

## **Degree Project**

Level: Master's

**The Treatment of Indians and Women as the Other in Ruth  
Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*:**

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**Olivia's and the Nawab's Experiences of Discrimination as  
the Primary Reason for Their Mutual Attraction**

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## **Introduction**

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, originally published in 1975, tells the parallel stories of Olivia, a white British woman, and her step-granddaughter, the narrator, who is also a white British female and whose name is not revealed. In 1923, while India is under British rule, Olivia moves to Satipur, India, with her husband, Douglas Rivers, a white British civil servant and, subsequently, leaves him for the Nawab, which is the term used to refer to a Muslim Indian prince. Fifty years later, in the 1970s, when India is an independent country, her step-granddaughter inherits letters that Olivia had written to her sister Marcia, and, curious about her ancestor's history, travels to India, to retrace her footsteps.

Through Olivia's written accounts of her life, both her step-granddaughter - for conciseness, referred to as the narrator from this point onwards - and the reader gain an insight into the India of 1923, and the relationship between the British and the Indians - especially between those British who work closely with the Nawab - and the Nawab, his family, and other Indians who are close to him. These accounts include Olivia's memories of the, mostly, negative views the British in her social circle have of Indians and India, in general, and of the Nawab, in particular. They also include descriptions of the British treatment of the locals. Similarly, Olivia describes the Nawab and his views of, and attitude towards, the British, which she observes and experiences as she becomes closer to the prince. Equally important in the novel is the portrayal of the relationship between men and women in both British and Indian communities and social circles. Through Olivia's observations, experiences and written accounts, the reader learns of the distinction between the treatment women and men receive in these two cultures in 1923. More specifically,

the reader observes the contrast between Olivia's relationship with her husband and her relationship with the Nawab, and how she reacts to this distinction.

Because Jhabvala's portrayal of her characters in *Heat and Dust* reveals both negative and positive aspects of the British and Indian cultures, this novel has received much acclaim and criticism. I. H-Shihan, a retired associate professor of English, points out that the Indian writer Chaman Nahal argues that the novel contains "a measure of racial chauvinism, which places the West on a better plane" (qtd. in H-Shihan 55). Similarly, referring to The Man Booker Prize Jhabvala won in 1975 for the novel, the writer Judie Newman argues that "many Indians" thought the novel was "an attempt to ridicule India, abetted by the stamp of British approval offered by the prize" (qtd. in Park 31). For H-Shihan, Jhabvala's portrayal of both the British and Indians in her novel does not always show the cultures they represent positively (H-Shihan 56). Thus Jhabvala's India "evokes antipathy among western readers and resentment among Indian counterparts" (H-Shihan 56), which, in H-Shihan's view, "is detrimental to race relations and cultural integration" (56) in general. In addition to attracting much acclaim and criticism, Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* has been the focus of analysis in many academic and critical texts. There are three specific academic and critical texts that are of particular importance to this thesis and they are examined in the following three paragraphs.

Taking a feminist perspective, Vijay Prakash Singh in his article "The Female Face of the Raj: Studies in Selected Fiction" analyses the behaviour of the Englishwoman in India "in selected fiction set during the period of the Raj" (117), that is, the period during which India was under British rule, which includes Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*. Taking *Heat and Dust* as an example, Singh argues that "[in] the context of the masculine hegemony of imperialist enterprise,

the memsahib [is] but a secondary figure” (129). *Memsahib* is a respectful term usually used by non-whites to address married white women. To be precise, Singh highlights that, while the man is the one responsible for managing the empire, the memsahib is left to the role of managing “the household” (129). Therefore, Singh draws on Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin’s words and postcolonial theory, which contend that “Marginality is the condition constructed by the posited relation to a privileged centre, an ‘Othering’ directed by the imperial authority” (qtd. in Singh 130), to argue that the memsahib “is the marginalized ‘Other’ in an enterprise where the founders and torchbearers or the ‘privileged centre’ are the Englishmen” (130). Thus Singh suggests that Olivia, as a memsahib, is treated as a marginalized other. In other words, for Singh, Olivia is not only treated differently from the British male characters in the novel, but she also occupies a less privileged social and political position when compared to those British male characters.

Taking a postmodernist approach, in “Disillusionment With More Than India: Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s *Heat and Dust*”, Devapriya Chitra Ranjan Alwis Goonetilleke examines the theme of disillusionment in Jhabvala’s *Heat and Dust*. Regarding the character Olivia, Goonetilleke argues that her disillusionment is firstly “sexual” (251) and that this disillusionment is with her husband Douglas. In addition, Goonetilleke argues that Olivia sees the Nawab as “the exotic Other” and that, therefore, she is attracted to him and “does not seek the ‘real India’” (251). However, Goonetilleke states that, “to the other British” in the novel, the Indians are, using Kipling’s words, ‘lesser breeds without the Law’” (qtd. in Goonetilleke 252). This means that “[the] Indians are outside the pale of civilized order-even the Nawab and the Begum [his mother]” (Goonetilleke 252). In other words, in the process of analysing the theme of disillusionment in Jhabvala’s novel, Goonetilleke

argues that Olivia and the other British in the novel perceive the Nawab, in particular, and Indians, in general, as the other, in that Olivia sees the Indian prince as exotic and the other British see all Indians as inferior to them.

Looking at Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* from a different perspective, in her article "Imperial Fantasies: Mourning the Loss of Empire in the Novels of Penelope Lively and Ruth Praver Jhabvala", Kathleen Williams Renk analyses imperialism within *Heat and Dust* and in Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger*. For Renk, both texts create "novelistic worlds steeped in imperial nostalgia" (217-218). Regarding *Heat and Dust*, Renk attributes Olivia's attraction to the Nawab to her desire to "associate herself with wealth and luxury, something that she is beginning to find lacking in the Anglo-Indian world" (228). What is more, she argues that both Jhabvala's and Lively's novels "inscribe, to borrow a term coined by Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, a type of 'imperial feminism'" (qtd. in Renk 218). As for *Heat and Dust*, drawing on Antoinette Burton's ideas, Renk claims that Olivia's "defense of the [suttee] practice attempts to defend women who cannot speak for themselves, which does fit with a typical imperial feminist approach", which "[represents] [Indian women] almost invariably as . . . helpless" (qtd. in Renk 232). In other words, Renk looks at Olivia's behaviour towards Indian women from a postcolonial perspective in that she suggests that, like the male imperialist, Olivia behaves as if it were her responsibility and right to speak for colonial subjects in general and, because Olivia is a woman, for female colonial subjects in particular.

While both Goonetilleke and Renk briefly comment on how the Indians are perceived and treated as the other in the novel, neither of them analyses Olivia's experience as the other. Regarding Singh, although he briefly comments on how Olivia is viewed and treated as the other, he does not examine the Nawab's similar

experience in the novel. What is more, none of these three writers analyses both the Nawab's and Olivia's experiences as the other, and the correlation between these experiences and these characters' mutual attraction. Therefore, this thesis will argue that, in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, in the context of discriminatory perceptions of both Indians and women, the characters Olivia and the Nawab are drawn together primarily by their experiences of being discriminated against; Olivia, for being a woman in a patriarchal society, and the Nawab, for being a colonial subject.

In order to support the statement mentioned above, this thesis will draw on the concept of the *other*, as applied by both postcolonial and feminist writers. As the concept of the *other* has not been coined by either postcolonial or feminist theorists, its application varies slightly between the postcolonial and feminist approaches. However, theorists from both approaches agree that the distinction between "self" and "other" (Todorov qtd. in Walder 1082) occurs in any society or between societies (Todorov qtd. in Walder 1082), usually when an individual or a group comes across an unfamiliar individual, group, or place (Beauvoir 6-7). What is more, the identification of the other takes on a negative connotation, for instance, when the Occidental - those who are from the West - use it to refer to the Oriental - those who are from the East, and when men use it to refer to women (Todorov qtd. in Walder 1082). This situation is portrayed in Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*; therefore, it is relevant to this thesis.

As for this thesis structure, its main body will be composed of four sections. The first section will explain the concept of the *other* in general, and as used in postcolonial and feminist theories. The second section will analyse the British characters' discriminatory perceptions and treatment of Indians, in general, and of

the Nawab, in particular, while the third section will analyse the British male characters' similar attitude to women, in general, and Olivia, in particular. Finally, the fourth section will compare Olivia's and the Nawab's experiences of being perceived and treated as the other and analyse the correlation between these similar experiences and their mutual attraction.

### **The Concept of the *Other* as Used by Postcolonial and Feminist Writers**

The concept of the *other*, the feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir declares, is as old as “consciousness itself” (6). She explains, “The duality between Self and Other can be found in the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies” (6). In addition, works such as the sociologist Marcel Granet's “on Chinese thought” (6), originally published in 1934, show that the division between self and other “did not always fall into the category of the division of the sexes” and “it was not based on any empirical given” (qtd. in Beauvoir 6). However, because women, colonial subjects and members of former colonies have been viewed and treated differently from men and colonists, respectively, not only feminist, but also postcolonial writers have drawn on the concept of the *other* and applied it to their respective fields of study.

To clarify, “[no] group”, Beauvoir declares, “ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself” (6). As previously mentioned, this view of self as opposed to the other is common in any situation in which a group comes across something or someone they are not familiar with (Beauvoir 6-7). For instance, when “[village] people view anyone not belonging to the village as suspicious ‘others’”, or when “blacks” are viewed as “others” by racist Americans, or when “indigenous people” are seen as “others” by “colonists” (Beauvoir 6-7).

Nevertheless, people resist being identified as the “others” (Beauvoir 6), even when they are part of a group that ends up completely dominated by another (Beauvoir 7). In addition, Beauvoir declares that, “It is often numerical inequality that confers this privilege: the majority imposes its law on or persecutes the minority” (7). Although “women are not a minority like American blacks”, that is, “there are as many women as men on earth”, and they are not unfamiliar to men, as “there have always been women” (Beauvoir 8), many men still refer to and treat women as the other (Beauvoir 8). For instance, they attribute certain roles to them that are different from their own, whether women agree with those roles or not (Beauvoir 2011). When women refuse the role of the other, many men attempt to keep them in that role by using all sorts of justifications such as those based on religious teachings (Beauvoir 2011). In St Thomas’s words, a woman is an “incomplete man” (qtd. in Beauvoir 5). For the theologian Jacques-Bénigne Lignel Bossuet, the biblical story of Genesis, “where Eve appears as if drawn from Adam’s ‘supernumerary’ bone” (qtd. in Beauvoir 5), represents St Thomas’s idea. Similarly, Aristotle argues that “[the] female is female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities” (qtd. in Beauvoir 5), implying that, unlike men, women are incomplete. This is the same idea expressed by Julien Benda, in *Uriel’s Report*, who argues that a woman “determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (qtd. in Beauvoir 6).

Like Beauvoir, the feminist Luce Irigaray discusses and criticizes the idea that the woman is an incomplete being. In doing so, she criticizes Freud’s idea that the woman envies the man because he has a penis and she does not, which alludes to St Thomas’s belief that the woman is an “incomplete man” (qtd. in Beauvoir 5).

Irigaray argues that “[female] sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters” (23). To support her argument, she draws attention to Freud’s claim that the woman’s lack of a penis is an “atrophy” and that, therefore, the penis is “the only sexual organ of recognized value” (qtd. in Irigaray 23). For Freud, this leads the woman to attempt “by every means available to appropriate that organ for herself”; for instance, through her “servile love of the father-husband capable of giving her one” (qtd. in Irigaray 23-24). What is more, Irigaray criticizes Freud’s implication that the woman desires to have a baby, “preferably a boy”, to appropriate a “child-penis” and that she also attempts to appropriate the penis “through access to the cultural values still reserved by right to males alone and therefore always masculine. . .” (qtd. in Irigaray 24).

Like feminist writers and theorists, postcolonial writers and theorists have applied the concept of the *other* to their field of study. The historian Tzvetan Todorov argues that “the conquest, colonization, and destruction of the indigenous cultures of the Americas”, which “set pattern for much of the history of Western colonialism thereafter”, is connected to “the creation of the ‘Other’” (qtd. in Walder 1081). This creation, Todorov states, is that “of the specific social groups who are not ‘I’ or ‘we’, in the writings or discourses about those ‘other’ people, in ‘that’ (therefore also ‘other’) place” (qtd. in Walder 1081). However, Todorov contends that the other are also “subjects just as I am” and it is “only my point of view”, “according to which all of them are *out there* and I alone am *in here*”, that “separates and authentically distinguishes [them] from myself” (qtd. in Walder 1081-1082). As previously mentioned, Todorov argues that the distinction between “self” and “other” can happen inside a society, for instance, where women are considered the other by men, or it can happen between members of different societies, for instance,

when members of one society find the “language and customs” of another society difficult to understand, “so foreign that in extreme instances [they] [are] reluctant to admit that they belong to the same species as [their] own” (qtd. in Walder 1082). This view of the other, as exemplified by Walder when he quotes David Hume’s argument that “negroes and in general all other species of men” are “naturally inferior to whites” (1083), not only reveals that the other is perceived as different, but it also reveals the belief, which an individual and/or society holds, that they are superior to other individuals and societies.

The postcolonial writer Edward W. Said connects *orientalism*, as defined by him as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (*Orientalism* 3), to the manufacture of the other (*Orientalism* 47-48). He then expands on this idea by saying that the “traditional Orientalist” coins “the difference between cultures, first, as creating a battlefield that separates them, and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other” (Said, *Orientalism* 47-48). In addition, Said points out that the “Orient and Orientals [sic] [are considered by Orientalism] as an ‘object’ of study, stamped with an otherness – as all that is different, whether it be ‘subject’ or ‘object’ – but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character. . . .” (*Orientalism* 97). In other words, orientalists claim that people who are not from the Occident, that is, who are not from the West, are inherently different from those who are. Therefore, they place those people in the category of the other. This category is not only used by orientalists to refer to individuals they consider different from the Occidental, but it is also used to attribute negative traits to those people (Said, *Orientalism* 2003). In turn, Homi K. Bhabha discusses the role of colonial discourse in the identification of individuals as the

other. For Bhabha, “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (70-71). Thus this discourse aims “to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha 70). The British discrimination of Indians as the backdrop for the Nawab’s experience as the other in the novel is identified and analysed in the next section.

### **The British Discrimination of Indians as the Backdrop for the Nawab’s Experience as the Other**

According to Said, “[the] Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also . . . the source of . . . one of its deepest and most recurring images of the *Other*” (*Orientalism* 1). Thus orientalism is connected to the manufacture of the other (Said, *Orientalism* 47-48), as previously mentioned. Therefore, to analyse the Nawab’s experience as the other is to examine the British orientalist perception and treatment of the Nawab in the novel. What is more, examining the British perception and treatment of the Nawab as the other, in particular, is also to examine the British views and treatment of all Indians and their country, in general. This is because the British characters’ attitude towards the Nawab is the result of their attitude towards all Indians and their country.

The first time Olivia meets the Nawab is at a dinner party thrown by him in which most of the guests are the British who live in Satipur and work in cooperation with the prince. Major Minnies, “the political agent appointed to advise the Nawab and the rulers of some adjacent small states on matters of policy”, Mr Crawford, “the Collector”, and their respective wives, “[are] very much” (Jhabvala 16-17) alike,

according to Olivia. To be precise, they all think they know “all there [is] to know about” India and Indians, as they all “[have] been in India for over twenty years” (Jhabvala 17). For Arthur James Belfour, who served a British monarch “who in 1876 had been declared the Empress of India” (Said, *Orientalism* 31), English superiority was based on the fact that they knew countries in the East very well (qtd. in Said, *Orientalism* 32). His idea was that to have knowledge about a certain country “[was] to dominate it, to have authority over it” (qtd. in Said, *Orientalism* 32). Likewise, Major Minnies, humorously, tells the group about “a devilish Hindu moneylender in Patna who had attempted to outwit the Major many, many years ago when” he “was still green behind the ears . . .” (Jhabvala 18), implying he knows Indians and, therefore, has the authority to talk about them. Like the Major, the Crawfords claim to know India and, therefore, feel entitled to attribute the value they think is suitable for the whole of India and all Indians. Therefore, while the Nawab respectfully listens to his guests, they, apart from Olivia and Harry, a long-term British guest of the Nawab, use anecdotes about Indians as party entertainment. This reveals not only that the British think they are entitled to tell stories about Indians, but also that they have no respect for the Nawab, his fellow countrymen and his country.

As Olivia has listened to similar anecdotes from other British people about “things that [have] happened” in countries in the East, she “[keeps] asking herself how it [is] possible to lead such exciting lives - administering whole provinces, fighting border battles, advising rulers - and at the same time to remain so dull” (Jhabvala 17). In this case, Olivia, inadvertently, also questions the British stagnant stories about India and Indian people. The situation experienced by Olivia mirrors the narrator’s experience fifty years later when she travels to India. For instance,

upon her arrival in India, the narrator realises, “[all] those memoirs and letters I’ve read . . . I really must forget about them. Everything is different now . . .” (Jhabvala 4). However, when she is in her first accommodation in India, the narrator meets a European lady who conveys her negative views of India and the locals and claims that there is no “hope” for this country, as “[wherever] you look, it’s the same story” (Jhabvala 6). This distinction between what the narrator experiences upon her arrival in India and what the woman in the accommodation tells her indicates that, unlike what the woman claims, India is capable of change and has changed. As previously mentioned, Bhabha argues that the “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (Bhabha 70-71). What is more, this discourse depends “on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (Bhabha 66); in other words, it needs to argue that a situation is permanent and that the other, in this case, Indians and, by extension, their country, are not capable of change. Similarly, the lady in the narrator’s accommodation uses colonial, therefore, static, discourse to attribute negative value to the whole of India. This situation suggests that the British in 1923 also use colonial discourse and the concept of *fixity* to refer to the Indians and their country, and that those British are likely to ignore any change that occurs in India. This indicates the Westerner’s stagnant views of India and Indians, as Olivia implies, at least, between the 1920s and the 1970s.

The British characters’ views are not only stagnant, but they are also contradictory. When Olivia leaves Douglas for the Nawab, the British have no doubt that the Nawab has “used Olivia as a means of revenge” (Jhabvala 170). In his retirement, Major Minnies writes “a monograph on the influence of India on the European consciousness and character” (Jhabvala 171), as a reflection on the

implications of Olivia's case. In it, the Major claims that "India always . . . finds out the weak spot and presses on it" (Jhabvala 171). The irony is that this is exactly what the British colonisers had done when they used the "inflexibility, weakness or ossification" (Walder 1078) of feudal empires such as India, to take control of such countries (Walder 1078). Masoud Kamali, a professor of Social Work and Sociology, argues that, while the West is associated with positive traits, the East is associated with the negative side of a dichotomy (1). Likewise, instead of focusing on the evidence, which reveals that the British were the ones that exploited India's weaknesses, the Major places the Nawab and all Indians on the negative side of a dichotomy, in which the British are defined as righteous, while Indians are defined as deceitful.

Throughout the narrative, the British repeatedly show their contempt for Indians. Following a visit to the Begum, Mrs Crawford and Olivia visit Mrs Minnies and, as Mrs Crawford reveals where they have just been, "[she] comically [rolls] her eyes up" and Mrs Minnies says "Oh you are good, Beth" (Jhabvala 32). This shows that neither of them likes the Begum, nor do they respect her and, by extension, her family, which includes the Nawab. According to the writer Charles Allen, Mrs. Norie, a British woman who lived in India in the early twentieth century, declared that the British "didn't mix with the Indians at all", which she rephrased, "[you] mixed with a very high-up family perhaps, but you didn't really bother about the Indians" (qtd. in Allen 193). Likewise, although Mrs Crawford and Mrs Minnies interact with the Begum and other Indians in the novel, they do not give any importance to them, which is revealed in their derisive attitude towards the Begum.

Like the other British, Douglas also reveals his contempt for Indians in a number of occasions. After he meets "some of the local rich men" who "would come to pay

their respects” to him “on festive occasions” (Jhabvala 38), Douglas shakes “his head in benign amusement” (Jhabvala 39), as he refers to those Indians as “a pack of rogues”, who “think they’re frightfully cunning but really they’re like children” (Jhabvala 39). The orientalist perspective infantilizes the other, that is, the Oriental. Like Lord Cromer, “England’s representative in Egypt” (Said, *Orientalism* 35) between 1882 and 1907, who believed that subject races were not able “to know what was good for them” (qtd. in Said, *Orientalism* 37), Douglas refers to the Indians as “children” (Jhabvala 39), implying that they are not to be taken seriously and that they are not capable of taking care of either themselves or their own country, and must, therefore, be managed and set straight.

Similarly, after Douglas arrests a group of people allegedly responsible for forcing a widow to “burn herself” with her deceased husband “on his funeral pyre” (Jhabvala 57), while the Nawab congratulates Douglas for his good work, “looking at Douglas man-to-man” (Jhabvala 58), “Douglas [does] not look back at him that way” (Jhabvala 58). However, when Douglas’s counterparts congratulate him for the same work, during a dinner party at the Crawfords’ house, “he [is] . . . very proud, for he highly [respects] his superiors and [sets] great store by their good opinion of him” (Jhabvala 59). This distinction in Douglas’s reaction between when he is praised by the Indian prince and when he is praised by the British shows his orientalist view of the other, which is based on the idea that the European identity is “superior” to “non-European peoples and cultures” (Said, *Orientalism* 7). In other words, Douglas not only sees the Nawab as different from him, but he also perceives the prince as beneath him, in particular, and beneath all British, in general, and, therefore, he sees the prince’s praise as not valuable.

During the same dinner party, when Olivia says that the custom of the suttee, that is, “widow-burning”, is, “in theory”, “a *noble idea*” (Jhabvala 60), Dr. Saunders reacts to her point in an angry outburst by saying “[it’s] savagery” (Jhabvala 61), “[like] everything else in this country, plain savagery and barbarism” (Jhabvala 61). Here he generalizes about the Indians, their customs and their whole country based on the case of the suttee. For Bhabha, the stereotype is the “major discursive strategy” of the colonial discourse, which “is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated . . .” and yet it “can never really, in discourse, be proved” (Bhabha 66). Similarly, Dr. Saunders uses stereotype to justify his generalization about Indians.

The British attitude towards the Indians, examined in this section, supports Goonetilleke’s statement that, in the novel, most British perceive Indians as “lesser breeds without the Law” (Kipling qtd. in Goonetilleke 252). Likewise, women are perceived and treated as the other in the novel and, as such, have traits and roles attributed to them. In this case, the men are the ones to treat them as the other. Olivia is one of those women.

### **Olivia’s Experience as the Other in the Context of Discriminatory Perceptions of Women**

Simone de Beauvoir contends that, for women, to be seen as the other means to be considered man’s creation and, therefore, responsibility and possession (2011). Moreover, it means not to be suitable for certain roles, as they are considered incomplete, which gives men the presumed right to take on roles that are not granted to women, and to decide which roles women are suitable for (Beauvoir 2011).

Similarly, in *Heat and Dust*, the character Olivia is perceived and treated as the other in her relationship with many of the male characters she interacts with, especially her husband, followed by his counterparts Mr Crawford, Major Minnies and Dr. Saunders.

In Olivia's household, her husband, Douglas, makes the ultimate decisions. For instance, when the Nawab invites the couple to visit his palace, after a long argument with Olivia, Douglas "[sends] a note to the Nawab, regretfully declining the invitation" (Jhabvala 22), without first agreeing with Olivia about this. For Beauvoir, "[humanity] is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself, she is not considered an autonomous being" (5-6). Similarly, Douglas's attitude shows that he thinks not only that Olivia's wishes and opinions are secondary to his, but also that her life is his to manage and, that, therefore, he is entitled to make decisions for her. In addition, Douglas reveals that he believes it is his right to decide which activities are appropriate for Olivia. For instance, when Olivia tells him that she "*must* learn" Hindustani, referring to the group of languages and dialects spoken in India, Douglas replies, "without enthusiasm", that "[yes] [she] must" (Jhabvala 40). This suggests that Douglas does not feel that learning the local dialect is suitable for his wife. Douglas expresses his opinion more overtly as he refers to the skills involved in insulting others with "the most flowery courtesy" and states "[it is] a man's game strictly" (Jhabvala 40), implying it is not for Olivia or any other woman. As Singh suggests, Olivia is treated as "the marginalized 'Other' in an enterprise where the founders and torchbearers or the 'privileged centre' are the Englishmen" (130). In other words, Douglas behaves as if it were his right to decide what not only Olivia, but also all women are suitable for. Moreover, like Aristotle, who suggests that the woman lacks qualities that the man possesses

(qtd. in Beauvoir 5), Douglas believes that his wife does not possess the attributes required to play what he considers a man's game.

Failing or pretending not to understand why Olivia becomes upset after his statement, Douglas maintains his patronizing attitude and tells her “[it’ll] be all right once you get to the hills. It’s the heat darling, that’s getting you” (Jhabvala 41). The anthropologist Sherry Ortner argues that the man denies the woman the autonomy to define herself. Instead, he defines her according to his wishes, which in many instances, attribute to the woman traits that are the extreme sides of a dichotomy, such as “angel” or “monster” (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 814). Thus the woman “becomes herself the embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness, which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing” (Ortner qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 814). In addition, for the writer Wolfgang Lederer, “the aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility and delicate beauty – no doubt associated with the moral cult of the angel-woman – [obliges] ‘genteel’ women to ‘kill’ themselves . . . into art objects” (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 817). Similarly, when Douglas tells Olivia that her irritability is due to the heat, he is implying that she is fragile and, therefore, is not able to handle the weather in Satipur. In doing this, Douglas is treating her as a delicate angel and, therefore, an object to be worshipped. By treating her as an object, which is manufactured according to his wishes, he is depriving her of her identity, power of speech, and autonomy.

On many occasions when Olivia questions the behaviour of her husband or other British male characters in the novel, especially when it refers to their rule of India, she encounters hostility. For instance, when she questions the interference of the British in Indian “religious practices” and “culture”, “Dr. Saunders and Douglas

[are] . . . annoyed with Olivia” (Jhabvala 60). However, when she plays the role that the British male characters attribute to her, she receives their approval. To illustrate, when Mrs Crawford and Mrs Minnies are away from Satipur, but Olivia stays at home, she and Douglas “[spend] lovely evenings and nights together. Olivia [tries] to be lively and gay for him” (Jhabvala 86). In addition, she does not mention either the Nawab or India to her husband, which makes Douglas love “her more than ever at this time . . .” (Jhabvala 86). Douglas’s reaction to Olivia’s cheerful and compliant attitude, in that her focus is to cheer him up and she does not mention anyone or anything that might upset him, contrasts with his reaction when Olivia expresses her opinions and disagrees with him. This suggests that Douglas subscribes to the writer Sarah Ellis’s suggestion that the woman “should become her husband’s holy refuge from the blood and sweat that inevitably accompanies ‘a life of significant action,’ as well as in her ‘contemplative purity,’ a living memento of the otherness of the divine” (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 816). In other words, Douglas’s reaction suggests that he believes the woman’s role should be to make the man’s life better. Thus her existence is only justified if she serves the man, his needs, and his interests.

When Olivia does not encounter hostility, she encounters condescending behaviour. For instance, when she questions the British interference in the suttee custom, while “Dr. Saunders and Douglas [are] annoyed with Olivia”, as previously mentioned, the other men “sportingly [discuss] her point of view as if it were one that could be taken seriously” (Jhabvala 60). The reference to “as if it were one that could be taken seriously” implies that the other British people humour Olivia, like adults humour children sometimes, just to please them, especially if they do not take their ideas seriously. After dismissing Olivia’s point about the British interference in Indian customs and discussing the topic of suttee as if it were a topic of study,

they conclude that “it [is] still suicide and in a particularly gruesome form” (Jhabvala 60). In other words, although the British attitude in this situation seems to be that of open-minded scholars, their dismissal of Olivia’s main point and their rather quick conclusion reveals that they have not really considered Olivia’s perspective and have just humoured her in the hope that, like a child, she would direct her attention towards something else. Like Indians, in general, and the Nawab, in particular, Olivia is placed by the British men into a category that is not only different, but that is also, using Sherry Ortner’s words, beneath “some realm in which the highest powers of the society are felt to reside” (7-8). This gives those men a presumed authority over her, which is revealed in their condescending and paternal attitude towards her. However, neither the Nawab nor Olivia is oblivious to the way they are perceived and treated by the British and British male characters respectively. What is more, their similar experiences as the other draw them closer, as the narrative progresses.

### **The Correlation between Olivia’s and the Nawab’s Experiences as the Other and Their Mutual Attraction**

Hyungji Park, in her article “‘Staying on’: Abortion and Narrative Silence in Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s *Heat and Dust*”, claims that Olivia is “naïve” (37) in that she “projects herself into a fairy-tale romance with an Indian prince . . .” (36). The Nawab, however, Park believes, is “acutely aware of the historical exigencies that confer an overdetermined meaning upon sex between an Englishwoman and her Indian ‘Prince’” (36). Therefore, Park refers to the prince as a “politically motivated seducer” (37), implying that the Nawab deceives Olivia, to serve his political purposes. However, the evidence that Park uses to support her argument lacks

strength. To illustrate, the alleged involvement of the prince with “a petty gang that engages in theft and murder” (36), which Park refers to, is a claim made by the British characters, such as Major Minnies, who refer to the gang as “[his] [the Nawab’s] gang of dacoits” (147). However, as the two previous sections of this thesis have shown, the British base their opinions of Indians, in general, and of the prince, in particular, on discriminatory views. Regarding Park’s view of Olivia as a “naïve” individual, who has been exploited by the Nawab, it reflects a sexist view, which, according to Ortner, many males have, that women are controlled by their bodies and physiology (9). In Olivia’s case, this view implies that she naturally lacks the ability to judge people’s characters and is easily swayed by the Nawab’s charisma. What is more, in her argument, Park does not consider the evidence pertaining to the Nawab’s and Olivia’s similar experiences as the other and its correlation with their mutual attraction in the novel. Equally important, her argument fails to consider Olivia’s and the Nawab’s behaviour throughout the narrative, before judging their characters.

As revealed in the previous two sections, both the Nawab and Olivia are perceived and treated as the other. At times, their experiences are very similar. For instance, when Douglas and Olivia have an argument while walking through their local cemetery, he walks towards the exit, ahead of Olivia. When she stays behind, as if addressing a child, her husband tells her, “in a testy voice” to “[come] along now” and he adds that “[it’s] getting dark” (Jhabvala 108). Subsequently, Douglas approaches her silently and, standing “stiff and straight”, he tells Olivia that she “should have gone to Simla. The heat’s getting you down” (Jhabvala 109). Like Freud, Douglas seems to subscribe to the view that “female sexuality” is defined with reference to “masculine” (qtd in Irigaray 69) sexuality and not with regards to

itself, which places the female in the category of deficient, “as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex” (Irigaray 69). This belief reinforces the patriarchal discourse (Irigaray 73), which places the man as the holder of power in a society, and the woman in a position of subordination. This view implies that, like a child, the female has not achieved maturity and, therefore, is not able to make her own decisions and manage her own life. As a result, the woman is seen as someone who needs the man to manage her life and tell her what to do. In the novel, Douglas acts like this man when it comes to Olivia. Like a child who has annoyed her father, Olivia has her permission to stay out revoked. In addition, like a strict and caring father, Douglas sets Olivia straight and reminds her that she should have done what he had suggested, implying that he knows what is best for her.

Similarly, as the relationship between the Nawab and the British becomes strained, Douglas refers to the Nawab as if he were a child. When Major Minnies drives to the Palace to discuss with the Nawab the issue of the dacoits, the name given to members of a gang of armed robbers, whom major Minnies believes the Nawab is involved with, the prince refuses to see him. Afterwards, when at dinner with Douglas and Olivia, he tells them about the incident, and Douglas expresses his outrage by saying that “[it’s] time he was taught a lesson” (Jhabvala 148). Like in his reference to other Indians, Douglas refers to the prince as if he were a child, which is a typical orientalist attitude towards those races the Occidental view as the other, that is, the races that are not from the West (Said, *Orientalism* 37). Based on his orientalist perspective, Douglas implies that it is his responsibility and right to discipline the Indian prince.

For Colette Guillaumin, the idea of nature, that is, the idea that certain groups have certain inherent traits, “proclaims the permanence of the effects of certain social relations on dominated groups” (143). In other words, groups that are dominant use the idea of nature to attribute traits to dominated groups and justify their treatment of those groups. In addition, the idea of nature keeps those groups in the position of submission because it implies that their traits are “first of all fixed and secondly hereditary” (Guillaumin 135). Similarly, in the novel, the Indians, in general, and the Nawab, in particular, and women in general, and Olivia, in particular, are defined based on the idea of nature and are kept in the position of the other by the same justification. This shows when Douglas treats the Nawab as a child and when he extends that same treatment to his wife, Olivia, dismissing her argument and attributing her annoyance to some trait that is allegedly inherent to her, which in this case is some implied physical fragility. Thus the treatment of the colonial subjects and women in the novel is justified by the British and British men’s belief, respectively, that their nature makes them who they are.

It is not only the Nawab’s and Olivia’s experiences of discrimination that are similar. Both characters reveal that they are aware of how they are perceived and treated, and that they are not happy with those experiences. What is more, they both notice each other’s experiences, which draws them closer and prevents them from taking the British and British men’s claims, respectively, at face value. For instance, in the cemetery, when Douglas treats Olivia like a child, she “[sinks] to her knees” and “[weeps] silently” (Jhabvala 109). For Beauvoir, when a woman cries easily, she is rebelling against a life that keeps her in a powerless state (662-663). Similarly, when Olivia cries over her husband’s disrespectful treatment of her, she reveals her feelings of vulnerability and her despair for having to remain in a situation she is

not happy with because she is, to start with, financially dependent on Douglas. What is more, when her husband applies the same treatment to the Nawab, Olivia immediately recognizes it and calls him out on his behaviour – “You talk as if he’s a schoolboy!” (Jhabvala 148), she cries, which shows that she notices Douglas’s discriminatory behaviour and that she is quite upset about it.

Contrary to Goonetilleke’s claim that Olivia’s disillusionment with her husband is “sexual” (251), Olivia’s reaction to Douglas’s patronising behaviour reveals that what upsets her is her husband’s treatment of her, and of other individuals and groups he considers inferior to British men and all British respectively. What is more, Olivia’s indignation at Douglas’s unfair treatment of the Nawab and of her reveals that Renk’s argument that Olivia’s “defense of the [suttee] practice . . . does fit with a typical imperial feminist approach” because Olivia “attempts to defend women who cannot speak for themselves” (Burton qtd. in Renk 232) lacks strength. To illustrate, Olivia’s perspective is not that of an outsider, as she herself is treated unfairly. In other words, like the Indian characters, whether they are female or male, Olivia is treated as the other in that the British men believe that it is their right to attribute lower value to her and to manage her life. In addition, imperialism, as Said points out, “means thinking about . . . controlling land . . . that is lived on and owned by others” (*Culture* 7) and, by implication, controlling other individuals. Olivia’s defence of the suttee custom, however, does not imply any attempt to control Indian women.

As for the Nawab, when Olivia first meets him, she observes his reaction when the Major uses insulting anecdotes about India and Indians as party entertainment. The Nawab’s “appreciation of the Major’s humour” (Jhabvala 18), for Olivia, is just an act. “Olivia [feels] he [is] putting it on: she [is] almost sure of it” (Jhabvala 18).

Olivia's realisation reveals that she is an observant and insightful woman. What is more, her observation reveals that the prince is not thrilled about having the British mock his fellow countrymen, his country, and, by extension, him. In turn, the Nawab shows that he is aware of the treatment women, in general, and Olivia, in particular, receive for being repressed in a patriarchal society. This is shown when the Nawab stops by Olivia's house to invite her for a drive and, "[like] a man who understands every situation perfectly, he [sees] to it that she [doesn't] have to explain" (Jhabvala 42) why his invitations to visit the palace have been refused. This suggests that the prince suspects the refusal has not come from her, but from her husband. This also implies that the Nawab understands that, in Olivia's household, her husband is the one in charge.

At the beginning of the narrative, Olivia reveals that Douglas and she "haven't been – together so very long" (Jhabvala 34), which suggests that they do not know each other very well. One of the first indications that Douglas approves of the opinions held by the other British of India and Indian people is when, during their first joint visit to the Nawab's palace, he "[sits] listening to Major Minnies with attention and genuine respect" (Jhabvala 18). Unlike Douglas, Olivia and Harry do not have those feelings. However, contrary to Park's claim that Olivia has fallen prey to the Nawab's charm, Olivia's behaviour shows that it is her feelings for her husband that she is vulnerable to. For instance, during one of the arguments Olivia and Douglas have, "she [is] still looking at him straight but [is] weakened – not with fear but with love – by the way he [is] looking back at her" (Jhabvala 42). The fact that she is "weakened" by her love makes her more vulnerable to her husband's patriarchal behaviour. Yet, the more Olivia observes the discriminatory behaviour of the British and British men, in general, and of her husband, in particular, towards

the Indians, especially the Nawab, and towards her, the more she distances herself from her husband and the closer she becomes to the Nawab.

The difference between how the Nawab and Douglas treat Olivia is revealed throughout the narrative. For instance, from the very first moment the Nawab spends time with Olivia away from the other British, except his guest Harry, he is courteous, but, unlike her husband, he does not treat her as if she were less capable or less suitable for certain activities than he is. On this occasion, they play a “game of musical chairs” (Jhabvala 48) and, instead of letting Olivia win, he surprises her when “he [flings] himself on the one remaining cushion” (Jhabvala 49). His attitude shows that the prince respects Olivia more than to let her win. In other words, letting Olivia win would be to give her a dissimilar treatment by treating her as a child who is not able to win by her own merits.

As the Nawab and Olivia spend more time together, they get to know each other better, start trusting each other, and develop a friendship. As a result, the Nawab stops playing the role of “attentive” host, who is “full of courtesy and consideration” (Jhabvala 46), yet not genuine, and he starts acting in a more honest way around Olivia. For instance, when Dr. Saunders visits the Nawab’s residence to check on Harry’s health and tells insulting anecdotes about Indians and how he has set them straight because, according to him, “they haven’t got it here, you see, up here, the way we have” (Jhabvala 122), the prince entertains Harry and Olivia, who is visiting Harry, by “eliciting” the doctor’s words –“Then what did you do, Doctor?” and, mockingly, adding, “You did quite right, Doctor. Quite right. You set a good example” (Jhabvala 121). Although colonised people “often” “mimicked the cultural patterns of their conquerors”, they did it “with a sense of sly difference that asserted their own yearnings for independence” (Ryan 195-196). Similarly, on this

occasion, the Nawab uses pretence to deal with Dr. Saunders's disrespect, which is to Indians, in general, and by extension, to the Nawab. While the doctor is too arrogant and/or, to use Olivia's words, "too blatantly stupid" (Jhabvala 122), to notice the Indian prince does not appreciate being insulted, Olivia and Harry are completely aware of it. What is more, when the Nawab is alone with Olivia and Harry and they tell him that mocking Dr. Saunders is like "cruelty to animals" (Jhabvala 122), the Nawab indignantly answers that "he calls *us* [Indians] animals" (Jhabvala 122). This situation reveals that the Nawab and Olivia are close enough for him to express his real feelings about the British treatment of Indians, which draws them even closer.

One of the biggest changes in the Nawab's behaviour is that he confides in Olivia. For instance, he tells her about missing his estranged wife, Sandy, and about the bad stories "many people", implying he is talking about the British, might tell about him – "Whatever I do – there are always those who will say one thing when it is another" (Jhabvala 89). When the Nawab shares with Olivia his resentment with people such as Major Minnies, who "make themselves into judges over others, saying this is good, this bad, as if they are all-knowing" (Jhabvala 136), she, in turn, shows she understands and supports him by placing her hand "on his chest as if to soothe him. And really he [is] soothed" (Jhabvala 137). Their companionship reveals that they trust, understand and support each other. Although Olivia does not complain about her experiences of discrimination to the Nawab, he is "a man who understands every situation perfectly" (Jhabvala 42), as previously mentioned. It is through their increasing closeness, and her understanding of and support to the Nawab that she reveals that she is not happy with the British and British men's, especially Douglas's, discriminatory treatment of Indians and of women respectively. In other

words, Olivia's and the Nawab's shared experiences of discrimination and their increased closeness, as they go through those experiences, reveal that those similar experiences are the primary reason for their mutual attraction, contrary to Renk's argument that Olivia's attraction to the Nawab is due to her desire to "associate herself with wealth and luxury, . . ." (228), which does not consider the Nawab's and Olivia's experiences as the other and their correlation with these characters' mutual attraction.

As Olivia gets more intimate with the Nawab, she gets pregnant. While she does not know whether the baby is her husband's or the prince's, she still tells both men about her pregnancy. Douglas asks her whether she would rather have "a soldier or a civilian" as a son, and adds that, like him, "he'll do something decent too" (Jhabvala 155), implying that he will bring up their child to have the same views he does, which Olivia does not share. As for the Nawab, he tells Harry, Olivia finds out, that "when this baby [is] born, Douglas and all [are] going to have the shock of their lives" (Jhabvala 162), implying he intends to use the child to provoke the British. After observing Douglas's and the Nawab's reactions to her pregnancy, Olivia decides to have an abortion. Homi K. Bhabha says that the American historian Elisabeth Fox-Genovese "considers infanticide to be the core psychological dynamic of all resistance" (qtd. in Bhabha 16). According to Fox-Genovese, by killing their infant, the female slaves believed that they would be preventing their master from using the child as their property and "would be in some way reclaiming it as their own" (qtd. in Bhabha 17). Even though Olivia has not killed an infant, her abortion can be compared with the infanticides committed by the slaves. To be precise, Olivia's decision to have an abortion suggests that, if the child is her husband's, she does not want her child to be treated like an object, whose

purpose is to serve Douglas's interest, which is the way he treats her. Similarly, if the child is the prince's, she does not want the Nawab to use the child for revenge. Therefore, she makes the decision that is more suitable for her.

After Olivia's abortion and the exposure of her affair with the Nawab, she leaves Satipur and moves to the mountains, where the Nawab gives her a house and provides for her financially. Although she is not financially independent, Olivia's life from her abortion onwards seems to follow what she finds suitable and not what anybody else does. The fact that the Nawab does not abandon Olivia after she terminates her pregnancy indicates that he understands that, although she decides to stay with him, she does it on her own terms. In addition, it indicates that, unlike what Douglas shows throughout the novel, the prince respects Olivia enough to accept her decision.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis has shown that, in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, both the Nawab and Olivia are perceived and treated as the other; the prince, for being a colonial subject, and Olivia, for being a woman in a patriarchal society. This has been revealed in the context of discriminatory perceptions and treatment of Indians and their country, and of women, respectively. Regarding the Nawab's experience of discrimination, the British characters in the novel reveal their orientalist views when they define the Indian prince, in particular, and all Indians, in general, as the other, in that they attribute to them the negative aspects of a dichotomy. In other words, the British characters associate themselves with all that is positive. Therefore, from their perspective, those who are different from them can only be associated with what is negative. As for Olivia's experience of discrimination, the

British male characters in the novel reveal a perspective that reflects ideas that date back to hundreds of years before Olivia's time, including St Thomas's thoughts, which are based on the biblical story of Genesis, to claim that the woman was born from one of the man's body parts, and, therefore, is incomplete. Consequently, all women, in general, and Olivia, in particular, are perceived as individuals who are not only different from men, but who also lack some characteristics that the male characters possess. In other words, the male characters, especially Douglas, treat Olivia as the other in that she is treated as someone who lacks the attributes and capability to define herself; who can not possibly have opinions that are worth taking seriously; who is not capable of performing the same roles the male characters do; and who is not capable of deciding which roles she is suitable for.

What is more, by comparing the Nawab's and Olivia's experiences of discrimination, this thesis has revealed and analysed the similarities between their experiences, such as being perceived and treated as children. It has also identified a common justification used by the British and the British male characters, respectively, which is based on the idea of nature as the determining factor in the separation of groups - in which the British and British men are associated with positive traits, while Indians and women are associated with negative traits - and as the determining factor in the attribution of social roles by a dominant group to a dominated group. Similarly, regarding the Nawab and Olivia, they have been defined as individuals that can only be what those in the dominant group claim is in their nature, and who are only able to do what the dominant group believes is inherent to these two characters and, by extension, to these two characters' perceived groups.

Regarding the development of the Indian prince and Olivia's relationship, this thesis has shown that their similar experiences as the other are what have primarily drawn them together. In other words, as revealed in the previous section, it is the recognition of their own experiences of discrimination and the recognition of each other's experiences as the other that primarily draws them closer as the narrative progresses, instead of deceitful and naïve natures, which Hyungji Park associates with the Nawab and Olivia respectively. It is also because of an increase in trust between them that their mutual attraction develops, as is revealed when they share their feelings about their experiences of discrimination with each other, through words, actions, or both, and when they support each other.

By comparing the Nawab's and Olivia's experiences as the other, this thesis has revealed that, although these characters' contexts are different, in that she is a white British woman and he is an Indian colonial subject, they both belong to dominated groups and, therefore, experience discrimination, which draws them together. It has also demonstrated the British and the British male characters' stagnant views about the Oriental and women, respectively, which, this thesis has shown, are based on stereotypes, instead of evidence. By considering the connection between the Nawab's and Olivia's experiences as the other and its correlation with these characters' mutual attraction, this thesis has expanded on Goonetilleke's, Renk's and Singh's analyses of the Nawab and Olivia in regard to their perceived otherness, and their increasing closeness, in the novel.

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