Gendering Globalization:

Alternative Languages of Modernity

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Emerging from globalization and related crises of modernity are debates surrounding the relationship between women and knowledge, and issues of situationality and plurality. Modernity as an historical material process enters the Third World bringing with it its own cultural and linguistic baggage. The issue of "women's/human rights" arises out of this engagement with modernity. The ensuing contestation over the ideals of freedom, justice and equality brought about by the unevenness and incompleteness of the materialist project generates a plurality of voices speaking from individual experiences with this historical encounter. The colonized "other" in her confrontation with modernity generates various forms of struggles and ways of speaking which articulate and grapple with the contradictions that modernity generates (e.g. secularist, Islamist, nationalist).

The problematic we address in this paper explores precisely the contradictions contained within modernity, that not only create a plurality of voices but also generate different languages and idioms through which women's struggles for rights come to be articulated, recognized, suppressed and/or repudiated. We are interested in examining these questions through a shift in focus from an emphasis on discourse to a concern with experience which permits us to incorporate difference without reifying it.

In this paper we examine the plurality of experience and voice of three women – Doria Shafik, an Egyptian; Jahanara Shahnawaz and Hamida Akhtar Hussein, from the Indian subcontinent – whose lives and works traverse the historical transition between colonialism and

neo-colonialism spanning the twentieth century. Through a close reading of these women (Nelson on Shafik and Rouse on Shahnawaz and Hussein) we move from a perspective that homogenizes voices to one that locates itself in their multiplicity. This reading also illumines different possibilities and forms of women's struggles.

In looking at their individual biographies we notice stark differences. However, on another level, all three women are engaged in a quest for self-expression and representation. This quest itself is marked by the particular conditions of hybridity that emerge in the subjective experience of each of these women living through this historical transition. As Sangari has described:

> The hybrid [individual] is already open to two worlds and is constructed within the national and international, political and cultural systems of colonialism and neo-colonialism. To be hybrid is to understand the question as well as to represent the pressure of such historical placement. [This hybridity] both historical and contradictory, is also the ground for analysis and change. (Words in parentheses added.)
>
> (Sangari 1993: 264)

In conclusion, we examine how our work informs the larger debate on globalization, gender discourse and indigenization of knowledge.

The Voices of Doria Shafik[1]

Doria Shafik (1908-1975) epitomizes what Emma Goldman described as "the life of the transition stage, the hardest and most difficult for the individual as well as a people" (Falk 1984: ix). On the one hand is the life of the historic society of the Nile Valley responding to the direct confrontation with the expanding society of Great Britain, which first imposed its control over Egypt in 1882 and then tried to maintain it by momentum of its own growth and in accordance with its own beliefs until the Egyptian revolution of 1952. On the other hand is the unfolding consciousness of an Egyptian women, who lived through much of this period of social and political transformation and came to public prominence particularly in the post World War II era when the old order was crumbling in the face of increased discontent over how Egypt should be governed. While Egyptian society struggled to liber-

ate itself from colonial domination, Doria Shafik struggled to awaken a feminist consciousness and forge a new self identity of "The New Woman" so as to awaken Egyptian women to their rights in a world that was rapidly "modernizing". In the face of strong political and religious opposition she challenged and criticized those cultural traditions and Islamic institutions within her own society that she believed not only adversely affected women's lives but also served to strengthen erroneous western/colonial representations of the "oriental Muslim woman". As she attempted to change her society in order to find space for her own feminist project, Shafik found herself caught between the margins of the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized and suffered the human price that is exacted when that project was carried beyond the political tolerance of her own society.

It is this dialectic between a society's national struggle for liberation and a woman's personal quest for human freedom, particularly during the turbulent years between nineteen forty-five and fifty seven that the history of Egypt and the life of Doria Shafik intertwine. To understand how the life of an individual intertwines with the life of a society during a particular moment of "colonial encounter" in which each life comes into a new awareness of itself we need to move from a perspective that homogenizes voice to one that examines the multiplicity of voices even within one person. And in Shafik's case we discover a multiplicity of voices. Before engaging in a closer reading of these "alternative languages of modernity" let us situate Doria Shafik within her historical context.

Shafik's own origins encapsulated social shifts that were occurring in early twentieth century Egypt. She grew up in a very modest and traditional middle class Muslim family in the provincial towns of Tanta and Mansura during a period when Egypt was passing through the throes of great internal turmoil following World War One, and which erupted in the 1919 Revolution. During the 1920s and 1930s educational opportunities for women were slowly beginning to open up and for some young women like Doria Shafik, education became an outlet from constraints of tradition, particularly the pressures for an early arranged marriage, and a chance to discover alternative possibilities to a conventional life. Doria exploited that avenue to the fullest and obtained her *Doctorat d'État* from the Sorbonne in 1940, achieving the highest accolade, *mention très honorable*.[2] Although not the

first Egyptian woman to receive such a degree, at twenty-nine she was certainly among the youngest. Education may have been a release for her craving to achieve but her ultimate ambition was to enter the public and political arena and it was within the context of post World War Two Egypt that Doria Shafik catapulted herself into national and international prominence.

During her brief but dramatic appearance onto the public stage of Egypt, she openly challenged every social, cultural and legal barrier she viewed inimical and oppressive to the full equality of women in her society and contributed in constructing an Egyptian feminist discourse surrounding women's rights and Islam. Breaking with the reformers of an earlier generation she represented a radically different model for and also created a different discourse on the women's movement in Egypt. Set against the backdrop of the post war social and political upheaval unfolding in Egypt, Doria Shafik attempted to shape a feminist consciousness on several fronts. First through writing: she was the founder and chief editor of two prominent women's journals – *La Femme Nouvelle* in French and *Bint al-Nil* in Arabic – as well as the author and co-author of several books in Arabic on the history, development and renaissance of the social and political rights of Egyptian women.[3] Second through mobilization: She established a feminist organization, Bint al-Nil Union, through which she challenged the very bastions of male authority under both pre-revolutionary and revolutionary regimes. Finally through a strategy of non-violent confrontation: marching on the Egyptian parliament; attempting to run for parliamentary elections; coordinating a sit-in at Barclay's Bank to protest the British Occupation; and finally staging an eight day hunger strike at the Journalists' Syndicate for women's rights. Throughout her career (1945-1957) she met and spoke openly about "women's rights" not only with the president of her own country, but also with the heads of various states[4] on Arab women's struggles for political equality and human freedom, only to lose her own freedom and civil liberties in 1957 following her dramatic protest against the populist regime of Gamal Abdul Nasser which she believed was eroding democracy in Egypt. Although silenced and virtually secluded from public life from 1957 until her death in 1975, she continued to struggle – only this time it was against the isolation and solitude that this banishment to the world of internal exile imposed.

Alternative Languages of Struggle

As a middle class Muslim woman who grew up within one culture, was educated in another and tried to forge a feminist project through the languages of both (French and Arabic), Doria Shafik embodies what Sangari calls the hybrid individual. Through a close reading[5] of her published writings we can follow the trajectory of her struggle to come to grips with and mediate between these different dimensions of her hybrid self identity during a highly charged anti-colonial nationalist political climate.

As the third child and second daughter of six children (three daughters and three sons), born of parents from different class and cultural backgrounds – her mother from an impoverished but notable Turko-Circassian family; her father from a modest, but educated native Egyptian family of civil servants – Shafik early in her life became aware of difference only for her it was associated with the pain of class difference within her own family:

> There always seemed to be an unspoken feeling of mortification within Mama, who felt diminished compared to her cousins, the majority of whom had married wealthy landowners. And within Papa, a profound hurt. He loved my mother deeply and had achieved a high level of culture through his own efforts, yet he felt irreconcilably outclassed. A great tragedy existed within my own family and they hardly even realized it.
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> (Shafik 1960: 57)

At about the time of the outbreak of World War I when Doria had reached the age of primary schooling she was sent to live with her grandmother in Tanta, where her parents placed her in the French mission school of Notre Dame des Apôtres. By 1926 she finished her secondary education in Alexandria where she attained the French Bachot achieving the second highest score in the country. Two years later she won a national essay contest, celebrating the 20th anniversary of Qasim Amin's death which brought her to the attention of the prominent Egyptian feminist, Huda Sha'rawi, who invited her to speak at the theater of Ezbakiyya Gardens on May 4, 1928.

Doria Shafik stood before her audience and for the first time publicly proclaimed her feminist vision. It was an extraordinary speech

for a girl of nineteen, revealing her charming candor. Paying homage to Qasim Amin,

a name which has been eternally engraved in our hearts. Has he not been our guide in the darkness? I will try to be one of his disciples whose example will teach women to fend for themselves in spite of the necessities of the material world.

She continues by lamenting,

what miseries the depths of the harems have concealed for so long! What experience can one acquire if one has simply made a trip from one part of the house to the other? And in her torpor the woman was not aware of her own captivity, having always led the same life she did not think she could liberate herself.

Then she muses on the question,

why certain men persist in isolating women? Do they believe that age-old traditions cannot be adapted to the current of modern life? Or is it that they do not understand the absolute value of liberty? Perhaps we should lock them up for one or two years for them to get the idea of what they impose on women.

Then she directly challenges,

You men, when you decide to let women out, you cover their faces with lugubrious black veils so that they can't see the world except through a cloud. And when you tire of the first wife, you believe you were wrong in your choice, so you take a second, and a third … .

She concludes her essay by pointing out the benefits to men if women were truly educated:

Would you content yourselves with a heart without any knowledge of life? Do you believe that a woman could truly love you if she did not understand you? And for her to understand you, mustn't she be educated? Young girls of today, are they not the mothers of the future? Does an ignorant mother

know how to give her child a clear idea about infinity, duty, justice? … You men construct walls around your daughters, you multiply the number of gates and guards, but you forget that walls are never high enough for feminine ruse. To enable them to communicate with the outside world, your daughters have an old woman or a domestic servant. You show them the world through the windows of their imagination so they see only illusions. And at the first opportunity they fall into the abyss. Why don't you use religion as your support? Give your daughters a good conscience and let them out into the world!

(Shafik 1928: 12-14)

As if answering Shafik's call, Huda Sha'rawi immediately procured a scholarship from the Ministry of Education for this impassioned young woman to travel to Paris and begin her studies at the Sorbonne.

Voices from the Sorbonne (1929-1932)

In her earliest essays written from the Sorbonne and published in Huda Sha'rawi's *L'Égyptienne*, we hear the voice of a modernist's longing for the freedom to discover the world as well as the loneliness and estrangement of a soul yearning for the familiarity of home. Often during moments of despair and unhappiness Doria escaped to the world of her imagination and expressed her innermost thoughts through the metaphors of Egypt, the desert and her beloved Nile.

Alone next to the waves that pass, no sound reaches you except the heavy roaring of the always majestic Nile, the echo of infinity from the desert, that mysterious silence where the human soul finds a point of contact with Eternity; a sublime and mournful kiss between perfection and the still imperfect human being; between man and Divinity, a kiss that leaves an indelible mark within the silence of the desert.

(Shafik 1929: 25)

Shafik's essay written during her first year in Paris constructs a dialogue between the "Child of the Nile" and the "mighty Sphinx", and is important for what it reveals about her self image and inner feelings as well as her attempt to build and nourish a sense of self confidence:

Child: 'Sphinx, I would like to be like thee, regarding the universe from on high and seeing nothing except infinity that circles everywhere under the multiple forms of mere mortals. The Nile gave birth to me and Madam Sha'rawi Pasha became my protectress.'
Sphinx: 'Poor human being, who are you in comparison to the Past? You who wander in the desert and do not know your way because you do not know yourself.'
Child: 'I am the being that wants to touch true knowledge with her own hand.'
Sphinx: 'Do not despair. You are still young and the truly strong souls are the ones forged by suffering. Above your despair place hope beyond all reach.'
The child of the Nile arose and slowly moved forward keeping the head of the mysterious Sphinx in view. A voice in the distance called out: 'Courage, Child, and I shall answer you.'

(Ibid.: 26-27)

The contrapuntal themes of Doria Shafik's hybrid world seem etched into the metaphors of this essay. The mystical bond between herself and the Nile; the mournful kiss between perfection and the imperfect human being; the reconciliation of dreams merging with infinity, the trauma of being thrown into another culture with its painful obstacles and grievous blows; but then the forging of strong souls by suffering; the despair of this being, who wants to touch true knowledge with her own hand.

In another essay she mused on the question, "Does a Woman Have a Right to Philosophize?" (Shafik 1930: 18-28) In attempting to answer her own query, she articulated what she believed was the great drama bursting forth to which the modern era may bear witness: "The sensitivity of the woman; the intellect of the man – two contradictory aspects within a single being." Through her defense of woman's right to philosophize, Doria Shafik was not merely arguing for the right to study one subject as opposed to another, she was offering us her ideas on the crisis challenging the woman of the modern era:

If it is true that every reality is the truth of the moment, then we are witnessing the great turning point that constitutes the crisis traversed by the woman of today: a passage from one moment to another moment of her history, a substitution of a new reality for another reality. How can we move from a romantic conception of things to a new realism? Woman has confined herself

to this world of 'Feeling' of Rousseau to the exclusion of clear knowledge. Being a toy of her own passion she has become the toy of those who want to live love. For a long time woman has adopted this sentimental attitude, which undoubtedly had its charm with you, gentlemen. Now one must consider a new woman very different from the old. It is time that a new realism wipe away the tears, from now on useless and even paradoxical. Realism as I understand it consists of getting rid, as much as possible, of illusions of the imagination and as a condition of this effort to conserve the desire of Being, this cry of the Self. It is from this Self that I set out and ridding it of all hallucination, I introduce it into the world of pure knowledge. I ask for a return from this sentient wandering. I ask for a passage from the complaints of Rousseau to a social adaptation that prepares the return to realism.

(Ibid.: 20)

By the phrase "a return from this sentient wandering" she means a passage from the first stage where woman abounds in sensitivity, to a second stage where woman explains the universe for herself.

This self that is passionate can, by looking back upon itself, study objectively the passionate Being that it was. This Being with a Janus face, is simultaneously both an 'I' and a 'me'. It is this being in all its [indefinable] complexity, which must constitute the proper object of philosophy. Woman must, in so much as she is intuitive, be able by looking back upon her past, regard this intuition objectively. This calm of reason is indispensable to the present feminine epoch.

(Ibid.: 23)

In her attempt to grapple with one of the fundamental issues in philosophy: the relationship between intuition (immediate, spontaneous, subjective knowledge) and reason (distanced, systemic objectified knowledge), she explores the context of the situation facing women, like herself, who are caught between two philosophical moments:

The opposition of the woman of yesterday to the woman of today reflects the great opposition of an intuitive philosophy to a more systematic philosophy. I mean a philosophy of presentiment where mystery reigns, but one in which the harmonious base is glimpsed by the human heart. Perhaps it's there wherein lies great philosophy? Anyway there is another philosophy that is venerated much less than this latter one but has the advantage of being incontestably

realistic. It is a philosophy concerned with the multiple problems posed at every moment to the individual to which the only solution is Action.

(Ibid.: 25)

The feminist problematic involved, therefore, an intellectual struggle to unite contradictory modes of knowing – intuition and analysis. Shafik did not intend to leave the argument one of mere opposition between two eras of the woman or two opposed philosophical positions. She wanted nothing less than to find a true synthesis:

How could I explain to myself the synthesis of an intuitive and systematic conception of the universe? As magic has given birth to science [the analogy permits me to say] so the woman of today, daughter of the woman of yesterday, preserves within her that which she was, but she lives with a new life. How can woman, in being artist, pretend to pure knowledge? She is herself a work of art! In this work she is no longer placed as an object of contemplation. Her goal is knowledge. She wants to conceive clearly that which she has produced spontaneously. She wants to introduce the spirit of system into that which, by its essence, defies analysis. She sees the possibility of blending intuition and Concept. And in this, one cannot refuse her the Right to Philosophize!

(Ibid.: 28)

There is a definite "modernity" in the manner in which Doria has structured the crisis posed in the successive moments of feminine history when a new adaptation is substituted for the old. Although in this essay she is not analyzing any particular historical reality where this transition is taking place, she does reveal a certain insight into the problem she is confronting as a woman intellectual who desires to fight to be recognized in this world "where so many authorities (daughters of centuries past) would like to ridicule her." She believed in her right to choose, at the same time conscious of the struggle involved.

In her last essay to appear in *L'Égyptienne*, "*Rêverie d'une femme d'aujourd'hui*", written at a time of emotional ambivalence in her own life – she had just completed her License d'État from the Sorbonne and was returning to an unsure future – Doria muses on the quandary of the modern woman of our time:

Forgetting time and everything that the measure beats, the young woman of today wants to live in wholeness: a sympathy between herself and the universe; a genuine dream that seeks harmony between the storm that overturns the self, and this other storm which never ceases to give existence to the universe: a fight and always a fight. Between lived reality and being: Love! A word that will never die away except with the human being! But today love of whom and love of what?

(Shafik 1932: 15)

In a vein similar to her earlier essay in which she conversed with the Sphinx, Doria writes: "A young heart thinking only of the true, the tragic, the sublime. Youthful and old at the same time, a human being who questions 'who are you?'". As she tries to tries to formulate an answer she reveals her own inner struggle to maintain a sense of autonomy in a world where "objections will be made against the possibility that the woman wishes above everything to be equal to man!" Through her metaphors we grasp something of the meaning of her life:

What can I grasp of myself outside this material and social crust? If one could transpose the formula of Descartes into the order of life and say: 'I fight therefore I am,' then every act would perhaps have a meaning. In this fight, our young dreamer is engaged in contemplation. Yes, but a lived reverie, because the ideas that manipulate her are experienced ideas! It is always the same problem, a solution forcibly suspended, a relentless flight that dies and is reborn: There lies humanity. There is the woman of today.

(Ibid.: 19)

An Awakening Feminist Consciousness

By publishing these essays it is clear that the editors of *L'Égyptienne* were reaffirming to their readers that, "the torch of the Egyptian women's movement has been placed in the hands of the new generation represented by Doria Shafik" (Editors of L'Égyptienne 1928).

Shafik gladly accepted this mantle of approval from her idol and protectress as she felt that destiny had presaged a role for her to play in bringing women into the broader national struggle. And upon her return from the Sorbonne, after completing her doctorate, she wrote a

treatise, *La Femme Nouvelle en Égypte* (1944), in which she sets out to describe the social situation of Egyptian women. By writing in French she was directing her message to the educated Egyptian elite, the class she wanted to catalyze as the vanguard of social change for the poorer majority of the Egyptian masses. She began by challenging the western orientalist view of Egyptian women:

> The social situation of the Egyptian woman is in a general way very little understood in the world. Westerners are still impressed by the writings of those early travellers, who first probed the East. These very unscientific writings might, through a great stretch of the imagination, provide a portrait of the Egyptian woman of an earlier time. But they certainly distort the idea of the Egyptian woman on which the West bases its views today. She has evolved so fast that one can hardly recognize her. Compared with her sister of the beginning of the twentieth century the Egyptian woman of today is a totally different woman with new ideas, different habits and unlimited ambition. It is with the particular goal of clarifying this situation that I have written this book. I focus on the social situation of the Egyptian woman as it was not so long ago, as it is in our day, and as she hopes it will be in the future.
>
> (Shafik 1944: 8)

Through her portrayal of the new woman in Egypt Shafik articulates her own vision of feminist consciousness and self image during this moment of historical transition when Egypt was struggling toward its own national independence:

> One of the first questions posed for the [educated] woman is the safeguarding of her femininity; another is the role of woman in public life, and a third is the role of woman in society. Feminism in the true sense of the word is the total comprehension between man and woman, not a perpetual fight between the two sexes. As for the statement that "women normally constituted and not too ugly are not made to be politicians, diplomats, generals or drum majors" I am revolted! You forget Cleopatra, the most beautiful diplomat and politician, and Joan of Arc, the charming warrior. The feminine genius is not necessarily accompanied by ugliness. One finds equally that nearly all exceptional women whose names have come down in history, have been unhappy. That is their affair. One must believe that they preferred an unhappy and meaningful life to

a complacent but stupid one. 'Nothing renders us so great as great suffering,' as the poet says.

(Ibid.: 10-12)

For Doria the educated elite woman had a special mission, to bridge the immense gap between the women of the upper classes and those of the poor. She argued that it is the particular responsibility and obligation of this elite to change and transform those traditional socio-cultural and legal barriers inimical to woman's free and full participation in the life of the country. That she should engage in public criticism of customs oppressive to women in her society was due to her conviction that Islam, if properly understood, offered no barrier to women's freedom. An argument she had made in her doctoral thesis:

> We are like a huge machine whose cogs fail to mesh. There has been too much progress at the top of society and none at all at the bottom. Yet it is on this basis that the solid foundations of any society, and particularly of female society, are laid, and it is from this layer of society that the majority of mothers come. Here is an issue to which we should devote the greatest attention.
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> (Ibid.: 75)

Voices of 'La Femme Nouvelle' and 'Bint al-Nil' (1945-1957)

In 1945 shortly after publishing *La Femme Nouvelle en Égypte* Shafik received an offer from the notorious Princess Chevikar[6] asking her to serve as editor-in-chief of Chevikar's French magazine *La Femme Nouvelle*, which led to mounting criticism among certain critics in the broader Egyptian society that Shafik was more French than Egyptian. To counter this criticism she promptly established her own Arabic women's periodical, *Bint al-Nil*. Through the voices coming from the pages of these two magazines we sense the profound transformation of an earlier feminine expression into a critical feminist expression.[7]

Through the pages of *La Femme Nouvelle* Doria portrayed the greatness of Egypt and the capabilities of its woman. By invoking history and cultural heritage she gave dignity to the continuity of woman's self image:

At such an interesting period as our own in which the most diverse spirits tend to come together and establish understanding, I wanted a review capable of reflecting our state of mind, and of putting us in touch with the rest of the world. A review which would be the mirror of our present progress, and the echo of a very old civilization which is being reborn and which will never die.

(Shafik 1947)

This analogy between the rebirth of an old civilization with the emergence of the "new woman" which resonates throughout Doria's editorials on one level was her voice directed to the west with the expressed purpose of countering negative stereotypes of Egypt with a more positive image of its heritage and potentialities:

La Femme Nouvelle reappears today, as if restructured, with a great role to play – that of reflecting our present renaissance, of putting us in touch with other countries, and this serving as a bond between ourselves and the rest of the world. Until now almost all the works produced on Egypt are in foreign languages and written by foreigners, either passing through or living in Egypt. This was Egypt seen from the 'outside' as one might say. But with *La Femme Nouvelle* we offer a description of our Egypt from what may be called the 'inside'. We tell you about her as we would tell you about our mother whose arms have cradled us.

(Ibid.)

It is interesting that Doria does not consider that *La Femme Nouvelle* is foreign, despite its use of the French language, since on another level she was addressing the French speaking native elite whose support she wanted to draw towards the cause of women. The metaphors she used to describe the New Woman is that of message and messenger, bond and bridge.

Our readers will be, so to speak, members of a grand family, that of the New Woman, the one who works without respite. The one who has no other goal but the continued progress of the oriental woman. She will be this new messenger directing herself toward the West and will make it hear her voice. In one immense stride, she will throw a magnificent bridge between the East and the West.

(Shafik 1946)

> The New Woman is a message, an unusual message, arising from the distant mists of history and advancing into the future; a message that reveals hidden treasures and relieves Egypt from the burden of so many secrets that she alone has borne for six thousand years! A message that probes freely into the depths of time; a message of those endless and innumerable unknown riches, of hidden treasures. The New Woman is a message of an art that gives life to stone and instills life into the inert. But she is also a messenger that reveals the changing aspect of Egypt and its renaissance.
>
> (Shafik 1948)

She argued that East and West are not hermetically sealed entities but, on the contrary, complete one another, and the new woman enriches herself not only with her own past but with her manifold relations with other civilizations.

> There was a time when East and West were two inscrutable worlds, two irreconcilable monads evolving along two parallel roads and never meeting. Through space and time, various civilizations shake hands, understand one another, unite and complement one another. This edition essentially bears witness to this reconciliation, to this rapprochement, often unexpected, and yet so harmonious. *La Femme Nouvelle* will serve as a bond between the intellectual and artistic life of Egypt and the West.
>
> (Shafik 1949)

By focusing on Egyptian culture, Doria was also depicting the renaissance of Egypt. Through its aesthetic heritage, its poetry, painting, theater and music, Doria was also trying to reveal Egypt from the inside.

In contrast to *La Femme Nouvelle*, *Bint al-Nil* had another focus and objective. *La Femme Nouvelle* was Shafik's French aesthetic/cultural voice turned outward to the Occident with the goal of conveying the true image of Egyptian greatness. *Bint al-Nil* was her activist/feminist voice directed inward to the Arabic-speaking world of the emerging middle class not only in Egypt but also throughout the Arab countries of the Levant. Doria wanted to wake up educated men and women to their duty and responsibilities in solving the nation's problems. *Bint al-Nil* was her vehicle for educating men and women –

in the profound meaning of that term – awakening consciousness to women's basic rights and responsibilities:

Women of our generation have as yet not learnt to take control of their lives. They are as yet not ready to enter the arena of politics. It is rare to find women who know the names of our politicians. Moreover they don't know the politicians outside Egypt. All of this is information that one can freely obtain from the newspapers that our fathers, brothers and husbands bring home. Most women, however, only read the obituaries and the social news. I do not ask that women work in politics but I do think that they should be aware of what goes on. We are harming our own children more than anyone if we remain incapable of informing them of the events that take place in public life. In raising our children we should have a comprehensive understanding of political events. Thus the evolution of society begins with its women and *Bint al-Nil* will be an aid in the education and evolution of the Egyptian woman and thus contribute to the Progress of the nation.

(*Bint al-Nil*, 1946)

Despite her denial, the issue of women and politics was always a prominent theme in Doria Shafik's writing. However, in the early years, the conservative influence of her husband and Ibrahim Abdu[8] kept a lid on her volatile ideas. As Abdu admitted,

'Those first editorials of 1946 do not reflect the sentiments and works of Doria Shafik. They are mine! I wrote down those ideas, not Doria!' When pressed to explain the circumstances which necessitated this more cautious approach he responded, 'I had a difficult time toning down Doria's confrontational approach. During this period the Shaykhs of Al-Azhar were strongly and publicly against women going to university with men and entering those professions that were exclusively man's work, such as medicine, law, engineering, and science. So as not to incite the al-Azharites' immediate wrath and violent opposition to *Bint al-Nil*, I thought a better strategy was to go step by step at a more moderate pace. Also as a university professor at that time, I was more in touch with the explosive political situation than Doria.'[9]

The first issue of *Bint al-Nil* appeared during a period when Egyptian society was experiencing dramatic acts of violence, including assassinations and widespread student and worker demonstrations which

fanned social unrest. We hear the more conservative voice of Abdu filtering through the editorials of *Bint al-Nil*:

I don't, however, think that our active women should be asking for equality because this will not serve the purpose of our movement … Nature has created a distinction between men and women which is difficult to negate. Women were created most importantly of all to bear children. If we equate her with men we would be liberating her from her natural responsibilities. This role that nature has cast women in makes equality between men and women not feasible. The religious (Sharia) laws were imposed on men for the sake of women. They were created to guard women and their rights before and after divorce; so how can we ask for equality when all religions have differentiated between the sexes … Instead of asking for equality, we should be asking for a change in the legislature that has been unfair to women.

(*Bint al-Nil*, Jan 1946)

A comparison of the sentiments expressed above in *Bint al-Nil* with Shafik's statement in a different context, that of her 1944 treatise, reveals the extent of Abdu's control over Doria's Arabic voice.

We must pull the Egyptian woman out of the quandary in which she has suffered for centuries. The attainment of total equality with men is the axis of the Egyptian woman's modern existence and admits no concession however minimal.

(Shafik 1944: 43)

By 1948 the message and tone of *Bint al-Nil* began to change, suggesting that Doria was starting to speak out more distinctly in her own Arabic voice uncensored by Abdu:

Men in Egypt do not want what is best for their country. They fight us in our efforts to develop our country. At times they do this in the name of religion. We have never heard of a religion that stands between women and their right to life. At other times they say that it is in the name of tradition. What tradition stands between women and their ability to do good? In fact it is the inferiority complex from which some Egyptians suffer which makes them

behave in this way. Gentlemen make way for us and let the procession take its natural course.

(*Bint al-Nil*, Jan 1948)

And from the end of the forties until she was put under house arrest Doria Shafik engaged in a much more open criticism of society and her storming of Parliament in 1951 and hunger strike in 1954 opened up a public debate on the question of women's rights and human freedom. Given her own interest in reconciling Islam and modernity she argued vehemently that Islam was not in contradiction to her vision of women's legal and political rights. In her view the issue of women's rights was not restricted merely to suffrage. She wanted nothing less than to change the Islamic personal status laws that allowed the husband unlimited polygamy, the unilateral right to repudiate his wife and the right of child custody as well as the civil laws that prohibited women from running for elected office and serving as parliamentarians. She wanted to abolish *Bayt al-ta'a* (House of obedience)[10] and requested that the measures taken by the police to enact the law also be abolished.

Bint al-Nil and *La Femme Nouvelle* not only epitomize Doria Shafik's attempt to fashion a new image of and for the Egyptian and Arab woman during the critical post war period, they also reveal how the aesthetic and the activist, those dual and competing strands in her life, are woven more intimately and profoundly into her lived experience as she seeks to discover her destiny. Both magazines centered around the construction of identity, whether cultural or sexual, evincing not only Doria Shafik's personal struggles but also her disquiet over the general debate in society at large between pan-Islamists and Egyptianists as to the more appropriate ideology for the political future of Egypt.

The tension between the aesthetic and activist within her own persona not only contributed to her enigmatic public image but also reinforced the conservative Muslim belief that Doria Shafik was a tool of western society trying to undermine the society's Islamic values. Her modern ideas about women's role in the life of nation, as well as her own unescorted trip to Europe to affiliate with a western feminist organization, drew harsh criticism from Islamic fundamentalists, who argued that women's participation in public life was a source of *fitna* (or social anarchy). In their view her affiliation with western international women's organizations was just another example of an on-going

conspiracy that combined the motivations and battle plans of colonialism with the goals of international Zionism. Only in the guise of the women's movement, it had chosen to launch its attacks against the Islamic family structure, the cornerstone of Muslim society. Thus any demand for women's right to political power or call for restrictions in divorce procedures and polygamy was perceived as an imperialist plot designed to undermine the Egyptian social structure.

In 1944 following her trip to Europe where she had officially registered her Bint al-Nil Union with the International Council of Women, one fundamentalist group, the Flame of Muhammad, launched a stinging public criticism against Shafik accusing her of being an agent for her country's enemies: [11]

> Colonialism has many games and tricks. The Egyptian Feminist Movement, in the shadow of Muslim society, needed a dramatic plot that would give its required thrust and achieve its required goals in the shortest time possible. Therefore it needed a personality that would play the role of opposition in the games of agents in this sphere of women. First there was Huda Sha'rawi, who founded The Egyptian Feminist Union; then there was a second one who established the national feminist party and renewed the ways of corruption; the third was the Bint al-Nil Party, which seeks to save the woman from the man and recapture the lost rights of women. Who is this personality playing the role of adventurer? None other than Doria Shafik. In 1949 she established the Bint al-Nil Party and within a month she travelled to England, which at the time had 85,000 troops occupying the motherland. There she was received by heads of states and leaders. The British press received her and shed their light on her and published many talks that depict her a fighter and the first leader in Egypt for the liberation of women from the shackles of Islam – the restraints of the veil; the scourge of divorce and polygamy. A reporter from the Scotsman iterated the goals of the Bint al-Nil Party as expressed by Doria Shafik: (1) to get the vote and enter parliament; (2) to abolish polygamy; and (3) to introduce European divorce laws into Egypt! The ideas of this 'suspect' woman came from colonial instigation and through colonial institutions.
>
> (Al-Gohari 1980: pp. 259-264)

Doria Shafik's quest for self expression represented an indigenous and authentic response to the civilizational encounter that enfolded her. From the moment she established her journals in 1945 until her final

defiant act in 1957 protesting against the authoritarian regime headed by Gamal Abdul Nasser, Doria Shafik was engaged in a cultural critique that was simultaneously directed outward to the Other (the West) and inward toward the Self (Egypt and Islam) in a project that was aimed to dismantle the distorted and stereotyped images of the oriental woman as well as the patriarchal frameworks in which these were embedded.

As a genre of intellectual cultural production, Shafik's two journals engage directly in the construction of a public discourse surrounding feminism, Islam and political power. As a style of cultural critique, these journals represent the first stage of a process, which Hisham Sharabi has defined as

> the critical movement marking the fundamental shift and cultural crisis of post-modernism. The model of the post-modern critic, then, is the person who occupies a space of critical consciousness … a criticism that must distance itself from domination and assume an adversarial position.
>
> (Sharabi 1987: 15-16)

I read Doria Shafik's languages of struggle not so much as post-modern but as representing the contestation of Self and Other within the framework of modernity. As a woman intellectual, who straddled two cultures and interrogated her own, Doria Shafik is more representative of the hybrid individual or what Christopher Norris describes as "that modernist colonial figure, the internal exile – half in and half out – homeless and dispossessed."[12]

Voice of the Muse (1949-1957)

At the same time that Doria Shafik was struggling for the political rights of Egyptian women she was also writing and publishing her poetry – revealing yet another dimension of her political and cultural hybridity. The appearance of *La Bonne Aventure* (1948), her first collection of poetry, gave her enormous satisfaction in an otherwise hectic and conflict-laden life.

> This need to write poems was as necessary to me as breathing! It is true that I was alive to poetry from my first year of study in Paris – but it is only much

later that I was awakened to Poetry – as an expression of the Absolute. The publication of my booklet of poems helped me to discover a certain consistency to this Infinity resonating within me and which I was unable to formulate; to this grand flame, whose moving presence I felt but could never reveal.

(Shafik 1960: 343)

She was thrilled that her work had been recognized by Pierre Seghers, one of France's most distinguished publishers[13] who founded his own publishing house during the war to support the writings of such resistance poets as Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Pierre Reverdy and others who were to become among Doria's favorites (Seghers 1978). He not only encouraged young foreign poets like Pablo Neruda, Federico Garcia Lorca, Elsa Triolet, he also authored several books of his own work including poetry, prose anthologies, songs and films. Following his death on November 4, 1987, Jean Orizet eulogized Seghers as follows: "Poetry has lost its most fervent lover, its most active defender. It is still befitting to remember that Seghers was above all the poet of abandon and passion."[14]

If Huda Sha'rawi can be credited for encouraging and supporting Doria's feminist ardor and Princess Chevikar for offering Doria the opportunity to channel her restless search for a mission into journalism, then Pierre Seghers must be singled out as the one person in her life who recognized, appreciated and encouraged the soul of the poet smoldering within her. From the moment they first met in 1947 Seghers became her trusted friend, her literary critic, her publisher, but above all her mentor within the world of modern poetry.

When she came to Paris it was not only to see me. She came for many other reasons. She was busy with her magazines, her publications, her struggle for women's rights. She was extraordinarily active. But I don't think she ever came to Paris without seeing me. And that's another thing. My domain, my sphere of activity, was within the realm of poetry and this is what brought us together, a friendship that became more and more profound.[15]

Through her friendship with Seghers, Doria was encouraged to explore, discover and give expression to her "inner lyricism" as Seghers once described her special style. Over the years Seghers and Shafik exchanged letters and poems. Shafik often sending Seghers samples of

her work, asking for his criticism and he, in turn, sending her his published books often inscribed with warm and affectionate dedications. Doria had begun working on a large opus which she first entitled "Christ Rouge" but later changed to "Redemption", metaphors chosen from those childhood memories of the glass stained windows of the nun's schools. "You are very near to Pablo Neruda as well as to the *Épiphanes* of Henri Pichette. In this union of spontaneity and hard work they are a lesson to all."[16]

Poetry was not a frivolous diversion for Doria, it was central to her being and it is through her poetry that we gain an understanding of the interior world of this enigmatic woman. As Seghers commented,

> She was a poet. That's all. With this zeal, passion, ardor. I believe that a man or a woman living passionately is someone who is not calm; there is this demand, this anxiety and this need which are not calm and placid. There is always this ardor; this ardor is like a fire and fire torments itself. She was like that because she was an artist; she was a woman of thought.[17]

This recognition by one of France's "*poètes de l'élan et de la passion*" further encouraged Doria to write and she produced a second collection, *L'Amour Perdu* (1954), the same year that she staged her eight day hunger strike for women's rights. Her final five volumes of poetry appeared in 1979 published posthumously by her daughters with the help of Seghers. In his words the earlier poems are:

> A beginning, an annunciation, a preface to her work. They are more radiant, more silky, more smooth than her later ones. At the same time I think there is a certain strength, a certain vigor, a certain severity, a certain sobriety and a certain subterranean power in her later work that surpasses the first ones. This later poetry goes deeper, much deeper. It is a poetry where thought, reflection and the inner life are, they say, more evident. It is more solemn if you like. The first poetry announces, moreover a temperament like this. It is still the beginning. But afterwards we feel this gravity, this seriousness which endures until death.[18]

Among the poems of *L'Amour Perdu* we listen to a voice that is moving further into the interior landscape exploring the themes of solitude,

destiny, the Absolute, struggle and the suffering of the human heart, and where "the profound source of her inner lyricism dominates."

Le Désert

A perte de vue s'étend	As far as the eye can see
le Silence …	Silence stretches out …
Las nappes de sable	The sheets of sand
pleurent leur solitude	sobbing their solitude
Et les rares bédouins	And the rare bedouins
passent leur chemin …	passing on their way …
Mais	But
là …	there …
n'est pas	is not
le vrai Désert	the true Desert
Celui	In the one
que dans mon coeur	that
se creuse	deeply penetrates
en profondeur … .	my heart … .
le soleil	where the sun
y est	is
interdit …	forbidden …

These poems are uniquely grounded in Shafik's Egyptian experience as she delves deeper into her culture and finds familiar motifs to revitalize and be revitalized in her poetry. A Cairo Night, The River Nile, Domes and Minarets, The Flute Player, the "Sakkieh" all became transformed into her lyrical melodies. In an anthology of *Poètes en Égypte* appearing in 1955, the editor writes of Doria Shafik:

> Between her two magazines she is a prolific bilingual writer; she also writes poems with an engaging simplicity where interior landscapes and Egyptian impressions are fixed in the most rapid but sure touches.
>
> (Moscatelli 1955: 204)

Such touches we hear in her depiction of a Cairo night:

Le Caire La Nuit

Nuit pétrie d'amour	Night consumed by love
où mon coeur	where my heart
retrouve	discovers
sa première émotion … .	its first emotion … .
Nuit mouillée de lumière	Night drenched in light
où mon âme	where my soul
touche	strokes
à l'enchantement …	enchantment …
Nuit mêlée de pénombre	Night bleeding into dusk
où mon être	where my being
erre	wanders
dans son torment	in its torment

Or through her image of her beloved Nile:

Tantot miroitant	Its crystalline
sex eatix	waters
cristallines … .	Now shimmering … .
Tantot vert	Now green
comme	as
une belle saison	A magnificent spring … .
Tantot rouge	Now red
et fougueux	and fiery
comme le sang … .	as blood … .
Tour à tour	At the same moment
provoquant	challenging
et docile	and docile
Sombre	Somber
et nonchalant	and nonchalant
Perfide	Treacherous
et avenant …	and comely …
Avançant	Advancing
majestueusement	majestically
dans La Valée …	through the Valley …
Défiant	Defying
le monde	the world
et les gens … .	and the people … .

Nil	Nile
bienfaiteur	benefactor
Nil	Nile
autoritaire	domineering
On voudrait	One would like
te comprendre	to understand you
On voudrait	One would like
l'approcher.	To approach you.
Dans ton mystère	In thine mystery
tu restes	Thou rest
là	there
muet	mute
secret …	secret …

Through these images and metaphors of Egypt, Doria Shafik not only explores her inner emotions that are both personal and political, individual and universal, but foreshadows the despair that was to overcome her during these long years of house arrest and self imposed seclusion.

The Voice of Interior Music (1957-1975)

On February 6, 1957, Shafik walked into the Indian Embassy, having announced to the international media that she was embarking on a strike,

> to hunger unto death, to protest the two enemies of my freedom – Israel, which is occupying Egyptian land, and the present authoritarian regime which is leading the country into bankruptcy and chaos.

This was her last political exploit and ultimately led to her being placed under house arrest, her journals being confiscated, and her name officially banned from the Egyptian media until her tragic death on September 20, 1975, when her name reappeared on the front pages of the Egyptian press. Ironically, this final defiant act in defence of that single principle of individual liberty resulted in her entering an eighteen year period of near seclusion, in many ways more painful and

tortured than the harems she had witnessed as a child growing up in Mansura and Tanta.

Doria's house arrest abruptly ended a public career which had spanned more than thirty years from 1928 when she first stood beside Huda Sha'rawi on the platform of the theater at Ezbakiyyah Gardens and delivered her impassioned and in some ways prophetic, eulogy to Qasim Amin.

Withdrawn from public view, abandoned by former comrades and denounced by her society as a "traitor to the revolution", Doria Shafik was only forty eight years old when she embarked on her final and most difficult battle: the struggle against isolation and solitude that this banishment to the world of internal exile imposed.

From this isolated ambience, where my enemies believe they have driven me back to a slow death, I nevertheless have discovered the most beautiful windfall; my own existence as a human being. At what door can I knock in order to leap over these invisible bars of my prison? Invisible even for those, who up until this point, were near to me and in the habit of seeing clearly. Here I am hunted down on the moving sand, encircled by wolves and vipers. In this indescribable desert, where my optimism at every trial still pushed me to hope, I advance in the void, echoing my own call. I speak to the deaf. Where are the people? I belong to them! I am made of the same stuff! Human! One can be made to do anything but no one can oblige me to go against my conscience. There I affirm myself as Absolute. There I exist in the most elevated sense: I am free. At the end of three years of seclusion, at the end also of my years of struggle, I have discovered you, liberty, essence of my being. Liberty: you give unique meaning to this work. I have dedicated this work to you, and to all those who, like me, have suffered from loss of freedom.

(Shafik 1960: 585)

On the final page of these memoirs written during the first years of her house arrest, she scripts a line of verse in homage to Paul Eluard, to whom she dedicated her work.

O Liberty
I make you a gift
Of my heart

Without you
Life
Means
Nothing

Shortly after news of her house arrest reached Seghers, he sent her this personal note:

For you, Doria, who will always remain the very image of beauty, the flame and passing of living poetry: for you, who are your country, and to whom I remain so near. With most faithful friendship, Seghers.

For ten years after her house arrest, Seghers faithfully continued writing to his friend and sending her copies of his latest poetry. We find affectionate inscriptions such as: "To Doria, the art of always being able to keep oneself company"; "For Doria Shafik, these stones from the same temple; with my loyal memory"; "For you, Doria, whoever sings his troubles enchants it!" But Doria never responded and Seghers eventually stopped writing.

However it is essentially through her poetry, that "voice of interior music" that we catch a glimpse of what Seghers often referred to as "her most authentic truth". The following poems written during those final years appear in an unpublished volume which she entitled "Hors Temps":

Because they were conceived and written in an atmosphere escaping our perceived time, that eternally narrowly measured time. The setting of these poems is timeless. It is an immediate apperception of our interior life whose essence belongs to infinity, to the unlimited. The profound meaning of these poems is in the expression of interior music that emerges from the depths of our hearts, when our heart is pure, transmitting the echoes of our soul which, when it is elevated to the lofty heights of purity becomes capable of capturing the Absolute.

(Shafik n.d.: 8)

In this brief homage to her favorite resistance poet we sense her pensive mood:

O, Reverdy

quelle résonance!	what resonance!
Le coeur en silence	the heart in silence
se tait	holds its tongue
et laisse parler	and lets the others
les autres.	speak ….
Il n'a plus rien à dire	There's nothing more to say
Il a tout dit	It has all been said
[ce qu'il fallait dire]	[that which one must say]
Et son silence	And its Silence
à travers l'absence	through the absence
de véritable vie	of a genuine life
erre	wanders
dans le désert	in the desert
de la mélancolie	of melancholia
Mais le poids de l'angoisse	But the burden of anguish
tassé	boxed in
en barricade	against a wall
se découvre	discovers itself
soudain	suddenly
et se révolte	and revolts
sans bruit sans vaine	without noise or vain
parade	display
levier inexorable	unyielding lever
des HEURES de matin	HOURS of the morning

Or in this silent lament which was her message to the world outside her prison:

Don't be surprised
That I write to you in verse
When the customary prose is there
It is, you see,
That I have suffered some setbacks
Hemmed in by walls
Not of stones, it is true
But worse – I hope you understand
And only poetry

Friend of passionate souls
Should explain to you
My name begins with D
and I am a woman …
Daughter of the Nile
I have demanded women's rights
My fight was enlarged
To human freedom
In a world of oppression
I have dared to demand
this freedom
And what was the result?
I have no more friends
So what?
Until the end of the road
I will proceed alone
Without hesitation, without turning back
What does loneliness matter?
Nausea – disheartening torture
I feel my heart is big
So big that it overflows
The barriers of treason
And rejoins, in the four corners of the world,
All Souls of Good Will

As Doria withdrew further into herself she struggled against the encroachment of loneliness through the only means left to her. More than ever, she relied upon her trusted muse, who became both her mistress and companion and through whom she could express her anguish.

How to Live Without Poetry
How
Without this rhythm of life
To endure
the passing of the days
empty of content and
these departures without

return
departures of all our hopes?
How to live without
this interior music
which alone permits us
to bear the heavy burden
of inexpressible sorrow?
how to live without
this profound breathing
that is poetry
friend
of those who suffer
of those
with too sensitive a heart
of those who want
and insist on wanting
to make of their life
a work of art

Unyielding she continued through her poetry to denounce repression, hatred and violence. Under these conditions of separation and loneliness that became more and more difficult for her to endure, she proclaimed her attachment to the absolutes of Freedom, to Good, and to Love. She filled thousands of blank pages with words that gushed forth in a stream of consciousness, revealing the slow process of a self disconnecting from a world of social and family ties drifting slowly towards the ultimate fusion with the Absolute.

Through these voices of inner struggle we follow the trajectory of Shafik's withdrawal from the everyday world and her transformation in time and space reflecting a heightened involvement with the transcendental, foretelling her final act of will which was to throw herself from her sixth floor balcony into the void on September 20, 1975.

The Voices of Jahanara Shahnawaz and Hamida Akhtar Hussein

Jahanara Shahnawaz (1896-1979) and Hamida Akhtar Hussein (1918-) were both born in colonial British India. At independence in August 1948, both came to live in Pakistan. Their lives, like that of Doria

Shafik, represent the lives of the transition. However, their individual trajectories are not identical: their voices and actions bear witness both to the historical times they lived in (at different periods during the passage from coloniality to neo-coloniality), and to the uniqueness of their particular encounters with those times. In this portion of the paper, I examine a single autobiographical text by each of these two women, so as to tease out their respective experiences and voices and their engagement with processes and dilemmas of modernity. Let me start with a brief biographical sketch of each woman.

Jahanara Shahnawaz[19] was born in Baghbanpura, near the city of Lahore, in Punjab Province. Her family belonged to the Arain Muslim community.[20] Her father, Muhammad Shafi, was a well known lawyer and political figure, active in Muslim League[21] politics. As his favorite child, she received her initial political education starting at a very young age, at his hands: [22]

> Since the age of twelve, I had become a companion in the house of my father, and he used to talk to me of his political work and would often read his speeches and statements to me. He would discuss the political situation and other topics, welcome comments on the salient points, and while doing so trained me to take part in the political life of the country. It was his greatest wish to prepare me for work in the political sphere.
>
> (Shahnawaz 1971: 36)

Jahanara was initially educated at home, as was customary for Muslim Indian girls of her time. In 1908, she joined Queen Mary's College, a posh girl's school in Lahore organized along lines similar to institutions established by the British to educate boys from elite Indian households. She and her sister, Geti, joined the school the day it started: "There were only eleven girls who attended, and my name was placed first on the register" (ibid.: 33). She continued her studies after an early marriage in 1911 at age fifteen. Though she remained in school for another year after the birth of her first child in the summer of 1912, it was only to study Arabic and learn embroidery.

During the colonial period and after, Jahanara was active in women's and national politics. She entered public life while young, writing articles for papers and women's magazines as early as 1906. A serialized story by her was published in book form in 1915, when she was

nineteen. She was an active member in many organizations including the All India Women's Conference[23] (in which she served as provincial branch president for many years, and later as national Vice President in 1932), the Red Cross Society, the Muslim League and the Muslim Educational Conference, including their women's sections. In 1917, she was among the organizers for the annual session of the Muslim Ladies' Conference. At that moot, she proposed a resolution against polygamy "which was passed unanimously and became a standing resolution of the Conference."[24]

Despite this extensive political involvement it was only after 1920 when during a trip to Calcutta, Bengal, she and other women family members came out of seclusion, that Jahanara began to participate in gender-mixed political events. During debates on the enfranchisement of women under the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, she spoke before a mixed gathering for the first time. Subsequently she was to speak to many such gatherings in different locales on a variety of issues.

She was appointed delegate to several of the Round Table Conferences[25] held in London in the early through mid-thirties. In 1931, she was invited by the Secretary General of the League of Nations to visit their offices as a 'Collaborator'[26] to study the League and its various committees' workings. In 1935, she served as the only Indian delegate appointed to the League of Nations Advisory Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children. She contested and won provincial elections in 1937, 1946[27] and after independence. She was a member of the Constituent Assembly before independence and continued in this capacity afterwards as well, when she served on four parliamentary committees responsible for drafting the constitution for the new state of Pakistan. In this capacity, she worked for women's rights to be assured under the new constitution. She also helped frame the charter of Women's Rights, which was supported by all women's groups then in existence in Pakistan; and later, campaigned to have this charter accepted by the National Assembly which approved it unanimously in 1954. When the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 1956, and Martial Law declared, she withdrew from public political life and devoted the rest of her life to reading and writing.

Hamida Akhtar Hussein too was born and raised in British India. Unlike Jahanara Shahnawaz, she grew up in an intellectual rather than a political household environment.[28] Her family was based in central

India, in the then-famous town of Aligarh.[29] Her surroundings reflected the preoccupations of the Muslim literati and intelligentsia, and combined linguistic, literary and political considerations. Because of this her concerns and intellectual pursuits, although revolving around nationalist concerns as well, were distinct from Jahanara's in various respects. Among these differences was a focus on the position and place of the Urdu language in a united Indian anti-colonial movement; an immersion in literature and the world of aesthetics; an awareness of being at the center of the Muslim literary and political renaissance. And because of the geographical location and cultural position of Aligarh, an awareness of the significance of working across sectarian/communal lines with Hindus and other religious communities.

It is noteworthy that for Hamida Akhtar's generation of middle class girls, women's education was now a norm. Hamida studied at the Aligarh Muslim Women's College, a companion institution to Aligarh University, an all male institution at the time. However, despite studying at a segregated school, unlike Jahanara's household, Hamida's family were not strict in observing gender segregation at home. She met young men, friends of her brothers and cousins. It was this social exchange between genders, which led after matriculation to her marriage to Akhtar Hussein, a fledgling writer and journalist, after a lengthy but secret courtship, known only to several of her girlfriends. Hers was a marriage of choice (although formalized through parental channels). After marriage, she moved far away from home to Hyderabad, Deccan, to live in an all male, literary environment. After marriage when outside her marital home, she still did not practice *purdah*, but inside the household there was a strict segregation of the *zenana* from the male quarters.[30] She lived until widowhood, as a close companion to her husband, devoting her life to him. While independent minded, her coming to voice publicly[31] followed the death of her husband. It was then that she began to write.

The two texts one each written by these two women that are read closely here are Jahanara Shahnawaz's *Father and Daughter: A Political Autobiography* (1971) and Hamida Akhtar Hussein Rai Puri's *Hum Safar* (1996). Jahanara's book is by no means her first written text. As mentioned earlier, she started to write in 1906 in Urdu language papers and magazines. Her work *Husn Ara Begum* first serialized in a women's magazine *Khatoon*, was later published as a book

under the same title in 1915.[32] Like some of Shafik's writings, this work attempts to construct and appeal to "The New Woman". Jahanara wrote extensively for different organizations in which she had membership; she also wrote speeches both for her father and on her own behalf. She used both Urdu and English to write, basing her choice on the context.

Hamida Akhtar Hussein's autobiography, is her first writing attempt, as mentioned earlier. She writes only in Urdu. Since this text came out, she has written and published a children's book, which contains stories she was told by her mother and grandmother; has finished a second autobiographical book as sequel to *Hum Safar*; and is considering a cookbook of recipes from Hyderabadi kitchens. Two of these four texts deal with what are considered "women's subjects" – children and food. In my interview with her, Hamida said these themes allowed her to pay homage to women in her family and surroundings.

Several factors are noteworthy: the fact that each of these women should write autobiographically, a form of self-identification often considered forbidden to women of their generation; that both women wrote their autobiographies at least in part, as homage to significant men in their lives – Jahanara to her father, Hamida to her husband; and that both wrote these texts *after* the death of these men; last, that despite this overarching framing and acknowledgement of men in their lives, there is a clear recognition of the significance of women's contributions not only to this world of men, but also in their own right. The sheer act of writing autobiographically itself serves to bring the authors – these women – themselves to the center, even though this center may be shared. The autobiographical form therefore serves as a vehicle for self representation but not as in *masculinist* autobiographies. I use the term masculinist deliberately to denote a type of writing that constructs the self as autonomous agent, stripped of any historical/experiential baggage which comes into existence precisely by severance from the past and prior connections and influences.

It could be argued that this gesture which includes an acknowledgement of male influences in their lives, reflects the continued hold of patriarchal norms. Alternatively we could posit that such narration celebrates the debts one accumulates in life and recognizes their contribution to, and hence the circularity rather than linearity, and indeed the contradictoriness of self formation rather than celebrating and

creating the "heroic" self. Rather than a simple narrative of progress, we thus have a narrative of ambiguity that lies at the heart of this (auto)-biographical style, and which may be more accurately reflective of "lives lived in the transition" especially for those on the margins of that transition. The gendered self here is seen as not born in isolation but in context, therefore always embedded in social relations and history.

Hamida's text remains more faithful to this non-linear narrative than does Jahanara's. It is striking in the latter's work how she comes to stand on her own and stake out her own positions in the aftermath of the deaths of her father and her first husband. This raises the question whether this re-inscribes a masculinist voice, or whether instead, we might see it as a coming to voice of the author precisely because of the removal of patriarchal barriers in her personal life? The latter is as plausible a conclusion as the former.

The actual languages and the idiom in which each of the two women write also deserves mention. Jahanara wrote her autobiography in English, although she was capable of writing it in Urdu. And she writes in a style that is fairly conventional using references to family archives and government records to substantiate her position and assertions. Hamida Akhtar on the other hand, writing in Urdu, writes not in a formal literary Urdu style but in an oral, story telling style. The mode of writing is totally unconventional in terms of Urdu autobiographical writing and gives more weight to her voice, without necessarily giving her an authoritative voice. Thus, while Jahanara attempts to move to the center positing an objectively constructed autobiography relying on "scientific evidence", Hamida remains comfortable on the margins.

Their difference in style perhaps reflects their respective aspirations to power, and different dimensions of power. It also problematizes a simple understanding between the construction of power, and the relationship and struggles surrounding voice and power. Thus Jahanara, through the form she adopts – writing in English, using archives, dates, "scientific" evidence – might be seen to draw closer to a privileged voice and therefore engaged in an attempt to grasp power at its center. Hamida, on the other hand, by her refusal to write in a formal, literary Urdu style, eschews any attempt to gain currency through formalistic literary devices. Instead, by retaining the voice of orality

and the vernacular, generally associated with women and other marginals, she continues to stay outside the mainstream, but to enhance for us, the readers, a certainty that what we are listening to is indeed her voice. She demonstrates by her writing, that to gain voice does not necessarily signify the ability or even desire to usurp power in a hegemonic sense.[33]

The use of language reflects each woman's particular biography and experiences. Hamida grew up in an environment where Urdu was a highly regarded form of literary expression, and remained immersed in it all her life, both as a young single woman, after marriage, and even following widowhood. The circle of friends with whom she socialized and continues to do so, are largely literary figures, and have included both Hindus and Muslims, but more often prominent Urdu writers. Her choice of Urdu as the language of her autobiography reflects this history. But it does more than simply mimic it: the fact that she chooses to write in a vernacular style speaks to her desire to retain her own voice rather than simply reproduce the literary voice that reverberated in her home.

Jahanara, on the other hand, studied in a English-medium school. This and her public political experience may have something to do with her desire to write her autobiography in English rather than Urdu. It may also reflect her desire to have a readership that was not simply local. However, the fact that English was still the dominant language institutionally in Pakistan when she wrote, as well as being the language of the elites, definitely suggests a different agenda and readership than that which Hamida Akhtar envisioned.[34]

Struggles over language, linguistic domination and shifts therein are telling: by the time Hamida Akhtar wrote *Hum Safar*, Pakistani society had taken a definitive turn culturally from English to Urdu; and while not suggesting that this was why Hamida Akhtar chose to write in this language, the fact of her doing so gives her both greater access and currency in the nineteen nineties. This suggests a need to problematize the relationship between language, authenticity and hegemony; and the need to see their connection as historically constructed and variable rather than as ahistorical and static. This awareness needs to be held in mind alongside issues of readership and power alluded to earlier.

Another matter of form in the two texts is the play with visual

images. Jahanara's book uses none except on the front cover which has a photograph of her and her father taken in London in 1930. She is wearing what looks like a sari, khusas on her feet, a fur trimmed coat, and has her hair covered.[35] The spine has a portrait of her alone. On the back cover are newspaper clippings which laud her political contributions. In Hamida Akhtar's book, on the other hand, there are eight pages of photographs, which are like a family album, starting with her husband and his family. She, her family and friends come towards the end of this album. In none of the photographs does she have her hair covered. On the back cover is a striking portrait of her as a young woman.

These visual images demonstrate a mix between convention and crossing of boundaries: in Jahanara's case, a shift from her close attachment to her father (front cover) to the political reception of her own work and contributions (back cover). In Hamida's case no simple reading is possible either. The choice of her portrait as an attractive young woman cannot be simply read as a nostalgia for the past on the part of an elderly woman, but must be seen also as pride in one's looks and singularity. Which of the two women's choices of photographs are more "feminist" and which more "traditional"? There is no straightforward answer, which suggests that perhaps the problem resides with that mode of questioning itself.

Jahanara Shahnawaz's *Father and Daughter* is interesting in both its title and choice by which the author names herself. The book's title suggests her tutelage at her father's hands; and that it is not a complete accounting of her life, only of her political life. Part of her life remains cloistered, secluded from view. The name chosen for the author with the appellation Begum, like the cover photo, posits a relational self: a self named through marriage.

Furthermore, the text itself moves from these relations (in which both husbands play a very marginal role) to an emphasis in the last third of the book, on her apart from these relations. The family remains important but now in the form of her daughter, and the extended 'tribe' of Arains from which Jahanara came.[36]

The title *Hum Safar* for Hamida's book can be roughly translated as 'fellow traveller' or 'companion'. It is a reference to the closeness between the author and her husband. The title highlights the 'companionate' marriage that Hamida experienced unlike Jahanara, whose mar-

riage was arranged for her by the men of her household.[37] However, the text disallows a straightforwardly 'positive' reading of marriage 'by choice' by pointing to the contradictions in the marital relationship and the coming to awareness of the author of these only as she sits down to write this, her self expression, rather than simply her autobiography. In her introductory chapter she states, "As I started re-living my past I better began to understand Akhtar and my own weaknesses and strengths in depth" (Rai Puri 1996: 11). The writing of the autobiography thus illumines what had been unseen and unremarked upon before.

The chapters in Jahanara's autobiography are in the following sequence: "The early years"; "Towards the emancipation of women and the country's freedom"; "The Lonely Furrow"; "The Constituent Assembly and Democracy"; and the final chapter: "The Philosophic Mind". Throughout Jahanara links her personal life to her political one; the two seem seamless and interwoven. This raises the question: is this the way she experienced her life or is this a deliberate narration accentuating its political rather than personal dimensions? And what does this tell us of her understanding, and construction of the relationship between the two domains of the political and personal?

Her introductory chapter makes a direct link between her life as a child growing up in a very politicized family, the historical times in which she lived (the struggle for freedom from colonialism and also minority rights for Muslims), her desire to see women as active participants in the political process, and her own sense of destiny as a significant public/political figure. She writes (in a voice that is reminscent of Shafik's):

> The annual sessions of the Educational Conference were held in one of the capitals of the provinces … . Father and other young members of the family would attend them … . In the early years of the century, as a child of six or seven, I used to dream of the day when women would be allowed to attend such gatherings and even address them, and I would picture the moment when I would have a chance to make my speech to the Conference …
>
> (Shahnawaz, op.cit.: 5)

In this chapter there is evidence of the contradictory character and influences of modernity on the young Jahanara. She grew up in a segregated but not a cloistered household. In her childhood, only men of

her family and class moved freely in public spaces; women relied on them for news of the outside world. But there is mention as well of women in the public domain who served as role models, including Sarojini Naidu, the famous poet and feminist/nationalist activist. The twin influences of Jahanara's mother and father are mentioned in this context, alluding to the fact that her mother was among a new generation of women, active in public life even though in seclusion.

Education is a key motif: Quranic, Urdu, and English. The former two were undertaken under female influence (mothers, aunts), the latter under the guidance of her maternal grandfather. This suggests that women of an earlier generation in her household did not have access to English education, but were trained to read and write Urdu and Arabic; women's education was seen as a social 'good' in their social and class circles; last, a shift was already underway where education in more than the local languages was being impressed on those who could afford it, whether by formal or informal means; and in this effort both men and women participated. It was this emphasis on women's education which led Jahanara to write and publish an article on the topic in 1906, which was published in the journal *Tehzib i Niswan*.[38] This mention of a prior generation of women to whom the young Jahanara looked up to occurs several times in the text. It is revealing that this community of women is multi-religious: Hindu, Muslim, Christian; and also multi-national: British, Indian and even Middle Eastern. Thus, while national politics increasingly turns sectarian in religious terms (with communal riots breaking out and more and more Muslims, including her father, being firmly committed to a Muslim national politics), the women continue to provide a very different example until late into the anti-colonial struggle. As mentioned, the All India Women's Conference to which Jahanara belonged included women from all communities resident in India regardless of race, religion, nationality. Jahanara continued her membership in it until the eve of independence even though her nationalist politics took her towards the Muslim League.

The one area in which the rosy picture of familial life that Jahanara paints breaks down pertains to her marriage. She makes it clear that men (her father and maternal grandfather) made the decisions: following her maternal aunt's death, Jahanara was betrothed to this aunt's widower husband, much older than herself, but approved of by her

maternal grandfather and father. This incident, along with the coming out of 'purdah' at the behest of her father, show the experience of modernity and its tensions.[39] The arranged marriage itself is hedged in her favor by her family's insistence that she stay with them until twenty (with her husband) and be able to continue her education as long as possible (which turns out to be until 1913 – a year after the birth of her first daughter).

In the narrative of her early years, Jahanara enacts a silence of sorts – there is mention of her husband's breakdown (alluded to as having been caused by a series of consecutive deaths in his family), and her dedicated (and single handed) nursing him back to health. This breakdown seems to be pivotal in the text but we are given little detail. Does this reluctance to elaborate reflect one of the taboos that exist in writing her life? Is it a concession to patriarchal norms or a deliberate and conscious attempt to maintain privacy?

In her second chapter which links women's emancipation and the country's freedom in its title, little mention is in fact made of women's emancipation. Instead, the chapter elaborates her father's political career, the political twists and turns of anti-colonial politics including the emergence of Muslim separatist politics. The chapter seems to reflect her desire to exonerate her father from charges against him as separatist and sectarian. It ends with mention of his death and her ensuing bereavement.

In this chapter and the next, she takes great pains to demonstrate that Muslim politics did not necessarily mean anti-Hinduism but rather the protection of minority rights. In this regard, she mentions Nahas Pasha of Egypt's assurance to the Copts of their rights (by giving them a blank paper signed by him) as a way of guaranteeing their participation in the nationalist cause:

> Nahas Pasha, by working in this manner, won the confidence of the minorities in Egypt and gave them the impetus to fight for the freedom of their motherland side by side with the majority community. Muslims were asking for majority rights in the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, only which was their due, and were prepared to accept even bare majorities. The Hindus should have said 'by all means, have it' and by so doing they would have won the confi-

dence of the Muslims. Statesmanship meant winning the confidence of each and all by generosity and by the acceptance of their legitimate claims.

(Shahnawaz, op.cit.: 131)

She also stresses that her own work for women and municipal rights for all communities (during her term as Municipal Commissioner) won her support from all religious groups. This issue of minorities continues to inform her politics even after independence.[40]

In this third chapter her statement that she "had to fight a lonely battle throughout the rest of my life" (ibid.: 144) is striking. She suggests that she continued in political life as a gesture towards her father. But ironically it is after the death of her father that she begins to discuss women's representation more systematically and at greater length.

Under the 1935 Constitution, the British Government had conceded provincial autonomy, with a parliamentary system resembling the British system. Entering politics in her own right, and asked what she saw as the aim of her work in the legislatures, she replied:

We women had realized very early in our work of general advancement that, unless women entered the sphere of legislative work, it would not be possible for them to achieve economic independence and emancipation.

(Ibid.: 160-161)

She thus establishes a link, like Doria Shafik, between political representation and women's emancipation. It is also striking that she continues to draw strength from other women, using the collective "we women" as her figure of speech.

There is also an interesting shift in Jahanara's perspective as her exposure to Europe and European social relations deepens. She starts as an admirer of the material advances in European society while commenting on what she sees as their lack of spirituality and reflectiveness. (She tells us that she was always drawn to Islamic mysticism.) Later, as her familiarity with both England and the U.S. intensified, she notes with surprise that most women went to either 'finishing' or vocational schools rather than going on for university education, espe-

cially in Britain (ibid.: 170). This remarks indicates the earlier assumption of an existence, in the West, of equality in men and women's education and occupational pursuits. This practice is not critiqued; rather, Jahanara comments on such an educational model as worthy of emulation in the Indian context:

> I remember asking a young girl from a rich family, whose home was at Oxford, which university she would be joining. She had passed the London Matriculation examination rather well, but she looked at me and said: 'I am not a blue stocking, why should I join a college? I have been admitted to a finishing school.' Blue stockings were those who did not have much chance of getting married. The finishing schools were more like the Home Economics Schools and as no institutions of that type existed in our country, I knew that this all-important question had to be taken in hand immediately … .
>
> In my speeches or otherwise talking to the Minister concerned during 1937-38, I tried my best to draw attention to the forming of a new policy for education, which should be organized like the pattern of a carpet, so that boys and girls belonging to every cadre of society could be fitted into it and there would be no armies of intellectuals roaming about in the streets. I pointed out … that the weeding out of children should begin from the age of eleven onwards, when the primary course finished.
>
> (Ibid.: 171-172)

Should this recommendation be seen as a form of cultural "borrowing" or in fact a hybrid practice that combines local institutions and interests with forms adopted from outside that reinforce, in this instance, particular notions of meritocracy, class privilege and women's emancipation?

Jahanara's international travels increased after her husband's death in 1938, and brought her not only in contact with the "West" but also other parts of the "East" and "South". These travels brought exchanges with others in Sudan, South Africa, Egypt, and also enabled her later to use the knowledge gained through these travels in her struggle for women's rights. The 'borrowings' or hybridity therefore, did not simply occur in relationship to one part of the world, but represented a broader spectrum of north, south, east and west; and in

all instances, the ideas and practices sought to be emulated were selectively appropriated.

Throughout, we witness Jahanara's struggle between three elements: gender (her own brand of feminism), nationalism (Hindu/Muslim unity and/or minority rights), and class/quom distinctions. The latter is the least problematized of the three elements especially before Independence; the other two remain vexed and contradictory both in her discussions of them and in her practical and everyday politics around them. There is also evidence of an increasing "feminist" stance on her part which is reflected in greater outspokenness and independence in political positions and criticisms, greater persistence on behalf of women and lesser compromises being made, and fewer and fewer references to men as influencing her decisions. Thus, in discussing events after the creation of Pakistan, she briefly mentions marrying a relative in 1948. Her comment on this event runs as follows:

> He [her new husband] had been educated at Oxford and was fond of my children. It was mutually agreed that I should retain my earlier name.
>
> (Ibid.: 236, parantheses added)

This decision to retain her previous name suggests her increasing agency not only in her public/political life, but now also in her private one. And it is an interesting fact that these developments occur only after the deaths of her father and first husband, and the achievement of national independence from colonial rule.

It is also significant that her daughter rather than any male figure comes to inform her post-independence politics. There is continuity here: Jahanara retains her familial loyalties, while simultaneously strengthening her concrete connections with women. Her daughter Tazi's last words to her before she died in a plane crash while still a young thirty were: "Please, mother, remember the new State must be a progressive Muslim State and you must never forget to work for it" (ibid.: 240).

Jahanara took this advice to heart. Her discussion of post partition politics contains severe criticisms of the restrictions on democracy, with respective regimes and political figures making concessions to the

ʿulama. She posits the debates over the Constitution as ones in which the new political leadership compromised opportunistically; whereas she stood her grounds and kept up the demand for a democratic system with adult suffrage for all including minorities and women. She mentions the achievement of adult suffrage soon after independence in 1947, but because of fears stemming from prejudice against women among the (male) electorate, asked for reserved seats until such time as they could become an established part of the elected political system. Throughout the process of Constitution formation, she continued to insist on linking issues of democracy and women's rights and representation. In foreign policy she advocated neutrality vis-à-vis the super powers, arguing that:

> I pointed out that friendship with the neighboring Powers was essential for our very existence. In the world, the two systems were at loggerheads with each other and our ideology, for which we had made such tremendous sacrifices, believed in neither. We had a precious philosophy of our own, therefore it was all the more reason that we should take the best of both other ideologies.
>
> (Ibid.: 255-256)

Here too, she was to take a more balanced approach towards both India, and the capitalist and socialist blocs, compared to the bulk of her male political counterparts in the liberal mainstream.[41] Not only that, her position stems not from a "western" political philosophy but what she calls "a precious philosophy of our own", alluding to her own interpretation of an Islamic framework which guaranteed democratic rights for all. A "modernist" Islamic philosophy if you will.

On women's rights, she critiques the premier women's organization created after independence – the All Pakistan Women's Association – which she charges with having abandoned its earlier commitment to all women, only to become the stronghold of elite women, especially those connected with officialdom. She also criticizes state sponsored feminism as dangerous given the state's increasingly anti-democratic stance. She felt the top-down control in APWA was a threat to women's abilities to "secure … their rightful place as equal citizens with men" (ibid.: 268). The state was hijacking the women's movement and

doing so through infiltrating women's organizations, and corruption of the electoral process (ibid.: 283-295).

There is an increasing pessimism in her writing:

> Did democracy ever function in Pakistan? No, never. A handful of persons had captured power and they were continuing to rule. If one of them was not a success in one office, he was given another … . The unwarranted delay in framing the Constitution, and not letting real democracy come into being in the country had led to all these difficulties … . Had the Constitution been drafted and enforced in 1952, where might the country be today!
>
> (Ibid.: 301)

Upon losing the democratic struggle even before the declaration of Martial law in 1956, she retired from official political life. This is a woman who, with little formal education, rose to participate in parliamentary politics both during the colonial period and after, was a champion of women's rights (in a way that shifted in definition and scope over time), spoke and wrote eloquently on Constitution building, and who finally left politics when she saw the possibilities for democratic rule collapse, living out her days in self imposed political exile. The title of the final chapter bears a reminder: "The Philosophic Mind" – but here this philosophic mind is not devoted, as in Doria Shafik's case, to philosophy or inner reflection but to a musing on the failure of democracy. The text and even her philosophical concerns remain political to the very end of this narrative. We are never permitted to see within.

Hamida Akhtar Hussein provides us a very different model/picture. Born in 1918, she grew up in a very different personal environment from either Doria Shafik or Jahanara Shahnawaz, although all three women shared a similar historical time. Here is a woman who was never active in any form of public politics, feminist or otherwise. Yet her text itself represents voice and a concerted (albeit occasionally masked) journey into (public) self representation. This becomes evident not only in the substance of her autobiography but also in its entirely different mode of expression and self-enunciation. In the discussion that follows of *Hum Safar* more attention will be paid to issues of form, of language and voice, and only secondarily will other substantive themes raised in the text be considered.

Hamida raises issues of form, language and voice herself, at the very outset. Her first chapter, entitled *Dilki Baat* (literally: heart talk; figuratively: inner dialogue) directly discusses her inability to write; but it also suggests that writing for her has to be from the heart: it has to be intuitive, subjective, 'honest'. No claims here to universality, objectivity, or generalization. She links this inability to write to her awe of her (writer) husband, a sentiment that barred her from 'coming to voice': [42]

> Spending my life with Akhtar, I kept a lock on my tongue [can also be read 'voice'] because his aura always loomed over me. I always thought myself inferior and looked up to him … . When Akhtar finished having his life story written and I read it, I wanted to expose what he had left unsaid … but I didn't dare … (parantheses added).

When a family friend advises her following her husband's death to write down their life together as a form of solace, narrating it as if she were speaking to a friend, she responds "I don't have pen or paper" (Rai Puri, op.cit.: 9). When informed by the same friend that he will provide both she writes: "I found his innocence amusing as if I could write simply upon his sending me pens; I who had never even written a line and had no courage to" (ibid.).

This dissimulation is frequent and yet countered constantly in this text. Claiming her lack of courage to write, she nonetheless writes – this is after all *her* text. Yet she waits until after her husband's death, to come 'to voice', and this too in a form uniquely her own.

Not surprisingly, it takes a woman friend – a writer herself – to get her past the initial barrier. Upon informing this friend of her promise (to her husband's friend) to write combined with her inability to do so, this friend – a well known Pakistani poet, Fehmida Riaz – prompts her to simply 'speak' the images she sees in her mind's eye; and when Hamida does so, Fehmida writes down her words. This is the inception of writing. The imagery is that of film (a series of images in front of her eyes) and the form that of story telling, that is, orality. The age of the writer when she enters into this journey is seventy two.

Hamida is fully aware of the form and style of her writing. When she receives back comments from the family friend who got her started

on this project, she muses over his comments on her language, which he praised "despite" its vernacular form:

> I went into deep thought – on what he had written. In the recesses of my mind was the [idea] that such language was spoken in streets and alleys. [But] … I would keep writing … [about] the happiest days of my life.
>
> (Ibid.: 10)

There are numerous transgressions in this text. Among them those already mentioned: writing in the vernacular, in spoken not in literary form; not only writing, but publishing this (auto)biography, and following that up with more writing. But other transgressions abound as well. The first one we are made aware of, is her secret communication and courtship with Akhtar, whom she later married. We are told of the liberal background she grew up in, and her decision, against her mother's explicit desire, to marry Akhtar. She may not be a rebel; but neither is she voiceless.

This person, who tells us that she was always in awe of her husband, makes it clear that from the very beginning of her marriage she transgressed some of the 'rules' of the all-male household into which she moved after marriage, and slowly subverted others. We are made aware of her subjectivity – not as a victim this, but as an active agent – who manages to turn a very difficult situation around through struggle. There is a double-play on agency here: her autobiographical narration of certain contexts which reveal her subjectivity to the reader plus her self consciousness awareness of doing so in this autobiographical project. This mode of representation calls into question her 'lack' of voice that she had alluded to earlier. We, the readers, are made aware, that the writer saw things clearly even when she did not overtly speak/challenge them. And we are informed as well, that the sheer act of writing has opened her gaze even further. This book serves as solace, it honors her husband, and simultaneously it constitutes an expose, an exorcism, a speaking of things that were hitherto unsaid, unspoken and expected to remain so. It is a lifting of taboos – self imposed and/or socially sanctioned. And in a literary ploy which also plays on memory as 'truth' the writer is 'forced' to speak those things that could not (previously) be said, inferring that she is speaking the

truth. This is a very different mode of verification than the one adopted by Jahanara: the latter's bases its appeal on scientific values, Hamida's on moral grounds.

This book then, in its subtext, subverts it own explicit narrative: to serve as solace and to honor her husband. Indeed, these two explanations become alibis for Hamida's writing of herself through a focus on the everyday, the local, and the particular, that which only she knows. She is the holder of secrets; it is she who reveals them; and ultimately, it is she who is at the center of this story telling.

Historically Constituted Subjectivities

It is my contention that Jahanara Shahnawaz and Hamida Akhtar Hussein represent their respective times, their socio-economic backgrounds, and individual agency. Hamida, born several decades after Jahanara in a house where seclusion is not practiced strictly, in a literary family and milieu, takes education and its benefits for granted. This does not prevent her, like Jahanara, from leaving her education at an early age, to get married. Unlike Jahanara, however, her marriage represents a new form of arrangement, in which she has an active decision making role.

Oddly though, it may be this very fact that prevents Hamida from taking a public political stand either in the nationalist movement or in women's circles. The very liberalism that is so much a part of her life, may also explain the 'private' nature of her struggles. (These struggles were private in a dual sense: they largely revolved around her familial relationships; and they were kept private until the writing of her autobiography.)

What links the two women is their increased vocality upon finding themselves without the men whom they were closest to. For Jahanara, this means the death of her father first and later that of her husband. For Hamida, it is her husband's death that unlocks her voice and mind publicly. The former, however, links her voice to issues of democracy, human rights and women's struggles. Hamida, on the other hand, is engaged in a very solitary struggle – one that is primarily hers alone.

These experiences and texts call into question any linear reading of modernity and/or its accompanying languages. They suggest that difference, multiplicity, and hybridity reside both within modernity

and among its 'discontents', and only a focus on the particular-cum-historical can reveal the full range of possibilities and struggles. They also emphasize the "negotiated" self crossing boundaries of the old and new and in the process itself creating "the modern".

Conclusion

The lives and works of these three women represent the various voices of struggle and its modalities. Women's struggles must be seen and analyzed in terms of their multiplicity and hybridity. In most discussions feminism is represented as if it were constituted of one set of assumptions. The possibilities of different feminists speaking across boundaries to and with each other whether this be across cultural and social boundaries or across cultural, social and historical boundaries are closed off and hence lead theorists to speak of "western" or "eastern" or "Muslim feminism". Thinking in these global categories does not allow the theorizing of the different and various forms of feminism. The criticism that any feminist/women's struggle is a western import (a critique often made against Doria Shafik) eclipses the fact that each of these three women has a particular history that creates her particular feminist struggle.

The processes of globalization do not necessarily lead to homogenization of feminist struggles towards one universal goal or even along a single path to that goal. But on the contrary create particular historical realities and cultural contexts within which women are socialized including their socialization into different languages through which their struggles are articulated. Assia Djebar has presciently understood the process of writing women's lives:

> Here, then, is a listening in, by means of which I try to grasp the traces of some ruptures that have reached their term. Where all I could come close to were such voices as are groping with the challenge of beginning solitudes.
>
> (Djebar 1992: 1)

It has been through our focus on the experiential and biographical lives of these three women that we have been able to illuminate how each woman's confrontation with modernity generates different forms of struggle and ways of speaking.

This excursion also calls into question the meaning of the notion of authenticity. What is often proffered as "indigenous" or "authentic" by many writers on the indigenization of knowledge culture is often a fixed, almost naturalized notion of authenticity. Our paper suggests much more complicated, shifting, and multiple meanings to the term. This reading is made possible by our methodological stance which proceeds from the epistemological premise that "the everyday world is problematic" thus enabling us to move beyond formulaic debates based on a priori categories that are assumed to be universal as to what is or is not authentic.

> We are talking about the consequences of a silence, an absence, a non presence. What is there – spoken, sung, written, made emblematic in art – and treated as general, universal, unrelated to a particular position or a particular sex as its source and standpoint, is in fact partial, limited, located in a particular position and permeated by special interests and concerns.
>
> (Smith 1987: 20)

The lives of the women who are the focus of this paper together traverse nearly a century of globalization (read modernity), a period that brackets and frames their particular encounters with colonialism, nationalism, and post coloniality. Each life represents a struggle to grapple with the contradictions created by these broader historical transitions. We who read these lives are forced to ask whether the contradictions we note are internal to each self or externally imposed by those others whose vested interests preclude a recognition and tolerance of the multiplicity and hybridity of identities produced by the uneven processes of change brought about by globalization.

Given the issues of partiality and positionality raised above, it is highly problematic to talk about globalization without gendering it and its accompanying processes. This is not to simplistically suggest that women as a category are uniformly positioned in relationship to globalization. We are not replacing one universalizing stance with another. The differences even within women highlighted by the tracing out of the lives of these three women not only demonstrate the centrality of the experiential standpoint but underscore the significance of the local and particular context of those experiences. The differences between Doria Shafik and Jahanara Shahnawaz demon-

strate our point. On the one hand they both articulate the necessity of human rights and democracy as essential to women's achieving full equality, albeit each of them used different mechanisms to argue and carve out her position. On the other hand, the reception of their voices within society was vastly different. India was under direct British colonial rule; contrarily, in Egypt, although there was a significant British colonial presence, given its protectorate status, Doria's fight for women's political representation brought her into a direct confrontation not with the British, who operated behind the scenes, but rather with the male native ruling elite. Therefore, Doria's struggle was seen as a form of betrayal of "authentic", local concerns, whereas identical concerns on the part of Jahanara and Indian women activists were seen as entirely legitimate and supported by the majority of Indian male nationalists.

This coming to voice on the part of each of these women takes sharply different forms. Unlike the previous example where the historical times and context effect the way their voices are heard, the actual forms their voices take, reflect much more the particular encounters and responses to the times. The voices of Doria Shafik combine the forms of the political/poetic/philosophical, while Hamida Akhtar Hussein's utilizes the style and the form of the vernacular with an emphasis on detail and the everyday. Jahanara unlike these two women exposes very little of her innermost self in her writing. Her inner subjective self is always subsumed under public/political issues. These differences in form are not arbitrary: their voices reflect the shifting character of their struggles over time. Therefore voice must be seen as intimately related to the trajectories of their lives and not as an abstraction. With Doria Shafik we witness the transformation of the voice of external challenge to the voice of interior music, both reflective of a different struggle. With Jahanara Shahnawaz we see an increasingly self confident voice as she turns from the tutelage and oversight by (male) guardians, to an assertive and self conscious critique of existing power structures and authoritative political figures. For Hamida whose writing comes very late in her life, following the death of her husband, writing becomes a way of coping with solitude and also a form of unveiling. Among all three women there is reflected this real sense of the solitary self brought on by quite different lived experiences. However in their works we detect a common theme that choosing

to write is a conscious act of resistance – against silence, taboos, forced incarceration. The very act of writing becomes a mode of self liberation. Writing for each of them is more than more than about a cause, it is also about self definition, self exploration and survival.

We might ask, what then is the relation between coming to voice and power? There is an assumption in the very term globalization that suggests that we are 'one village' and therefore more and more coming to speak with one voice. Such an assumption masks and mutes the different voices not only within individuals but also between them. This is not to conclude that the processes of globalization must end 'in a tower of Babel' but to assume a gendered standpoint that allows us to practice a critical reflexivity along the lines suggested by Assia Djebar when she writes:

> Don't claim to 'speak for' or, worse, to 'speak on', barely speaking next to, and if possible very close to: these are the first of the solidarities to be taken on.
>
> (Djebar, op.cit.: 2)

Notes

1 See Nelson (1996) for an in-depth account of Shafik's life.
2 In the French doctoral system, one is required to write two theses. Her primary thesis was *L'Art pour L'Art dans L'Égypte Antique* (Art for Art's Sake in Ancient Egypt) and her secondary thesis was *La Femme et Le Droit Religieux de L'Égypte Contemporaine* (Women and Religious Rights in Contemporary Egypt). Both published by Paul Geuthner, Paris: 1940.
3 *al-Kitab al-Abiyad li Huquq al-Mar'ah al-Siyasiyah*, 1953 (The White Book on the Political Rights of Women); *Rihlati Hawla al-'Alam*, 1955 (My Trip Around the World). Co-authored with Ibrahim Abdu, *Tatawwur al-Nahda al-Nisa'iyah fi Misr*, 1945 (The Development of the Renaissance of Women in Egypt); and *al-Mar'ah al-Misriyah min al-Fara'niah ila al-Yawm*, 1955 (The Egyptian Woman from the Pharaohs Until Today).
4 During her world tour following her 1954 hunger strike she met the Prime Ministers of India, Ceylon, Lebanon and Pakistan; she publicly chastised the president of Pakistan for taking a second

wife; she lectured to audiences in Europe, the United States, South Asia as well as the Middle East on women's issues in the Arab world.

5 For purposes of this paper, I am focusing primarily on her French writings. Those works she did publish in Arabic were co-authored with Ibrahim Abdu and hence it is not clear whose voice is really speaking. All excerpts taken from the French are translated by Nelson.

6 Princess Chevikar (1873-1947) married Fuad in the mid 1890s, long before he had any pretensions to the throne. Spoilt and capricious, Chevikar was as well born as her husband and considerably richer. Their marriage nearly cost Fuad his life. As a young man Fuad was an impoverished playboy who owed money everywhere. His Italian upbringing had given him a taste for gambling and mistresses, but he had very old fashioned ideas about the seclusion of Muslim women, and Chevikar resented deeply being kept in the harem from morning until night. Chevikar gave birth to their only son in 1896, who died in infancy. After the birth of her second child, Princess Fawkieh, she decided she could no longer bear her husband's violent temper and finicky habits, and returned to her family in Constantinople. Her husband got her back, as he was entitled to do under Muslim law; but Chevikar had an elder brother, Prince Sayf al-Din, who swore to deliver her from this tyrant. On 7 May, 1898, Sayf al-Din rushed up the stairs of the Khedival Club, found Fuad in the Silence Room, and shot him several times before anybody could stop him. Fuad was so badly wounded that his doctors decided to operate then and there on the floor. They took a bullet from his ribs and another from his thigh, but one lodged in his throat was too near an artery to be removed. From that day until his death, the future Sultan/King of Egypt was left with a permanent disability in his speech described as a high spasmodic bark. Fuad divorced Chevikar and the criminal court committed her brother to a mental asylum in Ticehurst, Sussex near Tunbridge Wells where he stayed for nearly 20 years. Many years and several husbands later Chevikar, having inherited an enormous fortune, returned to Egypt, where she focused her attention on the young King Farouk. She died in 1947 at which time Doria Shafik took complete control of *La Femme Nouvelle*.

7 The terms "feminine expression" and "feminist expression" are indeed problematic terms. Fenoglio-Abd al-Aal (1988) finesses the dilemma by employing the term feminist "to designate everything that attempts to disengage the woman from behavior that is obliged, defined and imposed from the exterior, that is to say everything that revolves around the woman in whatever way without engaging her in a liberating commitment" (p. 32). In the context of this paper I accept the ambiguity that the Arabic term, *nisa'iyya* conveys. It carries the double meaning of feminist and feminine and its was perhaps this ambiguity that allowed Doria Shafik to define her own position on the terms by stating: "Our feminism is totally feminine."

8 Ibrahim Abdu, a close friend of her husband Nour al-Din Ragai, established the first department of journalism at Cairo University and because of his expertise helped to found, along with Doria and Nour, the *Bint al-Nil* magazine. Because his Arabic was much stronger than Doria's, he often helped her write the editorials. At the beginning, while she was learning the trade so to speak, she often deferred to his more conservative views.

9 Personal communication March 31, 1985. Also see Khalifa, *al-Haraka*, 1973: pp. 173-176.

10 Refers to the right of the husband to force his wife to return to his house through the use of police force if necessary.

11 There is strong evidence that these specific excerpts were taken from an earlier work by Abdal-Wahab (n.d.).

12 From a lecture delivered at a conference on "Images of the Other in Contemporary Literature" held at Cairo University, December 1994.

13 Pierre Seghers published a series he entitled *Poésie*. It also included the poetry of the French surrealists Paul Eluard, Tristan Tzara, Louis Aragon, as well as the short books of verse by Lewis Carroll and Henry Miller.

14 "Adieu à Pierre Seghers", *Le Monde*, November 7, 1987. "La poésie vient de perdre son amoureux le plus fervent, son défenseur le plus actif … Il convient encore de rappeler que Seghers fut aussi et d'abord poète de l'élan et de la passion."

15 Personal interview, September 10, 1986. Paris, France.

16 Personal letter, October 1956.

17 Personal interview, September 10, 1986.
18 Personal interview, September 10, 1986. These later works to which he refers are *Larmes d'Isis* and the four volumes comprising *Avec Dante Aux Enfers*.
19 This biographical sketch is pieced together from several primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interviews with family members and friends; secondary sources include Naresh Kumar Jain (1979); Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza (1981); All India Women's Conference, *Reports,* 1930-47.
20 Among Indian Muslims, at the time, there were clear demarcations into different *quoms* of which the *Arain* were one fairly large collectivity. These quoms loosely paralleled the Hindu caste system in that membership within the quom was hereditary; one's quom designation also had a bearing on one's occupation, marital arrangements which occurred, at the time, largely within one's designated quom, etc.
21 The *Muslim League* was the party which, during the colonial period in India, came to be the corporate representative of Indian Muslims, especially those living in the Muslim majority areas, and those who felt marginalized by Hindu dominated political parties, even non-sectarian ones. At the time Jahanara came to political consciousness, many Muslims were members of the Indian National Congress (INC), a non-sectarian political organization made up of Hindus, Muslims and other groups. Jahanara's father, Sir Muhammad Shafi (who was knighted by the British) remained always outside the fold of the INC.
22 It is also noteworthy that her father opted to train her as his protege rather than his elder son, or indeed any one of the male offspring in the family.
23 This organization was formed in 1926. Margaret Cousins, who was a founding member of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) was also the moving force behind AIWC's creation. According to Jahanara, the circular Cousins sent argued for its constitution on the ground that there was a need for an organization that could "achieve and safeguard the rights of women and … work for their general advancement" (Shahnawaz, 1971: p. 92). Christian, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim women worked together in this organization, long after communal politics became a norm among many

Muslim male political figures including Jinnah, the leader of the Pakistan movement, and head of the Muslim League at the time of independence.

24 Shahnawaz, op. cit.: p. 50. It is noteworthy that this question was on the agenda of Indian Muslim women's groups very early. Though radical as a feminist demand for the time, it was one that was the norm among women activists.

25 These were a series of conferences by the name held in London by the British government to determine the status of India and the question of political representation for Indians, including the issue of decolonization. Jahanara spoke at two of the Round Table Conferences in 1930-31, 1932-33 and to its Joint Select Committee in 1934, on behalf of women and minorities.

26 This was a special designation used by the League of Nations to invite prominent figures to study and become familiar with the League's workings and practices.

27 In 1937, she was elected as member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, and was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Education, Medical Relief and Public Health. In 1942, she was expelled from the Muslim League when she refused to abide by its decision on a political matter. However in 1946, she was allowed back in, and was once again elected member of the Punjab Assembly. It was in this capacity that she was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1946, as a representative to that Assembly from the Punjab. She was one of two Muslim women to serve in this capacity, both before and after independence (Mirza 1981).

28 The intellectual milieu of the time was itself imbricated in nationalist/anti-colonial politics. What I mean to stress by this distinction is not the *absence* of politics in Hamida Akhtar Hussein's household but the literary turn that such politics took.

29 Aligarh was the site of the first Muslim University to be founded in India, and an intellectual renaissance among Muslims which gave priority to education as a way of moral and social "uplift" for the community. Aligarh University produced many prominent Indian Muslim intellectuals, politicians and professionals, many of whom came to play a significant role in anti colonial and nationalist politics including cultural politics. This sketch is based on Ha-

mida Akhtar Hussein's own autobiography, interviews with her, as well as interviews with family friends.

30 *Purdah* is the Urdu term used to signify women's seclusion, segregation and/or the observance of *hijab*. Hamida never observed *purdah* in her dress, but experienced spatial separation of men and women's quarters early on in her marriage. The term *zenana* refers to women's quarters and/or domestic space. The system, as she experienced it, is not similar to the *harem* of the Middle East (also found among upper class families in the Indian subcontinent). Rather, the *zenana* in the household she moved into after marriage consisted of a spatial separation of the domestic quarters from male work places (which were in the compound of the house itself). This arrangement was not entirely dissimilar to the arrangement that existed in her natal home, although in her marital home the lines initially were much more severely drawn and seldom transgressed. In her natal home, the demarcation existed more for visitors who expected it, than for family members and close friends.

31 The term *publicly* is used cautiously here, meaning simply a formal entry into the public arena such as exposes the individual to a wider array of impersonal audiences. While utilizing this term, we remain cognizant of how one's private life may also have *public* implications and manifestations, and therefore the necessity to not reify the division between the two domains into a fixity that does not empirically exist.

32 A copy of this novella, which is primarily exhortatory to young woman, can be found in the India Record Office in London.

33 I am using the term *hegemony* here to refer to the move to domination, centering, or becoming normative.

34 One needs to highlight the times: when Hamida wrote, Urdu had become the official language of Pakistan ousting English from this spot. However, English still continues to be the language of privilege and a class marker. Her use of Urdu therefore cannot be read straightforwardly in terms of linguistic contestations and struggles between dominant/subordinate languages. What is unique of course is the vernacular, spoken style that she adopts: that remains marginalized in publications in both languages.

35 The very hybridity in clothes and style is itself striking: the *sari* is

a dress worn by Muslims and Hindus in pre-partition India; in recent Pakistani history there have been attempts to re-cast it as 'Hindu'; the *khusa* is a typically north Indian/Pakistani shoe style; the coat with fur trimming is 'western'; and the hair covering suggests a departure from purdah but a gesture to modesty.

36 Her daughter Mumtaz, whom Jahanara calls by the diminutive Tazi, was clearly a favorite child, whose early death left a definite lack in Jahanara's life. This daughter was a political activist, staunchly anti-colonialist, secular, and a gifted poet and writer. It is ironic that the second daughter, Nasim, who was also an activist – and belonged to a more left wing tradition – is not given the same recognition by Jahanara. On the issue of 'Arains', Jahanara continued to engage in a type of populist politics that bases itself in the sub-continent on familial connections. Thus her continued connection to her *quom* what she designated as 'tribe' using colonial classificatory terminology, is as much a political move as it is a familial convention.

37 It also shows the generational shift between the two women where new marital forms and possibilities had come to exist partially because of social reforms and the normativizing of the idea of "The New Woman" herself. This shift represents both a radical step and a move towards new and distinct types of gender relations not necessarily resting on liberation.

38 *Tehzib* refers to upbringing; enculturation. *Niswan* simply means women. Together the reference is to 'the new woman'.

39 It is worth considering whether this decision represents patriarchal power and authority solely, or whether it is compounded by a mixture of gender, class and *quom* restrictions. Jahanara's first husband, Shah Nawaz, was an established lawyer and well known political figure. He also belong to the same kinship group as her family. We are told in the autobiography that Jahanara favored a younger man, whom her mother also approved of, but the elder males favored her deceased aunt's widower. Following the sudden death of the younger suitor due to an illness, Jahanara tells us that she no longer cared about whom she married, and decided to let her elders have her way. It is noteworthy here that her mother is the only figure who stands by her in this matter of marital choice: the men are systematically aligned against her. It is also notewor-

thy that Jahanara nowhere acknowledges this stand on her behalf on the part of her mother as being significant, although she does narrate the various positions taken by the different actors involved (Chapter 1: "The Early Years").

40 Jahanara, while recognizing women as numerically equivalent to men, politically used their minority status (in hegemonic terms) as a way to politically ensure representation for them after independence along the same lines that she had supported for Muslims at the Third Round Table Conference in London prior to independence.

41 Jahanara's second child – another daughter – named Nasim, was an active member of the left. She and her husband, General Akbar, were both arrested in the 1951 Rawalpindi case in which several individuals were accused of criminal conspiracy to overthrow the state. It is worth asking to what extent Jahanara's foreign policy position was shared with her two daughters, Mumtaz and Nasim, both of whom espoused left-of-center positions. This question becomes all the more important because it reflects a departure in Jahanara's prior complacency regarding class privilege and its reproduction.

42 Rai Puri, op.cit.: 11. Remarks in parentheses added. The word she uses is *zubaan* which means both tongue and voice. This and all coming translations are by Rouse from the original Urdu text.

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