Redefining Pakistani Muslim wifehood in Hamid’s and Shamsie’s fiction
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Abstract: Mobile Muslim women in Pakistan transcend the dualistic reductive discourses of the secular and the religio-cultural to carve out a distinctive modern subjectivity which is neither Western secular nor local religio-cultural; instead, it is interstitial. Pakistani fiction in English explores how mobile Muslim women in Pakistan choose their battles to renegotiate and redefine their gendered role of wifehood. However, it is still under-researched in this regard. In this paper, we aim to examine the effectiveness of empowerment enabled by the mobility of Muslim women to redefine their wifehood subjectivity as depicted in the fiction by Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie. Drawing on the concepts of performativity by Judith Butler and third-space by Homi K Bhabha, we interpret female characters from Moth Smoke and How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia by Hamid and Broken Verses by Shamsie as reflective of the women’s struggles to renegotiate the role of wifehood.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
The point of focus in this article that Muslim women in their subjectivity are not homogenous and monolithic and thus cannot be either exclusively secular or religious can be of interest and convincing even to the general public. It appeals to those who are interested in lived experiences and also to those interested in theoretical underpinnings.
Beyond the dualistic discourses, we examine and discuss the variously situated Muslim women’s exercise of mobility-shaped third-space and its agentiveness. We argue that though mobility variously empowers them, the common factor among them all is that it enables them to negotiate without exclusive adherence to the local religio-cultural and the universalist Western secular discourses. We also foreground mobility as a source of agency in general to challenge the reductive discourses that view Muslim women as a monolithic passive entity.

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1. Introduction
Mobile Muslim women in Pakistan have struggled to performatively challenge, negotiate, modify and redefine their social space from within the institutional structures of religion and culture for their empowerment (Khurshid, 2017, 2020; Masood, 2018; Safdar & Yasmin, 2020). Among a range of the traditional socio-cultural roles and concepts that they have renegotiated, wifehood is just one of them. The conservative religio-cultural concept of wifehood relegates a wife to a lower social status as compared to her husband and makes it obligatory for her to be servile and ready to sacrifice for the sake of her husband. Similarly, universalist secular feminist discourses have also largely attempted to construct the subjectivity of Muslim women as a monolithic entity which is fundamentalist. Pakistani fiction in English by Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie explores the ways in which variously situated mobile Muslim women choose their battles to renegotiate and redefine their gendered role of wifehood by performatively carving out an interstitial space which is non-dualistic; however, it is still under-researched in this regard (Safdar & Yasmin, 2021). We, therefore, explore how mobile1 Muslim women in Pakistan, as presented in the fiction of Hamid and Shamsie, have attempted to challenge, renegotiate and resist the traditional concepts associated with wifehood. We also analyze how mobility becomes a means of agency in general not only against their suppression by local patriarchal and conservative Islamist discourses but also against the foreign/Western discourses that view Muslim women as a monolithic passive entity. In our arguments, we do not marry Muslim women’s agency with travel to the West or present Western cultural imaginaries and one-size-fits-all secular modernity as a precondition to their agency; instead, we argue that mobility variously enables the diversely situated Muslim women in the fiction to performatively carve out an interstitial/third-space which is inclusive and dynamic, and resistive to the oppressive dictates of the local religio-cultural and the Western discourses regarding wifehood. We find that active creation of interstitial space emerges as a common pattern among the diversely mobile and situated women. It is such a space of contestation and collaboration in which the characters in their roles as wife actively redefine and re-signify (instead of being a monolithic recipient of ideology) norms without exclusive association with the local and/or the global cultures. They actively and variously re-signify the local while in interaction with the global.

Mobility does not mean just physical travel; it involves virtual, imaginative and communicative travels as well (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Sorokin, 1998; Thimm, 2018). Travel that is not physical (such as imaginative by looking at visuals or images and reading text, etc., virtual through internet technologies, etc., and communicative through telephone, letters, etc.) may be taken as virtual travel. We employ the common term mobility to refer to physical and virtual travels that are beyond traditional spaces into the ones which can be, but not necessarily, international. Instead of the dichotomous categorization of mobility/immobility, we take mobility and its impact as relational and embedded in contextual power constellations. We assume women as mobile at various levels on the basis of their diverse sets of physical and virtual mobility in their specific contextual settings. We take performativity as agentive intervention through the repeated enactment of
norms; the agentive intervention is made possible when multiple discourses/norms come together to shape a subject (Butler, 1990, 2009). Interstitial/third-space is a negotiated space of enunciation and resignification of norms between the duality of the local and the global (Bhabha, 1994). It is (re)created through agentive performativity of norms.

Wifedhood of a Muslim woman in Pakistan is usually viewed through the static imaginary of conservative traditional religio—cultural concepts and secular feminist discourses. Traditional religio-culturally rooted patriarchy views a Muslim woman in her wifely role as heteronormative and secondary to her husband in her family (Jamal, 2005; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1988). She is expected to be respectful to and cooperative with her husband and ready to sacrifice her individualist desires and goals for his sake to ensure the stability and intactness of her marriage and collective family life. Basically expected to serve her reproductive purpose, she is respected for her fertility, child-rearing and household chores. Such traditional religio-cultural concepts have long defined and determined Muslim women's wifely identity and roles. Restraining a woman's mobility has traditionally helped patriarchy ensure construction and stability of the intelligible and recognizable wifedhood. Because mobility beyond the traditional domestic and ideological space opens up new opportunities to view and observe things from new horizons and aspects and broadens thinking of its actors, which may potentially be threatening to the restrictive and regulatory discourse. Grounded in Western cultural and legal imaginary, secular feminist discourse in Pakistan rejects the religio-cultural determination of wifedhood and presents individualist human rights based equality in relationship as the alternative (Zia, 2018). We assume both of these dualistic ideological positions—the traditional religio-cultural and the Western secular—as reductive when it comes to their workability and practice in the wifely roles of those Muslim women who are mobile beyond conservative and traditional religious and patriarchal contexts.

In the wake of technological and capitalist developments creating and promoting opportunities of mobility and globalization, women have increasingly become mobile across the world—disrupting and redefining local and global norms and concepts related to womanhood. Global and local cultures are coming closer to each other, compressing temporal and spatial scales (McDowell, 1996). Comparative to any other socio-cultural context, it is, however, more intriguing to study the impact of women's mobility in the community which is widely viewed by the West as religio-culturally bound, yet increasingly globalizing—like Pakistan. The dualistic secular and religio-cultural discourses have reductively viewed Muslim women in Pakistan as passive monolithic recipients of ideology instead of being active, dynamic and creative agents to reposition and construct a distinctive identity through their mobility (Jamal, 2005; Zia, 2018). Pakistani fiction in English is rife with such theoretical engagements and reflections of the shifting socio-cultural standards—the transformation in which mobility of women has the leading role. Hamid and Shamsie are such Pakistani English novelists who have adroitly presented relatable depiction of it. However, such themes in the fiction are still under-researched.

Hamid and Shamsie were brought up in Pakistan, had extensive first-hand experience of Pakistani culture, lived in Europe and America, and wrote on the political themes which spoke back to Western hegemonic narratives about Pakistan, its culture and Muslim women. We intend to understand the contemporary brewing socio-cultural shift in Pakistan regarding women's role as wife through interpretation of Hamid's female characters, Mumtaz from Math Smoke (Hamid, 2000) and the Wife from How to Get Filth Rich in Rising Asia (Hamid, 2013), and Shamsie's Samina Akram and Shehnaz Saeed from Broken Verses (Shamsie, 2005), by drawing on the concepts of third-space and performativity (Bhabha, 1994; Butler, 1990, 2009; Safdar & Ghani, 2018). The characters are selected because, being situated in diverse contexts with different sets of mobility, they provide opportunity to examine their mobility-driven agency from different dimensions to understand the complexity of their various levels of empowerment. Across-gender selection of the authors is meant to garner insightful and closer picture of how men and women may view the mobility-driven empowerment of women and its cultural implications. We examine only those female characters from the fiction that have been presented in the roles of wife. For
analysis, we situate them in their respective historical and political specificities. We foreground mobility-shaped performativity and third-space theoretical positionality to view Muslim women’s performance of wifehood which fits neither in secular nor in conservative religio-cultural imaginaries.

2. Mobility as analytical category

Over recent years, a growing number of studies has taken mobility as an analytical category to examine socio-cultural, political and developmental conditions (Hanson, 2010; Iqbal et al., 2020; Lulle, 2014; Näre & Akhtar, 2014; Nguyen Thi Phuong Tam & Araújo, 2017; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Thimm, 2018; Vaattinen, 2014; Viqar, 2018). Type, means, purpose and extent of mobility are important effective factors that shape the effect of mobility on behavior and lifestyle. We concentrate on the type, means, purpose and place of travel, and the ensuing wifehood subjectivity of the traveler while in and away from her local cultural context. We also concentrate on her intergenerational and intra-generational comparison and contrast to gauge the effect of mobility. The fact whether the mobility of its actor is for the sake of leisure, pleasure, work, education, family life, escape and/or migration is also important constituent of the nature of influence that mobility makes. Extending the analytical lenses further closer and deeper to gauge the impact of mobility on performativity and third-space, to examine the difference of the actor’s talk, action, dressing and thoughts while she is away from her traditional cultural environment, is useful. How she feels, thinks, behaves and acts towards her traditional wifely responsibilities is an analytical technique which helps understand the impact that mobility might have made. Mobility and traditional wifehood are strongly interrelated; they are constituent to each other (Akhtar, 2014). Increase or decrease in one directly affects the other. There are far lesser chances of a mobile woman to become a traditional wife than the one who is immobile. Mobility in its various forms\(^5\) brings its actor in connection with and enables to navigate those spaces which could otherwise not have been possible to connect with or navigate (Fazal et al., 2019; Khan, 2020). However, it does not mean that mobility just enables to question and challenge local or traditional stereotypical concepts associated with wifehood; rather, it also enables to see the biasedness of foreign ideologies and evaluate the applicability of them in local cultural contexts (Zubair & Zubair, 2017). We argue that mobility has the potential to enable its actors to question and challenge oppressive structures—be they religious, nationalist, indigenous or foreign. It enables them to carve out a new and distinctive identity for themselves. Moving or traveling away into new spaces can disrupt unquestioning and unflinchingly blind association with the traditional/local, allay fear of the untraditional and sharpen one’s critical skills. However, mobility, especially when gendered, is always situated and cannot be separated from the discourses that formulate and interplay with it (Adeel & Yeh, 2018; Adeel et al., 2017; Thimm, 2018). In accordance with such assumptions regarding the potential of mobility, the select female characters in Hamid’s and Shamsie’s fiction\(^3\) are found engaging with and challenging patriarchal, secular and Islamist discourses and redefining their wifehood subjectivity. They conform to as well as resist against the oppressive regimes of local and foreign/ Western modern norms that define wifehood; they renegotiate their positions—performatively creating a third-space which is inclusive and dynamic (Bhabha, 1994; Butler, 1990, 2009). We are thus also focused on examining how and how far a cultural transformation related to wifehood is in making in Pakistan—as reflected in the fiction. Departed from the linear secular and religious approaches, we also foreground the performatively created third-space epistemology to study the gender subjectivity of mobile Muslim women.

3. Mobility and wifehood

Why is Mumtaz, in the Moth Smoke, so audacious in her choices and decisions toward her traditional wifely obligations? Other female characters, including her own mother, mother-in-law, aunts and Dilaram, are remarkably different from her in their views and treatment of the wifely concepts and roles. Why is not the Wife, in How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia, not so audacious and subversive? Why is she more inclined to seek recourse to the modestly modern religio-cultural discourse to look for agency in her marital relationship? Further, why are Samina and Shenaz, in Broken Verses, closer to Mumtaz in their being agentive than the Wife? How do these women, as
being diversely mobile, variously negotiate and resist to their religio-cultural obligations as wife? Such are the questions that are meant to explore and examine the difference of the potential of the agency which is enabled by the diverse sets of mobility. Instead of being taken as binary or dichotomous (mobile/immobile) in their mobility, the women will be seen as embedded in their respective power constellations and meaning-making hierarchies.

The era, from the last quarter of the twentieth century to the present, is of utmost relevance when it comes to discuss women’s increasing access to and practice of physical and virtual mobility and their struggles at redefining their gender roles in Pakistan. Though General Zia-ul-Haq’s state-sponsored social Islamization had repressed and curtailed women in their rights and mobility, it came out for the first time in the history of the nation that its women sprang up in the form of a politically organized movement to put a democratic fight against the state for their secular human rights. Educated upper class women formed WAF (Women’s Action Forum) and protested against the gender-biased Hudaad (limits) laws which had repressed and marginalized women in the name of sharia (Islamic laws). Public debates about women’s rights enhanced awareness among the general people. Inroads by modernity, capitalism and the awareness of Islamic obligation of education for all irrespective of sex also increased the number of women joining formal education in schools. VCR (video cassette recorder) revolution of that era had brought international cultural awareness and exposure even to the remotest rural areas, especially through oversees Pakistanis who worked abroad and sent or brought VCRs and entertainment films with them back to their families in Pakistan. Television had also been establishing its roots in the society. Pakistanis, in growing number, travelled across the globe for various purposes including education, business, leisure, migration, work and medical treatment, etc. Transportational infrastructure improved. Communication technologies like telephone and World Wide Web (www) compressed temporal and spatial boundaries; and Pakistan, like the rest of the world, took a major leap towards globalizing itself. Cable television in the early twenty first century came out as another media revolution which reached even to the ordinary person—spread of popular culture and awareness of women’s rights were just a couple of the multi-dimensional impacts of cable television. A growing number of women joined the showbiz. Print and electronic media, internet websites and social media transcended national boundaries and brought international cultures closer to the local cultures. A large number of NGOs entered the post-Zia Pakistan and worked on many sectors including women’s development as well. General Musharraf’s liberal project of social “enlightenment” and his women-friendly policies resulted in unprecedentedly increased political representation by women in the legislative assemblies and their greater visibility in jobs, businesses and public places. A number of legislations were made by the federal government to protect women’s rights. One of the socio-cultural impacts of such legislations was that a growing number of women applied for khula (an Islamic avenue for Muslim women to seek divorce) (Safdar & Ghani, 2018). The trend of love-marriage and semi-arranged marriage (love turned into arranged-marriage) was also on rise. Honor-kilings were widely condemned by the public; and the perpetrators of them were punished by the state. Women became more empowered, causing consistent challenges to their structural suppression. The inflow of foreign remittances improved living standards, opening up further space for modernity of ideas and culture (Fazal et al., 2019). A large number of young people migrated to Europe, America, Canada and Australia for education and permanent settlement. The connection, frequent travels and exchange of ideas through these overseas Pakistanis between their place of stay and the back home (Pakistan) made multi-faceted social and cultural impact which included gender subjectivity of women as well. Urban and rural divide also reduced in many of its aspects due to increased and eased mobility. Though it was also the same era (2010s) when right wing religious political parties like Muthida Majlas-e-Amal (MMA, it is an alliance of religious political parties), for the first time in the nation’s history, succeeded to form their provincial government and anti-western sentiments among the general public were on rise due to the so-called war against terrorism in Afghanistan, women’s mobility continued to grow. The apparently feminist agenda of the US-led war against terror reinvigorated intellectual response by postcolonial and anti-west-centric feminist discourses. Public dislike, criticism and even condemnation of secular feminism increased; rather, feminism
was ambivalently interpreted to be Western propaganda against Islam and Westernization of society—which meant spread of vulgarity. Mobility of women came under severe restrictions at the places where extremist religious outfits like Taliban had their influence. At other places, including urban and rural ones, however, it remained on rise due to various factors that facilitated it. Nonetheless, it does not mean that opportunities of mobility were equally available to women at all places. Systematic patriarchal suppression of women continued, though in more resisted and challenged forms. Such is the wider socio-cultural and political setting in which the characters under study here in this paper are situated.

When the story of the novel turns to talk about Mumtaz’s life as a wife she does not let anybody else speak on her behalf. Instead, she herself narrates her experience of how she feels as a wife, which helps the reader see into the close and deep quarters of her wifehood subjectivity. Instead of introducing herself by taking her husband’s name as a suffix with her name (which would be Mumtaz Aurangzeb), she introduces herself as “I’m sure we’ve already met, Lahore being such a small place and all, but let’s reintroduce ourselves so there’s no mistake. I’m Mumtaz Kashmri […] you'll have to be patient, because I’m going to tell my story my way … ” (Hamid, 2000, 147). “Mumtaz Kashmri” is the name she had when she was unmarried (independent of the marital bond and identity). It was not acceptable for her to be named, known and identified as Mrs. Aurangzeb. She wanted to be known by her own original name (i.e. Mumtaz). Being known by her husband’s name and devoid of her own identity, she felt, could have presented her as a traditional dependent wife. In Pakistan, it is usual with men that they use their caste/location as their second/family name as a suffix with their first name. They are usually known by their caste; especially, those who belong to socially respectable caste like to be known by it. It is yet another form of masculinities which is rampant in Pakistani society and general social behavior. For women, however, it is usual that they take their husband’s name, instead of their caste/location, as their family name. Doing so deprives them of their original name and also confirms their status of being married and a wife. Mumtaz, however, behaves otherwise. She begins speaking about her life before her marriage and from the time when she went to America for education. “Let’s start in New York City, my senior year in college” (Hamid, 2000, 147). She wants to emphasize her independence as an unmarried woman who was free in her mobility to fulfil her dreams. After her marriage, she feels that she is not the sort of a traditional married woman who willingly and happily accepts her role as a housewife. She feels restlessness and anxiety when she thinks that she has been restricted to in-house life only because of her pregnancy. Her marriage has caused her the loss of identity, such feelings become poignant for her. The poignancy gets further soothing for her when she sees her husband free to work and promote his professional career instead of being engulfed by the marital life the way she is being done. She compares her lifestyle having been crippled and restricted after marriage with that of her husband, and feels the weight of the loss growingly unbearable for her.

He [her husband] enjoyed building tax shelters in exotic places. His clients took an instant liking to him, and his golf game improved. His friends at the office said he might even make partner […] I felt neglected, resentful at being the one left at home when I hadn’t wanted to have a baby in the first place […] I decided I wanted to work full-time again […] I said if he felt so strongly he could ask for maternity leave. (Hamid, 2000, 152)

Contrary to hers, her husband’s lifestyle and goals are less distracted by familial responsibilities. Typical of a traditional Pakistani husband, his focus on his professional advancement and financial needs and targets gets stronger while leaving the responsibilities like taking care of children to his wife regardless of her professional dreams. He develops and establishes his business, makes travels and enjoys the company of his friends and clients. He improves in sports and loves to listen to such remarks which are suggestive of his physical beauty and attraction for another possible marriage. However, Mumtaz is completely left and expected to forget what her own goals and desires are. Unlike a typical “good” wife, she feels neglected and expresses her resent. It is these feelings of having been neglected and feeling resentful which will ultimately evolve into
making Mumtaz defy against this traditional patriarchal suffocation. She had not wanted to have a baby and instead wanted to work full-time. It is he who wanted baby. However, after the birth of the baby, he has left the responsibility of its care to her. She expects and demands love from her husband instead of being the silent and patient bearer of his indifferent behavior. She is aware and conscious of how a marriage gets ruined.

I didn't ask Ozi why I’d cried. He didn't ask. He just hugged me. And even though I needed him to, it felt empty. Ozi had found my week spot. He may not have understood why, but he now knew he could make me do things I didn’t want to do. And that’s an awful power to give one person in a relationship. It killed our marriage. I think it would kill anyone’s. (Hamid, 2000, 152)

The fissure generated by the feelings of having been neglected on the part of Mumtaz and Ozi’s indifference to it keeps widening. Mumtaz finds it useless sharing her inner feelings of pain and loss with him. She feels, his love for her has become empty of sincerity. She feels, he knows how to emotionally blackmail her through artificial love to make her yield to his demands. Ozi, her husband, had already succeeded in delaying her abortion and ultimately persuading her to give birth to the baby and known the trick of how to get her round regarding family life. At least, Mumtaz feels and thinks so. She finds it fatal for the continuity of the compatibility of their marital relationship. Initially, she keeps reluctantly following her husband and being persuaded by him. However, gradually, while feeling the growing pressure of her individualist voice from inside, she loses interest, trust and faith in her married life and feels wings in her body grow. She is not seen to be seeking recourse to or situating her demands in either universalist secular individualist or conservative religio-cultural discourses for her rights. Instead, the feelings of independence, the regret at her decision to marry and the recurring desire to pursue her career goals spring from her inside without association with any exclusive ideological orientation. Educated Muslim women in Pakistan exhibit a tendency to situate their locally appropriated version of Islamic feminism to expand their social space from within religio-cultural norms (Zubair & Zubair, 2017). Mumtaz’s subject position, however, is different from the participants of Zubair and Zubair (2017). Now, the question arises as to what might possibly have made her feel and be so conscious of the loss of her independence, identity, love and a professional career. Why she has been untraditional in her feelings and role as a wife requires close attention towards the sort of mobility she experienced and enjoyed before she married and which, most presumably, may have left its impact into making her feel and think the way she is seen to be doing. Here, the intersecting role of her upper social class, metropolitan location and liberal cultural and religious interpretations is not meant to be ignored. However, what we mainly focus on is mobility in its various forms and its formulatory impact on her wifehood subjectivity and its wider socio-cultural impact.

Mumtaz travels alone to America through airplane for her studies. Her physical movement across international borders and virtual/imaginative movement through her studies bring her into contact with and exposure of the culture which is secular and liberal. It does not mean that the culture of her origin is the complete opposite of the one she moved into. She would not have been allowed to travel to America for her studies, had it been so. Rather, it means that she moved into the culture that was ideologically much more secular and liberal. She lives with an Egyptian, travels regularly from her residence to her college for academic activities, goes to enjoy parties and celebrations like Halloween. She also works as an editor of a magazine. The socio-cultural, academic and professional engagements that she experiences regularly while in America provide her greater secular knowledge and exposure. While linked with her indigenous religio-cultural imaginary and placed in the secular one, she develops her critical thinking skill to carve out a distinctive space for her gender subjectivity and identity. Her dress, behavior and lifestyle while away from her home-culture (i.e. Pakistan) are such that make her impression to her readers that of a liberal-minded woman who does not match the traditional gender norms of her homeland. She, on her first encounter with the traditionally modest Ozi, considers him as “some conservative boy from the homeland” (Hamid, 2000, 148). The independence she enjoys in physical and virtual
mobility increases her desire to pursue her individualist life goals. However, whenever she contacts her traditional-minded relatives back home in Pakistan, the religio-cultural pressure to marry soon comes heavy on her. Because “every mother, aunt, sister, cousin, friend, every woman from home” tells her

that an unspeakable future awaits girls who don’t wind up marrying, and marrying well (well being short for “wealthy Pakistani bachelor”). All of that advice, which New York had laughed out my window and into the Hudson, came rushing back to me, sopping wet, in that instant, and stupid or not, I said yes (Hamid, 2000, 149).

Since, in Pakistan, men are traditionally supposed to be the breadwinners in family and women are supposed to take care of domestic chores, women are often wed into well-off families to ensure financial security. It, however, usually costs them their choice, will and compatibility. Rooting justification in religion and culture, many women are also wed off in their teenage. Mumtaz, howsoever empowered, cannot escape the traditional religio-cultural gendered pressure, especially when she contacts home. Though her elite-class and metropolitan home culture also empowers her to decide for marriage and choose her husband herself, she has to succumb to the expectations of marrying soon. However, she does not accept and submit to her traditional wifely expectations squarely. She keeps resisting and negotiating against the traditional religio-cultural expectations that are usually expected from a “good” wife. Her resistance and negotiation are stronger while she is away from home than when she is within or in contact with her relatives. In Pakistan, though she is free to drive to the places of her choice even during the presence of her husband, she exercises this free will more comfortably and frequently while her husband is abroad. Somewhere in the unconscious perhaps, there goes on in her a tussle between the empowerment she gained through mobility and the pressure of norms that dictate the traditional wifely role. Her having been repeatedly gotten round by Ozi to give birth to their child and then to rear it signifies how she easily comes under the awe of his husbandly image. In taking the husbandly influence, she, however, is remarkably different from her mother who could even bear and tolerate beatings from her husband. Once, her mother lost her left ear due to such beatings. Mumtaz’s difference from her mother that mobility has imprinted on her is clear to note. Her mother though belongs to the same elite class and metropolitan culture bears the beatings silently and does not defy against her husband. Mumtaz, however, even cannot tolerate that she should be dedicated solely to looking after her child and domestic chores and that her husband should ignore her. The point here to be noted is that while she argues with her husband demanding for his love and attention and protesting against her life restricted to just her traditional wifely responsibilities, she neither seeks recourse to religio-cultural underpinnings nor to secular Eurocentric individualist discourse. Instead, what she can be assumed speaking from is her awareness and confidence which she gained from mobility. She starts writing as a freelance writer for a newspaper. Gradually, as opportunities evolve into enabling her to take a decision, she leaves her husband to pursue her career goals as a writer without openly and publicly claiming her individualist rights. First, the widespread readership of her blogs on motherly experience and then her newspaper articles on suppression of women and the decent income she draws from them add to her confidence to be independent and serve the greater social cause instead of remaining restricted to the traditional roles.\(^5\) Importantly, she continues to expand her social space and re-form norms while performing them. She gives birth to her child, focuses her energies on looking after it and respects her husband. However, she does not do all this in the traditional way as a “good” wife or mother is expected to do. Because, having been mobile, she has acquired exposure of multiple discourses which converge and work on the site of her mind and body to form her into a distinctive subject. Butler (1990, 2009) argues for the gender performativity that is agentive as a result of the convergence of multiple discourses/norms on the single site of a subject. Bhabha (1994) also argues for the cultural performativity that is enunciative for its subject. The gender and cultural space which Mumtaz performatively carves out is enunciative and empowering for her. In Pakistan, the number of women having mobility has been rising as well as of those having divorced or not married at all and its consequence in the form of the rising challenge to collective family patterns
and the decreasing average number of children produced by a couple (Safdar & Ghani, 2018; Sathar & Framuz Kiani, 1998). This ongoing social and cultural change can be seen as reflected in the character of Mumtaz. It may need to be emphasized here that Mumtaz’s agency in gradual awakening to self-assertion and then ultimately to decide to be self-dependent does not orient in Western individualist ideologue. Her local culture was open and empowering enough for her to encourage her to travel alone to the USA and pursue her studies and career there. Her decision for separation from her husband and child (the traditional wifely and motherly relationships that she thought every ordinary woman was performing) to focus on her writing on issues of social and gender injustice rampant in her society are embedded in her understanding of her wider obligations as an educated and well-aware citizen. Her inspiration to write on such issues is the famous Pakistani Muslim novelist and short-story writer Soadat Hassan Manto who highlighted the suppression of women, prostitutes and the colonized. Mumtaz’s mobility has just sharpened what she was already learning from her indigenous context. After her separation from her husband, she does not even think of travelling back to America. Instead, she continues to live in Pakistan and write on social injustice. Further, her motherly attachment with her child makes her continue to live in Lahore, in the same city where her child was, instead of moving to any other city.

The Wife, in Rising Asia, being different in the type and purpose of her mobility, is remarkably different from Mumtaz in her performativity of wifehood subjectivity. However, like Mumtaz, she also cannot be put into the simplified categories of being either secular or traditional religio-cultural in her wifely responsibilities. Hers is a more complex subjectivity than Mumtaz. Mumtaz is mostly seen thinking, planning and acting for her individualist dreams—being more challenging and subversive to the norms that define intelligibility of a wife. The difference between their mobilities corresponds with the difference between their methods and intensity of the challenge they pose to the traditional image of a wife. The Wife does not have the sorts, expanse and purpose of mobility that Mumtaz has. The Wife, having been trained in religio-cultural and secular education is an interesting, complex and relatable read.

The Wife submits to her father’s decision to marry her off to a well-off person who is twice her age. However, as a wife, she negotiates for the continuity of her studies in law and “that she not be tasked with producing any children while studying. She attached these conditions partly because she wanted them fulfilled and partly to test her power” in which she succeeded (Hamid, 2013, 125). The point here that needs to be noted is her behavior in this negotiation. She does not make the impression of being defiant in any way. Instead, she argues with her husband while being decent and respectful in her tone and language. She performs as well as challenges and redefines her wifely roles in a complex way which evades the simplified dualistic categories of the secular and the conservatively religio-cultural. She reads imported glossy magazines to learn the ways of how to persuade and please her husband in bed when he does not show sexual interest and,

greatly daring, as your anniversary approaches, she instructs her waxing lady to remove all of her pubic hair, […] purchases with the entirety of her month’s pocket money an expensive, lacy set of bra and panties, in violet, her favorite color, and waits for you on your bed, semi-undressed, in the glow of flickering candles. (Hamid, 2013, 130)

One may argue and question why she has not been subversive and resistant to her traditional wifely image the way Mumtaz is even after she has got virtual and imaginative mobility by reading the glossy magazines. In reply, we argue that what such magazines do is to promote the traditional image of a wife as seeking ways to be pleasing to her husband instead of questioning his callousness. So, the Wife’s mobility through reading the magazine further promotes her into endeavoring to be a good wife. She has to sum up all of her courage to undertake this “greatly daring” act of getting her pubic hair removed, wearing the expensive and attractive bra and being semi-undressed while waiting for her husband onto his bed. She does not complain and bears silently even when her husband does not react despite this much of her inviting make-up:
[...] when you lie, she reaches deep within, and, summoning extreme reserves of willpower, places your hand upon her chest and her hand between your legs, and she feels her body swelling and hardening against you, but not yours to her, overcome as you are by exhaustion and stress, and so she turns around and clenches her face against sound and wetness and pretends to go to sleep. (Hamid, 2013, 131)

She has to summon deep reserves of her willpower to place his hand on her chest and her hand between his legs. She keeps the secret of his sexual impotency to her and does not like to reveal it to others, acting like a good traditional wife who keeps her husband’s secrets secret and does not reveal anything which may cause him embarrassment among the public. It is the modest womanly and wifely respectfulness, submission and shyness that she is mostly embodied of. Mostly, she uses her silence, compposure and tolerance as her agency. However, she also gets divorce, remarries of her own choice and stays in modest (un-sexual and without involving any kind of flirtation) contact with her ex-husband as well when he was admitted in hospital after his heart attack. She prefers to stay within modestly redefined religio-cultural norms. Like Mahmood’s (2005) and Abu-Lughod’s (2002) Muslim women, she willingly and satisfactorily leads a family life by modestly renegotiating her wifehood and gender subjectivity. When unsatisfied with her husband, she divorces him despite the fact that her culture does not like this sort of boldness on the part of a woman. However, before divorcing she waits for her son to grow to the age of five and takes proper care of him. For her next marriage, she decides and chooses her husband herself, which is also traditionally not liked and practiced. After her divorce, she chooses to remarry instead of remaining single. She guides and helps other women in their domestic and legal matters by remaining at home and veiled. When she comes to the hospital to inquire about the health of her ex-husband she is accompanied by her current husband. She creates such a third-space for her, which cannot be claimed to be defiant of the local religio-cultural norms but is obviously redefining and enunciating. Her way of being performatively creative of the third-space does not come out to be as boldly subversive as does of Mumtaz in its implications and scope. Whatever space, agency or autonomy Mumtaz and the Wife are seen to be exercising is not because they are sovereign subjects; rather, their subversive/resistive agency comes from the performativity of the norms of their respective contexts in their specific historical specificities. Their subjects are the products of the norms and discourses that intersect and converge on the sites of their minds to formulate and recognize them. Their contexts, as noted above, are diverse and have largely been formed and impinged on by their various mobilities.

Mumtaz and the Wife are archetypal female characters of Hamid when it comes to make sense, through their literary reflections, of the socio-cultural transformation brewing in Pakistan regarding Muslim female subjectivity. They both are seen working and struggling for women’s rights, but in the ways which are remarkably different in ideological orientations. Mumtaz’s approach is closer to the secular; whereas, the Wife’s is to the women of the piety movement of Mahmood (2005) and Abu-Lughod (2002). The Wife is the modestly modern woman who runs a sort of NGO from home to provide religious and legal counselling to the women of her area in the matters like beating and maltreatment of them by their husbands. She herself, and the women who call on her to seek counselling, observe the norms of purdah. She does not do her professional job outside her home despite being graduate in law even when there is no such restriction on her by her husband. She earns a modest income from her NGO work and becomes financially independent but does not want to come out or get rid of familial life. She corresponds with the modern urban Middle-class Muslim woman subjectivity constructed by the Islamic Revivalist Movement of the nineteenth century India in response to the British colonization (Khurshid, 2015). According to that ideal Muslim woman subjectivity, a Muslim woman is expected to perform educated middle-class disposition; which means she is supposed to practice “politeness, orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, accounting, and hygiene”, a disposition that is “in opposition to the coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, and sexually promiscuous un-Islamic mannerisms associated with lower-class females” (Khurshid, 2015, 102). The way the ideal urban middle-class educated womanhood is expected to performatively expand her public and social space from within religio-cultural institutions, the Wife
obeys her father’s decision of arranged marriage, negotiates with her husband about the continuity of her studies and childbirth, respects her husband but divorces decently, remarries of her own choice and looks after her ex-husband in hospital when he has no one to take care of him.

Samina, in Broken Verses by Shamsie, represents yet another wifehood subjectivity that is more empowered and autonomous. The types, means, extent and space of her mobilities are wider and further away from traditionally conservative social, cultural and religious environments than those of Mumtaz and the Wife. Belonging to elite class, she lives in the metropolitan Karachi of the era when General Zia had taken over through a military coup, and she is from such familial environment which is religiously and culturally much liberal. Her physical mobility across geographies involves national and international travels via airplanes, private cars and public transport. Her virtual mobility is carried out through public education, media, letters, books, conferences, debates and public congregations. The literature that has heavily become the source of her virtual and imaginative mobility is the one which critically talks about women’s status in society, their patriarchal suppression and equality of all human beings. She makes frequent intra-city and inter-city travels alone, participates in, leads and addresses protest rallies and demonstrations against the laws which she perceived as suppressive and restrictive for women. She deconstructs patriarchal interpretations of Quran and advises her daughter also to do so. As a university student who wants justice and end of suppression in society, she is much impressed by the Poet who is well-known, nationally and internationally, for his anti-military-establishment poetry. While in university, she has got the direct exposure and experience of the students’ revolution of the era of 1960s. After her first meeting with the Poet when she is twenty-three, an unending relationship of association, love, meetings and exchange of ideas between them begins. After her university education, she works in her uncle’s law company and makes research for her book which she has planned to write on women and jurisprudence in Pakistan. While working in the law firm, she happened to take an opportunity to be interviewed by a Canadian film team on the issue of a poor woman who had just recently murdered his former employer and killed herself also after having been disappointed by the justice system in Pakistan.

[…] with a sense of justice so newly minted it shone through her eyes. The student revolutions of 1968 had found her on their fringes in her final weeks in the UK, listening, sympathizing, occasionally even marching, but it took the village woman’s bloodied end to draw all those political ideals away from the abstract margins of her life and place them front-and-centre. (Shamsie, 2005, 87)

Though she did not participate very actively in the student revolutions, she could not help feeling impressed and influenced by the political ideals of them. Their deep impact on her mind and thinking can be observed when she is seen involved and absorbed in the issue of the village woman and speaks her heart and mind out while being interviewed. “And she could speak with passion and intelligence and flashing grey-green eyes. ‘Pakistan’s Gypsy Feminist’ was born” (Shamsie, 2005, 87). She was featured in a hugely popular international magazine as a feminist activist and savior of women in Pakistan. She became the figure of salvation and rebellion. She was frequently invited into girls’ colleges and conferences to address on women’s uplift. Her virtual and imaginative travels through education, socio-cultural and political exposures and physical travels had stretched her mind beyond the conservative normative boundaries. Its impact can be seen in what she thinks, speaks and does—including her behavior as a wife. She is challenging and defiant to the traditional concept of the institution of wifehood. It does not mean that she does not marry; she marries, but does not sacrifice her love with the person (the Poet) who inspired her to play a leading role in the women’s fight for their rights against the state during the regime of General Zia. “They were married for eleven months; she left him after four months” (Shamsie, 2005, 33). It is she who took the initiative in deciding to leave. Even, as per the religio-cultural norms, she attempts to convince the Poet to marry her after she had divorced her husband; but it is he who preferred to keep their relationship extra-marital. She felt the social
pressure of institutions and just wanted wider space from within norms instead of overturning them. Instead of being Eurocentric or Western in her approach for women’s rights in Pakistan, she grounds her arguments in modern feminine interpretations of Islam while defending women’s rights against patriarchal and conservative religious viewpoints. She makes strategic use of religion and secularism somewhere in the third-space without having been drifted away by either of them.

Shehnaz Saeed is yet another wife in Broken Verses who struggles for wider social space while keeping herself within norms and institutions. The capacity of her struggle to challenge the traditional stereotypical concepts related to wifehood matches the type and scope of her mobilities. She gets higher education, studies English literature, performs the plays like Macbeth and spends time in the company of the liberal-minded people like the Poet. It all stretches and mobilizes her mind which never returns to its old dimensions. Physically and virtually, she is growingly mobile. Though she was married off in an arranged marriage when she was seventeen, she could never feel contentment in being just a wife who is supposed to sacrifice her career dreams for the sake of her family life. Though she does not resist against her marriage, she always remains anxious to realize her dreams of becoming an actress.

And, anyway, I was scared to do anything to risk my parents’ anger, and what respectable family in those days would want to admit their daughter was an actress? So I tried my first major performance: I convinced myself I wanted to be wife and mother and daughter-in-law and high-society hostess. It was my worst performance ever […] Every day, every single day, I wanted to be on stage … (Shamsie, 2005, 61)

Shehnaz remains dissatisfied with her roles as wife, mother and daughter-in-law and wants to perform something unusual which is beyond the roles traditionally expected from her. Though also afraid of the social norms, she is ambitious to be like the famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt who, through her stage performances, inspired women to become more mobile and claim greater social and public space. Her (Shehnaz’s) husband divorces her because she could not come up to his expectations of being a “good” wife. She was twenty-four with a six year old son when she was divorced and felt clueless in the patriarchal society around her. However, because of her rich knowledge and experience gained from mobilities, it did not take her long before getting back onto her feet and feel confident to start anew as an actress—on the way to realize her dreams.

Women, in the Pakistan of the eras to which these characters belong, were increasingly becoming physically and virtually mobile and entering the spaces which empowered them. The discourse between the religio-cultural and secular ideological stances regarding Muslim women’s rights had got further heightened due to increased rift between the West and Islam in the wake of post-9/11 USA-led war against terrorism (which is mostly viewed by Muslims as to have targeted them and Islam). Religious or Islamist organizations and movements had more vehemently promoted the image of wifehood which was closer to the traditional one, in deliberate opposition to the Western/secular one (they took secularism as a Western concept instead of looking for its roots in Eastern culture and politics). Burqa-clad women of the religious political pressure group of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) intensified their reactionary politics to secular feminists by grounding their arguments for Muslim women’s rights in the discourse of Islamic modern and empowered Muslim female subjectivity (Jamal, 2005, 2013). They promote the image of a modestly modern Muslim woman who, if unavoidable and much needed, enters the public space for education and job, etc. while having properly covered her head and body, taking care of her sexuality and not developing across-gender unnecessary interaction (Ali & Syed, 2018; Syed & Ali, 2005). Al-huda, Al-noor and Jamia Hafza are ideologically interconnected organizations with their different approaches to Islamize women in accordance with fundamentalist (closer to Saffi sect) interpretations of the religion. However, Jamia Hafza is more radical but wins the silent support of JI, Al-huda and Al-noor. The deliberate observation and politics of burqa/abaya (full-body veil) in Pakistan has considerably increased. The type of wifehood the Wife represents is closer to the one promoted by the religious organizations
of women like the political wing of JI, Al-noor and Al-huda. However, as contrary to the burqa-clad female students of the Islamic religious seminary Jamia Hafza\(^6\) in Islamabad, the Wife does not believe in violent or militant activism and radical Islam. It may be argued that the type of wifehood subjectivity and NGO the Wife represents are examples of the rising religiosity and conservativeness in the society. The proponents of this argument may also refer to the Islamist political parties coming into power for the first time in the history of Pakistan in the parliamentary elections of 2002. However, it needs to be noted that the Wife does not seek recourse to or promote radicalism or violence. She performatively expands her social space. It also needs to note that the religiously conservative political parties had to make alliance (MMA, supported by the then military dictator to secure his rule) to form only a provincial government and also that they had to face defeats in all the general/parliamentary elections which were held after 2002. Unpopularity of and even public hatred against Taliban (Islamist militants) grew, which meant greater space for moderate discourse and voices. Mumtaz, Samina and Shehnaz are more influenced by moderate and locally appropriated secular individualism and feminist interpretation of Quran regarding their wifehood. However, none of them (even including the Wife) clearly associates with either of the ideological stances: secular feminism or Islamic/faith-based feminist struggles. They are seen performing somewhere in-between at different levels—in the space which is inclusive, dynamic and enunciative.

4. Conclusion
To reduce Muslim women to the dualistic categories of the religio-culturally traditional and the secular is to ignore the multiplicity of their subjectivity and is thus fundamentally flawed. Among a number of other intersectional factors, their diverse mobility deeply influences and shapes their wifehood subjectivity. Without wholesale and exclusive association with either secular or religiocultural ideological underpinnings, Mumtaz, Samina, Shehnaz and the Wife, in their “lived” experiences in the fiction, agentively perform their subjectivity of wifehood by carving out an inclusive, pragmatic and empowering third-space. In their struggles for rights, resistance and self-assertion, they invoke their particular interpretations and understandings of religion, indigenous culture and appropriated version of secularism as well. They feel restricted and even alienated by the duality of the discourse and construct their space somewhere in-between them which they find more enunciative and articulate. However, the scope and intensity of their being challenging and resistive to the traditional patriarchal structures depends on the type, means, extent, purpose and location of their mobilities. As compared to the Wife, Mumtaz, Samina and Shehnaz have got more opportunities and time for their mental stretches or virtual mobilities by secular and liberal education, international cultural exposures, travelling alone and metropolitan urban cultural environments. Accordingly, they are more challenging and subversive. However, even their challenges and subversions evolve through performativity of local norms. The multi-cultural exposure and awareness of the characters through their diverse forms of mobility does not make them and also should not be taken as Euro/West-centric. Instead, it enables them to actively resist not only against their suppression by local patriarchal and conservative religious discourses but also against the foreign/Western discourses that view Muslim women as a monolithic passive entity. Moving or traveling away into untraditional spaces enables them to performatively create a third-space which connects them with the international community without cutting off from their local norms. They actively and variously re-signify the local while in interaction with the global.

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Notes
1. This article is a part of the first author's PhD research.
2. Those women who travel and are free to travel, physically and virtually, beyond traditional gendered space.
3. Physical or corporeal mobility which is done through geographic forms of travel for various purposes; imaginative travel which is done by watching images and visuals or visualizing images and places; virtual travel which is done in real time through internet, transmigrating material and physical boundaries; and communicative travel through means of communication including letters, telephone, etc. (Uteng & Cresswell, 2008, 1).
4. General Zia-ul-Haq was a military dictator who ruled Pakistan from 1977 to 1988. During his tenure in power, he introduced and implemented several religiously sanctioned laws to Islamize Pakistan and thereby to establish himself in power.
5. Usage and writing of blogs and newspaper articles are forms of mobility.
6. Covered in black burqas, female students of the religious seminary Jamia Nazia in Islamabad in 2007 took up weapons and sticks to forcefully close what they thought were prostitution centers and video shops selling pornography and music which, according to them, was un-Islamic and thus to be stopped. The state had to launch a military operation against the seminary to stop the students from taking law into their hands.

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