Silence and the Female Migrant Identity In
Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003)

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Anglo-American Studies

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2016-2017
Candidate Declaration Form

I, MEZIANI Ahlam
candidate of Master at the Department of English, Larbi Ben M’hidi University, do hereby
declare that the dissertation entitled Silence and the Female Migrant Identity in Monica
Ali’s Brick Lane (2004) in partial fulfillment of Master Degree in Anglo-American Studies
is my own original work, and it has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted at
any university.

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…………………………
Dedication:

To my dear father and mother, without you I wouldn’t be the person I am today;

To my beloved sisters, family members and friends;

To all of those who held my hand when I was weak;

To Djoumana’s memory, you will be always in my heart.
Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my parents for all their support and being always there for me. I, also, give my deepest respect to my honourable supervisor Miss ACHIRI Samya for all her enlightenment and guidance. I thank her for being patient and kind. Without her assistance, I would not be able to finish my work. I thank also my dear teachers Mr AID and Mrs ZERROUKI for all their advice. My sincere thanks also go to my classmate Islam who helped in providing the sources I need to accomplish this work.
Abstract

Silence has always defined the life and identity of third world women. It is considered as an aspect when describing their weakness and marginalisation. As such, this study questions whether silence is always a sign of passivity or if it can be a sort of power. This memoire aims to investigate the different strategies adopted by Monica Ali to represent different forms of silence in the light Postcolonial Feminism. The interpretation of Brick Lane (2003) opens up contemporary contexts in which issues of silence, migration, and multiculturalism are discussed. The main aim is to discover the different forms of silence expressed in the novel and their impacts upon female migrant Muslim identities. It investigates the changes that happen to the female identity while being silent. To accomplish this, this memoire will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter tackles the issue of Muslim migration in the Modern English novel in which Brick Lane is a case in point. The second chapter discusses different instances in which silence is considered to be an act of weakness. The last one is about the form of silence which is considered as an empowerment of the female identity. The conclusion suggests that reworking Ali’s Brick Lane in the light of Postcolonial Feminism suggests a more realistic and practical understanding of the notion of female silence with both its active and passive forms.

Key Words: Silence, female Muslim migrant, empowering identity, weakness for the female identity.
Résumé

Le silence a toujours défini la vie et l'identité des femmes du tiers monde. Il est considéré comme un élément important dans la description de la faiblesse et de la marginalisation de ces femmes. En tant que tel, cette étude se demande si le silence est toujours une caractérisation de la passivité ou il existe des cas où il devient une puissance. Cette piste de recherche vise à étudier les différentes stratégies adoptées par l'auteur pour représenter différentes formes de silence soulignées dans le féminisme postcolonial. Le roman en discussion ouvre des contextes contemporains dans lesquels les questions de silence, de migration et de multiculturalisme sont discutées. Notre étude vise à détecter comment ce roman retrace le silence avec ses formes multiples ainsi le reflet de la femme à travers l’analyse de l’identité chez la femme en situation migratoire. Donc c’est l’analyse de la métamorphose identitaire chez une femme muette. Pour accomplir ces objets, cette recherche sera divisée en trois chapitres. Le premier chapitre aborde la question de la migration musulmane dans le roman Anglais modern dans lequel *Setp Mers et treize Rivières* correspond parfaitement à ce genre de romans. Le deuxième chapitre traite des différents cas dans lesquels le silence est considéré comme un acte de faiblesse pour l’identité. Le dernier sera sur la forme du silence qui est considéré comme un acte d'autonomisation de l'identité féminine. Cela mettra particulièrement l'accent sur les formes positives de silence que les femmes musulmanes peuvent choisir pour gagner ce qu'elles veulent dans un contexte étranger. Par conséquent, le retraitement *Setp Mers et Treize Rivières* d’Ali dans le contexte de cette étude suggère une compréhension plus réaliste et pratique de la notion de silence féminin avec ses formes actives et passives.
لقد سيطر الصمت على حياة و هوية نساء العالم الثالث، إذ إنه يصف ضعفهم وتهيمهم، وعلى هذا الأساس تساءل هذه الدراسة عما إذا كان الصمت يعتبر دائما تشخيسا للسلبية، أم أن هناك حالات يصير فيها قوة و الهدف من هذه الأطرحة هو التحقيق في الاستراتيجيات المختلفة اعتمدتها الكاتبة لتمثل أشكال مختلفة الصمت الذي برز في نظرية النسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية. وتتبع الرواية مشاكل معاصرة تناقلها فيها قضايا الصمت، الهجرة والتعديدية الثقافية في دراسة هذه الأشكال والقضايا. ثبتت هذه الأطرحة بدراسات النسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية، حيث ركزت على مناقشة الطريق التي تقدم بها هذه الرواية أشكالاً متنوعة من الصمت، وكيف تتعكس على هوية الأنسان، وذلك بهدف اكتشاف أشكال الصمت المختلفة في الرواية، وآثارها على هوية المسلمين المهاجرين، وتحقيق أيضاً في التغييرات التي تحدث لهوية المرأة في حالة الصمت، وتحقيق هذه الأهداف، قسمنا هذا البحث إلى ثلاثة فصول، يتناول الفصل الأول قضية حجر المسلمين في الرواية الإنجليزية الحديثة ويدافع الفصل الثاني الحالات المختلفة التي يعتبر فيها الصمت ضعفاً للهوية، أما آخر ففصل سيكون حول أشكال الصمت الإيجابية التي قد تختارها المسلمين المهاجرين لكسب ما يبرن في بيئة أجنبية، وبناء على ذلك فإن إعادة صياغته في هذا السياق تؤدي إلى فهم أكثر واقعية وعملية لفهم الصمت الأنثوي بكل أشكاله الإيجابية والسلبية.
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Introduction:

Western stereotyping of third world women has been existing from the old times. This stereotyping covers different ideas such as being passive, uneducated, marginalised, ignored and most importantly silent. For this reason, third world literature started to analyse the third world females’ silence as it becomes a characterisation of their identities. However, as a part of some cultures, like Islamic culture, silence does not always present negativity, but in some many cases it is the perfect thing to do.

Taking this into consideration, based on their experiences, postcolonial female writers choose to tackle this notion in different ways. Some of those writers have the tendency to refuse the silence made upon them, and they create their characters as voiced ones. That is to say, they believe that silence is passivity and should not be viewed within the female identity. Others look at this issue differently, and they assert that this notion is a main characteristic about them. However, according to these postcolonial feminists, silence is an act of insubordination, a strategic behaviour and choice of their own. They believe that choosing silence demands enormous courage and intelligence and they portray their female characters as such.

This research aims to discuss the impact of notion of female silence upon her identity in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*. The novel which has been selected for this study describes women of Bengali origins. Throughout this narrative, these women do not express their ideas and thoughts in spoken form either voluntary or involuntary. In order to examine this issue, the memoire will try to take a different way from what other researches took that mostly call for Feminist Postcolonial analysis for *Brick Lane*, the case study.
Due to this, the study looks up to find out the different forms of silence that reflect differently upon the females’ identities. The important role of silence in empowering or weakening females is unquestioned in this memoire. What is known, generally, is that silence is an act of weakness; however, in this study, the power of silence will also be revealed.

*Brick Lane* (2004) by the Muslim-Bengali writer Monica Ali presents generally the possible females’ forms of silence in any British-Bengali community, Brick Lane is an example. It shows that the changes in the female’ identity is very much linked to the forms of silence created by the author. As such, silence is sometimes perceived negatively and other times very positively according to the situations. So, the memoire seeks to analyse these situations in order to figure out how silence should be perceived.

To accomplish the previous objective, the memoire will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter is entitled “Muslim Migration Culture, Community and Literature”. This chapter is the theoretical background of this research. It tackles the subject of migration and its impact on literature. It digs into figuring out the role of Muslim migrants in establishing multiculturalism in Britain. It also discusses briefly how the living condition of these migrants changed after the 9-11 Attacks. Moreover, how these attacks had a tremendous effect on Muslims’ writings in the west is another aim.

The second chapter is entitled “Silence: the Subaltern’s Characteristic”. This part will obviously tackle the subject of silence as an act of subordination, weakness, passivity, and subalternity. Through this chapter, silence will reveal instances of dark secrets, shame, weakness and marginalisation of different females. These characters will be confirmation of the stereotypical views made about Asian women and about silence as an act of weakening the female’s identity.

Chapter three holds the title of “Silence as a Strategic Behaviour of Empowerment”. In this chapter, the silence of the female character is considered as an empowerment. The
The main female character who will be put under discussion in this chapter is the protagonist Nazneen. An analysis of the authorial silence will be the first section discussed in the chapter. This section will aim to show the moments in the narrative when the writer intentionally chooses to silent her character to get certain goal or reveal some hidden facts for the foreign reader. Monica Ali in this novel intentionally seems to keep information from the reader, so that he can look for them by himself. Consequently, this study’s aim will try to discuss some points that are left in the previous studies, and open the way for other studies to analyse this important notion in literature which is always flexible to changes.

The conclusion of this memoire will be about the need to differentiate between the different forms of silence. As there are several negative forms of silence which affect negatively upon the female’s identity; there are other forms by which the female gains tremendous power. It will insist also upon the inseparability of voice and silence, and the need to know how to use each one of them in the right time. In addition to this, it will hopefully open the way for extra researches about this notion and its existence in literature.
Chapter One:

Muslim Migration Culture, Community and Literature

During the last century, modern telecommunications and technologies have helped in a big degree in the transformation of different ideas, beliefs, products and other forms of culture from different countries. These factors have been the major reason of the appearance of the process commonly called ‘Globalisation’.

Globalisation as a phenomenon led to a rise of new concepts in the global world such as multiculturalism, cultural hybridity. These concepts along with others are generally connected with life experiences of migrations. It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the notions of migration and immigration have not the same meaning, hence given each ones’ definition, the difference will be clear. According to Oxford Learner’s Pocket Dictionary immigration means the process of moving from one country to another and it is more exclusive for individuals or families (207), and migration is broader in the sense that it touches the act of moving both within a country and across borders enacted by a larger demographic than a single individual or family (263).

In the past, migration was usually caused by religious reasons. For instance, the Jews had migrated from Europe toward the Arab world to escape persecution. However, in modern times, reasons for migration have radically changed due to different reasons. For instance the 19 century migration is mainly characterised as being a labour migration in which people
started to migrate for economic needs. Farmers, for example, used to migrate to find better jobs in the new industrial regions whereas the twentieth century migration became largely influenced by globalisation. This last is equivalent as westernisation that is why it would not be weird if in almost all cases the process of migration is taking place from the east to the west (Conway 34).

In this context of migration, Douglas S. Massey asserts in his book *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium* that international migration has gone through three periods. The first is known as the mercantile period that lasted from 1500 to 1800 BC, the period in which world migration took place from Europe to other places of the World. The second is the period of European industrial migration after World War I. The last one is the period of post-industrial migration since the 1960s, the more globalised one (72).

Diaspora is a term which is described by Ashcroft as “the combination of migrancy and continued cultural affiliation that characterizes many racial, ethnic and national groups scattered throughout the world” (425). Migration along with diaspora always end up with the same different issues and problematic of the way migrant should assimilate, and how this migrant could have a hybrid identity without falling in the trap of identity crises. However, the migrant who is able to assimilate without having problems of identity will be able to peacefully co-operate with the foreign world.

For this, Modern writers come with their literature to shed the light upon the life experiences of both migration and what is known as diaspora. These literatures, directly or indirectly, give the reader an adequate description of the different angles that are closely related to the changes of identity and its major problems. One of those problems that face identity goes for most of the time to one part of it, religion. When this last is in a foreign surrounding, it is seen as a danger and this problem turns to become a clash of religions. This
clash is largely found in the western context where generally speaking Islam is the dangerous
religion which needs to be attacked.

Taking this into consideration, to the purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of
how migration took place in Britain and especially towards England. In addition to the
attempt to illustrate how Muslims’ migration has shaped in a big degree the modern
multicultural England. Moreover, the chapter will be about the historical event of 9-11 attacks
and how these events changed the Muslims’ living conditions in Britain. Furthermore, an
illustration about the way these events helped in the creation of a new context for the Modern
English Novel will be discussed.

1. Migration to England:

“We are a nation of Migration”, a sentence that is commonly used nowadays in
Britain. However, the phenomenon of migration is not new to this country. In fact, there have
always been series of waves of migration to Britain from the old times. James Walvin in his
book Passage to Britain: Immigration in British history and politics points out that the basic
human stock of England has been settled and relatively homogenous since time immemorial.
This means that there have always been a series of waves of migration to Britain since the
eyearly days of history. The beginning of these series was based on military conquests, the list
most importantly ranged from Romans, Vikings, and Anglo Saxons to the Normans (27).
Although none of the pervious conquests had a permanent settlement in the country, one
cannot ignore that each one of these invaders had its influence on the English language and its
culture.

During the Renaissance period, migration was based on religious and economic
reasons. At that time of history, several changes took place in Europe which made people
attracted in living there. Taking for instance, the rise of Humanism came to break the norms
of the medieval period which was known by its restricted laws concerning religion. People
had no personal freedom, and they were in front of the need to devote their lives only to Church and nothing else without the Church. Consequently, Humanism came to reverse how things go. It called for the need to have a good life, focusing only on the personal interests and letting go of religious principles and demands. In this context, John Lock influentially wrote in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* that: “liberty of conscience is everyone’s natural right, equally belonging to dissenters as to themselves; and that nobody ought to be compelled in matters of religion either by law or force” (36).

This new spirit of religious freedom with the great economic expansion of Europe encouraged migration internationally. Migrants firstly decided to settle in harbours for mercantile activities. After that, they moved to bigger cities such as London to have the better life conditions they came for. Those newly arrived people started to make their own communities with establishing their own economic, political and religious activities. Panikos Panayi in his book *Outsiders: History of European Minorities* said that:

> [b]y the early nineteenth century we can see that the foundations had been laid for some of the most important communities to develop in the century and a half that followed, notably the Germans, Jews and Irish. Both migration patterns and, more especially, ethnic institutions had developed. In addition, racial ideas and traditions of racism had been formulated. (21)

What Panayi here advocates for is that after developing their own communities and their own ethnic institutions, migrants will definitely enter into a clash with the host community’s institutions. This automatically will lead to multiple problems such as racism, discrimination and again entering in the scope of being “other”. However, this racism does not contain any religious or cultural aspects. The Irish Catholics minorities, for instance, were one of the
major previous religious minorities in Britain and they were not seen as threat or danger and they had the capacity of participating their religion freely.

Nevertheless, things had the tendency to change in post-WWII era. Britain, especially England, had passed through a migration scale that was not previously witnessed. Migrants from former colonies increased the level of migration tremendously. This increasing level of migration was accompanied with an increasing importance of religion. Bengalis and Pakistanis mainly transported Islam to Britain making it the second most important religion in Britain after Christianity. This vast and fast spread of Islam in the former colonial power was due to the religion’s importance in Muslims’ identity. In other words, Muslims did not only make their own specific cultural religious communities there, but they made Islam speak for their identity and their roots. In the South Asian Presence:

[i]mmigrants are concentrated in England […] and comparatively absent from Scotland Wales […] Over two thirds of the entire ethnic minority population of Britain is concentrated in the south-east of England and the West Midlands. Parts of cities like London, Leicester or Birmingham now appear to have no connection with the England of Arthur Bryant. (Ballard 5)

Day after day, migrant Muslims started to be an integral part of the modern multicultural English society. “In these areas, multiculturalism is […] a fact of life, in which the Church of England has been replaced by mosques or temples and the old corner grocers by halal butchers and sari shops. In Spitalfields […] 60 per cent of the population is now Bangladeshi. In parts of Bradford, over half the population now comes from Pakistan.” (5). However, in the first wave of Muslim migrations, Muslims had no intention in spreading neither their culture nor their religion. In fact, they also migrated for financial interests. The aim of migration in
general has been and will be a change of living conditions to the better and economical success (Spatial Strategy and Research 17).

Generally speaking, the first waves of Muslims’ migration were mainly enacted by male groups from Bangladesh and Pakistan. The next waves saw an influx in women migration. After establishing their lives there, Muslims gathered themselves in shared communities of minorities and they created an imaginary homeland in England. East London is a good example to see how different migrant identities had their touch in the city’s development. Certain places such as “Brick lane” and “Spitalfields” became known for their Asian flavour. The area history can be seen in buildings such as the Jamme Masjid Mosque. It was built in 1741 as a Huguenot Church, spent much of the 19th Century as a Baptist chapel, and became a synagogue in 1893 before eventually becoming Mosque in the last quarter”(43).

British native communities were open to these ethnic minorities and they welcomed any participation made by theme. As it came in the Swann Report:

a multi-racial society such as ours would in fact functions most effectively and harmoniously on the basic of pluralism which enables, expects and encourages members or all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping the society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures, whilst also allowing and, where necessary, assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within this common framework .(5)

Even though the Swann Report is considered as a good initiative, it gave the idea of freedom of religious and political participation. However, it found difficulty in being applied because of the majority government refusal and the Churches’ fear that British people would let go of the Christianity for the sake of reverting to Islam. This made Muslims stay away
from public discussion and to make their own religious groups. This last was a main reason to strengthen them up. This by its turn helped in the development of Muslims themselves religiously, ideologically and politically. Women started to go to work and men helped their wives. Down years, migrants started to lose that close connection with their home. Traditions which had no necessity were being vanished; however they also had problems in participating their religion in a non-Islamic country. This led to the attempt to spread Islam so as to have the freedom of participating it. Between the 70’s and 80’s, an enormous number of Islamic institutions were being built, Islamic principles and ideas were being spread fast; However, this development began to cause a clash of religions, cultures and traditions especially when government and Church felt the threat and the danger of being replaced by this new community.

2. 9-11 Attacks and their Impact:

One of the main events that have changed the world is the attacks on the Twin Tower in New York on the ninth September 2001. These attacks had tremendous events, most importantly, its ability of changing the world into two opposing parts. After having a binary system between the west and the east, 9-11 changed this division and made it more of the world of the west and the world of Islam.

“The Global War against Terror” was immediately called for after these attacks. In fact at eleven o’clock on the morning of September 11 George W. Bush had already asserted that the only one responsible for these attacks was Al Qaeda. So, he used this term to argue for a global, military and political war against both terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and against countries that are accused of supporting them.

The Islamic fundamentalists in wrecking havoc on America had appeared, almost at a stroke, to put the whole globe out of kilter. The attacks had ‘changed everything’. The
security of the entire state order appeared to be imminently threatened by the Islamic fundamentalists led by Osama Bin Laden. The palpable fear was that ‘evil’ might triumph over ‘good’, ‘Islam’ symbolized by al-Qaeda would threaten the established foundation of ‘modern society’. (Milton-Edwards 133)

What was clear there is that America’s old enemy (communism) was, suddenly, replaced by a new enemy which is Islam as it was described as the religion of terror. Not surprisingly, the two enemies were situated in the east. This is tackled by Runnymede Trust in Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, Islamophobia: a challenge for us all by stating that:

It is no accident, some commentaries have suggested, that the recent demonizing of Islam began at much the same time that the evil empire of communism receded as a real threat. Western political and popular culture required a new enemy, an implacable other, to replace the Soviet Union. Also, it is cynically if plausibly claimed, the western armaments industry needed a new enemy. (8)

After lunching what was called the Global War, America started to use this for its own economic reasons. Explicitly, it began to make a military war against some countries for the reason that either it contained terrorist groups or it helped foreign terrorist organization. However, it had internal interests in occupying those countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan in order to have access into its natural resources taking for instance oil.

America found these attacks the best to accuse Islam and Muslims of being terrorists. With its media and propaganda people of the west started to have islamophobia. Muslims were seen as terrorist, bloody, and violent people who cannot act peacefully. Britain, especially England, decided to make acts laws and anything was possible to end the Muslims’ existence there. One of these laws is known as the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Law
2001 which was enacted two months after the attacks. British people, then, started to have more prejudices against Muslims. The scale of racism got into its biggest levels. Muslims were under multiple abuses sometimes physical and in other times they were moral. The British government made several anti-terrorist laws such as, detention without charge. The Muslim community was treated unfairly with a high degree of unreasonable searches and arrests which for most of the times led to being judged as guilty.

Media also played its role in attacking Muslims. The Muslim males’ conservative attitudes towards their women were one of the weapons that anti-Muslim thinkers had used against this community. Gender inequality became highly debated so as to make the difference between western and eastern thinking. Media started to fabricate fictional stories about Muslims’ lives. Westerners, because of this, became more anxious about the radical attitudes of Muslims. The London Times journal, as an example, published an article entitled “This War is not about Terror, it is about Islam”. Through this article, David Selbourne talked about Islam as it was the new evil empire replacing the Soviet Union. He tried to give examples of the reason why Muslims had migrated to Britain, such as running from Sharia Laws and inter-Muslim conflict. Selbourne also asserted that Muslim migrants are only waiting their chance for another attack (Telegraph).

This religious hatred against Muslims in United Kingdom from a western perspective was logical especially with the so called War against Terror. British people started to target Mosques and Hijabist women especially those who wear Burka. Even children were in front of racist attacks. So, generally speaking, the themes that were tackled about Islam and Muslim were in the scale between the conservative attitudes towards women, terrorist attacks, Muslims’ citizenship issues. Not only laws, society and Media were against Muslims. Political parties also had a great role in advocating those negative images and views. Some political parties saw the use those attacks, the easiest way to convince people to embrace
islamophobia. The most famous group which had this goal is the British National Party. This party is largely known as being a far-right political party. This means that it supports social conservatism; consequently, it opposes any type of liberalism and socialism. As it was mentioned, BNP encourages people for hating insulting British Muslims. In order to gain their goal, the political leaders of this party made the presentation of the danger of Islam one of the party’s principles. A leaflet was made to accomplish this objective, it was under the title of “the Truth about I.S.L.A.M”. With that title, each letter of I.S.L.A.M is symbolising a word. These words are Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson and Molestation of women.

At the very beginning of the leaflet, it is stated as following: “[a]mong the native British majority, no one dares to tell the truth about Islam and the way it threatens our democracy, traditional freedoms and identity - except for the British National Party”(1). Here, the party explicitly maintains that Islam is a threat and because of islamophobia no one dares to talk about this fact. It also encourages people to read the leaflet and distributed it before making it “illegal”. This is because the government is afraid of Muslims’ terrorist reaction for it. At the end, the parties’ members called the government to stop Muslim Immigration before they will be able to control the country.

Another side which also encouraged these views was the former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. According to her, all Muslims are responsible for the 9-11 attacks and each Muslim should apologise, or she considered him a supporter for terrorism. Such views and others had in a big degree damaged the Muslim community immensely. After being a part of the British society, Muslims found themselves again in the scope of the other.

Even though, America to some degree succeeded in accomplishing its goal in ruining the image of Islam, Muslims have found a way to make their voices heard after being silent migrants in all the pervious times. They started to participate in politics, and they made
their own political groups to defend their rights. One of those is the Forum against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR) which was established in order to end those prejudices made against Islam. FAIR was more connected to media; its aim was to show the world that there was no need to islamophobia and racism (Mrd40). With their dialogues and interviews with media organisation, they answered everything that was put under question. In addition, this Islamic group tried to make changes in legislation by making a document entitled “the Religious Offences Bill: A Response”. This document was sent to the house of lord select committee as an opposition to the British National Party. According to them, the leaflet of the BNP made the British Law ambiguous, injustice and illogical. Due to this, some communities were protected from hatred and racism while others were not.

In addition to FAIR, Islamic Society of Britain is an organisation that defends Muslim values in the British society. This society had always the tendency since 1994 to organise Islam Awareness Week. The importance of this organisation became more obvious after the attacks. In fact, they started to be more involved in discussions and attending fundraising events across UK. As it is the case of all Muslims’ organizations, they sick to end this misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims. One of its representatives said in the Awareness Week: “[w]e believe that through awareness and understanding of one another we can create better relations and develop respect and harmony in our society. IAW is an opportunity for us all to come together in addressing the threats posed by misunderstanding one another” (The History| Islamic Awareness Week).

What was said before was only a glance about the difficulties that Muslims faced in the Western context. The attacks had really a significant impact on the world’s views concerning Islam. Some had found that the attacks were only a small reason to begin a war against Islam as Sullivan describes it as being a religious war and September 9/11 was only the beginning. Meanwhile, some had accused America of manipulating facts to gain personal
interests. For others, they found that Islam is really the religion of terrorism. Between this and that, migrant Muslims were and are still trying to give a clear message about Islam and to stop the misunderstanding of its principles. What was clear back then is that the world was in front of a new period which is mainly called Post 9-11.

This major event did not only touch the political, military and social aspects. In the matter of fact, literature also was one of the major branches that were influenced by these attacks. In fact, literary works played and are still playing a big role in discussing the ambiguity of these events and answering questioned issues such as whether Muslims are really terrorists or not? Does their religion ignore women? Is being a Muslim means being a radical? These and other questions were the most controversial issues that westerners had in mind. Writers for different reasons tackled these questions and answered them according to their own understandings of Islam.

Some have decided to write about Islam and these events to ruin what was rest about Islam. Their use of Muslim characters has showed huge fictional violence, primitiveness, and terrorism. Others were writing just to gain money for the reason that British people, at that time, were thirsty to know more about Muslims. It was known that some writings about this subject were not true but they have read it any way. For other writers they demanded the government to restrict Muslim migrants’ laws through their narratives. These western representations of Islam and Muslim migrants made Muslims suffer a lot especially Muslim women who were always under the scope of otherness.

In this new context, Muslim writers, whether Arabs or Indians, have their own ideas, way of thinking, and ways of perceiving their own Islamic identity. These factors are major factors that shape their literatures. Strictly speaking, even though those writers have different backgrounds and different perspectives, they all share the same view which held that
Islam is not based on individualism. In other words, to be a Muslim does not mean that you share the same identity with other Muslim, and each one embraces the religion of Islam. By this participating Islam becomes an individual act, unlike what westerners think, and eventually this individual act enters in what is known as ‘the identity formation’. The thing which means that as Muslim one is not forcibly has the same identity as the other Muslim. So, what someone may see as a normal thing to do, the other may not have the same view. What is new here is that Islam and the different Muslims identities are presented by Muslims themselves who are breaking down the heritage of traditional thinking of Islam equals terrorism.

It is unquestioned that migration literature is what ethnic minorities write about their experience of migration in the west, and how their identities are in front of multiple problems and difficulties. These active minorities entered new aspects of displacement that were not tackled before and they started new form of literature which is migration literature. This last was mainly made as an expression of the third world migrant’s experience in the western context. One of the aims of this form of literatures is to end the prejudices made by the west.

3. Postcolonial Feminism:

Rather than imagining that women automatically have something identifiable in common, why not say, humbly and practically, my first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue. You will see immediately what the differences are. You will also feel the solidarity every day as you make the attempt to learn the language in which the other woman learnt to recognize reality at her mother's knee. This is preparation for the intimacy of cultural translation.

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
One of the most important fields of study across the world is the field of feminism. History has marked different situations in which women all over the world were in front of multiple prejudices and mistreatments and ignorance. Society, culture and traditions were always against women, for such a reason, a west feministic movement in the late of 1960s emerged as a response to those misbehaviours made about them. The movement of feminism started the process of reexamination of different issues and problems such as gender, sex, and human rights. Feminism, from its beginning in the 19th century till now, has gone through different stages of ideas and thoughts. In its first enlightenments, feminists only fought for their rights such as the right to vote or to have a job. After nailing their demands, western females started to seek liberation from the patriarchal society, equality and ending up discrimination. As such, it aims to criticize the issue of power inequalities between men and women and it tries to end the inferiorities made against them. Consequently, it fights to gain the political, cultural, social relations and powers. Feminism is a movement that tries to universalise the experience of women all over the world. Feminists go to the idea that the experiences of women in the whole world are the same. They assert, also, that with feminism the voices of all women will be heard.

It is very obvious that western feminism bases its aims on the women’s rights in work, sexual freedom, gender equalities and the educational rights. By these demands, however; western feminism has ignored the needs and experiences of ‘women of colour’. This is mainly because the circumstances, way of living and experiences of the third world women differ completely from those of western women. For this reason a new movement emerged to advocate for the rights of the third world and postcolonial women. Postcolonial Feminism is, thus, the movement which rejects the notion of universal feminism. First, it is necessary to to draw attention to the idea that postcolonialism is a movement which seeks to end the structure of binary system where the third world countries are always primitive, weak, naïve
feminine and colonised. It is considered as a revolutionary movement that aims to deconstruct what west has constructed about them. Similarly to this, as it was mentioned before feminism seeks the same however it does not focus on west and east issues but gender issues. According to this theory, females all over the world are being underestimated. They are (as the east is) always marginalised, colonised and are put in the zone of “the other”. Feminist theory is often applied on the experiences of western females. Calling for the women’s right, western females generalised their experiences upon women of the world. By doing so, western females are being Eurocentrics and they ignore the experiences of other women of the world.

Postcolonialism and Feminism are both criticised about one shared thing which they both ignore. Firstly, Postcolonialism is more a male theory, i.e., this theory does not ask for the rights of postcolonial world’s women and they were not even mentioned. Secondly, Feminists are too Eurocentric; they only focus on their experience in the west without taking into consideration third world female. So, both of them have excluded the doubly colonised category: females of postcolonial world. For this, a new theory has made its way to give voice to this ignored category, this theory is Postcolonial Feminism.

Colonialism and patriarchy have been always linked together, their existence in the third world made women suffer two kinds of oppression: colonial and male control. However, the end of colonialism does not mean that the patriarchal control and the ignorance of females are ended. Here, Postcolonial Feminism comes to show how third world females are still being stereotyped by both their men and the west. Ironically, Postcolonial theorists who fight against culture oppression made by the west, they have done the same oppression on their women.

As a result, Postcolonial Feminism or third world feminism emerged as a response to both feminism and colonialism. It criticised the way they ignored the third world female and their special experience of oppression. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park state that:
Postcolonial Feminism cannot be regarded simply as a subset of postcolonial studies, or, alternatively, as another variety of feminism. Rather it is an intervention that is changing the configurations of both postcolonial and feminist studies. Postcolonial Feminism is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women’s lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights. (53)

According to this definition, Postcolonial Feminism is regarded as not a subset but as an independent theory which defends third women issues. It is a new stream of thought which suggests that Colonial oppression had a particular influence on women.

Postcolonial Feminism raises different important issues which are concerned with third world women. While postcolonialists struggle against the imperial oppression of the west that aims to misrepresent him, postcolonial feminists’ job is more complicated. They are colonised by both the imperial oppression and male oppression. By this, the male companion in the process of colonisation is no longer a companion of her in her new struggle. Postcolonial Feminists have always limited their relationship towards western feminists. This last have past racial and cultural specificities and they aimed for more open choices for them. With their ‘Global Sisterhood’, they ignored the voice of the third world females. In her article “Under Western Eye: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse”, Mohanty Chandra Talpade criticises the Eurocentric ideas of western feminism and its ignorance of the unique experience of third world females. In another work of her Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism she states:

Western feminists appropriate and "colonise" the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterise the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes in these countries. It is in the process of homogenization and systemisation of the
oppression of women in the third world that power is exercised in much of recent Western feminist discourse and this power needs to be defined and named. (97)

What matters mostly with Postcolonial Feminism is the need to make their voices heard whether in society, politics or even in writing. They aim to delete the image which conveys that third world women are uneducated, domestic, ignorant and subalterns and more often silenced. They also try to redefine their status and location in their own society and in the world. Third world women are always put in the circle of being objects nothing more. They fight for their location to be considered as subjects with certain rights and freedoms. Postcolonial Feminist tries to establish these objectives and transfer their ideas and messages with different means and ways. One of those ways is the use of their own literary theory which is called postcolonial feminism.

The aims of this literary theory are the same of those of the general movement. Postcolonial feminists use their literatures to transfer those issues, problems and needs. According to them, when these issues are voiced through literature, the ability to solve them will not be difficult. However, in certain cases, postcolonial feminists do not go with the same flow. Taking for instance the notions of silence and voice and how they should be transferred and perceived in the portraying and representations of third world women is much debated.

Silence, for example, is used sometimes as a moment of gathering thoughts. In other times, it is considered to be a hidden menace. It may also be fear of speaking, a fear of confronting. In writing, silence exists everywhere, between lines, chapters, with characters and even inside the author. As it is mentioned before, one of the most important issues to discuss in postcolonial feminism is the question of the representation of the female character and the use of voice and silence to reveal their power and weakness issue.

Some postcolonial feminist writers have argued that the existence of females’ voice is the existence of their power. Voiceless females are under study from different angles. In this
context, silence is mainly analysed for the sake of analysing women’s strength. It is considered as flexible, personal force. It is mainly linked to females as if it is their shadow that one cannot escape from it, i.e, the notion of being silent is inseparable from the female’s character. Third world females are the most known for keeping silent, that is why postcolonial feminists decided to give their focus on this specific notion and analyse it the way it should be analysed.

Postcolonial Feminism poses the question of voice and silence that is: who speaks for whom, whose voices are being heard whose voices are being silenced and who is choosing to be silent. The question of how silence should be perceived accordingly is another important assumption of ‘Postcolonial Feminism’. Accordingly, this is the aim of this memoire in which the study will tackle the notion of female’s silence and its reflections upon their identity.

By engaging in this close examination of the notion of silence as an empowerment for the third world women, it is very necessary to draw attention to two major theorists who contributed in a more understandable conception regarding this subject. One of these two scholars is Trinh T Min-Ha. In her book Woman, Native, Other, she explicitly maintains that talking about language is also talking about silence. In this context, she states in one of her interviews that “silence is always an imminent moment, what happened before guns fired or bombs were dropped’’ (Ruelle Elerctique). She, also, considers silence as an instrument by which a woman cleverly establishes her objectives with ending the male’s control over her. Moreover, Trinh T participates in the Rhetorical Feminism where silence is put under discussion and it is considered to be an art of resisting any kind of oppression and an effective way of communication.

King-Kok Cheung also approves with the pervious view, and she asserts that silence does not mean something is unheard. In her book Articulate Silences Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa, Cheung analyses the use of silence by three Asian
writers. She declares that “Asian American writers are just beginning to breathe” (23), and that by their works, they prove that “silence can speak many tongues, varying from culture to culture” (1). Cheung goes to the aim of “[unsettling] the Eurocentric perspective on speech and silence, which [she] see[s] polarized, hierarchal, and gendered, especially in regard to Asians” (23). She gives several meanings for silence one of those is that silence is a strategic method that the author might use to make the reader look for the unspeakable, and she links it to “women’s writing, which is often “coded” or made up of a dominant and muted story”(15). She, also, says that male trust of females’ silence is wrong because while being silent, the female is searching for a revolution (4).

Like it was mentioned, some of Postcolonial Feminists choose to confirm that silence is a stereotypical behaviour which expresses weakness, passivity and the absence of the self-consciousness. It is more likely to be a characterisation of women who do not want to end the patriarchal control over them. Consequently, these third world women are confirmation of the west’s stereotypical views made against them. They demand the need to stop being silent as Elle Wiesel in his speech in his Nobel Prize said “[s]ilence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented” (New York Times 1). To confirm these ideas about silence in this study, the use of Gayatri Spivak and Youngsuk Chae works is a need.

Gayatri Spivak asserts that silence is the behavior of the subaltern. By subaltern, she addresses mostly females who are not making their voices heard. Spivak discusses the lack of voice in females and how this is reflected in her personal life in her article “Can the Subaltern speak?” This is what Youngsuk Chae in her book Politicizing Asian American Literature asserts when she encourages Asian Females to speak out for their rights and she described them as being silent. She compares Asian workers with those “domestic white workers” and she encourages them for “fighting for better wages and conditions” (21). This is mainly because “Chinese workers were depicted by employers as ‘docile’ employees” in comparison
to the white workers and as ‘subservient and compliant’ by European white immigrant workers. These European workers “did not think that the Chinese workers could have a working-class consciousness and establish solidarity” (21). For her, when the female workers are capable of having their own consciousness, they will be able to end the stereotypical view made by them. As such the females of third world have to stop these prejudices by having a voice.

To sum up, Female migrant postcolonialists are new group of writers who aims to delete what was written in others’ mind about third world females. What is interesting in those females is that each one of them has her own way of describing things. The background of the author, her personal experience and what she have witnessed are considered to be one of the main criteria which help the reader to understand the literary work more. Female migrants, more than men, had many difficulties in living in western context especially after 9-11 attacks. They were triply colonised, firstly as women, secondly as Migrants and as an “other”. However, their need to show the world what they are able to accomplish made them.

Contemporary female writers try to show what was like in living in a western world full of racism, stereotypical views and islamophobia may look like. One of the most important contemporary writers who have nailed success by writing her novel Brick lane is called Monica Ali. She is a Bengali- British writer who has written her novel in which she shows what everyone wants to know: how living in a Muslim Family is like and she illustrates also that Muslims do not hate westerns but they hate how westerners treat them.
Works Cited of the First Chapter:


Chapter Two:

Silence: the Subaltern’s Characteristic

The traditional Asian society is described as being a male-rule and a woman subordinated society. This institutional way of ruling is often described as patriarchy. This last is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the social organization marked by the supremacy of the man in the clan or family, or control by men of a disproportionately large share of power”. This male-dominated society, automatically, prioritises the power and control of men over women so as to control, marginalise, and colonise. Moreover, in order to prove their status of power, men always attempt to silence their women. These lasts by their turn do not act against such thing and they accept being in the zone of silence.

Accordingly, women are taught that silence is the only thing that matches their identity perfectly. As a woman one should not speak out in front of a male, and she must not make her voice heard. By this, silence becomes fully feminine convention with which women are oppressed and marginalised. Thus, the female’s silence turns to be a repression for her and turns her to be only an object.

Consequently, third world literature is always interested in depicting those societies in which women are fully silenced. Writers tend to create their female’s characters as passive, submissive to their men, requesting their approval to speak out, and embracing the idea of being referred to as objects and others. This is the reason why Simon De Bouvoire states in her book Second sex: “[w]oman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he
with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the absolute- she is the other” (19).

Women are never allowed to speak, to read or even to think, the thing which causes their voices’ loss and their identities’ weakness. As such, silence becomes synonymous with absence, submission and weakness. Silence of women is, thus, an advocator for the characterisation of oppression and repression and weakness. That is why, women writers started to create voices to the unvoiced, marginlised group ‘women’. As a result, many postcolonial feminists prioritise the process of speaking out over silence as a method. Considering that silence is a stereotyped picture of third world females, and an assertion for their passivity, weakness and inability to have a spoken language. In this context, Henry Schawaz and Sangeeta Ray in their book A Companion to Postcolonial studies maintain that: “[w]hen “Third World Women” speak in, the voices of these feminists, it is to repudiate otherness, tokenism, stereotyping, exceptionalism, and the role of “native informant.” They seek to resignify the attributes of Third World women – silence, the veil, absence and negativity” (54-55).

Asian postcolonial feminists, in particular, focus on writing about their communities’ systems of behaving regarding women. In addition to their attempt to show that silence will always be silent and it can not in any way be a way of resistance. This is a reason which obliges third world female to try ending this stereotypic view of being either silent or silenced.

As a result, the notion of silence, according to them, is highly linked to the luck of power. Kamel Salhi, in this context, maintains in his book Francophone postcolonial cultures that women are known for the inability to speak because they do not have the power to do so “[i]n other words, the power of words is in some ways equivalent to the power of bombs” (69). This expresses the power of the spoken words and the weakness of females that
discourage them from having a spoken discourse which has the power of a bomb. “This direct comparison then points to a correlation between the breakdown of society as a result of the war and the breakdown of silence as a consequence of the war waged by women to end their oppression.” (69). By this, silence ought to be fought by women using the bomb of the spoken language.

As a matter of fact, third world women are known for their inability to speak out because they are silenced since old times. This silence became a more complex notion and created more theoretical debates a further more complex theoretical debate with the publication of the postcolonial feminist critic, Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988). By the term ‘Subaltern’, it is referred to women as “oppressed minority groups whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority groups. The subaltern social groups were also in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power.” (Bhabha 191).

In this article, Spivak believes that third world women can only be represented by the high class society. Their inability to represent themselves by their own will always put them in the silence zone. In her view, the Subaltern cannot speak because they used to be silent. If a woman was able to have a spoken form of language, however, she will be out of the zone of subalternity. This is an indirect call for third world women to speak out and to break the walls of their voicelessness.

In Brick Lane, Monica Ali makes a clear distinction between her females’ invisibility when being silent and their visibility when being voiced. Although, each female character has different experience from one another, it is clearly showed that they are all in so many instances gathered by one characterisation which is being silent. Ali attempts to show that Nazneen’s and the other female characters’ silences are of different kinds, and based on different situation. Furthermore, she suggests that silence is the only choice that is available to
women. By this, it cannot be considered as a free will but an obligation which one cannot escape of. This is justified by Mary Eagleton in her book *Working with Feminist Criticism* as follows: “[w]hen women speak of being silenced they don’t mean that they are incapable of adequately speaking a language; rather they are referring to social and cultural pressures which undermine their confidence and make them hesitant about speaking” (16). By this, Silence becomes not only an act of not speaking out but also a form of pressure which causes self-underestimation and eventually the inability of speaking even if when wanting to do so.

The study aims, in this chapter, at investigating the different forms of silence found in the narrative and how it presents the females’ identity and their lack of self-esteem. The female’s silence, here, is involuntary and it has power over all females. That is to say, the author shows that silence is an oppression, marginalisation and obligation women. This chapter, as a result, will attempt to answer questions such as: how can silence be an obligation? is really silence an image of third world women’s marginalisation? In the case that the women decide to break their silence, can they speak? The first section of this chapter will attempt to answer the first two questions, considering that silence is a form of obligation and marginalization. For the second one, it will show how silences has been broken by Nazneen and other characters in the narrative.

1. Silence: Shame, Fear and Marginalisation:

As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, Nazneen’s sister Hasina writes always multiple letters to her sister. Hasina gives details to each little event in her own life. In spite of this, Hasina has not the courage only to speak but also to write about certain event that is happening to her. Actually, Hasina is raped by her boss Mr Chowdhury. Even though, it is not Hasina’s fault that she is rapped, she chooses to keep silent about this and when she decides to tell her sister about it she chooses not to speak about it directly: “I say nothing I do nothing and then it done and he sit in the chair […] and I do it. He tell me not to cry and I stop. He ask
if it he who taking care of me and I say yes it him. This is what happen and afterward I cry” (166). Hasina’s fear and emotions that were caused by the rape is described in Chilla Bulbeck’s *Re-Orienting Western Feminisms*: “[w]omen have so often been raped as part of the process of war that it can hardly be described as 'extracurricular'. In fact raping women is not only the spoils of war which maintains the morale of victorious soldiers but also a weapon of fear which causes women to flee (190)”.

As it is stated earlier, Salhi Kamel believes that the power of words equals the power of the bombs and war, Bulbeck also uses the metaphor of war to maintain that a woman cannot speak out or stand against a man because of her fears. In this case, the results of the rape are the ones which cause Hasina’s silence.

Hasina writes about what happens to her in May 1991; however, Nazneen, like her sister, has not the courage and the power to talk about that letter to her husband Chanu. In fact, the patriarchal control of husband causes fear and eventually leads to Nazneen’s silence. This weakness that she feels goes to the fear that Chanu would make her stop talking to her only sister. She also feels ashamed about what is happening to Hassina. Nazneen makes the reader eager to make her speak, so that Chanu may give her help but she does not. The reason of her not speaking is what Gayatri Spivak states in an interview in *the post-colonial critic* quoted in Donna Landrya and Gerald MacLean’s *The Spivak Reader*: “[t]hen you begin to investigate what it is that silences you, rather than take this very deterministic position—since my skin colour is this, since my sex is this, I cannot speak”(5). Spivak gathers both the colour and the sex to announce that being a woman of colour is the thing that silences Nazneen. Silence comes out as a dreadful oppressor of third world women whose voices cannot be heard.

Nazneen does not only feel ashamed of her sister’s rape but also because of herself and her affair with Karim she is “sick with shame” (299). She is trying to tell Hasina about
her affair, her being no longer good girl and that she might be fallen in love. However, Nazneen is not ready for such a thing; her silence takes control of her. Taking a step like this requires a lot of courage which Nazneen lucks at the moment. She is not powerful enough to talk about this to anyone, even to her best friend Razia. Nazneen is unable to speak, she has committed adultery, and she has no other choice but to remain silent. Esposito and Delong-Bas point out in *Women in Muslim Family Law* that: “[c]heating is immaturity, dishonor, instability, disloyalty, in short, not to be content with what Allah has given and ingratitude. That attribute does not fit a spouse ad a mature Muslim; therefore, the Quran prohibited it” (45).

Nazneen’s silence, again, proves its power over the woman’s identity and way of thinking. She knows deep inside her that she has committed a sin: “They committed a crime. It was a crime and the sentence is death” (Ali 299). In spite of this, she cannot stop meeting Karim and she gives up to her forbidden desire. This secret that she keeps makes her feel uncomfortable about everything that goes around her. The reader is able to see that Nazneen is being suspicious about her neighbours’ knocking sounds. She has a feeling that her neighbour is also cheating her husband. She moves next to think whether if they knew about her affair with Karim because of the bed room sounds.

Through Nazneen perspective, as it is mentioned before, the reader is directly exposed to the Bengali culture and community. After finding herself in a new, western context, Nazneen’s life is nearly the same as it was back in Bangladesh. It is always the same Bengali community, the same thinking and the same oppression. Nazneen, along the narrative, is marginlised, stereotyped, ignored and she accepts being so. She is not an English speaker, she is not allowed to go out to the public sphere and she is supposed to be just the perfect housewife. In addition to this, she silently keeps waiting to be beaten by her husband: “[he] had not beaten her yet. He showed no signs of wanting to beat her. In fact he was kind
and gentle. Even so, it was foolish to assume he would never beat her. He thought she was a ‘good worker’ (she had overheard him on the telephone). He would be shocked if she lapsed” (12).

In spite of her living in London, her vision that any husband must beat his wife goes with her through the novel, and she shows acceptance about this even deep inside her. She is also happy and satisfied being described as “a good worker” and eventually as an object. This is what Chanu thinks of her. Like any patriarchal man, he is only seeing her as an object and a servant: “[w]hat’s more, she is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that. The only complaint I could make is she can’t put my files in order, because she has no English. I don’t complain though. As I say, a girl from the village: totally unspoilt” (17).

The reader may not be surprised by Chanu’s thinking; after all he is a man. However, Nazneen’s reaction to her husband’s words is undeniably a surprise. Her silence shows her approval to what is said about her about being the unspoilt girl from the village and being just a good worker:

Chanu went on talking but Nazneen crept away, back to bed. A blind uncle is better than no uncle. Her husband had a proverb for everything. Any wife is better than no wife. Something is better than nothing. What had she imagined? That he was in love with her? That he was grateful because she, young and graceful, had accepted him? That in sacrificing herself to him, she was owed something? Yes. Yes. She realized in a stinging rush she had imagined all these things. Such a foolish girl. Such high notions. What self-regard. (17)

This is, according to Spivak, a confirmation of Nazneen’s subalternity. Shadowing the history of the Sati Laws in India, Spivak concludes that it is impossible for the subaltern or third world woman to have a voice. This goes to the reason that silence became their characteristic

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from a long time ago “[o]ne never encounters the testimony of the women’s voice-consciousness” (93).

The luck of voice, self-confidence and weakness go with Nazneen all along the narrative. Especially, when Nazneen walks through Brick Lane, it happens that she sees an English girl. Nazneen tries to describe herself through the girl’s eyes: “She looked at Nazneen with a ready kindness, a half smile on her lips, but in her eyes there was nothing […] a blankness reserved for known quantities like pieces of furniture or brown women in saris who cooked rice and raised children and obeyed their husbands” (325). Even though Nazneen has so many years since she started to live in London, she is still stereotyping herself silently and making herself always ‘the other’.

It is very obvious to say that Nazneen’s ideas and thoughts are disclosed through her silence. This silence is the one which enables the reader to gain access to Nazneen’s hidden pain. After being described by Chanu as “the unspoilt girl from the village” and a “good worker”, Karim, like Chanu, gives her a description that is almost the same as Chanu’s.

“‘Ah, you. You are the real thing.’ ‘Real thing?’ […]And you never know what you’re going to get.’ ‘I am the real thing?’ A conversation overheard in the early days […] An unspoilt girl. From the village. All things considered, I am satisfied” (320).

At this point, the reader can feel, see and hear her unspoken disappointment. Again, she is described as an object, she is the real thing and this is what Chanu talks about she is the good choice. She is referred to as a “what” with Ali’s focus on the word by italicising it.

Unfortunately, she accepts being so; she has no choice but to be so. This inability to speak or comment about Nazneen’s invisibility as a woman not an object is tackled by Spivak in her “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as follows: “[i]f, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (32). Here, Spivak asserts that the female subalterns are in the matter of fact a muted
group and can never have a voice against any oppression made against them. This is the result of “the ideological construction of gender” in the colonial archives and the historical records of subaltern insurgency ‘keeps the male dominant’ (288).

Nazneen’s silence and being always trapped in the description of being a silent, and a perfect object to have turn to be threats over her physical health. Nazneen feels that she is “trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity” (Ali 76). Nazneen’s bad feeling, in addition to her secret affair with Karim makes her sick. She dreams of her mother who tries to make her regret and to take her with her (322). With her discovery that Chanu took a loan from Mrs islam. At the end, Nazneen falls in “nervous exhaustion” like Doctor Azad describes it (339). She is depressed, tired and she cannot handle all of this anymore. This nervous exhaustion explains in a very clear way how silence affects negatively one’s identity. This negative impact of silence is demonstrated by Carr-west Jonathan as follows:

[i]t becomes clear why conceiving of identity in the terms outlined above might be […]significant. It is also clear why the literary text should provide so suitable a forum for the exploration of this type of identity. If the self is, as has been claimed, a form of narrative, it seems likely that it will share some of the characteristics of the narrative text. Consider the following points: a text demands to be read, it exists to be read and to some degree it exists only insofar as it is read. Like the self, the text is dependent upon its own articulation. (83)

Carr-west in the quotation above draws an important similarity between the unreadability of the text and the silence. She maintains that any text should be read, if not it will be inexistence. Accordingly, without having an articulation, or a spoken form of language, the identity does not have an existence, proving that silence is not only an oppression of women but it also leads to the non-existence.
After her breakdown, Nazneen wishes that Chanu discovers her relationship with Karim. She wants that he will make her stop and “perhaps even to stone her, as was his right?” (Ali 342). Again, Nazneen is not able to act by herself; she is waiting for her husband to end an affair that she made it by herself. She also starts to get things together about her relationship with Karim. She realises that Karim is only with her because she makes him feel home, and his native identity. She interprets that she is just: “[a] Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her” (Ali 454). Before her nervous exhaustion, Karim was the man who listens to her, and who treats her like a woman not an object and this is the reason why she kept seeing him, not love. However, she now is able to see that Karim has no difference from Chanu and her father. In fact, Chanu now is giving her the husband and wife conversation. He starts to become the man she really wants.

Silence is always the method that is applied by the oppressor on the oppressed. However, it should be mentioned that it is not always man who silences women but also some women attempt to silence weaker females. This is very clear in the narrative through Mrs Islam way of behaving and thinking. She has the last word in this community neither men nor women are able to disagree with her. She has more than 30 years living in London, and this may show that now she is not a part of the previous colonised country. Mrs Islam is now totally assimilated in the British community even though she tries to show the opposite.

Mrs Islam’s controlling nature is very obvious in the way she keeps visiting Nazneen. After Raqib’s birth, the community’s lady starts to control Nazneen more especially on how she should behave with her new baby (85). Nazneen is not able to speak and demands from her to stop coming and stop spending time with Raqib: “Nazneen had begun to dread these visits. Raqib was five months old, and still Mrs Islam had not expended all her advice” (83). It is weird how even though the baby is Nazneen’s baby but she cannot decide with whom he should stay. The mother tries to show an unwelcoming to Mrs Islam, she takes her
baby with her to make tea for the guest to show that she does not want the baby to be with her anymore.

In spite of this, Mrs Islam does not care and she asks to take the baby with her. Nazneen, this time, shows her first spoken opposition to the lady saying that “He’s staying here with [her]” (88). At this point, Mrs Islam “looked at her. Her features could not accommodate surprise, but her eyebrows dug themselves a little closer together. Nazneen noticed for the first time how dark they were, untouched by the white that had leached her hair. What’s that?” (88). The narrator here describes “Nazneen trembled, but the warmth of Raqib’s body against her chest fired her resolve. He’s staying here”. This trembling comes from her speaking out, it is the first time she acts aggressively showing her real point of view. This last reaction has had its results and Mrs Islam is out of the house without her approval to be out.

Still, before her going out she attempts to make Nazneen frightened about her neighbours. She says: “[t]he white people,’ ‘they all do what they want. It’s nobody’s business. ‘If a child is screaming because it is being beaten, they just close the door and the windows. They might make a complaint about noise. But the child is not their business, even if it is being beaten to death” (98). By this statement, Mrs Islam is directly pointing to Nazneen’s motherhood. She deliberately gives her the metaphor of a baby who is “being beaten to death” and no one cares. This to show Nazneen that this last needs her and needs her protection in front of those cold hearted community. She chooses silence to frighten the mother and reminding her not to get in touch with them. Ali helps Mrs Islam in making the reader see how silence can become an adjective linked to the west and the white not with the east and colored people taking for instance the Tattoo Lady.

This last through the whole narrative is depicted silent and Ali does not give her any voice or even internal ideas which help to know her more. Nazneen’s friend, Razia, Later
on, gives insinuation that the tattoo lady was sent to a psychiatric hospital, the place where she belongs and it was mainly because of silence “Someone should have got to her sooner. Always sitting there in the window, like a painted statue. Did no one see?” (130).

Mrs Islam, in the beginning of the novel, appears as the traditional Bengali female character who is against breaking the norms of the Bengali community. She is against the women’s work, and against the females’ discussion with men who are not part of the family (98). According to her, living outside Bangladesh does not mean that one should leave the country’s traditions and the way of life.

Despite of this Mrs Islam is the most female character who can be said that she has left her country’s way of life. She likes gossip and she works mostly with men in money laundering. Almost all of the communities’ people know that expect Nazneen. Razia, specially, knows what Mrs Islam is doing but she chooses to be silent about it. Razia is afraid of the lady’s reaction because obviously she cannot stand against such a powerful woman. While Nazneen starts to wonder about Mrs Islam’s job, her friend Razia chooses to remain silent for her own good. So he knew (132). Chanu knows about it and everybody else knows about it and instead of speaking out they choose to speak in silence. This fear of confrontation is mentioned by Chae Youngsung in her book *Politicizing Asian American Literature*: “many Asian Americans who have settled down as middle-class have shown a tendency to be politically silent or even disengaging about unequal power relations along race/ethnicity lines,” (30). Mrs Islam has more than 30 years settlement in London, So automatically she has power over her communities’ people and she is the richest female there and no one will have the courage to confront her.

After Chanu lives his job and Nazneen starts working in the swing machine. Mrs Islam finds the perfect opportunity to revenge Nazneen’s last reaction to her about her son Raqib. She tells Nazneen to: “Give the money to the mosque and give me a little for the Heat
Spray. That’s all I ask” (198). Nazneen does not know about the loan Chanu took from the lady and this is the reason which makes her confuse when Mrs Islam orders her to put the money in the lady’s bag. However, Nazneen looks inside the lady’s bag, thinking that Mrs Islam wants something inside the bag. The lady suddenly incriminates Nazneen of trying to “rub her” (199). However, by this reaction, Mrs Islam discovers that Chanu kept his loan a secret and Nazneen does not know about it; so she apologies by saying: “I understand. Forgive a sick and anxious old woman. This arrangement is between friends. Pay when you can” (199).

Mrs Islam pretends that all what she is doing is for religious benefits as giving charities and helps to the mosques. However, in fact she is a very cruel lady who does not allow anyone to escape paying his debts: “I would let you go, child, give you my money and my blessing — but how would it look to all others? Let one slip through and they all slip through. I have my sons to think about. Just give what you owe” (420). Nazneen starts to get angry and she tells her that she has no extra money but Mrs Islam silences her by saying that: “God always provides a way,’ she said, and smiled humbly as she spoke.’ You just have to find it.” (421).

2. Speaking out and Breaking Silences:

In Asian communities, it is known that a woman’s identity is always expected to be submissive to her husband. Women are not supposed to have a voice that expresses their situations or opinions, and they are supposed to be silent. This “[s]ilence represents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status” (Ifechelobi 22 ). As a consequence, the postcolonial feminist movement attempts to encourage women to end this patriarchal power. They also open the way for those women to
begin a story of self-empowering and to speak out against the restrictions and oppressions made against them.

In *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali showcases the way in which silence is used as a weapon to marginalise and to oppress women. However, the author does not stop in showing how females are subordinated by their silences. Ali uses the weapon that destroys silence which is voicing her female characters. It is believed that a voiceful woman is the one who has sense of belonging. Chukwuma Helen in this context believes that “Feminism means [...] a rejection of inferiority and a shining for recognition. It seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing human being. Feminism is a reaction to such stereotypes of women which deny them a positive identity” (9). Nazneen in this narrative demonstrates clearly how an Asian woman can avoid being a subaltern subject by being a voiceful woman. The stereotype of the self-marginalising, victimised migrant woman begins to vanish in the start of activating the hidden female voice. This much appears when she corrects her husband’s mistake about their national history issues:

[a]sense of history,’ he said. That is what they are missing. And do not forget – the Bangladeshis they are mixing with are Sylhetis, no more, no less. They do not see the best face of our nation.’

‘Colonel Osmany,’ said Nazneen quietly. ‘Shah Jalal.’

‘What?’ said Chanu. ‘What?’

‘Our great national hero and - ’

‘I know who they are!’

Nazneen apologised with a smile, and then added, ‘And that they both come from Sylhet.’ (186)

It is clear how the transformation of Nazneen’s identity takes place even in her political views. Before, she has no word or comment upon such events and issues. However,
after she knows her county’s heroes and interprets her husband by mentioning their names. Yet, her gesture of correcting her husband is the thing which is interesting. In opposite to what Chanu explains that Bangladeshis are mixing with Sylhetis who do not seek the best for the country, the two national heroes are from Sylhet and she proves that he is wrong. When she speaks about that she looks quite, smiling and behaves in an ironic way which angers Chanu. This is what bell hooks tries to advocate for in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist Thinking Black States*:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonised, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is the act of speech, of ‘talking back’, that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (211)

Until 2001, she is able to break the walls of her silence and gives Chanu a clue about what was happening to Hasina: “[w]hen she spoke of the rape, she named it in the village way, Hasina was robbed of her nakphool, her nose ring; and the selling of her body she did not name, saying only my sister had to stay alive and she saw that Chanu understood” (Ali 351). Nazneen now becomes powerful enough to talk about such thing. Ten years past and till 2001, Nazneen is finally able speak. Nazneen’s silence about her sister’s rape indicates that certain events, like this event, are problems and issues which cause shame and fear that is why women tend to build a wall of silence about them. According to Uwakweh Paulin in her article “Debunking Patriarchy: the Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions” silence is “[a]ll imposed restrictions on woman’s social being, thinking and expressions that are religious or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure” (75). However, by breaking the cultural silences in which rape is a shame upon the woman not the
man, Nazneen is not only destroying the mechanism of the patriarchal control but she ends also her fears.

At another level, Nazneen finally decides to break out with Karim. She tells Karim that she refuses to marry him, after Chanu goes back to Bangladesh. Nazneen for the first eats in front of Karim when they are talking about the reason of breaking out. Even though, eating is not a weird thing to do, however, when being silent, Nazneen was never able even to eat in front of him. Now, her courage to speak out gives her courage to do everything. Firstly, she justifies her choice of braking out that it is because of her children. Later on, she speaks out and tells the true reasons which is: “From the very beginning to the very end, [they] didn’t see things. What [they] did – [they] made each other up” (455). For the first time, Karim looks nervous and she is the one who makes him feels like that, and this makes her want to laugh (454). When Nazneen was silent no one has noticed her ideas, reactions or even emotions. But now when she is able to speaking out, she is making Karim nervous.

Ending this relationship with Karim gives her more power to tell Chanu that she is not going back with him. Before, she was unable to walk next to her husband, but now she is able to leave by herself without his existence. She spends two months of silence enable to confront her husband of not wanting to go back. Nazneen at the end makes her decision and tells that she is not going back with him.

On another level in the narrative, Mrs Islam acts rudely repeatedly and she asks to take Nazneen’s baby with her. Nazneen, this time, shows her first spoken opposition to the lady saying that “He’s staying here with [her]” (Ali 88). At this point, Mrs Islam “looked at her. Her features could not accommodate surprise, but her eyebrows dug themselves a little closer together. Nazneen noticed for the first time how dark they were, untouched by the white that had leached her hair. What’s that?” (88). The narrator here describes “Nazneen trembled, but the warmth of Raqib's body against her chest fired her resolve. 'He's staying
here”. This trembling comes from her speaking out, it is the first time she acts aggressively showing her real point of view. This last reaction has had its results and Mrs Islam is out of the house without her approval to be out.

Still, before her going out she attempts to make Nazneen frightened about her neighbours. She says:

The white people,’ ‘they all do what they want. It's nobody's business.

’If a child is screaming because it is being beaten, they just close the door and the windows. They might make a complaint about noise. But the child is not their business, even if it is being beaten to death. (98)

By this statement, Mrs Islam is directly pointing to Nazneen’s motherhood. She deliberately gives her the metaphor of a baby who is “being beaten to death” and no one cares. This to show Nazneen that this last needs her and needs her protection in front of those cold hearted community. She chooses silence to frighten the mother and reminding her not to get in touch with them. Ali helps Mrs Islam in making the reader see how silence can become an adjective linked to the west and the white not with the east and colored people taking for instance the Tattoo Lady.

This lady through the whole narrative is depicted silent and Ali does not give her any voice or even internal ideas which help to know her more. Nazneen’s friend, Razia, later after a period of time, Razia is finally able to break her silence about Mrs Islam and tells Nazneen “the woman is a usurer”. She starts a process of voicing her hidden information to show that Nazneen is shocked and she keeps silent and she looks “scandelised” (129). Razia after breaking her fear, she feels relief, and she starts to give more details in a more powerful way. She states that “[s]ome people. Perhaps many people. They are all hypocrites. That is the thing about our community. All sinking, sinking, drinking water” (129). Ali uses the words in italics to give them much importance because they show how people in the community know
all about Mrs Islam and still they refuse to speak because of their weakness and hypocrisy. She also informs her that this lady obliges people to pay endless-interest loans and threatens people who are not capable of payment by her children. Nazneen decides to tell Chanu about “the respectable lady” that he admires: “Mrs Islam,’ she began, [...] he interrupted her and drew a breath. ‘Sinking, sinking, drinking water.’”(132). So, even Chanu knows about the lady but he also chooses to be silent about it.

Contrary to Chanu and the people of the community, Nazneen decides to break her silent fear and confront Mrs Islam that she has paid her debt and more. Before, she attempted to hide from the lady so as not to ask her to pay. This time, Nazneen goes to the lady’s house. She is very angry and she decides to handle things by herself. Mrs Islam tries to silence her by saying that she knows about her affair with Karim and she is going to tell Chanu about it. However, Nazneen tells her that he knows all about it and she can make him come so that she tells him. In addition to this, she confronts Mrs Islam that she knows that she is a usurer however Mrs Islam denies that. Nazneen has had its relief from her breaking her silence, and she gains power to order Mrs Islam to swear on the Quran that she is not a money launder. Mrs Islam does not expect such a reaction from Nazneen. This goes to the fact that Nazneen is always choosing silence even though there is a need to speak out. Consequently, Mrs Islam believes that Nazneen has not the self-consciousness to defend herself loudly. In such a situation Chae believes that “These European workers “did not think that the Chinese workers could have a working-class consciousness and establish solidarity” (21). Chae, here, maintains that white workers did not expect Asian Chinese to have a voice of their own. Similarly to this, Nazneen establishes what is unexpected from her, she makes solidarity with her identity and she is able to speak out for her rights.

By this order, Ali shows Mrs Islam as a woman who is broken and she lives London and goes back to Bangladesh. This time Nazneen is not the one who is silenced but she is the
one who silencing someone else. Her breaking of silence, Nazneen realises that she can hold
of everything by herself without the helping of Chanu. It is the way of silence breaking
through which one can measure how the characters’ identities changes. In this context,
Nazneen breaks the inequalities that existed between her and Mrs Islam and her husband
Chanu. Chae illustrate this by pointing out to Spivak’s article “can the subaltern speak” by
saying: “In her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak points out that the task of
“measuring silences” may become important, especially cases where unequal power relations
between two groups exist in society”(55). As such, Nazneen’s acquisition of voice does not
only strengthen her identity, it also gives her the equality that she lucked before having a
voice of her own.

Through this chapter, the reader is given instances in which silence advocates for
different meanings. Silence is presented sometimes as fear, weakness and other times as guilt
and secrets. It is clear that Monica Ali has exaggerated in giving too much weight upon
stereotyping Asian women. However, the depiction of the female characters in this narrative
tells at the same time that the British-Bengali author is trying to show the basic prejudices that
are made about her homeland’s females.

In this narrative, it is clear that women, in almost all instances, luck verbal or spoken
responses. Their voices have been silenced either by the outside context or by their own. In
both cases Ali is making of her characters the perfect match with “the subaltern”. Females
who are silent or being silenced are the subalterns who cannot speak. This is what Guha
Ranajit points out in her article “On Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” by
defining subalterns as: “the general attribute of subordination […] whether it is expressed in
terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way”(4).

However, in the case that this subaltern breaks her silence, like Nazneen breaks, she
cannot be considered in the zone of subalternity anymore. This transformation from silencing
to voicing is what Kamel Salhi gives an idea about, he states: “[p]ost-colonial and feminist literature and criticism frequently use the tropes of silence and (coming) to voice to describe the accession of (formerly) oppressed people to writing” (45).

Through this narrative, Monica Ali cleverly shows the struggle of females to voice their situations, problems and the difficulty to kill what is known as silence. Accordingly, Mary-Angela Willis in her article “Francophone literature of the Middle East by Women: Breaking the Walls of Silence” states:

[t]hat same system of exclusion and oppression is the cause of society’s self destruction, which is embodied in the war. The war itself is a symptom of an oppressive society that has taken a path that will culminate in its own destruction. The result is a society in need of rebuilding, a situation in which previously silenced voices are able to contribute to the restructuring process. (66)

On another level, silence does not always cause passivity. In many times, silence is not recognised as weakness because without this silence the female will not nail her objectives. It is argued that the power of female lies only on her way of choosing silences. As such, if the female chooses to be silent, she can provide a mean to empower herself against men and society. Accordingly, this point will be discussed in the coming chapter.
Works Cited of Second Chapter:


Chapter Three:

Silence as a Strategic Behaviour of Empowerement

The silences, the empty spaces, the language itself, with its excision of the female, the methods of discourse tell us as much as the content, once we learn to watch for what is left out, to listen for the unspoken, to study the patterns of established science and scholarship with an outsider's eye.

- Adrienne Rich

Through history, especially western one, speech has been seen as the greatest gift that was ever given to the human kind. It is the characteristic feature that distinguishes the humans and gives them the opportunity to create and transfer their culture and power to others. Unsurprisingly, silence was given little importance and was rarely seen, if not never, as a rhetorical art. This last is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as the art of using language to influence people and which deeply effects our communication manners.

This ignored item started to appear in the binary system of the west and east. East which is always the colonised part of the world was given this notion of being silent and eventually oppressed. Third world women, more particularly, were the ones who were put under the umbrella of being silent. In recent times, however, many branches, most importantly
philosophy and literature, started to look and analyse deeply this notion as considering it no longer oppression but empowerment.

It might be strange how we can perceive and analyse literary works through silence. Literature, after all, is the art which makes us see, feel, hear and read words; silence, however, is the absence of speech. It is the world of muteness, stillness, forgetful, ambiguous and soundless. Even though the connotation of the word may sound passive, weak and nonresistant, but one cannot ignore that ‘silence is golden’.

Silence, in fact, has a language of its own and it is an important entity in literature. It juxtaposes words and it works outside the human conscious. It can transfer ideas and thoughts as effectively as words or even more (Stephens 3). Ratcliff states in his book *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition: Virginia Wolf, Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich*: “a woman silences need not to be read as simple passivity. Indeed, her silences may take many forms and serve many functions (122). Silence, thus, becomes a special artistic act which for most of times full of resistance. As Adrienne Rich tells us in his book *Cartographies*: “Silence can be a plan rigorously executed [...] Do not confuse it with any kind of absence” (17). In fact, silence can be the only way to survive especially in front of patriarchal society which is full of violence. The WHO study on health and violence state:

Most abused women are not passive victims [...] some women resist, others flee, while others attempt to keep the peace by giving in to their husbands’ demands. What may seem to an outside observer to be a lack of positive response by the women may in fact be a calculated assessment of what is needed to survive in the marriage and to protect herself and her children.(95)

Indeed, Silence in a big degree goes along with power, strategy and protection. It challenges the gender inequalities that have been always applied upon females. Silence, now,
is no longer silent; it has a voice, a meaning and a cause. In most of the times, it tries to convey messages, thoughts and emotions. This is what Elizabeth Kostova tries to convey saying: “[t]here is nothing harder, at moments, than talking to someone who has the power of silence.” (AZQuotes.com).

In this chapter, the study aims at investigating the different forms of females’ silence that exist in the novel, and how they affect the character’s self-esteem by empowering her identity. In some instances, it is clear that the character is choosing silence over verbal language. In others, the author is silencing her female character for reasons which will be discussed later. In other words, this chapter will attempt to answer different questions such as: Why does Monica Ali want to silence her female characters if she wants to empower them? How this study of silence will support that the females’ silence in Brick lane is a powerful one? And most importantly, can really silence be a powerful device? For an attempt to answer these questions, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first one will discuss the appearance of the “authorial silence” notion in the novel and what are it affects upon the narrative and the characters. For the second section, the analysis will be about the different forms of silence which are used by the female characters and which empower their identities.

1) **Authorial Silence:**

Nazneen is the protagonist of this narrative who moves to London by an arranged married which is made between her father and Chanu. Through this novel, she always gives us enough description of the novel’s progress and its main event by her silent inner thoughts. Most of the time, Nazneen is silent because of her wanting to be silent, yet, there are several instances where Nazneen is being silenced by the author. This technique is often called ‘authorial silence’ where the author makes a special link between him and his reader. Authorial silence, thus, according to Wayen Booth is:
[b]y the kind of silence he maintains, by the manner in which he leaves his characters to work out their own destinies or tell their own stories, the author can achieve effects which would be difficult or impossible if he allowed himself or a reliable spokesman to speak directly and authoritatively to us. (273)

This silence is a good strategy that allows the writer to tackle issues that are not easy or even forbidden to talk about. In her study *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* “, King-Kok Cheung tries to give more details about this technique by noticing that authorial silence uses several “strategies of reticence” such as irony and muted plots and characters, coded language, all which “tell the forbidden and name the unspeakable” (4). According to her, the story should not be consisted only on giving the whole details and information but as a good writer, one must give space to the reader to build up lives in the text (5).

So, authorial silence is both beneficial for the author and for the reader. In this study, such technique is cleverly used with by Ali to tell certain events. Monica Ali follows a realistic setting and events; this makes the task of the reader easier. In almost all the narrative, the female protagonist is the one who reveal the events of the story. At the same, she is, also, the most silenced character that the author has relies on.

It is known that silencing the female character is considered to be a weakening of her identity. Some authors have been explicit in doing so. However, Monica Ali attempts in her novel to make only Nazneen the controller of the information. Contradictory to what Virginia Woolf goes to believe that “For most of history, Anonymous was a woman” (51), Ali shows the woman as the most visible, known character through the whole novel. It is true that Ali silenced her in narrating some important events; however, it is obvious that only the female character has witnessed those events. Accordingly, the character proves her
power in controlling and keeping the information from the reader, so that she takes decision about how these realities will be revealed especially to the English reader.

Consequently, in this section, the study will reveal the most important events that are intentionally not explicitly mentioned by Nazneen. However, they are tremendously significant in the way the female character gains confident and self-empowerment by controlling the way in which the reader should perceive the novel. These events are: Thatcher’s reaction to Pakistani migrants, the 9-11 events and the riots in the East End.

a) Thatcher’s Cuts:

While a discussion between Nazneen and her husband Chanu, he gives a reference to Thatcher cuts and to her personally by stating: “[t]his Mrs Thatcher is making more cuts. Spending cuts, spending cuts, that's all we hear. The council is being squeezed dry. Now we have to pay if we want biscuits with our tea. It's ridiculous. And it could affect my promotion” (Ali 27). Chanu seems angry of the prime minister and he complains about the cuts she repeatedly makes. Ali provokes a curiosity about what will come next and the sufficient details about these cuts. Nazneen, yet, ends the conversation, she is silenced by the author and she changes the subject by thinking about buying a new sari. Monica Ali tries, perhaps, to show that Nazneen is not powerful enough yet to talk about politics and economics and especially those of a very most famous political woman in Britain like Margret Thatcher. However, it is more likely that the author silences her protagonist so as to make the reader looks what is behind those cuts and perhaps about choosing to talk about this lady specifically.

The previous prime minister of Britain while being at office had tried to make an anti-immigration act to stop the influx of migration to UK. She had fears that the “British character” will be lost with that much of migrants. In one of her interviews for Granada TV in
1979, she states: “Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture” (Thatcher Archive: Granada transcript).

What is obvious here is that Thatcher did not want any more migrants and to end this problem she raised the amount made upon them. This is another example of the way British people are against having a large percent of Muslims in their country. Ali tries to attract the reader in a way that does not make him feels that she is taking a side in the story. This process is justified by Cheung as: “pull with control rather than push with force” (24). The thing that indicates that if Ali states explicitly that Thatcher has been against migrant Muslims. By stating it like this, it is an evidence that neither Ali nor Nazneen act subjectively towards such event but the two go to being neutral for making the reality more interesting and authentic. So, by giving just the key words, the two females, the writer and the protagonist, nail both her reader’s attraction and the reality showing.

b) Twin Tower Attacks:

Monica Ali also gives sign to another important event that radically changed the migrants lives in the west and increased the anti-assimilation feelings. It is stated as follows:

Quick. Be quick!' he shouts. 'Put on the television. 'He rages around the room looking for the remote control, passing the television several times. Eventually, he switches it on by pressing the button below the screen. 'Oh God,' he says. 'The world has gone mad.' Nazneen glances over at the screen. The television shows a tall building against a blue sky. She looks at her husband.' This is the start of the madness,' says Chanu. He holds on to his stomach as if he is afraid that someone may snatch it away. Nazneen moves closer. A thick bundle of black smoke is hanging outside the tower. It looks too heavy to hang there. An aeroplane comes in slow motion from the corner of the
screen. It appears to be flying at the level of the buildings. Nazneen thinks she had better get on with her work. (Ali 222)

Chanu and Nazneen both watch the News of the Twin Tower attacks. It is exposed that Chanu is terrified by these News; he comments that “this is the start of madness”. Ali’s description of the state of Chanu makes the reader curious about what is coming next, or what is this madness? What happened to make Chanu feels that way?

As a famous event that touches especially the west, it is not a coincidence that the reader will be able to identify through Chanu’s words that he is talking about the 9-11 attacks. He states that these attacks are the start of madness which means that he knows the bad consequences of these events upon the lives of migrant Muslims. However, what is interesting in the passage above is Nazneen’s reaction. She thinks that she has better to continue her work; Ali here is directly silencing her for certain reasons.

What is clear here is that this is a direct message from Ali to the English reader that he should look for this event from a Muslims’ perspective more specifically from a Muslim female perspective. Females, after this event were the targeted group put under danger. Islamophobia was applied greatly on females with veil, traditional clothing and unwesternised women. It is here what Minha-ha Trinh means when she states that “[s]ilence as refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing, it is a voice, a mode of uttering and a response in its own right”(15). Indeed, silence is a mean that provides help to gain a hearing; in this context, the author and Nazneen both negotiate the voice they want to deliver.

c) Anti-assimilation Events:

Despite the fact that Ali is criticised by Sandhu Sukhdev that she neglected the events that led to the present situation that Muslims face in their existence in the west, or what
was stated by him as “[t]his novel has so little to say about the campaign of violence and intimidation which marked the lives of almost every Bangladeshi” (13). Monica Ali has given some important signs which must be analysed to understand what she attempts to establish. At the beginning of the last chapter of the novel, Nazneen is in the process of looking for her daughter Shahana. This last character runs away from home because of her refusal of going back to Bangladesh. The search for the daughter is interpreted when Nazneen is in Atalb Ali Park (a real place in London). The female protagonist finds a time to describe the place. However, Ali silences her character about mentioning the significance of this setting. This is in order to give the reader a space to link between the place and the coming events.

Nazneen does not explain why a place in London is called Atalb Ali, the thing which implies that there is a story behind it. Monica Ali cleverly chooses this park to indicate some important events that marked the migrant Bengali experience in Brick Lane. It might be asked why a park in a west context is named in Arabic. Before, the park was called St. Mary Matfelon but the name was changed into this current name in 1998 in memory of Atalb Ali, a clothing worker Bangladeshi. This worker was killed by three British teenage boys in Alder street which is also mentioned by Nazneen while looking for her daughter Shahana. This murder was one of the most racist attacks that happened in East End. At the entry of park, an arch was made as a memorial to the victim. After almost a year, near the Bengali new year, a new bombing has been made in the East End London. This bombing is mainly called “the London Nail Bombings” which is also made under the cause of racism. It was David Copeland who has made those attacks and he was a member in the Conservative British National Socialist Party. Copland, after he was arrested, declared that he wanted to start a war against race minorities.
Ali, through Nazneen inner speech, guides the reader to discover this major anti-
migrant event that is full of violence, racism and anti-assimilation. Wayne Booth describes
this process in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*:

If we can imagine an *Emma* purged of the improbable wisdom of Knightley and the
narrator, a novel in which the reader must infer the truth about Emma through her
own beclouded vision, we will have a loose prototype for many modern novels [...] the author and reader may meet. (271-272)

Here, Booth talks about Jane Eyre’s Emma. He maintains that only the reader is able to know
the reality of Emma through her silence that is made by the narrator. This should be an
original model to analyse the modern literary works according to it. This analysis of the
silence which is made by the author, he maintains, is where the narrator and the reader meet.

While she looks for Shahana, Nazneen finds herself in the middle of a huge fight
between a white group, the Loin Heart, and other different groups. The last events that happen
in Nazneen’s personal life make her disturbed by the chaos around her. Even so, through her
description of things around her, a great image of how the fight was like is given to the reader.
At one instance she states silently: “All mixed-blood vitality of the street had been drained.
Something coursed down the artery, like a bubble in the blood stream” (Ali 396). The panic
controls Nazneen, she “recognizes nothing” (397) she only hears one voice: “[b]rothers, why
are you fighting yourselves, Mussulman against Mussulman?” (398). This is a direct call from
Ali that Muslims should stop fighting each other. In this passage and many other passages, Ali
shows that the weakness of Muslims lies in their disagreements. She states that all Muslims
are brothers and they should not fight each other but uniting themselves as one body.

The Narrative of Nazneen gives an exclusive way that describes the historical anti-
assimilation event. Through the inner speech of Nazneen, Ali deliberately opens a discussion
of the problems of multiculturalism and the stereotypes that only touch Muslims without the other minorities. Nazneen is enable to “recognize” herself in this fight, and this is an indirect hint that allows the reader to say that Ali is describing the situation of migrant subjects in London. She describes the scene as “all mixed-blood vitality of the street” (396). By this imagination of blood, Ali speaks about the violence that is enacted against Muslims and she lets the English reader to discover this by himself. The scene that she describes, show more than it tells. The racism made by the police officers, the violence, the blood and the anti-assimilation against Muslims are highly highlighted.

2) Silent Revolution:

In the novel, Monica Ali gives focus on Nazneen’s actions and psychology rather than her spoken responses to her man and her society. Ali writes her novel through a mixture of third-person narrator and Nazneen’s inner speech which enable the reader to access Nazneen’s silent, hidden thoughts and responses. Like that, the emotions of Nazneen, like her silent revolution and rebellion against the norms, is expressed through actions not words. By this, only the reader can know what she is going to do, considering that she rarely expresses her ideas that shows her actual positions in different situations. She feels, in many cases, the refusal of several things and she feels angry and disappointed but she does not speak. However, she observes and makes comments silently, the thing which is known as “the internal monologue”.

Internal monologue or inner speech is defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary as a literary composition written in the form of soliloquy which is a long speech that a character in a literary work makes to an audience and that reveals the character's thoughts. It is a verbal thinking which has a significant performance in the character’s identity and cognition (Ben 2). This literary technique allows the reader to know the true identity of the literary character.
Nina Bawden believes that through this technique “[y]ou know people better in a novel than in real life because you know what people think – not just what they say they think” (Novel Writing Help). This is the main reason why writers usually use inner speech, through the process of writing. Within the context of this study, Nazneen’s silence is of a high importance because it shows the different strategies used by the character to nail her goal and strengthen her identity.

At the beginning of the novel, Nazneen looks like a passive, submissive character. Her voice and even her thoughts are not revealed when her husband forbids her of going outside without him: “Why should you go out?” said Chanu. “If you go out, ten people will say, “I saw her walking on the street.” And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don’t mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do?” She never said anything to this” (Ali 45).

One of the most important factures that leads Nazneen to self-consciousness is her silent contact with the British “tattoo lady”:

The tattoo lady waved back at Nazneen. She scratched her arms, her shoulders, the accessible portions of her buttocks. She yawned and lit a cigarette. At least two thirds of the flesh on show was covered in ink. Nazneen had never been close enough (never closer than this, never further) to decipher the designs. Chanu said the tattoo lady was Hell’s Angels, which upset Nazneen. (18)

In this passage, Nazneen and the lady share silent conversation. Nazneen waves to the “tattoo lady”; she feels fascinated when she sees the British female. The proof is that Ali writes the tattoo lady in a bold and italicised way to draw attention to her. This may mean that Nazneen is fascinated by the woman’s culture. Her everyday waving to the lady, even though she never
speaks to her, makes a clear statement that Nazneen feels comfortable, safe and happy when seeing her.

It is clear that Nazneen crosses the religious, ethnic boundaries; the thing which many people have failed to accomplish. Nazneen starts to compare between the tattoo lady and the Bengali society. She believes that the tattoo lady is, normally, poor because she is thin. Thin people back home in Bangladesh are poor while fat people are rich, yet, in her new country Britain everything goes in opposites because the tattoo lady is thin even though she is rich. It is more likely that Nazneen feels that back home people judge a person’s wealth by his outside appearance the thing that does not exist in London.

 Nazneen, by this silent contact, starts to gain more self-confidence. This contact is repeated by her gaze with the tourists and their “impressive camera”. Nazneen “adjusted her headscarf. She was conscious of being watched. Everything she did, everything she had done since the day of her birth, was recorded. Sometimes, from the corner of her eye, she thought she saw them” (254). Nazneen does not feel uncomfortable with the tourist gaze, she feels watched by angles (254). She does not feel angry or upset that those tourists are taking photos of her. This makes her remember the angles that are always watching her behaviours and that makes her think about several thing. Nazneen is judging her own action like her affair with Karim (her lover), her misbehavior with her husband and maybe her neglecting her religion. With her silence thinking, her self-confidence and conscious are in their highest levels and her identity becomes more influential.

 Nazneen’s sister, Hasina, leaves her father’s house, and she starts to send Nazneen several letters. Each letter contains news about Hasina’s new independent life. Contrary to Hasina, Nazneen is the type of a woman who never questions anything even if this thing has a great influence upon her life (in the first chapter of the novel). She does not try to take some
changes to her life. She says: “what could not be changed must be born and since nothing could be changed everything had to be born” (16). By this, she means that fate cannot be changed and she feels that there is nothing that she can do to change her life because it is already made. She only has to wait what will come next and this passive thinking cannot be changed.

Even so, Nazneen starts to get influenced by Hasina’s ideas and new way of life. For the first time in the narrative, Nazneen starts to question about how it feels like to be independent: “whenever she got a letter from Hasina, for the next couple of days she imagined herself independent woman, too” (66). These silent thoughts, even though they are only in Nazneen’s mind, are one of the main factors that influence her identity. This is explained by Minh-ha Trinh in one of her interviews: “a silence, these are never instruments simply called upon to serve a story or a message. They have a set of meanings, a function, and a rhythm of their own within the world” (86). This indicates that Nazneen’s silence certainly has a function that needs to be applied. Her silent thoughts help in empowering her identity and self confidence that she is able to have the independent life she want. With her silent observations of things help to stop relating all things to fate, and her start of believing in the ability of making her own life

For the first time, Nazneen wants to act against her fate; she wants to leave the house and run away to have a new experience like Hasina’s. However she feels uncertain: “[n]othing else that God wanted her to do. Sometimes she wanted to get up and run. Most of the time she did not want to run, but neither did she want to sit still. How difficult it was, this business of sitting still but still there was nothing really to complain of” (Ali 72). It clear that Nazneen wants something to complain of which allows her to run away from home. She in a way compares her life with her sister’s life. Hasina has a reason that makes her run away and
Nazneen is waiting for such a reason maybe because she wants the independent life Hasina has.

Nazneen, through the narrative, is exposed to different Bengali women living in London. One of those is Mrs Azad, the doctor’s wife. Mrs Azad is the typical westernised woman who speaks English in a very fluent way. She does not wear traditional clothes, Sari, and treats her husband in a bad way and goes out to work. Nazneen and even Chanu look like they are surprised by her manners and way of behaving because they do not wait such behaviours from the doctor’s wife. This last states that:

[s]ome women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English […] they go around covered from head to toe, in their little walking prisons, and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don’t have to change one thing. (116-117)

Even though Nazneen, unlike Chanu, does not act verbally to Mrs Azad’s ideas and emotion, Ali enables the reader to access Nazneen’s silent judgment concerning the doctor’s wife: “He comes to our flat to get away from her” (80). This means that Nazneen feels pity for Mr Azad who has the habit of having dinner at her house. Nazneen, yet, keeps her judgment for herself, and she chooses to be silent in this situation. As Minh-ha explains in her book When the Moon Waxes Red Repers: “[s]ilence is so commonly set in opposition with speech. Silence as a will not to say or a will to unsay, a language of its own, has barely been explored” (151). Nazneen does not feel the need to assimilate to the British way of life as the woman has done. In fact, she is not fascinated with the lady and she sees her behaviours as rude and inappropriate. This is a direct refusal of the western attitude. The doctor’s wife is fully assimilated in Britain, she becomes a British woman and Nazneen’s reaction proves that
her identity begins to be active enough to decide whether to mimic people, like Chanu does, or not. In addition to this, she is ignoring Mrs Azad while speaking to her by keeping her eye on her son Raqib. Chanu, after a while, drink with Mrs Azad w cup of beer and Nazneen does not like her husband’s behaviour: “[m]y husband does not say his prayers ... and now he is drinking alcohol. Tomorrow he may be eating pigs” (85).

Nazneen decides silently to make the first change in her look as a symbol of her identity’s development, “a glorious moment it was clear that clothes, not fate, made her life. And if the moment had lasted she would have ripped the sari off and torn it to shreds” (148). This indicates that her identity’s transformation is taking another stage. After changing her attitudes and behaviours, Nazneen decides to transfer these changes into the way she dresses. She feels that fate is no longer the controller of her life but clothes, “the body emerges as a site of mundane acts of resistance and rebellion as well as compliance” (Davies 12). Her identity’s empowerment, then, looks for a way to prove and show its power and it chooses her clothes and her body to do so.

At that instance, Nazneen makes the feeling that certainly she will change her clothes as Razia and Mrs Azad have done. Both last characters have assimilated completely into the British society with neglecting their own tradition, so one might say they had lost the native identity. However, at the end of the narrative, Nazneen does not give up her sari as a figural act of freedom and self-acquisition.

Through the narrative, it is revealed in Nazneen’s thoughts and silence that she is a big fan of ice skating: “Ice skating appears magical to Nazneen when she sees it for the first time” (36). This shows that Nazneen starts to have a contact with the foreign culture. However, she has instances in which she does not want to even watch ice skating on TV even though she adores it, “she refuses to watch it because she feels she has to accept her fate and
not dream of escape” (462). This was mainly because she knows that she is not strong enough to ice skate and cannot make other foreign things. At the end, Nazneen decides to ice skate with her sari; this indicates that she neither assimilates entirely nor keeps all of her traditions. By this, Nazneen’s identity is fixed by Nazneen herself; she does not care about what she is supposed to do by both her Bengali traditions and her host country.

Nazneen has the gut to try two times to have enough courage to demand from her husband to go to Dhaka and look for her sister. However, Chanu responds to his wife’s suggestion in an ironic manner saying that “[he] shall go to Dhaka and pluck her instantly from the streets and bring her back to live with [them]. On the way [he] could pick up the rest of [her] family” (62). Nazneen does not answer her husband verbally; however, the reader is able to feel the silent anger as stated by Nazneen: “Anything is possible. She wanted to shout. Do you know what I did today? I went inside a pub. To use the toilet. Did you think I could do that? I walked mile upon mile, probably around the whole of London, although I did not see the edge of it” (64) [original]. Nazneen’s first encounter with the public sphere is considered to be the turning point of her migrant experience in London. After her long walk alone, she starts to gain confidence through her “like a man” experience. Ali, also, gives high importance for this silent thought by italicising this passage. This is the first instance when Nazneen starts to empower herself against restriction made upon her by both her husband and her society. By going outside a foreign land that she happens to know very little about, she meets strangers who they are actually able of understanding her even though she does not master the language.

In fact, Nazneen had enough of her husband’s excuses who “always had an answer”. Now, she knows deep inside her that she is able to go back by herself to Bangladesh. Chanu tells “just wait and see”; she shows him that she has stopped her demands by silencing him saying “I have heard it. I know” (63). She has already heard this said by the elders in Bengali
village; however, her calmness is just on the outside. Nazneen’s silence makes a sign of a start of silent revolution made by Nazneen. Minh-Ha Trinh states that “The silence. The real silence, the one which is not composed of silenced words, of possible thoughts, had a voice” (187). With Minh-Ha definition, it is clear that Nazneen’s silence is what Minh-Ha considered as a real silence. This is due to the fact that Nazneen’s silence is hiding her feeling about fading up with her husband’s answers. She discovers that these promises have no use and she decides not to hear them anymore. She is no longer a passive listener who takes everything for granted. She allows her anger to interpret her husband and silencing him like he silenced her before. At this stage, her identity is powerful enough to decide whether to believe of what is said or to ignore it by not listening.

Nazneen decides to stop being the “Robert like” wife, she does not say anything but through her silent actions the reader can feel the shift in the character’s identity. Nazneen changes her personality as being a perfect housewife:

The next day, she chopped two fiery red chillies and placed them, like hand grenades, in Chanu’s sandwich. Unwashed socks were paired and put back in his drawer The razor slipped when she cut his corns. His files got mixed up when she tidied. All her chores, peasants in his princely kingdom, rebelled in turn. (63)

After Nazneen gives birth to Raqib, the reader can feel that her identity transformation is being stronger that before. She orders Chanu that she does not want anyone to disturb her and her son especially Mrs Islam who is the community’s eldest migrant lady. Her husband, however, is delighted by her coming because she seems “respectable and educated”. It seems that Nazneen shows that she is listening to her husband but in reality she “hoped that Chanu would let them both alone” (82). Consequently, his words are not listened to by Nazneen. She reacts to Chanu’s words the way Minha-Ha calls the women for: “undo the anonymous, all-
male, and predominantly white collective entity named he, and we wish to freeze him once in a while in his hegemonic variants” (48). By this, Minha-Ha freezes the male’s old power which is spoken words and replaces them with a new female’s power of voiceless, ignorant acts. Trinh Minh-Ha explains that “[b]y hegemony, [she is] referring to the authority of certain states over others, of one sex over the other, and to the form of cultural and sexual ascendancy” (49). This can be applied on Nazneen’s identity which becomes power enough to give no interest to the husband’s spoken words. His authority of making her listen to him is no longer applicable on Nazneen’s identity. This last when it gains power, it becomes sufficient to make Nazneen ignores her previous dominant power, her husband.

The reader is, through these lines, able to feel that Nazneen is no longer the “unspoilt girl from the village” (Ali 22). She is no longer satisfied neither of her husband nor her life. However she chooses to keep silent for a while for the good of her baby. Nazneen kept quiet. Her guts prickled. Her forehead tightened. All could do was talk. The baby was just another thing to talk about. For Nazneen, the baby’s life was more real to her than her own. His life was full of needs: actual and urgent needs, which she could supply. What was her own life, by contrast, but a series of gnawing, ill-defined and impossible to satisfy? (83)

Because of discrimination and racism, Chanu decides to quit his job and go back to his homeland Bangladesh. Nazneen now becomes the responsible for the financial issues of her family, and she is the one who is supposed to raise funds for their trip to home. Although Nazneen’s work is just about sewing, she silently manages to save some money for Hasina, her sister to help her in her living, and Shahana and Bibi her daughters, without the approval of her husband (213).
Nazneen now has the courage to keeps secrets from her husband. This indicates that she gains a great confidence in herself. Ali shows that Nazneen does not make of her silence a strategy just with her husband, but she also uses it with the moneylender Mrs Islam. Nazneen prefers not to talk with the lady by not opening the door and deciding to “hide under her covers in bed” (271). This is not an action of fear but she prefers to confront the lady by her actions not her words. Nazneen’s silence reaches its high when she decided not to go back to Bangladesh. Moreover, she does not tell her husband about her decision until last night.

In the novel, Ali shows the different types of racism and discrimination Muslims face while being in the host country. Because of this, Chanu decides to go back home and obliges his family to pack their luggage as soon as possible. Shahana and Bibi refuse this and act verbally against Chanu. Shahana tells Bibi that when they come back to Bangladesh they will make her married, and “[i]n Bangladesh, you’ll have to brush your teeth with a twig. They don’t have toothbrushes […] you know, Bibi, they don’t have toilet paper either. You’ll have to pour water on your bottom to clean it” (251).

Shahana has completely a stereotyped image toward the Bangladesh because of her contact with British people. During those discussions and the going back home plane, Nazneen all the way long chooses to be silent. She does not give her real opinion to Chanu because she knows that if he figures out he will change her mind. So, Nazneen, strategically, chooses to keep silence till the good time. Shahana, repeatedly, keeps asking her mother if this what she wants, if she loves Chanu and why is she going back if she does not want to. Nazneen only responds to her by saying that: “[s]ometimes things don’t turn so badly. Sometimes the bad things that you think are coming don’t come at all. You just have to wait and see” because “if he knew now, he will work on her” (360). Here, it is obvious that Nazneen is talking about her silence. According to her, silence is not a bad thing, and without using it the bad things will happen. She means that if she breaks her silence before the
suitable time, Chanu be able to make her change her mind. So, with her silence, she is able to empower her identity so that she stays there in Brick Lane even without Chanu’s existence or approval.

This chapter reveals how the silence in characters must be revalued not as a weakness but as a means of improving and empowering the characters’ identity. Monica Ali thematically uses the silence that has stereotyped Asian women as means of coming to power and effectiveness in society. In this narrative, Nazneen will not be able to accomplish what she accomplishes at the end of the novel if she was not silent. Her identity’s empowerment is based on silent observations of what people thinks of her. In addition to, her silent anger and rebellion against people who see her as only an object. Moreover, her strategic silence which enables her to be the independent woman she wants to be.

The conventional meaning of silence as the non-existence of words gets modified in Ali’s *Brick Lane*. As the study has shown, Ali’s novel reproduces silence as a metaphor for the self-confidence and empowerment that is given as the basis for the real change. Ali gives focus on the mistake of thinking that words only make activism. The narrative shows that what is on the surface, i.e, the speakable does not reveal the true story. Silence is, however, the part of the hidden truth which tells the whole detailed story.

As it is told through Nazneen’s inner thoughts, the main ground that indicates silence cultivates the land in which strong plants grow. Metaphorically, female characters are those plants which get strong by using silence as their land. They are linked more to this ground than to the words which ruin the plants. As such, silence is the main factor to empower female identity and making their ideas and voices heard. Ali’s story voices the silence and gives the fact of racial and gender migrant problems in the west. Silence, accordingly, must be voiced or the Muslim migrants will always be threaten in the foreign land.
As Bengali-British author, Monica Ali relates her fiction to her two homelands, Britain and Bangladesh. The female Muslim characters struggle in the novel for their independence and power. The perception of Britain as a colonial oppression is obvious in the novel. Ali uses authorial silence to make the foreign reader look for the unknown, while making herself in neutral.

In this chapter, silence is no longer the failure of communication and the symbol of weakness. It shows that this characterisation is used as an effective strategy by females in this narrative. In the story, Ali has not entirely silenced her character, but there are several instances where the reader is able to hear specific sounds, voices and words. Yet, it is clear that, in most of times, Nazneen refuses to communicate out loud, the thing that King-Kok Cheung called as “Strategic Silence” (4).

Thus, articulating silence is very important within this novel which privileges silence upon verbal communication (spoken language). In this context, Salman Rushdie in his *Midnights children* states:

I understood only a fraction of the things being said within the walls of my skull. Only later, when I began to probe, did I learn that below the surface transmission- the front-of-mind stuff which is what I'd originally been picking up -language faded away, and was replaced by universally intelligible thought-forms which far transcended words. (193).

Consequently, the value of voiced language is downgrade in front of this “thought- forms” which are situated in silence.
Works Cited of the Third Chapter:


Conclusion:

Generally, migration literature exposes the political and social circumstances that surround the postcolonial migrant experiences in the west. It mixes reality with fiction to create the best image that transfers the ideas and feelings of the migrant to the whole world. The migrant character in this form of literature is in front of many challenging such as the problems of marginalisation, assimilation, integration, racism and being in the middle of a new cultural context.

For this reason, migration literature has been more and more interested in writers who write about stereotypes as a theme in their fictions. These writers, generally speaking, have witnessed or lived such experiences of being stereotyped. Monica Ali is not the first Asian author who writes about such a subject. However, according to the critic Majed Hasan, it is possible to say that Ali’s narrative is the first narrative that talks about a very realistic female migrant experience in a purely female Muslim perspective. Ali’s *Brick Lane* addresses essentially the changes that happen to the Pakistani woman in a foreign context through her use the notion of silence.

The tendency to write about silence as a weapon to empower the female’s identity and to weaken another is revolutionary and entirely neglected by Ali’s critics. Most of them give a due focus to the oppression and marginalization of women in *Brick Lane*; however, Ali’s narrative allows different views and interpretations. It is necessary to give a focus on Ali’s use and focus on the importance of the ways in which silence affects the identity. Consequently, this idea has been the major focus of this memoire.
Through this study, it has been argued that silence may have different forms and different impacts upon the female’s identity. Furthermore, it is showed that these forms can be either positive or negative according to the context in which they appear. These silences have been considered as major characteristics for representing or portraying the female’s identity as being empowered or weakened. However, without voice, silence can and will not be existing. That is why it is fair to say that throughout this novel, there is a parallel of speaking and not speaking.

It has been displayed that silence is an oppression for females. It has prevented them from having what they needed. It is also used by other characters as a weapon to weaken their identities. So, by speaking out, female characters are able to end this oppression and without voicing their words they would have been stuck in the zone of subalternity.

Nevertheless, Silence, in another occasion, is a strategic behaviour by which the female gains power. It is used by the author to make the female character able to control the reader. This literary technique of authorial silence has helped the female character to gain power over the reader. In another context, it might be argued that if the female character has chosen to speak out in those situations, she will not be able to accomplish what she accomplishes with her silence. It is also showed that silence can be used as a weapon against oppression and stereotyping.

The importance of silence in literature and how it reveals the real experiences of female Muslim migrants in the West and its capacity of changing the females’ identity either for the best or for the worst is highlighted throughout the study. This notion is not only applicable on the migration literary works, but it can be analysed with different contexts. This can be a beginning for other studies and researches in terms of the possible forms of silence and its impact upon the fictional characters.
Our case study, *Brick Lane*, belongs to the diasporic novels. This type of literature, in most of cases, deals with the same problematic issues that are closely related to the postcolonial migrants’ experiences. By its various aspects and characterisation, it is always open to different interpretations from both sides of the reader and the theoretical approaches and studies. Chang-Rae Lee’s *Native speaker* (1995) is also a contemporary novel which deals with almost the same issues that *Brick lane* covers. However, the notion of silence, in this novel, is more linked to the male character. Taking this into consideration, the question of how does silence reflects upon the male’s identity can be examined. Moreover, making a comparative study between female silence and male silence can be a starting point for other researches.

To sum up, the notion of silence in literature is very vivid and flexible to changes according to the context it belongs. It can draw attention to several things such as stereotyping, marginlising, strategic behaviours and most importantly negotiating identities. The reader’s ideology and way of thinking also play very important role in contextualising these silences.
Works Cited:

I- Primary Source:


II- Secondary Sources:


