudia Klaver has argued that the Rebellion made explicit British women's role in supporting British imperialism by "simultaneously exposing British women in northern India to the full violence of Britain's imperial project and revealing the ideological work these women were performing for that project."[196] With the dissolution of the British East India Company and the establishment of the British Raj in 1858, India ceased to be understood as a passive colony. In the decades that ensued, the Indian Subcontinent came to embody danger and volatility. Christopher Herbert, in particular, has suggested that news of the event shocked and fascinated the British public, because British imperialism in India had appeared so secure.[197] Asian commodities had been widely available to British consumers since the eighteenth century; however, the growth of British manufacturing and the Indian Rebellion of 1857 prompted a revaluation of foreign consumer products and their influence on British women. Consequently, Kashmiri shawls, a quintessentially South Asian and imperial item, were attributed new meanings.

Although *The Pin in The Queen's Shawl* presents the Kashmiri shawl as an emblem of India, at the time of its publication, the shawl had been cast aside by British fashion. During the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, the Kashmiri shawl communicated British women's agency within British imperialism as well as their personal and class identities in an increasingly powerful consumer culture. The 1850s witnessed two significant events with contradicting cultural messages. On the one hand, the Great Exhibition substantiated the belief in Britain's

[195] Rebecca Merritt. "Public Perceptions of 1857: An Overview of British Responses to the Indian Uprising," in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857. Volume 2, Britain and the Indian Uprising*, ed. Andrea Major and Crispin Bates (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013) ,13.
[196] Claudia Klaver. "Domesticity Under Siege: British Women and Imperial Crisis at the Siege of Lucknow, 1857." *Women's Writing* 8, no. 1 (2001): 22.
[197] Christopher Herbert. *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 22.

civilizing mission and the societal benefits of consumerism. On the other, the Indian Rebellion demonstrated that Britain's presence in the Subcontinent was unwelcome and that its people were more capable of violence than previously imagined. Britain had become a consumer society largely as a result of imperialism and its adoption of Asian goods. These same goods, however, posed a threat to British women's bodies. As a result, the cultural discourse surrounding consumption devoted attention to conspicuous consumption and the corrupting effects foreign goods had on women who had gained greater access to the public sphere. This chapter explores the role of the shawl within discourses about art, race, and gender, to examine the ways in which the turmoil of the later nineteenth century contributed to the reassessment of the Kashmiri shawl's cultural valence, and ultimately to the Kashmiri shawl's shrinking relevance in British fashion.

The shawl's decline highlights an increasing awareness of the provenance of foreign commodities and shifting attitudes toward women and gender in the late Victorian period. At the end of the nineteenth century, boteh-shawls no longer enveloped the bodies of fashionable women. Early generations of scholars such as John Irwin and Monique Lévi-Strauss[198] attributed the Kashmiri shawl's decline in production and popularity to European women's changing tastes. Since then, Michelle Maskiell and Chitralekha Zutshi have criticized this Eurocentric interpretation of consumption which incorrectly assumed that Europe was the largest market for Kashmiri shawls.[199] These scholars have instead pointed to larger political and economic trends

[198] John Irwin. *The Kashmir Shawl*. (Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum Monograph, No. 29. London: H.M. Stationery Off, 1973) and Monique Lévi-Strauss. *The Romance of the Cashmere Shawl*. (Mapin International, New York, 1987).
[199] Chitralekha Zutshi. "'Designed for Eternity': Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain." *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 420–40 and Michelle Maskiell. "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000." *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 27–65.

in Europe and Kashmir which harmed the shawl industry. Although European fashion did not bring about the shawl's demise on its own, it is worth considering what factors made the Kashmiri shawl less desirable to British consumers. The first chapter of this thesis discussed the ways in which British women used the Kashmiri shawl to exert sexual and economic agency through imperial symbols and touched on the concerns surrounding contagion and miscegenation. This chapter will more fully examine the hybrid elements of the shawl in the last fifty years of the nineteenth century.

Key to understanding the shawl's shifting cultural importance in the nineteenth century is the concept of hybridity. In *The Location of Culture,* Homi K. Bhabha defines hybridity as a process through which colonial forces derive their ideological power from the perceived differences between the colonizer and the colonized. These differences, in turn, justify the colonizer's presence. Despite efforts to assimilate the colonized into the colonizer's culture and customs, the colonized subject can never be fully accepted into the colonizer's world if colonization is to be sustainable. Under these fraught conditions, hybridity begins to emerge. Hybridity then underpins colonial authority while also shaping new identities for the colonizer and the colonized through repeated processes of discrimination.[200] As a result, Bhabha asserts that "the articulation of an ambivalent space where rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, [makes] its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory—or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency,"[201] which would come to characterize how British consumers related to Asian commodities like Kashmiri shawls.

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[200] Julie Codell. Imperial Exchanges of Goods and National Identities: Victorian and Swadeshi Views of Crafts under the Raj." In *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration. Convergence*, ed. J. Anderson (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press,2009), 375.
[201] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture.* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 158-160.

Reorienting India: British Public Understanding of the Indian Rebellion of 1857

The shawl's status as a hybrid object has already been thoughtfully explored. For instance, Suchitra Choudhury has drawn attention to how Wilkie Collins' (1824-1889) *Armadale* uses Lydia Gwilt's Paisley shawl to illustrate the threat of democracy and the possibility of a mutiny of the masses.[202] Prior to Collins' novels, most portrayals of South Asian people in British fiction and writing had been painted with Orientalist strokes. These representations emphasized the sensuality, meekness, wisdom, and worldliness of the South Asian population. As Suchitra Choudhury argues, in the decades following the Indian Rebellion symbolic reminders of India became increasingly threatening and subversive to British culture.[203]As has been previously mentioned, racial distinctions between South Asians and white colonizers became more strictly enforced during the 1830s.[204] Just as the social worlds of British colonizers and South Asian natives began to drift apart, the 1857 rebellion justified greater separation.[205]

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Western Europe underwent rapid urbanization which roused fears of racial and class mixing in the face of accelerating globalization and democratization. Urbanization and the new roles available to women altered the consumer landscape and by extension, the shawl's cultural meaning. Considering these changes, the Kashmiri shawl and the women who wore them adapted to these new social realities by forging new identities in the anticipation of a new century. Although the Kashmiri shawl had persisted in British fashion cycles for close to a century, by the 1870s the shawl industries in Britain and

[202] Suchitra Choudhury "'It was an Imitashon to be Sure'" The Imitation Indian Shawl in Design Reform and Imaginative Fiction." *Textile History*, 46, no.2 (2015): 189-21.
[203] Suchitra Choudhury."Fashion and 'The Indian Mutiny' the Red Paisley Shawl in Wilkie Collins' Armadale." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 44, no.4 (2016): 817-832.
[204] E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj c.1800-1947* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 40.
[205] Bhabha, 292.

Kashmir were on the verge of collapse. Even in its decline, the shawl was sensitive to cultural shifts—new colonial relations between Britain and India, increased urban shopping experiences, and British women's emergence in the public sphere,—all of which made Kashmiri shawls increasingly suggestive of India and its challenge to British power and culture.

Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* illustrates commodity culture's reach in late nineteenth-century Paris, and how items like Kashmiri shawls contributed to the emotions and textures of urban life. While at the beginning of the century Kashmiri shawls in paintings were symbolic of power and of empire, by the 1860s their meaning had shifted to represent new aspects of a consumer society.[206] The marriage market positioned women's bodies as goods that could be exchanged, however, shopping altered this circumstance by having women seen in public, buying and selling consumer products by themselves. The sentiment that women were both consumers and consumed is echoed in Benjamin's statement that "fashion has opened the business of dialectical exchange between woman and ware."[207] In the past decade this relationship has been explored in greater detail. In *Come Buy Come Buy,* Krista Lysack unpacked literary portrayals of consumption and the act of shopping to argue that Britons believed foreign commodities had a corrupting effect on women.[208] In *Shopping for Pleasure,* Erika Rappaport outlined the changes to late Victorian culture as women became increasingly involved in shopping and other consumption-related social activities outside of the home.[209] Judith Flanders

[206] Meanwhile Therese Dolan has written about the multivalent meanings of shawls in the paintings of Édouard Manet and his juxtaposition of desirable consumer items like shawls alongside sex workers, see Therese Dolan, see "Fringe Benefits: Manet's Olympia and Her Shawl." *The Art Bulletin* 97, no. 4 (2015): 409–429.
[207] Walter Benjamin. *The Arcades Project*., trans., Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge MASS: Belknap Press, 1999), 881.
[208] Krista Lysack. *Come Buy, Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women's Writing*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).
[209] Erika Diane Rappaport. *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

has also contributed to this body of work by exploring the changes to leisure in nineteenth-century Britain and their cultural significance.[210]

This period of British cultural history is noteworthy because as Lauren Goodlad argues, "Opening in the aftermath of the Indian rebellion and closing with the emergence of the New Imperialism, this supposed age of equipoise was noteworthy for its reinvention of empire at a time when Britain was also reinventing itself as a mass democracy. It is a period to which no criticism focused wholly on the European crises of 1848 can do justice."[211] The New Imperialism constituted a new cultural era that was increasingly outward in its geopolitical focus and the political impact of the Indian Rebellion is salient in the literature of the day. As such, fears of colonial and metropolitan upheaval generated narrative tension in the works of novelists Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon as well as in Christina Rosetti's poem *Goblin Market*. For instance, in Collins' *Armadale* the spectre of a veiled Lydia Gwilt in a black dress and a red Paisley shawl haunts the narrative precisely because she reminds readers of violence in India. Although Collins is critical of Britain's treatment of India, his sensation fiction nevertheless capitalizes on British readers' sense of unease. As we shall see, shawls themselves could also incite a similar sense of apprehension

The cultural repercussions of the Indian Rebellion cannot be overstated and its effects on British culture are well documented. Gautam Chakravarty,[212] Suchitra Choudhury, Catherine

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[210] Judith Flanders. *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain*. (London: Harper Press, 2006).
[211] Lauren M. E. Goodlad. *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic: Realism, Sovereignty, and Transnational Experience*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29.
[212] Gautam Chakravarty.*The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination*. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 43, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Suchitra Choudhury. "Fashion and the 'Indian Mutiny': The 'Red Paisley Shawl' in Wilkie Collins's Armadale." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 44, no. 4 (2016): 817–32; Catherine Hall. *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Andrea Major and Crispin Bates. *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian*

Hall, Andrea Major and Crispin Bates, Nancy L. Paxton, and Saul David have all discussed the shock this incident produced as well as its effects on British relations with India as seen in Diane Hoeveler and Jeffrey Cass' *Interrogating Orientalism*.[213] This disturbance was framed in relation to white women's bodies. Alternatively, the event could also be understood in relation to Queen Victoria's body as discussed by Maria Grever[214] and made salient *in The Pin in The Queen's Shawl*. This distrust toward South Asia, combined with the rise of commodity culture in Europe led to excitement and anxiety surrounding the widespread ability of Asian commodities. Conservative critics believed that shopping could bankrupt the British family both financially and morally. For example, Anne Anderson observed that much of the British public believed that aestheticism was "a licence to shop, rather than a renouncement of materialism and living free from all 'fleshly' distractions."[215] The dangers of over-acculturation which threatened the purity of chaste white women accrued alongside increasingly racialized advertising. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock put forth the important argument that white supremacist messaging and the perceived taint of earning money were conveyed in soap advertisements.[216] Thus, within the vexed context of consumer culture and imperial conflict, the Kashmiri shawl acquired a new racial subtext.

Uprising of 1857. Volume 2, Britain and the Indian Uprising (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013); Nancy L. Paxton. *Writing Under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830-1947*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Saul David. *The Indian Mutiny: 1857*. (London: Penguin, 2003).

[213] Diane Long Hoeveler and Jeffrey Cass. *Interrogating Orientalism: Contextual Approaches and Pedagogical Practices*, edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and Jeffrey Cass (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2006).

[214] Maria Grever. "Colonial Queens: Imperialism, Gender and the Body Politic during the Reign of Victoria and Wilhelmina." *Dutch Crossing* 26, no. 1 (2002): 99–114.

[215] Anne Anderson. "'Chinamania': Collecting Old Blue for The House Beautiful c.1860-1900," in *Material Cultures 1440-1920: The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting*, ed., John Potvin and Alla Myzelev (Farnham England: Ashgate Press, 2009), 117.

[216] Anne McClintock. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995).

The establishment of the British Raj in India also affected the experience of British in India, who developed increasingly oppressive relationships with the native population. The experience of British colonizers has been documented in Margaret MacMillan's *The Women of the Raj,*[217] David Gilmour's *The Ruling Caste*[218], and Lawrence James *Raj: The Unmaking of British India*.[219] While the experience of living under the British Raj can be located in the Nancy L. Paxton's *Writing under the Raj*[220], as well as *Kashmir and The British Raj*[221] by Robert A. Huttenback. The Kashmiri shawl's place under this new form of political governance has been explored most notably in Chitralekha Zutshi's *Languages of Belonging* which outlines the economic conditions which rendered Kashmir's shawl industry unsustainable.[222] In a similar vein, Paul Sharrad has written about the royal patronage of Kashmir's declining shawl industry in the late nineteenth-century and the political significance of the famous Srinagar shawl commissioned for the Prince of Wales' visit.[223] Similarly, Pallavi Patke has demonstrated the significance of zardozi embroidery to the British in India and how it helped to forestall the decline of the shawl industry.[224] While Kashmir struggled to maintain its industry and skilled labour force, shawl industries in Norwich and Paisley also endeavored to maintain their industries and therefore shifted their focus away from manufacturing thread for shawls.

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[217] Margaret MacMillan. *Women of the Raj: The Mothers, Wives, and Daughters of the British Empire in India*. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2007).
[218] David Gilmour. *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2006).
[219] Lawrence James. *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*. (London: Little, Brown, 1997).
[220] Nancy L. Paxton. *Writing Under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830–1947*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 1999).
[221] Robert A, Huttenback. *Kashmir and the British Raj 1847-1947*. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[222] Chitralekha Zutshi. *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[223] Paul Sharrad. "Following the Map: A Postcolonial Unpacking of a Kashmir Shawl." *Textile* 2, no. 1 (2004): 64–78.
[224] Pallavi Patke "Fashionable Adaptation and Commercial Consumption of Indian Gold Embroidery and the Implicated Imperial Politics (C.1850–1910)." *Textile* 13, no. 2 (2015): 134–151.

The Indian Rebellion was one of the most popular novel topics in the nineteenth century, with the majority of these novels being published in the 1890s.[225] Although these novels performed the ideological work of empire, they enacted critiques of Britain's global imperialism. Much has been written about the racial and sexual slant of the press' reaction to these events, however, that the widespread xenophobic response from the British public and press bore strong similarities to Britain's many other colonial wars. In *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination*, Chakravarty contends that the violence of the rebellion was part of a larger uneasiness toward the legitimacy of British rule and its white supremacist justifications.[226] In the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, British officials needed to determine whether the cause of the uprising was due to dissatisfaction in the military or to a more troubling dissatisfaction with British governance. The concern surrounding the violence has roots in earlier colonial questionings such as the "trial of Warren Hastings, the quarrel between the Orientalists and the Anglicists, the conflict between the missionaries and the Company and the more recent controversy surrounding the annexation of Awadh" which had given way to " a struggle between expediency and legitimacy, between the violent applications of military power and colonial aggrandisement, and the competing narratives of justification."[227] Lauren Goodlad concurs by stating that the Indian Rebellion incited an ideological crisis for "the liberals and radicals who struggled to reconcile an increasingly formal imperial agenda with the nation's professed commitments to advancing freedom."[228] Thus, while late Victorian print culture held strong racialized views about South Asia, justifying Britain's imperial project became increasingly contentious. In consequence, art became one of the main ways to levy critiques against British

[225] Chakravarty, 3-6.
[226] Chakravarty, 32-39.
[227] Chakravarty, 23-45.
[228] Goodlad, 40.

imperialism. Despite opposing the state of British imperialism, these critiques were, nevertheless, attempts to shield British culture from the effects of hybridity and re-establish a racial hierarchy within the British Empire.

Art Industry, and Imperial Aesthetics

Five years after the Great Exhibition, one of its organizers, Owen Jones published *The Grammar of Ornament,* a compilation of ornamental and decorative art from Oriental and so-called "savage tribes," in the hopes of improving the quality of British manufacturing and design.[229] It was Jones' belief that oriental art was governed by certain principles which could elevate British design and forestall the nation's artistic decline. *The Grammar of Ornament* failed to achieve this ambitious purpose, nor did it provide complete illustrations of the decorative art nor any formal or contextual information about the designs it was displaying.[230] In spite of these shortcomings, Jones' work proved influential in shaping the discussions surrounding art and industry vis-à-vis India and by extension, the aesthetic prism through which Britons perceived the shawl. Soon after Jones published this text, the Indian Rebellion occurred and these aesthetic views would evolve and take on a new character during the ensuing decades.

Less than a year after the declared end of the Indian Rebellion, the British art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) gave a lecture at the South Kensington Museum in London called *The Deteriorative Power of Conventional Art of Nations* later published as *The Two Paths*. The lecture compares the cultural and artistic output of India and Scotland, two nations known for their production of shawls. Like Owen Jones, Ruskin argued that British art could improve by

[229] David Brett. "The Management of Colour: The Kashmir Shawl in a Nineteenth-Century Debate." *Textile History* 29, no. 2 (1998): 124.
[230] Codell, 374

further incorporating elements of South Asian design. However, unlike Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament*, Ruskin's lecture is imbued with the recent memory of the Indian Rebellion and, as a result, acquires a strong racial bent. This association of India with shawls was a powerful one, and Catherine Hall explains that: "If the West Indies was primarily associated with sugar in the mind of the English consumer, India featured first as the land of Kashmir shawls."[231] For Ruskin, Kashmiri shawls exemplified how South Asian art and design could be extracted to create better British products. Ruskin makes this point, while never acknowledging the Kashmiri shawl as a work of art. David Brett explains that to Ruskin and his peers, "The shawls were 'servile ornament' without relation to nature,"[232] a qualifier that criticized South Asian art and culture to re-establish India's subordinate position in the British empire.

In his earlier work, *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin sought to sketch the outlines of a "northern" and a "southern Gothic" which could offer an explanation as to the differences between the art and national character of northern and southern Europe. In consequence, the text affirms Britain and northern Europe's cultural superiority.[233] Ruskin attempts to prove a similar point in *The Two Paths*, by comparing the national temperaments of Scotland and India. On the subject of India, Ruskin explains:

> On the one side you have a race rejoicing in art, and eminently and universally endowed with the gift of it; on the other you have a people careless of art, and apparently incapable of it, their utmost effort hitherto reaching no farther than to the variation of the positions of the bars of colour in square chequers. And we are thus urged naturally to enquire what is the effect on the moral character, in each nation, of this vast difference in their pursuits and apparent capacities? And whether those rude chequers of the tartan, or the exquisitely fancied involutions of the Cashmere, fold habitually over the noblest hearts? We have had our answer. Since the race of man began its course of sin on this earth, nothing has

[231] Catherine Hall. *Civilising Subjects,* 284.
[232] Brett, 130
[233] Daryl Ogden, "The Architecture of Empire: 'Oriental' Gothic and the Problem of British Identity in Ruskin's Venice." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 25, no.1, (1997): 113.

> ever been done by it so significative of all bestial, and lower than bestial degradation, as the acts the Indian race in the year that has just passed by.[234]

Textile metaphors abound as Ruskin attests to his belief that South Asian art reflects its nation's capacity for artistic brilliance and barbarity in equal measure. Ruskin asks his audience to devote more attention to what is present in nature, to pay attention to the small and intricate details which will contribute to a larger and more beautiful whole. In Ruskin's view, this approach to art is best exemplified by, "[t]he skill with which the thirteenth century illuminators in books, and the Indians in shawls and carpets.[235]" In spite of these qualities, Ruskin does not believe Kashmiri shawls and other South Asian works of art are deserving of the artistic achievement bestowed on Europe's academies of art stating that "with so many other artifices which are quite instinctive and unteachable, that it is of little use to dwell upon them."[236] In this instance, Ruskin ascribes a mystical quality to shawl-making which discourages any kind of thoughtful artistic consideration. Daryl Ogden asserts that "By morally figuring Indian architecture in disadvantaged relation to its Scottish counterpart, Ruskin performs the ideological work of empire, at once accounting for Britain's domination of India and, implicitly, justifying the British Empire's activities elsewhere around the world."[237] Ruskin's lecture, therefore, is an important juncture in the discussion of art, race, and empire because it articulated the belief that South Asia's innate instinct for beauty was best exemplified by the Kashmiri shawl, but could also translate to violent passion.

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[234] John Ruskin. "The Two Paths," in *Sesames and Lilies, The Two Paths and The King of The Golden River* (London and Toronto: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1923), 89.
[235] The carpets Ruskin is referring to are most likely the bright carpets manufactured in India's colonial prisons which were sold to British consumers, see Natasha Eaton,"The industry of colour: Art, Design and Dyeing between Britain and India, 1851-96,"in *Art Versus Industry?: New Perspectives on Visual and Industrial Cultures in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, eds., Kate Nichols, Rebecca Wade, and Gabriel Williams. Studies in Design & Material Culture. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 225.
[236] John Ruskin. *Sesames and Lilies, The Two Paths and The King of The Golden River,* 237.
[237] Ogden, 111.

The Great Exhibition marked a moment of pivot in how Britons related to mass-market objects and the Kashmiri shawl became an important object at the heart of British artistic debates. Art critics were attracted to the Kashmiri shawl because of the harmony of its components, its intricate detailing, in addition to the vibrant colours and iridescent sheen.[238] The Kashmiri shawl's use of fine detail and vivid oriental colours had already begun to influence visual art,[239] which Natasha Eaton believes "blurred the boundaries between art and industry, art and craft."[240] In a similar vein, David Brett contends "the period of the shawl almost exactly coincides with the period in which the prestige of the Academies was undermined and finally destroyed. The Academic *episteme* and hierarchy of practices disintegrated as alternative patrons, schools and artistic intentions proliferated; the story of their proliferation is that of the creation of a modern culture."[241] The critical assessment of what constituted "good" and "bad" art became increasingly vague and inconsistent especially as elements of South Asian art like colour and pattern, appeared more and more in British art. The gradual realization that South Asian art and culture had permeated Britain's visual and textural landscape began to alarm critics who felt the need to establish methods of borrowing from South Asian culture without any cost to British identity. As a result, discussions about how British art could benefit from adopting South Asian design principles intensified in the ensuing decades.

In 1866, John Forbes Watson (1827-1892) published *The Textile Manufactures of India* which provided fabric samples from across the Indian Subcontinent. Like *The Grammar of Ornament*, Watson's work also decontextualized the art and craft of South Asian textile production by offering minimal information regarding the fabric's production. The fabric

[238] Brett, 125.
[239] Brett, 123.
[240] Natasha Eaton, 222.
[241] Brett, 130.

descriptions were limited to its provenance, quality of the weave, and which genders were likely to wear the garment. Curiously, Watson's work does offer its readers more information regarding the provenance of shawls, in particular, this catalogue sheds light on the hazy boundaries between shawls manufactured in Kashmir and those manufactured in nearby regions by providing samples from Punjab and Herat.[242]Watson's work, like Jones', betrays an effort to introduce South Asian textiles to the British public through educational means rather than through the unpredictable consumer market.

The ideas Ruskin articulated in *The Two Paths* and *The Stones of Venice*, and the concerns expressed by Jones and Watson became absorbed into larger ideas of how Britons conceived of art. Codell maintains that "By the 1880s, crafts were taken to embody racial and historical differences that constituted nations." Hybridity in art helps to explain how these differences could be so strongly felt despite the abundance of South Asian goods that lent texture to Britons' aesthetic and physical experiences. Codell explains that "To avoid confronting longstanding hybridity, Victorians forged a *déraciné*, abstracted 'universal' grammar of design for the purposes of transferring Indian design as a set of principles to British objects."[243] Following George Birdwood's publication of *The Industrial Arts of India* in 1878 and the Calcutta International Exhibition in 1883, the need to establish control of the introduction of South Asian art into British life was more deeply felt. Birdwood's text echoes many of the ideas previously espoused by Jones and Ruskin, namely that South Asia was not sophisticated enough to produce fine art. Like Ruskin, Birdwood believed that South Asian artisans possessed a more

[242] John Forbes Watson. *The Textile Manufactures of India and Costumes of the Peoples of India.* (London: Printed for the India Office by George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1866).
[243] Codell, 374.

holistic relationship to religion and community in a way that aligned with the values of the British Arts and Crafts movement's "utopian medievalism."[244]

These new artistic sensibilities eventually seeped into manufacturing and influenced consumers who, knowingly or not, became concerned with the hybrid elements of their consumption. At a moment when art, industry, and consumerism were irrevocably entangled, the Kashmiri shawl continued to exist as a hybrid object assimilated into British culture. Although such hybridity affected both British and South Asian culture, Codell makes the important distinction that: "Indians and their goods were stigmatised as contaminated by Europeanisation, while British imitation 'Kashmir' shawl-makers remained untarnished by their parallel hybridity." To limit this contamination, imperialism created new conditions for producing and consuming shawls and, in turn, constructed new "aesthetic hierarchies that redefined tradition itself."[245]

The British imagination sought to locate British and Kashmiri manufacturing within hierarchies of progress and artistic merit. Despite being a complex industry, British cultural critics viewed the Kashmiri shawl industry as primitive and interpreted its existence as an archaic counterpoint to refined British manufacturing. Critics also used a gendered lens to assess and cement the difference between local and foreign artistic industries. As Michelle Maskiell has noted, comparisons between South Asian and British manufacturing intensified following the Great Exhibition, with Kashmiri weavers being coded as feminine and British textiles workers coded as masculine: "Theories about an Asiatic mode of production, including though not limited to those of Karl Marx, based the concept squarely on widely accepted beliefs in

[244] Codell, 375.
[245] Codell, 374-375.

geographical determinism and differing racial productive capacities."[246] This misreading was, however, partly the result of British policy in India wherein "British concepts of authenticity and purity robbed Indian hands of their politics by preventing artisans from determining rates of production, design revisions and market negotiations."[247] Aviva Briefel explains that as a result, "the focus on the authenticity of the Indian workers' bodies filled in for the absence of British labourers from public display. If one of the effects of industrialization was to replace human bodies with machines, the Indian artisan became a prime visual signifier of physical labour."[248] Paradoxically, while this picture of Kashmiri artisans was most potent, Kashmir was transitioning toward an increasingly mechanized mode of production.[249] Nevertheless, these preoccupations surrounding the Kashmiri shawl indicated shifts in aesthetic values and preferred methods of production in response to increased mass-production of items within British consumer culture, which, in turn, shaped consumers' relationship to imperialism.

The World Inside a Shop: The Dangers of the Global Marketplace

Shopping underwent considerable change during the 1860s because of women's increasing access to public spaces. When compared to the consumer revolution, these changes to shopping were less significant in terms of the number of items consumed and the availability of new consumer products. Rather, historians have pointed to the development of larger retail stores which provided new shopping experiences for urban customers. Although there has been debate as to what constituted a department store, how large it needed to be, the variety of items for sale,

[246] Maskiell, 53.
[247] Codell, 376.
[248] Aviva Briefel. *The Racial Hand in the Victorian Imagination* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 57.
[249] Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 86.

and the date at which the department store began to overtake smaller high-street shops,[250] It is significant that quantity and variety of goods were not at all times indicators of a good shopping experience, rather British consumers valued in their shopping experience was novelty and interaction.[251] Judith Flanders has suggested that large department stores and smaller retailers coexisted in the nineteenth century and that department stores emerged from the arrival of large refurbished haberdasheries and drapers' shops designed to attract the middle-classes as well as an increase the working-class ' disposable income which enabled them to take full advantage of the rapidly expanding ready-to-wear market.[252] Increasingly, shopping began to mediate between the public and domestic sphere as middle-class women began to venture outside the home and walk the city streets. For British women, shopping came to represent a day out to have tea and lunch, meet new people, be seen, "buying, touching, rejecting commodities."[253] These experiences could be exciting and pleasurable as much as they could be unnerving much like Margaret Hale's experience of walking through Milton and having her shawl touched and grabbed by the factory girls she walks by.[254]

Women's increased participation in the public sphere and consumer culture allowed for new sensual experiences but also posed a moral threat. Consumer culture could also intrude into the sacred domestic space by way of advertising in print media. Publications like *Le Follet* began to allot more pages to advertising. By the 1880s and 1890s, many of the magazine's regular

[250] Public discourse surrounding the exploitation of workers began to take effect and the end of the nineteenth century there emerged a tendency toward ethical consumption which put forward Christian reasoning to argue against the exploitation of poor workers, see Ian Mitchell. "Ethical Shopping in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain." *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 7, no.3 (2015), 310-329.
[251] Jon Stobart. "Shopping the Streets of Provincial England, 1650-1840 in Furnée Jan Hein, and Cl Lesger, eds. *The Landscape of Consumption : Shopping Streets and Cultures in Western Europe, 1600-1900*., ed. Jan Hein Furnée and Clé Lesger.(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 31.
[252] Flanders, 75-85.
[253] Lysack, 21
[254] Elizabeth Gaskell. *North and South.* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 68.

columns had conceded their place on magazine pages to make way for more fashion plates and advertisements.[255] Shopping acquired sexual undertones as male commentators worried that respectable women would be corrupted by the city and turn to a life of vice.[256] If British women's virtue was to be preserved, Orientalism, an indelible aspect of commodity culture, needed to be mediated through respectable institutions like the department store. In the second half of the nineteenth century, shopping remained a powerful experience for configuring and reshaping identity within the dizzying circus of urban consumer culture. Urban consumption was a powerful assertion of identity and self-fashioning, in consequence, British society needed to establish new boundaries of acceptable consumption.

In her analysis of Christina Rossetti's (1830-1894) poem *Goblin Market*, Krista Lysack situates concerns about female desire and consumption within the context of the nineteenth-century global marketplace. Lysack draws attention to the racial coding of the goblins who occupy the marketplace and pose a sexual and moral threat to the poem's white female protagonists.[257] Rosetti's description of the goblin market suggests that Victorians sensed that a new global marketplace had overtaken an older British one. The fact that British women were eager to engage with this new global economy raised concerns regarding over-acculturation and the possible contagion carried in foreign goods as suggested by the term "goblin market," which lends a violent and transgressive character to the global marketplace. The dangers presented in the poem occurred concurrently with a public discourse that feared women's increased shopping. In 1857, *Punch* likened women's desire for shawls to a dangerous epidemic and labelled women

[255] *Le Follet*, 1855-1891.
[256] Erika Diane Rappaport. *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 40.
[257] Christina Rosetti's children's *Goblin Market* tells of two rural girls who fall prey to the dangers of the "goblin market", a large market filled with exotic fruits from every corner of the world and operated by grotesque animals or "goblins".

who deployed shawls most cunningly as loose women or "Delilahs,"[258] Lysack asserts that as a result, "Shops sought to decontextualize oriental goods and thus prohibit women's identification with the forces of exploited labor by which these goods were produced…constructing women as consumers rather than consumed."[259] Shawls, therefore, were becoming increasingly fraught items that reflected concerns about imperialism and women's presence in the public sphere.

Female Consumers and the New Woman

> "If you smoked too, the house might suddenly turn masculine. Atmosphere is probably a question of touch and go. Even at Queen Victoria's dinner-party—if something had been just a little Different—perhaps if she'd worn a clinging Liberty tea-gown instead of a magenta satin."
>
> "With an India shawl over her shoulders—"
>
> "Fastened at the bosom with a Cairngorm-pin."
>
> Bursts of disloyal laughter—you must remember that they are half German—greeted these suggestions, and Margaret said pensively, "How inconceivable it would be if the Royal Family cared about Art."[260] -E.M. Forster, *Howards End*

E.M. Forster's *Howards End* considers the challenges for women who want to embrace modernity in Victorian society. The novel's heroines Margaret and Helen Schlegel can be read as new women who try to reconcile their aesthete sensibilities with the slow progress of Victorian society. This discussion between Margaret and Helen highlights how boteh-shawls had fallen out of favour, to the point of becoming dowdy and ridiculous among fashionable members of the middle-class. If women such as the Schlegel sisters were not enthusiastic about buying shawls, who was? In the final decades of the long nineteenth century, the Kashmiri shawl was still clinging to British fashion cycles but was increasingly associated with an older and dowdier woman. The vision of late Victorian womanhood had shifted and came to be defined by two

[258] "Who is to Stand It?" *Punch or the London Charivari,* January 10 1857.
[259] Lysack, 18-19.
[260] E.M. Forster. *Howards End*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 38.

distinct visions of femininity, neither of which was sanctioned by cultural mores. The first, the "new woman" was regularly pitted against the second, the "coquette" who was fully immersed in commodity culture.[261] The term "New Woman" has been loosely applied to mean women who engaged in male-coded activities that had recently become available to women, be it smoking, riding bicycles and omnibuses, pursuing higher education, working to earn a living, wearing bloomers.[262] The coquette, for her part, was regularly criticized in the press despite embodying more conventional aspects of femininity.

Prominent anti-feminist Eliza Lynn Linton's decried the rampant vanity, coquetry, and consumerism of young girls. Linton also attacked the lascivious behaviour of women returning from India. Linton attributed this behaviour to the demographic imbalance in the colonies corrupted women by making them morally loose and desirous of male attention: "Women who have been in India, or wherever else they are in the minority in society, are of this kind; and nothing is more amazing to them when they first come home than the attentions which a certain style of Englishwoman pays to men, instead of demanding and receiving attentions from them."[263] Likewise, the *Norwich Mercury* confidently asserted that young women returning from India had "fiery personalities" which clashed with those of metropolitan Britons.[264] The reality, of course, lay somewhere in-between, as Patricia Marks writes: "The new woman as a figure who had simply followed a new dress fad was ultimately acceptable, because her frivolity was

[261] The emerging persona of the "tomboy" was often associated with the new woman, see Jina Moon. "Tomboys in Sarah Grand's New Woman Fiction." *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 26, no.2 (2021): 194-211.
[262] Patricia Marks, Bicycles, *Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*. (Lexington KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 150
[263] Eliza Lynn Linton. *The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays Volume II* (London: Richard Bentley & Son,1883), 305.

[264] "What we Know about India" *Norwich Mercury* November 27, 1875.

expected," however, "The New Woman as a figure whose dress indicated a real change in lifestyle was considerably more threatening, not only because once she shifted her place in society everyone else had to make accommodation, but also the shape of the coming era."[265] Commodity culture evolved alongside women's desire to travel outside the domestic sphere, which can be gleaned in changes to *Le Follet*'s fashion plates.' In the 1860s, fashion plates showed women in indoor settings only to shift toward drawings of women outside and playing sports in the 1880s. Large Kashmiri shawls did not suit the outdoor and urban lifestyle middle and upper-class British women desired.

By the 1860s, "the woman question" weighed heavily in the minds of the British people. Faced with the demographic problem of numerous unmarried women, the argument for women to enter the workforce grew increasingly persuasive. In 1871 Newnham College Cambridge began accepting female students, which provided academic credentials to a gender that had previously been unable to access higher education. Increasingly, women like Amy Levy, Olive Schreiner, and Sarah Grand spoke of the condition of women and lived and dressed in ways hitherto unthinkable to previous generations of women and, which excluded shawls. Writing in 1900, Lady Violet Greville explained the awkwardness of wearing a shawl which made popular sports such as cycling and tennis impossible.[266] This active and public lifestyle was not conducive to wearing long shawls, and women began to adopt more lightweight and practical clothing such as the hoopskirt.[267] The previous chapter briefly mentioned Anne Lister's style of dress which was considered unorthodox for the time and roughly thirty years after her death, the

[265] Marks, 208.
[266] Sheilagh G.L. Quaile, "Wrapped in Import: Kashmiri Shawls in British Paintings of the Long Nineteenth Century," MA diss., (Queen's University,2015), 65.
[267] The "hoopskirt" or "cage crinoline" premiered at the Great Exhibition of 1851 see Flanders, 19.

norms of respectable clothing had shifted such that dark sober gowns and more masculine tailoring had become increasingly acceptable. As such, many British women were drawn to more practical clothing, which facilitated movement and physical activity and slowly abandoned their long shawls.

Despite these lifestyle changes, women did not renounce their shawls altogether, rather they found new ways of incorporating them into their wardrobe and home furnishings. Shawls remained popular among a less fashionable sector of British society. As silhouettes changed, fashion magazines advised women to repurpose their shawls into mantelets. Philippe Perrot notes that women also began using Kashmiri shawls as tablecloths and piano covers in the later nineteenth century.[268] In August 1866, *Le Follet* explains that there remained few women who had not repurposed their shawls. Those who still wore shawls, wore ones made of lace to avoid showing their figure.[269]Some older women did continue buying and wearing shawls. In *East Lynne*, for instance, the tiresome and the sickly Lady Isabel Vane is obsessed with shawls and can comically be found buried underneath a pile of cashmeres.[270] Outside of fiction, Jane and Frances Ellen Spedding continued to send each other shawls as gifts, and their letters reveal their excitement at giving and receiving shawls.[271] Meanwhile, etiquette guides still considered shawls an appropriate accessory for women to own and published instructions on how to wear them.[272] Shawls had evidently become less precious in the final decades of the century.

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[268] Perrot, 111.
[269] *Le Follet*, August 1866.
[270] Mrs. Henry Wood. *East Lynne.*, ed. Norman Page and Kamal Al-Solaylee. (London: Everyman, 1994), 293.
[271] "Jane Spedding to Frances Ellen Spedding, October 31 1884." WLMSS / Spedding, Jane (Daisy) / 1 / 100. Jerwood Library. Grasmere, UK.
[272] *The Lady's Everyday Book: A Practical Guide in the Elegant Arts and Daily Difficulties of Domestic Life*. (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1875),43. The text reads: "If the visitor is allady, she may remove her

"Taste is Eternal": The Kashmiri Shawl and the Persistence of Imperial Symbols

Following the Great Exhibition of 1851, texts about Kashmiri shawls were increasingly directed towards young readers. The purpose of such texts was to educate them about the rise of bad taste and behaviours and the importance of Britain's imperial mission.[273] For instance, *Little Henry's Holiday's at The Great Exhibition* communicated, among other messages, that children should feel wonder and amazement at the sight of French and British shawl manufacturing. The need to highlight the cultural and economic significance of shawls to children paradoxically signalled the beginning of its decline. Texts about true Kashmiri shawls were often politically motivated and advocated to increase Britain's imperial presence throughout the world. Published in 1852, *The New Cashmere Shawl*, a short novel-poem about a young girl who learns a lesson in taste and humility after wanting to show off her new Kashmiri shawl and appear grander than her friends. To her dismay, her companions do not recognize the accessory's beauty and quality. This story has clear political motives, as it also contains an endorsement of a Christian mission to Japan's Ryukyu Islands, referred to in the text as Loo Choo.[274]

Likewise, *Kashmeer and its Shawls* provides informative content about the history of Kashmir's shawl industry in the form of a dialogue between a mother and daughter. The girl's mother is well versed in the history of Kashmiri shawls and discusses the shawls dwindling importance in British fashion. In addition to the 1819 famine in Kashmir, the text blames this decline on the French and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) which harmed Kashmir's shawl

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boa, or any neck covering (sic), but on no account either the bonnet or shawl, even if politely requested to do so by the mistress of the house, If, however, your visit of ceremony is to a particular friend, the case is different; but even then it is best to wait until you are invited to do so."

[273] Chitralekha Zutshi. "'Designed for Eternity': Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain" *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 438.

[274] *The New Cashmere Shawl* (London: J. Nisbet & Co, 1852).

industry.[275] The text firmly believes in the British government's ability to reinvigorate demand for Kashmiri shawls by seizing control of the industry.[276] The girl's mother finally reassures her, echoing Pierre Bourdieu's notions of taste and distinction, when she exclaims that "taste, like truth, must prevail" and that women with good sense will undoubtedly adopt the shawl once more.[277]When considered together, these texts illustrate how conservative writers deployed the Kashmiri shawl to cogently argue for imperial expansion and demonstrate that Kashmiri shawls were invaluable if they are in the right hands.

In many ways, Fanny Parkes and Mah Munzel ul-Nissa's belief that the British had ruined the quality, beauty, and authenticity of Kashmiri shawls anticipated those of John Ruskin and George Birdwood who believed that South Asian craft possessed the spiritual and mystical qualities that British industry lacked. Although Parkes praised Kashmiri shawls and promoted them to her British readers, she did so in a way that reinforced the shawl's inaccessibility and mystique. One would think, therefore, that given the cultural significance of the Indian Rebellion and the steady decline of the shawl's popularity that British women in India would show less interest in Kashmiri shawls. Although they too repurposed these textiles, the letters of British women on missionary trips to South Asia reveal their admiration for the accessory as well as their relationships with the local population. British women's letters discussing shawls, shed light on different aesthetic points of view and fashion influences.

[275] *Kashmeer, and its Shawls.* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1875), 22-23. It is worth noting that the book's narrator attributes South Asian demand for Kashmiri shawl as one of the reasons why the industry demonstrated resilience.
[276] *Kashmeer, and its Shawls*, 54.
[277] *Kashmeer, and its Shawls*, 58.

Writer and novelist Charlotte Maria Tucker's (1821-1893) letters illustrate how missionary women continued to receive shawls and held a patronizing assurance of the affection between themselves and the South Asian population. On September 26, 1876, Charlotte Maria Tucker wrote to a Leila Hamilton: "The darzi, who squats in the verandah, is busy on a magnificent dressing-gown, which I have ordered. I brought out flannel from England, but not a flannel dressing-gown, so I have bought a rich shawl-pattern, and the flannel will line it, and I shall look like a Maliká and feel—almost as comfortable as a sparrow. This combination of a Kashmiri shawl and English flannel makes the dressing gown a hybrid object in the literal sense and speaks to British women's attempts to breathe new life into old shawls. The letter also seeks to reassure her reader of the trustworthiness of those the writer terms natives in an effort to counter prevailing concerns about the instability of the South Asian character whilst also reinforcing condescending and paternalistic views of colonized peoples: "The Native Christians have quietly subscribed for a shawl for her Mother, as a token of their grateful love. I think the Natives very affectionate. People talk of their being ungrateful; but those who talk so have perhaps never *earned* their gratitude. If you love them, they love you!"[278] Even in South Asia, wearing a Kashmiri shawl was in essence playing dress-up and enacting oriental fantasies. Tucker's letter also elucidates cultural differences in fashion and repurposing shawls stating, "It seemed to be a question with the darzi whether the white flannel was to be inside or outside!" In this instance, Tucker is following the recent Western trend of transforming shawls into dressing

[278] Charlotte Maria Tucker. "To Miss Leila Hamilton September 26, 1876," in *A Lady of England: The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker*, ed. Agnes Giberne (London: Hodder and Stoughton: 1895), 232.

gowns and shawl coats,[279] whereas the seamstress has as a frame of reference the Mughal and Persian trend of wearing shawls to line the inside of women's jackets.[280]

Although a minority of women continued to wear shawls, by the 1890s they were decidedly out of fashion. In 1892, a contributor to the magazine *Hearth and Home* wrote of the terrible embarrassment they felt upon seeing a woman wearing a "sad-looking cashmere shawl" to the theatre instead of the preferable opera cloak.[281] The inimitable Kashmiri shawl had truly fallen far. Although it was unquestionably a luxury item, it had begun to lose its lustre. The shawl's symbolic ties to the Indian Subcontinent in the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion as well as British women's changing relationship with the public sphere may not have been sufficient to remove it from the fashion cycles. Although these cultural changes were significant, the shawl might have continued to dominate European fashion cycles had it not been for the decline of shawl manufacturing in Britain and Kashmir.

An Industry in Decline

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, shawl manufacturing had encountered difficulties. As was mentioned in chapter two, when Norwich had begun manufacturing shawls, its industry had already entered into decline. A similar decline took place in Kashmir, where shawl weavers had been working and living in precarious conditions. Chitralekha Zutshi has offered a strong counterpoint to histories of Kashmir that overly attributed blame for the decline of the shawl industry on the Dogra rulers. It is true that certain flaws in its organization hindered

[279] Sally Stevenson Gray. "The Shawl-Patterned Gown," *Dress: The Journal of the Costume Society of America*, 40, no.2 (2014): 167,
[280] Maskiell, 27-28.
[281]"Opera Cloaks," *Hearth and Home*, December 8,1892. credit to Sheilagh Quaile for unearthing this source.

the shawl industry's long-term viability. Under Dogra rule, weavers could not leave the valley or change employers. This restriction was especially damaging to shawl weavers as they were among the first to be affected by famines as was the case in 1819 and 1832 which prompted many to move to Punjab. In 1847, one year before the workers' revolts in Continental Europe, shawl weavers assembled and demanded the right to change employers and professions. Their request was denied and until 1867 when an even bloodier revolt took place against the Dagh Shawl Department. Once shawl weavers were no longer limited in where they could work and live, many of these skilled labourers left Kashmir altogether. European politics inadvertently affected the health of Kashmir's economy. French merchants had controlled the shawl trade over land, however, their ability to trade became compromised by the advent of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 which eventually forced 800 shawl workshops to close.[282] British interference in Kashmir also inflicted considerable damage upon the shawl industry because British officials in India believed that Kashmir's economy needed to pivot to an agrarian model to better serve British needs.[283]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, exorbitant prices began to dissuade Europeans from purchasing true Kashmiri shawls, which sold for upwards of 500% of their original production cost. This increase in price occurred when European manufacturing had already demonstrated its ability to produce quality imitations and, in many ways, devalued the boteh shawl. As a result, true Kashmiri shawl became increasingly regulated to the realm of craft and art objects. Nevertheless, shawls remained a respectable item to possess, and fashion magazines continued to feature advertisements for new and used shawls. Magazines like *Le Follet* scattered shawl advertisements throughout its pages well into the 1870s and in the winter months,

[282] Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 84-86.
[283] Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 100.

provided advice on how to style shawls.[284] These accessories continued to feature prominently in novels, most often as an indication of propriety by never leaving her home without a bonnet and shawl, or alternatively signalling nurture by wrapping others in shawls. And the Kashmiri shawl still held a certain allure amongst the middle classes but was no longer a prized engagement and wedding gift. In India, British women still enjoyed owning shawls and still believed in their symbolic importance and made mention them in their letters to friends and family in Britain.

Although the Kashmiri shawl retained its value in the eyes of some, British culture no longer regarded these accessories with the same wonder and admiration as they had during the Napoleonic Wars. The increased availability of affordable imitations made shawls less desirable to the wealthy women who could afford genuine Kashmir shawls. Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, proximity to South Asian bodies no longer signified hedonism and eroticism, but the memory of violence and sexual danger. These same concerns reverberated within consumer spaces where unsupervised female shoppers' experiences commodity culture and urban life through their senses. In response to these anxieties, British writers, consumers, and art critics alike to had to re-establish the Kashmiri shawl's place in British culture. Jones, Ruskin, and Forbes all believed that the Kashmiri shawl occupied a space between consumer item and art object just as it had occupied a liminal cultural space between what was "British" and what was "Indian."[285] The desire to shield young women from potentially corrupting South Asian goods, eventually led young women to adopt different fashions that prioritized comfort and physical activity in an urban setting for which the shawl was incompatible.

[284] *Le Follet*, 1855-1891.
[285] French designers drew patterns and passed them on to manufacturers in Kashmir. Therefore, to be more accurate, French culture also inhabited this liminal space, however, it is unlikely that British consumers and cultural critics were aware of this.

Conclusion

The Kashmiri shawl held a particular fascination to British consumers who recognized in it the prestige of imperial conquest as well as the affordable material comforts and new sensual experiences that it provided. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose's assertion that British people embodied imperialism through their quotidian practices extends to women's sartorial choices.[286] To the British consumer, the riches of Empire's were sufficient proof that imperialism was benevolent in nature. The purpose of this thesis was to situate women's consumer practices within an imperial context and demonstrate clothing's power in endorsing Empire. More precisely, it sought to determine how the Kashmiri shawl's cultural valence evolved alongside changing gender expectations.

The nature of British imperialism shifted significantly between 1800 and 1900. Initially, adopting South Asian consumer habits had been socially permissible. However, the adoption of South Asian clothing and customs which characterized nabobery and the wealth associated with it soon became a source of envy and a symbol of corruption and moral laxity. Metropolitan Britons' unease about the adoption of Indian customs led them to discriminate against behaviours that suggested over-acculturation. By the 1830s, the British in India had begun to distance themselves from South Asian dress to establish greater distance between themselves and the Indian population. At the same time, European culture heavily sexualized the bodies of South Asian women which, in turn, provided a way for British women to express their sexual agency. Amid these tensions, the Kashmiri shawl enabled women in Britain to partake in the wealth and sensuality associated with the Orient at little cost to their respectability. Thus, the Kashmiri

[286] Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds. *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

shawl lent intrigue to modest European clothing and endowed women with oriental mystique while simultaneously upholding imperialism and established gender norms.

While shawls did signal sexual agency, they also operated as reminders of class distinction and social ties. The consumer revolution improved the material comforts of many and introduced new relationships with objects. When British officials realized the profits that could be made from producing shawls in Britain, they began devising new ways of manufacturing these accessories for the middle-class and working-class consumer. The similarities between these products gave way to concerns about authenticity, which in turn shaped notions of taste and demonstrated the need for practices of distinction. As opportunities for consumption increased, women began deploying clothing and accessories to communicate their class affiliation and identity. Kashmiri shawls, therefore, were attractive items that powerfully communicated female agency within imperial consumer culture. The apotheosis of which was the 1851 Great Exhibition which despite its organizers' best efforts, firmly established Britain as a consumer society upheld by Empire. Although many of the wonders on display were the product of colonial exploitation, enslaved labour,[287] and working-class toil, visitors to the Crystal Palace understood them as confirmation that Britain was a beacon of civilizing light for the rest of the world.

The conviction in the righteousness of imperialism, however, wavered after the Indian Rebellion of 1851, which highlighted Britain's fragile hold on the Indian Subcontinent. Consequently, discussions of race hierarchy and its role in Empire featured more prominently in British cultre. The Rebellion raised further concerns about imperialism in relation to women's bodies not only because the British press clung to the image of raped and murdered women at

[287] In the case of the American Pavilion

Lucknow, but also because female shoppers were thought to be vulnerable to the cosmopolitan influences of the consumer products. The realization that South Asian culture continued to seep into British life troubled British art critics who recognized that British design could benefit from adopting elements of South Asian design, but argued that they should be introduced carefully and systematically so not as to erase or degrade British art. The Kashmiri shawl was emblematic of Empire and had for decades resisted the changeable whims of fashion. However, British women's new roles and ambitions combined with weaknesses in the British and Kashmiri shawl industry contributed to the shawl's decreasing presence in British fashion.

Although this thesis addressed the ways in which British women asserted agency through their adoption of Kashmiri shawls, more research on shawls remains to be done. Although Chitralekha Zutshi has greatly contributed to historian's understanding of Kashmir's shawl industry, further research surrounding the experiences of Kashmiri weavers would undoubtedly enrich the field of historical knowledge. Additionally, embedded in nineteenth-century discussions of shawls and Indian commodities is another conversation about how these goods invoked the cultural worlds of other Western nations such as France and Ireland. Future studies of shawls could also examine race, as texts like *Vanity Fair* and the *Memoirs of George Elers*[288] suggest that black Britons were considered undeserving of luxury items like Kashmiri shawls. The Kashmiri shawl's place in nineteenth-century British culture is, therefore, entwined with other histories of race, ethnicity, and belonging.

Ultimately, this thesis sought to prove that Kashmiri shawls were powerful reminders of imperialism and status, which British women used to express their agency and identity throughout a tumultuous century. This work contributes to the existing scholarship of Empire

[288] Captain George Elers. *Memoirs of George Elers, Capitain of the 12th Regiment of Foot* (London, 1903), 179-188.

and Kashmiri shawls by examining consumption patterns throughout the nineteenth century and situating them within an imperial framework. Such an investigation matters because it explains how the adoption of a foreign commodity such as the Kashmiri shawl assisted in constructing the British consumers' imperial imagination and relationship to South Asia. The different sources used in this investigation highlight the different scales of Empire and they demonstrate that be it through reading novels and magazines, sending gifts, or pawning clothing, British women communicated identity and political beliefs through the shawls they wore.

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