

# **What is an 'oriental' carpet?**

**Reimagining, remaking, repossessing the patterned pile carpets  
of South, Central and West Asia since 1840**

**Dorothy Armstrong**

Royal College of Art / Victoria and Albert Museum Department of  
History of Design

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30 August 2019

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Dorothy Armstrong

## **Abstract**

This thesis excavates what lies beneath commonly accepted judgements of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, widely known as 'oriental' carpets, in order to open new areas of investigation into these artifacts.

Beginning with a critique of the dominant European and North American connoisseurial and scholarly position on these artifacts, the thesis analyses the role they play in materializing ideas of the Other, the subaltern and the colonized. It investigates their participation in complex global networks of materials, technology, skills, and ideology. It interrogates important concepts underlying not only European and North American ideas about the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, but about crafts more broadly. Contested concepts such as tradition, authenticity, authorship, originals and copies, handmade and machine-made are explored, and the binaries implied by them are challenged.

Chapter one interrogates the assumptions underlying European and North American writing and thinking on these artifacts since around 1840. It argues that rather than articulating stable and enduring evaluations of aesthetic and cultural value, these assumptions express certain psychological, political, social and economic ideas in which Europeans and North Americans invested from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The chapter examines the circumstances which brought into being this dominant reading, a reading I describe as the European and North American orthodoxy; deconstructing the work of its foundational thinkers, and the practice which enacts and polices it.

Chapters two, three and four investigate the orthodoxy at work, both materializing its values in carpets it reinvents as iconic and excluding carpets it regards as transgressive of its values. I use three examples to argue my case. The first is the reimagining of the canonical sixteenth century Persian Ardabil carpet in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, as the preeminent example of the values of the orthodoxy, from its arrival in the museum in 1892 to the present day. The second two examples are of carpets that transgress the European and North American orthodoxy's values and are consequently defined by it as of low aesthetic, cultural and commercial value. They are machine-made versions of these artifacts woven at the Templeton Carpet Manufacturing Company in Glasgow from 1840, and handmade carpets produced for a global export market in colonial Punjab from 1860, and independent Pakistan from 1947.

The thesis takes an approach which is at once political, rooted in the framework of orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality; historical, setting out to write a history of objects and history through objects; material, focused on technology, making, dyes and fibres; and experiential, drawing on haptic and psychoanalytical thought. From these perspectives, the thesis argues for an opening up of the conversation about these artifacts, beyond the frequently used constraints of connoisseurship and provenance. It sets out to readmit excluded weavers and their carpets to the story of these artifacts; and to reposition these carpets in the discussion about creativity, how things are made, and how that making changes across time and space, a conversation where their role has commonly been restricted to that of exemplars of the traditional and the Other.

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## Introduction

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## **Abbreviations**

APOC: Anglo-Persian Oil Company

BP: British Petroleum

DSA: Department of Science and Art, London

EIC: British East India Company

GSA: Glasgow School of Art

MAK: The Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

NGV: National Gallery of Victoria, Australia

OPEC: Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PCMEA: Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association

RA: Royal Academy, London

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees

V&A: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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In memory of

Kathleen Armstrong

1936-2019

Norman Armstrong

1929-2019

Denys Johnson-Davies

1922-2017

Betty Gordon

1930-2020

Jon Thompson

1938-2020

## Introduction

### 1.The genesis and objectives of the thesis



Figure 1: 'Pazyryk' carpet, handknotted, wool, 200 x 183 cm, c.300 BCE, production location unknown. (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, 1687-93)

The objects at the heart of this thesis are patterned pile carpets. They have been made across Eurasia since at least 300 BCE (figure 1) and are also found in Latin America. Whilst they share structure with other woven textiles, the unique characteristic of patterned pile carpets is the introduction of knots, really loops,

between the horizontal weft threads (figure 2).<sup>1</sup> The decisions made by the weaver about the colour of the knots gradually build up the pattern in the carpet.

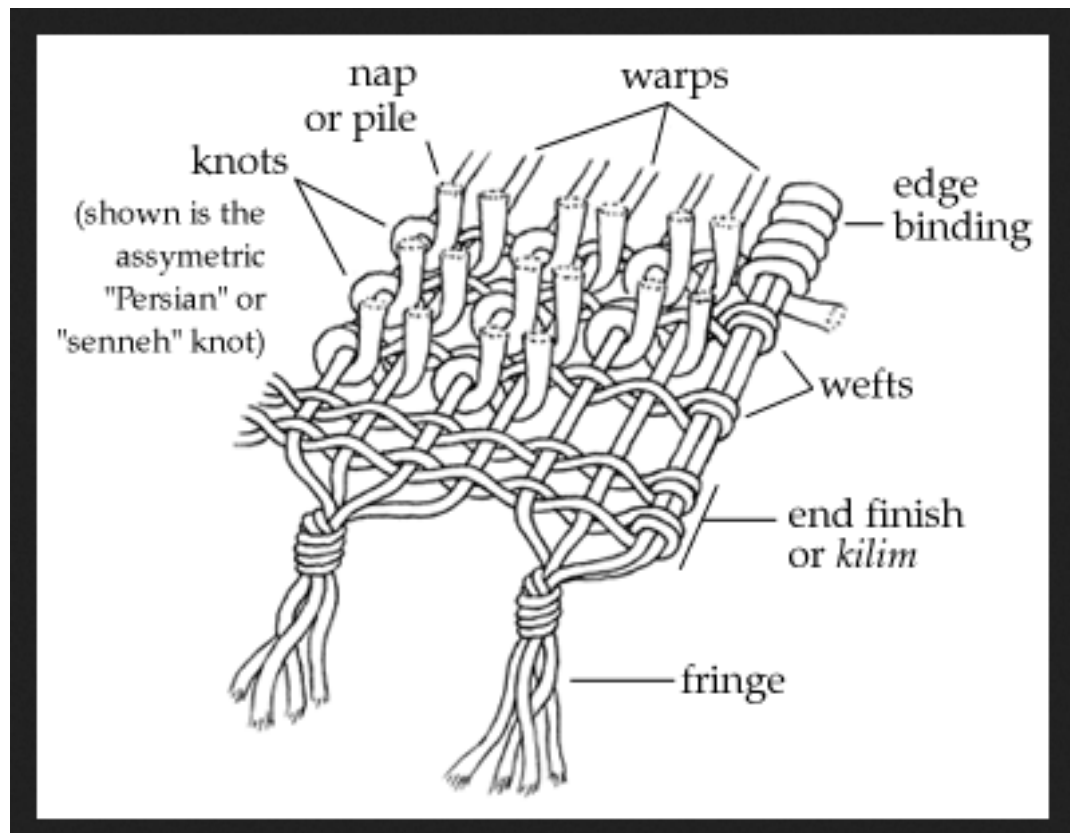


Figure 2: Structure of knotted pile carpet. (Wikicommons, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.5)

These artifacts are made and traded globally, and their techniques and decorative vocabulary cross modern nation-state borders, and previous territorial boundaries. Within this global context, I have chosen to focus particularly in this thesis on patterned pile carpets made in South, Central and West Asia, geographies shown in figure 3.

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<sup>1</sup> Patterned pile textiles are referred to as both carpets and rugs in this thesis, as there are no consistent material, design or scale characteristics specific to either term.



Figure 3: Carpets discussed in this thesis were woven in these geographies.

(Wikicommons)

Carpets from these geographies share a distinctive design structure and vocabulary, recognizable from the earliest known examples. The third century BCE Pazyryk carpet shown in figure 1 contains multiple borders of different widths, using geometric motifs, and designs of animals and vegetation, in dark red with green and light brown highlights. It is thought by scholars to be of Persian origin.<sup>2</sup> This decorative idiom and palette has been continuously used in pile-carpet weaving in South, Central and West Asia. Since the rise of Islam in the

<sup>2</sup> C. Parham, 'How Altaic/Nomadic Is the Pazyryk Carpet?', *Oriental Rug Review*, vol. 13 no. 5 (June-July 1993), 34-39.



sixth century CE, and its success as a religious and social organization in these geographies, such carpets have had a strong Islamic association.<sup>3</sup>

The descriptors South, Central and West Asia serve to distinguish the decorative structure, palette and material qualities of the group of carpets associated with these geographies from patterned pile carpets made elsewhere in Eurasia; for example those made further East in China (figure 4), or further North in Sweden (figure 5). Figure 4 shows the blue, cream and salmon palette of Chinese carpets, and their iconography of dragons and wave borders. Figure 5 shows the monochrome palette, long pile, and abstracted figurative decoration of the Swedish *rya*. Both are recognizably different from the group of carpets I focus on here, although it is possible to detect connectivity in technique and style.

I have also chosen to use the term West Asia rather than the more familiar 'Middle East' or 'Near East' to refer to the historically shifting boundaries of modern Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt. The more flexible term 'West Asia' permits me to include the carpets of the Caucasus, which are part of the same tradition of carpet-weaving. It also avoids the colonial inflections of the terms Middle East and Near East.

---

<sup>3</sup> Prior to the development and spread of Islam, elite production is often attributed to imperial Persia. Textual records describing carpets at the courts of both Achaemenid (550-330 BCE) and Sassanian (224-651CE) emperors. Demotic production took place in the varied religious environments and social organisations of tribal, village and workshop weavers across South, Central and West Asia. Karen S. Rubinson, "CARPETS vi.Pre-Islamic Carpets," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/8, pp. 858-861. <[iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-vi](http://iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-vi)> [accessed January 24, 2020]



Figure 4: Carpet, silk, China, nineteenth century. (1stDibs.com)



Figure 5: Wool pile carpet, Sweden, c 1733. (1<sup>st</sup>Dibs.com)

There are also naming issues with territories within this broader grouping, as geopolitical boundaries have changed over time. Important examples for this thesis are the change from the term North West India to Pakistan in 1847, explored in chapter four of this thesis, and the choices made throughout the thesis between the terms Persia and Iran. Scholars sometimes suggest that 'Iran'

is aligned with the idea of empire, whereas ‘Persia’ is aligned with the idea of nation.<sup>4</sup> The distinction is ambiguous, and the terms are often used interchangeably in scholarly writing. The name ‘Iran’ was revived by Reza Pahlavi Shah in 1925. I have chosen in this thesis to use the term Persia for discussions of issues before 1925, and Iran for issues after 1925.

I recognize the limitations of the geographical terms I use, and indeed the danger inherent in bordering any specific territory.<sup>5</sup> The chapters within the thesis focus strongly on local case studies in London, Glasgow, Lahore and Amritsar within their global context, rather than on nation-state, regional or continental blocks. The terms South, Central and West Asian are used primarily to help the reader identify the particular type of carpet under discussion here.

From about 1840 onwards interest in these artifacts intensified in Europe and North America,<sup>6</sup> and a hierarchy of supposedly better and worse carpets was developed by scholars, dealers, curators, and collectors operating there. This hierarchy of value and quality remains in place today and is internationally accepted within the market for art and antiquities.

My objective in this thesis is to challenge this accepted hierarchy of accomplishment in weaving, and of the cultural and aesthetic value of patterned

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<sup>4</sup> Afshin Matin-Asgari, ‘The Academic Debate on Iranian Identity: Nation and Empire Entangled’, *Iran Facing Others*, ed. by A. Amanat and F. Vejdani (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), pp. 173-192.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp.1-17; Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp.49-91.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard Helfgott, *Ties that Bind: A Social History of the Iranian Carpet* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1994), pp. 49-125.

pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia, and to explore ways of answering the question in my title, 'What is an 'oriental' carpet?' which open up the discussion on these artifacts. I set out to demonstrate that the hierarchy is not a series of settled truths, but a culturally-defined discourse; a European and North American orthodoxy which reflects the historical context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and which is a site for discussions of power, race, gender and class, alongside aesthetics, craft, and the nature of weaving.

To achieve this, I begin in chapter one by examining the historical circumstances that brought the orthodoxy into being and the work of its foundational thinkers. I then go on in chapters two, three and four to deconstruct examples of it in use. It is not my objective to engage in debate on the market value or provenance of carpets, but instead to conduct a scholarly analysis of how the orthodoxy operates.

Patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia are generally known as 'oriental' carpets. Islamic art historians have begun scrutinizing the use of the term 'oriental' carpet, noting that 'oriental' is not used in this totalizing way for other classes of Islamic artifacts.<sup>7</sup> As part of the effort in this thesis to challenge the European and North American reading of these artifacts, to identify the role of that reading in orientalist discourse, and to make space for other narratives, I have placed the term in quotation marks up to this point, and have avoided using

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<sup>7</sup> Yuka Kadoi, 'Arthur Upham Pope and his "research methods in Muhammedan art"', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 6, (June 2012), 1-2.  
<[arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/kadoi.pdf](http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/kadoi.pdf)>[accessed June 2017]

it elsewhere in the text. The ideological content of the term is analysed throughout the thesis, where I explore its role in closing down broader discussion about the making and experiencing of these artifacts and in constraining them within an orientalist discourse of power and Othering.

I now go on to describe what I mean by the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia.

## **2. The European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia in practice**

In chapter one, I analyse the work of a group of writers, curators, collectors and opinion formers who, I argue, created the foundations of the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. They are Wilhelm Bode (German, 1845-1929), William Morris, (British, 1834-1896), Alois Riegl (Austrian, 1858-1905), Arthur Upham Pope (American 1881-1969) and May Hamilton Beattie (Scottish 1908-1997).

A practice of carpet evaluation was derived from their work which continues to be important in the analysis and evaluation of carpets for the market, the museum, and in conditioning consumer taste. I describe this in the thesis as the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. Below, I outline the main components in the practice, and the judgements of value that are built on it.

My own understanding of this practice of carpet evaluation has been built through carpet handling sessions with skilled carpet specialists and weavers. These include Dr. Jon Thompson, using examples from his private collection (April-June 2011); Professor Walter Denny at the Ratti Center for the Study of Textiles, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (July 2012); Jennifer Wearden, former curator of textiles at the V&A, using samples from the V&A (September-October 2012); Jonathan Cleaver, Dovecot Weaving Studio, Edinburgh and Glasgow University, using carpets in the V&A's Clothworkers' Centre (August 2017). Alongside their high level of expertise in the practice of the orthodoxy, these practitioners also question it, and the questions they raise have influenced the discussion in this thesis.

Upholders and practitioners of the orthodoxy have not been exclusively scholarly. Whilst they have included curators and academics, they have also included more popular writers, travellers, collectors, dealers and carpet enthusiasts, often with connections to museums, the academy and the market. Contemporary examples in Britain include Michael Franses, the publisher of the international carpet periodical *Hali*, who has both owned a carpet dealership and acts as advisor to private and public collectors such as the curators of the Museum of Islamic art in Doha;<sup>8</sup> and in the US the Eiland family, comprising Murray Eiland Jr, a writer, dealer and advisor to collectors, who has studied and collected carpets in the field; his son Murray Eiland III, a writer and magazine

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Franses publishes prolifically. A well-known example of his work is 'An Early Anatolian Animal Carpet and Related Examples', *God is Beautiful and Loves Beauty: The Object in Islamic Art and Culture*, ed. by Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom (New Haven; Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 245-270.

editor with whom he wrote the acclaimed *Oriental Carpets: A Complete Guide*;<sup>9</sup> and his brother Emmet Eiland, carpet enthusiast and dealer. The practice derived from European and North American commentators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is now global, and one of its leading contemporary practitioners is Hadi Maktabi, who alongside his scholarly work on Qajar carpets, and his role as advisor to both the Louvre and the new museum of carpets in Mashad, Iran, owns an international dealership in Beirut.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Maktabi was a PhD student of Dr. Jon Thompson, with whom I have also worked.

The tools used by such expert practitioners include analysis of iconography, the technology and structure of weaving, the nature of materials and dyes, historical archives which locate a carpet in time and space, such as paintings and inventories, and, to some degree in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries century, fieldwork with weavers. They also draw on the precedent of earlier carpet specialists, captured in the set of writings discussed in chapter one.

Central to their investigative process is the attempt to locate a carpet in time and place visually, through its overall design and the motifs which compose that design. Specialised vocabularies and taxonomies are used in this analysis which date back to the nineteenth century but continue in use in the market, scholarship and in museums. For example 'Holbein' carpets, illustrated in figure 6, are a type depicted in paintings by Hans Holbein and associated with Anatolia

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<sup>9</sup> Murray Eiland Jr. and Murray Eiland III, *Oriental Carpets: A Complete Guide* (Boston Mass.: Little, Brown, 1998).

<sup>10</sup>Hadi Maktabi, *The Persian Carpet: The Forgotten Years, 1722-1882* (London: Hali Publications, 2019).



from the fifteenth century onwards;<sup>11</sup> 'Medallion' carpets,<sup>12</sup> illustrated in figure 7, are a type associated with Persia from the sixteenth century onwards; 'Scrolling Vine' carpets, illustrated in figure 8, are associated with India from the sixteenth century onwards;<sup>13</sup> 'Dragon' carpets, illustrated in figure 9 are associated with the Caucasus from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>14</sup> The names of specific areas of production are also used, such as Kirman, Lahore, Gendje, associating certain carpet designs with specific areas and even towns (figure 10).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Julius Lessing, *Ancient Oriental Carpet Patterns after Pictures and Originals of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Berlin: 1877, London: 1879); Donald King and David Sylvester eds., *The Eastern Carpet in The Western World* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Wilhelm von Bode and Ernst Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs of the Near East* (Berlin: 1902).

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Walker, *Flowers Under Foot: Indian Carpets of the Mughal Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Saida Garunova and Robert Chenciner 'A Survey of Rugs and Textiles with Dragons from Azerbaijan and Daghestan', *Azerbaijani Carpets*, vol. 7 no. 24 (2017), 63-71.

<sup>15</sup> May Beattie, *Carpets of Central Persia: With Special Reference to the Rugs of Kirman* (London: World of Islam Festival Publishing Company, 1976).



Figure 6: Holbein carpet, handknotted, wool, 276 x 203 cm., Turkey, late fifteenth-early sixteenth centuries. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2009.458.1)



Figure 7: Salting medallion carpet, handknotted, wool knots, silk warp and weft, brocaded with metal thread, 231 x 165cm, Persia, 1560-1580. (V&A, London, T.402-1910)



Figure 8: Scrolling vine carpet, handknotted, silk warp and weft, pashmina pile, 416 x 167 cm., Kashmir or Lahore, c.1650. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14.40.725)



Figure 9: 'Dragon' carpet, handknotted, wool, 467 x 218cm inches, Quba, Azerbaijan, seventeenth century, (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 22.100.122)



Figure 10: Handknotted carpet, wool, Gendje, Caucasus, nineteenth century. (Richard Rothstein Carpets)

Carpets represented in European paintings of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as that in the Holbein portrait in figure 11, are of particular importance in dating. A later date is fixed according to the degree of variation between the motifs of carpets represented in those paintings, and the carpet being studied, assuming a linear 'decay' in design. The older the carpet, and the closer to the assumed origins of its motifs, the more highly the carpet is valued by specialists and the market.

Patterns in carpet weaving [...] do not arise *ex nihilo* unless in the context of high end *karkhaneh* [élite workshop] production involving professional artists. They are subsequently copied and transmitted across the various levels of weaving. As a result, designs diffuse from urban centres towards rural communities [...] Progressive deterioration in the pattern occurs as various forms of stylization set in, often caused by a complete misunderstanding of the original forms and their symbolism.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 11: Detail of Portrait of Georg Gisze, Hans Holbein, 1532, oil on canvas, 97.5 x 86.2cm (Staatliche Museum, Berlin, 586)

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/der-kaufmann-georg-gisze/VwFTBKeaJVASog?hl=en-GB>

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<sup>16</sup> Maktabi, *The Persian Carpet*, p.89. See also Jon Thompson, 'Early Safavid carpets and Textiles', *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501-1576*, ed. by Jon Thompson and Sheila Canby (Milan: Skira editore, 2003), pp. 271-317 (pp. 292-298).

Within this practice, carpets are analysed by structure, alongside motifs and patterns. This tool is used to identify both location and relationship between groups of carpets. An important factor in this is the difference between an asymmetrical and a symmetrical knot. As with motifs and patterns, they are named. Symmetrical knots are called Ghiordes or Turkish, asymmetrical knots are Senneh or Persian (figure 12), associating them with a location of production. Attention is paid to the direction of the tail of the loop in an asymmetrical knot, be it left or right, and this is used to establish relationships between small groups of carpets.

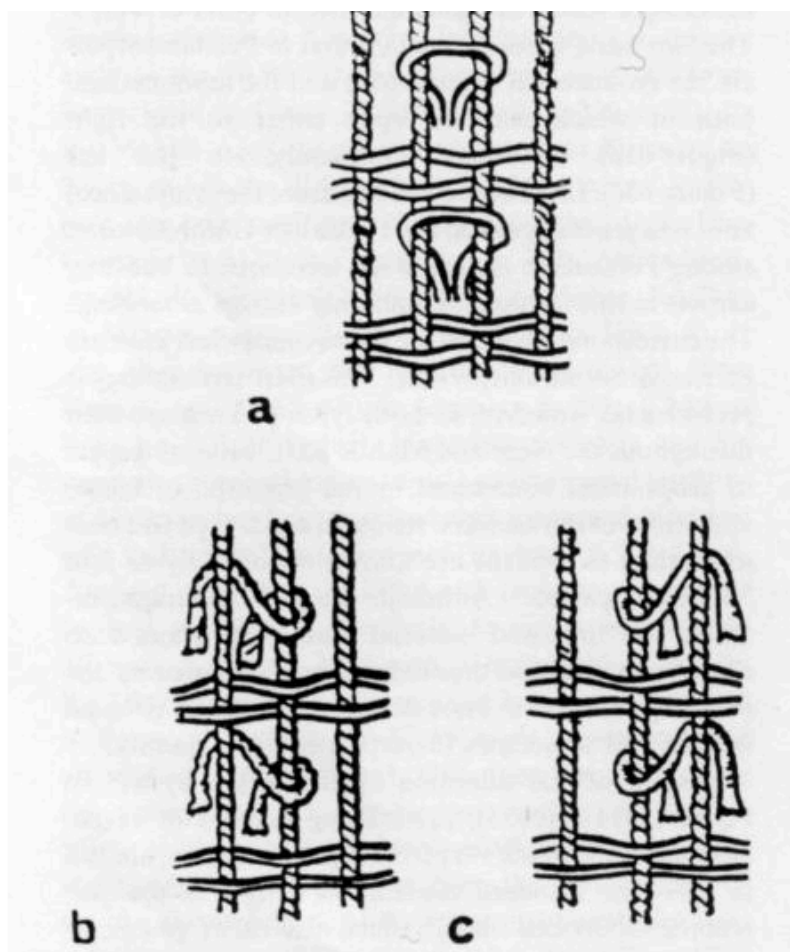


Figure 12: Carpet knot types. (Wikicommons, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.5) a) symmetrical knot; b) asymmetrical knot open right; c) asymmetrical knot open left.

The number of weft shoots across the knots, the set-up of the warp, types of fringes and finishes are analysed (figure 13). Spinning techniques are identified, and the direction of plying of individual threads - counterclockwise S spun or clockwise Z spun - is established. Major museum collections specify these structural characteristics.<sup>17</sup> One hundred and fifty years of European and North American association of these structural characteristics with particular locations

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Wearden, *Oriental Carpets and their Structure: Highlights from the V&A Collection* (London: V&A Publications, 2003). Also see the public access catalogues of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the V&A, London, the MAK, Vienna.



and types of production, and particular dates, are used to help identify the provenance of a carpet.

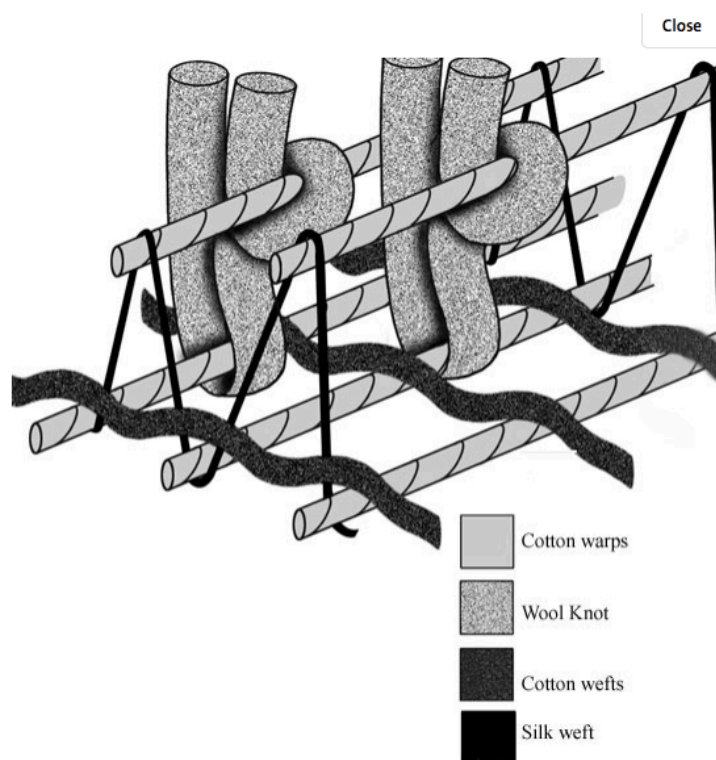


Figure 13: Central Persian 'vase' carpet structure. Drawing Pauline Webber and Danny Norman. (V&A, London)

The number of knots per square inch is counted on the assumption that the greater the number of knots, and consequent sharpness of design, the more accomplished the weaver. The orthodoxy and its practitioners then take a further step, asserting that the more accomplished the weaver by their definition, the more likely that the place of production was an atelier under the patronage of a rich and powerful member of the élite.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Kurt Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets: An Account of their History*, trans. By Charles Grant Ellis (Fishguard, Wales: Crosby Press, 1976) p. 29. Michael Franses, 'Safavid Carpets in the Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar', *Hali*, no. 155 (Spring 2008), 72-89.

The type and fineness of the materials - silk, linen, cotton, wool - is assessed.

Today, scientific analyses can be used to identify the provenance of the materials in the carpet.<sup>19</sup> Frequently, however, practitioners use the experienced eye and the experienced touch,<sup>20</sup> assuming that the finer the materials seem to their senses, the more likely the carpet is to be of élite production and therefore of aesthetic, cultural and financial value. The wool in the carpet in figure 14 was being assessed by eye as part of such an enquiry into provenance of a carpet in the V&A. The curator and I judged by eye that this wool was not pashmina, and therefore did not match the original inventory description of a carpet we were attempting to track down.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For example, DNA testing, AMS Radiocarbon dating, X-Ray fluorescence, electron microscopy, chromatography and spectrometry.

<sup>20</sup> 'The experienced eye' is regarded in the connoisseurial community as a coinage by George O'Bannon (1936-2000), specialist in Central Asian weavings.

<sup>21</sup> In collaboration with Avalon Fotheringham, South Asia curator at the V&A, I attempted to establish whether a carpet in storage at the V&A was the prize-winning carpet in the jail category of the 1881-82 Punjab Exhibition, discussed in chapter four of this thesis. Archival records at the V&A suggested that it might be. The prizewinning carpet is described in the archive as being made of pashmina. This image shows a coarser variety of wool, and so suggests that it is not the prize-winning carpet. For results of the enquiry see V&A catalogue note, museum number IS.797-1883. <[collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O472054/carpet](https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O472054/carpet)>[Accessed 24 July 2019].

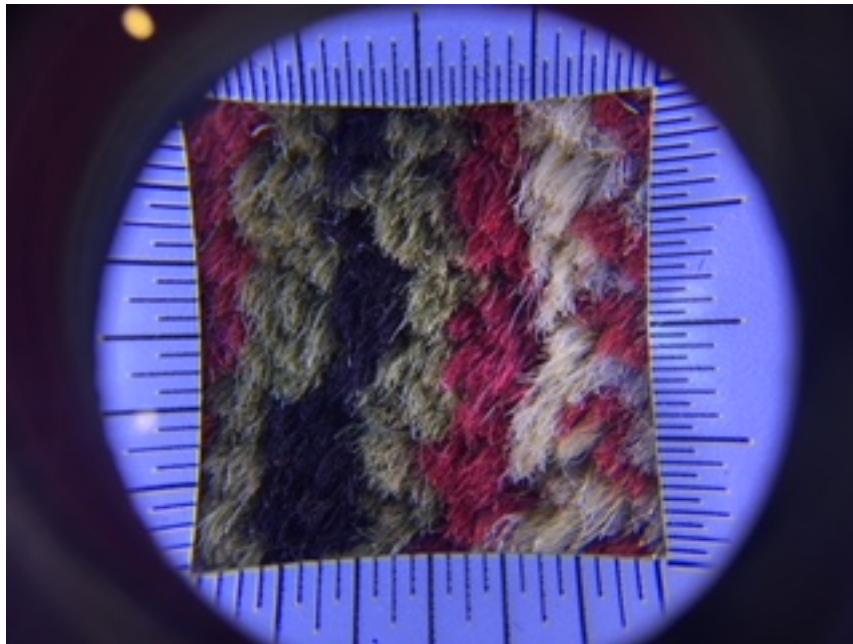


Figure 14: Magnified image of carpet fibres. (Author's photograph)

The practitioner's sense of the carpet's date, quality and value is refined by looking at the colours in the carpet. The European and North American orthodoxy places a high value on the use of 'natural' dyes, that is achieved using dyes produced by non-industrial processes from organic materials, such as plants, shellfish and insects.<sup>22</sup> The distinction normally made by both foundational thinkers and later practitioners is between these dyes and those synthesized in laboratory processes using 'chemicals', processes and materials industrialised during the later nineteenth century. William Morris's description of the latter as 'the foul blotches of capitalist dyers' underwrites this trend.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Murray Eiland III, 'Problems Associated with the Dissemination of Synthetic Dyes in the Oriental Carpet Industry', *Journal of the International Committee for the History of Technology*, no. 5 (1999), 138-159.

<sup>23</sup> William Morris, 'On Dyeing as an Art', (1889), *William Morris on Art and Design*, ed. by Christine Poulson (Sheffield University Press, 1996), pp. 66-73 (p.72).

Practitioners believe that they can identify carpets made using natural dyes by the experienced eye, attributing to such dyes an identifiable palette, described variously as ‘subtly varying’,<sup>24</sup> ‘rich’,<sup>25</sup> but also, contrastingly, ‘brilliant’,<sup>26</sup> as in the catalogue note for figure 16, discussed below, a Turkish carpet in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York:

This Star-Ushak is of unusually beautiful and brilliant intense, clear and vibrant colour.<sup>27</sup>

The orthodoxy’s colour vocabulary also includes a range of terms to describe the highly valued and idiosyncratic quality of fading of natural dyes, described as ‘harmonious’ or ‘mellow’:

When they [the colours ] all faded at a similar rate, and maintained their original hues as did the better natural dyes, then the rug changed predictably, and was often thought to improve in mellowness with age.<sup>28</sup>

The use of natural dyes is so important to the connoisseur that it is a boundary condition for the acceptance of a carpet as ‘authentic’, made using ‘traditional’ techniques and materials, and is a strong determinant of aesthetic and monetary value. For example, in figure 15, the dealer, Liberty and Company, London,

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<sup>24</sup> For example, Wearden, *Oriental Carpets and their Structure*, p.17.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Hermann Haack, *Oriental Rugs* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960) p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> For example, *Howard Hodgkin, Portrait of the Artist* (London: Sotheby’s, 24 October 2017), lot 241.

<sup>27</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 08.173.13.

<sup>28</sup> Eiland, ‘Synthetic Dyes’, 138-159.

advised that the right-hand carpet might contain some synthetic dyes, and so could not be offered as an example of the authentic Turkman tradition. The relative prices of the two carpets reflected this; in 2008, the left-hand carpet cost £2000, and the right hand carpet cost £650. Efforts are also made to associate particular dyes with particular locations, as an aid to establishing provenance.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 15: Turkman carpets, handknotted, wool, Central Asia, left c.1890, right c.1920.

(Author's collection)

Bringing together the results of this analysis, the application of the orthodoxy would support the conclusion reached by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York that a carpet in its collection using what in Europe and North America is called a Ghiordes or Turkish symmetrical knot, producing a pattern associated

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Jessica Hallett and Raquel Santos, 'Interwoven Knowledge: Understanding and Conservating Three Islamic Carpets', *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. by Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 257-265.

with Anatolia, made from fine wool or silk, and using natural dyes believed to be associated with the location, might be a product of a seventeenth or eighteenth-century court-sponsored workshop in Ushak, Turkey (figure 16).



Figure 16: Handknotted carpet, Ushak, Anatolia, seventeenth century, wool, 595 x 335cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 08.173.13)

If the visual assessment of motifs, pattern, dyes and structure leads to the conclusion that the carpet is a handmade court carpet of sixteenth or seventeenth century Safavid Persia, then the owner of the carpet has won the jackpot, because such carpets have become the global gold standard.

Furthermore, it is indeed a financial jackpot, as these carpets can be valued at prices an order of magnitude more than Turkish or Indo-Persian carpets of

similar age. The Safavid carpet fragment in figure 17 was sold for £224,750. In the same sale Anatolian fragments of similar age sold for around £10,000, and Mughal carpets for around £30,000.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Sale of the estate of the painter Howard Hodgkin.  
<[sothebys.com/en/auctions/2017/howard-hodgkin-portrait-artist-117120](https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2017/howard-hodgkin-portrait-artist-117120)>  
[Accessed January 2018].



Figure 17: Fragment of the 'von Hirsch' garden carpet, handknotted, wool, northwest Persia, seventeenth century. (Sotheby's, London, 2017)

Practitioners of the orthodoxy are equally alert to the structure, materials, palette and design of carpets made by machine. Machine-made carpets of the type in figure 18 have greater regularity of tension than handmade carpets,



straighter edges, designs that repeat without mistakes, and a mixture of dye types. A central tenet of the orthodoxy is that a machine-made carpet lacks the creative input of the human hand and cannot claim to be authentic. Rug dealers Jeff and Rose Shadkan of Catalina Rugs in California summarise this position thus:

Rugs that come out from these regions [South, Central and West Asia] but are made by machines are not Oriental rugs, even if they have the same colours and designs [...] By definition, Oriental rugs can only be handmade.<sup>31</sup>

This thesis uses the unhyphenated terms handmade, handwoven, and the hyphenated terms machine-made and machine-woven. This draws attention to the common conceptual separation between machines and weaving, and the assumed conceptual intimacy between hands and weaving, illustrated by the quotation above. These assumptions are tested throughout this thesis.

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<sup>31</sup> <[catalinarug.com/rug-encyclopedia/origins-of-rugs/part-2-characteristics-of-oriental-rugs](http://catalinarug.com/rug-encyclopedia/origins-of-rugs/part-2-characteristics-of-oriental-rugs)> [Accessed August 2018]



Figure 18: Templeton Wilton machine-made carpet, wool, Glasgow, 1960s. (STOD 201/1/1/15/1)

The orthodoxy also has reservations about carpets that borrow designs and techniques from other areas, even if they are handmade in locations in South, Central and West Asia with a tradition of carpet-making. An example is the Pakistani factory-made Bokhara in figure 19, which is a version of the tribal weavings of the nomadic Turkmen tribes of Central Asia. There is little

contemporary literature on such carpets, and as discussed in chapter one, influential commentators in the late nineteenth century were highly suspicious of such types of carpets.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 19: Handwoven Bokhara carpet, Pakistan, c.2015, New Zealand wool. (John Lewis Partnership); Turkman carpet, late nineteenth century, Central Asia. (Author's collection)

The methodology based on the European and North American orthodoxy is focused on establishing a carpet's provenance and authenticity. Provenance in the orthodox view is the identification of the time and place of production of a carpet, its relationship to a taxonomy of other carpets, and its history of ownership, particularly its 'historical significance', a combination of age, rarity and connection with élite individuals and their context. Provenance was the

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<sup>32</sup> Alois Riegl, *The Relationship between Oriental Carpet Fabrication and Western Europe* (Vienna, 1891); Caspar Purdon Clarke, 'Oriental Carpets', *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna*, ed. by Caspar Purdon Clarke (London: South Kensington Museum, 1892).

focus of the foundational writers discussed in chapter one,<sup>33</sup> and many of the more recent commentaries identified in this section and elsewhere in the thesis also have the establishment of provenance as their ultimate aim.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile the idea of authenticity embraced by the orthodoxy and its practitioners concerns itself with whether a carpet was produced using designs, techniques, tools, and materials that are deemed to be continuous with pre-industrial carpet weaving, and if the place of production of the carpet has a long history of the weaving of carpets of similar style and structure, both of these often described by the shorthand 'traditional'.<sup>35</sup>

The characteristics assessed with such rigour, and the hierarchy which results can easily be assumed to be the 'eternal verities' of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, rather than intuitions and preferences which have solidified through frequent application and the carrying forward of precedent, into 'facts'. Part of my challenge to the European and North American orthodoxy is to the tools I have described in this section, which enact and police these intuitions and preferences; in particular, the use of a taxonomy of designs; the tracing of an arc of decay in designs through time; the analysis of the structure of spinning, plying, weaving, and knotting; and judgements on types of fibres and dyes used in a carpet. I argue in chapter one that this toolkit cannot be accepted on its own terms as the unquestionable method for assessing these artifacts, and

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Bode and Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs of the Near East*.

<sup>35</sup> Amongst many examples, P.R.J. Ford, *Oriental Carpet Design: A Guide to Traditional Motifs, Patterns and Symbols* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008).

I probe its limitations. Based on my challenge to the orthodoxy's tools, I go on in the thesis to challenge the hierarchy of 'better' and 'worse' carpets they build.

The carpet evaluation practice described here, and the European and North American orthodoxy which both produces it and is reinforced by it, has a number of important implications. One is the creation of a hierarchy of carpets and a practice of valuation which enables an international market for old carpets to function. A second is the creation of genuine new knowledge about specific carpets as the practice absorbs new ideas and technology. Alongside these are important political and sociological implications. Through the combination of exclusive knowledge and limited opportunities for ownership the practice offers 'cultural capital', a tool to gain advantage in cultural sophistication within the societies of the industrialised, capitalist West,<sup>36</sup> and which contributes to the construction of ideas of class, race and gender.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, it writes a chapter in what is regarded by students of orientalism, postcolonialism and coloniality as the master narrative by hegemonic powers about those they seek to dominate, which is used to define and control the less powerful.<sup>38</sup>

The orthodoxy offers a tool of control which operates exogamously, across the West's colonies and para-colonies, and endogamously, within its own

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<sup>36</sup> West and East are capitalized in this thesis, the adjectives western and eastern are not. West and East are proper nouns describing specific entities and values under debate here, whereas in their adjectival form they have more general meanings. I go on to explore those specific values and entities in this introduction and throughout the remaining chapters of the thesis.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1-55.

<sup>38</sup> The work of Edward Said, Walter Dignolo, Dipesh Chakrabarti, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha is discussed below.

geographies, society and culture. Although the political dynamic in South, Central and West Asia has shifted since the colonial period,<sup>39</sup> the continuing application of an orthodoxy of patterned pile carpets defined originally by Europeans and North Americans is one example of how that power dynamic endures. The orthodoxy has spread alongside the international market for art and antiquities and continues to express these structures of power in the twenty-first century.

### **3. Challenging the orthodoxy and opening up the space for discussion about the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia**

The overall question which frames this thesis is ‘what is an ‘oriental’ carpet?’ I have described my intention to challenge the default answer articulated in the European and North American orthodoxy, by analysing the limitations of the orthodoxy, how and why it came into being, and the work it has done in Europe and North America. Alongside this I aim to open space for other discussions of these artifacts, and other potential answers to that question. I do not offer a complete alternative story, but rather experiment with some new directions of enquiry, for example the emotional, sensual and psychological response of makers and consumers to these artifacts, and their operation within multi-directional flows of international exchange.

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<sup>39</sup> Scholars debate ‘colonial’ versus ‘imperial’. Although colonial is often used to refer to settled territories, and imperial to territories ruled but not settled, the distinction is ambiguous, and the terms are used here interchangeably.

Two more detailed research questions guide the thesis. The first asks what weavers and their work, and what experiences of carpets are marginalised by following the European and North American orthodoxy and why. To answer this, the thesis analyses both highly-valued canonical carpets such as the V&A's Ardabil and carpets which transgress the orthodox idea of a patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia. This latter group include copies and versions, carpets made by machine rather than by hand, those using non-traditional materials, and those made in places distant from their presumed original locus of production.

The second research question examines the gap between the European and North American orthodoxy's account of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia and the actuality of their individual biographies. To uncover this gap, the thesis analyses case-studies of individual carpets, situating them concretely in their places of making and their wider networks. It sets these individual case-studies in conversation with the interpretation offered by the European and North American orthodoxy.

The European and North American orthodoxy responds to the question in the title, 'what is an 'oriental' carpet?' with a description of provenance, quality, technique and historical significance, ranked within a mutually agreed canon. This thesis instead explores a heterodox range of carpets as palimpsests which materialise layers of global, local and individual interactions, with histories

independent of constructed hierarchies of quality. In this it closely follows the practice of historians of global material culture.<sup>40</sup>

I open up the space for discussion partly by means of a change in analytical method, and in the population of carpets discussed. The analytical method of the thesis decentres the questions of provenance and assumed quality which are the focus of the European and North American orthodoxy. It also moves away from the close relationship established by the orthodoxy between its judgements about carpets and its judgements about the cultures, ethnicity and socio-economic organisations of the people who make them, and the places in which they are made. It does not attempt to place the carpets it analyses within the hierarchy of carpets developed by the orthodoxy and questions the cultural assumptions which underpin that hierarchy. The population of carpets discussed includes those marginalized or excluded by the orthodoxy as inauthentic and poor quality, and this forces an account of them which does not depend on concepts embedded in the orthodoxy.

Instead, the thesis attempts a reconstruction of the making and experiencing of the particular individual carpets it examines, an effort which is necessarily partial and imperfect. It analyses each carpet as the product of particular makers and attempts to reconstruct the context of its making. Alongside this it attempts to identify the practical, haptic and psychological experience of the carpet by its

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<sup>40</sup> Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello eds., *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello and Sarah Teasley, *Global Design History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).



users in the widest sense.<sup>41</sup> These users include people who bought and laid the carpet on their floors, retailers and merchants who sold it, curators and advisors who acquired it for and hung it in a museum, visitors who looked at it there, commentators who wrote about it. These accounts include analysis of both the historical and the experiential context of making and using each carpet. To enrich them, the thesis draws where necessary on insights from a diverse range of writers influenced by anthropology, materiality and psychoanalysis, alongside more traditional historical and design historical analysis, discussed in the literature review below.

As described at the beginning of this thesis, these artifacts are made and traded globally, and their techniques and decorative vocabulary cross modern nation-state borders, and previous territorial boundaries. Whilst the unit of analysis is the individual carpet in its local environment, an important part of the approach here is to situate the carpet within its global network, recognizing patterns of interaction at the level of materials and making, trade, exchange of ideas, formations of taste and geopolitics. Part of the analysis in the thesis is to identify how these global objects are re-imagined, remade and repossessed as geopolitics continuously redefines nation-states and their relationships. These object-led and concretely situated accounts are then set in a dialectic with the superstructure of judgements about quality, historical significance, and aesthetics employed by the orthodoxy.

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<sup>41</sup> I use the term 'haptic' not in opposition to 'visual', but in the sense proposed by Alois Riegl in *Late Roman Art Industry* (Vienna:1901) of the fusion of touch and sight. Riegl is discussed in chapter one. See also Pennina Barnett, 'Folds, Fragments, Surfaces', (1999), *The Textile Reader*, ed. by Jessica Hemmings (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp.182-190.

A strong challenge to the orthodoxy is central to the question in the thesis title: 'what is an 'oriental' carpet?'. The analytical method used in the thesis, and its analysis of both exemplary and marginalised carpets puts pressure on the orthodoxy's fixed hierarchy of better and worse carpets, and the boundaries it throws up between the acceptable and the transgressive. As a result, the thesis creates greater space for the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia in the conversation about creativity, how we design and make things across geography and time. Within the orthodoxy, that space has commonly been restricted to the role of such carpets as exemplars of the traditional and the Other. The thesis unsettles assumptions embedded in this positioning. The examination of carpets in the following chapters questions the orthodoxy's assumptions of the innate superiority of, for example, imagined 'originals' over versions, single over multiple authorship, pre-industrial over industrial methods of production, small-scale local production and use over participation in international exchange, the individual masterpiece and master over the workshop and batch production. In doing so it engages with European and North American ideas about craft and art more broadly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The thesis does not seek to revise provenance or connoisseurial accounts of carpets, but to offer examples of more interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional accounts of these artifacts. In summary, in the introduction and chapter one it interrogates the robustness of the constraints placed by the European and North American orthodoxy on the making of and response to the patterned pile carpets

of South, Central and West Asia; in chapters one, two and four it sets out to demonstrate that an important function of the orthodoxy is as an agent of colonial power; in chapters three and four it opens a conversation about the kinds of creativity non-canonical carpets outside the orthodoxy's constraints might demonstrate.

An alternative account of patterned pile carpets to that found in this thesis might have been written based on the work of commentators from the geographies currently known as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Turkmenistan, Khazakstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and other areas of the Caucasus; South, Central and West Asian geographies with important traditions of production of such carpets.

Arguably the most well-developed tradition of scholarly attention to carpets outside Europe and North America exists in Turkey. The first Turkish museum containing carpets was established in 1891, and the Carpet Museum and Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul now contain two of the world's most important collections of carpets. Recent and contemporary Turkish scholars, working inside and outside Turkey, such as Gulru Necipoglu, Huyla Tezcan, Nazan Olcer, Selin Ipek and Serare Yetkin have extended understanding of Turkish material culture, craft production, historic textiles and carpets.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Dorothy Armstrong, 'Unravelling the Carpet: Carpets in "The International Persian Exhibition", 1931, "The World of Islam Festival", 1976, and "Turks", 2005' (Royal College of Art and Victoria and Albert Museum: Unpublished MA dissertation, 2014), pp.148-158.

Meanwhile, late twentieth century and early twenty-first century geopolitical issues have to some extent damped down the development of writing and thinking on carpets in important carpet-making areas such as Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and the renamed post-Soviet Central Asian states. However, individual thinkers and makers such as Parviz Tarnavoli, an artist and carpet specialist now in exile from Iran, and Faig Ahmed, an Azeri weaver and designer, both discussed later in this thesis, have offered new insights into old carpets and new ways of conceptualizing their making.

The picture is more complex in the twenty-first century than it was during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when the foundational thinkers I discuss in chapter one defined the desirable qualities of a patterned pile carpet and attached meaning to them. The increasingly global and interconnected nature of the academy now includes many voices from geographies of production. Amongst them, Hadi Maktabi, Parviz Tarnavoli, Yuka Kadoi, Siawosch Azadi and Gulru Necipoglu are referenced throughout this thesis, some of them in support of my challenge to the orthodoxy. However, a much fuller account could be written on the new perspectives and on the nuances of old perspectives that this more inclusive scholarship makes possible. It would offer the opportunity to frame these artifacts outside the colonial purview, and analyse them as examples of an unbordered global scholarly project. This is a possible future piece of research.

However, an important focus of this thesis is on how ideas about patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia were put to work in support of

structures of colonial power, during and beyond the colonial period. It therefore focuses on the knowledge world developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in North America and Europe about carpets made in geographies which were colonized, like India, or under the strong influence of the colonial system, like Persia and Egypt, or the subject of dispute between competing colonial powers, such as the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia.

It is in order to explore this in detail that I have consciously chosen not to fully contrast a European and North American orthodoxy with an indigenous version, that is, the body of thought about such carpets developed by people who have historical continuity with the occupants of the geographies of production before the period of colonialism.<sup>43</sup> Rather I identify the ideological work done on behalf of the European and North American colonial and post-colonial hegemony by the orthodoxy its members developed, testing the orthodoxy's constructs through close attention to individual carpets, their weavers and local situations of making and reception. The extent to which the European and North American orthodoxy was itself sealed off from indigenous commentary can be seen in the

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<sup>43</sup> The term 'indigenous' has a diversity of uses. The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues currently accepts seven, 'Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic or political systems; distinct language, culture and beliefs; from non-dominant groups of society; resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities'. This thesis uses the term in two of these senses: historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources. <UN.Org> [accessed 2 February 2020].

exclusively European, North American and occasionally Russian names in the bibliographies of foundational texts.<sup>44</sup>

This focus necessarily means that I am, in Aimé Césaire's phrase, 'talking to the West about the West', and also talking about the West from the West, analyzing a colonial phenomenon from within a set of institutions, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal College of Art in London which are themselves colonial foundations.<sup>45</sup> Whilst this clearly narrows the focus of the thesis, and offers challenges in terms of creating an external perspective on the workings of colonialism, the strength of this tight focus is that it permits a detailed exploration of my primary hypothesis.

In summary, the thesis does not seek to revise provenance or connoisseurial accounts of carpets, but to offer examples of more interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional accounts of these artifacts. In the introduction and chapter one it interrogates the robustness of the constraints placed by the European and North American orthodoxy on the making of and response to the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia; in chapters one, two and four it sets out to demonstrate that an important function of the orthodoxy is as an agent of colonial power; in chapters three and four it opens a conversation about the

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<sup>44</sup> Bode and Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs of the Near East*, 1902. This was still true in Kurt Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, (1966) trans. by Hannah Erdmann and May Beattie (London: Faber and Faber, 1970).

<sup>45</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 255-276. Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson eds., *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publications, 1997).

kinds of creativity a non-canonical carpet outside the orthodoxy's constraints might demonstrate.

An important set of primary materials for this thesis are the foundational texts of the European and North American orthodoxy and the records of exhibitions with which their authors were associated. These are analysed in detail in chapter one. The argument of the thesis is also supported by a range of secondary literature which I draw on to achieve my objectives of critiquing the orthodoxy and opening up space for alternative accounts. This secondary literature is reviewed below. The review describes the political framework of the thesis within the study of orientalism, post-colonialism and decoloniality; its disciplinary position in global design history; and its relationship to Islamic art history and to historiographies of craft. It describes the cultural histories, and anthropological and psychological literature I use to open up space for an experiential discussion of these artifacts.

#### **4. Secondary literature supporting this thesis**

##### ***i. The role of orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality in the thesis***

In this thesis, I read the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia as a manifestation of unequal power relations arising from the activities of the hegemony. The two main approaches available to critique such power relations are described by Spivak as 'histories of domination and exploitation [or] the great modes of

production narrative'.<sup>46</sup> I use the former, orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality, rather than the latter, Marxism, as the primary political framework for the thesis. Orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality have played a role in my intellectual formation, as I go on to discuss below. At the same time, they permit the investigation of the role in power relations of a wider range of phenomena than Marxism, with its strong focus on the interaction between the social and the economic. That interaction, however, also forms an important part of my analysis.

The study of orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality has its own complex historiography and vocabulary. The term postcolonial itself is an example. It is suggested that 'post-colonial' emphasizes historical periodization, 'postcolonial' ideological continuity, with 'post(-)colonial' as an option to suggest both.<sup>47</sup> This clear separation is not maintained in practice. I discuss postcolonialism as both an ideological framework and a historical period and use the unhyphenated form. Scholars in the field have discontinuous and sometimes conflicting perspectives. However, they participate in a conversation from their diverse positions about issues which are central to this thesis, and in which it too participates. Of greatest relevance to the analysis here is the pioneering work of Edward Said in the 1970s and 1980s, Gayatri Spivak and Johannes Fabian from the 1980s onwards, Dipesh Chakrabarty from the 1990s onwards, and contemporary scholar Walter Mignolo.

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<sup>46</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 197.

<sup>47</sup> Chadwick Allen, 'Review: Who put the "Post" in Postcolonial?', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 32 no. 1 (Autumn 1998), 144-146.



Mignolo has questioned the centrality of northern Europe's relations with Asia in the academic historical narrative, and its post-Enlightenment temporal framework, returning to and extending Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory. By reintroducing Spain and Latin America into the discussion, thereby changing both the geographical and temporal framing, he has forced into the open a meta-coloniality, within which he proposes that all academic history is Eurocentric and post-Enlightenment. He describes the practice of history as the creation of a series of 'global designs', totalizing narratives which offer 'a warranty for the well-being and interests of the story-teller'.<sup>48</sup> To counter this he proposes the pursuit of local histories, written outside academic disciplines, using instead 'border thinking', an eclectic set of tools dictated by the particular local case.<sup>49</sup> Whilst the thesis is located in the European and North American relationship with Asia, its focus on questioning the orthodoxy and on transgressive carpets is an example of the 'epistemic disobedience' Mignolo urges.<sup>50</sup> The thesis positions the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia as a global design, and conducts border thinking by approaching the local histories of specific carpets from outside the orthodoxy's constraints.

Mignolo draws on Chakrabarty's work arguing that the entrenched Eurocentrism of historical analysis renders all other societies, geographies and cultures

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<sup>48</sup> Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2018), p.113.

<sup>49</sup> Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, pp.30-88.

<sup>50</sup> Walter Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 26 no. 7-8 (2009), 1-23.

subaltern, even when that analysis is postcolonial in orientation.<sup>51</sup> Chakrabarty's work has three specific resonances for the thesis. Firstly, like Mignolo, he alerts us to the need to question disciplinary assumptions and to think outside disciplinary boundaries. Secondly, he draws attention to the historical appropriation of modernity as an exclusively European quality. This feeds into my discussion of the European and North American desire to freeze-frame these artifacts in a pre-industrial past. Thirdly, he has been a leading participant in the debate over the ownership of the Indian postcolonial narrative.<sup>52</sup> In my discussion of that narrative in chapter four of this thesis, I explore the role of indigenous carpet producers in Punjab and Pakistan. The form Punjab rather than The Punjab is used in this thesis. The Punjab is the common British colonial usage, which I seek to avoid, preferring Punjab, which is used by contemporary international scholars.<sup>53</sup>

Gayatri Spivak is also a major contributor to the debate on Indian postcolonial narratives, and raises further issues of relevance to this thesis. She identifies the subaltern as a condition of voicelessness in the historical debate, rather than as a particular group, although she has often used women as her test case.<sup>54</sup> This concept of voicelessness is important to my reading of certain carpet makers and carpets as excluded and transgressive. She also asserts the inevitable complicity

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<sup>51</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Post-Colonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?', *Representations*, no. 37 (1992), 1-26.

<sup>53</sup> See Kim A. Wagner, *Amritsar: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019); Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313.

of the academy in both the oppressive narrative and the oppression itself. In particular she highlights the academy's 'foreclosing' on the experiences of the subaltern after decolonization,<sup>55</sup> and the undue readiness of global institutions of power to absorb subaltern experiences into a narrative of global financial restructuring.<sup>56</sup> In its examination of the dialectic in the European and North American orthodoxy between ideas of industrialization and the traditional, this thesis operates in this territory, and Spivak's work acts as a reminder of the need for constant self-reflexivity regarding complicity.

Like Mignolo, Chakrabarty and Spivak, Johannes Fabian's work raises the issue of scholarly complicity. Working in the field of anthropology, he ties the discipline closely to the study of coloniality, stating that 'existentially and politically, critique of anthropology starts with the scandal of domination and exploitation of one part of mankind by another'.<sup>57</sup> His analysis of the West's academic 'anthropological project' in the nineteenth and twentieth century uncovers the participation of Anglo-American and French anthropologists in a series of distancing mechanisms which place the Other at a remove from the western observer. The most significant of these mechanisms for him is 'allochronism', the insistence that the Other occupies a different temporality, that the Other's society is fixed in a version of the past.<sup>58</sup> Alongside Chakrabarty, Fabian's work offers a framing for the discussion throughout this thesis that the European and

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<sup>55</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. by Sarah Harasym (London: Routledge, 1990), p164.

<sup>56</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), p 330.

<sup>57</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*, (1983) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p.xl.

<sup>58</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 37-71.

North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, central and West Asia sought to resist the participation of carpet makers from colonial and para-colonial territories in modernity. Of special significance to the genesis of the political framework for this thesis is *Orientalism*, Edward Said's transformative 1978 critique of the uses of European literacy, both literary and scholarly, to define and control not only the idea of the Middle Eastern and North African Other, but its actuality, through a hegemonic master narrative.<sup>59</sup> This significance is both intellectual and personal.

I do not suggest that Said's work was the first of its kind. The idea of the master narrative did not spring from nowhere. Foucault and Gramsci, for example, both acknowledged by Said as influences, explored the relationship between discourse, texts and power.<sup>60</sup> Nor was the francophone Egyptian, North African and Middle Eastern geography Said used untouched by critical thought before *Orientalism*. Frantz Fanon, the Caribbean psychoanalyst and activist, had written powerfully on the French in Algeria in the 1950s and 60s, for instance.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, new departments in Near Eastern and Middle Eastern studies had been established to bring modern critical thought to the practices of oriental studies from the 1950s, beginning with Princeton and Oxford.<sup>62</sup> Said's ideas

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<sup>59</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

<sup>60</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from The Prison Notebooks*, trans. by Quentin Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969).

<sup>61</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris: Cahiers Libre 27-28, 1961), *Peau Noire, Masques Blanc* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952).

<sup>62</sup> Roger Owen, *Edward Said and the Two Critiques of Orientalism* (Oxford: The Middle-East Institute, St Antony's College, 2009).  
<mei.edu/content/edward-said-and-two-critiques-orientalism> [Accessed 10 February 2017]

were already in the air when he sat down to write three interconnected works; one on western literature and scholarship in 1978, *Orientalism*, one on western political narrative in 1979, *The Question of Palestine*, and one on western mass media in 1981, *Covering Islam*.<sup>63</sup> In them, however, he both clearly articulated the idea of the master narrative, and embedded it in contexts which were relevant, live and familiar. This was the era of the Iranian Revolution, the Lebanese civil war, the Palestinian Intifada, the attempt by OPEC to gain greater control of Middle Eastern oil for the countries of indigenous production.

Nor do I set out to suggest that Said's work is without flaws. Mignolo, Chakrabarty, Spivak and Fabian acknowledge the transformative impact of *Orientalism*. Homi Bhabha spoke for many when he thanked Said for providing him with 'a critical terrain and an intellectual project'.<sup>64</sup> Said's work has been highly-productive for postcolonial, subaltern, feminist and LGBTQI studies, and for critiques of race and class across geographies and cultures. However, his followers also articulate the many limitations of Said's paradigm-changing work. They see him as an example of the problematical occidental/oriental binary defined by the European and North American academy, narrowly focused on the period from the European Enlightenment onwards, a binary which often stands in the way of efforts to decolonize knowledge and to dissolve the boundary between the knower and the known. They point to his lack of interest in postcolonial experience as a form of Othering.

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<sup>63</sup> Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1979); *Covering Islam* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

<sup>64</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. xxvii.

Less holistic but related doubts are also raised, for example, about the applicability of his method beyond the geography of the Middle-East.<sup>65</sup> It is often noted also that Said talks to the West from the West, using its own tradition of thought to comment on itself, and does not, like Aimé Césaire, for instance, 'write back' to the West.<sup>66</sup> For others, he is insufficiently interested in politics, apart from the Palestinian special case. He is criticized for his lack of analysis of social and economic relations within the Middle East,<sup>67</sup> and for his exclusive focus on relationships between states, rather than power dynamics within and between social groups.<sup>68</sup> His ambiguous position on Marxism causes concern. His critics point out that he offers no alternative methodology to the tradition he undermines.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, European and North American and indigenous Arabists critique the incompleteness of Said's engagement with their scholarly traditions, and his narrow linguistic skills.<sup>70</sup> He is not fully equipped, in their view, to play so prominent a role in the debate.

In the same spirit of engaged critique, I would point out that his attention to the use of the material culture of the Middle East by Europe is limited and

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<sup>65</sup> Richard G. Fox, 'East of Said', *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Michael Sprinker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 145-154.

<sup>66</sup> Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, pp. 255-276.

<sup>67</sup> John H. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.11, pp. 20-39.

<sup>68</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *Re-reading Said: Late Thoughts*, (Oxford: Middle East Institute, September 2009).

[mei.edu/content/re-reading-said-late-thoughts](http://mei.edu/content/re-reading-said-late-thoughts) [Accessed 10 February 2017]

<sup>69</sup> Turner, *Re-reading Said*.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Bernard Lewis, 'The Question of Orientalism', *The New York Review of Books* (June 24, 1982).

[amherst.edu/media/view/307584/original/The+Question+of+Orientalism+by+Berna+rd+Lewis+|+The+New+York+Review+of+Books.pdf](http://amherst.edu/media/view/307584/original/The+Question+of+Orientalism+by+Berna+rd+Lewis+|+The+New+York+Review+of+Books.pdf) [Accessed 2 March 2017]

instrumental. Material culture is offered as an example of physical possession and domination, taken away to imperial museums, and as another example of the taxonomic project which creates an idea of the Other. Unlike his passionate textual analysis of works of literature and scholarship, he does not attempt to 'close-read' the material culture chosen and used by the West. However, Said's very incompleteness creates an opportunity to take his breakthrough thinking into a new area, and is one of his gifts to later scholars.

Despite the justifiable critique of his work, Said's work has areas of particular relevance to this thesis. He focused on the Islamic world, original home to many of the objects under discussion here, and that cultural and spatial location is important in the discussion of carpets. Furthermore, his investigation of how power relations were enacted in the creation of knowledge about the Other by the West is situated in a timeframe, geography and within the cultural environment that also produced the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. But my sense of allegiance with him goes deeper than these methodological congruences. Said's work played an important part of my intellectual formation and the gestation of this thesis.

In an interview in 1989, Said talked about the importance to his emotional and intellectual life of the Cairo of his childhood, before his move to the US. Cairo was the temporary home of his Palestinian parents after the 1948 Nakba, the

enforced Palestinian exodus from the territories that became Israel.<sup>71</sup>

He also talked about his adoption of the European humanist tradition, its scholarship and literature, as an intellectual homeland. He did not feel the need to apologise for the partiality of this.

EWS: [Achebe] said, well, people study Conrad, but he's just a racist...There's no need for me to perform acts of amputation on myself, intellectual, spiritual or aesthetic...I can share in feelings of alienation, and extremely severe critique, but I can't fully accept the dismissal of these writers because they have meant a great deal to me, and indeed play a role intellectually and aesthetically in the cultural life of the world in which we live.<sup>72</sup>

Throughout this 1992 interview, Said to a certain extent withdraws from the debates about coloniality I discussed earlier, positioning himself instead as writing out of his own heart and experience as much as out of an intellectual programme. He refers to theory as 'a guild designation now that has produced a jargon I find hopelessly tiresome'.<sup>73</sup> He had lost something - the Anglo-Franco-Arabic world of Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine - and he had gained something - the European humanist tradition - and these two things came together in *Orientalism*.

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<sup>71</sup> Jennifer Wicke and Michael Sprinker, 'An Interview with Edward Said', *A Said Reader*, Sprinker ed., pp. 221-265.

<sup>72</sup> Wicke and Sprinker, 'Edward Said', p. 253.

<sup>73</sup> Wicke and Sprinker, 'Edward Said', p. 249.



I empathise with his sense of loss, and its power over his intellectual agenda. This thesis too is partly defined by autobiographical traces and exile, within a single deeply culturally divided nation-state, Britain, with its enduring class divisions. My exile is from the industrial Northern English community of the post-war consensus, which has ceased to exist.<sup>74</sup> My particular industrial North was that of the cotton mills, and in my family's past were men and women who worked in textile factories, swept along by industrialization. Most of the women were also privately makers, particularly seamstresses and knitters, as they raised families and negotiated the changes in the nineteenth and twentieth-century North of England. These people and their industrial communities have a role in the story of how Europe and North America remade, reimagined and repurposed the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. Their skills are the ones at use in carpet factories such as Templeton in Glasgow, examined in chapter three.<sup>75</sup>

As a consequence of this experience, I feel strong empathy with postcolonial intellectuals such as Said, Spivak, Bhabha and Mignolo, who, in Stephen Morton's words, are 'self-consciously marked by [their] diasporic location and cultural background', and that empathy fuels this thesis.<sup>76</sup> I do not, however, wish to suggest that issues arising from race, political affiliation, class and gender can be collapsed into a single experience, or that my sense of exile carries with it any of

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Pelican Books, 1957); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (London: Pelican Books, 1958).

<sup>75</sup> The form Templeton is used by the company and its historians for the firms James Templeton & Co., and J & J.S. Templeton & Co.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Spivak* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.3.

the material and physical risks endured by scholars setting themselves against government policy in or concerning, for example, Palestine or Latin America.

I have adopted a set of cultural assets and approaches to understand my particular exile. Some are shared with Said; European humanism, and its pre-theory tool of close reading.<sup>77</sup> These sit alongside the forty years of development in cultural analysis since *Orientalism*, which now includes an alternative story told by non-textual sources, material culture. The final one is the accident in 1977, during great turbulence in the Middle East, of encountering a group of British Arabists who ignited my interest in Islamic culture, and prompted a recognition that there was something else in the world apart from 'the West'.<sup>78</sup> It is significant that those discussions took place in rooms in the UK decorated with Asian carpets and textiles. At the deepest level, the application of Said's thinking as an approach in this thesis is about the identification of a territory that is uniquely meaningful to me as an individual, but which is then explored for meanings for others.

Whilst writers on narratives of power, be they postcolonial, feminist, LBGTQI, or concerned with issues of race and class, have very properly debated Said's shortcomings, they do not usually question his basic insight. However he had other opponents who believed that he was fundamentally wrong. They articulate what was threatening about *Orientalism*, in both political and intellectual terms.

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<sup>77</sup> I read English in the 1970s, during a fight between 'close readers' and 'structuralists'.

<sup>78</sup> In particular Denys Johnson-Davies (Canadian-British, 1926- 2017), described by Said as 'the leading Arabic-English translator of our time'. Edward Said, 'Embargoed Literature', *The Nation*, vol. 251, (September 7, 1990), 278-279.

The tradition of the western orientalist as a high status occupation, and one which has close ties to power, was at least three centuries old when Said questioned its motives in *Orientalism*.<sup>79</sup> A group of scholars, some within this career path, strongly opposed Said's reading of the western tradition of scholarship.<sup>80</sup>

The core of the argument against *Orientalism* amongst orientalists and imperial historians in post-imperial countries, is that the West's project to articulate its relationship to the East during the Age of Empires was not one driven by Othering, or control, or the establishment of western-dominated ideologies, or political and economic exploitation, but one of respect and even empathy.<sup>81</sup> They read colonialism not as a master's narrative, but a lover's narrative. Their West was a nervous lover, as they see a high level of uncertainty in domestic culture towards the colonial Other, rather than the overweening confidence they believe Said depicted.<sup>82</sup> Nor was it a lover with the whip hand in terms of power, for both in India and in the para-colonies of the Middle East, western domination, in their view, was not so extensive as Said imagined. It was also a lover who brought the gift of its own civilizational model to the East,<sup>83</sup> and opened up its fine and decorative arts to eastern influence. This reading articulates an idea of a benign

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<sup>79</sup> Bruce Robbins, 'The East is a Career', *A Said Reader*, Sprinker ed., pp. 48-74; Osamah F. Khalil, *America's Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>80</sup> For example, Bernard Lewis, now Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton.

<sup>81</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire*, (London: Allan Lane, 2001), pp xix-xx.

<sup>82</sup> This position is fully developed in MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, pp.1-20.

<sup>83</sup> Found in the work of, for example, David Cannadine, Robert Irwin, Niall Ferguson and Andrew Roberts.

relationship of mutual exchange between two separately constructed ideas of East and West, which is highly-relevant to the orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia.<sup>84</sup> The Europeans and North Americans who created and enacted it were passionate in their commitment to these artifacts, and believed that passion justified their right to codify and judge them.

Said's importance to this thesis is partly a question of emotional tone, his unwillingness to accept the self-excusing rhetoric of apologists for empire. However, the methodology of the thesis goes beyond Said, drawing on more recent studies of postcolonialism and decoloniality. It participates in what Bhabha described as 'a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation', rather than in a monolithic reading of the impact of colonialism, beneficial or otherwise.<sup>85</sup>

## ***ii. The role of global design history***

The disciplinary position of this thesis is global design history. In their 2011 introduction to *Global Design History*, Adamson, Riello and Teasley make a strong claim for the discipline, saying, 'Modernist design history's triumphalist narrative of progress emanating from industrialized Europe after 1850 is simply out of date'.<sup>86</sup> They offer an alternative to this:

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<sup>84</sup> John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*; MacKenzie, *Orientalism*.

<sup>85</sup> Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p.3.

<sup>86</sup> Adamson, Riello, Teasley, *Global Design History*, p. 2.

Far from an overarching narrative, then, global design history is a sited approach that recognizes the multiplicities and fragmented condition in which we experience and enact design, as part of being in the world. It is the recognition of interconnectivity, of situation within networks, often of asymmetrical power and exchange.<sup>87</sup>

Just as orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality offer a political framework for this thesis, global design history offers an analytical framework, focusing on specific objects moving across space and through time. Of particular relevance are the material histories tracing complex, long-term patterns of production and exchange over long distances in which the discipline is rich.<sup>88</sup>

The perspective these writers articulate has its roots in the parallel historical traditions of entangled history, world systems analysis, world history and the new imperial history which have developed in recent decades.<sup>89</sup> Examples of this global historiography which are of particular relevance to my argument are Janet abu Lughod's disruptive re-introduction of the Islamic world into narratives of early modern world systems,<sup>90</sup> and Lambert and Lester's reconceptualization of nineteenth and twentieth century colonial history as a series of 'networks, webs and circuits' rather than a metropolitan centre and a colonial periphery where

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<sup>87</sup> Adamson, Riello, Teasley, *Global Design History*, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> For example, Maxine Berg ed., *Writing the History of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Gerritsen, Riello, *Global Lives of Things*.

<sup>89</sup> Sonke Bauck and Thomas Maier, *Entangled History: Concepts and Critical Perspectives*, (Bielefeld: University of Bielefeld, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Janet abu Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

directionality is from the centre outwards.<sup>91</sup> This perspective itself derives from Actor Network Theory.<sup>92</sup> These histories support the analysis in this thesis of the patterned pile carpet of South, Central and West Asia as a mobile concept, co-produced by a diversity of actors across an archipelago of interacting sites in the colonial period.

There has been a reaction elsewhere in the discipline of design history to the insistence on the global. Writing in 2016, Fallan and Lees-Maffei emphasized the importance of national readings, asserting the need 'to recognize that the much-vaunted global chains of design, manufacturing and commerce are still composed of national endeavours'.<sup>93</sup> I acknowledge parts of their position, analyzing questions of national identity-formation, and social, political and economic patterns which are specific to particular nations. However I tend not to use the nation-state as the default unit of analysis, because the history in this thesis requires diverse definitions of space and place over time. The locations discussed include Europe, Pakistan, Punjab, Glasgow, Amritsar, Templeton's factories, Sawabi refugee camp in Kyber Pakhtunkhwa, the South Kensington Museum. The networks to which these places belong shift and change during the period under discussion.

A key tool for the thesis is global design history's focus on biographies of objects

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<sup>91</sup> David Lambert and Adrian Lester eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-32 (p.2).

<sup>92</sup> Bruno Latour, *Re-Assembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>93</sup> Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei, *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), p. 2.

and materials. This has its roots in in Arjun Appadurai's 1982 breakthrough edited collection *The Social Life of Things*, where the life of the object within its social, economic, ideological and political context was explored.<sup>94</sup> Practitioners of global design history have subsequently produced enlightening transgeographical and transcultural biographies of things. Christine Guth's work on the movement of Hokusai's *Great Wave* across time, space, class, and media provides a model for the analysis of the iconic Ardabil carpet in chapter two.<sup>95</sup> Sarah Cheang's and Anne Gerritsen's work on Asian objects in European interiors offers insights into processes of assimilation of the Other.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, the extension of the global biographical method to materials and technology supports the same emphasis in my thesis.<sup>97</sup>

The writing of such biographies often raises issues of hybridity, the interaction of styles, materials, technologies and ideas of value from distinct types of object and traditions of making, trading and using, as part of an ongoing multi-directional process of change. The concept of hybridity is controversial. Some scholars raise objections to its origins in nineteenth century 'racist biologism', ideas about the mixing of blood and ethnicities.<sup>98</sup> For Homi Bhabha, on the other hand,

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<sup>94</sup> Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>95</sup> Christine Guth, *Hokusai's Great Wave: Biography of a Global Icon* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).

<sup>96</sup> Sarah Cheang, 'Dragons in the Drawing Room: Chinese Embroideries in British Homes, 1860–1949', *Textile History*, vol. 39 no. 2 (2008), 223-249; Anne Gerritsen, 'Domesticating Goods from Overseas: Global Material Culture in the Early Modern Netherlands', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 29 no. 3 (2016), 228-244.

<sup>97</sup> Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Dagmar Schäfer, 'Technology and Innovation in Global History and the History of the Global', *History of the Global*, Berg, pp. 147-165.

<sup>98</sup> Yasmin Gunaratnam, 'Rethinking Hybridity: Interrogating Mixedness', *Subjectivity*, no. 1 vol. 7 (April 2014), 1-17.

The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different [...], a new area of meaning and representation.<sup>99</sup>

Hybridity is used in this sense in my discussion of marginalized copies and versions, my effort to bring them back to the centre of the discussion of patterned pile carpets, and my positioning of them as enriching the experience of these artifacts. Alongside this framing within cultural discourse, hybridity has a pragmatic meaning in the thesis. As Gunaratnam points out a wide vocabulary is used to express versions of hybridity; creolization, *métissage*, introgression, *bricolage*, transculturation.<sup>100</sup> *Bricolage*, discussed further below, is the drive to re-assemble for new purposes ideas, designs, practices that have worked in a different context. It is used in this thesis as a tool to analyse change in carpet design, technology and making, and to create space for the celebration of borrowing and copying.

In addition to creating the model for object biographies and the analysis of hybridity, *The Social Life of Things* includes essays which make a contribution to the specific issues under examination in this thesis. Kopytoff's model of the processes of individuation and commodification at work at different stages in an object's biography underpins my analysis in chapter two of the Ardabil carpet's reinvention in Britain.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, it contains a powerful essay on carpets.

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<sup>99</sup> Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 211

<sup>100</sup> Gunaratnam, 'Rethinking Hybridity', 5.

<sup>101</sup> Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process', *The Social Life of Things*, Appadurai, pp. 64-91



Brian Spooner analyses the fixation on authenticity amongst western consumers and collectors of carpets, a concept explored throughout this thesis.<sup>102</sup> Using his anthropological fieldwork amongst tribal weavers, Spooner highlights differences between what he reports as the experience and intentions of the weavers of tribal carpets and the way those carpets are read in the West. His scepticism about these readings, and his location of them as issues of the market, of nostalgia for the remote and exotic, and of desire for distinction, support the alternative readings I offer in this thesis. Spooner focuses exclusively on tribal weavers and carpets, and does not critique the broader orthodoxy, or discuss canonical carpets. This thesis takes that further step.

Spooner's article is unusual in the literature of what can be defined broadly as global design history, in that it takes patterned pile carpets of Central Asia as its subject. These artifacts, and their cousins from South and West Asia, are little studied within the discipline, and it is one of the contributions to knowledge of this thesis to bring its disciplinary methodologies to bear on them. There are however a handful of exceptions to this relative lack of attention, alongside Spooner. For example, Pennina Barnett's *Rugs R Us (And Them)*, deconstructs the advertising of ethnic rugs in the later twentieth century, offering a model for my account of the advertising of machine-made copies of the patterned pile rugs of South, Central and West Asia in chapter three.<sup>103</sup> Miriam Naji's analysis of carpet-distressing in Morocco, discussed in chapter one, gives theoretical and practical

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<sup>102</sup> Brian Spooner, 'Weavers and Dealers: The Authenticity of an Oriental Carpet', *Social Life of Things*, Appadurai, pp.195-235.

<sup>103</sup> Pennina Barnett, 'Rugs R Us (And Them): The Oriental Carpet as Sign and Text', *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, vol. 30 (Spring 1995), 13-28.

insight into the negotiation between indigenous producers and global consumers over the latter's preoccupation with old carpets, a central theme of this thesis.<sup>104</sup> It is not the purpose of Barnett's and Naji's essays to engage holistically with the European and North American orthodoxy of carpets as I do here, but rather to throw light on revealing examples of the relationship between carpets, their consumers and hegemonic ideology. Meanwhile, the work of Abigail McGowan on jail carpets in India is important to my discussion of the repossession of carpets by indigenous Punjabi weavers in chapter four, as is her broader interest in how material culture forms national identity.<sup>105</sup> However, her work adopts and operates within the assumptions of the European and North American orthodoxy of carpets, rather than critiquing it.

Global design history has been a hospitable environment for 'writing back' to the West.<sup>106</sup> Of particular relevance to my analysis are Partha Mitter and Arindam Dutta, writing back from an Indian perspective, the locus of chapter four. Dutta analyses the use of a British infrastructure centred on London to enforce European ideas of Indian design on Indian practitioners during the British Raj.<sup>107</sup> Mitter's examines the work that Indian art was expected to perform for Europeans across centuries of interaction, and the ideological attitudes revealed

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<sup>104</sup> Myriem Naji, 'A Falsification of Temporality: Carpet Distressing in Morocco', *Surface Tensions*, ed. by Glenn Adamson and Victoria Kelley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 60-72. Other examples include Hallett and Santos, 'Understanding and Conserving Three Islamic Carpets', pp. 257-265.

<sup>105</sup> Abigail McGowan, 'Convict Carpets: Jails and the Revival of Historic Carpet Design in Colonial India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2 (May 2013), 391-416; *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>106</sup> Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, pp. 255-276.

<sup>107</sup> Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

by this.<sup>108</sup> Their work is of broad conceptual and methodological significance to the thesis, especially in its analysis of the negotiations between coloniser and colonized over design.

### ***iii. Carpets in Islamic art history***

As discussed above, this thesis is written within the study of orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality, and within the discipline of global design history. At the same time, it has a relationship with work on carpets in the discipline of Islamic art history.

The discipline has had a sometimes-conflicted relationship with these artifacts. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the study of Persian and Turkish carpets and Islamic art history moved forward together. This was particularly true of the Austro-German school of art history,<sup>109</sup> where scholars and curators such as Wilhelm Bode (1845-1929), Alois Riegl (1858-1905), Julius Lessing (1843-1908), Friedrich Sarre (1865- 1945), Hermann Trenkwald (1866-1942) and Ernst Kuhnel (1882-1964) had a dual interest in carpets and in the formulation of the discipline of Islamic art history. This is discussed in more detail in chapter one.

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<sup>108</sup> Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago; Chicago University Press, 1992); Partha Mitter and Craig Clunas, 'The Empire of Things: Engagement with the Orient', *A Grand Design*, Baker and Richardson, pp. 221-234.

<sup>109</sup> Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empires: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 387-427.

In the second half of the twentieth century, however, carpets lost the central position in Islamic art history that they had held in the early days of the discipline. Eminent Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar (1929-2011) writing in 2000 on the important contribution of collectors to the field, stated:

A special case should be made for rug collectors, who, more often than not, are not interested in other things than their knots and kilims, and whose contribution to cultural history has been almost nil.<sup>110</sup>

Leading contemporary scholar Robert Hillenbrand's words in 2012 that 'carpets, for example, left him [Grabar] cold', warn us against taking Grabar's attitude as representative.<sup>111</sup> However, it reveals the hostility of parts of the academy to the study of carpets by the end of the twentieth century.

It is certainly the case that a handful of super-élite carpets of great historical interest were deeply studied throughout the twentieth century and continue to be so in the twenty-first. As Sheila Blair pointed out in 2014, the Ardabil carpet has its own historiography, discussed in chapter two.<sup>112</sup> Another élite sixteenth century Safavid court carpet, the Boston Hunting Carpet, was the subject of a radical analysis in 1971 by Richard Ettinghausen (American-German, 1906-1979), one of the most respected twentieth century Islamic art historians. Figure

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<sup>110</sup> Oleg Grabar 'The Implications of Collecting Islamic Art', *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850-1950*, ed. by Stephen Vernoit (London: IB Tauris, 2000), pp.194-200 (p.198).

<sup>111</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, 'Oleg Grabar: the scholarly legacy', *Journal of Art Historiography* 6, 1-35 (p.12).  
<[arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/hillenbrand.pdf](http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/hillenbrand.pdf)> [Accessed 6 August 2016]

<sup>112</sup> Sheila Blair *Text and Image in Medieval Persian Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 228.

20 shows a detail analysed by Ettinghausen. He draws attention to the informal body language between the prince, seated, and the cup bearer to his right, who offers a drink. He uses this amongst several examples in the carpet's design to make an argument for the mutuality between social groups in Safavid courtly relationships.<sup>113</sup> This effort to see the design of the carpet as a reflection of social life in the time of its making is a departure from the approach of the European and North American orthodoxy.



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<sup>113</sup> Richard Ettinghausen, 'The Boston Hunting Carpet in Historical Perspective', *Boston Museum Bulletin*, vol. 69, no. 355/356 (1971), 70-81.

Figure 20: Detail of 'Boston Hunting Carpet', handknotted, silk, metal wrapped supplementary wefts, 480 x 225cm, Persia, c.1530. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 66.293)

By the second half of the twentieth century, however, the broader population of carpets no longer held the intensity of interest for scholars of Islamic material culture that they had in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some experiments in new approaches to carpets were conducted within Islamic art history in the 1980s and 1990s, a period of a broader reassessment of both art history and museology. However, Islamic art historians who read carpets through the lenses of economics, social history and anthropology, did not question the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, rather they deployed it in the service of their particular agenda.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, the orthodoxy's focus on taxonomy and provenance continued in the second half of the twentieth century in the work of German Islamic art historians such as Kurt Erdmann and Friedrich Spuhler, both curators of the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin.<sup>115</sup>

Since the turn of the millennium new directions of investigation have emerged across Islamic art history. Graves' and Carey's 2012 review of the status of Islamic art historiography noted an increased 'reflexivity' in Islamic art

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<sup>114</sup> For example, Annette Ittig's economic assessment in 'Ziegler's Sultanabad Carpet Enterprise', *Iranian Studies* vol. 25 no. 1/2 (1992), 103-35; Lisa Golombek's anthropologically-influenced account in 'The Draped Universe of Islam', *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic world*, ed. by Priscilla Soucek (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), pp. 25-38; Helfgott's social history in *Ties that Bind* (1994).

<sup>115</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*; Friedrich Spuhler, *Oriental Carpets in the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin*, trans. by Robert Pinner (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).

history.<sup>116</sup> For example, Islamic art historians have recently questioned the periodicity and geographical definition of their discipline.<sup>117</sup> They have considered the secularizing of Islamic art in the West in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>118</sup> They have analysed processes of collection and display.<sup>119</sup> The constructed nature of European and North American ideas of, in particular, Persian art has been explored.<sup>120</sup> Trade and transnational exchange have been investigated, including clothing, silk and velvet.<sup>121</sup>

This turn in Islamic art history has focused mainly on other media than carpets. However, in the last decade it has also begun to enrich the study of carpets and made them somewhat less marginal to the discipline. The use of carpets in the performance of power in the Safavid and modern periods has been explored.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Moya Carey and Margaret Graves eds., 'Islamic art historiography: Special edition' *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6 (June 2012).

< arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/pdf> [Accessed 6 August 2014]

<sup>117</sup> Gulru Necipoglu, 'The concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches', *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Benoit Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf (London: Saqi Books, 2012), pp. 58-75.

<sup>118</sup> Finbarr Barry Flood, 'From the Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art', *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and its Institutions*, ed. by Elizabeth Mansfield (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 31-53; Wendy M. Shaw, 'The Islam in Islamic Art History: Secularism and the Public Discourse', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6, 1-34.

<sup>119</sup> Vernoit, *Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850 – 1950*; Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Stephen Vernoit eds., *Islamic Art in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Tradition, Innovation and Eclecticism* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

<sup>120</sup> Yuka Kadoi and Ivan Szanto eds. *The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

<sup>121</sup> Alison Ohta, Michael Rogers and Rosalind Wade Haddon eds., *Art, Trade and Culture in the Islamic World and Beyond, from the Fatimids to the Mughals* (London: Ginko, 2016); Sussan Babaie and Melanie Gibson eds., *The Mercantile Effect: Art and Exchange in the Islamicate world in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London: Ginko, 2012).

<sup>122</sup> Kishwar Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Avinoam Shalem, 'Hitler's Carpet: A Tale of One City', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, vol. 55 no.1 (2013), 119-143.

The career of Arthur Upham Pope, a foundational early twentieth century writer and curator of carpets, has been revisited.<sup>123</sup> The narrow focus on Safavid carpets has been opened up to include scholarly work on later periods of Persian production.<sup>124</sup>

Amongst these approaches, the area of study which has the closest relationship to my work is on the role of carpets in materializing the ideological agendas of some major collections and exhibitions.<sup>125</sup> I use this work in chapters one and two as part of my examination of the narrative of carpets that was created through exhibitions and museum displays. I broaden this discussion to consider not only exhibitions and displays which focused on carpets, but to consider the ambiguous place occupied by South, Central and West Asian patterned pile carpets in exhibitions and displays which materialised late nineteenth and twentieth-century ideas about 'world art' and 'primitive art'.<sup>126</sup>

The work I have described above has begun a debate within Islamic art history on the need to shift the scholarly position of carpets and has enriched the context for my analysis in this thesis. However, the focus in Islamic art history still

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<sup>123</sup> Yuka Kadoi, ed., *Arthur Upham Pope and a New Survey of Persian Art* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016); Kishwar Rizvi, 'Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and The Discourse on "Persian Art" in the Early Twentieth Century', *Muqarnas*, no. 24, (2007), 45-65.

<sup>124</sup> Maktabi, *The Persian Carpet*.

<sup>125</sup> Moya Carey, *Persian Art: Collecting the Arts of Iran for the V&A* (London: V&A Publishing, 2017); Cailah Jackson, 'Persian Carpets and the South Kensington Museum: Design, Scholarship and Collecting in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 30 (Sept. 2016), 265-281; Barbara Karl, 'Persian art in 19<sup>th</sup> century Vienna', *The Shaping of Persian Art*, Kadoi and Szanto, pp. 110-130; Eva-Maria Troelenberg, 'Regarding the Exhibition: The Munich Exhibition "Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art" (1910) and its scholarly position', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp.269-278; Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, pp. 189-215.



remains on the canon of so-called 'classical' carpets defined by the European and North American orthodoxy, particularly those in museum collections established in step with the peak of European colonial and economic power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These new perspectives do not extend to questioning the canon itself, or to shifting the focus towards challenger forms of carpets, such as copies or replicas, or carpets made under non-canonical circumstances of production, such as a machine shed. In these important respects, Islamic art history continues to operate within the European and North American orthodoxy which I critique in this thesis.

In the sections above, I have described the location of this thesis in the study of orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality, and in the discipline of global design history. I have described the relationship of the thesis with Islamic art history. In the following sections I describe bodies of thought which enrich my alternative reading of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia; historiographies of the industrialization of craft, the literature of copies and versions, and writings rooted in anthropology, materiality and psychology which support an experiential reading of the human-carpet interaction.

#### ***iv. Historiographies of the industrialisation of craft***

I have discussed the preference in the European and North American orthodoxy for carpets which pre-dated industrial dyes, spinning and weaving methods. This preference was assumed to reflect carpet quality, rather than politically, socially and economically constructed taste. In this thesis, I test this assumption against

different historiographies of industrialization.

The historiography of the industrialization of craft is a spectrum. At one extreme is the narrative that mechanization and automation of, for example, spinning and weaving, and the industrial synthesis of dyes, was key to the differential development of the West, its 'progress', between 1750 and 1950.<sup>127</sup> At the opposite extreme is the narrative that the industrialization of craft was a threat to social cohesion, the psychological and physical health of the individual, cultural and material production, and civilization itself. As I discuss in chapter one, most writing on carpets assumes the truth of the second position.<sup>128</sup>

I have used analyses which complicate this binary to interrogate the European and North American preference for pre-industrial carpets. David Edgerton, for example, challenges a linear model of technological progress, bringing social and economic progress in its wake. He demonstrates how technologies which are believed to be transformative can wither away, or indeed be revived unexpectedly.<sup>129</sup> His is an alternative story of multi-millenia and multi-directional flows of technological change and hybridization, where different variants live alongside each other, meeting the socio-economic and cultural needs of specific times and places. In a similar vein, Dagmar Schafer's work on technology transfer emphasizes the importance of the analysis of the coexistence

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<sup>127</sup> For example, Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>128</sup> For example, William Morris, 'The Revival of Handicraft', (1888), *William Morris*, pp. 187-197.

<sup>129</sup> David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (London: Profile Books, 2006).

of technologies in a specific site, what she calls ‘an intra-cultural perspective’, alongside studies of cross-cultural and cross-geographical technological flows.<sup>130</sup>

Edgerton and Schäfer offer tools for the argument in this thesis that changes in carpet technology are not so much a process of linear evolution or degradation, but rather a broadening of the repertoire of available techniques, each with its own materiality of making experience and finished product, politics, and local context. For example, the environments and technology of the women shown in figure 21 and 22 are disparate, but they are all skilled weavers, working in the mid-twentieth century.



Figure 21: Horizontal loom, Iran, mid-twentieth century. (Jenny Housego)

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<sup>130</sup> Dagmar Schäfer, ‘Technology and Innovation in Global History’, pp. 147-165.



Figure 22: Carpet-weaving machine-loom for Axminster process, 1960s. (STOD 201/1/16/2/4, author's photograph).

David Pye and Peter Dormer further complicate the binary between pre-industrial and industrial making. They reflect on the craftly characteristics of batch production, mechanised and automated manufacturing, exploring, for example, the skills required in the matching of machine settings to the materials used, and the virtuosity involved in maintaining machines.<sup>131</sup> Pye and Dormer offer tools for my analysis of versions and copies of patterned pile carpets made for scale markets, and using industrial technologies, as manifestations of the human creative impulse.

These readings focus on technological, material and social aspects of industrialization. Glenn Adamson offers an account of the nineteenth and

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<sup>131</sup> David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (London: A&C Black, 1968); Peter Dormer *The Art of the Maker: Skill and its Meaning in Art, Craft and Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994); Peter Dormer ed., *The Culture of Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1997).

twentieth-century rejection of industrialisation in favour of handcraft which has its roots in psychoanalytical thought.<sup>132</sup> He suggests that the rejection is psychotherapeutic ‘memory work’, using ‘craft as a response to the trauma of modernity’, with textile production as a major site.<sup>133</sup> The uncovering of autobiographical narratives, ‘memory work’, was one of the founding principles of psychotherapy, initially used by Josef Breuer, and famously developed by Sigmund Freud,<sup>134</sup> and it continues to be central in contemporary psychotherapeutic practice. The psychotherapist seeks to empathetically attune herself to the client’s macro-narrative of current and past events, to uncover deeper and possibly concealed or distorted responses.<sup>135</sup> Psychotherapists recognize the subjectivity of memory, and that it functions politically as well as personally.<sup>136</sup> Adamson’s use of the term in relation to the elevation of ideas of traditional craft in the later part of the nineteenth century suggests that commentators and practitioners were creating new memories for themselves, based on their idea of a pre-industrial golden age of craft work, and absorbing them into their personal narratives. He goes on to identify this process as a response to what he calls ‘the trauma of modernity’. The idea of ‘trauma’ as debilitating psychological distress in response to extreme experience goes back

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<sup>132</sup> Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 182-232.

<sup>133</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, p. 211.

<sup>134</sup> John Launer, ‘Anna O and the “talking cure”’, *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, vol. 98 no. 6 (June 2005), 465-467.

<sup>135</sup> L.E. Angus, J. Lewin, B. Bouffard, D. Rotondi-Trevisan, D. “‘What’s the Story?’: Working with Narrative in Experiential Psychotherapy’, *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy: Practice, Theory, and Research*, L. E. Angus, & J. McLeod eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), pp. 87-101.

<sup>136</sup> Erica Burman, ‘Therapy as Memory Work: Dilemmas of Discovery, Recovery and Construction’, *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. 18 no. 4 (June 2002), 457-469.

to the nineteenth century and was an important part of Freud's thinking.<sup>137</sup> Adamson identifies the trauma as the dislocating urbanization and transformation of working lives by the industrial revolution. He sees the nostalgia for pre-industrial craft practices and the way of life associated with them as a form of psychological reassurance in the face of that trauma. Adamson sets out to demonstrate how the psychological need was met by personal narratives of craft developed by commentators like Ruskin and Morris, and then was transformed by them into a political, moral and aesthetic credo.<sup>138</sup> Adamson traces this psychological mechanism across a number of craft areas and commentators, but draws attention to its particular role in shaping nineteenth century responses to textiles, where the transformation of domestic and workshop practices to the industrial system was particularly extreme, and where the employment of the vulnerable was particularly marked.

I draw on Adamson's work throughout the thesis to explore the relationship between unresolved anxieties about industrialization and the creation of the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. I also use Adamson's model to explore nostalgia about craft traditions, and carpets in particular, as a response to other disturbing discontinuities in the nineteenth century, for example the rapid territorial expansion of the British Empire, and the acceleration of globalization.

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<sup>137</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The aetiology of hysteria' (1896), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1962) vol. 3, pp. 189–221.

<sup>138</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, p. 214.

***v. The literature of copies and versions***

A central objective of this thesis is to return copies and versions, machine-made or handmade, in areas of indigenous production or elsewhere, to the story of carpets. A vigorous discourse on versions, copies, fakes, originals and the authentic exists, which I use in chapters two and three to unsettle the assumptions of the European and North American orthodoxy about the nature of the authentic.

Authenticity and uniqueness have been an important topic in European and North American thinking on the modern experience. A classic formulation is Walter Benjamin's 1935 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, where Benjamin tries to pinpoint the aura of the unique authentic object, in the face of an increasing popular interest in the mass produced and mass experienced.<sup>139</sup> Benjamin sees copies and copying as a threat, concluding that the movement away from the authentic and unique leads to cultural degradation of things, experiences and people. An extreme version of the sense of threat Benjamin articulates is the anxiety about forgery found in the academy and the museum, with their claim to historical authority, and the market, with its need to price. Islamic objects suffer acutely from this anxiety about fakes.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', (1936), *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn, ed. by Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp.211-245 (p 214).

<sup>140</sup> Margaret Graves, 'Fracture, Fracture and the Collecting of Islamic Art', *Faking, Forgery, Counterfeiting, Discredited Practices at the Margins of Mimesis*, ed. by Daniel Becker, Annalisa Fischer, Yola Schmitz (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2018), pp. 91- 109; Oliver

The desire for uniqueness and authenticity, and the sensitivity about forgery and being deliberately taken in, has complicated attitudes to artifacts which draw on previous models in their design and production methods, or which are produced in multiples with only a small degree of variation. For example, in the countries of production of Islamic artifacts, the decorative arts in which they excel are often made in batches of similar items, and design reference to other artifacts and media is valued.<sup>141</sup> The patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia are such objects. A key part of their design process is the copying and re-assembling of elements from previous carpets to create new versions. Figure 23 shows an example of the technology of versioning, a carpet sample containing samples of borders and field motifs from other carpets, from which the weaver assembles a new version.

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Watson, 'Fakes and Forgeries in Islamic Pottery', *Oriente Moderno*, n.s., anno 23 (84), nr. 2 (2004), 517-539.

<sup>141</sup> Stefan Weber, 'A Concert of Things: Thoughts on Islamic Art in the Museum Context', *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Benoit Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf (London: Saqi Books, 2012) pp. 28-57 (p. 36-37).





Figure 23: Handknotted sampler (*wagireh*), wool, Bijar, Iran, early twentieth century.  
(Oturn Carpets)

The European and North American orthodoxy struggles with workshop and batch production. It is strongly attracted to signed carpets, such as the Ardabil, discussed in chapter two, and to the idea of the individual master designer in an élite workshop. Pope and Erdmann, two significant scholars in the field both posited a genius of illustration and illumination whose talents were set to work to revolutionise carpet design in in Persia in the sixteenth century.<sup>142</sup> This approach permits a comfortable fit between a western art-historical masterpiece-driven account of creativity, and the orthodoxy's drive to absorb

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<sup>142</sup> Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets: An Account of their History*, pp. 28-30; Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2258-9.

élite Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman carpets into a western-defined canon of art, discussed in chapter one. The orthodoxy is consequently strongly attracted to signed carpets, apparently indicating a single controlling consciousness, a theme which is explored in chapter two's analysis of the Ardabil carpet.

The attitude to copies and versions in the West is further complicated by their political implications. Benjamin's suspicion of copies and mass production has part of its root system in the attack by Karl Marx (1818-1883) on commodity fetishism as a driver of an exploitative capitalist socio-economic system.<sup>143</sup> Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital exposes the pre-occupation with authenticity as a way of gaining individual competitive cultural edge within capitalist consumerism.<sup>144</sup> The European and North American orthodoxy regards ownership of an old, handmade Persian carpet as evidence of educational sophistication, superiority of taste and consequent power within the system over the owner of a machine-made reproduction, or a contemporary handmade version of a Persian carpet made for export in Pakistan.

I use a range of literature to support my effort in this thesis to rehabilitate copies and versions of these artifacts. The thinking on hybridity discussed earlier offers a framework for understanding the modification of objects across space and time and is fundamental to understanding the material and historical existence of versions and copies. Alongside these are investigations into the perception of copies and versions. Glenn Adamson's forensic account of the constructed nature

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<sup>143</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Hamburg: Verlag von Otto Meisner, 1867), vol. 1 chapter 1.

<sup>144</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

of European ideas of uniqueness, tradition, authenticity and authorship helps frame my discussion on the constructed nature of the orthodoxy.<sup>145</sup> Judy Attfield's assertion that the idea of the 'unique' object is created by the availability of the copy, rather than vice versa,<sup>146</sup> is of particular relevance to the historical circumstances in which the orthodoxy emerged, at a time when mechanization and mass production of carpet weaving became possible. Her insight is relevant to the analysis in chapters two and three.

Alongside these challenges to the orthodoxy's focus on the unique and the authentic, I draw on literature which explores the human experience of copies and versions. Hillel Schwarz, for example, explores examples of the discontinuity in our response to copies, showing how we are psychologically and physically both attracted to and repulsed by them, an ambiguity which is investigated throughout this thesis.<sup>147</sup> Susan Stewart demonstrates the capacity of apparently low value replicated items such as postcards to embody profound emotions when used as mementos, and explores the socio-economic drivers of the distinction between copies and originals.<sup>148</sup> Their readings support my effort to reinstate the experience and responses of owners of machine-made, mass-produced, copies and versions in the narrative of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central, and West Asia.

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<sup>145</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, p. xvii.

<sup>146</sup> Judy Attfield, *Wild Things* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 119-120.

<sup>147</sup> Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>148</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir and the Collection* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 132-169.

## ***vi. The literature of the human-carpet interaction***

The literature of copies and versions contributes to my objective to open up space for an experiential discussion of these artifacts, alongside the political, social and economic implications of carpets and their production methods discussed earlier. This is part of my effort to ‘think from the borders’, to use Mignolo’s phrase. In doing so, I follow the pioneering work of such writers as Rozsika Parker and Elizabeth Wayland Barber, who undertook radical interdisciplinary investigations, exploring how women negotiate social, economic and political agency through textiles, but also investigating the nature of femininity and the female experience textiles express.<sup>149</sup> Their examples of thinking through textiles are part of the genesis of this thesis.

In developing this approach, I have drawn on an eclectic range of writers whose work has its roots in psychology, anthropology, materiality, philosophy and mythography. These are not my specialist fields of expertise, and I do not attempt complete literature reviews of them, or of the broad field of textile studies. Nor are these writings used as frameworks for the entire thesis. Instead this work is used as a series of stimuli helping to open up an exploration of areas of the human-carpet interaction neglected by the European and North American orthodoxy.

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<sup>149</sup> Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Women’s Press, 1984); Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women’s Work, the First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth and Society* (New York: Norton, 1995).

The role of textiles in articulating ideas of consciousness, selfhood and the emotional life has been widely explored. Many writers on textiles point to psychologist Donald Winnicott's suggestions that an exceptionally strong innate attachment exists between humans and textiles. The toddler chooses a blanket or cloth, which becomes dirty and ragged and finally disintegrates, to provide a bridge, a 'transitional object', between the belief that the whole world is the baby, and the recognition that there is a world, and, quite separate, a baby.<sup>150</sup> Judy Attfield builds on this to identify textiles as particularly productive of metaphors describing individuality, proposing a relationship between the physical provisionality of textiles, their lack of durability, and the provisionality of 'contemporary self-identity'.<sup>151</sup> Alongside this a broad literature exploring the role of textiles in the materialization of human emotions and of memory exists and has been used throughout this thesis.<sup>152</sup>

This thesis focuses not on textiles more broadly, but in particular on the interaction between people and patterned pile carpets. As part of its effort to broaden the conversation on these artifacts, it reflects on those parts of that interaction that are unconscious or driven by the underlying dynamics of social organization. It attempts thereby to move out of the structuring, rational, conscious model which has given rise to the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned piled carpet of South Central and West Asia, and to include the emotional, psychological and sensual aspects of the human

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<sup>150</sup> D.W. Winnicott, 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena: A Study of the First Not-me Possession', *International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, vol. 34 (1953), 89-97.

<sup>151</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*, pp.124-134

<sup>152</sup> The field is summarized in 'Emotional Textiles', ed. by Alice Dolan and Sally Holloway, *Textile: Cloth and Culture*, vol. 14. no. 2 (2016).

relationship with these artifacts. This approach is most fully implemented in chapter three, as part of the analysis of the continuities and differences between the designing, making and experiencing of handmade and machine-made carpets, but surfaces throughout the thesis.

The influence of Sigmund Freud is present in many of the writings used in this part of the analysis; in the work for instance of mythographer and cultural historian Marina Warner, psychoanalyst and historian of material culture Jane Graves, cultural and textile historian Pennina Barnett. Marina Warner was inspired by the carpets in Freud's study to describe how carpet patterns echo both the structure of human consciousness, and Freud's intellectual process in weaving together the conscious and unconscious activities of his patients' minds (figure 24).<sup>153</sup> I draw on this to explore the dynamics of the human response to pattern, alongside Jane Graves' Freudian reading of pattern as the source of both benign security and damaging repression. Graves roots what she describes as our addiction to pattern in the child's recognition of the lineaments of her mother's face.<sup>154</sup> By exploring pattern at the unconscious level explored by Warner and Graves, I experiment with a discussion of the pattern of these carpets which is distinct from the judgements of the orthodoxy. Meanwhile Barnett's psycho-analytically inflected analysis of the plane of a carpet, and its association with earlier, more vulnerable forms of selfhood, such as the crawling

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<sup>153</sup> Marina Warner, 'Freud's Couch: A Case History' *Raritan*, vol. 31 no. 2 (2011), 146-163; *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2011), pp. 405- 425.

<sup>154</sup> Jane Graves, 'Pattern, a Psychoanalytical Approach: Pleasure or Oppression', *Bulletin of John Rylands University Library*, vol. 77 no.1 (1995), 21-30.

child, permit novel insights into both the making and using of carpets.<sup>155</sup>



Figure 24: Sigmund Freud's study. (Freud Museum, London)

Anthropology's study of the underlying dynamics of social organisation has also offered fruitful models for my attempt to investigate the psychological, sensual and emotional relationship between people and patterned pile carpets. Suzanne Kuchler has interrogated the role of the knot, based on her fieldwork in the Pacific islands.<sup>156</sup> Kuchler's suggestion that knots and stitches fill and order, or alternatively give freedom to explore, the void that lies in the liminal zone

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<sup>155</sup> Barnett, 'Folds', 184-5.

beyond the known,<sup>157</sup> has informed my analysis of the human pre-occupation with the details of the process of making; of 'who does what?'.<sup>158</sup> Mary Douglas's important study of concepts of pollution, based on her fieldwork on tribal rituals, supports my analysis of carpets as 'dirty' objects, examples of 'matter out of place', in Douglas's terms, anomalies that serve to help define the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable ways of being, experiencing and possessing.<sup>159</sup> Her work offers a platform for my exploration of the psychological, sensual and emotional threats inherent in patterned pile carpets.

An important dynamic in the unconscious and socially conditioned aspects of the relationship between people and patterned pile carpets is the erotics of these artifacts, their connection with sexuality and sensuality. The orientalist model suggests that access to sexuality and sensuality is less available in the West than in the East,<sup>160</sup> and eastern woman semi-clothed or naked on luxurious carpets, sexually available to the male and the western gaze, is repeatedly represented in nineteenth century orientalist paintings. Jean-Léon Gérôme's 1889 painting of Bathsheba seen by the hidden King David, is a powerful expression of transgressive sexuality, and his two props are the city of Jerusalem and a Persian carpet (figure 25). I use Rana Kabbani's analysis of this trope as an entry point into the erotics of the nineteenth and twentieth-century European and North

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<sup>157</sup> Suzanne Kuchler 'Why Knot?', *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, ed. by Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas (London: Berg, 2001), pp. 57-79.

<sup>158</sup> Graves, 'Pattern, a Psychoanalytical Approach', 21-30.

<sup>159</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), pp. 44-45.

<sup>160</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp.178-190.



American response to the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia.<sup>161</sup>



Figure 25: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Bathsheba*, 1889, oil on canvas. (Wikicommons)

I use Rana Kabbani's analysis of this trope as an entrypoint into the erotics of the nineteenth and twentieth-century European and North American response to the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia.

Meanwhile, the designs of these carpets have been read as a form of religious practice and experience in the West.<sup>162</sup> This has been contentious. Later twentieth and twenty-first-century carpet writers mobilized the work of Jung on

<sup>161</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of the Orient* (London: Macmillan, 1986); Rana Kabbani 'Regarding Orientalist Painting Today', *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by Nicholas Tromans (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 40-48.

<sup>162</sup> Amongst many examples, Patricia L. Baker, '20<sup>th</sup> Century Mythmaking: Persian Tribal Rugs', *Journal of Design History*, 10, 4 (1997), 363-74.

archetypes and the collective unconscious,<sup>163</sup> in support of the idea that carpet motifs are part of a system of archetypal symbols writing an ancient religious language, understandable across time and space as part of a shared human psychological heritage.<sup>164</sup> The religious interpretation is challenged by voices writing from anthropology and fieldwork with weavers, who record a more contingent and adaptive use of design.<sup>165</sup> This debate on the sacrosanct nature of carpet motifs is used to analyse the roots of the orthodoxy's commitment to a static design vocabulary in carpets, discussed in chapters one and three, and is challenged by the psychoanalytical readings of pattern discussed above.

There are two sides to the human-textile interaction. The thinking described above offers tools to explore the human emotional and psychological response to carpets. At the same time, textiles participate in the interaction, they have agency in it. This agency is expressed not only through what they represent to people, but through their own materiality and how it operates in the world. The debate on agency developed within Actor Network Theory and has broadened to challenge anthropocentric readings of the material world.<sup>166</sup> This thinking provides a vocabulary for my discussion of the materiality and experiencing of carpets in chapters two and three.

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<sup>163</sup> C.G. Jung, 'Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious', *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1958), part 1 vol. 9. Jung uses mandalas and rock carvings as his illustrations, rather than carpets.

<sup>164</sup> Caroline A. Mason, 'The Geometrical Characteristics of Oriental Carpets' (University of Leeds: Unpublished PhD dissertation, 2002).

<sup>165</sup> Spooner, 'Weavers and Dealers', pp. 195-235; Jon Thompson and Richard Tapper, *The Nomadic Peoples of Iran* (London: Azimuth, 2002); R.D. Parsons, *The Carpets of Afghanistan*, (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1983), pp. 65-67.

<sup>166</sup> Latour, *Re-Assembling the Social*; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010); Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013).

In this section, I have explored the relevance to an enquiry into the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia of the political framework of orientalism, the disciplinary methodology of global design history, the historiography of technology and of copies, and the insights of psychoanalysis, anthropology, materiality studies and philosophy into the human-carpet interaction. The thinkers and writers discussed above are central to my attempt throughout this thesis to interrogate the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia and to open the space of discussion about them.

## **5. Methodology of the thesis**

I have set out to write a 'material history', both a history of certain carpets, but also a history through those carpets, using the stories I tell to enrich the history of the periods in which they developed.<sup>167</sup> Below I describe the methodology I use to achieve these aims; its structure, geographical focus, time frame, and the primary materials on which it is based. I specify the carpets discussed and the analytical method applied to them. I describe the disciplinary position of the thesis and its contribution to knowledge.

### ***i. Structure of the thesis***

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<sup>167</sup> Gerritsen and Riello, 'Writing Material Culture History' and 'Spaces of Global Interactions: The Material Landscapes of Global History', *Writing Material Culture History*, pp. 1-15, pp. 111-134.

The thesis contains this introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction describes the objectives and research questions guiding the thesis, the European and North American orthodoxy in practice, the literature underpinning my reframing of the orthodoxy, and the methodology of the thesis.

Chapter one examines how and why the European and North American orthodoxy developed, probes its limitations, and analyses the work of writers who were of particular significance in shaping its content. They are Wilhelm Bode (German, 1845-1929), William Morris, (British, 1834-1896), Alois Riegl (Austrian, 1858-1905), Arthur Upham Pope (American 1881-1969) and May Hamilton Beattie (Scottish 1908-1997). With the exception of Morris, an artist, political thinker and weaver, these figures were all scholars, collectors and curators. Their nationalities support the claim that this is a European and North American intellectual phenomenon, and hence a European and North American orthodoxy. The works of these writers are used here as primary materials. The chapter interrogates their conclusions and provides a baseline for the analysis of carpets throughout the thesis.

The remaining three chapters take a carpet or group of carpets as their focus, each example chosen because the carpets put pressure on European and North American ideas about these artifacts. The chapters do not attempt a continuous end-to-end history of these carpets, but instead concentrate on these episodes of pressure.

In chapter two, 'Reinventing the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, the focus is the Ardabil carpet, originally woven for the Shia shrine at Ardabil in Persia around 1539 at the behest of Shah Tahmasp I (1514-1576), and displayed from 1893 in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (figure 26). Three episodes of pressure on the European and North American orthodoxy are highlighted in the chapter. The first is the creation of the Ardabil's origin story during the decades following its arrival in London in 1892. The second is the mediation of the idea of the Ardabil by the museum through its choices about display, particularly during the 2005-6 creation of the Jameel Gallery. The third is the stimulus the Ardabil has given throughout its sojourn in the West to versions, copies and reproductions. I examine the narratives that were created as the West reimagined this élite carpet, demonstrating the complex ideologies at work. It becomes the orthodox object that I track throughout the following chapters of the thesis, where I set it in dialogue with the other carpets discussed there.



Figure 26: Ardabil carpet, handknotted, silk warps and wefts, wool knots, 340 knots per square inch, 1044 x 530cm, Persia, c.1539 CE, AH 946. (V&A, London, 272-1893)

In chapter three, 'Remaking the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia', the focus is the machine-made copies and versions of these artifacts made by the Templeton Carpet Manufacturing Company of Glasgow, for example, the Ardabil version in figure 27. Three episodes of pressure from these transgressive carpets on the European and North American orthodoxy are analysed. The first is James Templeton's patenting of the process that made possible the machine-production of patterned pile carpets in 1839. The second is the development from the late nineteenth century of a volume market for replicas and versions of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, to which Templeton responded. The third is the middle decades of the twentieth century, when Templeton sought to create a relationship between its versions and canonical carpets within the orthodoxy. I make two arguments from this analysis. Firstly, I challenge the orthodoxy's clear binary between authentic and inauthentic methods of production, instead exploring the proposition that there is commonality, exchange and sharing of the skills, making, and experience of carpets. Secondly, I uncover the ideological work that machine-made carpets did both inside and outside the European and North American orthodoxy. In its placing of Templeton's carpets within an international network, the chapter is an example of how a domestic case study can be used as an analytical tool in global design history.



Figure 27: Templeton machine-made copy of Ardabil Carpet wool, cotton, jute, Glasgow, c.1930. (STOD 201/1/3/1/5, courtesy of Glasgow University Archives and Special Collections)

The focus of chapter four is a second group of transgressive carpets; handmade versions and copies of carpets from across South, Central and West Asia, made by the Punjabi carpet industry, using designs and technologies from diverse sources across the Eurasian weaving belt, sourcing materials globally, and designing carpets primarily for consumers in Europe and North America. The

region of Punjab was partitioned between Pakistan and India at independence in 1947. The carpets discussed in this chapter come from pre-partition Punjab, and post-partition Pakistan. The chapter examines two episodes of pressure on the orthodoxy. The first is the period between 1860 and 1920 under British rule, when a dialectic emerged between the heterodox and commercial approach of the Punjabi indigenous industry and the British idea of the so-called 'traditional' Indian carpet, an idea materialized in British jail workshops. The second is the escalation of Punjabi carpet making into a world-leading export industry in independent Pakistan after independence in 1947, providing heterodox versions of carpets to global consumers. The Pakistani carpets in figure 28, for instance are loose versions of the Ardabil carpet using its name as a promise of quality. Through its examination of the challenge posed by the indigenous repossession of both the imaginary and the production of these artifacts in an imperial geography, the chapter demonstrates the interconnectedness of the orthodoxy and the hegemony.



Figure 28: Versions of the Ardabil carpet, handknotted, New Zealand wool, Lahore, Pakistan, contemporary (ALRUGS Pakistan)



All four chapters stress ongoing hybridization in carpets as technology, ideas, designs, carpets and people travel, global markets develop, geopolitics and sensibilities change. I challenge the orthodox suggestion that it is possible to identify an Ur version of a type of carpet, a point of peak production, and an arc of decline, testing instead an alternative model of complex, continuous modification and exchange.

## ***ii. The geographical focus and time frame***

Alongside chapter one's intellectual location amongst Europeans and North Americans, chapters two, three and four also have geographical locations significant to their argument.<sup>168</sup> These locations have a strong British and imperial inflection. Chapter two is located in the colonial metropolis of London. Chapter three is based in the Scottish city of Glasgow with its colonial and broader international mercantile and industrial links. Chapter four is located in Lahore and Amritsar in colonial Punjab, and Lahore in independent Pakistan, where cultural ownership of patterned pile carpets moved between the British and the independent Punjabi carpet industry. This permits a sited analysis of the narrative of these artifacts in a single colonial and postcolonial relationship, that between Britain and Punjab. At the same time, given the participation of these places in globalizing markets for carpets and their materials of production, it

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<sup>168</sup> This thesis is not a study of the international practice of collecting. Studies of this include Mercedes Volait, 'Appropriating Orientalism?', *Islamic Art in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, Behrens-Abouseif and Vernoit, pp.131-155; Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850-1950*; Linda Komaroff ed. 'Exhibiting the Middle East: Collections and Perceptions of Islamic Art: Special Edition', *Ars Orientalis* XXX (2000).

enables the reading of carpets as part of an international network of interacting sites.

The time frame of the thesis is from 1840 to the present day, with a focus on episodes of transformation in the remaking and reimagining of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia in that *longue durée*. These episodes are read against the historical process of imperialism, colonialism and decolonization.

Earlier, I identified the 1840s as an approximate starting point for an intensification of interest in these artifacts amongst diverse agents in Europe and North America. The 1840s also offer the starting point for the case studies in chapters two, three and four. Scholars believe that the last sighting of the twin carpets in the shrine at Ardabil was in the early 1840s, before they began the journey that ended for one in the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1893,<sup>169</sup> and for the other in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1953.<sup>170</sup> In 1840, James Templeton patented the chenille process, which permitted the mechanized weaving of patterned pile carpets, and opened his first carpet factory in Glasgow in 1843.<sup>171</sup> A series of Anglo-Sikh wars in the 1840s ended when the British East India Company took possession of Punjab in 1849, at which point the British began their intervention in Punjabi society, economy and culture.

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<sup>169</sup> W.R. Holmes, *Sketches on the Shores of the Caspian* (London: Richard Bentley, 1845), pp. 38-40. Holmes describes two very large, damaged carpets in the shrine, which scholars suggest are the twin Ardabils.

<sup>170</sup> Rexford Stead, *The Ardabil Carpets* (Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1974).

<sup>171</sup> William Quigley co-invented the process but withdrew early from the business. Fred H. Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making 1839-1939* (Glasgow: Collins, privately printed, 1943), p. 15.

The 1840s are also an inflection point for the materials from which such carpets are made. Expanding production put pressure on local supplies of wool in areas that reorganized carpet making to meet export demand. The British colony of New Zealand was established in 1840, and New Zealand merino wool began to be exported across the British imperial free-trade area, including Glasgow and Punjab.<sup>172</sup> Jute was critical to the manufacture of machine-made carpets, providing the backing which stabilized them. The first direct shipment of Indian jute to what became the centre of the imperial jute trade, Dundee in Scotland, was in 1840.<sup>173</sup> The chemistry was put in place for synthetic dyes in the early part of the nineteenth century, and its commercialization began in 1856 with the creation of Mauveine.<sup>174</sup>

In 1851, the Great Exhibition was held in London, the first in a sequence of international exhibitions which accelerated the engagement of European and North American audiences with the decorative arts of the East, including patterned pile carpets. Through its mass appeal the Great Exhibition fired a starting gun for the increase of consumer demand for these artifacts.

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<sup>172</sup> William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 93-110; Malcolm McKinnon, 'International Economic Relations - New Zealand in the World Economy, 19th century', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*.

<[TeAra.govt.nz/en/international-economic-relations/page-1](http://TeAra.govt.nz/en/international-economic-relations/page-1)> [Accessed 10 December 2018]

<sup>173</sup> Anthony Cox, *Empire, Industry and Class: The Imperial Nexus of Jute* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>174</sup> Simon Garfield, *Mauve: How One Man Invented a Colour that Changed the World* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).

### *iii. Primary materials*

Primary materials for this thesis include objects, texts, photographs and experiential practice. The objects are collections of carpets, carpet-making tools and technologies, and their supporting archives in museums and other collections. Collections of carpets used include those at the Louvre, Paris; the MAK, Vienna; the V&A, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art. Smaller private collections of carpets and weaving equipment have been examined, for example the collection of Venice and Alistair Lamb in Hertfordshire, UK.<sup>175</sup> Archives of carpets, tools and technologies used include the Templeton-Stoddard Archive at the University of Glasgow, the Clothworkers' Centre at the V&A, and the Axminster Carpet Museum, Devon, UK.

Textual and photographic records of carpets, carpet making, carpet makers, and the carpet industry are used throughout this thesis. These include exhibition and acquisition records from the V&A Archive, the Arts Council of Great Britain Archive, the Royal Academy Archive, London, the May Beattie Archive at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and the Stoddard-Templeton Archive, Glasgow. The commercial and industrialised production of patterned pile carpets is core to this research, and so business records and commercial marketing materials have been used as primary sources. This is the case particularly in chapters three and four, where such records from Templeton, the PAK Persian Carpets Company,

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<sup>175</sup> Venice Lamb, *Looms Past and Present: Around the Mediterranean and Elsewhere* (Hertfordshire: Roxford, 2005).

the Multan and Lahore Carpet Companies have been consulted. Government textual and photographic records are used to support historical analyses, particularly in chapter four, where India Office, British Government in Punjab, Pakistani Government and United Nations records have been examined.

A set of foundational European and North American carpet writings and exhibitions and their catalogues are also regarded as primary sources, because the orthodoxy they created is second only to the carpets themselves as a subject of analysis throughout this thesis. The foundational writers are Riegl, Bode, Morris, Pope, and Beattie, as discussed above. The exhibitions include the 1891 'Exhibition of Oriental Carpets', Vienna; the 1910 'Masterpieces of Mohammedan Art', Munich; the 1931 'International Exhibition of Persian Art', London; and the carpet exhibitions included in the 1976 'World of Islam Festival', held across the UK. These sources are analysed in chapter one.

The final primary source is my knowledge of carpet making and of carpets as objects. I have drawn on workshop experiences with carpet specialists, curators and weavers. These include a series of handling sessions with Jon Thompson, working with his collection, April-June 2011; a series of handling sessions with Jennifer Wearden, formerly V&A curator of textiles, using the V&A collection, September-Oct 2012; a visit to the Ratti Centre, Metropolitan Museum of Art to work with Professor Walter Denny in July, 2013; and handling sessions at the V&A Clothworkers' Centre with weaver Jonathan Cleaver of Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, and Glasgow University, in August 2017.

These diverse primary materials have been mined for historical data, stylistic, material and technological change, but also as evidence of ideological positions, and changing sensibilities. I have triangulated different types of primary sources, objects, texts, photographs, practice, to avoid over-interpretation of a single source. I have also tried to maintain sensitivity to the independent existence of photographs, objects and texts, with meaningful histories of their own, quite separate from the use to which I put them.<sup>176</sup>

#### ***iv. The carpets and the analytical method applied to them***

Whilst many carpets are discussed throughout the thesis, from locations across the Eurasian rug-weaving belt, and across six centuries of production, six individual carpets and one family of carpets are particularly important to my argument (figure 29).

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<sup>176</sup> Elizabeth Yale, 'The History of Archives: The State of the Discipline', *Book History*, vol. 18 (2015), 332-359; Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Image Matters', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3 (2008), 777-791.



Figure 29: Main carpets in this thesis (1/2).

Top, Ardabil carpet, handknotted, silk, wool, 1044 x 530cm, Persia, c.1539 CE, AH 946.

(V&A, London, 272-1893).

Centre, Templeton machine-made copy of Ardabil Carpet wool, cotton, jute, Glasgow,

c.1930. (STOD 201/1/3/1/5).

Bottom, machine-made Khotan rugs, wool and cotton, Glasgow, early twentieth century.

(STOD/201/1/1/1/1)





Figure 30: Main carpets in this thesis, 2/2.

Top right, Templeton machine-made 'parquet square' copy of the Trinitarias carpet, Abbey quality wool, Glasgow, mid twentieth century. (STOD 201/1/1/7).

Top left, handknotted wool carpet, 330 x 250cm, Lahore Central Jail, Punjab, c.1880. (V&A, London, IS.797-1883).

Bottom left, handknotted carpet, cotton, wool, silk, Amritsar, c.1900. (Doris Leslie Blau, New York).

Bottom right, handknotted Bokhara carpet, New Zealand wool, Pakistan, c.2017 (Walmart Online Store, US)

The first is the Ardabil carpet, which anchors the discussion on the European and North American orthodoxy and demonstrates the process by which the orthodoxy constructed meaning. The second is a 1930s version of the Ardabil carpet important to my discussion of the status of copies and versions. A family of early twentieth century Templeton 'Khotan' carpets supports my discussion of the intimate relationship between machine-made and handmade carpets, and the ideological work to which machine-made carpets are put. A mid-twentieth century Templeton copy of the Trinitarias carpet, a Persian or Indo-Persian carpet owned by Templeton, supports my discussion of their desire to associate their versions with canonical originals. Three carpets from Punjab form the final core group of carpets. The first is a jail carpet woven in Lahore Central Jail between 1880 and 1882, which supports my exploration of the British effort to control both the production and the design vocabulary of carpets made in Punjab under its jurisdiction. The second is a commercial carpet woven independently of direct British control in Amritsar around 1890, which permits the analysis of the heterodox adaptation pursued by indigenous weavers. The third is an example of a type of carpet woven in the Pakistani carpet-industry throughout the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, known globally as a Bhokara, and claimed to be Pakistan's most successful carpet export. It supports a discussion of Pakistan's repossession of the Eurasian imaginary of the patterned pile carpet, and the illustration of the mechanisms of exclusion within the European and North American orthodoxy. Alongside these seven, reference is made to a wide variety of patterned pile carpets, from locations across the Eurasian rug-weaving belt, and across six centuries of production.

Where possible the carpets, or similar examples, and their production tools, have been physically examined, to understand their materiality. Accounts of their making, by makers and observers of makers, have been analysed. This focus on materiality aims to place a haptic and experiential account alongside the theoretical and historical approach also found here.

***v. The contribution to knowledge of this thesis***

The disciplinary and theoretical framework I described above makes possible a broadening of the discussion on the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. This broader discussion includes their hybridization across time, space and culture, as part of global networks of ideas, technology, materials and peoples. This diversifies the orthodox body of thinking, with its strong focus on fixing provenance in a single time and place, and permits a broader discussion of the creativity involved in carpet-making. The approach draws on ideas often neglected in specialist carpet writing, such as insights from materiality, anthropology and psychology, permitting an original account of the unconscious, emotional and sensual encounters between people and carpets, and of their relationship to the underlying drivers of social organisation. The population of carpets subjected to this scrutiny includes those commonly marginalised by the orthodoxy, and explores what canonical and marginalised carpets share, rather than focusing on where they are different.

The thesis takes the critique of the orthodoxy much further than other writers who approach patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia from a

scholarly perspective. These writers tend to accept the values articulated in the orthodoxy, even when they debate its conclusions about specific carpets. By standing outside it, developing instead object-led, situated, haptic and experiential accounts of carpets, I uncover stories which trouble the monolithic evaluations of the orthodoxy. This critique and repositioning is at the heart of the contribution to knowledge of this thesis.

Many of the carpets discussed in the thesis have not previously been considered worthy of analysis at all. However, these are the carpets which form the core of most people's experience of these artifacts, be they weavers or users. The inclusive choice of carpets in this thesis is an area of innovation, and rescues from neglect important populations of versions and copies.

The thesis helps extend the agenda of the disciplines with which it has closest links. Whilst global design history has many examples of micro-histories of disruptive objects, few of them touch on carpets. Similarly, whilst historians of Islamic art history and material culture discuss carpets, their focus is on elite versions as defined by the orthodoxy, rather than on non-canonical versions and copies.

The introduction and subsequent four chapters each make their own distinct contribution to knowledge. The unpicking of the components of the European and North American orthodoxy in chapter one is more complete than other critiques.

The examination in chapter two of the Ardabil carpet as an exemplar of the orthodoxy, and the ideological work that it is expected to do in Europe and North America, is different to approaches which accept its canonical status, or are primarily historical or museological.<sup>177</sup> Chapter three analyses Templeton's machine-made carpets as a test case for the orthodoxy's binary between authentic and inauthentic, and to explore the ideological work machine-made copies and versions are expected to do in the West. This innovative approach is distinct from and extends other work done on Templeton and the textile network of southwest Scotland, which is primarily historical in focus.<sup>178</sup>

Chapter four analyses the carpets of Punjab and modern Pakistan. It extends and repositions existing work on the design of carpets in nineteenth century India, which have in the main focused on the jail industry, instead placing the emphasis on the independent indigenous industry.<sup>179</sup> This independent industry has previously been analysed primarily as part of the economic structure of India, rather than through the broader ideological and material approach taken here.<sup>180</sup> The close focus on the independent carpet making industry rather than the jail industry, on Punjab rather than the whole of India, and the application of the conceptual framework and object-led approach discussed earlier, makes an

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<sup>177</sup> See chapter two for the historiography of the Ardabil.

<sup>178</sup> Helena Britt ed., *Interwoven Connections: The Stoddard-Templeton Design Studio and Design Library, 1843-2005* (Glasgow: Glasgow School of Art, 2013); Sally Tuckett and Stana Nenadic, *Colouring the Nation: the Turkey Red Printed Cotton Industry in Scotland c.1840-1940* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland Publications, 2013); Jonathan Cleaver, 'The Design of Machine-Made Carpets and Technological Innovation in the Stoddard Templeton Archives' (University of Glasgow: unfinished PhD thesis, begun September 2016).

<sup>179</sup> McGowan, 'Convict Carpets'. Her geographic focus is the Bombay Presidency.

<sup>180</sup> Tirthanker Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

original contribution to the discussion. Chapter four also includes analysis of the carpets of modern Pakistan, which have been subject to little study, despite Pakistan's role as one of the largest global exporters of patterned pile carpets. Therefore, chapter four also creates new knowledge around the carpets of Pakistan.

A final important contribution of this thesis is to reposition these artifacts in the conversation about the fundamental nature of creativity, how human beings make things. It raises questions about the relationship of the skills of the artisan, the designer, the manufacturer and the entrepreneur. It uses the example of patterned pile carpets to explore the impact on making of the constraints placed around artifacts by hegemonic groups. It contributes to the discussion of issues of originality and adaptation, of authenticity and authorship. It sets out to offer these carpets a wider participation in this discussion than the restricted role of exemplars of the traditional and the Other.

## **Chapter One**

### **Creating a European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia**

#### **Introduction**

Modern carpet specialists, examples of which are discussed in the preceding introduction, might well challenge the idea that their practice is part of an orthodoxy. They might not agree with my description of it as intuitions and preferences which have solidified through frequent application and the carrying forward of precedent, into 'facts', seeing it instead as the bedrock on which an understanding of carpets is based. At risk for them are important vested interests; their own financial investment in carpets, and the stability of the market in which they are traded; their personal cultural capital, and professional and social status as experts; the epistemic dominance of the European and North American orthodoxy, and the viability of the worldview that it underpins. The existence of these vested interests adds urgency to the interrogation of the orthodoxy conducted here.

I begin this chapter by probing the limitations of the tools and practice of carpet evaluation based on the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. I argue that it cannot be accepted on its own terms and should properly be considered as a construct. In

section two I go on to analyse the historical pressures which brought the orthodoxy into being in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the work of a group of foundational writers. Section three investigates the roots of their views, using tools described in the introduction, from the study of orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality, global design history, histories of the industrialisation of craft, the literature of copies, and insights from anthropology, materiality and psychoanalysis. Section four analyses the materialization of the European and North American orthodoxy through exhibitions and museum displays from the mid nineteenth century onwards, and I conclude in section five with a discussion of the ongoing vitality of the orthodoxy in a network outside the academy and the museum.

Important primary materials for this chapter are the original works of the foundational contributors to the orthodoxy; Riegl, Morris, Bode, Pope and Beattie. The photographic and catalogue records of exhibitions and museums which materialized the orthodoxy are also used, including the V&A, the MAK and the Louvre, the 1910 exhibition 'Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art', Munich, the 1931 'International Exhibition of Persian Art', London, and the 1976 'World of Islam Festival', London, Sheffield and Birmingham. The archives of The Arts Council of Great Britain, the Royal Academy, London, and the May Beattie Archive, Oxford have also been consulted.

### **1. The limitations of the orthodoxy in practice**

As outlined in the introduction, the orthodoxy and its practitioners depend



heavily on four techniques to establish provenance and authenticity: the use of a taxonomy of designs; the tracing of an arc of decay in designs through time; the analysis of the structure of spinning, plying, weaving, and knotting; and the types of fibres and dyes used in a carpet. From this the practitioner establishes the place and date of making of a carpet and derives a hierarchy of 'better' and 'worse' carpets. Below I demonstrate the limitations of this approach.

### ***i. Taxonomies of design***

A number of taxonomies are brought to bear in the orthodoxy's attempt to name a carpet, and the group to which it belongs. One taxonomy associates carpets with the Renaissance paintings in which they are represented, for example 'Lotto' or 'Holbein' carpets (figure 9, chapter one). This tells us little about the carpets, offering instead a visual aide-memoire for European and North American commentators, collectors and dealers who are often as familiar with the western tradition of art as with the material culture of the areas of indigenous production. The inventors of this method, Julius Lessing (1843-1908) and Wilhelm Bode, were both European art historians as well as carpet specialists. The association persisted through the twentieth century. The 1982 exhibition 'Eastern carpets in the Western world', which matched carpets against the European paintings in which they were represented was co-curated by a curator of textiles, Donald King, and a historian of western art, David Sylvester.<sup>1</sup> The method creates an arbitrary privileging of the version of a pattern or motif

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<sup>1</sup> Donald King and David Sylvester, 'The Eastern Carpet in the Western World: From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century', Hayward Gallery, London, 20 May -10 July 1983.

which existed at the point the European painting was made, a focus which again gives little insight into the carpet, but which stimulates the absorption of the carpet into a western art hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> I begin with this methodology not because it is the most important, but because it is the most illustrative of a process of appropriating the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia into a western taxonomy.

Meanwhile, the attempt to name groups of carpets through a relationship between places and types of designs is equally vexed. Towns associated with particular carpet designs are as likely to be trading centres as production locations.<sup>3</sup> Even at regional level, fixing provenance geographically is difficult. Many areas of indigenous production had, and in some cases still have, mobile nomadic or semi-nomadic populations, or populations which repeatedly fled political turbulence across the Eurasian landmass, or moved for economic reasons along extensive land and maritime trading networks.<sup>4</sup> Motifs and patterns moved with them. The taxonomies used for naming are ambiguous.

## ***ii. The arc of decay***

Equally ambiguous are the orthodoxy's tools for dating. An important component is the idea that there has been an arc of decay in carpet-making since its peak, which is commonly taken to be the court carpets of sixteenth and

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<sup>2</sup> Troelenberg 'Regarding the Exhibition', 1-34.

<sup>3</sup> The Pakistani 'Bokhara' carpet, discussed in chapter four, is a modern example of this. Parsons, *The Carpets of Afghanistan*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp.1-27.

seventeenth century Safavid Persia, Ottoman Anatolia and Mughal India, with Persia as first amongst equals. As discussed in the introduction, the orthodoxy suggests that there have been two processes of decay, one a gradual erosion of standards in court carpets as these empires declined, the other a dilution of technique, pattern and motif by transmission into workshop and village weaving. This concept was central to Alois Riegl's theoretical approach to the development of design in carpets, and to his curatorial analyses of individual carpets,<sup>5</sup> and has persisted into twenty-first-century scholarship, in, for example, Jon Thompson's analysis of Safavid carpet design.<sup>6</sup> The current catalogue note for the mid-eighteenth century garden carpet in figure 1, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, draws particular attention to its lack of accomplishment compared to sixteenth century versions, rather than to its intrinsic qualities.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alois Riegl, 'The Carpets', *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna*, ed. by Caspar Purdon Clarke (London: South Kensington Museum, 1892), plates XCI and XCII.

<sup>6</sup> Jon Thompson, 'Early Safavid Carpets and Textiles', *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501-1576*, ed. by Jon Thompson and Sheila Canby (Milan: Skira editore, 2003), pp. 271-317 (pp. 271-2); pp. 271-2.

<sup>7</sup> < [metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/447583](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/447583) > [Accessed July 15, 2018].



Figure 1: Detail of 'Garden' carpet, handknotted, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 309 x 190cm, Persia, Kurdistan, c.1750-1800. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.100.128)

The assumption of an arc of decay can be readily challenged. The discovery in 1949 of the Pazyryk carpet, preserved in ice in the Altai mountains of Siberia and dated to the third century BCE, indicates that high levels of technical and aesthetic accomplishment had been achieved in pile carpet-weaving more than a thousand years before Safavid Persia, and the Ottoman and Mughal Empires (figure 2).<sup>8</sup> The rarity of surviving examples of carpets in the centuries before the assumed sixteenth century peak in the territories ruled by these empires distorts our idea of how exceptional they are.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile twentieth century

<sup>8</sup> Parham, 'How Altaic/Nomadic Is the Pazyryk Carpet?', 34-39.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, 'Early Safavid Carpets and Textiles', pp. 271-317 (pp. 271-2); Richard Ettinghausen, 'The Boston Hunting Carpet in Historical Perspective', 70-81.

work on later carpets challenges the assertion of an abrupt decline in production quality.<sup>10</sup> But the idea that a linear path of dilution of both design and quality can be traced from court to workshop to village, and from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the industrial age, when it is believed to disastrously accelerate, is fundamental to the orthodoxy's assessment of the quality and value of these carpets.



Figure 2: 'Pazyryk' carpet, handknotted, wool, 200 x 183 cm, c.300 BCE, production location unknown. (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, 1687-93)

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<sup>10</sup> Maktabi, *Persian Carpets*; Walter Denny, *The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets* (Washington: Textile Museum, 2002).

The arc of decay hypothesis assumes that the best weavers would be found in elite ateliers sponsored by the rich and powerful, and that the carpets they produced would therefore be the standard against which others should be measured, and from which a lesser demotic tradition would be derived. As discussed in more detail below, early European thinkers on carpets often came from an intellectual environment with a focus on the European Renaissance. The centralisation of artisanal talent in Renaissance courts was part of their historical understanding, and they applied it to carpets. However, this is challenged by analyses of the model of carpet weaving in South, West and Central Asia.<sup>11</sup> Siawosch Azadi argues for a distributed model of carpet-weaving skills, materials and trade, reading from the tribal and nomadic carpet-weaving environments in these geographies.<sup>12</sup> Historical documents from the Mongol, Timurid, Safavid and Ottoman periods record that military booty in the region included skilled artisans, and that imperial ateliers were indeed enriched by this.<sup>13</sup> However, unless they were troubled by imperial military campaigns, skilled weavers producing carpets of distinction for domestic use and trade in remote parts of South, Central and West Asia were mainly doing so in tent, village and workshop environments.<sup>14</sup> The production of exceptional carpets is likely to have been more diffuse than is suggested by the European and North

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<sup>12</sup> For a summary see Siawosch Azadi, 'CARPETS xiv. Tribal Carpets', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/8, pp. 893-896.

<[iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xiv](http://iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xiv)>[accessed 5 July 2018]

See also Azadi, *Catalogue for the Inauguration of the Carpet Museum* (Tehran: 1977).

<sup>13</sup> For example, Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane 1403-1406*, trans. by Clements Robert Markham (London: 1859), p.21.

<sup>14</sup> May Beattie, 'On the making of carpets', *The Eastern Carpet in the Western World: From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. by Donald King and David Sylvester (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1983), pp. 106-109; Jon Thompson, *Carpets from the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1988), pp. 5-33.

American orthodoxy. This historical difference throws further doubt on the idea of an arc of decay.

### *iii. Structure and fibres*

The insights offered by analysis of the spinning, plying, weaving and knotting of diverse fibres seem to offer a more reliable basis for judgement, and seem to promise to bring the weaver back into the story. However, the ambition is often to refine provenance using comparable spinning and weaving structures, tying a carpet to a location, and tying individual carpets into a family. The security of the conclusions of structural analysis however is undermined by the mobility of weavers and their animals, tools and techniques, and of carpets themselves, across the Eurasian rug weaving belt. Symmetrical Turkish or Ghiordes knots are found in carpets from Persia and modern Iran and Afghanistan, areas which are associated by the connoisseur with asymmetrical knots. Counterclockwise S-spun fibres are found in carpets from areas defined by connoisseurs as clockwise Z-spinning locations.<sup>15</sup> Fibres from different locations were traded in the market towns of the silk routes and in maritime ports, then taken away elsewhere to be spun, plied, dyed and woven. Different strains of goats, sheep and camels interbred. Scholarly opinion as a consequence is subject to significant revision on the source location of even the most studied of carpets, as May Beattie's revisiting of the provenance of Vase and Sanguzsko carpets, discussed below, demonstrates. Again, this undermines the integrity of the orthodoxy's tools.

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<sup>15</sup> The correspondence between May Beattie and Grant Ellis contains many examples of such anomalies. Box 52, May Beattie Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

#### *iv. Dyes*

Equally, the distinction between 'natural' and 'synthetic' dyes is more conflicted than the rigour of its application suggests. Both types of dyes are combinations of organic and inorganic materials. Organic aniline, 'Turkey Red', and organic toluidine were mixed with inorganic potassium dichromate in one of the first 'synthetic' dyes, Perkins' Mauve, discovered in 1856.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, natural dyes usually require the use of a mordant to fix them, often an inorganic compound such as potassium aluminum sulphate, which is recorded in use in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, although some dyes can be made by a process closer to the kitchen than the laboratory, some pre-industrial dyes could only be prepared by experts in their synthesis. Indigo is an example of this and travelling indigo dyers have been part of the textile economy for centuries.<sup>18</sup> There was a genuine objection to the early dyes introduced after Perkins' breakthrough. They were often unstable, quickly bleaching and greying. This problem was largely fixed by the turn of the twentieth century, but the early negative association remained.<sup>19</sup> Given the lack of clear boundaries between dye types suggested by this analysis, it seems that the objection to industrially-produced dyes lies at least partly in the fact that they are neither indigenous nor

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<sup>16</sup> Garfield, *Mauve*; Various, *Commemorating the Discovery of Aniline Dyes, Proceedings of the Perkins Centennial 1856-1956* (New York: American Association of Textile Chemists and Colourists, 1956).

<sup>17</sup> Martin Levey, 'Alum in Ancient Mesopotamian Technology', *Isis*, vol. 49 no.2 (June 1958), 166-169.

<sup>18</sup> Jenny Balfour-Paul, *Indigo*, (London: British Museum Publications, 2000), pp. 115-144.

<sup>19</sup> James Morton, 'History of the Development of Fast Dyeing and Dyes', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 77 no. 3986 (April 12, 1929), 544-574.



traditional.

Carpet specialists are confident that they can discriminate between synthetic and natural dyes by eye. However, the relativity of colour perception has been raised by both scientists and philosophers.<sup>20</sup> Recent scientific research suggests that individuals vary significantly in their ability to perceive colours.<sup>21</sup> Philosophers including Goethe and Wittgenstein have speculated on the possibility that the nature of colour is constructed, and depends partly on cultural factors.<sup>22</sup> These findings also call into question the validity of ideas of better and worse colour relationships, codified for instance in Chevreul's colour wheel.<sup>23</sup> An individual practitioner of the orthodoxy might counter that his or her position is based on comparative research amongst many carpets. However, the debate on colour perception raises the question of whether the comparative research on colour of one connoisseur is sharable and shared with others, for example the makers of carpets in the countries of indigenous production.

Meanwhile, modern techniques of chromatography, digital microscopy and multi-spectral imaging applied to carpets dating from the mid-nineteenth century onwards have shown mixtures of synthetic and natural dyes in a single carpet,<sup>24</sup> and have undermined confidence in what George O'Bannon called the

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<sup>20</sup> John Gage, *Colour and Meaning: Art, Science and Symbolism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Timothy H. Goldsmith, 'What Birds See', *Scientific American* (July 2006), 69–75.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Westphal, *Colour: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> M.E. Chevreul, *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours*, trans. by C.Martel (London: 1854).

<sup>24</sup> Paul Mushak, 'A General Technical Commentary on Synthetic Dyes in Oriental Rugs', *Oriental Rug Review*, vol. 4 no. 5 (1984); and the extensive work of Harald Bohmer.

'experienced eye'.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, these techniques demonstrate the resilience of the orthodoxy, as the chemical signatures of dyes are now used to confirm taxonomies of location, on the assumption that certain dyes can be connected to certain places.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, the orthodoxy's position on dyes and colour in patterned pile carpets is noticeably different to that observed in nineteenth and twentieth century dress and furnishings more broadly, where the vivid new colours were often adopted enthusiastically by both manufacturers and consumers.<sup>27</sup> In these environments, colours and the dyes which produce them are closely associated with shifting questions of economics, fashion and taste. The European and North American orthodoxy and its practitioners, however, offers a reading of dyes and colour as an objective system of judgement, rather than a question of taste.

Important in the orthodoxy's approach to colour is the belief that natural dyes fade in a superior way to synthetic dyes. It is their faded state, found in old carpets, that is most highly prized.

When they [the colours ] all faded at a similar rate, and maintained their original hues as did the better natural dyes, then the rug changed predictably, and was often thought to improve in mellowness with age.

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<sup>25</sup> Markus Meyer et al, ' $\mu$ -XRF Studies on the Colour Brilliance in Ancient Wool Carpets', *Scanning* (2017).

<[hindawi.com/journals/scanning/2017/6346212](http://hindawi.com/journals/scanning/2017/6346212)>[Accessed 17 March 2019]

<sup>26</sup> Hallett and Santos, 'Understanding and Conservating Three Islamic Carpets', pp. 257-265.

<sup>27</sup> Charlotte Crosby Nicklas, 'Splendid Hues: Colour, Dyes, Everyday Science and Women's Fashion, 1840-1875', (University of Brighton: Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2009).

With the new [nineteenth century] synthetic dyes not only did some colours fade quickly, but some changed hue as they did so [...] The problem here [with twentieth-century chrome dyes] however was that there was little mellowing with age.<sup>28</sup>

The vocabulary used in this analysis in a scholarly journal by a carpet specialist is imprecise and subjective. The central proposition is that natural dyes change predictably, losing their intensity at the same rate, whereas synthetic dyes are more unpredictable. However, different natural dyes are made from chemically very different compounds to each other, and there is no reason why those different dyes would change at the same rate. There is also a connection made between this predictability and the aesthetic quality of mellowness, a connection which is not validated in the article.

To achieve this talismanic faded effect of old carpets, from the nineteenth century onwards carpets meant for export have been exposed to the traffic of the streets and more latterly chemically washed by their producers in the countries of indigenous production, in what Myriam Naji has described as 'the falsification of temporality'.<sup>29</sup> This in turn produced two categories of fading, one perceived by as 'genuine', resulting from the slow ageing of organic dyes and the other as 'artificial', resulting from the fast ageing of synthetic dyes, or of natural dyes deliberately distressed.<sup>30</sup> The orthodoxy values 'genuine' ageing most highly, in

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<sup>28</sup> Eiland, 'Dissemination of Synthetic Dyes', 148-149.

<sup>29</sup> Naji, 'Carpet Distressing in Morocco', *Surface Tensions*, Adamson and Kelley, pp. 60-72.

<sup>30</sup> Morris, 'On Dyeing as an Art', (1889), *William Morris*, pp. 66-73.

effect ageing which places the carpet in the pre-industrial period.

I argue that when practitioners of the orthodoxy detect differences between natural and synthetic dyes in a carpet, or identify a superior process of ageing in natural dyes, they are expressing an idiosyncratic personal perception of colour, and reflecting the orthodoxy in which they participate, rather than identifying a measurable characteristic of the carpet's dyes. For instance, I read the colours of the highly-prized Schwarzenberg carpet in figure 3 not as a 'subtly varying',<sup>31</sup> and 'mellow',<sup>32</sup> or even 'vivid',<sup>33</sup> descriptors often used for the palette of old Persian carpets, but rather as pleasingly high contrast, discordant and arresting. Equally, the intense colours and contrasts visible on the back of the synthetically-dyed carpet in figure 4, seem to me to have faded down on the side which has been exposed to light to an attractively muted colour range, rather than 'the foul blotches of capitalist dyers' which fade to the 'livid ugliness', described by William Morris.<sup>34</sup> Both examples demonstrate the subjectivity of visual perception and taste.

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<sup>31</sup> Wearden, *Oriental Carpets and their Structure*, p.17.

<sup>32</sup> Eiland, 'Dissemination of Synthetic Dyes', 148.

<sup>33</sup> *Howard Hodgkin, Portrait of the Artist* (London: Sotheby's, 24 October 2017), lot 241.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, 'On Dyeing as an Art', pp. 66-73 (p.72).



Figure 3: 'Schwarzenberg' carpet, handknotted, cotton warp, silk weft, woollen pile, 517 x 217cm, Persia, sixteenth century. (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, CA.60.2003)



Figure 4: Village or workshop flatwoven carpet, handknotted, wool, some synthetic dyes (orange and magenta), Iran or Turkey, mid- twentieth century. Top left and right, back of carpet, bottom left, front of carpet (Author's collection)

This resistance to industrial dyes and privileging of pre-industrial materials and methods demonstrates what Johannes Fabian describes as the denial of coevalness, the resistance of hegemonic societies to the full participation of the Other in the contemporaneous world.<sup>35</sup> It is also a manifestation of the anxiety about the impact of industrialization, mechanization and automation discussed in both the introduction and later in this chapter. The insistence on natural dyes has part of its root system in the idea of nature as an aesthetic and ethical norm in counterpoint to industrialization, which developed from the Enlightenment onwards in Europe, and was at the heart of the Romantic Movement.<sup>36</sup> Dyes are an important example of the use of an aesthetic rationale by the European and North American orthodoxy and the twenty-first-century connoisseur who has inherited it, to describe a series of preferences which arise from political, economic, ideological and psychological roots.

This probing of the practice arising from the European and North American orthodoxy of patterned pile carpets demonstrates that it is not a neutral process of questioning and understanding the object, but instead an agenda-driven process of constructing difference, creating exclusions, and making claims, many of which, as this section demonstrates, can be unpicked. The practice cannot, as the orthodoxy might suggest, be accepted on its own terms as a fact-base for judging carpets. Rather it derives from a set of ideas about patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia which was constructed in Europe and North

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<sup>35</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Claire McKechnie and Emily Alders, 'Introduction: Literature, Science and the Natural World in the Long Nineteenth Century Special Edition', *Journal of Literature and Science*, vol.5 no.2 (2012), 1-4.

America during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Below in sections two and three, I discuss the historical pressures which brought that orthodoxy into being from 1840 onwards, and the key ideas in its formation.

## **2. Historical pressures creating the need for an orthodoxy**

From around 1840 there was a transformation in the intensity of the encounter between Europe and North America and these artifacts, as a diverse set of European and North American scholarly, artistic, commercial and popular agents became strongly engaged with them. By the 1870s, this had reached the peak described by economic historians and carpet specialists as the oriental carpet boom.<sup>37</sup>

The oriental carpet boom had multiple causes. Throughout the nineteenth century, European and North American exploration and colonialism created encounters with societies producing these artifacts. Improving trade links and communications brought a greater number and variety of types of these carpets to the European market.<sup>38</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, international exhibitions brought both contemporary commercial production and old carpets to a wider public,<sup>39</sup> and newly developing museums across

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<sup>37</sup> Annette Ittig, 'CARPETS xi. Qajar Period', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/8, 877-883, <[iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xi](http://iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xi)> [accessed June 2015]; Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 134-142; Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective, 1500-1925* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Helfgott, *A Social History of the Iranian Carpet*, pp. 83-125.

<sup>39</sup> For example, the Great Exhibition, London, 1851, the Exposition Universelle, 1878, Paris, 'Old Oriental Carpets', 1891, Vienna, 'Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art', 1910, Munich, discussed later in this chapter.

Europe and North America displayed exemplary versions.<sup>40</sup> Collectors, dealers and intermediaries provided carpets for these foundational collections, establishing European and North American connoisseurial standards in the process.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, an increase in and wider distribution of disposable income throughout the nineteenth century enabled more people to decorate their houses with carpets.<sup>42</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, magazines and periodicals advertised carpets and gave taste advice on how to choose and use them,<sup>43</sup> and department stores made them easy to acquire.<sup>44</sup>

These factors stimulated increased demand in Europe and North America, and in turn led to an attempt to increase supply. Local entrepreneurs in Asia increased and reorganized production, using factory disciplines and the outsourcing of piece-work, and importing wool and synthetic dyes.<sup>45</sup> European and North American entrepreneurs such as Anglo-Swiss Ziegler, the British Oriental Carpet

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<sup>40</sup> These included the South Kensington Museum in London (1852/7), the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris (1905), the Kunstgeberwemuseum in Berlin (1868), the HandelsMuseum (1887) and the K.K. Osterreichische Museum fur Kunst und Industrie (1863), both in Vienna, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1870), and the Chicago Art Institute (1879).

<sup>41</sup> Examples include Wilhelm Bode, Robert Murdoch Smith and Arthur Upham Pope, Goupil Brothers in Paris, Delekian Brothers in New York, Vincent Robinson in London. See Komaroff, 'Exhibiting the Middle East: collections and Perceptions of Islamic Art Special Edition'; Vernoi, *Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850 – 1950*, (London: IB Tauris, 2000), pp. 1-61.

<sup>42</sup> Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 12-13.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Charles Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste* (London: Longman Green and Co., 1869). For influential magazines see Cohen, pp. 65-76.

<sup>44</sup> Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> For Persia, Annette Ittig, 'The Kirmani Boom: A Study in Carpet Entrepreneurship', *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies*, vol. 1 (1985), 111-23; Willem Floor, *Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran, 1800–1925* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2003); for Turkey, Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing*, pp. 134-160; for India, Roy, *Traditional Industry*, pp. 197-231.



manufacturing Company (OCM) and Lockwood de Forest involved themselves directly in indigenous production, through their workshops and trading networks in Persia, Turkey and India.<sup>46</sup> Carpets inspired by handmade patterned pile rugs from South, Central and West Asia began to be made in industrial or semi-industrial environments in Europe and North America, using increasing mechanization of spinning, weaving and dyeing, materials circulating in a global trading system, capitalist financial instruments, and factory labour organization.<sup>47</sup> The response to the oriental carpet boom supplied the European and North American market, reorganised the financial and production environments of traditional carpet making in the countries of indigenous production, and laid the foundations for a preferred commercial European and North American style. Europe and North America were transformed from recipients of export goods into active participants in the remaking and reimagining of these artifacts.

The result of these changes was that patterned pile carpets were made in five different production and commercial environments from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (figure 5). The first group was pre-industrial carpets woven in the traditional locations of production for domestic use. The second was contemporaneous carpets from the industrializing West, which tend to be

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<sup>46</sup> Annette Ittig, 'Ziegler's Sultanabad Carpet Enterprise', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 25 no.1-2 (1992), 103-35; Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing* pp.143-160; Roberta A. Mayer, *Lockwood de Forest: Furnishing the Gilded Age with a Passion for India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008). The direct intervention of the British government in Indian carpet-weaving is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>47</sup> C.E.C. Tatersall, *A History of British Carpets* (Essex: F. Lewis Limited, 1934); J. Neville Bartlett, *Carpeting the Millions* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1978).

referred to as machine-made, that is produced using technologies which were to some degree industrialised, mechanized or power-assisted. The third was those produced by hand in locations of traditional production, for export to Europe and North America, with design, production and materials controlled by European companies. The fourth was carpets made by hand in locations of traditional production for export, under the management of local entrepreneurs. The final group was contemporaneous carpets made by hand in locations untouched by nineteenth century globalization and industrialization, which were increasingly rare. Connoisseurs were no longer faced only with the task of discriminating between different types and quality of old carpets, but between carpets made in pre-and post-industrial environments responding to an expansion in the global market.

<b>Five groups of carpets available in Europe and America from c. 1840</b>					
	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION OF MAKING</b>	<b>LOCATION OF ORIGINAL INTENDED CONSUMPTION</b>	<b>OWNERSHIP OF PRODUCTION</b>	<b>TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT OF PRODUCTION</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Before c.1840 (pre-industrial)</b>	<b>Indigenous carpet weaving areas</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Handmade, tribe, village, workshop</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Post c.1840</b>	<b>Europe/ America</b>	<b>Global</b>	<b>European and American</b>	<b>Machine-made, factory</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Post c.1840</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Europe and America</b>	<b>European and American</b>	<b>Handmade, factory, workshop</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Post c.1840</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Europe and America</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Handmade, factory, workshop</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Post c.1840</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Handmade, tribe, village</b>
<b>Highlighted text indicates characteristics that create suspicion concerning value and authenticity amongst Euro-American connoisseurs, collectors, dealers and commentators.</b>					

Figure 5: Author's chart.

This transformation prompted two debates amongst European and North American stakeholders in the production, trade and collection of carpets as the nineteenth century progressed. The first was amongst connoisseurs and scholars of these artifacts. The diversification of the production of carpets meant that questions of tradition, provenance and authenticity became much more difficult to answer, the clarity and trustworthiness of market pricing were compromised, and the integrity of public and private collections apparently undermined. The second debate was part of the broader discussion amongst design reformers on the role of design in the competitiveness of national manufacturing industries in Europe and North America, and of what constituted good and bad design.<sup>48</sup> An important trope in this debate, discussed later in this chapter, was the beneficial model offered by non-western design, for example carpets, and the necessity to keep that source of inspiration uncorrupted by bad practices, if necessary by exerting European control over indigenous production environments. Both of these debates led to suspicion of some of the emerging environments for producing and trading carpets, and a structure of quality and value developed to negotiate those suspicions. This dynamic lies at the heart of my description of the European and North American orthodoxy.

### **3. Foundational contributions to the orthodoxy**

The debate on the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia

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<sup>48</sup> Suga Yasuko, 'Designing the Morality of Consumption: "Chamber of Horrors" at the Museum of Ornamental Art, 1852-53', *Design Issues*, vol. 20 no. 4 (Autumn, 2004), 43-56.

amongst cultural and aesthetic commentators in nineteenth century Europe and North America had two inflection points. The first was the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, discussed above, the second the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Moya Carey has argued that the level of scholarly engagement provoked by the 1878 exhibition's display of rare old carpets as works of art can be viewed as a second oriental carpet boom.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, German art historian and curator Julius Lessing had published one of the earliest monographs on these artifacts in 1877, and its English translation appeared in 1879.<sup>50</sup> A major field of carpet publications began to open up.<sup>51</sup> Amongst the growing group of writers, collectors and curators engaged in the field during the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries definitive contributions were made to the characteristically European and North American view of these artifacts by Wilhelm Bode (German, 1845-1929), William Morris, (British, 1834-1896), Alois Riegl (Austrian, 1858-1905), Arthur Upham Pope (American 1881-1969) and May Hamilton Beattie (Scottish 1908-1997).

Their work and its context are explored below in five sections, each describing an important characteristic of the European and North American orthodoxy. The first examines the role of historical analyses of design in creating a focus on carpet provenance, particularly in the writings of Alois Riegl. The second explores the commitment of William Morris and Riegl to traditional technologies and materials, and the impact of this on thinking about pre-industrial and

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<sup>49</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, pp. 197-204.

<sup>50</sup> Julius Lessing, *Ancient Oriental Carpet Patterns after Pictures and Originals of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, (1877), (London: H. Sotheran, 1879).

<sup>51</sup> For early carpet studies see Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, pp. 17-41.

industrial carpets. The third examines the creation of taxonomic and art-historical frameworks around élite carpets, with particular reference to Wilhelm Bode. These sections are located in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fourth examines a phenomenon which, whilst found across the entire timeframe of the thesis, became particularly intense in the first half of the twentieth century; the privileging of sixteenth and seventeenth century Safavid court carpets from Persia, with a particular focus on Arthur Upham Pope. The fifth moves to the later part of the twentieth century, and explores the effort to set the identification of carpet provenance on a scientific footing based on structure, materials, and technologies of production, with a focus on May Beattie. In each section I analyse the relationship between the emerging European and North American narrative of carpets and the degree to which it expresses imperatives arising from the historical context, rather than from the carpets themselves.

***i. The search for origins and the developmental rules of decorative style  
(1851 - 1902)***

In the second half of the nineteenth century a strong interest emerged in Europe and America in the development of decorative style through time. A number of factors contributed to this encounter between the material culture of the past and present. There was increasing access in Europe and America to artifacts produced by non-Europeans, as a result of the findings of archeologists and

explorers and of displays at international exhibitions.<sup>52</sup> The period between 1870 and 1900 in particular has been described as the coming of age of archaeology.<sup>53</sup>

In parallel, the European and North American intellectual world was engaged broadly with the idea of change through time, in particular with ideas of progressive development, be it of biological species or of societies, their material culture and religions. Biologists, geologists, and ethnographers participated in these investigations.<sup>54</sup>

In this intellectual environment, questions arose about the relationship of designs and motifs across time and space, and about how the circumstances of societies producing designed artifacts affected their decoration. The work of Gottfried Semper and his circle, discussed below, was key to this endeavour.<sup>55</sup> As a result, an effort arose to integrate ancient and alien design forms into the European and North American aesthetic vocabulary, and to codify their history and relationships.<sup>56</sup> Design became part of the colonial taxonomic project

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<sup>52</sup> Glyn Daniel, *150 Years of Archaeology* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 122. Daniel notes that no ancient artifacts were displayed at the 1851 Great Exhibition, unlike later international exhibitions.

<sup>53</sup> Archaeologists of the period include Auguste Mariette (1821-1881), Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), Augustus Pitt Rivers (1827-1900) and Flinders Petrie (1852-1942).

<sup>54</sup> Herbert S. Lewis, 'Darwin, Boas, Science and Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 42, no. 1 (June 2001), 381-406. Evolutionary biologists of the period include Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882). Geologists include James Hutton (1726-1797) and Charles Lyell (1797-1875). Anthropologists included Franz Boas (1858-1942), James George Fraser (1854-1941). Anthropological Societies influenced by the new biology were set up in London, 1863, Madrid, 1865, Vienna, 1870, Italy, 1871. The Berlin Anthropological Society, 1869, rejected Darwinism.

<sup>55</sup> Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den Technischen and Tektonischen Künsten* (Frankfurt am Main: 1860); Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Mashek, 'The Vital Skin: Riegl, The Maori and Loos', *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work*, ed. by Richard Woodfield (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), pp. 158-183.

described by Said as part of the construction of the idea of the Other in order to control it.<sup>57</sup>

The carpets arriving in Europe and America in ever-greater numbers and from more distant and diverse places, became part of this discussion on the evolution of decorative design, and out of it came one of the building blocks of the European and North American orthodoxy, the identification of a carpet's origins and path through time and space to establish its degree of 'authenticity' and its 'provenance'. Alois Riegl was a highly significant figure in this approach. Riegl was a specialist in late Roman art who was also a curator of textiles, first at the Handelsmuseum, then between 1885 and 1897 at the K.K. Osterreichische Museum fur Kunst and Industrie (now known as the MAK), both in Vienna. He worked with what has been described by a recent curator as the MAK's 'incomparable collection of carpets from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'.<sup>58</sup> In 1891, Riegl was part of the curatorial team which organized the ground-breaking exhibition 'Old Oriental Carpets', held at the Handelsmuseum.<sup>59</sup> It borrowed carpets from other institutions and from notable private collections, resulting in the most systematic and wide-ranging display and cataloguing of Europe's holdings of these artifacts up to that point.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 4-9, pp. 76-92.

<sup>58</sup> Barbara Karl, 'Persian Art in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Vienna', *The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. by Yuka Kadoi and Ivan Szanto (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp.110-130 (p.118).

<sup>59</sup> Arthur von Scala, Alois Riegl et al., *Katalog der Ausstellung Orientalischer Teppiche im K. K. Handels-Museum* (Vienna: Verlag des K. K. Österr. Handels-Museum, 1891).

<sup>60</sup> Karl, 'Persian Art', p.120.

Riegl had an independent intellectual agenda which ran alongside his curatorial responsibilities; to compare artifacts across pre-Hellenic and archaic Greek art, late Roman and Byzantine art, and the ‘many-sided intermixture of ancient oriental and Greek art’.<sup>61</sup> As Suzanne Marchand notes:

Riegl made it his mission to emphasize the importance of these ignored Hellenistic forms, a mission that inevitably involved rethinking not only the question of Roman “decline”, but also the Orient’s creative impact on western culture.<sup>62</sup>

Riegl’s biographer, Diana Cordileone, notes that ‘this was a grand and highly-polemical agenda for an adjunct curator’.<sup>63</sup> Riegl was intent on bringing not only neglected European periods into a western narrative of material culture, but the entirety of its interaction with oriental material culture. Marchand and Cordileone’s descriptions suggest that Riegl’s rescue mission was also an orientalist appropriation of a monolithic Other.

The carpets he encountered offered Riegl a data set for this research. In 1891 he published the monograph *Old Oriental Carpets*,<sup>64</sup> and contributed analyses of individual carpets to the catalogue of the 1891 Handelsmuseum exhibition.<sup>65</sup> In 1893 he published *Stilfragen*, his thoughts on the evolution of ornament, which

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<sup>61</sup> Alois Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1891), pp. vii – viii.

<sup>62</sup> Marchand, *German Orientalism*, p. 400.

<sup>63</sup> Diana Reynolds Cordileone, *Alois Riegl in Vienna 1875-1905: An institutional biography* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), p.94.

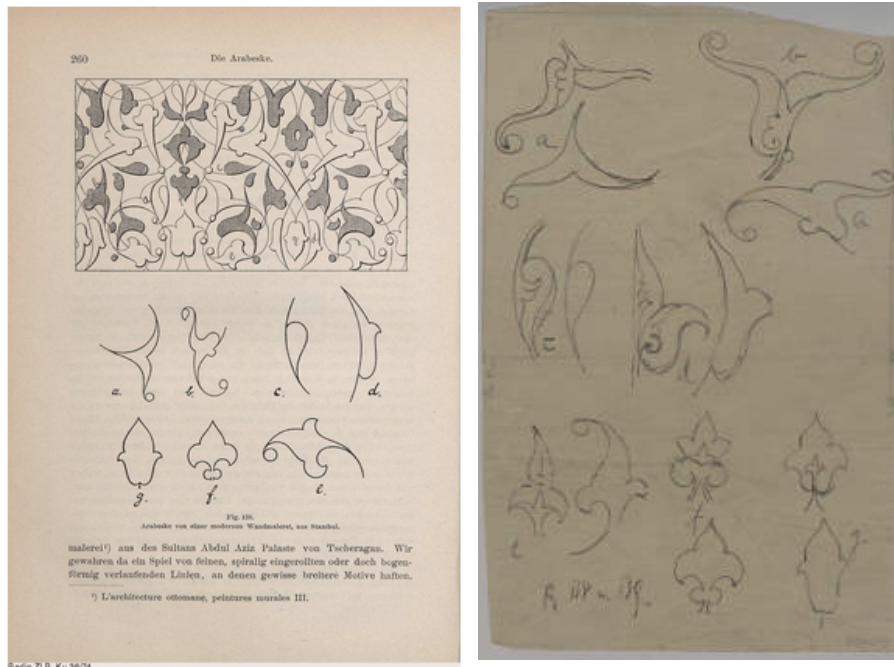
<sup>64</sup> Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche*.

<sup>65</sup> Scala, Riegl et al., *Katalogue*.



brought together his two practices, the study of Roman, Greek and Byzantine art, and the study of carpets.<sup>66</sup>

*Stilfragen* was significant for both its proposal of a relationship between a given cultural and historical moment and the design it produced, which Riegl described as *Kunstwollen*, but also its method, the detailed analysis of motifs across media, time and place. Riegl's examination of the development of the Greek tendril motif into the arabesque motif which underlies many carpet designs is an enduringly influential example. In the early twentieth century, influential art historian Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948) drew a close study of Riegl's arabesque analysis in *Stilfragen*, demonstrating the extent to which Riegl's methodology had been absorbed into art historical thinking and education (figure 6).<sup>67</sup>



<sup>66</sup> Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (Berlin: G. Siemens, 1893).

<sup>67</sup> Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style*, trans. by Evelyn Kane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chapter 3.

Figure 6: Arabesque analyses. (Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen*, 1893; Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Box 21, Folder 11, Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington).

The origins of *Stilfragen* can be seen in Riegl's analyses of individual carpets in the catalogue for the 1891 Handelsmuseum exhibition. His pre-occupations are clear as early as his discussion of Plate II in the catalogue; perspective, symmetry and asymmetry, the influence of China, the composition of the tendril and its relationship to the arabesque. His analysis of the Ardabil carpet, Plates XCI and XCII, shows his formalism at work:

The date 1539 [woven into the carpet] offers [...] a confirmation to the accuracy of our conclusions with regard to the gradual and historical progress in artistic style [...] we can without difficulty discover certain peculiarities exclusively belonging to this carpet, and unobserved by us in all the previous examples hitherto described in this work. We are therefore justified in coming to the conclusion that these peculiarities belong especially to [...] the first half of the sixteenth century, and that later they disappeared from use.<sup>68</sup>

The 'peculiarities' are that 'the entire design appears almost to consist of winding, flowery, creeping stalks associated at certain points with arabesques

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<sup>68</sup> Alois Riegl, 'The Carpets', *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna*, ed. by Caspar Purdon Clarke (London: South Kensington Museum, 1892), plates XCI and XCII.

and cloud bands', shown in figure 7, rather than the hunting and garden scenes of other élite carpets of the period.



Figure 7: Detail of Ardabil carpet. (V&A, London, 272-1893)

Riegl concerned himself in his catalogue descriptions with what he regarded as the inter-linked material, aesthetic and spiritual decay of carpets, as well as their peak production. In this description of a seventeenth century Persian carpet, once again, the tendril and arabesque are his tools:

The stalks of the fine creepers have not such graceful contours [...] in fact all the later hand-worked Persian carpets that we possess show a continued decadence in the pure curve, which becomes more and more

notched owing to the difficulty in hand-made carpets of preserving the perfectly round contours.<sup>69</sup>

*Stilfragen* was the result of the abstraction of aesthetic and historic principles from these individual analyses. It was both an original contribution, and part of an intellectual trend, as Caroline Arscott notes:

Scholars in the 1880s and 1890s were debating [...] how to make a place in the account [of material culture] for the gradual morphology and variation of decorative motifs.<sup>70</sup>

*Stilfragen* was written in an environment which was absorbing Darwinian and Lamarckian evolutionary ideas, alongside the findings of archaeologists and early anthropologists. Harriet McAtee identifies Darwin's particular influence on Riegl in his development of 'genetic' relationships between objects and motifs through time, to create 'a hierarchy of descent'.<sup>71</sup>

The formalism of *Stilfragen* was also in part a response to the dominant account of this morphology, the materialism of Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) and his followers. In his 1851 *Der Stil*, Semper proposed that material culture was a response to need, particularly the need for shelter, that the earliest design was

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<sup>69</sup> Riegl, Purdon Clarke et al, *Catalogue*, plate XII.

<sup>70</sup> Caroline Arscott, 'Morris Carpets', *RIHA Journal*, (Jan-March 2014), paragraph 10. <[riha-journal.org/articles/2014/2014-jan-mar/special-issue-art-design-history/arscott-morris-carpets](http://riha-journal.org/articles/2014/2014-jan-mar/special-issue-art-design-history/arscott-morris-carpets)> [accessed January 2017]

<sup>71</sup> Harriet McAtee, 'Riegl and Darwin: Evolutionary Models of Art and Life' (University of Queensland: Unpublished M.Phil. thesis, 2014).

mimetic, an imitation of what could be seen in the world, and that the form of the craft was defined by available materials and technology. He describes the point of origin.

The transition from the intertwining of branches to the intertwining of plant fibres is easy and natural. From there one arrived at the invention of weaving, first with natural grasses and then with spun threads from vegetable or animal materials. The variations of the natural colours of the fibres suggest their use in an alternating arrangement and the *pattern* comes into being.<sup>72</sup>

Riegl rejected this. Through an analysis of the decorative styles of archaeological remains of people with no history of weaving, he offers an alternative.

All artistic activity begins with the direct reproduction of the actual physical appearance of natural things, in response to an imitative impulse that has been spurred into action by a psychic impulse.<sup>73</sup>

It is the urge to decorate that is one of the most elementary of human drives, more elementary in fact than the need to protect the body.<sup>74</sup>

Riegl sees the first expression of the design impulse as sculptural, followed by

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<sup>72</sup> Semper, *Der Stil*, vol. I, p. 213.

<sup>73</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, p.31.

relief-carving that 'renders just enough of the three-dimensional appearance of a thing to convince the human eye', superseded by outlines on a flat surface, which develop towards abstraction.<sup>75</sup>

The most important part of the whole process is undoubtedly the appearance of the outline, which captures the image of an entity in nature on any given surface. This is the moment when line, the basic component of all drawing, all painting, all art that is restricted to two dimensions, was invented.<sup>76</sup>

Riegl's focus on the outline, and his suggestion that there is a progressive development towards designs which are planar, linear and abstracted from natural models, was to an important degree based on his experience of the carpets in the Handelsmuseum and the MAK. These were the artifacts on which he sharpened his methodology. Riegl had developed a history of design from its origins which was readily applicable to the carpets from which he had drawn it in the first place.

There was an existing preference for flatness and abstraction in decorative arts amongst European and North American commentators when Riegl published *Stilfragen* in 1893. In 1852, Sir Henry Cole established a gallery at Marlborough House of purchases from the Great Exhibition. Entitled *False Principles in Design*,

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<sup>75</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, p. 29.

<sup>76</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, p. 30.

it displayed examples of what was perceived as poor quality design.<sup>77</sup> One of the most significant false principles illustrated was the use of perspective, three-dimensional and realistic designs on wallpaper, textiles and carpets. Figure 8 shows wallpaper on display there. In the catalogue for Marlborough House, such designs were compared unfavourably with the planar, abstracted designs of textiles from the East.<sup>78</sup>



Figure 8: Wallpaper, colour machine print on paper, Heywood, Higginbottom and Smith, Manchester, 1853. (V&A, London, E.158-1934)

However, whilst many Asian artifacts were geometric or abstracted from natural designs, many were figurative and showed three-dimensional modelling. Indian chintz is an example, as are the hunting and garden carpets of Persia (figures 9 and 10). Cole's 'False Principles in Design' expressed a preference,<sup>79</sup> and as with

<sup>77</sup> Yasuko, 'Morality of Consumption', pp. 43-56.

<sup>78</sup> *Department of Practical Art: A Catalogue of the Articles of Ornamental Art in the Museum of the Department* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1852), False Principle Number 16.

<sup>79</sup> This preference was not shared by the public, as the Crystal Palace wallpaper continued to be manufactured and sold.

patterned pile carpets, a selective view of eastern design was used to justify a European and North American taste. The principles developed by Cole and other members of British nineteenth century design reform movements spread throughout Europe and North America.<sup>80</sup>



Figure 9: *Palampore* (bed cover or wall hanging), painted and dyed cotton chintz, 272 x 311 cm, Coromandel Coast, southeast India, 1750-1775. (V&A, London, IS.30-1966)

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<[collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17449/perspective-representation-of-the-crystal-wallpaper-unknown](http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17449/perspective-representation-of-the-crystal-wallpaper-unknown)> [Accessed 17 May 2018]

<sup>80</sup> For example, Augustus Pugin, Owen Jones, John Ruskin, Christopher Dresser, William Morris, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Design reform movements included The Deutscher Werkbund, Vienna Secession, and Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic movements in Europe and North America.





Figure 10: Carpet fragment, handknotted, wool knots, silk warp and weft, metal brocade, 139cm x 105cm. Persia, c.1525-1550 (V&A, London, T.77-1919)

The attraction to planar, abstracted designs attributed to the East existed amongst reformers of painting, as well as reformers of decorative arts. As the

nineteenth century progressed, impressionist and post-impressionist artists were attracted to the flatness and abstraction they believed they saw in carpets and tiles from eastern geographies.<sup>81</sup> Patterned pile carpets, already highly desirable consumer goods, increasingly embodied the most advanced European and North American values of art and design.

Riegl's conclusion that abstraction and flatness were the most highly evolved forms of human creativity developed in this context. It was aligned with contemporaneous intellectual debates concerning formalism, evolutionary thinking, and the dynamics of orientalism. Furthermore, it was based on minute stylistic analyses of individual carpets which emulated contemporaneous empirical methods. As a result, despite Riegl's concept of the haptic as the fusion of the tactile and the visual, his method skewed the study of carpets away from the haptic and experiential, and towards the analytical and visual.<sup>82</sup>

Riegl's *Stilfragen* was a theoretical and historical expression of the idiosyncratic nineteenth century European and North American taste described above. Riegl was a participant in taste construction. However, Riegl did not see himself as dealing in either matters of taste or of intellectual history. He believed that he had reached a new objective truth in his analysis of design, and drew a distinction between his work and that of Semper's followers, which he regarded as influenced by:

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<sup>81</sup> Joseph Masheck, *The Carpet Paradigm: Integral Flatness from Decorative to Fine Art* (New York: Edgewise, 2010).

<sup>82</sup> Alois Riegl, *The Late Roman Art Industry* (Vienna: 1901).

The predominant intellectual tendencies of the last thirty years. By this I mean the materialist, scientific worldview, first promulgated by Lamarck and Goethe and subsequently brought to maturity by Darwin, which has left such grave consequences in its wake, even in the field of art history.<sup>83</sup>

Despite his broadside, Riegl participated in these models of thought. His analysis of carpets borrows from the 'scientific worldview' he criticizes, and as Jas Elsner has noted, Riegl expressed 'axiomatic assumptions about evolutionary progress and change in a multicultural Empire'.<sup>84</sup> These axiomatic assumptions fed into Riegl's perspective on the history of carpets.

They also shaped his views on the contemporaneous production of patterned pile carpets. As Suzanne Marchand points out, whilst he 'was perfectly willing to give the (ancient) Orient credit for new ideas and fine craft traditions [...] Riegl was quite sure, like most of his contemporaries that the modern Orient was a place of decadence'.<sup>85</sup> In Riegl's philosophy of aesthetics, old carpets were of historical and artistic interest, offering a model for the evolution of all design, but the products of the modern industry were less so.

Despite the debate generated between the followers of Semper's materialism and Riegl's formalism, they shared an insistence on the importance of origins, and the

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<sup>83</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> Jas Elsner 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History*, vol. 25 no. 3 (2002), 358-379 (p. 375).

<sup>85</sup> Marchand, *German Orientalism*, p. 401.

impulse to base historical interpretations on the development of patterns and motifs. These approaches are fundamental to the study of provenance underlying the European and North American orthodoxy.

In his practical use of this method in the study of carpets, comparing their designs across place and time, Riegl pioneered one of the major tools of carpet connoisseurship; the dating and placing of carpets, and the establishment of relationships between 'families' of lesser and greater carpets, through the analysis of design and motifs as they changed through time.

Meanwhile, the idea of *Kunstwollen*, the design impulse which expresses the spirit of a place and time, lent itself to an analysis which includes peaks of cultural achievement, and arcs of progress and decay. Riegl combined this with a distrust of the modern Orient. He offered a hierarchical model of achievement in carpet-making, which placed the peak of achievement in the past, and distrusted recent production. This has deeply influenced the creation of the European and North American canon of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. It is an example of a mechanism identified by Said, where a narrative is both produced by, and at the same time is productive of, the racial and political assumptions of the time.<sup>86</sup>

## ***ii. Freeze-framing the pre-industrial carpet (1870-1896)***

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<sup>86</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-25, particularly p. 3.

The two Viennese museums where Riegl acted as curator of textiles were part of an initiative across Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century to leverage design for economic impact.<sup>87</sup> Alongside its ability to generate profit and tax revenues, the technology of the Industrial Revolution was seen as an opportunity to produce domestic goods for the masses which would improve their quality of life and with it their morals, but only if subject to the discipline of good design.<sup>88</sup> During the period of international exhibitions from 1851, a view developed that the best examples of design in the decorative arts, those most relevant to industrial manufacture, were to be found outside Europe, and that these should be used to improve European goods.<sup>89</sup>

This belief in the power of non-European design to elevate the quality of European manufacture ran alongside an anxiety about the degradation of non-European material culture, as it was infiltrated by the processes and values of industrialised Europe. A view emerged in the mid-nineteenth century that the only good carpet was an old carpet. C.J.Wills writes:

At the time of which I am speaking, carpets had very seldom been exported from Persia, and consequently there was no rubbish

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<sup>87</sup> Vienna's Handelsmuseum and K.K. Osterreichische Museum (now the MAK). Others included London's South Kensington Museum (now the V&A), Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, Kunstgeberwemuseum, Berlin.

<sup>88</sup> Stacey Sloboda, "'The Grammar of Ornament': Cosmopolitanism and Reform in British Design', *Journal of Design History*, vol.21 no.3 (Autumn 2008), 223-236; Rebecca Houze, *Textiles, Fashion and Design Reform in Austria-Hungary before the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2015); Deborah Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>89</sup> Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Day and Sons, 1856); George Birdwood *The Industrial Arts of India* (London, Chapman and Hall, 1880); Christopher Dresser, *Japan, its Architecture, Arts and Art Manufactures* (London: Longman's, 1882).

manufactured; now it is quite different. If a very good carpet is wanted, an old one must be bought.<sup>90</sup>

Wills was a physician with the Indo-European Telegraph Company in Persia between 1866 and 1881, supporting the communications infrastructure between the British imperial centres in London and Delhi. Wills is incorrect about the export of Persian carpets, which were traded internationally before the nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> However, the level of confidence the European coloniser had in judging the material culture of their colonies and imperial spheres of influence can be seen in his strongly worded statement. The confidence brashly expressed here also underpinned more elegantly expressed debates on the impact of industrialization and a globalizing market on carpets. Alois Riegl and William Morris were important participants in these debates, Riegl as a curator and writer, and Morris in his practice as a weaver, his business as a carpet-manufacturer at Merton Abbey Mill, and his role as a keen enthusiast and proselytizer for these artifacts.

In an 1891 article Riegl discussed the disappearance of traditional manufacturing environments in the countries of indigenous production, and the rise of machine-made carpets.<sup>92</sup> He warned that whilst designs could be imitated accurately by machine, it was the handmade quality, the irregularities, which ultimately gave a rug 'charm and value'.<sup>93</sup> Riegl expressed the distrust of

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<sup>90</sup> C.J. Wills, *In the Land of the Lion and the Sun or Modern Persia, Being Experiences of Life in Persia during a Residence of Fifteen Years in Various Parts of that Country from 1866 to 1881* (London: 1891), p.149.

<sup>91</sup> Floor, *Persian Textile Industry 1500–1925*.

<sup>92</sup> Riegl, *The Relationship between Oriental Carpet Fabrication and Western Europe*.

<sup>93</sup> Cordileone, *Alois Riegl*, pp. 91-92.

perfection which continues to be a part of the orthodoxy's polarization of handmade and machine-made carpets.

Riegl's reflections on the circumstances of production of patterned pile carpets articulate key components of the emerging orthodoxy; independent weaving in countries of indigenous production untouched by the practices of capitalism or industrialization was the ideal environment for the making of carpets. These carpets were 'authentic', and the investment in the idea of authenticity tightened even further the focus on origins. Brian Spooner asserts the constructed nature of this thinking, making the point that authenticity mattered only to the western consumer of carpets, trying to maintain balance of power in his negotiations with well-informed dealers, and was of no consequence to makers.<sup>94</sup>

Riegl's suggestion for the preservation of that authentic 'charm and value', was interventionist and colonialist in spirit; that in areas where carpets were particularly under threat, for instance the Ottoman Balkans, western Europeans should organize production to maintain quality control.<sup>95</sup> He suggested that indigenous producers could not be trusted to deploy capitalism and industrialisation responsibly; they would inevitably sacrifice quality for quantity, producing 'rubbish' in their rush to seize new commercial opportunities. On the other hand, European firms would help protect traditional craft skills and production characteristics, even whilst they took advantage of the same commercial opportunity.<sup>96</sup> Riegl's analysis demonstrates how aesthetic

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<sup>94</sup> Spooner, 'Weavers and Dealers', pp. 195-235.

<sup>95</sup> Riegl, *Relationship*, p. 214, Marchand, *German Orientalism*, p. 399.

<sup>96</sup> See also Caspar Purdon Clarke, 'Oriental Carpets', *Catalogue*.

judgements and commercial self-interest combined in the creation of the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. The aesthetic exclusion created a favourable environment for patterned pile carpets produced and commissioned in Persia, Anatolia and India by European and North American firms.

Ideas of the superiority of pre-industrial methods of production, pre-capitalist organization of labour, and in consequence, the products of that labour, were also central to the political and social beliefs, writing, and carpet making of William Morris. In Morris's view, the most damaging aspects of industrial production were mechanization, division of labour, and the distant relationship between the maker and the consumer. Carpets made on machine-loom, where design was separated from knotting, in factories whose processes could not be understood by the purchaser, exemplified this.<sup>97</sup>

Morris believed that objects made in a pre-industrial environment were *de facto* more aesthetically pleasing, and lives lived working at handcrafts rather than at the mill were inherently richer and more desirable:

To make something beautiful that will last, out of a few threads of silken wool, seems to me a not unpleasant way of earning one's livelihood so long as one lives and works in a pleasant place, with the workday not too long, and a book or two to be got at.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> William Morris, 'The Revival of Handicraft', (1888), *William Morris*, pp. 187-197.

<sup>98</sup> Morris, 'The Lesser Arts of Life', (1882), *William Morris*, pp. 78-85, (p.79).



Morris tried to live his beliefs. He wove himself, was a manufacturer of carpets at Merton Abbey Mills and Kelmscott House, and as figure 11 shows, spread the improving skills of weaving to the culturally engaged classes of London.



Figure 11: 'William Morris gives a weaving demonstration', Edward Burne-Jones, pencil drawing, 23 x 17cm, London, 1888. (William Morris Gallery, London, D133)

Old Persian carpets fitted well with Morris's blend of the aesthetic, the political and the moral. He became one of nineteenth century Europe's foremost proselytisers for them, advising collectors and museums,<sup>99</sup> collecting them

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<sup>99</sup> See chapter two for Morris's role in the V&A's purchase of the Ardabil.

himself, and using them as models for his own carpets (figure 12).<sup>100</sup> Morris's passion for Persian carpets and fantasies about the 'orient' are communicated in his writings:

I praise the usefulness of the lives of these men, whose names are long forgotten, but whose works we still wonder at. In their own way they meant to tell us how the flowers grew in the gardens of Damascus, or how the hunt was up on the plains of Kirman, or how the tulips show amongst the grass in the mid-Persian valley, and how their souls delighted in it all, and what joy they had in life; nor did they fail to make their meaning clear to some of us. <sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Arscott, 'Morris Carpets'.

<sup>101</sup> Morris, 'Making the Best of it', (1880), *William Morris*, pp. 94-122 (pp. 118-19).



Figure 12: 'Redcar' Carpet, handknotted, cotton, mohair, camelhair, wool, jute, 360 x 247 cm, designed William Morris, London, 1881 (V&A, London, T.3-1919)

Morris's articulation of the desirability of pre-industrial methods of making became central to the European and North American orthodoxy, but like Riegl, he developed his ideas in the context of his time. A socialist, Morris was influenced by the suggestion of Karl Marx (1818-1883) that the subservience of the individual worker to those who control capital, means of production and workers' labour, leads to the loss of the worker's sense of self, an alienation, in

addition to their economic and political powerlessness.<sup>102</sup> Morris feared the impact of this on culture.

So long as the system of competition in the production and exchange of the means of life goes on, the degradation of the arts will go on; and if that system is to last for ever, then art is doomed, and will surely die; that is to say, civilization will die.<sup>103</sup>

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was also an important source for Morris's ideas on the inter-relationship between the quality of the life of the worker and the quality of their products. Ruskin in particular among the Gothic Revivalists and Design Reformers believed that a superior mediaeval and early modern model of work was being actively destroyed by the mechanization and factory production methods of the industrial revolution.<sup>104</sup>

Part of Ruskin's thinking was a distrust of copying, 'never encourage imitation or copying of any kind', a distrust inherited by Morris.<sup>105</sup> Despite their idealization of pre-industrial making, this put reformers like Ruskin and Morris into a conflicted relationship with craft production. They wished to return to pre-industrial making, but also desired originality from each craft artifact, denying the adaptations, versions and copies at the heart of traditional artisanship.

Morris's fusion of the circumstances of production, the artifacts created, and the

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<sup>102</sup> *Entfremdung* (alienation) is first found in Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 (unpublished in his lifetime).

<sup>103</sup> William Morris, 'Art under Plutocracy', (1883).

<[marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1883/pluto](http://marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1883/pluto)> [Accessed 23 April, 2017]

<sup>104</sup> Ruskin's position on industrialization is summarised in Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, pp. 191-198.

<sup>105</sup> Ruskin quoted in Pye, *The Nature of Art and Workmanship*, p.65.

quality of life of the workers in the pre-industrial world, helped create a preference for carpets made at a point before industrialization. He set a limit on the possibility of adaptation and change in carpet making, rejecting the use of industrialised technologies and materials. He makes a clear distinction between ‘the craft of carpet-making, by which I mean the real art, and not the makeshift goods woven purely mechanically’.<sup>106</sup> His position on industrial dyes is at the core of the European and North American orthodoxy:

They [natural dyes] all make in their simplest forms beautiful colours [...] and they can be modified and toned without dirtying, as the foul blotches of the capitalist dyer cannot be [...] These colours in fading still remain beautiful, and never, even after long wear, pass into nothingness, through that stage of livid ugliness which distinguishes the commercial dyes as nuisances.<sup>107</sup>

The ideas of Riegl and Morris made a defining contribution to the European and North American orthodoxy, creating a preference for pre-industrial carpets amongst connoisseurs. This preference again reflected to a significant degree the ideological context of the times, in Riegl’s case a distrust of the modern Orient, and in Morris’s, a nineteenth century anxiety about uncontrolled capitalism and industrialization.<sup>108</sup> Underlying both is the flight from what Glenn Adamson has

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<sup>106</sup> Morris, ‘Some Hints on Pattern-Designing’, (1881), *William Morris*, pp. 73-78 (p.74).

<sup>107</sup> Morris, ‘On Dyeing as an Art’, (1889), *William Morris*, pp. 66-73 (p.72).

<sup>108</sup> Michael Levin, *The Condition of England Question: Carlyle, Mill, Engels* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); Ella Dzelzainis, ‘Radicalism and Reform’, *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820–1880*, ed. by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 427–443.

described as the ‘trauma of modernity’.<sup>109</sup> Chakrabarty points out that ‘Europe’s acquisition of the adjective “modern” for itself is an integral part of the story of European imperialism within global history’.<sup>110</sup> In Riegl’s and Morris’s thinking, the crafts of the East must remain untouched by western modernity, and thereby are denied their coevalness.<sup>111</sup>

The views of influential commentators such as Riegl and Morris did not inhibit the production of carpets in industrial and semi-industrial environments, either in their countries of indigenous production, or in Europe and North America. Nor did they inhibit commercial designers in design reform movements across Europe from coming to an accommodation with increased industrialization. The writings of Christopher Dresser and Owen Jones and their designs for machine-made carpets, discussed in chapter three, demonstrate this.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, the views of the European and North American orthodoxy did not deter consumers from buying carpets made after the advent of industrialization and global trade, as the history of the late nineteenth century oriental carpet boom demonstrates.<sup>113</sup> As I discuss later, there are alternative dynamics in the relationship between people and patterned pile carpets than those that were systematically enshrined by the orthodoxy from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Nevertheless, the debate on these artifacts which took place in the academy, and in museums and exhibitions, defined the European and North

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<sup>109</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, p. 214.

<sup>110</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*, p. 43.

<sup>111</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 31.

<sup>112</sup> Christopher Dresser, ‘Carpets’, *British Manufacturing Industries*, ed. by G. Phillips Bevan (London: Edward Stanford, 1876), pp. 90-130; Jones, *Grammar*, 1856.

<sup>113</sup> Helfgott, *Ties that bind*, pp. 83-147.

American aesthetic, cultural and commercial valuation of such carpets. As I go on to discuss in the next section, it also became an important part of colonial knowledge production.

***iii. Absorbing the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia into European structures of knowledge (1870-1910)***

Said notes that knowledge-production by colonial powers about the colonized is both an instrument of control, and a construction of the inter-related identities of both parties.<sup>114</sup> Taxonomies were an important part of this process.<sup>115</sup>

In the later decades of the nineteenth century, significant effort was put into creating a taxonomy of carpets, structuring their geographical, temporal, stylistic and technical diversity into families which could be recognized in Europe and America.<sup>116</sup> It was a taxonomy for societies which consumed and critiqued carpets, rather than made them.

During the carpet booms of the late nineteenth century, domestic consumers in Europe and North America, private collectors, dealers, and museums required a structure against which to judge the quality of an imported patterned pile carpet and understand its price. Said describes the 'bizarre jouissance' of European interaction with caricatures of the East it has itself invented.<sup>117</sup> One such is the cunning indigenous rug-dealer who cannot be a trusted intermediary for a naïve

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<sup>114</sup> See Said's analysis of Napoleon's 'army of knowledge', *Orientalism*, pp. 80-87.

<sup>115</sup> Joe Earle, 'The Taxonomic Obsession: British Collectors and Japanese Objects 1852-1986', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 128 no. 1005 (Dec. 1986), 862-873.

<sup>116</sup> Thompson, 'Early Safavid Carpets', p. 271.

<sup>117</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p.103.

western buyer. The mediation of European specialists and European knowledge was believed necessary to protect the buyer. Power was thereby transferred to European consumers and expert institutions, and away from indigenous makers and dealers.

One of the most influential contributors to the taxonomy of carpets was Wilhelm Bode. Bode travelled throughout Europe during the later nineteenth century, buying old carpets from churches, families and dealers. He was a pioneer collector and benefitted from the fact that the European and North American market was in its infancy, and the value of old rugs not yet transparent. He did not publish his full findings until 1902, by which time he had amassed a significant collection.<sup>118</sup> He donated it to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, of which he was the first curator, and which was renamed the Bode Museum in 1956.

Kurt Erdmann, mid-twentieth century scholar of Islamic art and curator of Berlin's Pergamon Museum, suggested that Bode and other early collectors deliberately kept their understanding of the age and value of the carpets they acquired both from their owners and the wider scholarly world.<sup>119</sup> If so, Bode's manipulation of prices was at least partly in the interests of creating a museum collection celebrating nationhood and imperial reach. He, and the museum, assumed the right of a European colonial power like Germany to own and control these artifacts, and to dictate their price.

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<sup>118</sup> Bode and Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs of the Near East*.

<sup>119</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, p. 36.



The taxonomy Bode developed discriminated between and created relationships amongst groups of carpets by analysis of commonalities in their design and motifs. He put carpets into families, and related the families to places of production. It was a practical application of Riegl's theoretical approach.<sup>120</sup> Bode's methods had a number of impacts on the European and North American orthodoxy. They contributed to a terminology for carpets and their designs, offered a way to establish provenance, articulated the idea of an arc of decay in carpets in their countries of indigenous production, and reinforced an association between elite carpets and the European Renaissance.

In the following example Bode analyses a set of small silk rugs (figure 13).

Kashan has entered its claim to a series of medallion rugs usually of smaller dimensions, which are woven entirely in silk. The centerpiece usually has a four-lobed medallion, with but a scarcely noticeable intimation of the pendants which otherwise are so customary, yet occasionally a short distance away from it there will be a conspicuous enclosing ribbon-scroll set with large blossoms...amid the vine-scrolling of its ground, aside from the customary flowers and foliage, [it] shows with especial clarity the clenched form of that symbol adopted from China, the tchi.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Riegl conducted similar analyses in *Katalogue*, 1891; *Altere Teppiche aus dem Besitz des Allerhochstein Kaiserhause* (Vienna: 1892).

<sup>121</sup> Bode and Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs*, trans.by Charles Grant Ellis (Berlin: Klikhardt and Biermann, 1958), p. 94.



Figure 13: Silk rug attributed to Kashan. (Bode and Kuhnel, *Antique Carpets of the Near East*, 1902, fig.62, p.93)

Bode is at this point in his argument exploring the relationship between a group of small rugs which may have come from Kashan, and a famous and highly regarded group of Persian carpets with large complex centre pieces known as medallions. The terms of the analysis are subjective but are deployed as if they permit a scientific iconographic analysis. He analyses the medallion of the carpet. We are told that the Kashan rug does not show full pendants, that is hanging motifs on the lobes of its central medallion. By lobes Bode means the sections of the medallion (figure 14). The residual nature of these pendants is central to Bode's identification of the rug as related to, but not a member of, the highly-regarded group of Persian medallion rugs to which the Ardabil carpet belongs. In his broader description of the design, it is difficult to know what visual difference Bode is trying to evoke between the conspicuous and inconspicuous ribbon-scrolls he describes, presumably a question of scale, or when the *tchi*, the

cloudband, is clenched or unclenched, presumably open or closed (figure 15). A lot of work is being done by these ambiguous terms.<sup>122</sup> Bode's primary aim is to establish the provenance of these Kashan rugs, and its relationship with that of their elite cousins, the medallion carpets.



Figure 14: Detail of figure 13 showing residual pendants at end of medallion lobes.

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<sup>122</sup> The 1958 translator, Charles Grant Ellis, a carpet specialist operating regularly with these terms, may not have felt they were ambiguous.



Figure 15: Detail of Figure 13, possibly showing clenched cloudbands or tchi.

Commentators from Kurt Erdmann through to Walter Denny and Cailah Jackson make the point that the taxonomy that developed through this pioneering work is poor and needs improvement.<sup>123</sup> Contemporary curators observe that it does not help them in their work of identifying carpets.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, Bode's taxonomy made a powerful and enduring contribution to the emerging orthodoxy. Erdmann described the process thus:

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<sup>123</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, p. 37; Jackson, 'Persian Carpets and the South Kensington Museum', 265-281; Walter Denny, 'Introduction: Carpets and Flat-Weaves', *Oxford Islamic Art Online*, VI, 4. [oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T041771](http://oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T041771)>pg35 [Accessed 16 January 2016]

<sup>124</sup> Based on discussions with Jennifer Wearden, former curator of textiles at the V&A, and Moya Carey, former curator for Iranian Heritage at the V&A.

Those terms first tentatively used by Bode in 1901 – Holbein, Dragon, Polish, Bird, Portuguese, Damascus, Garden, Medallion, Vase, Animal and the rest – gradually developed into type designations.<sup>125</sup>

These type designations were absorbed into the vocabulary of dealers, collectors, connoisseurs and scholars, and began to define the orthodox view of the heterodox production of the Eurasian rug-weaving belt.

Bode's taxonomies relating designs to time and place of production formed the basis for his thesis that designs of courtly carpets from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, recorded in contemporaneous paintings, degraded as they moved into popular production. In his view it was possible to identify a carpet's provenance from its presumed pace of change from its courtly or elite origin.

Two ideas of degradation in carpets were available to the European and North American orthodoxy by the late nineteenth century, the first articulated by Riegl and Morris, whereby carpets are degraded by their encounter with technology, the second articulated by Bode, whereby carpets degraded as a result of popularization and domestication in their places of indigenous production. The idea of pattern degradation in these artifacts, rather than pattern change or modification, gained traction in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries partly because it meshed so well with racial hierarchies and the belief

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<sup>125</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, p. 36.

that some once-great eastern cultures had become decadent versions of their earlier glory.<sup>126</sup>

Examining the consequences of this pre-occupation with pattern decay, Siawosch Azadi lays at Bode's door the neglect of rural and nomadic carpets by the European and North American orthodoxy. He also critiques the association that was created between carpets and artists of the European Renaissance by Bode's taxonomy:

The noted early authority Wilhelm Bode stressed the necessity of distinguishing "mainstream" Persian from provincial work and the typical from what is only of historical or local interest" [...] The European assumption that an art form is generally developed in an ecclesiastical or courtly environment and then is imitated with varying degrees of simplification and misunderstanding in more popular settings cannot, however, be applied to study of Persian carpets. In fact, the carpet was not introduced as a courtly art but was evolved among nomadic peoples at an early date.<sup>127</sup>

Azadi's statement is an unusual and welcome challenge to Bode's influential reading. Bode absorbed Lessing's 1877 taxonomy into his work. To structure his survey, Lessing gave carpets the names of European Renaissance artists, such as

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<sup>126</sup> Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity', 358-379; Jackson, 'Persian Carpets and the South Kensington Museum', pp. 269-271; Kadoi and Szanto, *The Shaping of Persian Art*, pp. 1-21.

<sup>127</sup> Azadi, *Tribal Carpets*, pp. 893-896.

Holbein, Lotto, or Ghirlandaio, who had included élite carpets in their paintings (figure 16). It has been suggested that Bode encouraged Lessing in the development of this, recognizing that the method gave a *terminus ante quem* for carpet designs.<sup>128</sup> The design had to be at least as old as the paintings. This striking example of Saidean orientalism is acknowledged by a small number of commentators, who associate its continuing use with the ongoing dependence in carpet-writing on the taxonomies of the market.<sup>129</sup> However it is so baked into the orthodoxy that it is often used without question by historians of carpets and Islamic art, and by museums of international stature.<sup>130</sup> The practice also opened up a space for hegemonic owners to rename the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia for themselves; demonstrated throughout this thesis in the naming of carpets such as the London and Los Angeles Ardabils, the Boston Hunting Carpet, the Bardini carpet, and the Trinitarias carpet.

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas J. Farnham, 'From Lessing to Ettinghausen: The First Century of Safavid Carpet Studies', *Hali*, no. 154 (2013), 82-91.

<sup>129</sup> Discussing *Oxford Art Online*, Jackson notes: 'Apart from Walter Denny's contribution ('(i) Introduction') which strongly criticizes the absence of scholarly method in carpet scholarship, such terminology is used throughout.' Jackson, 'Persian Carpets in the South Kensington Museum', footnote 86; see also Kadoi, 'Arthur Upham Pope and his "research methods in Muhammedan art"'.  
<sup>130</sup> <[metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/445297](http://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/445297)> [Accessed 25 May 2018]



Figure 16: Lorenzo Lotto, 'Alms of Saint Anthony', 1542, oil on wood. (Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice)

The association established by Lessing and Bode between carpets and Renaissance paintings legitimized the application of the broader framework of Renaissance art history to carpets. This was materialized in the important 1910



exhibition, 'Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art', held in Munich. It was not the first exhibition that had recognized the historical and artistic interest of carpets, rather than their role in improving the design vocabulary of European and North American manufactured goods. The Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1878 and the 1891 Handelsmuseum exhibition had a strong aesthetic and historical agenda. However, Friedrich Sarre, the curator of the 1910 exhibition, working alongside Bode's collaborator Ernst Kuhnel, and respected carpet specialist Robert Martin, went a step further.<sup>131</sup> Islamic art was positioned as a material culture which produced *Meisterwerke*, using terminology and concepts borrowed from European art history, and indicating thereby that Islamic art was on a par with it. In her analysis of the exhibition, Eva-Marie Troelenberg describes the tensions in this position:

The European high culture of past epochs ultimately remained an essential reference-point. In this respect, the masterpiece approach also stands for an explicitly conservative and indeed Eurocentric attitude.<sup>132</sup>

This framing of Islamic artifacts was particularly influential on European thinking about carpets. Carpets were first amongst equals in the 1910 exhibition, which had its origin in a plan to exhibit Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria's collection of old Persian carpets. They were displayed in the exhibition's prime spaces, such as the specially built Mosque Room in figure 17.

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<sup>131</sup> Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945), art historian and first curator of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum's Islamic department; F.R. Martin (1868-1933) author of *A History of Oriental Carpets before 1800* (Vienna: 1908); Ernst Kuhnel (1882-1964), Bode's collaborator, and recently graduated PhD in Italian Renaissance Art.

<sup>132</sup> Troelenberg 'Regarding the Exhibition', 11.



Figure 17: Mosque Room, 'Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art', Munich, 1910. (Friedrich Sarre and Robert Martin, exhibition catalogue, 1910)

Troelenberg describes the impact of the exhibition on the perception of Persian carpets in particular:

From the western perspective, the sixteenth and seventeenth century 'Persian rug' thus represented a classical or golden age of carpet-making'.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Eva-Maria Troelenberg, "'The Most Important Branch of Muhammedan Art": Munich 1910 and the Early 20th Century Image of Persian Art', Kadoi and Szanto, *The Shaping of Persian Art*, pp. 237-254 (p. 240).

To the taxonomy of carpets which named them for European paintings, was now added a historical and aesthetic framing which associated their 'golden age' with the revered masterpieces of Renaissance and seventeenth century Europe. This process was largely focused on carpets from Safavid Persia and illustrates the intensification of the privileging of Persian carpets over Ottoman, Moghul carpets, and of élite production environments over workshop, village and tribal carpets in the European and North American orthodoxy.

Bode's approach to establishing provenance through design continues to dominate the European and North American orthodoxy, and scholars still use his methods. The idea of pattern degradation is regularly used.<sup>134</sup> Equally, viewing the carpets of South, Central and West Asia through the filter of western art continues to be a powerful tool, given new energy in the later twentieth century by a popular 1983 exhibition, 'The Eastern Carpet in the Western World', which showed carpets alongside images of the European paintings in which they can be seen.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, the study of what Azadi described as 'rural' carpets is still largely in the hands of collectors, enthusiasts and dealers.

Bode was a pioneer in the process of absorbing these artifacts into European structures of knowledge. Through his foundational typology, carpets, like Egypt in Said's famous example, became a department of western learning, providing a chapter in the encyclopedia of European and North American definitions of the

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<sup>134</sup> For example, in 2003, Thompson, 'Early Safavid Carpets', *Hunt for Paradise*, pp. 292-298; in 2019, Maktabi, *Persian Carpets*, p.89.

<sup>135</sup> Donald King and David Sylvester, 'The Eastern Carpet in the Western World: From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century', Hayward Gallery, London, 20 May -10 July 1983.

East.<sup>136</sup> Like Riegl and Morris, Bode constructed a narrative defined by the underlying assumptions of his time, what Foucault would call a discourse and an episteme, as much or more than an understanding of a set of artifacts from outside his own culture.<sup>137</sup>

#### ***iv. Persian exceptionalism and oil politics (1910-1950)***

In the early twentieth century, Persian design began to be perceived as exceptional. This had not always been the case. In *The Grammar of Ornament*, Owen Jones proposed the Moorish decorative design of Spain and North Africa as the world-class example against which all should be judged:

The Persians, unlike the Arabs and the Moors, were free to introduce animal life and this mixing up of subjects drawn from real life in their decoration led to a much less pure style of ornament.<sup>138</sup>

However, the sixty years between *The Grammar*, with its design reformer's commitment to flatness and abstraction in the decorative arts, and the 1910 Munich exhibition discussed above, saw an increasing focus on Persian material culture. During the early twentieth century, this Persian exceptionalism in design was increasingly associated with the carpets of Safavid Persia, and by association Persian carpets in general, and they rose to their enduring place at the top of the European and North American orthodoxy.

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<sup>136</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 83.

<sup>137</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

<sup>138</sup> Jones, *Grammar* (London: Herbert Press, 2000) p. 223.

Persian exceptionalism was related to the identification by Enlightenment philologists of an Indo-European language group and racial type, distinct from Arabic and Semitic groups.<sup>139</sup> Persians were the first cousins of Northern Europeans in this racial schema. French writers were early persophiliacs, but it soon spread across Europe.<sup>140</sup> By the time of the Munich exhibition, Friedrich Sarre could confidently declare that Persian art was ‘the most important branch of Mohammedan art’.<sup>141</sup>

Kadoi and Szanto suggest that this view of Persian art was a late nineteenth and early twentieth century creation, stating that:

The abstract image of Persian art was not a pure creation of Persian civilization but [...] the manifestation of particular historical times and charismatic individuals.<sup>142</sup>

One of these ‘charismatic individuals’ was Arthur Upham Pope (1881-1969), arguably the early twentieth century’s most active proselytizer for Persian art. Pope had strong relationships with Reza Pahlavi Shah (1878-1944), which enabled him to operate freely in Iran. He was a scholar, curator, dealer, and in a phrase used by Stuart Cary Welch (American, 1928-2008), ‘a P.T. Barnum of

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<sup>139</sup> Marchand, *German Orientalism*, pp. 21-28, pp. 125-131.

<sup>140</sup> Arthur Gobineau, *Histoire des Perses* (Paris: 1869); Marcel Dieulafoy, *L’Art Antique de la Perse* (Paris: 1884-1889); Kadoi and Szanto, *The Shaping of Persian Art*, pp. 4-6

<sup>141</sup> Troelenberg, “‘The Most Important Branch of Muhammedan Art’”: *The Shaping of Persian Art*, Kadoi and Szanto, pp. 237-249.

<sup>142</sup> Kadoi and Szanto, *The Shaping of Persian Art*, pp. 2-3.

Islamic art'.<sup>143</sup> Pope's reputation has been contentious, shadowed by suggestions that his scholarship was unduly affected by his close association with the market for Islamic antiquities, and by the background noise of his appetite for academic quarrels. However, it has been subject to significant revision recently, highlighting his role in bringing Persian material culture to a broad audience, including in Iran.<sup>144</sup>

For this thesis, his importance lies in his contribution to the European and North American orthodoxy, particularly its commitment to the idea that Persian carpets of sixteenth century Safavid Persia were the standard against which all other carpets should be judged. In his influential 1938 *Survey of Persian Art* he claimed world-leading status for the Safavid carpets illustrated in figures 18, 19 and 20:

This world verdict on Persian carpets as the finest that have been made is amply sustained. In this medium Persia has suffered no rivalry [...] the great carpet that is shared between the Cathedral of Cracow and the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, the Anhalt, and the Ardabil carpets are quite unapproached by anything to which they can be compared. [They] offer unlimited scope for the Persian genius for pure design [...] guided by

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<sup>143</sup> Stuart Cary Welch, quoted in Kadoi, *Arthur Upham Pope and a New Survey of Persian Art*, p. 4. Cary Welch (1828-2008) was an American scholar and curator of Indian and Islamic Art.

<sup>144</sup> Kadoi ed., *Arthur Upham Pope and a New Survey of Persian Art*; Kishwar Rizvi, 'Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse on "Persian Art" in the Early Twentieth Century', *Muqarnas*, vol. 24 (2007), 45-65; Talinn Grigor, *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (New York: Periscope, 2009), pp 178-181.

an unfailing intellectual clarity which is characteristic of the Persian spirit.<sup>145</sup>



Figure 18: 'Anhalt' Carpet, handknotted, cotton warp, silk weft, wool pile, 792 x 419cm, Persia, early sixteenth century (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 46.128)

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<sup>145</sup> Pope, *Survey*, vol. xi, pp. 2258-9.



Figure 19: Detail of Paris-Kracow carpet, attributed to early sixteenth century Tabriz. (Wawel Royal Castle Museum, Krakow).



Figure 20: Ardabil carpet. (V&A, London, 272-1893)

In these passages, Pope offers a totalizing account of the Persian carpet, and positions it as an expression of a national, ethnic and cultural ethos. In his



descriptions, the carpets exist in the realm of the imagination and intellect, their material qualities erased. There is little evocation of makers and their skills, production techniques, access to and use of materials or even the influence of the sponsors of the carpets and their planned use in a particular historical context. Rather they are an expression of 'the Persian genius for pure design'. Pope's view of the world supremacy of Persian carpets of the sixteenth century became an unshakeable aspect of the European and North American orthodoxy, and one of its central imaginative constructs.

Pope also had a view of where the designs of these world-class art objects had originated:

Scarcely any medium could seem more unfavourable to perfect translation of the painter's intent than the knotted pile fabric. Yet once at least in the first half of the sixteenth century in Persia the arts of painting and rug weaving were combined in a series of masterpieces [...] where it is the illuminator rather than the miniature painter who serves as designer, the effect is happier still.<sup>146</sup>

The seed planted here developed into a historical concept, 'The Sixteenth Century Carpet Revolution'. Particularly associated with Kurt Erdmann, it suggested that carpets came to a sudden peak in the Safavid royal atelier, under the influence of the arts of the book; book-binding, illuminating, and what is

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<sup>146</sup> Pope, *Survey*, Vol. xi, pp. 2262-2263.

described in the West as ‘miniature’ painting,<sup>147</sup> with no connectivity to the past except in basic weaving technique.<sup>148</sup>

Richard Ettinghausen (German-American, 1906-1979), scholar and curator of the Freer Gallery, has challenged this through examination of earlier artifacts. In his analysis of the Safavid Boston Hunting Carpet, he concluded that ‘the [design] scheme existed at an early period, that it is found in a tribal setting, and that the rendition bears no influence of the art of the book.’<sup>149</sup> Despite this attempt to establish a longer and more diverse history for the court carpets of the sixteenth century, the model Pope proposed persisted, partly because it integrated seamlessly with the idea of the Renaissance courtly atelier, and with Riegl’s idea of *Kunstwollen*.

From 1926 to the end of his life Pope regularly organized exhibitions of Persian art, and Persian carpets in particular, and scholarly conferences to accompany those exhibitions. Between 1932 and 1938, he edited and wrote large parts of the multi-volume *A Survey of Persian Art*, including the section on carpets, with significant help from his wife Phyllis Ackerman.<sup>150</sup> His tireless productivity kept sixteenth and seventeenth century Persian carpets front and centre in European and North American awareness.

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<sup>147</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Sussan Babaie for pointing out the Eurocentric relativism of this term. Persian painting is only miniature relative to the larger size of European paintings.

<sup>148</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>149</sup> Ettinghausen, ‘The Boston Hunting Carpet’, 77.

<sup>150</sup> Jay Gluck, Noel Silver, Sumi Hiramoto Gluck, *Surveyors of Persian Art: A Documentary Biography of Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman* (California: Mazda Publishers, 1996); Grigor, *Building Iran*, pp. 176-179, for a feminist critique of the marginalizing of Ackerman’s contribution

Pope took forward the nineteenth century European and North American colonial racial agenda which privileged Aryan Persian culture, and materialized it in Persian carpets. At the same time, his personal commitment to Iran was intense. He lived there, is buried there,<sup>151</sup> and had close relationships across Iran, including with Reza Pahlavi Shah and members of his government. This dual loyalty drew Pope directly into a specialized form of colonialism, oil politics.

Control of the oil reserves of Iran was a priority for Britain and the US during the twentieth century, and episodes in this ongoing struggle arise throughout this thesis. The use of Persian art and its carpets as a soft-power weapon in oil politics is exemplified in the history of 'The International Exhibition of Persian Art', organized by Pope, and held at the Royal Academy in London in 1931.<sup>152</sup> Safavid carpets were of the first importance in the exhibition, as can be seen in figure 21. Indeed, Pope used his success in acquiring them as a way of tempting other collectors to participate, and of reassuring the exhibition committee of progress.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Grigor, *Building Iran*, pp. 190-196.

<sup>152</sup> Barry D. Wood, '“A Great Symphony of Pure Form”: The 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art and Its Influence', *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 30 (2000), 113-130; Armstrong, 'Unravelling the Carpet', pp. 48-88.

<sup>153</sup> Pope, letter to Exhibition Committee, 24 February 1930, MA/35/114, V&A Archive.



Figure 21: Gallery III: Masterpiece Room, 'International Exhibition of Persian Art', London, 1931. (Royal Academy Archive, London). Safavid Anhalt carpet and Emperor carpets right and left.

The exhibition was jointly sponsored by Reza Shah (r.1925-1941) and King George V (r.1910-1936). The chairman of the organizing committee was Sir Arnold Wilson (1884-1940), a senior colonial diplomat who by 1931 had become chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, now British Petroleum.<sup>154</sup>

At the time of the exhibition, the Shah was attempting to renegotiate the terms of the agreement by which APOC extracted and exported oil from Iran, a treaty he regarded as disadvantageous to Iran.<sup>155</sup> As the Shah had in 1928 seized control of the British Indo-European Telegraph Company in Iran, a crucial communications

<sup>154</sup> Wilson was Civil Commissioner in Baghdad 1918 -1920, as the new Kingdom of Iraq was established by the British. Oil politics were significant in this process. Ali Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 450-471.

<sup>155</sup> For APOC as an agent in Iran, Katayoun Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil: An Infrastructural History of BP in Iran* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2018).

link between Britain and India, the British government took seriously the threat to their oil supply. The degree to which ‘The International Exhibition of Persian Art’ was a participant in this high-stakes political discussion is illustrated by a comment from Eric McLagan, director of the V&A, ‘I got the impression that Sir Arnold Wilson is for some reason very anxious that this [exhibition] should be held’.<sup>156</sup> This anxiety is evident in a request made by Wilson as he tried to reconcile scholarly differences between Pope and Maurice Dimand of the Metropolitan Museum of Art which threatened reputational damage to the exhibition:

I beg you to do whatever is in your power [...] to realise that we have been acting in the genuine hope of utilizing this exhibition of Persian art as a means of forwarding international co-operation’<sup>157</sup>

Britain did not take military action against Iran or directly intervene in the political process to secure its claim on Iranian oil in 1931 as it might have done in the nineteenth century, and as it did alongside the US in 1953.<sup>158</sup> The use of this exhibition and its carpets as part of a diplomatic and economic negotiation with a subaltern power, Iran, illustrates the shift, albeit partial and temporary, in colonial expectations of the self-determination of nation-states after the First

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<sup>156</sup> MacLagan, Memo on inaugural meeting of the Persia Exhibition Committee (August 28, 1929), MA/35/114, V&A Archive

<sup>157</sup> *Minutes of a Commission of Enquiry into Transactions Relating to the Persian Art Exhibition* (February 4, 1931), Royal Academy of Arts Archive RAA/SEC/24/20/2. Pope was ‘tried’ by the Commission for using the exhibition to inflate the value of objects with dubious provenance. Armstrong, ‘Unravelling the Carpet’, 83-87.

<sup>158</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, The CIA, and the Roots of Modern US-Iranian Relations* (New York: The New Press, 2013).

World War.<sup>159</sup> Pope's exhibition and its carpets expanded the possibility of using material culture as a form of soft power in diplomatic and economic negotiations in the postcolonial world. At the same time, the fact that so many of the carpets, and other objects in the exhibition now had their permanent homes in European and North American collections was a reminder to resurgent Iran of European and North American cultural, political and economic dominance. Pope's exhibition is a particularly explicit expression of the role played in hegemonic politics by the European and North American orthodoxy.

Persian carpets dominated the canon after Pope. Next in the hierarchy came the court carpets of the Ottoman and Mughal empires, the latter often assumed to be Persian. However, the European and North American orthodoxy partly retains its power through its adaptability, and there were new entries into and exclusions from the hierarchy. During the first half of the twentieth century, nomadic and village carpets from the Caucasus, Iran, Anatolia and Central Asia, previously viewed as ethnographic materials began to be championed by collectors and carpet writers, the interest intensifying as the century progressed.<sup>160</sup> The view taken was that what these carpets lacked in aesthetic refinement compared to elite production, they compensated for by the greater confidence they inspired in their pre-industrial methods and materials, and by the romantic appeal of the

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<sup>159</sup> Susan Pederson, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>160</sup> For example, George Hewitt Myers, founder of the Textile Museum, Washington, in 1925 and Joseph V. McMullan, whose collection is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Thomas Farnham, *Rugs in the City* <[hajjibaba.org/rugs-in-the-city](http://hajjibaba.org/rugs-in-the-city)> [Accessed June 2015]; Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, pp. 211-242; V.G. Moshkova, *Carpets of the People of Central Asia*, (1928) ed. by George O'Bannon, trans. by Ovadan K. Amanova-Olsen (Privately printed, 1980); Andrei Andreyevitch Bogolyubov, *The Rugs of Central Asia*, (1907), ed. by Jon Thompson (Fishguard: the Crosby Press, 1973).

pre-industrial ways of living of their weavers. From the early twentieth century, there was also an increased acceptance of carpets made in urban workshops, particularly in Persia, so long as the production methods and materials were strictly traditional, that is pre-industrial.<sup>161</sup>

Despite these modifications, Pope's view continued to hold sway in the European and North American orthodoxy. The market with which it has an intimate connection gives concrete evidence of the continued primacy of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Persian carpets. In 2013 Sotheby's sold the seventeenth-century Safavid Clark-Corcoran Sickle carpet shown in figure 22 for \$33.7 million. At the time, this was the most expensive carpet ever sold at public auction.

Figure 22: Clark-Corcoran Sickle carpet, handknotted, wool, Persia, seventeenth century. (Sotheby's, New York, June 2013)

<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/so-rugs-n09012/lot.12.lotnum.html>

### ***v. The scientific turn (1950-2000)***

The elements of the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia that I have discussed so far use primarily aesthetic and stylistic criteria, based on ideological and historical

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<sup>161</sup> A. Cecil Edwards, *The Persian Carpet: A Survey of the Carpet-Weaving Industry of Persia* (London: Duckworth, 1953). Edwards (1881-1953) was managing director of the Oriental Carpet Manufacturing Company.

assumptions, to create a hierarchy of 'better' and 'worse' carpets. During the twentieth century, a new toolkit for understanding these artifacts was



developed, one that focused on weaving structure, materials, technology, and the modes of production of carpets. With this came a new idea of what a carpet might mean, and that it might be interesting as a made object. In this section, I examine this approach, arguing that it too, despite its apparent objectivity, was a product of the ideological and historical circumstances of its time, and was absorbed into the orthodoxy.

Jon Thompson identifies Siegfried Troll, curator at the Vienna K.K. Museum für Kunst und Industrie, as the originator of the structural method of analysis in 1926.<sup>162</sup> The peak of its influence was from 1950 onwards, and key early figures included Wilhelm Bode's collaborator, Ernst Kuhnel, alongside Charles Grant Ellis, and May Hamilton Beattie.

The structural approach was in essence diagnostic, and it is not irrelevant that its most accomplished practitioner, May Beattie, had a PhD in bacteriology from Edinburgh University. Recording systematically was a significant part of the process, and Beattie's archive contains many of her analysis sheets.<sup>163</sup> These sheets look like laboratory records, as can be seen in figure 23.

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<sup>162</sup> Thompson, 'Early Safavid Carpets', *Hunt for Paradise*, p. 271.

<sup>163</sup> Francesca Leomi, 'A perfectionist's search for provenance', *Hali*, vol.178 (Winter 2013), 37.



The analysis sheets record colour, motif, and materials, but their main focus is the structure of the spinning and weaving technology used. The direction of spinning and plying of fibres was analysed, S or Z-spun, and clues were sought to the structure of the loom in the stringing of the warp threads and the plane they occupied. The number of weft threads or shoots between one row of knots and the next was counted. Knots were analysed as Turkish/Ghiordes or Persian/Senneh. This example of correspondence between Grant Ellis and Beattie, reveals the puzzle-solving glee of the process:

You ask about Paris Pl.1198, so hold your hat! Warps ivory linen, Z2S, weft 3 and 4 strand ivory linen Z-spun in 2 shoots, pile wool Z2S, tied Ghiordes to the left; all sides cut and bound. 2 warp levels. No loss of horizontal section as His Eminence babbles!<sup>164</sup>

The Eminence referred to here is Arthur Upham Pope, also described in this correspondence as 'The Pope'. This reveals one of the reasons the use of this method accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century. It was a resistance to the powerful control exercised by Pope in earlier decades, and an attempt to retrieve carpet-studies from the suspicion that had fallen on Pope's integrity and the reliability of his assessments.

Other factors also played into the new emphasis, reflecting the historical context after World War II. An increased awareness of technology had developed during

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<sup>164</sup> Charles Grant Ellis to May Beattie (15 June 1965) Box 52, May Beattie Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

and after the war and was translated into both design and design thinking.<sup>165</sup> Part of this turn was an emphasis on the rational. Walter Mignolo has said ironically, 'As we know: the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture [...] Anglo-Americans have science.'<sup>166</sup> The European and North American orthodoxy had focused on carpets as expressions of western knowledge about eastern culture. Beattie's technical and analytical approach shifted that emphasis to give carpets a place within a western scientific frame of reference, at a time when the gap between what had become known as 'the two cultures', the creative and the scientific, widened.<sup>167</sup> Both positions reflected western preoccupations.

In the same period, the directing of government arts funding towards social, political and educational agendas through institutions such as the Arts Council, gave a curatorial platform for Beattie's apparently less élite and esoteric approach. In 1976 Beattie curated an exhibition of carpets as part of the 'World of Islam Festival' held across the UK.<sup>168</sup> In a domestic example of institutional assumptions about centre and periphery, the Festival's main exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, exhibited the canon of carpets of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Islamic empires as 'masterpieces', and Beattie's exhibition, 'Carpets of Central Persia', held in Sheffield and Birmingham, offered a challenger narrative.

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<sup>165</sup> David Crowley and Jane Pavitt eds., *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008).

<sup>166</sup> Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, 1-23 (p.1).

<sup>167</sup> C.P Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

<sup>168</sup> For the British Arts' Council's 1976 *World of Islam Festival*, see Armstrong, 'Unravelling the Carpet', 78-120.

The locations of Beattie's exhibition were aligned with social changes of the period. The strongly working-class communities of Sheffield and Birmingham were suffering increasingly from post-industrial deprivation, and had also become major centres of Muslim population in Britain. A new political agenda had developed in response to such social changes which stressed cultural outreach beyond London and to immigrant communities (figure 24). Through the agency of the Arts Council of Great Britain, carpet specialists were now at work serving that new hegemonic agenda.



Figure 24: Visitors at 'Carpets of Central Persia', Mappin Gallery, Sheffield, 1976. (May Beattie Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

In the exhibition, Beattie focused on one group of carpets, united by the technique used to weave them, rather than by geography, chronology, design or cultural assumptions. Furthermore, she displayed fragments which offered

technical insight about their making. She literally fragmented the consensus that the appropriate response to historic carpets is to gaze in awe at a whole perfect example (figure 25).



Figure 25: Fragments in 'Carpets of Central Persia', Mappin Gallery, Sheffield, 1976. (May Beattie Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

The focus in the exhibition was on a group known as 'Vase' carpets, which whilst they often contain vase-like motifs in their design are also connected by their shared structure (figure 26, 27). The catalogue for the exhibition is often regarded as a major achievement of her work.<sup>169</sup> She deduced that both Vase-type carpets and the prized Sanguzsko group (figure 28) shared structural characteristics, and were made in Kirman. Beattie's position challenged the authority of Erdmann, who had identified the provenance of the Sanguzsko group as Kashan, and of Pope, who had dismissed seventeenth-century Vase

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<sup>169</sup> Beattie, *Carpets of Central Persia*.

carpets as 'useful floor coverings', barely worthy of a paragraph in the *Survey of Persian Art*.<sup>170</sup>



Figure 26: 'Vase' carpet, handknotted, cotton warps, silk wefts, wool knots, 283 x 199cm, Persia, 1650-1700. (V&A. London, 364-1897)

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<sup>170</sup> Beattie, *Carpets of Central Persia*, p.12.

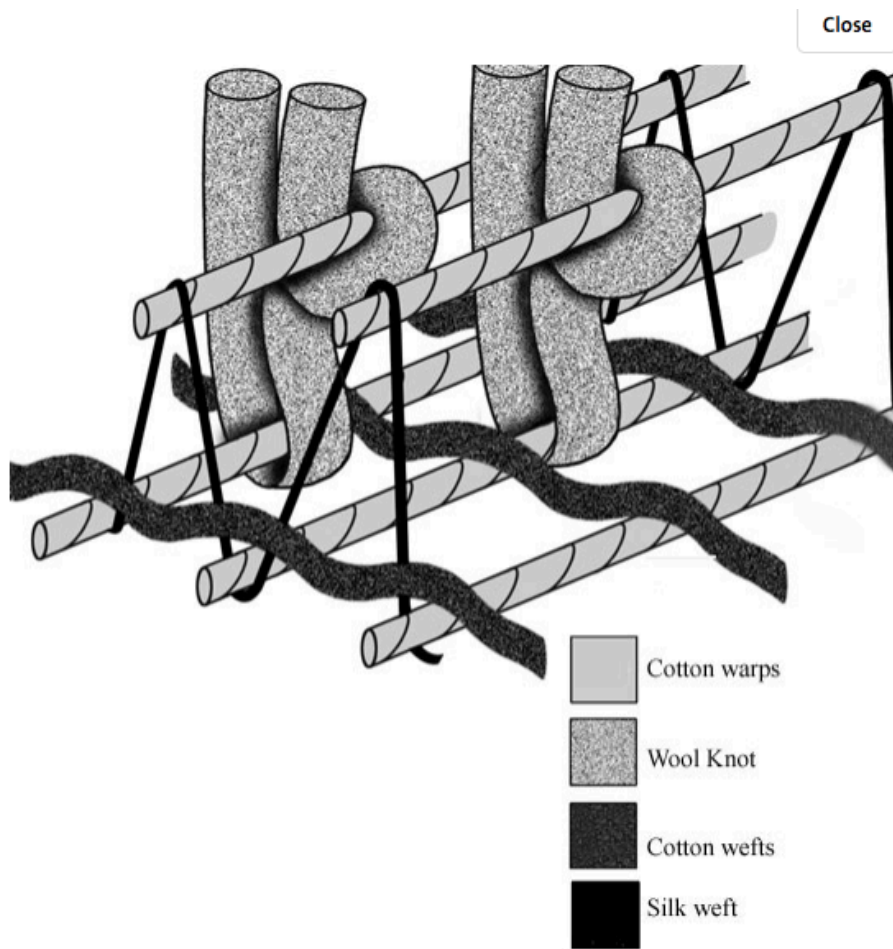


Figure 27: 'Vase' carpet structure. Drawing Pauline Webber and Danny Norman. (V&A, London)





Figure 28: 'Sanguzsko' carpet, handknotted, cotton warps, silk wefts, wool knots, 594 x 320 cm, Persia, c.1500-1550. (Miho Museum, Japan)

Beattie brought structural analysis to maturity, using it to deliver new insights such as those demonstrated in her exhibition 'Carpets of Central Persia'.

However, it was possible for the approach to degenerate into a game of terms with loose meanings, in common with earlier taxonomies. Structural analysis has been conducted across many museums holding examples of these artifacts. The method is often misunderstood, or misapplied, making it difficult for later curators to reconstruct what was identified and measured, and what insight was gained.<sup>171</sup> I have tried to analyse a carpet structurally, and have found that even with strong magnification, it is difficult to isolate the characteristics of weft, warp and knots accurately. As with many highly developed crafts, the artifact does not readily display its component parts.

The methodology Beattie developed was profoundly different to that of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, whilst her method was different, her purpose was in many ways the same. Despite the apparent focus on weaving and by extension weavers, her aim was to establish more accurate identifications of provenance, place and date of production, relationships between families of carpets, than those of nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers. She was an improver of the orthodoxy, rather than a challenger. Despite these reservations the structural approach to carpets decentred the evaluation of carpets on the basis of taste or cultural merit, as judged by

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<sup>171</sup> Based on conversations with Moya Carey, former Iranian Heritage Curator at the V&A, and Walter Denny, advisor to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

powerful European and North American commentators. In its place it brought a stronger focus on making, makers and the circumstances of production.

Beattie's approach influenced some important contemporary carpet specialists, for instance Walter Denny and Jon Thompson, the latter seen at work in figure 29, who marry structural analysis with fieldwork and archival research in the countries of indigenous production. The distance between these writers and the nineteenth and early twentieth-century version of the orthodoxy is indicated by Thompson's 1988 statement that 'the division of carpets into categories carries no suggestion of one being better than the other'<sup>172</sup> Meanwhile, Walter Denny has worked to rehabilitate the diverse carpet-making cultures of Anatolia.<sup>173</sup>



Figure 29: Jon Thompson examining the back of a weaving to establish its structure, c.2005. (Hajji Baba Club, New York)

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<sup>172</sup> Thompson, *Carpets from The Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia*, p. 25.

<sup>173</sup> Denny, *The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets*.

However, Beattie's heirs have increasingly focused on court carpets, and have consistently accepted orthodox valuations of dyes, technology, the local, and export goods. Furthermore, as it has been adopted by a broader population of connoisseurs, the structural method has become another branch of arcane knowledge to police ideas of authenticity and provenance, and to create boundaries between acceptable and transgressive carpets.

The writers and curators I have discussed in this section, Riegl, Bode, Morris, Pope, and Beattie, made defining contributions to a European and North American orthodoxy. They helped to create and codify an authorised version of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. The impulse towards codification was also an impulse to control, so that these artifacts became what the European and North American orthodoxy described them as being, reconstructed into a composite of characteristics that is still influential in the twenty-first century.

#### **4. Materialising the orthodoxy in western museum collections and exhibitions**

Some of the most important individual curatorial contributions to the European and North American orthodoxy have been described above. These foundational exhibitions and their curators sit within a broader group of nineteenth and twentieth-century curators in European and North American museums with

holdings of carpets.<sup>174</sup> This larger group played an important role in deepening historical understanding of the collections of their home institutions, putting into public circulation previously unseen images and analyses of carpets, and preserving fragile historical resources. In doing this valuable work, they largely followed the European and North American orthodoxy, its canon and hierarchy. Their displays materialized that narrative, and their work with collectors disseminated its ideas of quality and value. Only a handful of curators in museums of decorative arts seriously considered carpets that did not conform to orthodox expectations. C.E.C Tatersall of the Victoria and Albert Museum is one. In the 1930s, as part of a project to write a complete history of British carpet making, he conducted research into both handmade and machine-made versions of versions and copies of these artifacts made in Britain.<sup>175</sup> Tatersall's unusual readiness to consider machine-weaving as part of a continuum which also includes handweaving informs the discussion in chapter three.

Temporary exhibitions offer curators the opportunity to change the direction of the narrative about artifacts, and indeed the work of Riegl, Bode, Morris, Pope and Beattie was accelerated in such exhibitions, as discussed above.<sup>176</sup> The

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<sup>174</sup> Examples include A.F. Kendrick (in post early twentieth century), C.E.C Tatersall (mid-twentieth century), Donald King (1948 -1980), all at the V&A, Gaston Migeon (late nineteenth century) at the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Maurice Dimand (mid twentieth century) and Daniel Walker (late twentieth century) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and generations of curators during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the Berlin Museums of Islamic art and MAK in Vienna, including Ernst Kuhnel, Hermann Trenkwald, Kurt Erdmann, Friedrich Spuhler. Donald King is also regarded as the founder of the discipline of Textile Studies.

<sup>175</sup> Tatersall, *A History of British Carpets*.

<sup>176</sup> Jonathon Bloom and Sheila Blair eds., *Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) vol. 1, pp. 57-61, for a descriptive list of temporary exhibitions of Islamic art in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

display of the permanent collection of a museum, on the other hand, is a difficult environment in which to challenge a prevailing orthodoxy, mediated as it is by political agendas, constraints on funding and space, the serendipity of donations. As a consequence, curators sometimes have no choice but to follow the existing agenda.

Curators often describe the rehang of a permanent display as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reframe the narrative of a museum's collection.<sup>177</sup>

Unusually, since the beginning of the new millennium, a series of these once-in-a-generation rehanges has occurred in the major institutional collections of Islamic material culture which developed in Europe and North America in step with colonialism.<sup>178</sup> These offered the opportunity to disrupt the orthodox narrative, but have largely operated to reinforce it, offering a reading that is secular, focused on 'masterpieces', and on a continuing pre-occupation with sixteenth and seventeenth-century court production in the Islamic Empires.<sup>179</sup>

In 2004, the Benaki Museum in Athens established a separate home for its Islamic objects, the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art, where its collection of pre-Mamluk and Mamluk Empire (1250-1517) textiles are displayed in a primarily historical narrative. The V&A's rehang of its Islamic collection in the Jameel

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<sup>177</sup> Ladan Akbarnia, curator at the British Museum, gave a lifespan of thirty years for the BM's new Albukhary Galleries. Ladan Akbarnia and Venetia Porter, 'Rethinking Islamic art at the British Museum', *Apollo* (29 October 2018).

<[apollo-magazine.com/rethinking-islamic-art-at-the-british-museum](http://apollo-magazine.com/rethinking-islamic-art-at-the-british-museum)> [Accessed 23 November 2018]

<sup>178</sup> This thesis does not cover museums with carpet collections outside Europe and North America.

<sup>179</sup> The Burrell Collection in Glasgow and the new Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin are closed for redesign and expected to re-open in 2020.

Gallery in 2006 permitted its iconic carpet, the sixteenth-century Safavid Ardabil, to be shown on the floor for the first time since its purchase in 1893 (figure 30). As I will discuss further in chapter two, the gallery was redesigned around the carpet, embodying its place at the apex of a hierarchy of carpets and indeed of Islamic art in its entirety, echoing the position of Safavid carpets in the 1910 Munich exhibition.<sup>180</sup> The Louvre in Paris absorbed the carpet collection of the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in 1996. The Louvre's rehang of its Islamic Galleries in 2012 returned the carpets to the floor rather than hanging them like paintings on a wall (figure 31). However, they were at the same time absorbed into the gallery's narrative of high art. The carpets of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York were rehung in 2011, in new galleries entitled *Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia*, the title de-emphasising their Islamic and religious content in the fraught post-9/11 environment. From its very wide collection of carpets, the emphasis was strongly on sixteenth and seventeenth-century court carpets of India, Anatolia, and especially Persia.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Oliver Salway, 'The Design of the Jameel Gallery', *The Making of the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, ed. by Rosemary Crill and Tim Stanley (London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 2006), pp. 76-102.

<sup>181</sup> At my last visit (2016) only three village and tribal rugs from the unique collection acquired from Joseph McMullan in 1956 were on display.



Figure 30: Ardabil carpet, Jameel Gallery 2006. (V&A, London)



Figure 31: Islamic Galleries, Louvre. (Louvre, Paris)



One rehang took a step in a new conceptual direction. The MAK's new display, opened in 2014, displayed carpets as if they were kites, or more troublingly, flying carpets (figure 32). Despite this orientalist resonance, the rehang gives the viewer awareness of the carpet as a three-dimensional material object, although the back revealing the process of production cannot easily be seen, in favour of the front showing the aesthetic effect. Unsurprisingly, given the grip of the orthodoxy, this was controversial. One of the carpet enthusiasts on a *Hali* tour of the MAK display asserted that 'Any curator presenting a Picasso in such a way would be sacked straight away- so why is it all right for a carpet?'<sup>182</sup> This suggests a strong preference for carpets as two-dimensional works of art hung on walls, rather than as three-dimensional artifacts, and for the illusion of the surface design over the materiality of the made object. The MAK rehang also permitted the display of greater numbers of carpets and fragments. Despite the opportunity this gave to vary the canon, the extra carpets displayed maintained it.

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<sup>182</sup> Ben Evans, quoting the reaction of a participant in a *Hali* tour, in 'Display of Controversy', *Hali*, 181 (Autumn 2014), 43.



Figure 32: Carpet Galleries, MAK. (Hali Publications)

Meanwhile the new Albukhary Galleries of the Islamic World, opened at the British Museum in October 2018, offer a perspective on Islamic material culture that moves away from a series of expertly conserved masterpieces within a well-established canon. Instead it offers an encounter with a broader geographical Islamic world, and a timeframe beginning with a pre-Islamic past and continuing to the present day. It celebrates fragments, non-élite materials and demotic production alongside treasures, and exposes the life stories of objects through time and across space. It seeks to dissolve the boundary between ethnography and art. In part this is a reflection of the nature of the British Museum's collection of Islamic artifacts, which contains many non-canonical, fragmentary and utilitarian Islamic objects, and partly an explicit desire on the part of the curators

to broaden the idea of the material culture of these geographies and societies.<sup>183</sup> Two further European museums with large Islamic collections, The Burrell Collection in Glasgow and the new Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin are closed for redesign, and expected to re-open in 2020. Unlike the British Museum, these have extensive holdings of carpets, and it will be of great interest to see how current museological thinking is applied to them.

The discussion in this section has so far concentrated on permanent museum displays and temporary exhibitions primarily or exclusively focused on carpets. Carpets and their display have also been part of a broader discourse from the late nineteenth century on the nature of art. One of the themes of this has been the status of the material culture of groups outside of Europe and North America. Often described as 'primitive art', it included, in Larry Shiner's words, 'the arts of children, naïve amateurs, the mentally ill, peasant folk'.<sup>184</sup> Shiner points out that whilst a peak of interest was reached in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the interest pre-dates this.

Amongst the most famous examples of this interaction is Picasso's use of an African totem from Matisse's studio as an inspiration for his ground-breaking *Desmoiselles d'Avignon*, and the discourse that developed around it (figures 33, 34). Such objects were assimilated into a European and North American system for evaluating art, the tone of which of which was set early, as shown by one example out of many; artist and art theorist Roger Fry's 1920 pronouncement on

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<sup>183</sup> Akbarnia and Porter, 'Rethinking Islamic art at the British Museum'.

<sup>184</sup> Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, p. 270.

'the complete plastic freedom [...] of these nameless savages'.<sup>185</sup>

Figure 33: Carved figure, Vili people of Congo, date unknown. Archives Matisse, Paris.

<https://hiddencause.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/seated-figure.jpg>

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<sup>185</sup> Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*, (1926), (New York: Meridian, 1956), p.100.

Figure 34: Pablo Picasso, *Desmoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907, oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79766>

The European and North American orthodoxy, with its focus on élite carpets from the highly developed Islamic empires of the Safavids, the Ottomans and the Mughals, had defined those artifacts as part of a European canon of high art in exhibitions such as the Munich Exhibition of 1910, discussed above. Pope and others had ensured that a sixteenth-century Persian carpet would not be viewed as 'primitive' art.

Tribal and village carpets, however, were a different case. They were initially regarded as primarily ethnographic materials.<sup>186</sup> However, the European and North American orthodoxy partly retains its power through its adaptability, and from the early twentieth century, there was an increased acceptance of carpets made in villages and by nomads.<sup>187</sup> The view was that what these lacked in aesthetic refinement compared to élite production, they compensated for by the greater confidence they inspired in their pre-industrial methods and materials, and by the romantic appeal of the pre-industrial ways of living of their weavers. New industrial fortunes sought out canonical carpets, but less wealthy collectors, particularly in the US, bought carpets that, whilst they believed them interesting and beautiful, were also cheaper.<sup>188</sup> Tribal, nomadic and village rugs from Anatolia, Iran and Central Asia began to enter the discourse, as these collectors displayed and published their carpets. One such was George Hewitt Myers, who founded the Washington Textile Museum in 1925, another Joseph V. McMullan, whose collection is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. New taxonomies and bodies of esoteric knowledge arose around their production and iconography which offered connoisseurs a further type of cultural capital.<sup>189</sup> Tribal, nomadic and village rugs were assimilated into a European and North American model of value, as examples of 'primitive' art.

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<sup>186</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York displays only a few of its exceptional collection of village and tribal rugs. The V&A displays none. See also Baker, '20<sup>th</sup> Century Mythmaking: Persian Tribal Rugs', 10; Azadi, 'Tribal Carpets' pp. 893-896; Kadoi and Szanto, p. 9.

<sup>187</sup> For example, George Hewitt Myers (1875-1957) collected tribal and village carpets, and founded the Textile Museum, Washington D.C. in 1925.

<sup>188</sup> Farnham, *Rugs in the City*]; Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, pp. 211-242.

<sup>189</sup> See, for example, Jenny Housego, *Tribal Rugs* (Interlink Books, 1996); Anthony Landrau ed., *Yoruk: The Nomadic Weaving Tradition of the Middle East* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1978).

The impact of this categorisation has been long-lasting. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which does not regard itself as a 'folk art' museum, bought Joseph McMullan's exceptional collection of village and nomadic carpets in 1956, but in 2016 had only two on display in its extensive galleries of antique Safavid, Ottoman, Mughal and Mamluk carpets. In 1972, art critic David Sylvester curated an exhibition of Joseph McMullan's collection at the Hayward Gallery in London. Echoing the 1910 Munich exhibition, Sylvester contextualized the McMullan carpet in figure 35 within western art history.

If I for one feel that [...] a coarse peasant rug in which the Seljuk spirit vividly survives, is a very great work of art, I doubt whether I could have seen it as such but for Matisse.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> David Sylvester, *Islamic Carpets from the Collection of Joseph V. McMullen* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972), p. 15, discussing exhibit no. 80, Plate XXVII. The Joseph McMullan collection is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 35: Fragment of carpet, wool and cotton, c.17<sup>th</sup> century, Anatolia, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Image plate XXVII, 'Islamic Carpets from the Collection of Joseph V. McMullan'.

Sylvester's 1972 reading of 'a coarse peasant rug' through the filter of European post-impressionism, and his suggestion that without that filter the rug could make no independent appeal to a sophisticated European, was about to come under extreme pressure. From 1978, with the publication of Said's *Orientalism*, post-colonial studies developed tools to unsettle accounts like Sylvester's.

Two exhibitions exemplify the change in approach. 'Les Magiciens de la Terre', an activist exhibition at the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1989, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, was organized as a riposte to a 1984 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, entitled "Primitivism" in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: The Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern'. The MOMA exhibition was perceived by some



commentators as subordinating non-western material culture, positioning it as fuel for the Euro-American creative impulse.<sup>191</sup> 'Primitive' in the exhibition was used equally for élite and popular production, and disregarded the cultural, social and economic complexity of the places of making. 'Les Magiciens' destabilized this position. Each exhibit had its own map of the planisphere, 're-oriented in such a way that the referent dot [indicating the place of making] remained at the centre'.<sup>192</sup> 'Les Magiciens' decentred western art in its account of multi-directional flows of interaction.

The European and North American orthodoxy of 'oriental' carpets exemplifies the issue at the core of this debate. On the one hand collectors and exhibitions of village, tribal and nomadic carpets helped introduce a new population of rugs and makers into the discussion, and on the other, they assimilated those carpets into a European and North American consensus view. Just like the court carpets displayed in the 1910 Munich exhibition, they were set in relation to a hierarchy of western art.

## **5. The narrative of carpets outside the academy and the museum**

Whilst the European and North American orthodoxy has a strong hold in the academy and the museum, it also operates in a vibrant network for the

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<sup>191</sup> Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, pp. 189-215; Hilton Kramer, 'The "Primitivism" Conundrum', *New Criterion*, December 1984.

<[newcriterion.com/issues/1984/12/the-primitivism-conundrum](http://newcriterion.com/issues/1984/12/the-primitivism-conundrum)> [Accessed 3 November 2018]

<sup>192</sup> Annie Cohen-Solal, 'Revisiting Les Magiciens de la Terre', *Stedelijk Studies Journal*, no.1 (Fall 2014).

<[stedelijkstudies.com/journal/revisiting-magiciens-de-la-terre](http://stedelijkstudies.com/journal/revisiting-magiciens-de-la-terre)> [Accessed November 3 2018]

discussion of patterned pile carpets which exists outside these institutions. This includes materials produced by dealers, travellers and carpet entrepreneurs, commercial auction-houses and their catalogues, specialist media, conferences and travel companies which meet the appetite of carpet enthusiasts, and lively debates between interested parties in the blogosphere.

Amongst the most illuminating of these commentaries are the memoirs of entrepreneurs and dealers employed by trading and manufacturing companies, such as the British Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Ltd (1907-1968).<sup>193</sup> Travellers have also made significant contributions.<sup>194</sup> These writings are based on encounters and fieldwork, and consequently have a strong connectivity with weavers, processes of production, and the use and experience of carpets. However, whilst entrepreneurs, traders and manufacturers might lobby to have carpets that are of interest to them included in the orthodoxy, their commercial interests are fundamentally aligned with it. They accept its boundaries and use its methods.

Meanwhile, as a result of popular interest in carpets stimulated by a wave of exhibitions in both Europe and America in the 1970s and 80s, a number of alternative fora to mainstream academia came into being. The ICOC (International Conference of Oriental Carpets) has been running an irregular conference since 1976, and writers mentioned in this chapter and in the

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<sup>193</sup> Edwards, *The Persian Carpet*; Antony Wynn, *Three Camels to Smyrna: The Story of the Oriental Carpet Manufacturing Company*; (London: Hali Publications, 2008); Parsons, *The Carpets of Afghanistan*.

<sup>194</sup> Modern examples include Housego, *Tribal Rugs*; Anna Badkhen, *The World is a Carpet: Four Seasons in an Afghan Village* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013).

introduction have published their work and organized exhibitions under its umbrella.<sup>195</sup> The *Oriental Rug Review* published a similar population of writers between 1981 and the early 2000s. The periodical *Hali*, established in London in 1978, and which recently celebrated its 400<sup>th</sup> edition, describes itself as the world's leading carpet periodical. Its contributors now come from the worlds of dealers, collectors and enthusiasts, and increasingly, museums and academia. Spanning the carpet network it also includes a list of prices achieved at auction.

The spaces for debate have dramatically opened in the twenty-first century, to include many informal online fora. The volume of popular, demotic and democratic carpet-writing has increased, expressing the enthusiasm of lovers of carpets, reflecting market controversies around provenance and value, and often vigorously engaging with more established writers on minutiae of the European and North American orthodoxy. Here an irate rug enthusiast on the website *Rug Kazbah* engages with Michael Franses, publisher of *Hali*, and respected carpet specialist:

here are a few of the say-nothings Franses feeds his readership in this effort:

1. Calling the rug in question [...] “...an irreplaceable masterpiece from the highest period of 16th century Safavid Persian Art...” at the beginning of his article and then saying it is “...an eight [because] It does not have the

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<sup>195</sup> The first conference was organized to coincide with ‘The World of Islam Festival’. The exhibitions ‘Carpet Magic’, curated by Jon Thompson and published as *Carpets from the Tents, Cottages and Workshops of Asia*, and ‘The Eastern Carpet in the Western World’, curated by Donald King and David Sylvester, were parts of later ICOCs.

‘bells and whistles’ of animal hunts, or complex borders or exquisite details...” strikes RK as talking out of both sides of his mouth simultaneously [...] By first praising the carpet on page one Franes is actually giving that praise to the buyer who spent 1,930,550 dollars to bag it. And then by virtually dissing it and calling it an “eight” that lacks “bells and whistles” on page two Franes is covertly sending a message to that buyer. That message, loud and clear, is: You need to consult me next time.

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Writing such as this has a vitality that highlights how much rug enthusiasts care about their carpets, and yet it is here also that the most conservative expression of the orthodoxy can often be found. The writer uses highly specific details of the iconography of a Safavid carpet to impugn Michael Franes’ objectivity as a commentator. The reader is taken back to the domination of Safavid carpets, to Bode’s typologies, and to the personalized debates around the integrity of scholars who were also dealers and commercial advisors, such as Pope and Franes.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter by demonstrating why the ideology and practice of the European and North American orthodoxy cannot be accepted on its own terms as a fact-based and objective evaluation of the patterned pile carpets of South,

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<sup>196</sup> <[rugkazbah.com/boards/records.php?id=2443&refnum=2443](http://rugkazbah.com/boards/records.php?id=2443&refnum=2443)> [Accessed 24 Feb 2018]

Central and West Asia. I described the historical context which gave rise to the need for a way of navigating an increasingly complicated array of carpets, and which resulted in the construction of the orthodoxy to meet that need. I went on to discuss the foundational thinking which established the orthodoxy, and the deployment of it in the academy, the museum, and across the broader network involved in discussion of these artifacts.

A large amount of scholarship has been produced using the orthodoxy. It has also been of significant value to carpet connoisseurs and dealers, who use it as surety for a large global market for carpets that can suffer from asymmetries of information between weavers, dealers, curators and consumers. However, it has at the same time marginalized large groups of carpets and makers who are judged to transgress its precepts, privileging instead a small group of rare and elite carpets. In doing so it excludes the experience of patterned pile carpets enjoyed by the majority of people who make, own and use them.

Throughout the chapter, a pattern emerges of carpets being used as a way to discuss something else. They were used as a measure of the artistic integrity of impressionism, post-impressionism and modernism. Design reformers used them as part of a debate on the design quality and moral impact of European and North American manufactured goods. Nineteenth-century thinkers were interested in what carpets told them about the origins of human material culture. Carpets were used to support racial hierarchies, and assumptions about the civilized and the primitive. They helped define and make claims on the resources of Asia. They were used to describe a pre-industrial utopia of lives lived at

craftwork.

Throughout the period studied in this thesis, European and North American commentators have often preferred to use carpets to illustrate such ideological agendas than to engage with their materiality, the practice of their makers, or their own underlying response to them. They have constructed bodies of knowledge about carpets as part of a hegemonic effort to control subaltern groups, but also in an individual and internal effort to replace the emotional and haptic interaction between people and carpets by apparently objective and impersonal taxonomies and rules. In the next three chapters, I undertake three close studies of particular carpets to show the European and North American orthodoxy in action, and to broaden the discussion I begin by analyzing the appropriation of the sixteenth-century Safavid Ardabil carpet, and its use to reinvent the concept of these artifacts.

## Chapter Two

### Reimagining the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia: The 'London' Ardabil from 1892

#### Introduction

In chapter one I described the construction of the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, central and West Asia. In chapter two, I analyse how the values of that orthodoxy were embedded in ideas about a particular carpet, the Ardabil, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and discuss the impact of that process. Kopytoff has described how at points in their biographies, commodities are transformed into singular objects of distinction in response to the social, economic, psychological and ideological needs of a particular place and time.<sup>1</sup> I argue that the carpet from the shrine at Ardabil was such an object, and late nineteenth-century imperial Britain such a place and time.

I examine how the European and North American orthodoxy reinvented the Ardabil as its exemplary carpet after its arrival in London in 1892, then to set it to work in support of nineteenth and twentieth-century hegemonic values. I argue that the existence of the exemplary carpet in turn authorized the orthodoxy's values and underlying ideology. As a consequence, the binaries between carpets which the orthodoxy considered authentic and of value, and

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<sup>1</sup> Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', pp. 64-91.

those which it considered transgressive were intensified. I go on to discuss examples of these transgressive carpets in chapters three and four. My analysis of the reinvention of the Ardabil carpet from its arrival in London in 1892 directly addresses the research questions of this thesis; one asking what the gap is between the European and North American orthodoxy's view of these artifacts and the actuality of their biographies, and the second asking what weavers and carpets are excluded by the orthodoxy, and why.

The primary materials for this chapter include historical records of the Ardabil carpet and the Jameel Gallery, both held at the V&A archives, published commentaries and catalogues contemporaneous with the carpet's early years at the museum, the archive and writings of May Beattie, and data from interviews with visitors to the carpet at the V&A. I also use literary works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as primary materials.

The chapter begins with a description of the carpet. In section two I analyse the origin story developed for the London Ardabil during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Section three examines the process of its definition as a world-leading work of art from 1892 throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In section four I investigate the European and North American imagining of the carpet's production processes during the second half of the twentieth century, in particular the gendering of its making. Section five analyses the materialization of these narratives in the carpet's display in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Jameel Gallery, opened in 2006, and the twenty-first-century assumptions about Islamic material culture that the carpet serves



there. Finally, in section six, I consider the Ardabil's transformation into multiple replicas that offer the opportunity to possess the carpet, in the service of domesticity and intimacy on the one hand, and power and ideology on the other.

The acquisition history of the carpet and its role in the shrine at Ardabil was unclear when it arrived in London in 1893 and was much debated in the twentieth century. In 1986, May Beattie wrote:

The one fact that remains [about the Ardabil] is that valuable historical information has been distorted and lost in the tangled web of the carpet trade.<sup>2</sup>

Beattie's assertion that the multiplicity of theories around the Ardabil derives from commercial manipulation, whilst partly correct, underestimates the unusual power the carpet has had in generating stories amongst scholars, carpet enthusiasts and the general public. Beattie's 'tangled web' is partly woven from the fantasies this carpet has provoked in a wide range of people. Significant work has been published in recent years on the carpet's acquisition history in the West, and its role in the shrine at Ardabil.<sup>3</sup> It is not the purpose of this chapter to review current historical understanding. The focus here is on the stories that were created around the carpet after it left Persia. These stories had ideological,

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<sup>2</sup> May Beattie, 'The Ardabil Carpet', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, (December 15, 1986), pp. 365-368.

<[iranicaonline.org/articles/ardabil-carpet-persian-carpet-acquired-by-the-victoria-and-albert-museum-in-1893](http://iranicaonline.org/articles/ardabil-carpet-persian-carpet-acquired-by-the-victoria-and-albert-museum-in-1893)> [Accessed 20 May 2016]

<sup>3</sup> Sheila Blair, *Text and Image in Medieval Persian Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Carey, *Persian Art*; Kishwar Rizvi *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

political, social and commercial drivers, but also met emotional needs. The analysis in the chapter contributes to the objective outlined in the introduction to the thesis, to open up a space for discussion of the relationship between people and carpets which goes beyond taxonomies, provenance, and structure. To do so I draw on readings with roots in psychoanalysis, materiality and agency.<sup>4</sup> The chapter also draws on the self-reflection undertaken in recent years by Islamic art historians, described in the introduction to the thesis, which has widened the discipline conceptually.<sup>5</sup>

The analysis in the chapter supports a further objective of the thesis, to examine orientalism at work, offering an opportunity to particularize orientalism's dynamics of knowledge, power and control. On the one hand, the stories created about the Ardabil manifest what Mercedes Volait characterizes as the orientalism of early encounters:

The adoption of essentialist, globalizing notions or simplified dichotomies, based on allegedly clear cultural distinctions, [which] may be only a preliminary step to gain familiarity with artistic production alien to one's own culture.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For example Attfeld, *Wild Things*; Warner, *Stranger Magic*; Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of the Orient* (London: Macmillan, 1986); Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Junod, Khalil, Weber and Wolf, *Islamic Art and the Museum*; Moya Carey and Wendy M. Shaw eds., 'Special Issue on Islamic Art Historiography', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 6 (2012).

<[arthistoriography.wordpress.com/number-6-june-2012-2](http://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/number-6-june-2012-2)> [Accessed 7 June 2014]

<sup>6</sup> Volait, 'Appropriating Orientalism?', pp. 144-5.

However, over time, the reinvention was used in more sophisticated ways to manipulate representations of the Other in support of western identities, a process described by Edward Said thus:

European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the Ardabil's reinvention silenced the voices of its original makers and users, a dynamic identified by Gayatri Spivak as central to colonial control.<sup>8</sup> This remained the case until late twentieth and twenty-first-century scholarship attempted to recover them.<sup>9</sup>

## 1. The carpet

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<sup>7</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3. Said builds on Frantz Fanon's earlier statement in *Black Faces White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) that Europe is the creation of the third world.

<sup>8</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', pp. 271-313.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Jon Thompson 'Early Safavid carpets and Textiles', *Hunt for Paradise*, pp. 271-317; Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, pp. 90-98; Blair, *Text and Image*, pp. 250-260.

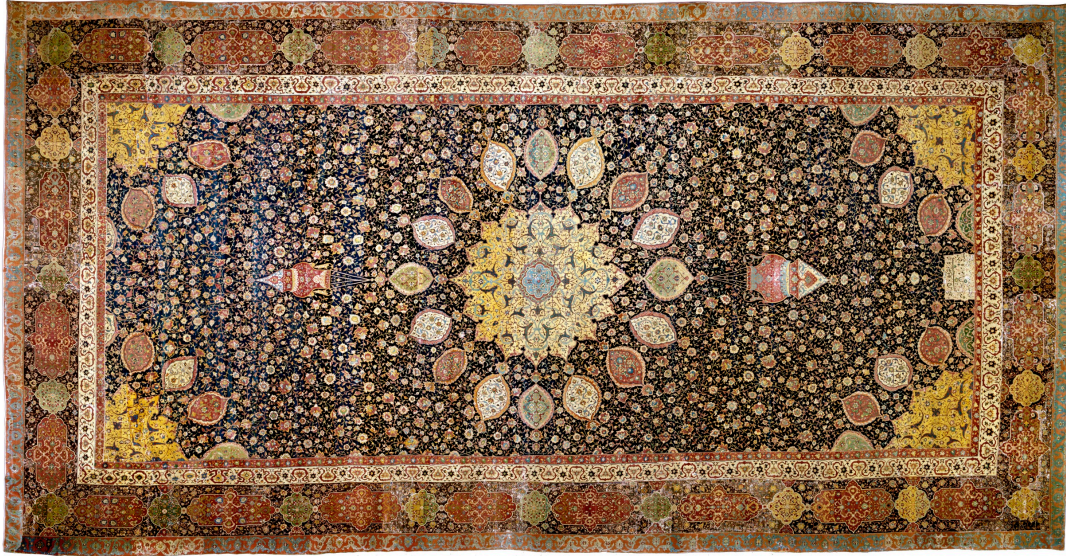


Figure 1: Ardabil carpet, handknotted silk warps and wefts, wool knots in ten colours, 340 knots per square inch, 1044 x 530cm, Persia, c.1539 CE, AH 946. (V&A, London, 272-1893)

In the introduction and chapter one, I have described the London Ardabil carpet as an example of the most highly valued type in the European and North American orthodoxy, exemplifying the material, aesthetic and historical qualities the orthodoxy seeks. It is a sixteenth-century Persian carpet made during the reign of Safavid Shah Tahmasp I, believed to have been directly commissioned by the Shah, for the shrine of Sufi Sheik Safi al Din at Ardabil, a cultural, political and religious centre.<sup>10</sup> It was handknotted, using ‘naturally’ dyed silk warps and wefts, and wool knots, with a knot count of around 340 knots per square inch. Whilst this is not so high as the 2,100 knots per square inch recorded in some Mughal carpets,<sup>11</sup> it contributes to the precision and clarity of the complex design, alongside the fine materials, and the investment of the patron in

<sup>10</sup> Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, pp. 250-260.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *Flowers Under Foot*, p.28, figure 7.

accomplished workmanship. The skilled artisans who made it operated in a pre-industrial environment of creative exchange between makers in different media, under élite patronage.<sup>12</sup>

Both the circumstances of the Ardabil's making, and its complex planar design of abstracted naturalistic motifs matched the preferences that had developed amongst European and North American commentators, connoisseurs, collectors and curators during the second half of the nineteenth century, discussed in chapter one. Its authenticity and provenance were apparently impeccable.

William Morris summarized the response to the Ardabil on its arrival in London when he said 'I am sure that this is far the finest Eastern carpet which I have seen'.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. 'Saving' the Ardabil carpet: Creating a new nineteenth-century origin story**

The reinvention of the Ardabil carpet began at the moment of its launch into the culturally inquisitive world of 1890s London by Edward Stebbing, Managing Director of Vincent Robinson and Company, who had the carpet for sale. In a marketing pamphlet of 1892 entitled 'The Holy Carpet of the Mosque at Ardebil', Stebbing stressed the exceptionalism of the carpet and its provenance.<sup>14</sup> The title of his pamphlet introduced a concept that became part of the Ardabil's history

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<sup>12</sup> Thompson 'Early Safavid Carpets', *Hunt for Paradise*, pp. 271-317.

<sup>13</sup> William Morris to Thomas Armstrong, 13 March 1893. V&A Archive, MA/1/R1314.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Stebbing, *The Holy Carpet of the Mosque at Ardebil: A Monograph* (London: Robinson and Company, 1892).

and display in London. It was the carpet that was holy, rather than the shrine and its mosque, the carpet that was invested with a power beyond the material, the utilitarian, or the ceremonial. Its sacral nature did not arise from Islam, but from the congruence between its materiality and aesthetics and those required from such a carpet in the West.

The exceptionalism Stebbing proposed for the Ardabil was endorsed by William Morris, Lord Leighton, and other members of the London arts establishment.<sup>15</sup> Morris dramatized the idea that the carpet was unique, writing in his letter to Thomas Armstrong to recommend its purchase for the South Kensington Museum, 'it has no counterpart'.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout these early commentaries, there was a stress on the carpet's excellent state of preservation. The complete and highly readable nature of the object, taken in conjunction with the fact that it was dated in a woven inscription to 1539 CE, offered the Ardabil's British audience an unusually direct connection to a Middle Eastern past that was both distant and exoticised.<sup>17</sup> From Stebbing's perspective, holy, unique and at the same time perfectly-preserved was a combination which would increase the carpet's commercial value, in a public discourse which was engaged by the esoteric, and a market that valued the complete object over the fragment.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, pp. 174-184, for the journey of the carpet from Iran to the V&A, and its initial reception.

<sup>16</sup> William Morris to Thomas Armstrong, 13 March 1893. MA/1/R1314, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London.

<sup>17</sup> Warner, *Stranger Magic*, pp. 1-26

<sup>18</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, p. 209,

As more details emerged about the carpet's journey from the shrine to the museum, a suggestion of conspiracy became attached to it. By the early years of the twentieth century it was clear that a second Ardabil carpet existed, and that a process of repair had been carried out in the late nineteenth century. In that process, still-unknown artisans in a still-unknown location wove and stitched sections from the border of the second carpet into the London Ardabil (figure 2).<sup>19</sup>



Figure 2: Ardabil carpet, handknotted cotton warp and wefts, wool and wool and silk knots, c.350 knots per square inch, 718 x 400cm, Persia, c.1540 CE, AH 946 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Getty Museum, Malibu, 53.50.2)

This story, if anything, added to the cachet of the carpet and its power over the public and scholarly imagination. In a 1911 auction catalogue, J.K. Mumford

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<sup>19</sup> Rexford Stead, *The Ardabil Carpets*, (Malibu: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1974); Jennifer Wearden, 'The V&A Ardabil: The Early Repairs', *Hali* 80 (1995), 102-108.

includes a description of a second Ardabil, then in Charles Tyson Yerkes' collection.<sup>20</sup> Mumford characterised the Ardabil discourse thus:

A greater or less measure of mystery has for years surrounded the Ardabil carpet of South Kensington, a dark suggestion of some truth hidden, and even furtive intimation of *chicane*.<sup>21</sup>

In 1966, Kurt Erdmann suggested that curators from the South Kensington Museum were aware of the history of the two carpets and the repairs before the Ardabil's arrival in the museum, stating that 'Mr Stebbing [...] did not tell the truth about its excellent state of preservation. This of course was known to the Director of the Museum'.<sup>22</sup> Even a scholarly German historian of Islamic art was susceptible to mythologizing the Ardabil, particularly the suggestion of conspiracy.

Despite Erdmann's reading, the V&A seemed unclear about the Ardabil's provenance as late as 1914, twenty years after its acquisition. A.F. Kendrick, Keeper of Textiles, wrote to Edward Stebbing thus:

I have lately been collecting what facts are recorded about the history of the Ardabil Carpet. So far, I cannot trace how or when it left Ardabil. Did Ziegler's get it there do you think? [...]The carpet is of so great interest

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<sup>20</sup> This second Ardabil is now shared between the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Getty Museum, Malibu.

<sup>21</sup> J.K. Mumford, *The Yerkes Collection of Rugs and Carpets* (New York: The Knapp Company, 1910), catalogue note 228.

<sup>22</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, p.32.



that it seems essential to record all that can be known about it while the facts are in the recollection of people living.<sup>23</sup>

The strong presumption now is that the answer to Kendrick's question is that Hildebrand Stevens, dealer and sometime British consul in Tabriz, sold the carpets to Anglo-Swiss carpet manufacturers and dealers Ziegler and Company, and that Stevens was their first purchaser from the shrine.<sup>24</sup> The historical consensus is that sections from the Los Angeles Ardabil were used to repair the London Ardabil, and that the repairs were managed by Ziegler and Company, using artisans either in Tabriz or Turkey.<sup>25</sup>

The file indicates that there was no reply from Stebbing to Kendrick's 1914 enquiry, and it was stamped 'no further action'. It seems that both parties were willing to let the investigation lie dormant. However scholars and the public continued to interrogate the contested half-century between W.R. Holmes' 1845 description of two large damaged carpets in the shrine at Ardabil, assumed by scholars to be the London and Los Angeles Ardabils, and the London Ardabil's arrival in the V&A.<sup>26</sup> The V&A Archives contain an alternative history for the Ardabil by a Major R. Jackson written as late as 1966. Jackson had family documents which he claimed shed light on the carpet's acquisition.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> A.F. Kendrick to Edward Stebbing, 4 June 1914. MA/1/R/1314, V&A Archive.

<sup>24</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, p. 179-80.

<sup>25</sup> Stead, *The Ardabil Carpets*, pp. 22-25; Wearden, 'The Early Repairs', 102-108.

<sup>26</sup> W.R. Holmes, *Sketches on the Shores of the Caspian* (London: Richard Bentley, 1845), pp. 38-40.

<sup>27</sup> Major R Jackson to Wingfield Digby, August/September 1966. London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, MA/1/R 1314.

Controversy about the Ardabil's fabulous provenance continued throughout the twentieth century. Questions were raised about when, where and by whom the repairs were carried out, where the carpets were originally made and whether they came from Ardabil at all. Even the price paid by the South Kensington Museum and the names and numbers of the contributors to its purchase were disputed.<sup>28</sup>

This European and North American origin story was quite distinct from what can be reconstructed of the Persian origin story of the twin carpets. Kishwar Rizvi, and Sheila Blair, working from sixteenth and seventeenth century Persian sources, describe the role of the two carpets in Shah Tahmasp's reinvention of the idea of Safavid kingship.<sup>29</sup> The Safavids were not only a major Eurasian political, economic and military power, but also had two claims to sacred power, both of them materialised at Ardabil. Sheik Safi al-Din (1252-1334), founder of the Shia Sufi order of Safaviyya, and forebear of the Safavids, was from Ardabil and had his mausoleum there. The Shia martyr Hayder (1459-1488), Tahmasp's grandfather, also had his tomb in the Ardabil mosque complex. In the mid-sixteenth century, Shah Tahmasp undertook an extensive renovation of his family shrine at Ardabil, including the commissioning of the twin Ardabil carpets. Tahmasp set out to create an environment at Ardabil where he could perform both his worldly imperial power and his sacred power. Rizvi and Blair suggest that the extraordinary twin carpets were rolled out at Ardabil for the Shah's

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<sup>28</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, pp.173-184.

<sup>29</sup> Blair, *Text and Image*, pp. 250-260; Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, pp. 90-94.

most important audiences, as a demonstration of the glamour, power and piety of the Safavids. I argue from this reading that the sixteenth century Persian story of the carpets was constructed to support a hegemonic narrative, in common with the story constructed in nineteenth century London.

How can we understand the nineteenth century origin story and its enduring power over the British, and more broadly, the European and North American mind? The story tells us that Persia, in decline and thoughtless of its own past treasures, left the carpets to moulder in a shrine to an exotic mediaeval holy man. They are rescued by intrepid Europeans, who might be mercenary, but have the clear-sightedness to recognize their value. They fall into the hands of ruthless western capitalists, who collaborate with wily eastern artisans to create a single apparently perfect, but disputed, carpet. The museum, greedy for oriental treasure, conspires in the mystery.

The story has many powerful archetypal components; the object of high value rescued from the East by the West, its mysterious, potentially dangerous route to its new home, and the West's reincarnation and protection of it.<sup>30</sup> The story also suggests the beginning of a backlash to this romantic exoticism, in the idea that European power brokers deceived to get what they wanted.

Important elements of the western imaginary of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, for example the escapism of the flying carpet, and

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<sup>30</sup> Mitter and Clunas, 'The Empire of Things', pp. 221-234.

the erotically tinged sensuality of orientalist interiors,<sup>31</sup> derive partly from translations of the Arabian nights stories in circulation amongst Europeans and North Americans since the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> By the late nineteenth century, however, imaginations in Britain were at least as much occupied by their own imperial territories in India and Africa, as with the Middle East of Harun al-Rashid. At the same time the western construct of the Islamic world had changed under historical pressure. These shifts influenced the new origin story created for the Ardabil.

The transformation of Britain's political role in India had been in progress since an Indian uprising against the British in 1857. In 1877, Queen Victoria had become Empress of India.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile the last decades of the nineteenth century saw the 'Scramble for Africa' by European states.<sup>34</sup> Britain conducted wars against indigenous peoples and the Dutch for the domination of southern and coastal Africa. European and North American attention was focused on French and German colonial expansion in North and Sub-Saharan Africa and on King Leopold of Belgium's private colony in the Congo.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, pp. 112-139; Rana Kabbani 'Regarding Orientalist Painting Today', *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by Nicholas Tromans (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 40-48.

<sup>32</sup> Warner, *Stranger Magic*, pp. 1-26.

<sup>33</sup> Described by the British as The Sepoy Mutiny, The Indian Revolt, and the Indian Mutiny, and by Indians as the Indian Rebellion and the First Indian War of Independence.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (New York: Random House, 1990); A.G.Hopkins, 'Review: "Blundering and Plundering": The Scramble for Africa Relived', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 34 no. 3 (1993), 489-494.

<sup>35</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Mariner, 1998).

The new origin story of the Ardabil carpet, from 1892 onwards, evolved against this background and reflects what Patrick Brantlinger has defined as ‘Imperial Gothic...a blend of adventure story with Gothic elements’<sup>36</sup>, and Dierdre David as ‘travel, hazardous adventure, and eventual mastery’.<sup>37</sup> Brantlinger and David locate this particularly in novels about Africa such as those by H. Rider Haggard.<sup>38</sup> ‘Imperial Gothic’ also lies in the background to Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories. Many clients arriving in Holmes’ consulting rooms, just around the corner from Robinson’s carpet dealership in Wigmore Street, are suffering the consequences of exposure to African and Indian objects with threatening attributes.<sup>39</sup>

The colonial treasure hunter in these narratives penetrates beyond the usual exploitation of natural resources and new markets, and appropriates hidden treasures with mystical attributes, often at cost to his physical and psychic health.<sup>40</sup> The trope reminds us of the great strangeness of the vastly extended imperial geography of the nineteenth century, and that colonial materiality could be seen as threatening, both to body and soul, as well as seductive. Anne McLintock describes the imaginatively compelling nature of this conjoined sense

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<sup>36</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.227.

<sup>37</sup> Dierdre David, *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire and Victorian Writing* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.188.

<sup>38</sup> H Rider Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mines* (London: Cassell, 1885); *She* (New York: Harper, 1886); *Allan Quatermain* (London: Longman’s Green and Co., 1887).

<sup>39</sup> For example, Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’, *Strand Magazine*, (February 1892); Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868).

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Blackwood’s Magazine, 1899).

of threat and seduction in her psychoanalytical analysis of colonialism.<sup>41</sup> Penina wants more

One of the justifications offered in the late nineteenth century for the colonisation of Africa, despite the great physical and psychic risks involved, was to 'free' indigenous peoples from a slave trade which in the public discourse of the time was attributed to Arab muslim traders.<sup>42</sup> By the late nineteenth century, Europeans and North Americans believed that they had abolished slavery, and so were able to claim moral authority over the Islamic world. In this discourse, the peoples of Africa and the material culture of the Islamic world were both safer under the control of Europe and America.

The rehabilitation is as important in the origin story of the Ardabil carpet as the rescue. The rescue articulates the strangeness and threat of colonial materiality, and the rehabilitation offers the antidote, the taking back of control. The carpet is remade, restored, made perfect, taken into the possession of a great imperial museum, and slotted into that museum's taxonomy of the arc of civilisations.<sup>43</sup>

To achieve the rehabilitation, Anglo-Swiss company Ziegler, we are told, had it repaired in Tabriz or Turkey. We have no archival confirmation of this, and skills existed in Britain to carry out such repairs. For example, Turkish-born entrepreneur Victor Behar had established a carpet dealership in Glasgow in

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<sup>41</sup> Anne McLintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London; Routledge, 1995), pp. 21-75.

<sup>42</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, chapter four.

<sup>43</sup> Jackson, 'Persian Carpets and the South Kensington Museum, 265-281.

1896, where he had an extensive repair workshop (figure 3, 4).<sup>44</sup> I am not proposing that Behar's workshop carried out the repairs on the Ardabil, which were carried out before 1892, but suggesting that they could have been carried out in Europe. However, accounts of the repairs that stressed the harnessing of eastern traditional skills in the East by a European firm, fitted seamlessly into a narrative of colonial mastery.



Figure 3: Carpet Repairing Department, Victor Behar Carpet Dealers, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. (Victor Behar, *Oriental Carpets*, c.1910). This image shows European female and male weavers.

<sup>44</sup> Images from Victor Behar, *Oriental Carpets*, (privately printed without publication date or page numbers). Glasgow School of Art holds a copy with accession date 1912. I am grateful to Jonathan Cleaver for this little-known source. The 1896 foundation date of Behar's firm is cited in *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*.



Figure 4: Carpet Repairing Department, Victor Behar Carpet Dealers, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. (Victor Behar, *Oriental Carpets*, c.1910). This image shows female weavers who may be Muslim or Scots supervised by Europeans, both images are posed for the camera.

During the carpet's early decades at the V&A, tension arose between the story of the unique, perfect carpet and the story of its rehabilitation in the West. The patching work was not perfectly executed, and the signs of the reinvention were clear (figure 5).<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the South Kensington Museum's acknowledgement of receipt in March 1893 describes it as 'repaired and restored'.<sup>46</sup> However the power of the story of its uniqueness and perfection seems to have dulled the

<sup>45</sup> Jennifer Wearden, 'The Early Repairs', 102-108.

<sup>46</sup> MA/1/R1314, V&A Archive.



questioning eye and mind, and the repairs were only fully acknowledged by viewers and commentators when the myth started to fragment. Small pieces claimed to be from the second carpet began to appear on the market, and by 1910, the rumours were substantiated beyond doubt when Charles Tyson Yerkes offered the second Ardabil for sale.<sup>47</sup> Stebbing had sold him the carpet at the same time that he arranged the sale of the London Ardabil to the South Kensington Museum.



Figure 5: Early Repairs to Ardabil Carpet, late nineteenth century. (V&A, London)

The current perception of the repairs has been affected both by changes in conservation practice and by the impact of postcolonial thinking in the museum, and a view has emerged that the repairs done on the twin carpets compromised both of them. The Los Angeles Ardabil experienced a fundamental change in its

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<sup>47</sup> Mumford, *The Yerkes Collection*, catalogue note 228.

structure, its borders replaced by a newly woven narrow field guard, meanwhile the London Ardabil by modern standards was over-restored. Moya Carey, the curator responsible for the carpet at the V&A in recent years articulates the contemporary perspective:

The highest market value was for complete carpets, rather than damaged ones or fragments. The London carpet was ‘a remarkable work of Art’, and as Morris had said, of real historical importance, but it had been compromised to suit the market values of nineteenth-century art connoisseurship.<sup>48</sup>

Alongside these commercial and taste issues, the repairs materialized the assumption that the material culture of what were regarded as less evolved races was safer in the hands of Europeans and North Americans, who could protect them.<sup>49</sup>

The focus of the repairs was on the borders of the two carpets. Borders have an important role in the psychological work that the carpets of sixteenth-century Northwest Persia have been expected to do by European and North American connoisseurs and scholars. A carpet’s structure of borders and field guards orders the sometimes overwhelming complexity of its field design. An aspiration

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<sup>48</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, p. 180.

<sup>49</sup> The Museum Association’s policy on repatriation of cultural property continues to stress the requirement in the home country for appropriate conservation and display environments.

<[museumsassociation.org/policy/01092006-policy-statement-on-repatriation-of-cultural-property](https://museumsassociation.org/policy/01092006-policy-statement-on-repatriation-of-cultural-property)>[accessed 2 December 2018]

to impose a heavenly order on worldly chaos has long been associated by commentators with these carpets. Robert Hillenbrand articulates this in his analysis of the London Ardabil:

The design is deliberately not complete, but is only a portion of an unimaginably large but thoroughly disciplined composition. Hence the viewer receives intimations of infinity, even eternity, all the more affecting because they are not explicit.<sup>50</sup>

The London Ardabil had lost its borders, and until they were restored, it could not execute this aesthetic and spiritual role. The second Ardabil sacrificed its borders in the process of restoration and became a lesser, unframed carpet. Its narrow field guard threatened to burst open and leak chaos, rather than creating the intellectual order and spiritual transcendence desired by the European and North American admirers of these artifacts.

The rescued and repaired icon, its borders intact, became the centrepiece of the Islamic collection in one of the preeminent colonial museums, the South Kensington Museum in London. The unframed, unbordered carpet suffered a significant reduction in status, and went into private ownership as a rich man's ornament, until John Paul Getty gave it to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1953.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), p. 248.

<sup>51</sup> The second Ardabil was bought by Yerkes, 1892, De Lamar, 1910, Duveen, 1919, Getty, 1938. Stead, *The Ardabil Carpets*.

Scholarly work in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has substantially modified our understanding of the Ardabil's route from Persia to South Kensington in the late nineteenth century, but the mythology is persistent because it meets needs beyond those of historical fact. The story of the rescue and rehabilitation of the carpet is an example of hegemonic powers defining the material culture of those they dominate. The Persian Ardabil became what the West said it was.

At the same time the sense of the strange inherent in the carpet and the material culture to which it belonged had to be preserved, if the rescue and rehabilitation were to be of any heroic value. The carpet accrued a strong spiritual resonance, and the rescue and rehabilitation were seen as risky and mysterious. The suggestion of conspiracy and moral hazard deepened this sense of jeopardy.

The Ardabil's origin story went beyond the materiality, aesthetics and history of the carpet. It explored the broader European and North American response to their colonial experience and helped create aspects of contemporaneous European and North American identity. Its exemplary nature within the European and North American orthodoxy offered a powerful platform; a lesser carpet would have given less authority to that identity. The nineteenth and early twentieth-century mythology of the London Ardabil seems to have become part

of what Said describes as ‘the sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse’ and has proven difficult to unpick.<sup>52</sup>

### **3. Classifying the Ardabil carpet outside Persia: World-leading work of art or craft object that ‘any Persian could have made’?**

The European and North American origin story for the carpet focused on its entry into nineteenth-century Europe, rather than its making and use in sixteenth-century Persia. The question now arose of what kind of object this carpet was. In this section I analyse how the Ardabil and by extension other élite examples of Islamic material culture, were absorbed into European and North American classifications of art and craft. The process of classification reveals reciprocal identity-formation, of Persia by non-Persians, and of the West by Europeans and Americans in their interaction with Persia. It also gives greater granularity to the understanding of what Europeans and North Americans believed that the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia should be, and the characteristics they invented for them.

When the Ardabil entered public awareness in Britain in 1892, there had already been half a century of popular and scholarly discussion in Europe and America on the status and relationship of design, craft, and industrial manufacture in the industrializing and globalizing world. The terms of the debate were often posed

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<sup>52</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 6.

as binaries, for example the higher and lesser arts, decorative and fine arts, commercial art and fine art, art and ethnography, the artist and the artisan.<sup>53</sup>

As discussed in chapter one, the theoretical basis laid by Ruskin, and developed by the practice and writings of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, set out to rehabilitate craftwork, artisanship, and the social and economic structures they believed to have underpinned the pre-industrial world of making. This discourse was fundamental to nineteenth-century thinking on material culture. Larry Shiner summarises the position of the Arts and Crafts movement thus:

If art were as it should be, every mason and carpenter would make things of beauty as well as use, and the arts would form a pyramid with the many handicrafts at the base and middle, seamlessly tapering into painting, sculpture, poetry and music at the apex.<sup>54</sup>

In the hierarchy of this pyramid, the base and middle sections were the location of what Morris called 'the lesser, decorative arts', including such things as carpets.<sup>55</sup>

Alongside this debate, an effort had been gathering strength since the eighteenth century to establish taxonomies of the material culture of the past and the

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<sup>53</sup> William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', (1877) and 'The Revival of Handicraft', (1888), *William Morris*, pp. 156-179, pp. 186-198.

<sup>54</sup> Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, p. 239.

<sup>55</sup> William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', *William Morris*, p. 156.

geographically distant, discussed in chapter one. A further binary arose from these taxonomies, distinguishing arts and crafts from ethnographic materials of scientific rather than cultural value.<sup>56</sup> The Ardabil carpet provided a stimulus and a test case in both the debate on the lesser decorative arts, and that on art versus ethnography. Moya Carey suggests that the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle was the point at which élite carpets came to be seen as art objects. She quotes Sir George Birdwood's shock at finding in the exhibition 'a high class branch of fine art production...ignored by Museum administrations'.<sup>57</sup>

Writing in 1880, before the Ardabil carpet had arrived in London, and just after his own visit to the 1878 Paris exhibition, William Morris wrestled with the issue of such carpets as art:

Belike the thoughts of the men who wrought this kind of art [defined earlier by Morris as the 'lesser decorative arts'] could not have been expressed in grander ways... I praise the usefulness of the lives of these men, whose names are long forgotten, but whose works we still wonder at. [...]But indeed, they, and other matters have led us far from our makeshift house, and the room we have to decorate therein.<sup>58</sup>

Morris is working through a conflicting set of responses. A carpet is a lesser decorative art. Its function is to decorate a room in a makeshift house, not to act

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<sup>56</sup> Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, pp.189-215.

<sup>57</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, p.198. Sir George Birdwood (1832-1917) was a specialist on Indian material culture and trusted advisor to the South Kensington Museum.

<sup>58</sup> Morris, 'Making the Best of it', (1880), *William Morris*, pp. 118-19.

as an object of aesthetic or philosophical contemplation. He puzzles over whether its subjects, described earlier in the lecture as nature and the hunt, somehow restricted the maker to wool, cotton and silk, rather than 'grander' materials, such as the minerals and oils that constitute paint and glaze; or warps, wefts and loops, rather than 'grander' technologies of canvas, brushes and chisels. He is in a knot. Deeply versed as he was in the ideology of craft, in 1880 he could not quite take the step that turned a carpet into a 'grander' fine art object. However, the debate (and the market) moved quickly, and by 1883 Morris was confident enough in the art value of Safavid carpets to buy two for himself, one of which is illustrated in figure 6.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Carey, *Persian Art*, pp. 213-214 and footnote 120.





Figure 6: Vase carpet, handknotted, cotton warp, silk and cotton wefts, wool pile, 523 x 330 cm, Persia, seventeenth century. (V&A, London, 719.1987). This example belonged to William Morris.

In the hierarchy of made objects developing in nineteenth-century Europe and America, two important boundary conditions were the possibility of naming

individual makers and the functionality of the artifact. Named makers had a greater chance of making it into the *élite* category of art, and anonymous makers were more likely to be viewed as craftspeople.<sup>60</sup> Authorship was valued. Equally, certain kinds of objects seemed to the European discussants to be crafts, however evolved, and however individual the hand of the master, because they were functional objects. These boundaries were even less permeable if the makers were women, as I go on to discuss below.<sup>61</sup>

The Ardabil carpet was able to sidestep this debate and establish itself as a work of art. Leaving aside any questions of artistic accomplishment, the Ardabil had characteristics that suggested to the European arts establishment that it was 'fine art production', in George Birdwood's phrase. Firstly, the motto woven into the carpet apparently named a single, male creator, Maqsud Kashani (figure 7).<sup>62</sup> Secondly a carpet need not be functional in the way that a chair is functional, it might equally be found hung on a wall like an art object, as it was at the South Kensington Museum, or draped decoratively over another object, as carpets were in many European paintings. Thirdly, it was believed on its arrival in Britain to be unique.

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<sup>60</sup> Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, pp. 197-213.

<sup>61</sup> The issue of structural sexism in art and craft is discussed in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1981).

<sup>62</sup> Current thinking is that Maqsud was a skilled overseer from Kashan. Blair, *Text and Image*, p. 231.



Figure 7: Motto woven into Ardabil carpet. 'I have no refuge in the world other than thy threshold. There is no protection for my head other than this door. The work of the servant of the threshold Maqsud of Kashan in the year 946.'<sup>63</sup> (V&A, London)

By 1893, in his letter recommending the purchase of the carpet by the South Kensington Museum, William Morris had shed his perplexity over whether these artifacts were lesser decorative, or fine arts.

For my part, I am sure that this is far the finest Eastern carpet which I have seen (either actual carpets or reproductions of them). For firstly it must be remembered that this carpet has no counterpart, whereas the

<sup>63</sup> [vam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet](http://vam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet) [accessed 3 January 2018]. 946 AH (After Hejira) is the equivalent to 1539-40 CE (Common Era).

finest carpets hitherto seen...belong to a class of which there are many examples. Next, and this is the chief reason that I wish to see it bought for the public, the design is of singular perfection; defensible on all points, with no oddities or grotesqueries which might need an apology...The carpet as far as I could see is in perfectly good condition, and its size and splendour as a piece of workmanship do full justice to the intellectual qualities of the design.<sup>64</sup>

Its workmanship and physical scale are important to Morris, but his main claims are its uniqueness, it 'has no counterpart', and its aesthetic and cerebral characteristics, 'the intellectual qualities of the design'. Morris is creating what Said, in a passage discussed above, described as a 'surrogate' self, claiming a common intellectual heritage with Safavid Persia.<sup>65</sup>

As discussed earlier, the carpet was not in fact unique, but the early claim that it was helped legitimize its position as an art object. This nineteenth-century European and North American focus on the unique object raised difficulties when European and North American scholars turned to the study of Islamic material culture.<sup>66</sup> Stefan Weber summarises the problem thus:

Most of the skillfully-made [Islamic] objects were either meant for daily use or were luxury goods designed to decorate the living rooms of higher

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<sup>64</sup> William Morris to Thomas Armstrong, 13 March 1893. MA/1/R1314., V&A Archive.

<sup>65</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, pp. 99-129.

income houses or palaces [...]. They were produced in dozens, hundreds or even thousands...they are the products of fine, high-quality mass production for the higher income market.<sup>67</sup>

The Ardabil carpets were prestige objects in their indigenous environment of making, but the fact that there were two of them is a reminder that they belonged to the Islamic world of batch production, as much as to the royal atelier of European and NorthAmerican dreams.

By the time of the 1910 Munich exhibition, 'Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art', a defining moment in the study and display of Islamic material culture in Europe, the focus was firmly on unique élite Islamic objects, not 'products of high-quality mass production'. As discussed in chapter one, first amongst equals in the exhibition were patterned pile carpets. Troelenberg describes their impact:

The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century 'Persian rug' thus represented a classical or golden age of carpet-making and perhaps even stood *pars per toto* for the refinement of Islamic arts and crafts in general.<sup>68</sup>

Whilst the London Ardabil was not in this exhibition (it is rarely moved out of the museum) its reputation as one of the 'finest' carpets in the world meant that

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<sup>67</sup> Weber, 'A Concert of Things: thoughts on Objects of Islamic Art in the Museum Context', *Islamic Art and the Museum*, pp. 29-53 (pp.36-37).

<sup>68</sup> Troelenberg, "The Most Important Branch of Muhammedan Art", p.20.

the status given to carpets at Munich applied particularly to the Ardabil, and enhanced its emerging identity as an icon of Persian and Islamic culture.

Meanwhile the concept of the Ardabil's intellectual content, so central to Morris's recommendation to the South Kensington Museum, continued to underpin its status as a masterpiece, a piece of art rather than a product of a craft tradition. In 1938, when Arthur Upham Pope identified the Ardabil as a world-class artwork in his canon-defining *Survey of Persian Art*, he stressed the 'intellectual' qualities of Persian culture and of the carpets that were recruited to represent it:

This world verdict on Persian carpets as the finest that have been made is amply sustained [...] the Ardabil carpets are quite unapproached by anything to which they can be compared [...] However complex the composition or subtle the poetic appeal, it is guided by an unfailing intellectual clarity which is characteristic of the Persian spirit.<sup>69</sup>

In Pope's account, the Ardabil carpets have become global icons of art, beyond the category of textile, and a representation of Persia itself. The London Ardabil's status as a masterpiece is guaranteed for Pope, as it was for Morris, by the 'intellectual' qualities of its design. This insistence on the intellectual also suggests the desire to place the Ardabil, and with it Persia, at a remove from both the sensuality and exotic fantasy of the traditional orientalist model. In Pope's version of orientalism, the Persians evoked through the filter of the Ardabil were

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<sup>69</sup> Pope, *A Survey*, vol. xi, pp. 2258-9.

rational beings with mastery over their desires, like their fellow Aryans in Europe and North America.

Reciprocal identity-formation can be seen at work in both Pope's and Morris's accounts of the Ardabil. An idea of Persia is being used to create an idea of the West. At the same time, as Kishwar Rizvi points out, Pope invented a canon of Persian material culture which had impact not only in Europe and North America, but in Persia itself. She quotes a 1928 letter from Prince Firouz in Tehran to Pope:

[The Iranians] appreciate what you are doing to popularize Persian art in America and Europe. [...] I believe every Persian will be enthusiastic about learning from authoritative leaders in the knowledge of art 'What the world owes to Persia', a fact which Persians do not themselves know.<sup>70</sup>

During the early years of the Pahlavi dynasty, Pope's construct of Persian material culture was part of Iran's reimagining of itself.<sup>71</sup> Mercedes Volait has asked:

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<sup>70</sup> Rizvi, 'Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse on "Persian Art"', 45-65.

<sup>71</sup> Grigor, *Building Iran*.

Does orientalism apply solely to European attitudes and artistic expression? If not, does it make sense to differentiate between a European and an indigenous orientalism?<sup>72</sup>

In the case of Pahlavi Iran the one fed the other. The idea of Iran created in Europe and North America and invested in artifacts such as the Ardabil became part of a new Iranian national identity.

Records of international trade in Persian material culture go back many centuries. There were collectors in Persia itself, Russia, China and Central Asia, the Ottoman and Mughal Empires, and in Japan.<sup>73</sup> Japanese collectors recognized the appeal of Safavid carpets early, and commissioned custom pieces at great expense.<sup>74</sup> Safavid carpets were transformed into high status hybrid objects, such as the war vest of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), a leading Japanese politician and warrior (figure 8). There has been long-standing Japanese public engagement with carpets, for example, the annual displays of antique Persian

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<sup>72</sup> Volait, 'Appropriating Orientalism', pp. 144- 5.

<sup>73</sup> The history of collections is outside the scope of this thesis, but significant work has been done since the millennium. Early breakthroughs included Vernoi ed., *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850 – 1950*; Komaroff ed., "Exhibiting the Middle East: Collections and Perceptions of Islamic Art". More recent work is referred to throughout.

<sup>74</sup> Willem Floor, 'Economy and Society', *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart: Textile Arts of Safavid and Qajar Iran*, ed. by Carol Bier (Washington DC: The Textile Museum, 1987), pp. 22-3.



rugs belonging to the Gion Matsuri Preservation Associations in Kyoto, which have been enacted for around 500 years.<sup>75</sup>



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<sup>75</sup> Daniel Walker, 'Rugs in the Gion Matsuri Preservation Associations', *A Survey of the Gion Festival Float Hangings: Imported Textiles Section*, ed. by Nobuko Kajitani and Kōjirō Yoshida (Kyoto: 1992).

Figure 8: Jinbaori (war vest) of Hideyoshi, 59 cm across shoulders, silk flatwoven carpet, constructed in Japan, woven in Persia, sixteenth century. Located Kodai-Ji Temple, Japan. (Image Kyoto National Museum).

As the orthodoxy around Safavid carpets and the Ardabil in particular developed in Europe and America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an important dissenting voice spoke from Japan. Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961), leader of the Mingei folkcraft movement, articulated a view of Persian carpets which insisted not on uniqueness, individual authorship, intellectual authority, or their status as art objects, but on the anonymity of their makers and the importance of this to their impact:

The virtue of folkcraft is that one feels no obtruding personality in them. The thing shines, not the maker. Consider Persian rugs; one feels their beauty before any question arises as to who made them. Actually, almost any Persian could have made them. The work was subdivided, it was certainly not done by one pair of hands, nor conceived by one mind. Moreover, of these rugs, can any one be called ugly?<sup>76</sup>

The Mingei movement from which Soetsu Yanagi spoke was committed to retrieving and protecting a set of traditional craft values within Japanese material culture,<sup>77</sup> which manifested themselves particularly strongly in

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<sup>76</sup> Soetsu Yanagi, 'The Way of Craftsmanship', adapted by Bernard Leach (1927), *The Craft Reader*, ed. by Glenn Adamson (London: Berg, 2010), pp. 170.

<sup>77</sup> Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007).

attitudes to ceramics. Ceramics in Japan came from the production system described above as high-quality mass-production. Some master artisans were known by name, but the focus of value was the workshop and kiln. The relationship between the object and its function was of importance, and there was a deep response to the imperfect.<sup>78</sup> These characteristics were embodied, for example, in utensils for the tea ceremony.

The discourse conducted by European and American scholars about Persian carpets, and *primus inter pares*, the Ardabil, focused on the uniqueness of maker and artifact, and the intellectual qualities of the work. By contrast, the discourse Yanagi conducts from within a Japan which had an equally long history of exchange with Persia and its carpets, stresses anonymity, shared work, and the materiality of the artifact. Yanagi's position is inclusive, permitting a broad population of carpets to be considered aesthetically and culturally valuable. The European and North American orthodoxy is exclusive, permitting the marginalization of groups of carpets which do not meet its requirements.

Divergences such as these between Japanese, European and North American perspectives on Persian carpets, emphasize the constructed nature of the varying accounts, which reflect the values and self-perception of the community which constructs them. Yanagi spoke from an early twentieth-century Japan in the midst of modernization and some degree of westernization, with the intent of rescuing traditional Japanese craft methods. Persian carpets are re-imagined by

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<sup>78</sup> Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp.175-213 (p.193).

him to support that endeavour. His ideological position leads him to ignore the circumstances of élite production in Persia that were central to the European and North American imaginary of the Persian carpet.

The intellectual and aesthetic classification of the Ardabil carpet as art, craft or any other taxonomy, was part of its reinvention by cultures outside of Persia and was quite separate from the context of its original production, use and reception there. This is increasingly recognized in both the academy and the museum:

“The notion of ‘art’ to describe and exhibit objects has not grown out of the context of the ‘artist’ and masters, but comes instead from its later non-Muslim reception. Oleg Grabar emphasizes that “in fact ‘arts of the object’ are the result of its collecting rather than that of its making” ... They were turned into art when chosen for an exhibition during our time’<sup>79</sup>

I have argued above that the process of classification of the Ardabil reveals complex reciprocal identity-formation; of Persia by non-Persians, of Europeans and North Americans in their interaction with Persia, and of Persia by Persians.<sup>80</sup> The Ardabil’s makers were Aryan, at the apex of nineteenth-century western racial hierarchies, and regarded as almost equivalent to Europeans. The carpet was made during the western-defined peak of Persian culture, the Safavid

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<sup>79</sup> Weber, ‘A Concert of Things’, p. 36. Grabar was an eminent twentieth century Islamic art historian.

<sup>80</sup> Kadoi and Szanto, *The Shaping of Persian Art*, pp. 4-10

sixteenth century. Possession of the carpet by a colonial power, Britain, attached Aryan Safavid imperial glory to British imperial glory. The vigour of the discussion around its artistic status suggests the importance of that status to British imperial identity-formation. The greater the uniqueness and art value of the London Ardabil, the greater the glory it added to the imperial hegemony.

#### **4. Gendering the Ardabil's production for the West: Female weaver/designers or male designers and master weavers?**

The previous two sections of this chapter have analysed the reinvention of the London Ardabil by hegemonic powers in Europe and North America, and the degree to which that reinvention was determined by the historical context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the section below I focus on the gap between the idea of the Ardabil created in Europe and North America, and what can be understood about the processes of its making. In particular, I consider the gendering of production.

European and North American power in the colonial period rested on the control of peoples outside Europe and North America, and of women and children both inside and outside the home territories.<sup>81</sup> Stories about the production of the Ardabil reflected contemporaneous gender assumptions, and acted to confirm them. Writing in 1880, Morris resonated with empathy towards the makers of Safavid carpets, saying, 'I praise the usefulness of the lives of these men, whose

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<sup>81</sup> McLintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 232-258.

names are long forgotten, but whose works we still wonder at'.<sup>82</sup> Morris assumed that the carpets he described were woven by men. In 1877, in a letter on labour needs to the manufacturer of Morris and Company's own carpets, Thomas Wardle, Morris gives an unguarded view of female weavers:

In speaking thus [on the difficulty of getting skilled men for weaving] I am speaking of the picture-work: a cleverish woman could do the greeneries, no doubt...The carpets like the Savonnerie ones is another matter quite: because you can get girls to do the work and it is quite a mechanical matter (figure 9).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Morris in *William Morris*, p.118. First published as *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures Delivered in Birmingham, London and Nottingham 1878-1881* (London: Ellis and White, 1882).

<sup>83</sup> Morris to manufacturer Thomas Wardle, (14 November 1877), *William Morris*, pp. 64-65.



Figure 9: Savonnerie carpet, Pierre Josse Perrot, handknotted, wool and hemp, 615 x 546cm, France, c.1750 (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1950.8)

Morris was not alone in these attitudes. They were shared by the broader Arts and Crafts movement which played a significant a role in drawing public attention to sixteenth and seventeenth-century Persian carpets, proselytizing, collecting, transferring carpet design concepts to other media, and weaving their own versions:

The Arts and Crafts movement at large often remained captive to gender prejudices. The London design guild simply excluded women. And even when talented women designers became a majority in firms, such as the

Vienna Werkstatte, they were liable to be dismissed by critics such as Adolf Loos as “painting, embroidering, potting, precious-material-wasting daughters of senior civil servants”.<sup>84</sup>

The Ardabil carpet seemed to offer documentary evidence that its weaver was a man, in the inscription on the carpet attributing it to Maqsd Kashani. The motto is so historically rare and significant that it has stimulated much debate amongst scholars of Islamic art. Thinking has moved away from the initial belief that Maqsd was the weaver, and the motto his dedication of the carpet to Shah Tahmasp. Recent scholarship, summarized by Sheila Blair in 2014, suggests that Maqsd Kashani was either overseer or commissioner of the carpet on behalf of Shah Tahmasp, and that the Hafez quotation refers to Tahmasp himself. In Blair’s reading, the humility and devotion is directed by Tahmasp towards God, not Maqsd towards his Shah.<sup>85</sup>

In 2017, the V&A’s account of the production of the Ardabil carpet hedged its bets on these issues of the named artist and the gender of the craftspeople involved:

Maqsd was probably the court official charged with producing the carpet and not a slave in the literal sense. [...] Carpet weaving was usually performed by women at home, but a court commission like this one may have been woven by men.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, pp. 239-240

<sup>85</sup> Blair, *Text and Image*, p. 231, pp. 259-261.

<sup>86</sup> <[vam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet](http://vam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet)> [Accessed September 11, 2017]



The claim that the Safavid court carpets defined by the nineteenth and twentieth-century West as the masterpieces of carpet design were made by men has been persistent, and the millennia of Persian female carpet-weaving during, before and after Safavid carpet-making have thereby been marginalized.

An examination of contemporaneous sources leaves the case unproven. The most-cited contemporaneous sources for carpets in Persia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are journals of European diplomats, priests and merchants.<sup>87</sup> They describe carpets in the context of court and diplomatic use, record visits to bazaars and discussions with merchants and other intermediaries, and give some geographical accounts of where carpets were made. These sources discuss design, materials and prices, but rarely the process of production. Similarly, the extensive records of the Ottoman court do not permit clear conclusions on making.

Modern scholarship does not help resolve the ambiguity about the making of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Persian, Ottoman and Mughal carpets most valued by the European and North American orthodoxy of. In 1983, Donald King, curator of textiles at the V&A, proposed a 'common sense' position on carpet production:

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<sup>87</sup> For example, Sir John Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse* (Amsterdam: 1711); P.Fr. Florencio del Nino-Jesus *En Persia 1608-1624* (Pamplona: Biblioteca Carmelitano-Teresiana de Misiones); Johann Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six Voyages de J.B. Tavernier en Tarquie en Perse et aux Indes* (Paris: 1676).

We are singularly uninformed about the organization of the carpet workshops and about the carpet trade. It is common sense to suppose that large, well-designed and well-executed carpets were produced in flourishing urban environments, whereas small and less-refined pieces could have been produced by outworkers in villages. It is common sense to suppose that the finest carpets, and especially carpets with silk pile and gold thread, were produced in centres which enjoyed the patronage of royal courts.<sup>88</sup>

Donald King's phrase 'common sense' implicitly acknowledges the lack of historical data, and instead encourages the unquestioning acceptance of the discourse of which he was a part.

Into this 'common-sense' position play two propositions that serve to consolidate the idea that men controlled the processes of production in élite workshops making carpets like the Ardabil. The first proposition is that the activities of design and weaving became separated in the so-called 'classic' period of carpet production, in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Persia and Anatolia, putting the design task into the hands of male designers in a court or urban atelier.

The separation of design and knotting, what Adamson describes as 'displaced authorship and distributed labour', is contentious in all the cases examined in

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<sup>88</sup> Donald King 'The Carpets in the Exhibition', *The Eastern Carpet in the Western World*, pp. 24-32 (p. 25).

this thesis, and is tied in with the anxieties raised by industrialization discussed in chapter one.<sup>89</sup> Jon Thompson hypothesizes that Safavid master-weavers wove carpets from cartoons made by court artists, not from knot plans. He thereby eliminates the suggestion that division of labour was an erosion of skills:

In practice the master carpet weaver possessed a skill similar to the *naqshband* [silk designer for drawloom] ...Assessing for instance the degree of curvature or steepness of linear pattern elements that can be accommodated within the given limits requires a high level of intuitive skill.<sup>90</sup>

However, Jon Thompson is candid about the lack of evidence for his hypothesis, describing his dream of finding such a cartoon in a lost archive. Despite this, he is unambiguous in gendering his highly skilled designers and weavers as male.

Whilst accepting the idea of the split between designer and weaver, Walter Denny is less confident about the gender of weavers of Ottoman court carpets of the same period (figure 10):

Those responsible for the design of these carpets (catalogue numbers 20, 44, 45 and possibly 48) were probably men; the gender of the weavers is uncertain.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.171.

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, 'Early Safavid Carpets', *Hunt for Paradise*, footnote 65, pp. 312-313.

<sup>91</sup> Denny *The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets* p. 55. The carpets Denny specifies are court and synagogue production.

Denny and Thompson both assume male designers for carpets of this quality, and Thompson also assumes a male master-weaver. This is puzzling, since both writers acknowledge elsewhere that carpet weaving and design skills were embedded primarily amongst women in these geographies. Recent scholarship seems to be ideological, as much as in the case of William Morris and his cohort.



Figure 10: Fragment of Ottoman court carpet, handknotted, silk warps and wefts, wool pile, 164 x 122cm, Istanbul or Bursa, late sixteenth century. (Textile Museum, Washington, R.34.33.5)

The second proposition which helps support the ‘common sense’ idea of male producers of the most revered carpets in the European and North American orthodoxy, is an anthropological account of carpet-weaving which suggests that carpets followed an evolutionary arc in which the role of female makers was

assumed to be circumscribed. This was articulated by leading European carpet scholar, Kurt Erdmann, in 1955:

At the same time that these urban and court manufactories are weaving carpets of extreme refinement, there always still are peasant areas of production in which the work is done for a limited circle of customers and there still are always nomads whose wives and daughters occupy themselves in the tradition handed down from generation to generation merely to meet the needs of their own tents; and in fact these peasants and these nomads still are thus employed when with the dissolution of dynasties the great manufactories have closed their doors and the city workshops too have been torn asunder in the vortex of economic collapse.<sup>92</sup>

The incantatory tone of the prose, and the ahistorical vision of the distribution of carpet-weaving practices alert us to the fact that we are in the presence of orientalism. Erdmann places the eastern other in a timeless, almost mythic zone. He explicitly acknowledges the presence of women in the practice of carpet making only during what he describes as its 'nomadic phase', and describes them only in relation to their fathers and husbands, as wives and daughters. He groups together ideas of the immemorial, unchanging and female on the one hand, and the male, the active, the refined and the imperial on the other.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets: An Account of their History*, p. 29.

<sup>93</sup> Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets: An Account of their History*, p.12.

Erdmann was a student of Kuhnel, Bode's collaborator, and through him heir to the nineteenth and early twentieth-century formation of European and North American thinking about carpets discussed in chapter one. Rather than clarifying the ambiguity around makers and making, he seems to participate in that same nineteenth and twentieth-century ideological position. Wives and daughters could be usefully deployed as labour for tribal economic sustainability, but prestige work was the realm of men, a formulation as useful for empires as for tribes.<sup>94</sup>

In 1972, May Beattie directly raised the question of the gender of the makers of court carpets, how the skills of court makers related to the traditions of domestic carpet weaving, and why women seem to be invisible in the historical accounts.<sup>95</sup>

Beattie is notable as one of the few women in the male world of carpet specialism.<sup>96</sup> Her effort to read carpets through their structures, discussed in chapter one, introduced a new emphasis into the European and North American orthodoxy. The processes and technologies of weaving, and by extension the weavers, were core to her analysis. Her questions about makers arise partly from this focus, but the date of her essay is also significant. Beattie made use of the permission given by the 1960s and 70s discourse on feminism to challenge a male hegemonic view:

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<sup>94</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, pp. 50-82.

<sup>95</sup> May Beattie was discussed in chapter one.

<sup>96</sup> Blair, *Text and Image*, p. 231, pp. 259-261.

The Persian village loom consists of a simple rectangular framework at which the weaver works [...] Even today rugs of extremely fine quality are woven on these simple frames, which makes one wonder if cottage weavers of several centuries ago, working at the instigation of merchants who provided materials more expensive than the weavers themselves could afford, were not responsible for some at least of the smaller so-called 'court' rugs.<sup>97</sup>

She offers her own rationale for why the sixteenth and seventeenth-century primary sources give us no guidance on the role of women in the weaving of 'classic' or 'court' carpets:

In the few early descriptions, women are not mentioned as carpet-weavers, although among nomads and in Anatolia in particular carpet weaving is largely women's work; but in a Muslim country three hundred years ago one would hardly expect a foreigner of the opposite sex to have access to the workshops where women are working.<sup>98</sup>

May Beattie's essay was reprinted twice, but its ideas did not take root, and the image of the male designer and the male master weaver in a workshop under royal patronage has stuck as the base set of assumptions in the West about the production of Safavid carpets such as the Ardabil. I argue, on the basis of the

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<sup>97</sup> May Beattie, 'On the Making of Carpets', *Eastern Carpets in the Western World*, pp. 106-109. Also published in David Sylvester ed., *Islamic Carpets from the Collection of Joseph V. McMullan* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972).

<sup>98</sup> Beattie, 'On the Making of Carpets', p.109.

sources described above, that there is radical uncertainty about this conclusion. I regard the assumption that female weavers played no part in the production of Safavid carpets as an example of what Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock have identified as the systemic exclusion of female makers from western canons of creativity.<sup>99</sup>

The dominant story eliminated female carpet-makers from the making of carpets of the highest quality and undermined the rich history of women's self-expression and self-fashioning through craft.<sup>100</sup> An aspect of this was the exclusion of the story of women's use of textile making for subversive political ends. This long tradition, crossing time and geography, can be found in the eighth-century BCE *Odyssey*, where Penelope's nightly weaving and unpicking of her shroud delays her need to choose amongst her suitors during her husband's long journey back from Troy, and is still present in the carpets woven by Afghan women in response to the high technology wars in Afghanistan conducted by Russia, the US and its allies during the last fifty years (figure 11).<sup>101</sup> The European and North American orthodoxy's insistence on the male production of elite carpets like the Ardabil has discouraged the exploration of what women weavers might have been setting out to achieve in their weaving, and has silenced voices potentially adversarial to the status quo.

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<sup>99</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, pp. 50 -82.

<sup>100</sup> Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*.

<sup>101</sup> These 'war rugs' are now widely-collected, and large numbers have been made in refugee camps in Pakistan and in Afghanistan to meet international demand. Consequently, it is difficult to establish which rugs contain the impulse of protest.





Figure 11: 'War carpet,' wool, Afghanistan, late twentieth, early twenty-first century.

Warrug.com

Clearly, we do not now know exactly how the Ardabil carpet was made. However, part of the reimagining of the Ardabil carpet in the West was the masculinization of its production processes, and the related devaluing of women's carpet weaving skills. In this version of the history of carpet making, women's involvement was restricted to the domestic, and whilst domestic products might be fine work in themselves, the production of carpets like the Ardabil, regarded in the West as art, woven for environments which embodied economic, political and religious power, and which were used to display that power, were the work of men. This assertion of the necessity of male skills in the Ardabil's production, whilst communicated in the language of carpet studies, acts to reinforce a political, economic and ideological system. That system has changed since William Morris made his ready assumption of male weavers of Persian carpets in

1880.<sup>102</sup> However the assumption persists into modern carpet writing. It has become part of Said's 'sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse'.<sup>103</sup> When we talk about a carpet and how it is made, we also talk about gender power relations.

## **5. Materialising the reinvention of the Ardabil carpet: The V&A's Jameel Gallery display, 2006**

The focus of this section moves from the reinvention of the Ardabil through written commentaries, to its reinvention in the museum, in particular the once-in-a-generation redesign of the Jameel Gallery at the V&A in 2006. I have stressed the connection between the characteristics attributed to the Ardabil and the aspirations, values and anxieties of the hegemonic powers of the time. The historical context of the earlier sections was colonialism, and its hegemonic powers were Europe and North America. The historical context of this section is a postcolonial globalized world, where the resource power of the oil-rich states of the Middle East has shifted the hegemonic balance. At the same time a militarized confrontation has emerged between some Islamic religious groups and non-Islamic communities and power structures, particularly in the US, but also across Europe, Russia, Central and South Asia, the Pacific Rim, and in the Middle East itself. The Jameel Gallery was established against this background. In this section I argue that whilst international power structures have changed, the Ardabil carpet continues to be put to work in their service, and that the carpet

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<sup>102</sup> Morris, 'Making the Best of It', (1880), *William Morris*, p.118.

<sup>103</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p.6.

now supports a contemporary rather than a late nineteenth and twentieth-century hegemony. I also argue that some key parts of the original colonial reinvention of the Ardabil persist in this changed environment.

For much of the time that the Ardabil was accruing new identities and characteristics, and carrying out the ideological work described in the previous sections, it was displayed in the museum behind a sheet of glass, hanging on a wall. The glass we are told was 'greenish', and the carpet increasingly dirty.<sup>104</sup> Despite being stripped of its materiality, with its three dimensional coloured and patterned surface increasingly hidden from view, it was indicated in the museum as an art object of prestige and authority, behind glass, protected from the viewer, but also protecting the viewer from its power to disturb, its imagined Otherness and exoticism. In 2006, the new Jameel Gallery of the Islamic Middle East was opened in Room 42 of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The redisplay of the Ardabil carpet was an important objective of the redesign.<sup>105</sup>

The gallery was endowed by his family in memory of Abdul Latif Jameel (birth unknown, died 1993), who founded an eponymous conglomerate in Saudi Arabia in 1945, originally centred on car manufacturing, but now diversified. The sponsorship of the gallery links it to an economic order which as I write in 2019 is already passing, as the power of the oil economies of the Middle East and the influence of their complex relationship with the US begins to be overshadowed

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<sup>104</sup> Linda Hillyer and Boris Pretzel, 'The Ardabil Carpet: A new perspective', *Conservation Journal*, 49 (2005).

<[vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-49/the-ardabil-carpet-a-new-perspective](http://vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-49/the-ardabil-carpet-a-new-perspective)> [Accessed 12 January 2017]

<sup>105</sup> Crill and Stanley, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery*, p. 82.

by the economic might of China. However, in 2006, possession of the Ardabil offered the V&A a strong card in a negotiation between the financial needs of a prestigious western imperial museum, and the prestige needs of a financially successful Saudi conglomerate. The new power dynamics required an accommodation between diverse parties, a British museum, a British Muslim community, an international Muslim community, a powerful Saudi family.

The Jameel Gallery was established at a fraught moment in the history of the relationship between Europe, North America and the Islamic lands, soon after the Al-Qaeda attacks of 2001, and shortly after the invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies in 2003. Part of its agenda was a response to the turbulence of relations between the Islamic Middle East and the West during this period. Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel describes the impact he aimed to have through his investment in the V&A:

At this time, events had conspired to create an overwhelmingly negative image of Muslims and their faith in the world's media, and I felt it was important for people to gain a more positive understanding of Islam, and what it has contributed to the world. The time was therefore right to make a significant donation to highlight the artistic culture of one of the world's great civilisations.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Crill and Stanley, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery*, foreword.

Tim Stanley, one of the senior curators of the Jameel Gallery installation, echoes the sponsor's ideological intention, when he describes a desire to resist:

The emphasis that recent news coverage of the Islamic world had placed on strife and polemic against non-Islamic societies, including our own.

Because of this Islamic culture tends to seem isolated and rejectionist.<sup>107</sup>

Gülru Necipoğlu, reflecting on such approaches with hindsight in 2012, issues a warning about the risk inherent in them:

The present instrumentalisation of Islamic art as a 'cultural ambassador' to improve the negative image of Islam has promoted neo-Orientalism and didacticism in public forums.<sup>108</sup>

This neo-orientalism can be seen at work in some existing museum displays of Islamic art, and it is one of the innovations of the British Museum's new Albukhary Galleries, discussed in chapter one, that the curators explicitly resisted this approach.<sup>109</sup> However, as the Jameel Gallery was designed and installed in 2004-5, risks other than neo-orientalism may have seemed greater. The designers and curators set out to remind the public of the glories of Islamic culture, and to rebalance the discourse about Muslim identity in the West during the difficult early years of the twenty-first century .

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<sup>107</sup> Crill and Stanley, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery*, p. 62.

<sup>108</sup> Necipoğlu, 'The Concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches', p. 68. Necipoğlu is Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art at Harvard.

<sup>109</sup> Akbarnia and Porter, 'Rethinking Islamic Art at the British Museum'.

Many museums established in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe and North America have redesigned the display of parts or all of their Islamic collections since the millennium, as discussed in chapter one.<sup>110</sup> Alongside this generational change in museum display, there has been a vigorous debate amongst scholars on fundamental issues of both the definition and display of Islamic material culture.<sup>111</sup> The debate has focused on three areas, the role of Islam as a religion, the periodicity of Islamic material culture, and its geography.

The increasing secularization of scholarship and display has been challenged, as concerns have grown that this creates barriers to engaging with the important religious content of Islamic material culture. As Wendy Shaw puts it:

This [...] implies a metanarrative of triumphal secularism and constructs a gross division between the Islam of art and the Islam of Muslims. Rather than being represented, Islam as a contemporary faith becomes the subaltern of Islam as a historical culture [...]. By maintaining such a strong distinction between secular and sacred, discourses such as these have

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<sup>110</sup> For example the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art, Athens, 2004; the Louvre and Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, 2012; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2012; Vienna's MAK rehang of its carpet collection in 2015; the British Museum's Albukhary Galleries, October 2018; the Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, expected 2020.

<sup>111</sup> Behrens-Abouseif and Vernoit, *Islamic Art and the Nineteenth Century* (2006); Junod, Khalil, Weber and Wolf, *Islamic Art and the Museum* (2012); Carey and Shaw, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 6 (2012).

conceptualized Islamic art as something that can be viewed but not understood.<sup>112</sup>

The putting of Islamic material culture at a safe distance in the past has also been questioned, again from a concern that this 'solution' to European and North American anxieties about Islam has the capacity to make the problem worse. Finbarr Barry Flood, draws attention to the dangers of this denial of coevalness:

In most art historical surveys the narrative of Islamic art history ends around 1800 CE. [The article] considers the roots of this idiosyncrasy and its implications for attempts to coopt or instrumentalize the objects of Islamic art in the decade after 2001 in discourses of liberalism and tolerance in which an originary Islam was contrasted with modern more 'fundamentalist' understandings of religious belief and practice.<sup>113</sup>

The geographical boundaries that have created a canon focusing on the Middle East and North Africa at the expense of South and South East Asia and West Africa have also been put under pressure:

New geo-histories [...]informed by postcolonial and postmodern critiques of Eurocentrism [...] have propelled a shift from the former totalizing

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<sup>112</sup> Wendy M. Shaw, 'The Islam in Islamic Art History: Secularism and the public discourse', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 6, pp. 1-34.

<sup>113</sup> Finbarr Barry Flood, 'From Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art', *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and its Institutions*, ed. by Elizabeth Mansfield (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 31-53 (p. 31). Flood is Director of the Center for Material Histories, NYU, and 2018-2019 Oxford Slade Professor.

conception of cultures as self-contained wholes to a new emphasis on diversity, permeable cultural boundaries and cosmopolitanism.<sup>114</sup>

The Jameel Gallery was established early in these debates, and as its Curatorial Strategy Document demonstrates, its designers decided on a secular approach, with a traditional canon, based on traditional geographies:

For our purposes, the what, when and where of Islamic Art are as follows:

- Islamic Art is understood as a cultural not a religious term and includes art produced by and for non-Muslims
- The Islamic Period begins with the establishment of the first Islamic state in the seventh century AD and ends with the First World War (1914-1918)
- The Middle East includes all those areas under Islamic rule by the mid-eighth century AD with some changes over time<sup>115</sup>

The Ardabil carpet was exemplary of this definition of Islamic material culture, just as it was exemplary of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European and North American orthodoxy of carpets. It was a courtly medieval artifact, made within the territorial boundaries of the eighth-century Arab conquest, whose career in the West since the nineteenth century had been in the role of representative of Persian dominance in certain kinds of secular intellectual art. Its exemplary nature authorised the adoption in the Jameel

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<sup>114</sup> Necipoğlu, 'The Concept of Islamic Art', pp. 64-65.

<sup>115</sup> 'Jameel Gallery Curatorial Strategy Document', MAP 61/11/5 6567, V&A Archive.



Gallery as a whole of the canonical and traditional approach expressed in the V&A's Curatorial Strategy document, an approach that was soon to come under pressure from the more reflexive discourse on Islamic material culture I have described. The carpet had been set to work again in support of the prevailing ideology.

If the conceptual approach to Islamic material culture in the Jameel Gallery now appears conservative, the display was more forward-looking, with different filters providing a multi-layered approach.<sup>116</sup> The gallery embodied the idea of Islamic art as a cultural term, with sections for the secular, courtly and figurative forms of Islamic art, a materials-based view of the development of styles and cross-cutting types of decoration, and a perspective on historical change which included cross fertilisation across geographies and cultures. Within that multi-layered approach, it gave prominence to certain objects as unique works of art, displaying them, as in Munich in 1910, in isolation. In doing so the curators and designers of the Jameel Gallery not only threw their weight behind an idea of Islamic material culture as a series of masterpieces, but also stepped further away from the V&A's traditional mission to improve the design of manufactured goods.

The Ardabil carpet was 'the centerpiece of the gallery', and whilst it is clearly an appropriated object under the control of a colonial museum, it had considerable agency in the gallery's physical design.<sup>117</sup> The Jameel Gallery's architect, Oliver

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<sup>116</sup> Weber, 'A Concert of Things', pp. 44-45.

<sup>117</sup> 'Jameel Gallery Curatorial Strategy Document', p. 29.

Salway, explains how the curators' intellectual programme was to be translated architecturally:

A central aspiration of the brief was to evoke a subtle sense of Islamic space, without resorting to pastiche.<sup>118</sup>

But as the Gallery took physical form, the objects in the collection and material qualities of the building and its interior took the brief in a different direction. The carpet from Ardabil in particular was subversive of the vision of its curators and designers.

From its purchase, there had been a desire to lay the carpet on the floor.<sup>119</sup> This was now achieved by sealing it in a glass box, permitting an independent lighting environment to help with conservation. The box is suspended from the ceiling to minimize the thickness of glass, thereby avoiding colour distortion. It is around eleven metres long by six metres wide, and taller than an adult (figure 12).

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<sup>118</sup> Crill and Stanley, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery*, p.78.

<sup>119</sup> Minute Paper, Department of Science and Art (11 January 1893) MA/1/1/R1314, V&A Archive.



Figure 12: Ardabil carpet in its housing, Jameel Gallery. (V&A, London)

Alongside its practical advantages for display and conservation, the glass box identifies the carpet as an Islamic cultural icon, and establishes connections with the display of icons of western art. The Ardabil's glass shrine was built by the same firm, Italy's Laboratorio Museotecnico Goppion, that made the glass box for Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre.<sup>120</sup> The western icon of Islamic art was housed in equal status to the western icon of western art, and its subordinate role in the religious shrine at Ardabil was replaced by its dominant role in its cultural shrine in the Jameel Gallery.

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<sup>120</sup> *The Art Newspaper*, 1 July 2006.

The 'centerpiece' is partly separated from the rest of the collection, as a subject for contemplation, in an environment fitting for a world class art object.

Architect Salway tells us:

Two deep leather upholstered benches...enable visitors to rest and view the Ardabil carpet from either end. Behind them, stone-clad walls screen the display cases beyond.<sup>121</sup>

He goes on to describe the influences on the Ardabil's architectural environment.

In the finalised design the Ardabil carpet sits in a case beneath a suspended canopy...for the multitude of tiny light sources...This low level ensemble is redolent of the dramatic chandeliers and glass lamps to be found in the great Islamic religious spaces, notably the mosque of Sultan Hasan in Cairo, and the Suleymaniye mosque in Istanbul. <sup>122</sup>

The floor slabs were laid out perpendicular to the long axis of the gallery, with stones of irregular width echoing the pattern in the courtyard of the shrine at Ardabil, where the carpet may once have been laid. <sup>123</sup>

In Salway's account, the architectural environment created for the Ardabil goes beyond a 'subtle sense of Islamic space' and abandons the secularism of the

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<sup>121</sup> Crill and Stanley, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery*, p. 95.

<sup>122</sup> Crill and Stanley, p. 84.

<sup>123</sup> Crill and Stanley, p. 94.

curatorial narrative. It is explicitly described as a religious space, a mosque, or the courtyard of the shrine at Ardabil. The description carries an echo of the display of carpets designed by Ernst Fiechter, architect for the 1910 Munich Exhibition, illustrating how that exhibition has remained in the shared memory of scholars and curators of Islamic art.

The big entrance hall [...] followed the scheme of an open courtyard surrounded by four *iwans* (archways) [...] This entrance hall was the setting for the so-called 'Polish rugs' from Royal Bavarian Collection.<sup>124</sup>

As architect Salway describes the creation of the appropriate environment for the carpet, he raises the proposition that it may once have been laid in the courtyard at Ardabil. The possible placing of the carpet in the Ardabil shrine has its own historiography. The current consensus view supports the idea that the Jannatsaray at Ardabil was both large enough for the twin carpets to be laid side-by-side, and was an appropriate ceremonial space for their use.<sup>125</sup> Kishwar Rizvi suggests that the carpets may have been unrolled only when Shah Tahmasp was conducting a ceremony or audience. She describes them as part of the mystique of Tahmasp's new idea of kingship, which combined secular authority and grandeur with piety.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Troelenberg, "The Most Important Branch of Muhammedan Art", p. 248.

<sup>125</sup> Blair, *Text and Image*, pp. 250-260.

<sup>126</sup> Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, p. 93.

The historiography does not support the suggestion that the Ardabil carpet or its twin were displayed outside in the courtyard. Furthermore, the elements would have destroyed them. At the same time, Rizvi's account reminds us that the Ardabil carpets were not permanently displayed functional or contemplative objects, as they are now in London and Los Angeles, and that they share the power of other textiles to create a temporary physical environment. There are many images of rulers holding ceremonies on carpets out of doors (figure 13).



Figure 13: Detail of portrait of Shah Jahan, opaque watercolour, gold, ink, paper, 35 x 24 cm, Mughal Empire, 1628-40 (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, AKM 124)

Salway's account is an example of the power of this carpet to generate stories. The image of the beautiful carpet under the beautiful Iranian sky may have been influenced by the Jameel team's visit to roofless antiquities on their preparatory

visit to Iran, playing into the architect's fantasy of ruins, nomads, spirituality and carpets exposed to the elements.

The display of the carpet in the Jameel Gallery completes a process which began with the monograph written in 1892 by Edward Stebbing (figure 14). It is the carpet that is holy, not the mosque, and power is transferred from the religious institution and from Islam, to the material object. The holy carpet in its turn re-frames the Jameel Gallery as an environment for worship. But the worship is not that of religion as conventionally understood. Persian carpets of the Safavid sixteenth century had been stripped of their religious function by early twentieth-century scholars such as Pope and repositioned as fine art objects. The worship provoked by the Holy Carpet is that of a western-defined hierarchy of art.



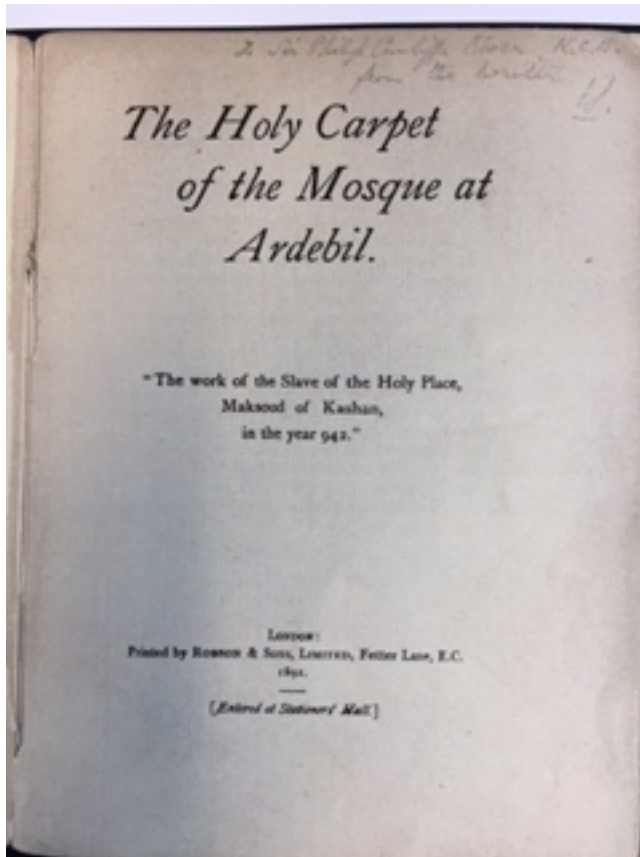


Figure 14: Marketing pamphlet for the Ardabil carpet, Edward Stebbing, London, 1892. (V&A Archives, London, author's photograph)

Indeed, *The Observer* newspaper's 2005 review of the Jameel Gallery described the Ardabil's glass box as a 'shrine'.<sup>127</sup> Avinoam Shalem has analysed the impact of the display:

The allusion to medieval sacred spaces and the display of holy relics enhances the aura of the carpet ...[it] is venerated in this hall, rather than authentically experienced, and its aura appears at the zenith. As Walter Benjamin suggests, the phenomenon of the aura clearly involves the

<sup>127</sup> Tim Adams, 'Wall to Wall Brilliance', *Observer*, July 26, 2005.

experience of seeing from a distance, and indeed, the Ardabil carpet in its transparent cage appears as an object out of our reach.<sup>128</sup>

The lights in the Ardabil's box are switched on for ten minutes out of every thirty. The congregation gathers, waiting for the lights to go up on this famous and potent object (figure 15). The 'dramaturgy', as Shalem calls it, of the museum's lighting of the carpet is as much about darkness and withholding as about light.<sup>129</sup>



Figure 15: Viewers around the Ardabil housing, Jameel Gallery. (V&A, London)

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<sup>128</sup> Avinoam Shalem, 'Multivalent Paradigms of Interpretation and the Aura or Anima of the Object', *Islamic Art and the Museum*, pp. 101-116 (p.113).

<sup>129</sup> Shalem, 'Multivalent Paradigms', p.111.

The lights come on and the waiting viewers judge the carpet for themselves. In a recent survey of visitors to the Jameel Gallery, the responses suggest that expectations are not met: 'I thought it would be gold'. 'I thought it was supposed to be the oldest carpet in the world'. 'I thought it would be very bright'. 'I can't see the pattern in it'. 'It's just a carpet'.<sup>130</sup> The darkness gives the viewer time to invent their own Ardabil story, a sometimes unfulfilled dream of unimaginable antiquity and richness of material.

Whilst the carpet cannot be 'authentically experienced' in a sensory way or by use, a second form of encounter with the carpet is created in the museum, which runs in opposition to 'veneration'; what Donald Preziosi calls an environment of 'vicarious possession'.<sup>131</sup> The stripping out of its Islamic religious identity from its purpose has left space for an expression of the consumer experience associated with capitalism. The midnight blue leather sofas at each end of the box, with their marble side tables, would be at home in a modernist house.

Meanwhile, the side tables contain coffee-table books, one entitled 'Highlights of the Jameel Gallery', the other, twenty-eight pages long, 'The Ardabil Carpet'.

Viewers experience the carpet as if it were on their own floor in their own home, and can judge it as a consumer good. An Observer review captures this tension, entitling the piece 'Wall to Wall Brilliance'.<sup>132</sup> 'Wall to wall' describes the broadloom carpeting of most twentieth-century western homes.

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<sup>130</sup> Author's interview sample of V&A visitors, June 2016.

<sup>131</sup> Donald Preziosi, 'Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity', *The Rhetoric of the Frame*, ed. by Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 96-111 (p. 99).

<sup>132</sup> *Observer*, July 26, 2005.

I have suggested in the earlier sections of this chapter that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ardabil was used to support the racial, colonial and gender ideology of Europe and America, and to associate the new hegemony with past imperial glories. In the Jameel Gallery the carpet exemplifies a global hierarchy of secular art objects that I have argued is a new 'religion' of art, and the modern international ideology of consumption.

As part of my effort to broaden the discussion on carpets, both canonical and marginalized, I suggest below some alternative displays of the London Ardabil, which might offer perspectives which move outside the global hierarchy of secular art objects. For example, a display which maps the movement of its materials, its design sources and its finished form would reveal the Ardabil's complex transnational and transcultural network, and give understanding of the human, institutional, physical, economic and ideological nodes in that network. This would in effect be the materialization in the form of a display of the biographical method which underpins global design history.

Alternatively, a display could dramatize its original context of use, as part of the performance of Safavid dynastic secular and sacral power in the shrine at Ardabil. This approach, reflecting recent Safavid historiography, would also offer the opportunity to display the Ardabil carpets as a pair, as current research hypothesises they were used.<sup>133</sup> This would recontextualizing the carpets in the Safavid world in which they were commissioned, made and used, and would at

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<sup>133</sup> Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, pp. 90-98; Blair, *Text and Image*, pp.250-260.

the same time raise questions about the celebration of the London Ardabil in particular as primarily an art-historical 'masterpiece'.

In Oxford, the Ashmolean Museum's Islamic textiles gallery includes a workshop environment alongside its displays of historic textiles, where tools and materials are available for experiments in weaving. Such an environment could form part of a display which returns the Ardabil to its identity as a made object, showing it alongside the materials and technologies of its making. This could be fused with the approach taken at the British Museum's Albukhary Galleries, opened in 2018, where 'art' objects and 'ethnographic' objects are shown side-by-side. A display which returns the Ardabil to its identity as a made object could be shown with more demotic weavings, which share that same identity.

A narrative which engages with its role as a global art object could contextualise the Ardabil as a source for other artists. This would permit an encounter with these artists' experience of the Ardabil which has the potential to shift our view of it. Alinah Azadeh's describes her 2013 installation *The Gifts*, inspired by the carpet, as a meditation on home and alienation, Ardabil being her mother's home (figure 16); meanwhile, Anish Kapoor describes his 2007 Ardabil-inspired piece as a materialisation of his memory of repeatedly revisiting and scrutinising it as an art student (figure 17).<sup>134</sup> Both artists talk about the 'volumes' in the carpet. Kapoor deconstructs it as a series of geometric shapes, and Azadeh creates a wave formation of many pieces of donated textiles which carry memories, a

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<sup>134</sup> Alinah Azadeh and Sue Jones, 'Returning Home: *The Gifts* and the Influence of the Ardabil Carpet', *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, no.2 vol.11 (2013), 188-195; V&A catalogue note for object E478:44-2008.

wave which evokes borders in the carpet and borders in human experience. The inspiration the carpet gives these artists is emotional and sculptural, rather than taxonomic and primarily focused on planar design.



Figure 16: Alinah Azadeh, *The Gifts*, 2010, suspended installation: donated objects, cloth, text. 700x180x170cm. and 100x170cm. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. Image: David Emeny courtesy of BMAG.



Figure 17: Anish Kapoor, Contribution to V&A's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary album, 2007. V&A E.478:44-208.

Finally, following a theme within this thesis, the Ardabil could be displayed and explored with a family of its copies and versions, stimulating engagement with ideas of the authentic and the traditional. These suggestions would require the release of many of the constraints the Ardabil's curators currently work under, for example, their responsibility to ensure the objects in their care are damaged as little as possible. Moving objects like the Ardabil is intrinsically damaging. It would also require a rethinking of how its current owners, sponsors and protectors wish the carpet to be understood in the world. Furthermore, it would disrupt the current narrative of Islamic material culture within the Jameel gallery as a series of art historical peaks of achievement, whose primary interest is in their artistic relationships, and which ends in the early twentieth century.

I have argued that the current display of the Ardabil carpet in the V&A works to support a hegemonic view of Islamic culture. It also illustrates a shift in the hegemony, away from European and North American colonial and post-colonial cultural and economic dominance. The agenda for the Jameel Gallery, and the most élite object in it, the Ardabil carpet, was set by a new late twentieth-century hegemony, the financial and resource power of the Arab states. The Ardabil was now set to work by the museum's prestige and the sponsor's money to rehabilitate what Saudi billionaire Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel calls Islamic 'civilisation'.

In this work it was participating not only in an exchange between the international order and Islam, but also in a conversation within Saudi between the Wahabis who supported and enacted Islamic militancy, and Saudis such as Jameel, who looked for concord with non-Islamic communities. In this complex transnational and transcultural debate, the Ardabil performed the new brand of orientalism described by Gülru Necipoğlu, acting as a 'cultural ambassador' for the Islamic world, evoking a story of a harmonious, creative Islamic past and drawing attention away from the divided present.<sup>135</sup>

## **6. Transforming the Ardabil: From unique art-object to copy.**

This chapter has stressed the importance of a belief in the London Ardabil's uniqueness in the relationship that developed between Europeans and North

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<sup>135</sup> Necipoğlu, 'The Concept of Islamic Art', pp. 64-65.



Americans and the carpet. The uniqueness was key to its prestige value, its ideological value, and its art value. A powerful indicator of the importance of this concept is the degree to which its cannibalized twin, the Los Angeles Ardabil, is marginalized. The vocabulary used to describe the London Ardabil has been and is still heavy with superlatives, rather than the comparatives which might acknowledge the existence of a second carpet, from Morris's 1893 'finest eastern carpet', to the V&A's 2018 'oldest dated carpet'.<sup>136</sup> However, since its arrival in London the Ardabil has stimulated replicas and versions. In this section, I analyse examples of Ardabil copies and versions, and the challenge they pose to the European and North American orthodoxy, with its intense focus on authenticity, authorship and provenance.

In 1990, The British Museum organized an exhibition entitled 'Fakes?', which included a pair of Persian turquoise ceramic jars bought by the South Kensington Museum in 1884 and 1886, one 'authentic' and one 'fake'. This prompted V&A curator Oliver Watson to reflect thus:

It is natural for museums and collectors to be concerned that their objects should be neither fakes (real things, but deceptively improved to make them more interesting to the collector) nor forgeries (things made totally new as deceptions). This concern is manifest early in the collecting of Islamic art in the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> <vam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet>[Accessed 20 December 2018].

<sup>137</sup> Oliver Watson, 'Authentic Forgeries' *Creating Authenticity: Authentication Processes in Ethnographic Museums*, ed. by Alexander Geurds and Laura van Broekhoven (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2013), pp. 59-71 (p. 59).

The early conspiracy theories in the London Ardabil's origin story partly derive from the fact that in Watson's model, it sits on the continuum he describes somewhere between an 'authentic' and an 'improved' object. Another continuum is closely related to this, one that runs from the authentic object to a replica, and then onto a version with only a loose association with its original model. The identity constructed for the Ardabil in the West insisted on its uniqueness, despite its compromised 'improved' provenance. Against this already problematic background it became one of the most copied of carpets.

Walter Benjamin identified authenticity and uniqueness as key to 'aura', the commanding presence of certain objects:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be...The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity.<sup>138</sup>

Nineteenth and twentieth-century European and North American carpet specialists expressed a deep-seated connection to patterned pile carpets as artifacts, and to the imaginary of their provenance, remote in space and time. They share what Adamson characterizes as the desire amongst nineteenth-century European and North American thinkers on and consumers of crafts 'to

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<sup>138</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, p. 214.

bring the past back to life in unaltered form...[and] systematically forget the present'.<sup>139</sup> Important to the fulfillment of this desire was the protection and preservation of the authenticity that Walter Benjamin tells us guarantees aura, by defining wherein it lay, be it design, structure or provenance. European and North American commentators also wanted to possess that aura, to control and administer it, as part of the colonial project of domination.<sup>140</sup>

But aura is vulnerable, as Benjamin describes:

The contemporary decay of the aura [rests on] the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent towards overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. <sup>141</sup>

The connoisseurs, dealers, curators, collectors and writers who contributed to the European and North American orthodoxy shared Benjamin's position, and his sense of the cultural and psychological threat that reproduction represented. They rejected copies and versions made under the circumstances of nineteenth and early twentieth-century industrialization and globalization as such a threat.

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<sup>139</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, pp. 212 -213.

<sup>140</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 76-92, for the comparable project of French Encyclopaedists in Egypt.

<sup>141</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 216.

The insistence on the uniqueness of the Ardabil and the marginalization of its twin are a pointed example of this.

Morris initiated the focus on the Ardabil's uniqueness. However, another view existed within the South Kensington Museum establishment, as the Ardabil arrived on the London market in the 1890s. During the museum's discussions about buying the carpet, Caspar Purdon Clarke, one of its directors, commented:

I consider the carpet a bargain at £1,500. The only modern carpet combining that fineness of count, 676 knots to square inch, with artistic workmanship are those made by Aubusson in imitation of the old things of the Groupil collection.<sup>142</sup>

Purdon Clarke assessed the Ardabil as an exceptional piece of workmanship, rather than a unique auratic work of art. He was comfortable thinking about the Ardabil in intimate relationship with fine copies. As a director of the South Kensington Museum, Purdon Clarke was keenly aware of the museum's role as a source for improving manufacturing design, and was consequently comfortable with ideas of reproduction, batch and mass production. Indeed, many of the museum's teaching resources were themselves copies, for example the monumental plaster reproductions of architectural features in the Cast Court, established in 1873.<sup>143</sup> A second reimagining of the Ardabil took place during its

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<sup>142</sup> Minute Paper, Department of Science and Art (11 January 1893), MA 1/1/R1314, V&A Archive.

<sup>143</sup> <[vam.ac.uk/articles/history-of-the-cast-courts](http://vam.ac.uk/articles/history-of-the-cast-courts)> [Accessed June 10, 2019].

sojourn in London, as a source for versions and copies which would bring the beautiful, exotic and remote into modest homes, improving both living standards and morals.<sup>144</sup> This was core to the V&A's mission, and in positioning the Ardabil as an iconic and unique art work, the Jameel Gallery steps away from this.

Despite Benjamin's proposition, I argue that copying the Ardabil does not entirely break the relationship with aura of the original carpet. Replicas of it are considered suitable not only for modest homes, but for rooms that contain and embody power. There is one in Downing Street, and we are told that there was one in Hitler's Reichschancellery (figure 18). A story that may be apocryphal tells that one of the reasons for John Paul Getty's gift of the cut-down Ardabil to Los Angeles County Museum of Art was that he felt that even he, the richest man in the world, should not be walking on a genuine Ardabil.<sup>145</sup> The aura of this carpet is so strong that even a copy of it supports the power of great men, and the original sometimes has too much power for them.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Nineteenth century design reform in manufacturing is discussed in chapters one and three; the industry in carpet copies in chapters three and four.

<sup>145</sup> Jennifer Wearden, Lecture at V&A, November 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*, p.101.



Figure 18: Ardabil in Hitler's Office, Reichs Chancellery, Berlin. (Chronicle/Alamy)

Even close Ardabil copies are not exact replicas. Both handmade and machine-made copies are substantially manipulated, as the 1930s machine-woven copy of the Ardabil carpet made by The Templeton Carpet Manufacturing Company of Glasgow shown in figure 19 demonstrates.<sup>147</sup> Buyers could choose any field colour from the firm's entire colour range. The original carpet's monumental dimensions were domesticated into 'parquet squares'. The design could be adapted by eliminating its medallion, pendants and corner-pieces.<sup>148</sup> The automatic tensioning of the mechanized loom gave crisp edges. The materials of copies vary from the soft merino wool of the machine-made Templeton version,

<sup>147</sup> Templeton is discussed in chapter three.

<sup>148</sup> *Templeton Presents Carpets of Distinction*, (Glasgow: Templeton and Co.,1952), STOD/201/1/2/2.

to the super-gleaming silk of the Kashmiri handmade version made around 2015, shown in figure 20. The integrity of the carpet's design and materials is not important, only a stylistic flavor, and that powerful origin story.



Figure 19: Templeton machine-made copy of Ardabil Carpet wool, cotton, jute, Glasgow, c.1930. (STOD 201/1/3/1/5, courtesy of Glasgow University Archives and Special Collections)



### Ardabil Silk On Silk Oriental Rug Brown Handknotted 9ft X 12ft

Call for price

Availability: 1 in stock

SKU: 1S056x9TL15

This carpet is available in various sizes and color combinations.

Email at [sales@kashmirhandcrafts.com](mailto:sales@kashmirhandcrafts.com) or call us at 617-236-7001 to check availability and discuss other designs and patterns in our selection. We have the finest selection of Silk Rugs in various sizes, designs and color combinations.

This splendid and world famous design has its origin in the town of Kashan. In 1530,

Master weaver Maqsud was commissioned by Shah Tahmasp to produce for the prayer hall of his court one of the greatest carpets of all times known as the Ardebil carpet.

Figure 20: Handknotted copy of Ardabil carpet, silk, c. 2015. (Kashmirhandcrafts.com)

From replicas and close copies, it is a short step to versions. Hand and machine-woven Ardabil versions which are stylistically different to the original are now made by producers who use its name to evoke the associations of elite Persian carpets (figure 21). The Ardabil has become a brand in the contemporary carpet industry. Carpet manufacturers globally, including in Iran, Pakistan, Kashmir, Nepal and China, have adopted the Ardabil for the conditions of their own modern carpet industries. Such versions are part of a cycle of co-creation of both the idea and the actuality of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia between countries of consumption and countries of production, a theme that is explored in chapters three and four of this thesis.



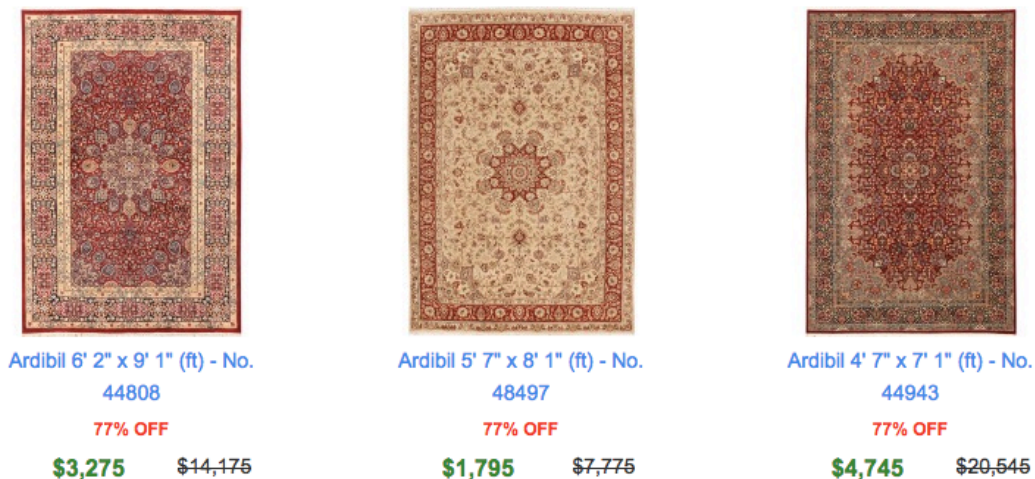


Figure 21: Handknotted versions of 'Ardibil' carpet, wool and cotton, ALRUGS, Lahore, Pakistan, c. 2015. (ALRUGS.com)

Replicas and versions of carpets satisfy the need for intimacy with an auratic object identified by Walter Benjamin, the desire to bring it closer.<sup>149</sup> When we place a copy of a famous carpet in our homes or public spaces, we can touch it and it can touch us.<sup>150</sup> An object has been taken out of a controlling hierarchy and thrown on the floor amongst us to do with as we please. It is reimagined as ours, and remade to cope with our ordinary and sometimes playful and subversive usage. The shrine at Ardabil has a scaled down copy of its own carpet in the Porcelain House, and women in jeans do not feel inhibited about sitting cross-legged on its central medallion (figure 22).

<sup>149</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 216.

<sup>150</sup> Gerritsen, 'Domesticating Goods from Overseas', 228-244.



Figure 22: Ardabil copy in Porcelain House at the Shrine of Safi al-din at Ardabil

(Courtesy of Richard Stone, PBase)

The aura of the Ardabil is so strong that it breaks free altogether from its original materiality and is remade in forms that are not carpets, or even textiles. In the Heydar Aliyev Park surrounding the Azerbaijan Embassy in Kiev, Ukraine, a mosaic executed in Murano glass and ceramic has been applied to a replica of the medieval fortress at Baku, over which flows a waterfall. The mosaic is a copy of the London Ardabil (figure 23).



Figure 23: Glass and tile mosaic replica of Ardabil carpet, Heydar Aliyev Park, Azeri Embassy, Kiev, Ukraine. (srgktg.livejournal.com)

This is not a copy which lays aside aura in favour of greater intimacy and subversion. Instead it is all reflected aura, a projection of the power, wealth and Islamic cultural dominance of the Safavid Shahs, now appropriated by the resurgent and oil-rich republic of Azerbaijan and mirrored back in the border zones of East and West in the Ukraine. The carpet's inherent drama has been intensified by the replica Baku fortress behind it, the running water, and the glittering Murano glass. It is unlikely that spectators looking at the carpet-mosaic will experience the disappointment expressed by visitors interviewed at the V&A when the lights were finally turned on and the Ardabil was, after all, not made of gold.

The Ardabil's aura is so strong that it does not require to be permanently physically materialized at all. It can be summoned through the ephemeral medium of performance. In 1960, as part of a conference on Iranian Art in the US that included a display of the Los Angeles Ardabil, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi Shah commissioned a ballet by George Balanchine, 'The Figure in the Carpet'.

'The ballet describes how a carpet woven somewhere in the desert was taken to a Persian court, where entertainments from the four corners of the globe are performed, including Scottish dancing!'<sup>151</sup>

This ballet dramatizes the origin story of the Ardabil and puts it to work as an ambassador for Iranian culture. Again the 'the sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse' is demonstrated.<sup>152</sup>

## **Conclusion**

We know only the outline of the history of the London Ardabil. It is a nineteenth-century restoration of one of two damaged carpets. It is almost five hundred years old, probably commissioned from an élite workshop by Safavid Shah Tahmasp in the first half of the sixteenth century and made by a team of weavers supervised by an overseer. It may have been produced in Tabriz, or Kashan or Ardabil itself. It is understood to have been bought from the Shrine of Safi al Din at Ardabil by Hildebrand Stevens around 1840, and repaired at the behest of

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<sup>151</sup> Sheila Blair, *Text and Image*, p. 270.

<sup>152</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 6.

Ziegler and Company before being sold by Robinson and Company to the South Kensington Museum in 1893.

The lacunae in its history have created space for a series of reinventions of the carpet, its history and status. These reinventions, discussed throughout this chapter, are diverse and serve different interests. Some of these are commercial. So, for example, it was recreated as a single perfect artifact from two damaged originals, for a nineteenth-century western market which particularly valued the complete masterpiece. It was repurposed as the gold standard in carpets and has helped anchor a market for Islamic antiquities. It has been used as a stimulus to consumer purchase in the global capitalist system of mass-produced goods. Some of the carpet's reinventions support reinventions of Islamic material culture more broadly; it has been redefined as a global icon of Iran's art, and installed at the centre of a secular account of Islamic material culture in the modern V&A. The discourse around it has contributed to totalizing orientalist accounts of Islamic culture and history.<sup>153</sup> Some of its reinventions are political; it has been repurposed as a tool of soft power in international diplomacy, and its aura of power, wealth and cultural dominance has been appropriated by emerging modern régimes. Each of these transformations has produced stories that have contributed to the discourse on the oriental.

Amongst this multiplicity of reinventions, I have focused particularly in this chapter on the carpet's use to support important ideological concerns of late

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<sup>153</sup> Necipoğlu, 'The Concept of Islamic Art', pp. 57-766.

nineteenth and twentieth-century hegemonies; arguing that the carpet was used to embed norms of taste about carpets that were closely related to the values, ambitions and anxieties of those powers.<sup>154</sup> It was set to work to define both what a Persian rug should be, but also to construct a discourse about Persia amongst non-Persians.<sup>155</sup> It participated in the definition of North American, European, and particularly British ideas, of their colonial identity, and in the construction of power relations, between colonisers and the colonised, and between genders.<sup>156</sup>

At the same time the carpet has had an independent life of its own and breaks out of its reinventions.<sup>157</sup> It insistently reminds us of the threatening materiality of carpets, and their association with what is covered over and buried beneath. It is not and never has been what it seems. Even now it must be 'caged', as Shalem puts it.<sup>158</sup> Alongside these troubling resonances, it offers through its proliferation of copies and versions an alternative to the European and North American orthodoxy; a subversive reality of domestication, intimacy and touch.<sup>159</sup>

The analysis of the Ardabil in this chapter helps answer the two research questions posed in the thesis. The first asks what the gap is between the European and North American orthodoxy of carpets and the actuality of their biographies. The chapter has demonstrated how the biography of the

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<sup>154</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, pp. 181-241.

<sup>155</sup> Kadoi and Szanto, *The Formation of Persian Art*, pp. 1-21.

<sup>156</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, pp. 50-82.

<sup>157</sup> Jane Bennett, 'Steps towards an Ecology of Matter: Theory and the Non-Human', *Political Theory*, vol. 32 no. 3 (June 2004), 347-372.

<sup>158</sup> Shalem, 'Multivalent Paradigms', *Islamic Art and the Museum*, p.113.

<sup>159</sup> Gerritsen, 'Domesticating Goods from Overseas', 228-244.

orthodoxy's exemplary carpet was constructed to respond to shifting sensibilities, geopolitics and identity-formation. The second research question asks what weavers and their work, and what experience of carpets do we dismiss by following the European and North American orthodoxy? The chapter argues that the Ardabil was reinvented to exemplify the orthodoxy, and that its existence validated the use of the orthodoxy as a way of judging, and excluding other types of carpets.

The analysis prompted by the research questions supports the hypothesis in this thesis that the European and North American orthodoxy was not an objective valuation of a class of artifacts, as it claims to be, but a culturally defined discourse, reflecting the historical context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The critique in the chapter challenges the objectivity of and material evidence for that orthodoxy, and creates space for the analysis in chapters three and four of carpets which transgress it.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Remaking the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia: Machine-made copies and versions from the Templeton Carpet Manufacturing Company of Glasgow, 1840-1980**

#### **Introduction**

In chapter one of this thesis, I examined the formation of a European and North American orthodoxy, arguing that it enshrined a series of preferences which reflected the ideological agenda of nineteenth and twentieth-century hegemonic powers. I argued that the tools used by the orthodoxy to assess the cultural and aesthetic qualities of a carpet are not robust, and that an important effect of the orthodoxy is to marginalize groups of carpets which do not conform to its expectations. In chapter two, I investigated the imaginative engagement the Ardabil carpet commanded from the late nineteenth century onwards. I argued that the Ardabil, through its reinvention as the exemplary orthodox carpet, helped authorize the orthodoxy's judgments, and hardened the boundaries between approved and marginalised carpets. In chapters three and four I go on to analyse examples of carpets which were perceived by the orthodoxy as transgressing the standards it set. In doing so I challenge the basis of the orthodoxy's exclusions and broaden the conversation about such carpets and the responses they provoke.



The transgressive carpets I discuss in chapter three are machine-made versions and copies of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia made by Templeton of Glasgow from the 1840s to the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> As discussed in chapters one and two, industrial carpet-weaving firms in Europe and America, and the machine-made carpets they produced, put pressure on ideas about the methods, materials and locations of production required for examples of these artifacts to be considered authentic and traditional. These firms thereby added intensity to the European and North American orthodoxy's higher valuation of handmade carpets from geographies of indigenous production. Templeton was such a firm.

I focus on Templeton carpets, and their design and making, rather than the firm as a commercial enterprise. In particular, I use Templeton carpets to probe the binary that arose in the orthodoxy between machine-woven versions and handmade carpets. Rather than assuming differences between the two, I take the position in the chapter that there are potential continuities between machine-woven and handwoven carpets; in terms of technology, materials, craft skills, creativity, and the ability to meet haptic and emotional needs. I explore both the divergences and the commonalities between handmade and machine-made carpets, in an effort to identify the roots of the perception of difference. The chapter is a complement to the analysis in chapter one, where the ideological roots of the orthodoxy are also sought. However, where chapter one builds its argument from an analysis of scholarship and museum display, chapter three build its argument from technology, materials and work in the making of carpets.

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<sup>1</sup> After a period of decline, Templeton ceased independent trading in 1980, when it merged with rivals Stoddard.

The chapter is geographically located in Templeton's hometown of Glasgow, however, the firm and its carpets are analysed as part of an international network of ideas, political, social and economic forces, trade and consumption, materials, technology and designs. The chapter uses a domestic case-study as an analytical tool in global design history, drawing on the methodologies of both that discipline and histories of imperial networks.<sup>2</sup>

Section one of the chapter situates Templeton in its Glasgow context. Section two describes the technology of machine-woven versions of patterned pile carpets, the nature and sources of their materials, and the process of designing them. In section three, the design and weaving processes of machine-made and handmade carpets are compared, to probe the binary established by the European and North American orthodoxy, and to identify continuities and divergences between the two processes. Section four continues this probing, examining the factors contributing to a consumer's choice of a machine-made or a handmade carpet, and the commonalities and differences in the way machine-made and handmade versions of these artifacts meet psychological, emotional, aesthetic and sensual needs. In section five Templeton's carpet designs and their marketing materials for those designs are analysed, to understand the ideological work that Templeton expected their versions to do, and to reveal

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<sup>2</sup> Adamson, Riello, Teasley, *Global Design History* (2011); Gerritsen and Riello, *The Global Lives of Things* (2016); Lambert and Lester eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire* (2006); Fallan and Lees-Maffei eds., *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization* (2016).

their negotiation of the relationship between machine-made and handmade carpets.

My analysis is based on the close reading of methods of production and design in both handweaving and machine-weaving of carpets, and of the account of their carpets given in Templeton's marketing materials. The most important textual and photographic primary source for this enquiry is the Stoddard-Templeton Archive at Glasgow University, which contains records of Templeton's business, production methods, designs and design sources.<sup>3</sup> Templeton's carpets are the most significant material resource, particularly those held by the V&A, London, and the Stoddard-Templeton Archive, Glasgow. Both physical carpets and images of carpets have been analysed. Sources for tools and technology include the Carpet Museum in Kidderminster, and the Axminster Heritage Centre, both in the UK. Two accounts of nineteenth and early twentieth-century carpet making provide significant primary material, one published in 1934 by V&A textile curator C.E.C. Tattersall, and one in 1944 by Templeton's senior partner Fred H. Young.<sup>4</sup> This latter is a potentially hagiographical corporate history but gives insight into production processes and personalities.

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<sup>3</sup> Stoddard-Templeton Collection, Archives Hub reference GB 0248 STOD/201. The University of Glasgow manages the design and corporate archives of both firms. The Glasgow School of Art manages the design library collection and small rugs and textiles collection. Glasgow Life manages the heritage carpet collection. Items used in the analysis in this chapter are given their title and STOD reference number. The titles of marketing pamphlets are given in italics. The archival descriptions of boxes and folders of material are given without italics or quotation marks. Some items are undated, and items from a range of likely dates are sometimes filed together in one box. Many items are undigitised, and hence some images in this chapter were taken under low archival lighting and have low resolution.

<sup>4</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making 1839-1939*; Tattersall, *A History of British Carpets*.

This chapter is particularly important for my challenge to the orthodoxy's binary between the handmade and the machine-made. It contains an analysis of the haptic and emotional responses prompted by machine-made patterned pile carpets, which is supported by literature influenced by materiality, anthropology and psychoanalysis.<sup>5</sup> The chapter explores debates on the nature and impact of copying,<sup>6</sup> and ideas of craft and technology,<sup>7</sup> as part of its attempt to reposition machine-made carpets in the discussion on creativity. The chapter also continues my analysis of the ideological work done by carpets, set within the debate on orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality.<sup>8</sup>

Research exists on the textile network of lowland Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. The work of Sally Tuckett and Stana Nenadic on the Scots dye industry is an important example.<sup>9</sup> The history of the Paisley shawl, and its role as a materialization of imperial relationships also continues to engage scholars.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile specific research on Templeton includes Helena Britt's work on the history of Templeton's design

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<sup>5</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*; Warner, *Stranger Magic*; Kuchler, 'Why Knot?'; Bennett, 'Steps towards an Ecology of Matter'.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'; Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*; Stewart, *On Longing*.

<sup>7</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*; Dormer, *The Art of the Maker*; Pye, *The Nature of Art and Workmanship*; Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old*; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Said, *Orientalism*; Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History'; Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience'; Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'; Adam Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (London and New York; Bloomsbury, 2013); Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.

<sup>9</sup> Tuckett and Nenadic, *Colouring the Nation: The Turkey Red Printed Cotton Industry in Scotland c.1840-1940*.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Sharrad, 'Following the Map: A Post-Colonial Unpacking of a Kashmir Shawl', *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, vol.2 no.1 (2004), 64-78; Chitrlekha Zutshi, "'Designed for Eternity", Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 48 no.2 (April 2009), 420-440.

studios and design library,<sup>11</sup> and Jonathan Cleaver's work on the rugs in two photographic albums of south, Central and West Asian carpets borrowed by Templetons, held in the Templeton archives. He analyses the carpets, their lenders, and the use of the two albums in the creation of carpet designs at Templetons.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter takes the research discussed above in a different direction. It is framed by a concern to re-evaluate machine-made carpets in order to challenge the binary between handmade and machine-made carpets established by the European and North American orthodoxy of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. The chapter explores creativity in industrial carpet-weaving, emotional and haptic responses to machine-made carpets, and the nineteenth and twentieth-century ideological agendas impacted by machine-made carpets. Whilst I link Scottish textile production history to handmade South, Central and West Asian carpets in a distinctive way, the chapter also has a relationship with existing work in the field. The chapter includes a discussion of the design process and the design studio, but from within the distinctive framing of challenge to the European and North American orthodoxy, rather than from the historical perspective taken by Britt, Cleaver's MA focus on the relationship between individual designs and their finished carpets, or his ongoing PhD research on the impact of technological change. The chapter also extends the

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<sup>11</sup> Britt ed., *Interwoven Connections: The Stoddard-Templeton Design Studio and Design Library, 1843-2005*.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Cleaver, "Carpets Loaned: The role of borrowed oriental carpets in the design processes of Templeton & Co. carpet manufacturer, 1902-1915." (Glasgow University: Unpublished Master of Letters, 2015).

range of archival materials used, to include Templeton's unresearched marketing materials. This permits a new insight into what Templeton's partners, designers and senior managers believed about the copies and versions they produced, and the ideological work they expected them to do.

The chapter contributes to what I described in the introduction as being at stake in the thesis. Firstly, it returns Templeton's transgressive machine-made copies and their processes of production to the narrative of patterned pile carpets.

Secondly, it sets out to make transparent the ideological assumptions underlying the marginal status of machine-made carpets in the European and North American orthodoxy, and to de-orientalise the stories told about them.

### **1. The context for re-making: The Glasgow textile network**

The first mechanized carpet looms were used in or around Brussels from the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Early industrial carpet-weaving in Britain was centred around Axminster and Wilton in the West Country and Kidderminster in the West Midlands. Amongst the secondary centres was Lowland Scotland. In 1841-2, applications to register design patterns for carpets show the ongoing vitality of Kidderminster, with around 12,000 applications, but alongside it, the strong presence of the emerging carpet weaving industries in Lowland Scotland, with

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<sup>13</sup> Tatersall, *British Carpets*, pp. 105-126; Bartlett, *Carpeting the Millions*, pp. 13-49.

1,400, Manchester with 1,700, and London with 3,100. The once-dominant West Country industry made only 48 applications.<sup>14</sup>

In 1839, James Templeton and William Quigley were granted a patent for the chenille process.<sup>15</sup> This breakthrough technology, discussed later in this chapter, permitted a mechanical loom to closely reproduce the effect of a handmade patterned pile carpet, for example the machine-made version of a seventeenth-century Persian medallion carpet shown in figure 1. James Templeton began his career in the paisley shawl and curtain making industry, establishing his carpet making business in Glasgow in 1843.<sup>16</sup> Templeton produced a range of carpet designs, including copies and versions of the handmade patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. The oriental carpet boom discussed in chapter one offered a lucrative market for Templeton's self-described 'oriental' styles, and these products contributed to more than a century of success at Templeton from 1843 to the 1960s.

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<sup>14</sup> Records of the Ornamental Design and Patent Registration Acts, 1841-2, National Archives, London. I am grateful to Sam Cottrell for sharing this data with me.

<sup>15</sup> "Administrative History," University of Glasgow Archives Services, <[archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb248-stod-201](http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb248-stod-201)> [Accessed November 8, 2016]; Templeton Chenille Patents, STOD/201/2/8/2.

<sup>16</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, pp. 8-20.



Figure 1: Templeton machine-made copy of 'Bardini' carpet, wool, cotton, 414 x 301cm, Glasgow, 1930s. (V&A, London, T.94-1999). Original at the time of making in the Bardini Collection, Florence.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Templeton had offices in Glasgow, London, and across the main European and colonial centres of trade.<sup>17</sup> Their marketing pamphlets were published in English, French and German. In 1913, they were the biggest UK carpet manufacturer in terms of production volume.<sup>18</sup> They made carpets for three British coronations, and Princess Elizabeth's wedding and bedroom. Many glamorous liners of the period were carpeted by Templeton. Their perceived status as late as the mid-twentieth century is

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<sup>17</sup> *Rugs and Mats* (Glasgow: Templeton, early twentieth century), front matter. STOD/201/1/1/9.

<sup>18</sup> Bartlett, *Carpeting the Millions*, p. 106.



indicated by newspaper cuttings which refer to Templeton as the biggest carpet-manufacturing firm in the British Empire, and in some articles, the world.<sup>19</sup> In 1980 they ceased trading independently and were merged into Stoddard and Company.<sup>20</sup>

My analysis of Templeton's versions of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia is predicated on the idea that there was a strong vision for the company running through design, production and marketing. This is supported by the structure of the firm. For most of its existence, Templeton was a partnership rather than a joint stock or quoted company, furthermore it was a family business. The managing partners came from two families, the Templetons and the Youngs, connected by marriage.<sup>21</sup> The design department showed a similar level of stability. The first two head designers, John Lawson and Victor Guerritte were in post until the 1870s, followed by William McFadyen until 1918, and James Kincaid until 1939.<sup>22</sup> Senior designer John Eadie worked at Templeton from 1892 until 1957.<sup>23</sup> Long-serving nineteenth-century foremen of works included John Lyle, William Adam, and Michael Tomkinson, all of whom later left to set up their own successful carpet companies, with, if we are to believe Young's account, the support of Templeton's partners.<sup>24</sup> This paints a picture of an intimate leadership team with direct involvement in the firm's activities.

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<sup>19</sup> Publicity and Promotions, STOD 201/2/14.

<sup>20</sup> 'Administrative/Biographical History'.

<sup>21</sup> D.H.L. Young, the father of Fred Young, married the daughter of John Stewart Templeton in 1888.

<sup>22</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> *Templetonian* (Glasgow: James Templeton and Co., Summer 1957).

<sup>24</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p. 35.

Templeton's home city, Glasgow, was one of the great ports of the British Empire. Glasgow's strength in shipbuilding and its range of manufacturing industries gave its import and export trade a global reach and scale.<sup>25</sup> Nineteenth-century Glasgow was also part of a vigorous textile network in southwest Scotland. It was heavily engaged in the import substitution of textiles originating in Britain's formal and informal empires. Ten miles away from Glasgow in Paisley, shawls were woven which copied those of Kashmir. Thirty miles away in the Vale of Leven, cheap printed cottons were made in competition with India. Mindful of the East, in 1884 the Leven dye and printing masters named their newly merged company the United Turkey Red Company.<sup>26</sup> The manufacturing culture of Southwest Scotland was deeply engaged with replicas and versions of products from Asia. Meanwhile, twenty miles away at New Lanark Mills, Robert Owen had in the early 1800s pioneered enlightened master-worker relationships in his father-in-law's cotton mills, offering a local example of the possibility of combining commercial success in textile manufacture with workers' welfare.<sup>27</sup> The Templeton partners inherited and co-created this textile culture.

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century Glasgow had a vigorous cultural life, and the period 1864-1914 is described as Glasgow's Gilded Age.<sup>28</sup> It hosted

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<sup>25</sup> W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver eds., *Glasgow: 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) vol ii; John M. MacKenzie and Tom Devine 'Scots in the Imperial Economy', *Scotland and the British Empire*, ed. by MacKenzie and Devine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 227-255.

<sup>26</sup> Stana Nenadic, 'Exhibiting India in Nineteenth-Century Scotland and the Impact on Commerce, Industry and Popular Culture', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, vol. 34 no. 1, 67-89 (p. 26); Tuckett and Nenadic, *Colouring the Nation*, pp 13-16.

<sup>27</sup> Ronald Garnett, *Co-operation and the Owenite Socialist Communities in Britain, 1825-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> For Glasgow's Gilded Age project and 'Glamour and Grit' conference see <[glasgowsgildedage.org.uk](http://glasgowsgildedage.org.uk)> [Accessed 18 January 2017]

international exhibitions, as would be expected of a major mercantile and industrial city, but also had a deeper aesthetic perspective. In 1881-2 an oriental art exhibition was held, of 1,000 contemporary art wares sent by the Japanese government in an exchange of goods between Glasgow and Japan.<sup>29</sup> An exhibition of the Viennese avant-garde was held in 1900.<sup>30</sup> Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Glasgow capitalists became collectors, most famously shipbuilder William Burrell (1861-1958).<sup>31</sup> Public collections of art were established, including the first public gallery in Britain, The Hunterian, in 1807, and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in 1901. This environment produced the Glasgow School of designers and architects, and artists the Glasgow Boys, and influenced commercial designers and manufacturers in the city.<sup>32</sup>

The broader Glasgow cultural context helped stimulate a high level of engagement with the creative at Templeton. Founder James Templeton established a design studio and design library, and committed to significant financial investment in design. By 1934 the studio employed 100 designers, alongside independent commercial artists commissioned for particular designs, including Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), Owen Jones (1809-1874), and Frank

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<sup>29</sup> Antonia Lovelace, *Art for Industry: The Glasgow Japan Exchange of 1878* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> Peter Vergo, *Vienna 1900: Vienna, Scotland and the European Avant-Garde* (Edinburgh: National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, 1983).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Marks, *Sir William Burrell 1861-1958* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> The Glasgow School included Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret MacDonald. The Glasgow Boys included Sir John Lavery, Arthur Melville, and James Guthrie, active c.1870 to c.1910.

Brangwyn (1867-1956), discussed below.<sup>33</sup> This was a strategic commercial response to the increasingly competitive environment for carpet sales, but also reflects the aspirations of the firm's partners:

John Templeton [founder James Templeton's brother and successor as senior partner] was a man of culture. He had his own taste in Art, Music and Literature [...] His combination of ambition with perhaps a touch of superiority complex was not without influence on the business.<sup>34</sup>

Young's dry comment, based on his personal knowledge of the family, is a reminder that nineteenth and early twentieth-century industrial Glasgow was a place of competition for cultural as well as financial capital amongst its merchants and manufacturers. The patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia played a significant role in this cultural competition. As I go on to discuss, major Glasgow collectors such as William Burrell collected elite carpets, and Templeton bought and borrowed prestige carpets as design inspiration.

The Templeton partners and their senior staff took commercial energy, technical innovativeness, a focus on import substitution, a global trading perspective, and an interest in aesthetics and design from Glasgow and its textile network. They also took a moral imperative. Templeton's partners espoused a model of worker-owner relations based on the belief that workers' opportunity to participate in

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<sup>33</sup> Others included Lewis Day (1845-1910), Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820-1877), Walter Crane (1845-1915), C.F.A. Voysey (1857-1941), Ernest Proctor (1885-1935). Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p.40.

<sup>34</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p. 46.

the wealth created by the firm, and the provision of welfare facilities and old age, death and sickness benefits would secure commercial growth through better service and quality. This thinking had been the basis of Robert Owen's experiment at nearby New Lanark Mills, and in 1890 Templeton's workers' voices evoked its importance in Templeton's business:

It may be necessary that you should sell Crownpoint Factory [...] But with all due respect we do protest against being handed over to the tender mercies of a syndicate of capitalists [...] For your words on many occasions and deeds such as the gift of the Trust Fund [for workers' benefits] have led us to believe that you did desire to do as much as any single manufacturer can to improve the position of the workers. This we have recognized with thankfulness and been proud of.<sup>35</sup>

Crownpoint was not sold and was still operational in the 1960s. As a partnership, Templeton had no need to satisfy external shareholders, or 'capitalists' as the workers' petition described them, and was able to make independent decisions about how much to invest in workers' welfare. The firms' efforts are reflected in the warmth of the address in the petition, and in its records of workers' details, showing generations of the same families on the firm's payroll, and recording, for example, the firm's attempts to keep workers out of the army during the First World War.<sup>36</sup> This last provides an illuminating example of the combination of

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<sup>35</sup> Staff Protest Petition, STOD 201/2/11/6.

<sup>36</sup> Summary Record of Employees, STOD/201/2/11/1/2; J. Templeton and Co. Memorandum Book, STOD/201/2/1/2.

commercial self-interest and poignant paternalism at work in Templeton's culture.

This approach fed directly into the sense of purpose Templeton developed for their business and its products, and into their commercial strategy. In their marketing materials and corporate history, they are explicit about their desire to make carpets for the masses, and to democratize the availability of fine carpets.<sup>37</sup> For example, in the late 1920s, Templeton produced a set of art carpets designed by Frank Brangwyn, whose design is shown in figure 2.<sup>38</sup> The marketing pamphlet explains:

It has been the aim of both the designer and the manufacturers to produce these carpets - not at exclusive prices - but on the ordinary commercial basis.<sup>39</sup>

Art carpets are offered here not as prestige products but instead as carpets for the people. This democratization was made possible by the relative cheapness of machine-made carpets, compared with handmade carpets of comparable quality, and by Templeton's (and Frank Brangwyn's) social objectives, which led them to waive the financial benefit of the prestige value of the artist's involvement.

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<sup>37</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p.11.

<sup>38</sup> *Autumn 1930 Exhibition of Furniture Made by E. Pollard and Company Ltd from the Designs of Frank Brangwyn* (London: Avenue Press, 1930).

<sup>39</sup> *Two Modern Carpets Designed by Frank Brangwyn R.A.*, (Glasgow: Templeton, 1930), STOD/201/1/2/6.

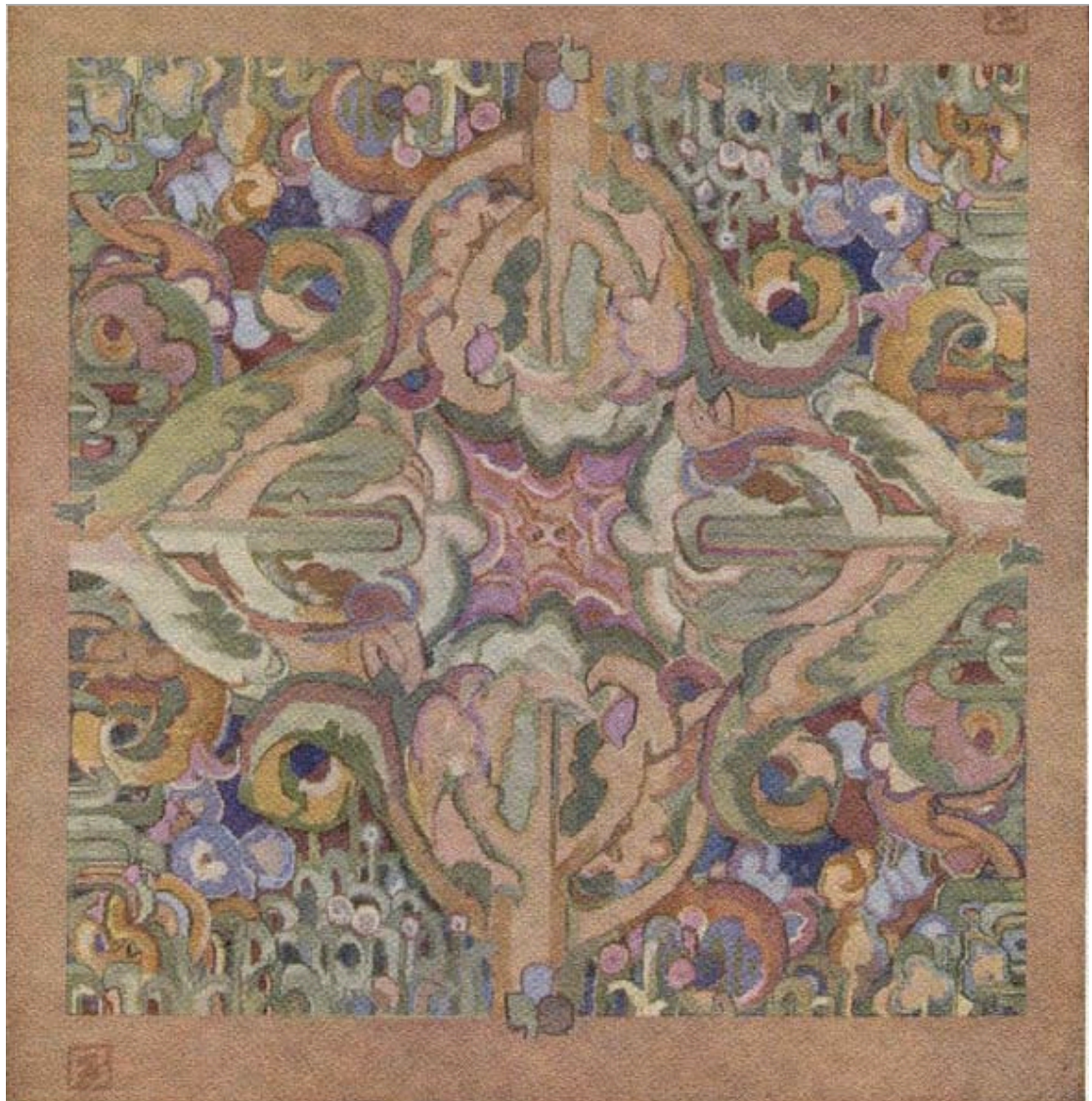


Figure 2: Frank Brangwyn, design for Templeton, gouache on card, c.1929. (STOD 201/1/2/6, design no 1276)

Templeton engaged in their commercial activities from the moral high ground of democracy and workers' welfare. Through this framing, Templeton set their carpets to work to support the European and North American ideology of the right to ever-improving economic growth, living standards, health and social justice for the developed world.<sup>40</sup> As the twentieth century progressed, this

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<sup>40</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).

ideology contributed to orientalist discourse, reinforcing orientalism's assumption of a different agenda for West and East, 'the developed world' and the 'undeveloped world'.<sup>41</sup>

The characterization of Templeton above runs in some ways counter to a set of expectations triggered by the idea of successful textile manufacturers in nineteenth-century Glasgow. Victorian literature is rich in exploitative factory masters who lack cultural and creative sensibility.<sup>42</sup> Glasgow's Gorbals are still a byword for industrial slums.<sup>43</sup> By suggesting that Templeton did not fully conform to this narrative, I do not mean to suggest that there was not real suffering in the British textile industry of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> Nor do I wish to overstate Templeton's protection of the wellbeing of their staff. In 1889, as Templeton's new factory at Glasgow Green was being constructed, part of the construction fell onto the roof of a nearby weaving shed, killing twenty-nine weavers.<sup>45</sup> This incident had been preceded by two fires.<sup>46</sup> Equally, even a relatively benign example of the domestic textile industry rested on systematic exploitation in the production of its raw materials. Jute, cotton, wool and dyes were produced in environments of extreme colonial and domestic

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<sup>41</sup> Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, pp.1-17.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1865); Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854); Dzelzainis, 'Radicalism and Reform', pp. 427-443.

<sup>43</sup> Ronald P.A. Smith, *The Gorbals and Oatlands: A New History* (Kilmarnock: Stenlake, 2014), vol. i.

<sup>44</sup> Levin, *The Condition of England Question: Carlyle, Mill, Engels*; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1963), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp. 297-346.

<sup>45</sup> Material relating to the 1889 disaster, STOD/201/2/15/5/2.

<sup>46</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p.38, p.45.



exploitation of the vulnerable.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the history of Templeton in Glasgow demonstrates the power of ‘individual situations of smaller, more local systems of production’, to add nuance to the mainstream narrative, a concept at the heart of global design history.<sup>48</sup>

## **2. Producing machine-made versions of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia s: Technology, materials and design**

As I discussed in the introduction and chapter one, it is the contention of the European and North American orthodoxy that machine-made copies or versions, produced in areas distant from indigenous production, cannot be considered authentic. In the view of the orthodoxy, this inauthenticity is exacerbated by the participation of their producers in a global market for materials and finished goods, and the industrialization of the carpets’ processes of design and making. In the following section I describe the technology, materials and design process involved in the machine-making of carpets, as a basis for the interrogation later in this chapter of the binary established by the orthodoxy between handmade and machine-made patterned pile carpets.

### ***i. Technology at Templeton***

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<sup>47</sup> Cox, *Empire, Industry and Class: The Imperial Nexus of Jute*, pp. 40-63; Jenny Balfour-Paul, *Indigo* (London; British Museum Press, 2011), pp. 89-115.

<sup>48</sup> Ethan Robey, ‘Review of *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840-1940*, ed. by Marta Filipova’, *Journal of Design History*, vol. 29 issue 4, (November 2016), 427-429.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a period of breakthrough technologies in spinning and weaving, central to the industrial revolution.<sup>49</sup> However, the reproduction of the effect of knotted pile carpets was not straightforward to achieve. It demanded machinery which could produce a cut pile texture, a complex pattern, and a wide palette of colours.

In the mid-eighteenth century a loom which could produce a deeply looped texture was invented in or around Brussels (figure 3). The loops on the warp threads could be cut to produce a pile. In Britain this cut loop pile carpet was known as Wilton.

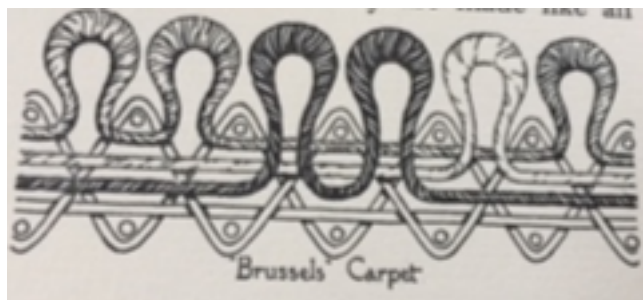


Figure 3: Brussels carpet structure. (C.E.C. Tatersall, *British Carpets*, 1934, p.113). Wefts are shown in cross section as circles. The pattern and pile is made by the deeply looped warp threads.

In 1804 the Jacquard mechanism came into use, automating the work of the traditional drawloom and drawboy in handweaving. Groups of warp threads were isolated by the Jacquard's punch cards, just as the drawboy isolated warps

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<sup>49</sup> Joel Mockyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 57-81.

in a drawloom, permitting the creation of patterns in certain areas of the textile and not in others. The Brussels process combined with a jacquard mechanism could produce a patterned pile carpet. The physical difficulty of using these heavy industrial looms was solved from the mid-nineteenth century, when power looms emerged, such as that in figure 4.<sup>50</sup>

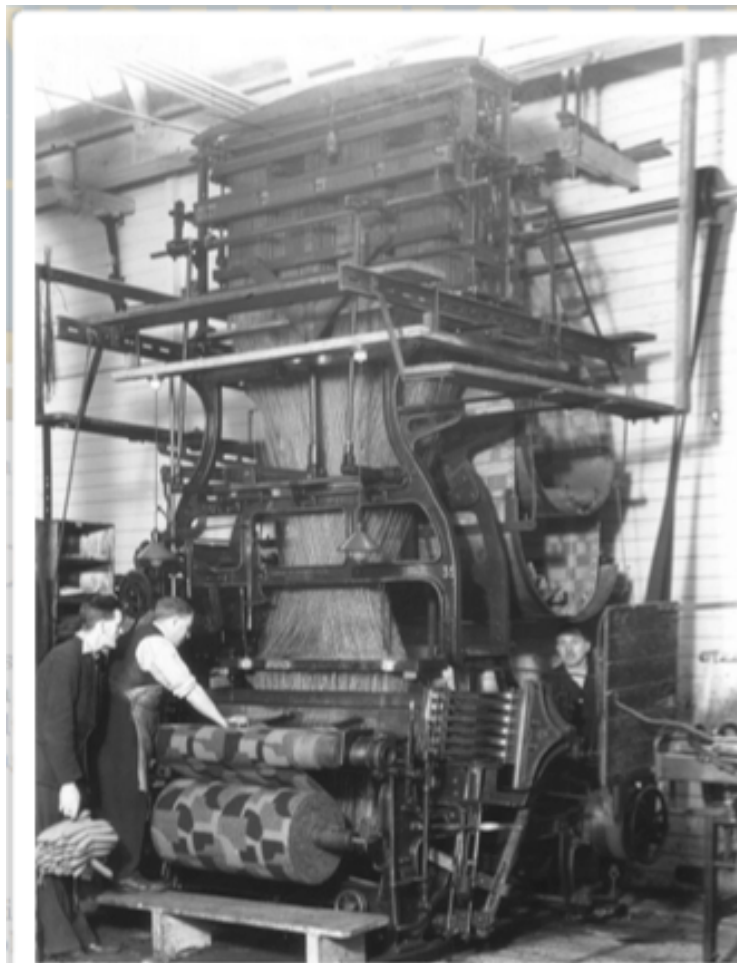


Figure 4: Brussels power loom with Jacquard mechanism, Naylor's Pike Mills, Kidderminster, early twentieth century. (*Revolutionary Players*, West Midlands History website)

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<sup>50</sup> Tatersall, *British Carpets*, pp. 58-79; Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, pp. 29-54.

However, the Brussels loom had limitations in replicating the designs found in handmade patterned pile carpets. Tatersall, writing in 1934, states that 'the number of colours practicable is up to six, and may be as few as two in the cheaper grades'.<sup>51</sup> A handknotted carpet on the other hand, could have as many colours and shades as it had individual loops in a line of knotting. The breakthrough technology which increased the number of colours available in a machine-made pile carpet was the chenille process, patented by James Templeton and William Quigley in 1839.<sup>52</sup>

The chenille carpet technology was adapted from that used to produce yarn for curtains and shawls. Furry multi-coloured weft threads were produced by a weft loom, which steam heated and pressed short threads into a fibre with a V cross-section. These weft yarns were called *chenille*, French for caterpillar. Figure 5 shows a chenille caterpillar escaping from a Templeton carpet. The individual multi-coloured caterpillars were then assembled in a chenille-setting loom into a complex pattern; the velvety chenille wefts attached to a foundation structure of warps and wefts, then to a jute backing.

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<sup>51</sup> Tatersall, *British Carpets*, p.113.

<sup>52</sup> Templeton Chenille Patents, STOD/201/2/8/2.



Figure 5: Templeton copy of 'Bardini' carpet, 1930s (V&A London, T.94-1999. Author's photograph)

The technology to achieve this was sophisticated. The weft loom produced a textile with the appropriate sequence of colours for a single line of the final carpet, shown in figure 6. This single line is known as a weft shoot of chenille. As well as weaving the textile, the weft loom also cut it into individual shoots. The original piece of textile would as a result produce a set of identical chenille weft shoots, each one used in a different carpet, where it would form the same piece of the pattern (figure 7). As Tatersall says 'one shoot of chenille is equivalent to one row of knots in a handwoven carpet.'<sup>53</sup> In common with the Jacquard

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<sup>53</sup> Tatersall, *British Carpets*, p.111.

mechanism, Templeton's and Quigley's innovation was both conceptual and practical. The sequence of colours in a chenille weft shoot encoded the pattern before weaving of a carpet began, separating the weaving of the structure from the weaving of the design.



Figure 6: Templeton chenille weft loom, 1960s. (STOD/201/2/15/5/3, author's photograph)

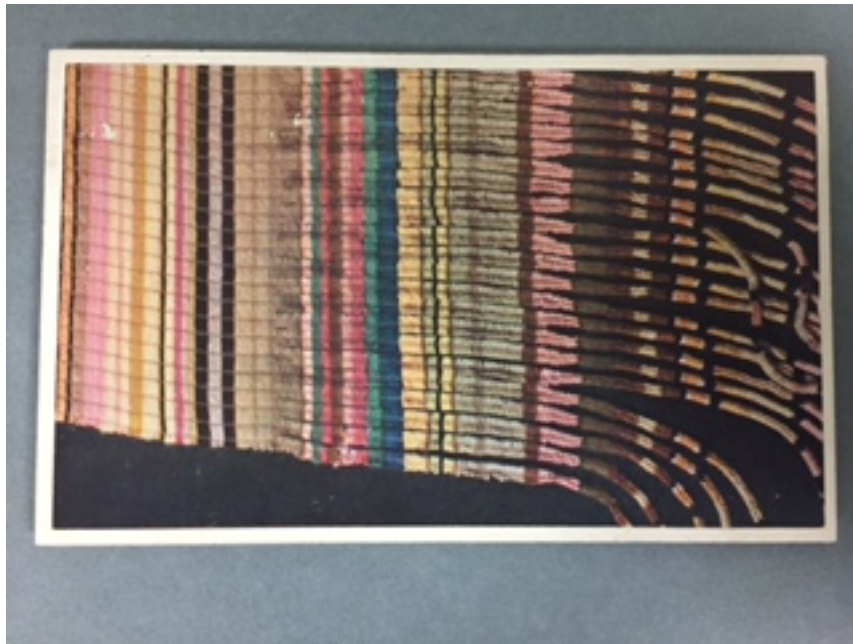


Figure 7: Templeton chenille weft shoots, 1960s. (STOD/201/2/15/5/3, author's photograph). These identical weft shoots are used in the same position in multiple carpets.

The chenille setting loom in figure 8 was a separate mechanism, to weave the chenille weft shoots onto a foundation structure so as to form a carpet. A Brussels-style looping mechanism was unnecessary, because the pile was integral to the fluffy chenille weft threads. A Jacquard mechanism was unnecessary because the pattern was created by the sequence of colours on each weft shoot.



Figure 8: Templeton setting loom and weavers, 1960s. (STOD/201/2/15/5/3, author's photograph). The chenille weft shoots create the pattern on the setting loom's warps.

In handmade patterned pile carpets, the loops that create the pattern are introduced by hand around the warp threads, then sandwiched between the weft threads to secure them (figure 9). The warp and weft threads are structural and have no impact on the pattern in the carpet.

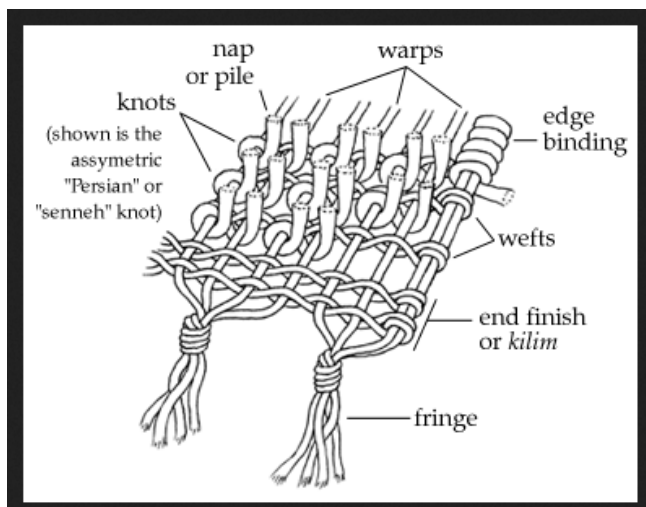




Figure 9: The structure of a handknotted patterned pile carpet. ( Wikicommons, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.5)

As illustrated in Sarah Sherill's schematic in figure 10,<sup>54</sup> a chenille carpet is composed of multiple sets of warps and wefts to create the structure of the carpet, and to give it weight (float warps, stuffer warps, filler wefts and chain warps), and an extra warp to bind the chenille weft shoots to the structural warps and wefts (catcher warp). The structural warps and wefts are hidden by the fluffy texture of the chenille pile.

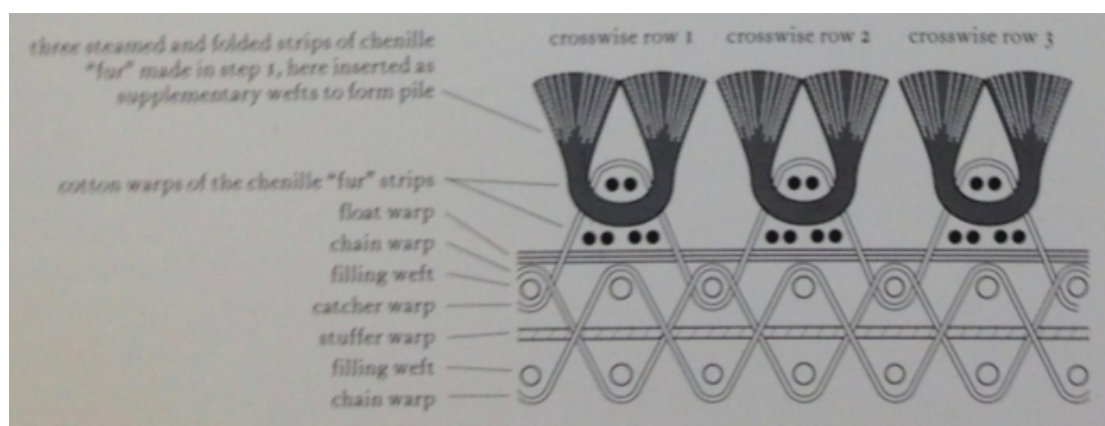


Figure 10: Structure of a machine-made chenille carpet. (Sarah B. Sherill)

Knot count and colour variation are both important indices of quality in the European and North American orthodoxy, which associated high scores in both with precision and nuance in design and palette. The current curators of the V&A give a knot count of 340 per square inch for the Ardabil carpet, and a colour range of ten shades. These are considered high, and many prestige handknotted

<sup>54</sup> Sarah B. Sherill, *The Carpets and Rugs of Europe and America* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), p. 228.

carpets have lower knot density and fewer colours. For example, the sixteenth-century Syrian carpet in figure 11 has 56-60 knots per square inch, and many Turkish carpets in museum collections have knot counts of around 30.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 11: 'Chessboard' or 'Damascus' carpet, handknotted, 56-60 knots per square inch, wool wefts, warp and pile, 377 x 243cm, Syria, late sixteenth century. (Textile Museum, Washington, R.34-34).

In 1934, C.E.C Tatersall, then curator of textiles at the V&A, assessed the performance of the chenille process in the dimensions of palette and knot count:

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<sup>55</sup> Denny, *The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets*, p. 60.

The changes of colour along a rope of chenille may vary from 12 to 20 to the inch [...]. The number of shoots of chenille in the carpet varies from 3.5 to 5 to the inch. The extreme textures would accordingly correspond to from 42 to 100 knots to the square inch in a knotted pile carpet.<sup>56</sup>

This suggests that the chenille process produced machine-made carpets with a level of precision of design comparable to handmade patterned pile carpets held by museums, such as the Syrian carpet, and a comparably diverse palette (figure 12). In both dimensions, they were not intrinsically less accomplished than handwoven carpets. In the chenille process, however design was decisively separated from weaving, resulting in 'displaced authorship and distributed labour', described in chapters one and two as an area of contention in the European and North American orthodoxy.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Tatersall, *British Carpets*, p. 111.

<sup>57</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, p.171.



Figure 12: Templeton machine-made carpets, 'Interwoven Connections', Mackintosh Museum, Glasgow School of Art, 2013-2014. (Photograph Janet Wilson, 2013)

### *ii. Materials for Templeton carpets*

Alongside changes to technology, the materials necessary for mechanized large-scale carpet weaving became more readily available during the nineteenth century. New Zealand became a British colony in 1840. The free trade environment the British fostered in the period permitted New Zealand farmers to import sheep, and then to export wool. By the 1880s the merino sheep of New Zealand had been crossbred to produce wool with long fibres and good tensile strength. In the last decades of the nineteenth century 60% of New Zealand's wool was exported to Britain, where 80% was used in Britain and 20% re-

exported abroad.<sup>58</sup> The fibre was ideal for making carpets; strong, lustrous, creating a good pile and holding dye well. New Zealand merino wool continues to be used in carpet making, and its use in Pakistan, for example, is discussed in chapter four.

Meanwhile, the existing relatively small-scale jute trade between Britain and India expanded greatly between 1840 and 1900. Jute is a very cheap textile derived from plants grown in delta areas in South Asia. Dundee in Scotland, in an example of the local specialization characteristic of industrializing Britain, became the jute capital of the world, importing and processing the raw material, and re-exporting it to the globalizing market.<sup>59</sup> Jute makes a cheap and strong backing for carpets, and can also be used as a fibre within the body of a carpet. Fred H. Young 's enthusiasm gives a sense of the impact of jute:

For the solid backing a woollen thread might be used, or a linen one, or what about this new, inexpensive jute which was coming into use and which would give weight and strength to the carpet? <sup>60</sup>

Templeton's first Glasgow factory opened in 1843, and from then on the merino, jute, and machine-made carpet businesses developed in parallel with each other in an international network of specialist sites.

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<sup>58</sup> Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, pp. 93-110; McKinnon, 'New Zealand in the World Economy, 19th Century'.

<sup>59</sup> Cox, *Imperial Nexus of Jute*, pp. 63-89.

<sup>60</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p.24.

The third critical material in the production of carpets is dyes. As described in chapter one, dyes were an area of great sensitivity for the European and North American orthodoxy, and dyes produced from organic materials by pre-industrial processes were an important indicator of acceptability to the orthodoxy. 'Synthetic dyes' produced industrially from inorganic materials offered a commercial alternative from the mid-nineteenth century, and as the quality and stability of such dyes improved during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were used both as a substitute for organic dyes, and alongside them.<sup>61</sup>

Templeton had their own dyeworks from the late nineteenth century,<sup>62</sup> but the pattern of usage of synthetic and natural dyes is not clear from the archives, and a firm analysis cannot be offered here. However, a lively lobby in favour of natural dyes existed in the Glasgow textile network. In 1898, the independent Vale of Leven dyers and the United Turkey Red Company resisted the introduction of synthetic dyes, defending their commercial position as producers of natural dyes.<sup>63</sup> This local pro-natural dyes lobby, alongside the European and North American orthodoxy around natural dyes, may have influenced the dye decisions of Templeton, which advertised its carpets as 'Orient-dyed'.<sup>64</sup>

Templeton participated in the entangled and geographically extended system of nineteenth and twentieth-century trade and production, which included wool

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<sup>61</sup> Morton, 'History of the Development of Fast Dyeing and Dyes', 544-574.

<sup>62</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p.44.

<sup>63</sup> Tuckett and Nenadic, *Colouring the Nation*, p. 14, pp. 37-43.

<sup>64</sup> <[canmore.org.uk/site/45135/glasgow-62-templeton-street-templetons-carpet-factory](http://canmore.org.uk/site/45135/glasgow-62-templeton-street-templetons-carpet-factory)> [Accessed 18 January 2018].

from Australia, jute from India, natural dyes from Europe and West Asia and synthetic dyes from countries such as Germany, the biggest contemporaneous producer.<sup>65</sup> Templeton's sourcing of materials has much in common with the long-standing, pre-industrial international sourcing of materials for handmade carpets discussed in chapter one.<sup>66</sup> However, the European and North American orthodoxy had a preference for a connection between a carpet's location of production and the source of its materials, and a suspicion of the international market for materials and finished products in which machine-made carpets participated.

### *iii. Design at Templeton*

Handmade patterned pile carpets made in South, Central and West Asia, derived their ideas from other carpets, and from other media, as discussed in chapter one. This was also the case for Templeton carpets. Templeton bought and borrowed diverse types of carpets as models from dealers, retailers, and collections across Britain.<sup>67</sup> Carpets bought and borrowed included urban Indo-Persian, Turkish and Persian carpets, for example in figure 13, and village and tribal carpets such as that in figure 14. The use of these carpets as design

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<sup>65</sup> Morton, 'Development of Fast Dyeing and Dyes', 544-574.

<sup>66</sup> In a local example, chromatography carried out by the National Museums of Scotland on the seventeenth century British Kinghorne carpet identified the presence of South American cochineal.

<[nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/art-and-design/kinghorne-carpet](http://nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/art-and-design/kinghorne-carpet)> [accessed 4 November 2018]

<sup>67</sup> These included Liberty, Harrods, both London; Baker and Sons, Oxford; Waring and Gillow, Manchester; Wylie and Lockhead, Glasgow; specialist dealers such as Victor Behar, Glasgow; private collections and the collection of the South Kensington Museum, later the V&A. Carpets loaned, STOD/201//1/5/1-2; Carpets bought, STOD 201/1/6/1-2.

inspiration established a connection between Templeton's machine-made versions of patterned pile carpets and those considered authentic and traditional, even when, as was commonly the case, Templeton did not copy them precisely.



Figure 13: Workshop rug, Turkish or Persian (STOD 201/1/5/1, author's photograph)





Figure 14: Tribal or village rug. (STOD 201/1/5/1, author's photograph). Annotated 'Lent by the South Kensington Museum (1904). One quarter rug copied of this in colours'.

Templeton's senior partners collected materials for designers, building a substantial library of art books, catalogues and works of design theory, both from Britain and abroad.<sup>68</sup> Albums and loose photographic images and drawings for design inspiration were collected.<sup>69</sup> The Chinese lacquer screen in figure 15,<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Britt, *Interwoven Connections*, p. 10. This design library is now at the Glasgow School of Art.

<sup>69</sup> Photographs for design inspiration, STOD/201/1/7/65.

<sup>70</sup> I discussed this screen with Christine Guth, expert in the material culture of both China and Japan. Whilst pointing out the difficulty of working from an image, she suggests the screen is likely Chinese, not Japanese; citing the symmetrical distribution of fans, number of panels, and border, which are uncharacteristic of Japanese screens. She

and the Indo-Persian ceramic tiles in figure 16 illustrate the eclectic range of media from which they drew ideas for their carpets. Designers also appear to have visited important exhibitions and museum collections.<sup>71</sup> These sources offered a diverse vocabulary of motifs for Templeton's carpets.



Figure 15: Chinese screen, lacquer with inlays, late nineteenth century. (STOD 201/1/7/65/1)

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suggests that the materials are lacquer with inlays, again more typical of nineteenth century Chinese screens. She suggests it is a genre sometimes referred to as a Coromandel Screen although such screens are not from India. Christine Guth, private email, August 12, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> The Templeton Design Library, GSA, contains watercolours dated 1931 of carpets which appeared in the 'International Exhibition of Persian Art', held in London that year.



Figure 16: *Portfolio of eighteen plates of ornamental tiles, The Afghan Boundary Commission, 1884.* (Templeton Design Library, Glasgow School of Art)

Examination of Templeton's designers' job books from the early twentieth century suggests that photographs had become central to their design process.<sup>72</sup> Photographs were taken of carpets or objects of interest, and their design components cut out, then pasted in new combinations into the designer's job book (figure 17). It is reported that full-scale cartoons of the resulting new design were sometimes painted onto heavy oil tracing cloth laid on the floor.<sup>73</sup> The final design was rendered in colour onto graph paper, where each square was equivalent to a cluster of v-shaped threads of one colour in the chenille caterpillar, a feat of draughtsmanship and mathematical reasoning (figure 18). Mirrors, and later cameras and projectors were used to help create pattern repeats.<sup>74</sup> Whilst some close copies of specific elite carpets were made, design of

<sup>72</sup> Designers' job books, STOD/201/1/8/4.

<sup>73</sup> Report on the Library, STOD/201/1/9/1.

<sup>74</sup> Helena Britt, 'Interwoven Connections: Examining the History of Scottish Carpet Design to Inform Future Learning, Teaching and Research', *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* (September 2014), paper 931.

versions of patterned pile carpets at Templeton was largely a process of adaptation and reassembly, rather than a process of replication.



Figure 17: Templeton designer's job book, early twentieth century, Glasgow.  
(STOD/201/1/8/4, author's photograph)



Figure 18: Templeton designer's job book, early twentieth century, Glasgow.

(STOD/201/1/8/4, author's photograph). Colour copy of carpet design on graph paper, now faded.

This time-consuming design process, which could take several weeks to complete, was conducted on an industrial scale; numbers of designers cited include 100 in 1934.<sup>75</sup> As a consequence, other roles developed in support of them; for example, teams of 'slab boys', and later 'slab girls', employed to grind colours from large blocks of pigment for the use of designers.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile the head designer was a person of consequence in the Templeton management team,

<sup>75</sup> Tatersall, *British Carpets*, p.161.

<sup>76</sup> John Byrne, *The Slab Boys Trilogy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003). Byrne was a Stoddard slab boy.

as Fred Young's careful recording of their names in his corporate history demonstrates.<sup>77</sup>

Unlike machine-weaving which after the arrival of power looms was carried out by women, as shown in figure 19, design at Templeton in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the responsibility of men. This remained the case until women's work opportunities broadened in Europe and North America. Figure 20 shows a strong female presence in the design studio in the later twentieth century, whereas the 1910 photograph is exclusively male (figure 21). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the knowledge-intensive, high status work of carpet design was assumed to be male by Templeton, just as it was by the European and North American orthodoxy, with its insistence on male designers for Safavid carpets.

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<sup>77</sup> Young, *A Century of Carpet-Making*, p.40.

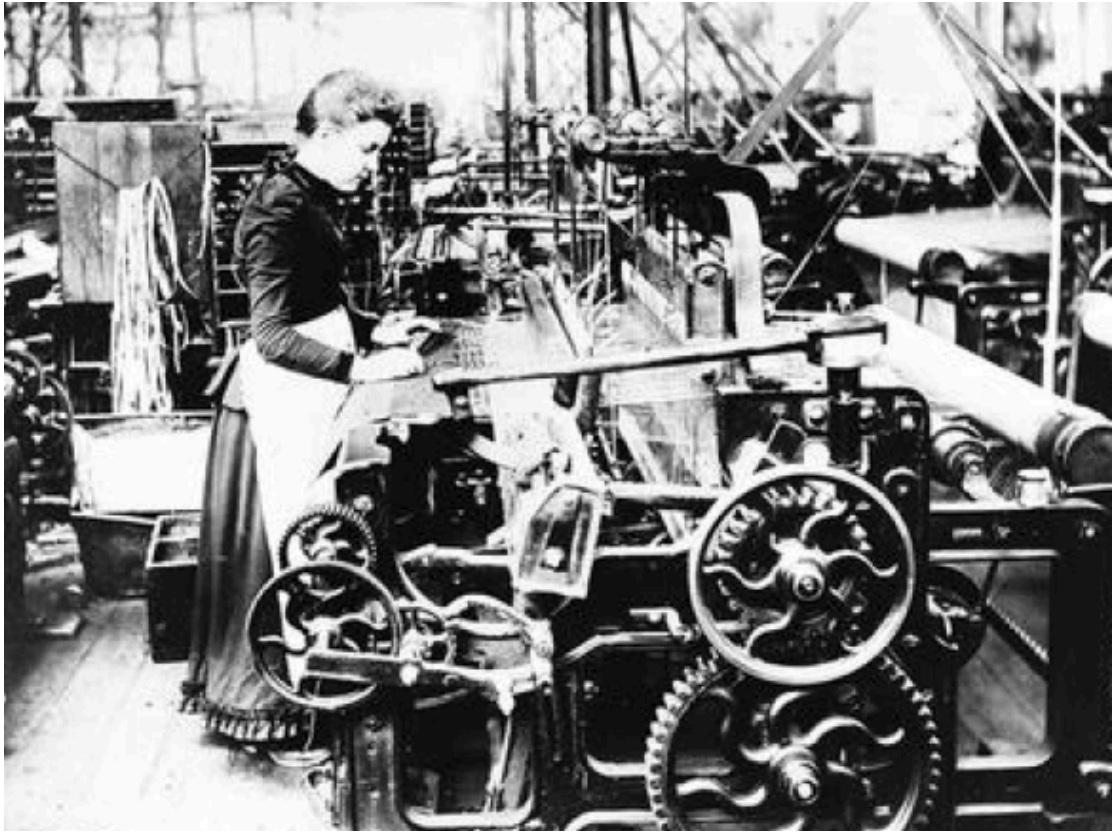


Figure 19: Weaver and loom, Templeton's carpet factory, Templeton Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow, late nineteenth century. (Burrell Collection, 1360.86.280)



Figure 20: Stoddard-Templeton design studio, later twentieth century.  
(STOD/201/2/15/5/3, author's photograph)



Figure 21: Templeton design studio c. 1910. (STOD/201/2/15/5/3, author's  
photograph)



Throughout section two above, I have aimed to lay aside judgments of cultural and aesthetic values of the kind enshrined in the European and North American orthodoxy. Instead I have set out to make transparent the technology, materials and design process involved in the making of Templeton's chenille versions of these artifacts. On the basis of these material realities, I go on in section three to probe the binary between handmade and machine-made patterned pile carpets proposed by the orthodoxy.

### **3. Divergence and commonality in the machine-making and handmaking of patterned pile carpets**

Pioneering American collector Arthur Dilley (1873-?), reflecting on his early attempts to champion the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia in an already crowded field of experts, asked 'what course could the young English Master [Dilley] pursue? Put up a fight for British Axminsters and Wiltons?'<sup>78</sup> Dilley expected his reader to get the joke; machine-made carpets were laughably far outside the orthodoxy. However, the examination of the technology, material and design of machine-made carpets conducted above does not explain why this should be so. Carpets using the chenille process could achieve a comparable level of accomplishment to handwoven carpets in knot-count and colour range. Both types of carpets participated in an international market for materials and finished goods. Design was important in both

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<sup>78</sup> Olive Olmstead Fester, *Fine Arts, Including Folly: A History of the Hajji Baba Club 1932-1960* (New York: Hajji Baba Publications, 1966) p.12. Dilley taught at the Taft School of Art.

handweaving and machine-weaving, and the design processes of both borrowed from other carpets and other media. High value work was gendered in the same way in both.

It is the case that a machine-made chenille carpet has some idiosyncratic structural characteristics which materially separate it from a handwoven patterned pile carpet. The pile is constructed before weaving by the production of multi-coloured furry chenille caterpillars, rather than taking the form of individual knots, and the textile has an extra warp to secure the chenille weft. A similar analysis of structural differences could be conducted on other forms of machine-weaving of carpets. It is the hypothesis of this thesis that these limited structural differences are not the source of the marginalization of machine-made carpets, and that the roots of their exclusion are political, economic, cultural, haptic and emotional. I am to make this transparent in this section by scrutinizing the continuities and differences in the design and making of machine-made carpets.

### ***i. Continuities in production between handmade and machine-made carpets***

The European and North American orthodoxy put great value on the role of the human hand in carpet weaving and was consequently suspicious of machine-made carpets. This goes back at least as far as Riegl's claim that a machine-made carpet could not offer the 'charm and value' of a handmade rug.<sup>79</sup> However, the

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<sup>79</sup> Riegl, *The Relationship between Oriental Carpet Fabrication and Western Europe*, p. 214.

illustrations throughout this chapter show people at work in the production of machine-made carpets, using their hands and their brains. They practice 'the workmanship of risk', David Pye's description of the potential of makers of all kinds to influence the quality of the object under production for good or ill.<sup>80</sup>

Templeton's workers' record books for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century show multiple grades of spinners, dyers, chenille-setters, weavers, finishers, toolmakers, maintenance engineers, and designers.<sup>81</sup> Many of these jobs share terminology with handweaving, and some of them share skills. Even where the work had a different role and status in the production system, the jobs demanded, aesthetic, intellectual and tacit capabilities.

Spinning, weaving, loombuilding and cutting are shared core activities in both the handweaving and machine-making of carpets. A machine-spinner must be able to judge the tactile and tensile qualities of wool in choosing the quantity and quality of fibre to introduce into the spinning machine and shares the manual sensitivity and dexterity of the handspinner in making that judgement. Equally, machine-weavers and handweavers require physical and conceptual knowledge of their looms; their limitations and maintenance needs, the precision they are capable of, the adjustments they require. A Templeton weaver had to ensure that the chenille wefts shoots registered correctly, for example, and the handweaver must adjust her weaving to the tension of her loom. Machine-loom building is

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<sup>80</sup> Pye, *Art and Workmanship*, pp. 20-24.

<sup>81</sup> Summary Record of Employees, STOD/201/2/11/1/2.

clearly a challenging conceptual and physical activity, and whilst some handlooms are as simple as a backstrap and a stick, handloom building can also be complex, as shown in figure 22, where an entire research team was required to reconstruct a drawloom capable of weaving traditional gold textiles.



Figure 22: Drawloom c. 2012. (Korean Cultural Heritage Administration). The male figure is playing the role of drawboy.

Cutting is important in carpet making, and a determinant of the quality of the finished carpet, creating an even surface which reveals the pattern. The making, use and maintenance of carpet blades are skills which are challenging in both machine and handweaving. The handmade Afghan knife in figure 23 is a precious, skillfully-made tool in itself.<sup>82</sup> Equally, the complex array of knives for

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<sup>82</sup> The making of this carpet is described in Anna Badkhen, *The World is a Carpet: Four Seasons in an Afghan Village* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013).

machine-weaving in figure 24 suggests the requirement for a high level of manual and intellectual skill in both the building of machine tools to produce them, and in their use and maintenance. Such comparisons complicate assumptions about the role of the human hand and mind in weaving, what is machine-made and what is handmade, where skill lies, and how it might be valued.



Figure 23: Handmade knife and handmade wool carpet, Oqa, Northeast Afghanistan, 2011. (Image courtesy of Anna Badkhen)

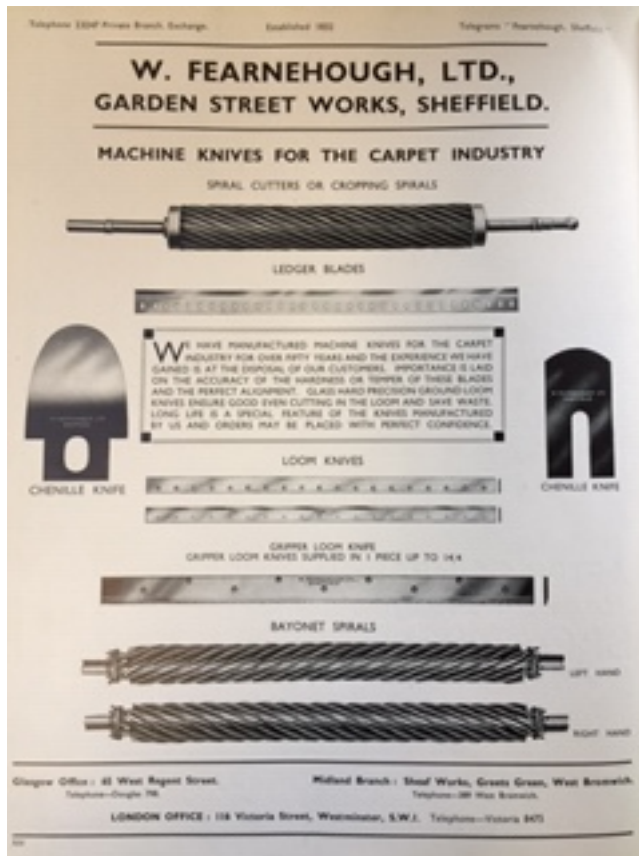


Figure 24: Advertisement for knives used in machine-making of carpets. ('Publishers' and Advertisers' Announcements', back matter of Tattersall, *British Carpets* 1934). Two chenille blades are shown left and right of the text.

Alongside the sharing of skills is the shared use of mechanical interventions in the process of production, speaking this time to Pye's question 'Is anything done by hand?'<sup>83</sup> Spinning wheels partially mechanize the creation of yarn, separating the human hand from the spindle. Heddles permit the raising of alternate warp threads in handlooms, so that the weft can be shot through the space created, without the need for the hand to interweave it in the warp threads (figure 25). The drawloom executes the same function as the Jacquard loom, with groups of

<sup>83</sup> Pye, *Art and Workmanship*, pp. 25-29.

warp threads excluded by a second hand, that of the drawboy, from the weaver's pattern making. Peter Dormer points out:

There is a conceptual core to woven textiles, based on the physical structure of weaving, that holds the elements of craft, design, and manufacturing together in a unity: woven structures and woven designs are based on rule-directed processes.<sup>84</sup>

These rule-directed processes mean that weaving has a ready affinity with technology, and a history of mechanization which predates industrialisation.

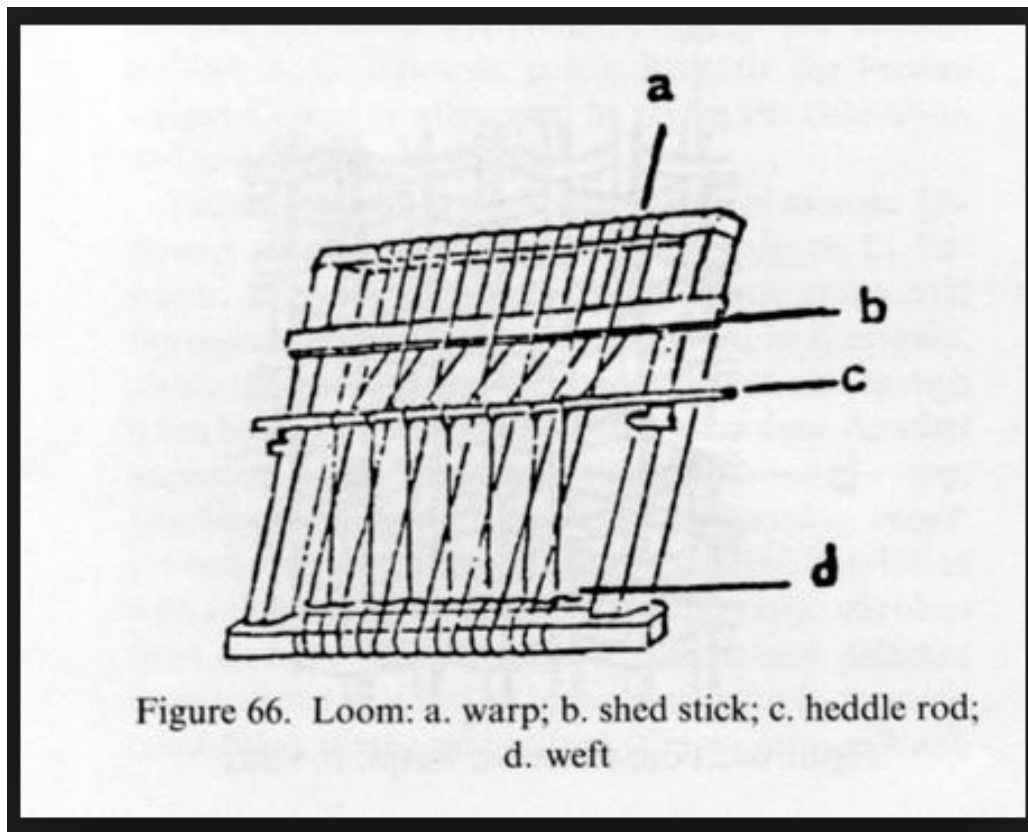


Figure 25: Shed and heddle on Iranian handloom. (Wikicommons)

<sup>84</sup> Dormer, *Art of the Maker*, p. 171.

The technology of patterned pile carpets has developed over centuries, and its variants live alongside each other in the modern world. I argue, following David Edgerton, that carpet weaving technology is not so much a process of evolution, where techniques disappear in favour of improved versions, but rather a broadening over time of the repertoire of available techniques.<sup>85</sup> Each has its own materiality of making and finished product, and its own way of being experienced.

Conceptually then, it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between production processes in handweaving and machine-weaving. Mechanization does not exclude the human hand and mind from the making process, although it may shift the point in the process at which human labour and skill are used.<sup>86</sup> It is necessary to look elsewhere for the source of the European and North American orthodoxy's binary between the two.

Part of the explanation is in the psychological role that each can play. In her discussion of handmade and machine-made lace, Elaine Freedgood argues that handmade objects 'make useful symbols around which cultural wishes can accrue; because they are both psychically manageable and representationally malleable'.<sup>87</sup> Her analysis is particularly helpful in understanding the

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<sup>85</sup> Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old*, pp. xi-xviii.

<sup>86</sup> For workers' experiences see Emma Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn: A People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2013); Maxine Berg ed., *Technology and Toil in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: CSE Books, 1979), both discussed below.

<sup>87</sup> Elaine Freedgood, 'Fine fingers: Victorian Handmade Lace and Utopian Consumption', *Victorian Studies* (Summer 2003), 625-647 (p. 642).



psychological and emotional impact on the consumer of the handmade. The representations she refers to in the statement above are the ways that the experience of makers is represented to consumers in the discourse on the handmade.

In these representations, the making of beautiful things [fine lace] is not labour or 'toil' as Morris called it, but creation. [The discourse on lacemaking] does not so much enhance the humanity of the workers, as the humanity of the middle-class person who reads about them.<sup>88</sup>

For handmaking to be 'psychically manageable' for the reader or consumer, however, Freedgood suggests that the hands must be 'severed', that is thought about by the consumer quite separately from the human being to which they are attached, who might suffer from hunger, or arthritis or increasing loss of sight as a direct result of her meticulous and poorly-paid work.

These severed hands [...] reassure because they suggest physiological presence without delivering fully on the complexity that such a presence would involve if whole bodies and minds had to be taken into account.<sup>89</sup>

In Freedgood's reading, the severed hands, detached from the human and physically experience of the handmaker, work to 'relieve anxieties about the effects of labour on the labourer, and indirectly, but finally more saliently, on the

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<sup>88</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine Fingers', p. 641.

<sup>89</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine Fingers', p. 630.

consumer'.<sup>90</sup> This, she suggests, provides 'the special consolation of handmade goods'.<sup>91</sup> Consumers of handmade goods can pretend to themselves that the work is a fulfilling expression of creativity for the worker, rather than, as Freedgood asserts, 'a slightly revised form of commodity fetishism' of the type that factory workers fully participate in.<sup>92</sup> This dynamic underpins the attraction of handmade carpets to consumers, and also helps explain the profound commitment of the Euro-American orthodoxy to the handmade.

Meanwhile, the discussion of Riegl, Ruskin and Morris in chapter one showed how the aesthetic and psychological requirement for the human hand quickly transformed into a discussion of the labour implications of industrialization; who does what, for what pay, and in what socio-economic configuration. It became a political rather than a material, sensual or emotional discussion.<sup>93</sup> Rather than giving insight into carpets, the position of the orthodoxy on the role of the hand was a site of ideological and economic negotiation over how human bodies and their labour should be used in the making of patterned pile carpets.<sup>94</sup> It is an example of a fastidiousness about the means of production being transformed into an aesthetic criticism, of the kind also identified in chapters one and four of this thesis.

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<sup>90</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine Fingers', p. 640.

<sup>91</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine Fingers', p. 644.

<sup>92</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine Fingers', p. 628.

<sup>93</sup> Pye, *Art and Workmanship*, p.28; Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, pp. 191-198.

<sup>94</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991).

***ii. Continuities in design process and design content between handmade and machine-made carpets***

I begin my comparison of design in machine-made and handmade 'patterned pile carpets with design processes, examining the degree to which both types of carpets share approaches to creating designs and to transferring those designs to the finished artifact. I interrogate whether the differences the orthodoxy identified between the two are so clear as to bear the weight of significance invested in them.

Figure 26 shows a leaf from the 1910 job-book of a Templeton designer. Using photographs, the designer has cut motifs which interested him from the field, borders and corners of multiple carpets, at least three identified in this image, laying these out next to each other on the page, before recombining some of them into a new design.<sup>95</sup> Figure 27 shows a *wagireh*, a carpet sample used in geographies of indigenous production, and discussed in the introduction. It contains a series of field, border and corner motifs from a variety of carpets, which the handweaver chooses amongst and recombines into a new design on her loom. The creative process in these two images is close. The possibility of innovation through reassembly of existing motifs is offered by both.

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<sup>95</sup> Templeton employed only male designers at the date of the image.

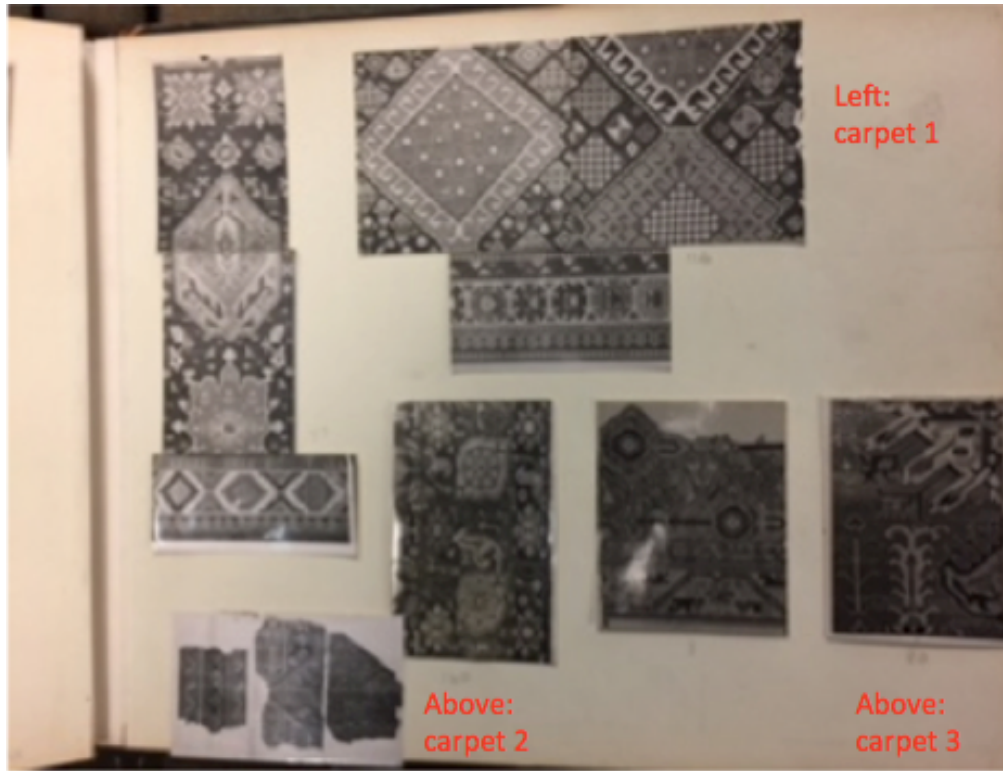


Figure 26: Templeton designer's job book, early twentieth century. (STOD/201/1/8/4, author's photograph). Carpet 1 is geometric, probably Caucasian or Anatolian. Carpet 2 is floral, probably Persian or Indo-Persian. Carpet 3 contains stylized motifs, associated with tribal weavings.



Figure 27: *Wagireh* (pattern sampler), handknotted, wool, Bijar tribal area, Iran, early twentieth century. (Oturn.net)

The design process they share is *bricolage*, Lévi Strauss's term for the mental process of what he describes as 'the indigenous intellectual'. He proposes that pre-literate societies disaggregate what they see and experience around them, and reassemble it to solve whatever conceptual problem they face, embodying

their solutions in their material culture and myths.<sup>96</sup> He argues that from earliest times and in societies of all degrees of complexity, human beings are programmed to re-assemble what works, from diverse sources. This fundamental creative process of *bricolage* is shared by industrial and pre-industrial carpets, hand and machine-woven carpets, demotic and élite production, and is the bedrock of carpet design. It unsettles simple assumptions about authorship in handmaking, and lack of agency in machine-making, and challenges the distinction upheld by the European and North American orthodoxy between copies and versions on the one hand, and the authentic and traditional on the other. *Bricolage* is a source of continuous regeneration in carpet-design. A recognition of its role rescues patterned pile carpets, handmade or machine-made, from the limited role they have been expected to play in the conversation about creativity, as static representatives of the 'traditional' and 'Other'.

The technologies of transfer of the new design to the woven artifact are also shared to a degree that unsettles the orthodoxy's binary between authorship in handmade carpets and lack of agency in machine-made carpets. These technologies of transfer are the knot plan, the carpet-weaving language, and the process of quality control.

Knot plans disaggregate the design into individual knots, or colour elements in technologies without knots, providing the maker with a map of the finished

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<sup>96</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, pp.1-35.

carpet, and are used by machine-weavers and handweavers across Eurasia (figure 28, 29). The knot plan is used alongside the *talim*, a set of text instructions written in a carpet weaving language to integrate motif and colour across the whole design



Figure 28: Templeton knot plan for machine-made carpet, paint on fine 14 x 15 point paper, Glasgow, early twentieth century (STOD/DES/131/7/1. Image courtesy of Jonathan Cleaver)

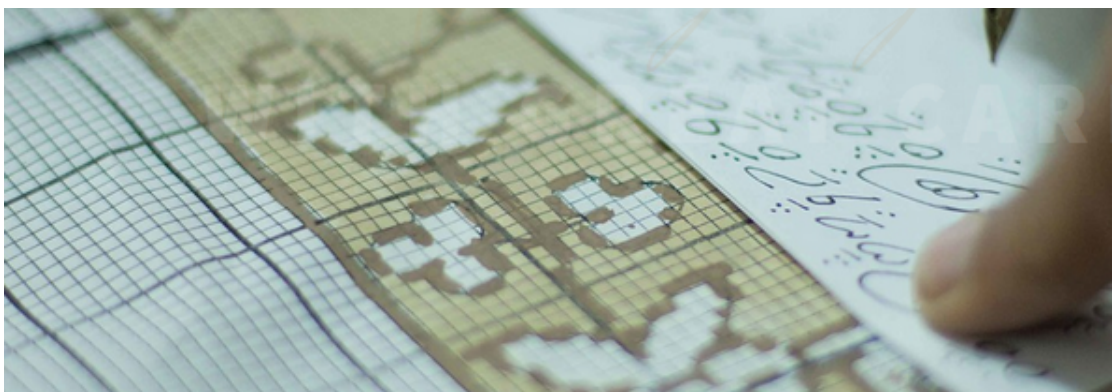


Figure 29: Knot plan and *talim* (instructions in carpet weaving language) for handwoven carpet, Pakistan, c. 2015. (Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company).

Despite the pre-industrial origins of such technologies, their use in geographies of indigenous production, discussed in chapter four, and their use in the production of canonical carpets, discussed in chapter two, they challenged European and North American ideas of creativity in carpets. Kashmiri shawls were woven using a weaving language similar to that used in carpets, as discussed in chapter four. At a British exhibition in Punjab in 1881-2, a demonstration of the shawl weaving language prompted a colonial officer to remark that traditional weavers had no more creative freedom than punched cards in a jacquard loom.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, a British official tasked with reporting on the Punjabi carpet industry asserted in 1907 that weavers working from knot plans under the supervision of a foreman had no knowledge of a carpet's design until it was finished.<sup>98</sup> To believe either of these observations one must ignore both historical practice and personal experience of working in teams where overall objectives are shared and understood alongside an individual's responsibility for a particular task.

Quality control in the transfer of the design to the carpet was also an area of contention. Again, it was a shared process between machine-woven and handwoven carpets. Handweaving has often been carried out in response to a foreman's chanting of the colour sequence of knots. Accounts of late nineteenth-century workshops in Punjab, discussed in chapter four, describe foremen checking individual lines of knotting and requiring the removal of lines with

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<sup>97</sup> *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881-82: Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*, n.s. no xxii (Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat Press, 1883), p.31.

<sup>98</sup> C. Latimer, *A Monograph on Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6* (Lahore: Government, Punjab and its Dependencies, 1907), p.14.



errors.<sup>99</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the current scholarly consensus on the production of élite carpets is that they were produced in workshops with high levels of quality-control.<sup>100</sup> Quality control in handmade carpets was a conflicted area for the orthodoxy. At one and the same time they valued the perfection of execution of élite carpets like the Ardabil but insisted on the mistakes that evidenced the human hand in workshop, village and tribal production. Perfection was desirable in carpets made for imperial rulers like the Safavids, with whom the British were happy to associate themselves, but imperfection in demotic production was a necessary demonstration of the inferiority of the East.

These shared processes of design and its transfer may have intensified the orthodoxy's focus on mistakes as a sign of expressive individualism and a guarantee of authorship and creativity in handmade carpets. Figure 30 shows an example of what the orthodoxy valorised. This village weaver operated without a knot plan, carpet weaving language or quality-control techniques, although she may have had a *wagirah* carpet sample. She continually intervened to ensure that the pattern of the carpet was completed within the length of the warp threads, and that she could fit the shape of her motifs to the geometry of the loom. Mistakes were corrected by inventive ad hoc solutions. She ran out of space for two full floral motifs in the corners. In the left hand corner she experimented with two squashed motifs. In the right hand she used a full flower in the corner, and a half flower in a less conspicuous place in the border.

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<sup>99</sup> J.K. Mumford *Oriental Carpets* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), pp. 257-258.

<sup>100</sup> <[yam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet](http://yam.ac.uk/articles/the-ardabil-carpet)> [Accessed September 11, 2017]



Figure 30: Handknotted wool carpet, Caucasus, mid-twentieth century. (Author's collection)

Such mistakes dramatise the close degree to which the hand is tied to the carpet, and are regarded by the orthodoxy as a source of reassurance that the carpet is produced by pre-industrial means, and is the product of a single creative vision. However, errors were also common in machine-made carpets, undermining the orthodoxy's use of mistakes as a boundary condition for 'authentic' and traditional' carpets. Tattersall states that in chenille carpets 'the register of the successive lines of pattern is liable to be a little faulty', a direct result of the decisions of the weaver, who has to 'take care that each weft thread registers accurately with the last inserted'.<sup>101</sup> These errors were regarded by the orthodoxy as negative 'faults' in a machine-made carpet, as opposed to value-enhancing appealing mistakes in a handmade carpet.

Templeton's designers were aware of the aesthetic, cultural and commercial importance of mistakes as a differentiator between handmade 'originals' and

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<sup>101</sup> Tattersall, *British Carpets*, p.111.

machine-made copies and versions, and began to design them in. *Abrash*, for example, is caused by the weaver picking up a slightly different dye shade from the pile of knotting wool, which introduces a subtle stripe of knots into the pattern. In an old handknotted carpet it is assumed to be an accidental error (figure 31). A chenille weft loom could be calibrated to produce an *abrash* caterpillar, and many of Templeton's versions contain this feature (figure 32).<sup>102</sup> It is not possible to know whether the handweaver of the carpet illustrated in figure 31 introduced the effect accidentally, as a creative error, or because she knew it was an effect that was admired, just as Templeton's designers did.



Figure 31: Handknotted wool carpet, Caucasus, late nineteenth century. (Author's collection). Abrash is visible in the centre, where runs of pink loops have been made.

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<sup>102</sup> Alexander Millar claims he introduced *abrash* into Templeton designs around 1878. Alexander Millar, 'The Making of Carpets IV', *Art Journal* (October 1908), 305-311(p.309).



Figure 32: Machine-made wool and cotton rugs, Templeton, Glasgow, early twentieth century. (STOD/201/1/1/1/1) Both rugs contain *abrash*, seen in the paler stripes.

In common with the processes of design, the content of design has been contentious, but again shows underlying continuities. Whilst participants in the orthodoxy do not necessarily accept the idea of an Ur version of a particular carpet design, they are committed to the idea of an association between

particular designs and particular places over long periods of time, and to the stability of tradition, a commitment that is challenged by adapted versions of South, Central and West Asian designs produced in Glasgow.

Holding to the commitment to stability of design through time and space required the orthodoxy to ignore the degree of entanglement of geography, culture and trade across Eurasia throughout many centuries. The sharing and movement of patterns was a familiar phenomenon to handweavers from the countries of indigenous production. Afghan tribal weavers have a term to distinguish geographically widespread motifs from those associated with their own tribe or family, *narche gashtai*, literally 'wandering design'.<sup>103</sup> They combine wandering designs and local motifs into new hybrids. The geographical distances motifs moved were great. A Persian motif might travel 4,000 kilometers west from Isfahan to appear in a machine-made carpet designed in Glasgow, but equally a Central Asian motif might travel 5,000 kilometers west from Dunhuang to appear in a handmade carpet in Anatolia. Weavers of handmade carpets borrowed designs from other media from at least the sixteenth century and probably before.<sup>104</sup> Across Eurasia, and amongst both handweavers and machine-weavers, a contingent attitude to design can be seen, ready to borrow, reassemble and reinvent across space, time and media.

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<sup>103</sup> Parsons, *The Carpets of Afghanistan*, p.212.

<sup>104</sup> Ettinghausen, 'The Boston Hunting Carpet', 70-81.

Writing in 1892, Caspar Purdon Clarke of the South Kensington Museum offers insight into the position of the orthodoxy on design content in handmade patterned pile carpets:

None of the patterns we so admire in old Oriental carpets were original designs, they were but slow developments [...] where the forms, originally symbolic, were regarded with superstitious respect and the colourings followed set rules which were seldom deviated from [this] resulted in a perfection which could not be obtained through other means.<sup>105</sup>

Clarke here adds the suggestion of sacred roots to the commitment to stability of design through time and space. This reading of the motifs in these artifacts as an expression of religious feeling remains a trope in European and North American writing about carpets.<sup>106</sup> Anthropologist Brian Spooner, basing his observation on fieldwork with Turkmen tribes, strongly resists it:

The idea that an authentic oriental carpet is one in which the weaver was weaving her symbols will not stand the test of either historical or cultural analysis. We have no good reason to believe that there ever was a Golden Age when Turkmen culture was an integrated systemic whole, within

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<sup>105</sup> Purdon Clarke, *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna*, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Amongst many examples, Baker, '20<sup>th</sup> Century Mythmaking: Persian Tribal Rugs', Caroline A. Mason, 'The Geometrical Characteristics of Oriental Carpets' (University of Leeds: Unpublished PhD dissertation, 2002). Writers often draw on C.G. Jung, 'Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious', *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1958), part 1 vol. 9. Jung uses mandalas and rock carvings as his illustrations, rather than carpets.

which noble tribeswomen conscientiously worked out their religious problems in their daily craft.<sup>107</sup>

What is at stake in both quotations is the idea of the existence of traditional culture as 'an integrated systemic whole'. The examples I have given throughout the thesis of the European and North American orthodoxy's resistance, defensiveness, anxiety and contradictory responses to change in patterned pile carpets invite the suggestion that the orthodoxy is a form of what Freud describes as signal anxiety, the mind's recognition that it is in the presence of something dangerous; in this case the disruption of the dream of a holistic and stable cultural system through the agency of adaptation in patterned pile carpet design.<sup>108</sup>

### ***iii. Sources of difference between machine-made and handmade carpets***

The previous section emphasized the continuities between processes of making and design in handmade and machine-made patterned pile carpets. It explored why, despite these continuities, the European and North American orthodoxy insisted on the differentiation of technological, material and aesthetic qualities between machine-made and handmade carpets. I offered psychological and ideological accounts of this insistence. I do not, however, suggest that there are no divergences, rather that they lie in different areas than those identified by the

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<sup>107</sup> Spooner, 'Weavers and Dealers', pp. 195-235.

<sup>108</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety', (1926), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), vol. xx, pp. 77-175.

European and North American orthodoxy. Below I investigate some of those differences.

An undeniable difference is that machine-weaving eliminates individual knots, as they are understood in handweaving. Templeton's chenille process is an example of this. Susanne Kuchner suggests that knotting is one of the ways in which human beings order their chaotic world. Where there was nothing, knotting makes something, and the knotted something can be continued as wide and as long, and can integrate as many conflicting threads, as we need it to. Unlike a pot or a chair, it can fill and order liminal spaces and chaotic voids:

As virtual space, the knot-spanning surface acts synthetically in bringing together [...] experience from a number of domains, rather than just articulating already existing knowledge, the knot as artifact is capable of creating something 'new' – a momentary integration of distinct domains of experience.<sup>109</sup>

James Templeton directly intervened in that psychologically and imaginatively important process. The removal of the knot in chenille carpet weaving offers an example of how at the detailed level of making and materiality, industrialisation created the psychic disturbance that Adamson describes as 'the trauma of modernity'.<sup>110</sup> Although the human hand is present in many ways in machine-

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<sup>109</sup> Kuchler, 'Why Knot?', p. 68.

<sup>110</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, p. 211.



weaving, machines cut the direct knot which for millennia had tied the female hand to the carpet.

New roles for women in carpet making brought further emotional and psychological disturbances. For example, in Templeton's factories women became finishers, a male role in the handweaving of carpets. Figure 33 shows female finishers at Templetons in the early twentieth century. They swarm across the carpet's surface, snipping off loose threads, in the most intimate connection with it and each other, lying full length on the carpet in relaxed abandon, and inhaling its dust. This insistent physicality is the essence of their craft and working experience.



Figure 33: Templeton finishing room, c.1930. (STOD/201/2/15/5/3)

Their working pose triggers the longstanding western connection between carpets, women and eroticism which the West located in the East and presented as both seductive and threatening. Shakespeare's earlier sources for his 1606 *Antony and Cleopatra* offered him the idea that Cleopatra came to Julius Caesar for their first sexual encounter rolled in a carpet. Orientalist painters such as Ingres, Gérôme, Delacroix and Lewis portrayed inhabitants of the harem lying and sitting seductively on carpets (figure 34). These images associate carpets with female sexual power and promiscuousness, and as if in an attempt to contain that power, represent women as supine, available, abased.<sup>111</sup>



Figure 34: Jean Léon Gérôme, *The Terrace of the Seraglio*, 1898, oil on canvas. Private collection. (Wikicommons)

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<sup>111</sup> Barnett, 'Folds', pp,184-185.

Rana Kabbani frames this connection between carpets and female sexuality as part of her reading of the erotic impact of the western idea of the seraglio.

The nude or semi-clothed woman in the orientalist painting is made more erotic by her surroundings of material objects [...] The woman's revealed body becomes startling and arousing in contrast with the well-dressed room.<sup>112</sup>

She itemizes the items in the seraglio which create the erotic dynamic, highlighting sensual textiles; 'silk, satin, fustian, damask, velvet and brocade; cushions, carpets'.<sup>113</sup> The photograph of the female workers finishing the carpet in figure 33 disconcertingly brings the trope of sexually available eastern women sitting and lying on rich carpets and textiles into a factory in industrial Glasgow.

The image of the female finishers can be read in a quite distinct way, as an expression of female freedom, companionship, and self-actualisation through work. However, the disturbance caused by female carpet finishers at Templetons is illuminated by the uneasy expression on the face of the Duke of York when he encountered the practice on a formal tour of Templetons in the early 1930s (figure 35). The Duke encountered women lying down in abandonment on

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<sup>112</sup> Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p.117.

<sup>113</sup> Kabbani, 'Regarding Orientalist Painting Today', pp. 40-48, p. 4.

carpets, and seems to have been unsure how to react, and whether this was entirely proper.



Figure 35: The Duke and Duchess of York, later George V and Queen Elizabeth, visiting the Templetons Factory in Glasgow c.1934. The Duke is second left.

STOD201/2/16/2/9/18.

The differences between the machine-making and hand-making of patterned pile carpets described above had the potential to create anxiety and resistance to machine-made carpets at an unconscious level. Other differences acted at more conscious levels. Scale of production and production environments differed between machine-made and handmade carpets. Mass-produced in a western industrial environment, a machine-made carpet did not offer a nostalgic dream of a pre-industrial golden age of craft work, nor an evocation of the imagined exoticism of the place of its making. Instead it evoked the factories of polluted industrial towns, and their exploitative work practices.

Furthermore, a machine-made carpet did not embody the same power relations as a handmade carpet. It did not demonstrate authority over subject nations whose women handwove carpets for their colonial or para-colonial masters, rather it was a manifestation of domestic capitalist economics. It was not an élite sophisticated encounter with alterity, nor did it offer its owner the prestige attached to a rare carpet, one of the few not the many. A machine-made carpet denied its owner both of these sources of superior cultural capital.

However ambiguous its material differences from a handmade carpet, and whatever its intrinsic attractions, a machine-made carpet could not do the work expected of a handmade carpet by the European and North American orthodoxy, and machine-made carpets remained at best a marginal novelty for scholars, connoisseurs, collectors and curators of patterned pile carpets.

#### ***iv. The maker's experience***

This chapter sets out to make a strong challenge to the binaries established by the European and North American orthodoxy between handmade and machine-made carpets. Alongside this it seeks to evoke the emotional, sensual and psychological experience of industrial carpet-makers and its relationship to the experience of handmakers. This is part of the attempt in this thesis to open up the conversation around patterned pile carpets, their makers and consumers.

In the previous section I described the intense physicality of the work of female finishers (figure 33), and the anxieties which might be provoked by it in commentators and consumers. Figure 33 also gives us an unusual insight into the experience of the makers, illustrating what Jane Bennett describes as the permeability between animate and inanimate matter. Using as her example Kafka's Odradek,<sup>114</sup> 'a spool of thread who/that can run and laugh',<sup>115</sup> Bennett describes a relationship of greater mutuality and exchange between people and stuff than is normally comfortable within an anthropocentric view of the world, and which can consequently be threatening.

*As animate wood, Odradek [...] resides in a world where the line between inert matter and vital energy, between animate and inanimate is permeable – and where all things to some degree live on both sides.*<sup>116</sup>

This is not a world of subjects and objects but of various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations [...] For example, the current alliance Jane-keyboard-birdsong (from the yard outside) will become another ensemble of flesh, plastic, and sound, when later in the day I drive my car to the dentist.'<sup>117</sup>

Bennett calls these groupings assemblages. In figure 33, the finishers are in an assemblage which includes finisher, carpet, dust, scissors, second finisher, room.

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<sup>114</sup> Franz Kafka, 'Cares of a Family Man', *A Country Doctor* (Munich and Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1919).

<sup>115</sup> Bennett, 'An Ecology of Matter', 352.

<sup>116</sup> Bennett, 'An Ecology of Matter', 352.

<sup>117</sup> Bennett, "An Ecology of Matter", 354.

It is possible for the viewer to resonate to the sensory and psychological energies inherent in the experience of that assemblage; the slightly scratchy texture of the carpet, and the warmth of the side of the body lying against the carpet; the pleasure in the scissors sharp edge, their weight and temperature against the hand; the scents of the finishers and the smell of the carpet; the ambient noise, the noise of conversation, the sound of breathing into the carpet. The assemblage for a loom operator or weaver would include the smell, noise and heat of the machines, the dust and fibres inhaled as they work, the concentration required for the intricate adjustments, and the mesmerizing effect of the flow of the product out of the machine. In Bennett's reading, the permeability which creates assemblages goes beyond a psychological response and is also a physical reality. The carpet finishers are not only emotionally, and sensually aware of the carpet, but become part of it as they inhale its fibres and dust, some of which is their own skin cells.

The physical permeability between textile workers and their products and raw materials is explored by Elizabeth Gaskell in her 1854 'state of England' novel, *North and South*. In Gaskell's stark and poignant account, dying mill worker Bessy Higgins tells Gaskell's heroine Margaret that her lung disease is caused by inhaling fibres of cotton produced in the carding process, 'fluff' (figure 36). When Margaret enquires how this could be avoided, Bessy explains that a fan called a wheel could be used:

'that wheel costs a great deal of money[...]so it's few of th' masters as will put 'em up; and I've heard tell o' men who didn't like working where there

was a wheel, because they said as how it made 'em hungry, after they'd been long used to swallowing fluff, to go without it.<sup>118</sup>

This is a fictional episode, but Engels *Condition of the Working Class in England* was based on investigation of the same cotton mills in Manchester from which Mrs. Gaskell drew her experience.<sup>119</sup> They are both powerful accounts of the 'trauma of modernity' discussed by Adamson, as experienced in the nineteenth-century textile industry. When cotton weavers and carpet makers inhale dust and fibres, they are merged with the materiality of their work at a level of intimacy that can be a death embrace. There is risk in this kind of making.

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<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (1854) (London: Walter Scott, 1898), p. 154. Leopold Classic Library facsimile of 1898 edition.

<sup>119</sup> Engels, *The Condition of the English Working Classes*, 1845.





Figure 36: Nineteenth-century image of carding shed in a cotton mill. People's History Museum, Manchester, UK. (Berg, *Technology and Toil*, p.60.)

Whilst suffering in the industrial textile industry is undeniable, Mrs. Gaskell also records other aspects of the experience of the female textile weavers of nineteenth-century Manchester.

They came rushing along, with bold, fearless faces and loud laughs and jests, particularly aimed at all those who appeared to be above them in rank or station [...] The girls, with their rough but not unfriendly freedom, would comment on her dress; even touch her shawl or gown to ascertain the exact material.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Gaskell, *North and South*, p. 54.

Mrs Gaskell's account gives insight into the emotional and psychological experience of textile workers such as the women employed in the carpet weaving industry. She powerfully evokes the lively sensuality, and highly developed responsiveness to textiles, colour and texture developed in female textile workers by their close daily encounter with fibres and dyes. The young women Mrs. Gaskell describes are cotton workers, but there is a meaningful analogy with makers of machine-made carpets. These textile workers have an enhanced sensual and aesthetic relationship with the elements that make the finished product, a relationship which moves out from the factory into their broader world.

Mrs. Gaskell also describes mischief and subversion in the female mill worker's social persona, the courage for resistance the mutuality between them offers. Figure 33 adds to this reading of the relationships between workers. The relaxed and abandoned posture required in order to finish a carpet means that the social encounter between co-workers is partly constructed whilst lying down with them in the essential human pose of intimacy. It is hard not to conclude that this adds an additional layer of closeness to the relationships of co-workers.

Gaskell evokes the experience of freedom, companionship, independence, enjoyment offered to working class women by the employment opportunities of the industrial revolution. Emma Griffin in *Liberty's Dawn* describes such accounts

as the necessary counterpart to accounts of the trauma of industrialization.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, drawing on the autobiographical writings of nineteenth-century workers, she distinguishes between the opportunities created for men and for women by the industrial revolution. She describes the increased amount and variety of work available for men, their higher levels of employment, and consequently higher wages, and their ability to learn trades without the traditional long formal apprenticeship.<sup>122</sup> In Templetons' factories in the nineteenth century there was opportunity for working class men to move from being factory hands to designers, engineers, and foremen. Griffin paints a different picture for women.

This [the industrial revolution] did little to create employment opportunities that could be grasped by women. The only real exception to this was the unmarried women living in a factory district, who were certainly able to earn higher than average wages. But even these gains were transitory, for once a millhand had married, and had the care of a family, she was very unlikely to return to work.<sup>123</sup>

Griffin demonstrates that the major source of factory employment for women in the nineteenth century was in the textile industry, 'from spinning on the humble spinning wheel to operating a vast power loom in a factory' (figure 37).<sup>124</sup> Mrs. Gaskell describes the Manchester cotton spinners and weavers at just this

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<sup>121</sup> Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, p.19.

<sup>122</sup> Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, p. 94.

<sup>123</sup> Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, p.106.

<sup>124</sup> Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, p. 87.

moment of their empowerment. The nineteenth century female workers at Templetons carpet weaving factories were part of this experience, and had the additional benefits of working for a relatively enlightened employer, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The changes in expectations of and for women in the early twentieth century further increased the freedom and opportunities available for women such as the carpet finishers in figure 33 and the power loom operator in figure 37.



Figure 37: Weaver and loom, Templeton's carpet factory, Templeton Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow, late nineteenth century. (Burrell Collection, 1360.86.280)

However, a first-hand account by a nineteenth-century dressmaker employed in a large workshop organized using division of labour reinstates the trade-off involved.

There is a greater amount of a kind of freedom in this life, for, except for wages, everyone is on terms of perfect equality. [However] Individuality is completely lost sight of, and each one becomes part of a machine.<sup>125</sup>

The empowerment of young women in the workforce often came at the cost of the satisfaction from the work itself.

Griffin describes the relative scarcity of women's accounts of their working lives compared to those of men after the onset of the European and North American industrial revolutions. The experience of pre-industrial handweavers of carpets in South, Central and West Asia is at least as difficult to recover. To the lack of records is added the difficulty that it has been the subject of an orientalising narrative by, for example, a genre of nineteenth-century photographs representing handweavers of carpets (figures 38, 39).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Berg, *Technology and Toil*, p. 233.

<sup>126</sup> Mira Xenia Schwerda, 'Iranian Photography: From the Court, to the Studio, to the Street', *Technologies of the Image: Art in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Iran*, ed. by David J. Roxburgh and Mary McWilliams (Harvard Mass.: Harvard Art Museums, 2017), pp. 81-107.



Figure 38: Antoin Sevruguin (1851-1933), Persian women weaving. C.R.Smith Archive, V&A E339:34-2010

These images do not bring us nearer to the experience of the handmaker, but place between us and their experience a filter which meets the needs of the male gaze. In figure 38 the maker is an enigmatic sly-eyed beauty, secretly executing a mysterious and exotic skill in her tent, village or harem, and peeping slyly at the photographer, perhaps in invitation.

Figure 39, seen previously in chapter two, offers a different narrative, but one which is equally constructed. The room, in a workshop in Glasgow at the end of the nineteenth century, half a mile away from Templetons factory on Glasgow Green, has been draped to resemble a tent, and the women, working on deft

repairs of patterned pile carpets for the booming European market, are posed in colourful and richly patterned but generic eastern dress. There are strong resonances of humility and modesty in this pose, eyes cast down and hair covered; a marked contrast to the laughing and joshing of Mrs. Gaskell's empowered factory girls. The image reveals little of their emotional and psychological connection to their work, but it is clear that whether they are from the East or from Scotland, they are being subdued to the authority of a European and North American dream of the circumstances of production of these artifacts. Physically they are totally immersed in carpets, one might say overwhelmed, sitting against them and on them, and covered by the carpets on which stitch by stitch they recreate the work of their predecessors.



Figure 39: Carpet Repairing Department, Victor Behar Carpet Dealers, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. (Victor Behar, *Oriental Carpets*, c.1910).

Many writers on the handweaving of carpets stress the intensely bonding experience of communal weaving across multiple generations of families, and within villages and tribes.<sup>127</sup> The earlier analysis of the photograph of the carpet finishers at Templetons has traced elements of this in the intimacy of their work with machine-made carpets. There is also a strong theme of continuity and stability amongst writers describing the handweaving of carpets. Daughters learn from mothers, a new generation repairs and revives the work of a previous generation.

A 2013 book, *The World is a Carpet*, gives an alternative reading to this benign account.<sup>128</sup> The author, a journalist, describes the making of a carpet in an Afghan village during the year she lived there (figure 40). She describes the high levels of physical and psychological stress the weaver is subject to. If the carpet does not sell well, the village will be unable to buy necessities. The maker cannot travel alone, so is dependent on the men in her family to get hold of the materials she needs. She must trust their choices or wait until one of them can accompany her. She has to do this against a deadline imposed by the middleman who will sell her carpet on. She works whilst at the same time looking after small children and caring for herself during her pregnancy. Her loom is not vertical but horizontal, creating physical stress on her joints from squatting, and constant pain.

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<sup>127</sup> Thompson, *Carpets from the Villages, Tents and Workshops of Asia*. This theme is explored throughout the work.

<sup>128</sup> Badkhen, *The World is a Carpet*.





Figure 40: Handmade wool carpet, Oqa, Northeast Afghanistan, 2011. (Image courtesy of Anna Badkhen)

I argue in this thesis that accounts of the making of carpets such as the one above deserve their place in the narrative. They reconnect Freedgood's 'severed hands' to the body and consciousness of the weaver. The inclusion of the experience of the maker and her interaction with the carpet she is working on complicates the biography of each individual carpet. It offers the possibility of reading the artifact, its maker and the historical context as a dynamic assemblage, rather than closing the discussion with the fixing of it in the European and North American orthodoxy's hierarchy of 'better' or 'worse' carpets.

#### **4. Choosing machine-made copies: Consumers and commercial designers**

The position taken by the European and North American orthodoxy differed from that of consumers of Templeton's carpets. Templeton made a commercial success of their business for more than a century, and consumers across Britain, its colonies and Europe bought Templeton copies and versions of handmade patterned pile carpets. Furthermore, the British commercial design establishment did not speak with one voice on machine-made copies and versions. Important commercial designers became involved in the industry despite the position taken by the scholars, curators, collectors and dealers of handmade carpets who promulgated the orthodoxy. In this section I analyse these choices in favour of machine-made versions of patterned pile carpets.

***i. Negotiating between the commercial and the traditional in the design of machine-made carpets***

The European and North American design reform movements of the second half of the nineteenth century negotiated between the demands of commerce and industry for adaptable design sources, and the demand amongst commentators, curators, dealers and connoisseurs for conservation of the traditional in the material cultures which provided some of those design sources. As discussed in chapter one, Riegl, Ruskin, Morris, and Birdwood were deeply suspicious of the copying of traditional designs for contemporaneous carpets, made by hand or by machine.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, European governments, their museums and

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<sup>129</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, p. 196.

educational systems were concerned with improving the quality of design in their national textile manufacturing industries by reference to traditional material cultures outside Europe.<sup>130</sup>

Templeton was intimately connected to the British design culture of the second half of the nineteenth century, and to these conflicted debates. The company participated in the 1851 Great Exhibition and had a continuing relationship with the South Kensington Museum, borrowing carpets as design models. As wholesalers of carpets they operated within a taste-defining network of retailers, such as Liberty of London, and as borrowers of carpets, within a network of well-informed dealers.<sup>131</sup> They had a close relationship with Glasgow School of Art (GSA), where some of their designers trained,<sup>132</sup> and through it to the Department of Science and Art in London, characterized by Arindam Dutta as the headquarters of the imperial bureaucracy of beauty.<sup>133</sup> Their design library, now at GSA, contained important contributions to the European and North American orthodoxy such as Purdon Clarke's 1892 edition of the catalogue for Riegl's Vienna exhibition, alongside works of design theory by reformers including Owen Jones and Christopher Dresser.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Tim Baringer and Tom Flynn eds., *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997); Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>131</sup> Carpets Loaned, STOD 201/1/5/1-2; Jonathan Cleaver, 'Carpets Loaned', 26-39.

<sup>132</sup> Britt, *Interwoven Connections*, p.12.

<sup>133</sup> Dutta, *Bureaucracy of Beauty*, pp. 1-39.

<sup>134</sup> For example, Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856); Christopher Dresser, *Studies in Design* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1874); cited in Britt, *Interwoven Connections*, p. 9.

Templeton commissioned many fashionable independent commercial designers, not all of whom designed Asian styles, for example, Frank Brangwyn, discussed above. However, both Jones and Dresser produced designs for machine-made carpets based on the handmade patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, and developed a set of principles for the process of borrowing.<sup>135</sup> They made a material and intellectual accommodation between traditional carpet designs and industrial production.

In Jones' influential 1856 *The Grammar of Ornament*, designs from across geographies, time and media were disaggregated into what he believed to be the design characteristics of individual cultures. Visually, Jones' plates in the *Grammar* are often laid out like patterned pile carpets, with borders and central fields, and echoes of them can be traced in Templeton's carpets (figure 41). However there are deeper connections between Jones' and Templeton's practice.

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<sup>135</sup> Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1873); Dresser, 'Carpets', *British Manufacturing Industries*, ed. by G. Phillips Bevan (London: Edward Stanford, 1876), pp. 90- 130; Jones, *Grammar*, 'General Principles'.



Figure 41: 'Moresque No 5' (Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856)

Cailah Jackson comments on the approach pioneered by Jones thus:

By decontextualizing and condensing visual forms into consumable fragments, complex forms of decoration were removed from their historical contexts and reified as ageless symbols of their respective cultures.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Jackson, 'Persian Carpets and the South Kensington Museum', 5.

Jackson's helpful orientalist insight can obscure another interpretation of Jones' approach; that he turned complex designs into components which were useful for artisans working in diverse environments, and thereby facilitated the *bricolage* which was at the heart of hand and machine-weaving. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that the Bijar tribal weaver knew more about the historical context of the components of her *wagireh* sampler, than the Templeton designer knew about the historical context of Jones' plates.

Jones and Dresser were commercial designers who tested their theoretical concepts in industrialised production environments; Jones at Templeton, and Dresser at their competitors, John Crossley and Sons.<sup>137</sup> They both faced the tension between copying, originality and authenticity in carpet design described above. They resolved it in their own practice and writings by encouraging contemporaneous designers to study past and geographically-distant examples, to develop a high level of craft skills, then to put traditional principles to new use.<sup>138</sup> Dresser made a distinction between this approach and 'the coarse commercial copying of styles'.<sup>139</sup> The sample of a larger carpet designed by Jones for Templeton in figure 42 combines geometric elements with abstracted natural designs, both reminiscent of motifs in South, Central and West Asian carpets, but at the same time suggests the chevrons and floral iconography of mediaeval European banners, fusing two expertly-observed traditions into a new hybrid. The design by Dresser for Crossley shown in figure 43 combines overall

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<sup>137</sup> John Crossley and Sons, *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*. <[gracesguide.co.uk/John\\_Crossley\\_and\\_Sons](http://gracesguide.co.uk/John_Crossley_and_Sons)>[Accessed January 20, 2016].

<sup>138</sup> Jones, *Grammar*, 'General Principles'; Dresser, 'Carpets', 121.

<sup>139</sup> Dresser, 'Carpets', 121.

structures reminiscent of handmade patterned pile carpets, with a high level of naturalistic draughtsmanship. These designs exemplify Jones' and Dresser's approach to borrowing.



Figure 42: Machine-woven wool carpet sample, 196 x 34cm, designed by Owen Jones, woven by Templeton, Glasgow between 1875 and 1900. (V&A, London, T.100-1953)

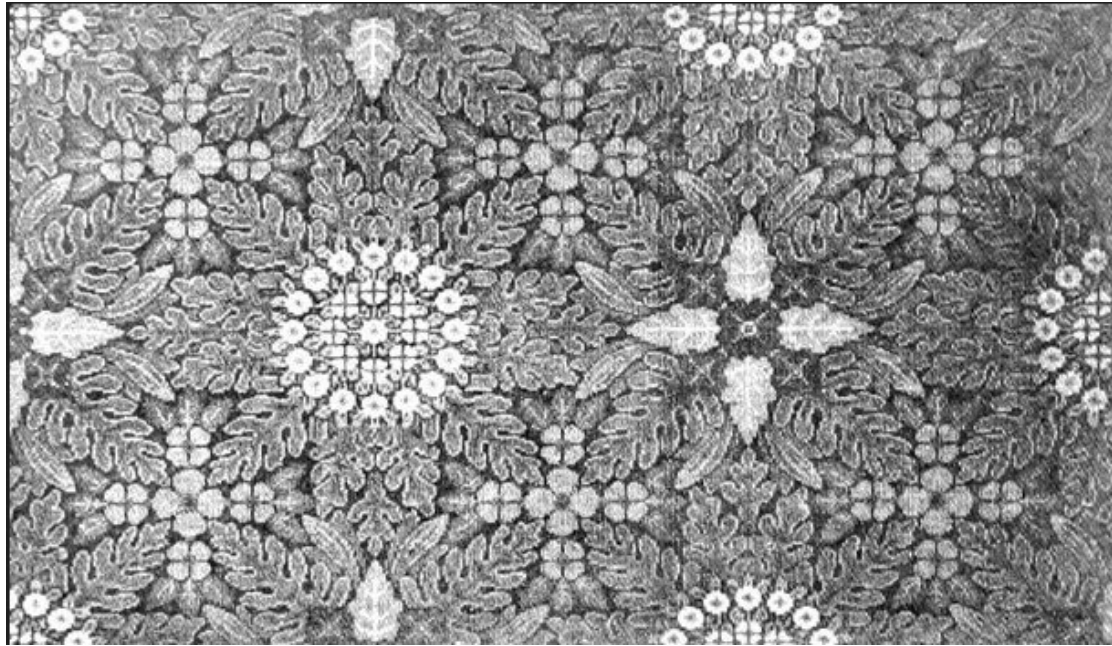


Figure 43: Design for a carpet for Crossley and Sons, Christopher Dresser, c.1898. (*The Studio*, no. 14, 1898)

Alexander Millar, a senior designer at Templeton from the end of the nineteenth century, described the commercial producer's attempt to reconcile the varying and strongly held views on the relationship between traditional designs and their modern machine-made versions:

The manufacturer is on artistically safe ground when he adheres to the traditional Oriental styles. But even here he finds it hard to please his critics. If he makes a facsimile of an Eastern rug he is reproached with copying. If he modifies and adapts Oriental forms, he is charged with destroying their spirit and character. If he tries to evolve new forms, based upon nature, but treated in the Oriental manner and spirit, his



efforts, though approved of by artistic few, are not appreciated by the many who prefer variations on familiar themes.<sup>140</sup>

The reader senses Millar's frustration at the conflicting ideological and taste demands within the design and carpet establishments, and between the standards of the establishment and those of the consumer, whose response had complex roots, explored below.

***ii. Desire and conflict in the consumer's response to handmade patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia.***

Prestige patterned pile carpets were imported from South, Central and West Asia for elite customers in Europe before the nineteenth century, as diplomatic gifts, war booty and for the demonstration of status. The nineteenth century, however, saw the introduction of these artifacts into the homes of the middle classes on a large scale, in the oriental carpet boom described earlier. A psychological, emotional and sensual relationship grew up between these new consumers and carpets. This section goes on to consider the factors influencing the decision to choose a handmade imported carpet from South Central and West Asia over a machine-made domestic carpet from, for example, Templetons. Some of these factors are pragmatic or associated with the particular historical circumstances of nineteenth century Europe and North America, but some have deeper roots in the human unconscious and the underlying dynamics of human

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<sup>140</sup> Millar, 'The Making of Carpets' III, 211.

groups. I begin by considering these deeper roots, often neglected in the orthodox discourse on carpets.

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed Glenn Adamson's reading of the nineteenth century focus on traditional handcraft such as carpet-making as 'therapeutic memory work', in response to 'the trauma of modernity', a harking back nostalgically to a pre-industrial golden age.<sup>141</sup> Earlier in this chapter I examined Elaine Freedgood's suggestion that the focus on handcrafting and the traditional was a psychological dismemberment, a way of severing hands from the bodies and experience of individuals which served to conceal the reality of labour, 'allowing middle-class readers to imagine women handworkers in the prettiest possible terms'.<sup>142</sup> Below I go on to explore broader psychological, emotional and sensual responses to the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, responses which go beyond the preoccupation with the handcrafted, and which are triggered by the fundamental materiality of these artifacts; their pattern, their pile, and their association with female sexuality.

Pattern, by which I mean palette and design, is a key area of interaction between the human being and her carpet. Historian of material culture and psychoanalyst Jane Graves, and weaver and writer Elaine Igoe have described the psychologically addictive and disorienting qualities of pattern.<sup>143</sup> In a

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<sup>141</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, p. 211.

<sup>142</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine fingers', 643.

<sup>143</sup> Elaine Igoe 'The Tacit Turn', *Duck Journal for Research in Textiles and Textile Design*, 1-11 (6); Jane Graves, 'Pattern, a Psychoanalytical Approach: Pleasure or Oppression' *Bulletin of John Rylands University Library*, vol. 77 no.1 (1995), 21-30; Graves, 'Symbol, Pattern and the Unconscious: The Search for Meaning', *Disentangling Textiles*, ed. by Schoeser and Boydell (2002), pp.45-55.

psychoanalytical interpretation of pattern, Graves suggests that the Ur pattern is the child's reading of the mother's face, which becomes essential to the baby's sense of security.<sup>144</sup> She goes on to argue that the traces left in the adult of this primal source of security are a source of the human 'addiction' to pattern. She stresses the importance of repetition in pattern, suggesting that repetition also is part of the primal search for security. In support of this she cites Freud's identification of repetition in play as the child's strategy for managing the mother's absence,<sup>145</sup> an analysis Freud derived from observing his grandson's 'fort-da' game of repeatedly throwing a cotton reel for his mother to retrieve.<sup>146</sup> Graves' conclusion is that repetition is one of the ways in which 'pattern makes visual sense to them [young children] of emotional chaos'.<sup>147</sup>

In the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, the field design is composed of highly complex repetitions and series of motifs, and the widely-observable fascination with their patterns in the academy, the market and amongst consumers suggests that they meet just such primal needs as Graves describes. At the same time the carpet's frame of borders contains and resolves the complexities of its pattern, offering a deeper psychological resolution than that offered by an unframed repeat, in a wallpaper or printed fabric for instance. In chapter two, I discussed this phenomenon with regard to the Los Angeles Ardabil's loss of its borders, suggesting that the complex design leaked chaos as a

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<sup>144</sup> Graves, 'Pattern, a psychoanalytical approach', 23.

<sup>145</sup> Graves, 'Pattern', 24.

<sup>146</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", "Group Psychology" and Other Works', *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (New York and London: Vintage, 2001) vol. 18, pp. 7-67.

<sup>147</sup> Graves, 'Pattern', 23-24.

result, and became consequently less desired than the London Ardabil, with its complete, resolving borders. The maker creates this order from chaos, and this suggests that part of the creativity of the weaver or designer comes from her access to these unconscious responses.

However, Graves observes that alongside the therapeutic aspect of pattern and its repetitions lies the potential for ‘neurotic repetition compulsion’,<sup>148</sup> that there is a conflict at the heart of the human response to it. Graves draws attention to Freud’s analogy between this compulsion and the disoriented and troubled attempts of a patient trying to trace the pattern in a wallpaper whilst in a fever.<sup>149</sup> Pattern can reassure and make whole, but it can also derange, and in Graves’ argument can become an instrument of repression, a way of restricting and controlling experience. It is possible that the urgent, and often misplaced search for religious meaning in a carpet’s symbolism discussed earlier in this chapter and in the introduction is an aspect of this anxious focus on pattern. As Graves points out, ‘Pattern makes sense but not meaning – it teases rather than enlightens’.<sup>150</sup>

Marina Warner was inspired by the carpets in Freud’s study to describe how the patterns in the carpets echo both the structure of human consciousness, and Freud’s intellectual process in weaving together the conscious and unconscious activities of his patients’ minds (figure 44).<sup>151</sup> The multiple complexities of the

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<sup>148</sup> Graves, ‘Pattern’, 24.

<sup>149</sup> Graves, ‘Pattern’, 24; Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, pp. 283-70.

<sup>150</sup> Graves, ‘Pattern’, 24-25

<sup>151</sup> Marina Warner, ‘Freud’s Couch: A Case History’ *Raritan*, vol. 31 no. 2 (2011), 146-163; *Stranger Magic*, pp. 405- 425.

patterns in the carpets, their apparent continuities and disruptive differences, suggest the parallels and anomalies found in dreams. At the same time the carpets insist on the sensual, through their pile, smell, and colours. Freud's striking use of carpets, and Warner's commentary on it, suggest that the patterns in carpets can offer themselves as a metaphor for the entire inner life.



Figure 44: Sigmund Freud's study. (Freud Museum, London)

Alongside the 'addictive and disorienting' impact of pattern is a similarly conflicted response to the texture of a patterned pile carpet.<sup>152</sup> Pile is sensuous, dense, warm, comforting, but it is as much like an animal pelt as it is like a textile, and it carries that ambiguous animal suggestion with it; oily, scented, feral.

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<sup>152</sup> Igoe, 'The Tacit Turn', 6.

Indeed, one of the hypotheses for the origin of pile weaving is that it was a way of emulating animal skins.<sup>153</sup> Whether or not this hypothesis is true, it is an example of the close mental association between pile carpets and animal skins.

Alongside its feral associations, the pile of carpets raises anxieties about dirt, and I go on later in this chapter to discuss how this was negotiated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with their evolving ideas of domestic and personal hygiene. However, the anxiety about dirt is not solely pragmatic, it also arises from the unconscious and the underlying dynamics of social groups. In her influential 1966 *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas examined the relationship between dirt and religious and social ideas of pollution.<sup>154</sup> She draws conclusions about twentieth century developed societies from her analysis of traditional tribal pollution rituals.

Where there is dirt there is a system [...] Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements [...] Dirt is matter out of place.<sup>155</sup>

She transforms dirt from a universally recognizable category of material or experience, to one which changes its nature according to the social or religious system it underpins. She argues that when something is described as dirty what

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<sup>153</sup> For a review of the foundational literature on this topic see Agnes Geijer, 'Some thoughts on the problems of early oriental carpets', *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 5 (1963), 77-87.

<sup>154</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966).

<sup>155</sup> Douglas, p. 44.

is being suggested is that the object, person or behavior is inappropriate and offensive in some more profound way, either religious or secular.<sup>156</sup> An example she explores is the sequestration of menstruating women.<sup>157</sup> The threat of the women's powerful fertility is removed from the communal group at the height of its visibility, under the justification of cleanliness. She stresses the power of the category 'dirt', matter out of place, the anomalous, to reinforce systems of power.

A rule of avoiding anomalous things affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform.<sup>158</sup>

This process can be seen at work in the nineteenth century European and North American consumer's response to the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. Whilst it is true that pile carpets do hold dirt in their fibres; skin cells, grit, fragments of matter, the association of them with dirt also has the deeper roots Douglas describes. The carpets, their makers and the societies of their making are set apart as anomalies, distinct from the normative values of Europe and North America. The pile of a South, Central and West Asian carpet is 'matter out of place', hence is defined as dirty. Émile Zola evoked this in his 1882 orientalist description of the carpet room in a Parisian department store.

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<sup>156</sup> Douglas, p. 45.

<sup>157</sup> Douglas, p. 218.

<sup>158</sup> Douglas, p. 49.

Visions of the Orient floated beneath the luxury of this barbaric art, in the midst of the strong odour which the old wools had retained from lands of vermin and sun.<sup>159</sup>

Zola's vocabulary, 'vermin', 'strong odours', 'barbaric' counterposed with 'luxury', evokes this enduring association between carpets and dirt, the Othering of its making, and the transgressive excitement it triggers. To choose to lay one in an imperial parlour or colonial lounge was in itself a transgressive act, both thrilling and potentially disgusting, an intense response with, again, a conflict at its heart.

Douglas's analysis helps in understanding what I propose is a sense of threat associated with these artifacts, a threat which complicated the response of nineteenth century European and North American consumers. Carpets connect us with the earth, the chthonic, and that which is potentially dreadful and hidden in it.<sup>160</sup> Carpets are trodden beneath our unclean and polluting feet.<sup>161</sup> By lying horizontally on the ground, they remind us of the undeveloped creeping creatures from which we evolved,<sup>162</sup> and the vulnerable crawling babies from which we have matured.

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<sup>159</sup> Emile Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, trans. by April Fitzlyon (London: John Calder, 1957), pp. 87-88. First published 1883.

<sup>160</sup> Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An essay on abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); <loubakerartist.co.uk/blog/25-cloth-and-the-abstract-march-2015> [Accessed 19 July 2018].

<sup>161</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; Olli Lagerspetz, *A Philosophy of Dirt* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018).

<sup>162</sup> Pennina Barnett, 'Folds, fragments, surfaces' *The Textile Reader*, ed. by Jessica Hemmings (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp.182-190, (pp.184-185).



This mulch of unconscious responses to pattern and pile was enriched and deepened further by the association between carpets, sensuality and sexuality. In the European and North American imagination, there were two main environments for the use of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia; their own parlour, and the female quarters of their imagined East, particularly, the harem or seraglio. The ideal contents of these environments were similar; carpets, cushions, musical instruments, ornate decorative ceramics, wall hangings, lush vegetation (figures 45, 46).<sup>163</sup> Within the harem, the props all contributed to an atmosphere of unbridled sensuality, and as Zola has it, 'barbaric luxury'. The association between carpets and sexuality is particularly literal in figure 45, where Constant portrays a sleepy post-coital woman, with flushed cheeks, the title suggesting that she is the ruler's current favourite sexual partner. The implication is that he has just left her, still lying on the carpet where they had sex. In the Cheyne Walk drawing room shown in figure 46, the props are there, along with the promise of sensuality, but the dress, gender and behaviour of the figures in the room work against this narrative.

In her reading of European orientalist painting, Rana Kabbani asserts that 'the seraglio is the bourgeois drawing room's secret foil'.<sup>164</sup> This formulation of the carpet's environment of use, which Kabbani locates in the imperialist orientalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is underpinned by the longer standing association between female eroticism and carpets discussed earlier in this chapter. Kabbani theorises that eroticism is evoked in the bourgeois drawing

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<sup>163</sup> Kabbani, 'Regarding orientalist painting today', p. 41.

<sup>164</sup> Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 117.

room by the carpets and other props, but is then controlled, replacing the erotic charge of the supine, abased, half-naked inhabitants of the harem with the proprieties of well-dressed inhabitants of the western drawing room. Again, the response to and narrative of carpets has a conflict at its heart.



Figure 45: Benjamin Constant, *The Favourite of the Emir*, 1879. (National Gallery of Art, Washington).



Figure 46: Henry Treffry Dunn, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Theodore Watts Dunton in Cheyne walk, Chelsea*, 1882, gouache and watercolour on paper. National Portrait Gallery, London, 3022.

I have stressed the conflicts which characterize responses to the patterned pile carpets of South Central and West Asia. I argue that these cognitive dissonances give those responses some of their intensity. To a certain extent we struggle with them, and that makes them more significant to us. These conflicted opportunities for psychological, emotional and sensual intensity were in play when the middle-classes in Europe and North America became enthusiastic consumers of patterned pile carpets from the mid nineteenth century. They were an integral part of the choice that consumers made between an imported handmade carpet from South, Central or West Asia, and a machine-made version such as those manufactured by Templetons.

### *iii. Choosing between a handmade and a machine-made carpet*

As the oriental carpet boom developed, and the relationship between European and North American consumers and patterned pile carpets intensified, traders and manufacturers took advantage of the commercial opportunity. From the mid-nineteenth century, both imported handmade and domestically machine-made patterned pile carpets were readily available at a wide range of prices in Europe and North America. The consumer's decision to buy one or the other was an active expression of preference. One of the functions of the European and North American orthodoxy is as a set of guidelines for why and how to choose an imported handmade patterned pile carpet. In this section, I discuss the factors that might lead a consumer to buy a machine-made carpet. Factors influencing the choice included ease of purchase, perceptions of class, changing ideas of hygiene, and the deeper psychic relationship between people and copies, discussed above.

As manufacturing businesses in Europe and America developed, magazine publishing, advertising and retailing grew alongside them, as discussed in chapter one. Consumers with disposable income could find out where to buy their objects of desire, from the same magazines that gave them taste advice on what they should buy. The Liberty advertisement in figure 47, explains why the consumer should buy an imported handmade carpet, in terms which accord precisely with the views of the European and North American orthodoxy.



**LIBERTY & CO. REGENT ST. LONDON W.**  
**DECORATION & FURNITURE.**

Messrs. Liberty & Co. invite a visit of inspection to their  
**Specimen Furnished Rooms,**  
 where may be seen quaint and original suggestions for  
 the treatment of Town and Country Houses, differing in  
 many essential respects from the more ordinary methods  
 adopted.  
**Designs and Estimates Free.**

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**EASTERN CARPETS.**  
 Eastern Carpets are more durable and beautiful in colour  
 and design than European machine-made Carpets. Patient  
 labour, deft and cunning workmanship, individuality of  
 thought, and centuries of traditional artistic skill are all  
 represented in a single Eastern Carpet.  
 Being large Buyers and Direct Importers, Messrs.  
 Liberty can offer every facility in regard to variety of  
 Design, excellence of Quality, and economy in Price.  
**Carpet and Rug Catalogue post free.**

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**“LIBERTY” TAPESTRIES.**  
 Messrs. Liberty's facilities for securing the choicest ex-  
 amples of Tapestry produced by English and Continental  
 looms have enabled them to gather together a most com-  
 prehensive and unique Collection of Furnishing Fabrics  
 suitable for Curtains, Portieres, Hangings and Furniture  
 Coverings. 50 ins. wide. Price from 1/11 per yard.  
**Patterns post free**

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**LIBERTY & CO., L<sup>TD</sup>. REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.**

Figure 47: Advertisement for Liberty of London. (*The Studio Magazine*, 1900)

If a consumer's object of desire was an imported carpet of the kind popularized by exhibitions, magazines and museums, they could buy from one of the department stores opening in cities across Europe and America, for example Liberty of London, or they could buy from a dealer. Buying from a dealer required expertise, because of the perceived asymmetry of information between the dealer and the buyer. Furthermore, the dealer might himself be an 'oriental', and the purchase an intimate encounter with the Other. This power dynamic was a small-scale replaying of the larger colonial dynamic of domination. To lose the price negotiation with a rug dealer was to lose more than money.<sup>165</sup> A department store offered an apparently more controlled environment, which

<sup>165</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 101. He notes the West's 'bizarre jouissance' when caricatures of oriental 'types' such as the rug-dealer act 'in character'.

mitigated the risk of the buyer being bested by someone perceived as an ethnic inferior.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, European and North American women could become active purchasers of imported handmade carpets in the safe environment of the department store, protected from the possibly erotic intentions of Asian dealers, and men more broadly.<sup>167</sup> Even in the department store, it remained easier to purchase machine-made carpets, with their printed list of prices, than to risk losing money or face by overpaying for a handmade import.

A preference for new machine-made carpets or for handmade imported carpets with a previous history of ownership, was connected to the consumer's perception of his or her class. Drawing on the insight of Bourdieu into the use of material possessions to create cultural capital, numerous commentators have explored the desire for newness amongst aspirational classes in nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe and America, and its mirror image, the preference for the old, renamed 'the antique', amongst classes regarding themselves as socially arrived.<sup>168</sup>

In the case of carpets, questions of hygiene complicate this. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed countries became increasingly

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<sup>166</sup> Spooner, pp. 195-235.

<sup>167</sup> Mica Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal: Women in the City and the Department Store', *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of Modernity*, ed. by Alan O'Shea and Mica Nava (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 38-76; Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>168</sup> Judy Attfield, *Wild Things* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 99-120; Stefan Muthesius, 'Why do we buy old furniture? Aspects of the authentic antique in Britain 1870- 1910', *Art History*, vol. 11 no. 2 (June 1988), 231-254; Deborah Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes 1918-1939: Domestic Design and Suburban Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 23-54, pp. 135-169 (p.156); Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).

concerned about domestic cleanliness. In the 1860s Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) had established the connection between germs and disease. In the 1890s viruses were discovered. This shift in understanding about the relationship of hygiene and disease was reflected in the design reform movements of the period, which included cleanliness in their advice on interior design.<sup>169</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, as the maintenance of domestic hygiene was absorbed into the idea of 'housework', executed by the 'professional housewife' rather than domestic servants, new ideas about ease of cleaning affected choices of furnishings and interior design.<sup>170</sup>

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, pile carpets are sensitive indicators of hygiene. They are walked on by feet carrying dirt from an outside world which is beyond the control of domestic cleaning. They provide a surface on which detritus of many kinds collects. Handmade carpets from South, Central and West Asia are often woven and finished in the rivers and on the sand and earth of these places. Their materiality evokes the raw originals of wool and vegetable dyes. Even when new they are not clean.

Machine-made patterned pile carpets from state of the art factories in Europe or America did not have these associations, and consequently had an appeal across classes. As discussed below, Templeton made close copies of canonical carpets

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<sup>169</sup> Examples of this include Charles Eastlake (1836-1906) and Edward William Godwin (1833-1886). See also Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 170-202; Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire* (London; Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 156-182.

<sup>170</sup> Sugg Ryan, pp. 93-135.

costing up to the modern equivalent of £4,000, which were affordable only by the prosperous, alongside their modestly priced carpets for the masses.

Machine-made carpets were not excluded entirely from this anxiety about dirt. US manufacturers Karastan focused in their marketing materials on the ease with which their versions of patterned pile carpets could be cleaned. At the 'Chicago World's Fair' of 1933, they displayed a machine-made copy of a Persian carpet, 'The Karastan Wonder Rug'. After, as they claimed, five million visitors to the fair had walked on it, they cleaned half the carpet, to dramatic effect (figure 48). Indeed, fibrous, dirt-capturing wool itself was a cause of concern, even if the carpet were new and machine-made. Figure 49 shows a solution to this, a washable linoleum square printed with a copy of a machine-made Axminster version of a patterned pile carpet.





Figure 48: Karastan Wonder Rug, Karastan Carpet Manufacturing Company c.1930, machine-made New Zealand wool. (Mohawk Industries, Georgia, US)



Figure 49: 'Axminster' linoleum in 'Catesby's one-piece linola squares', from *Catesby's Colourful Cork Lino*, 1938. (Image courtesy of The Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, Middlesex University)

People sweep secrets and dirt under the carpet. It is the bottommost layer of the controllable domestic environment. Below it lies the floor and the earth, as the *Id* lies uncontrolled beneath other levels of consciousness.<sup>171</sup> However, the handmade carpet from 'lands of vermin and sun' is itself dirty. The buyer who

<sup>171</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923), trans. by James Strachey, (New York: Norton, 1962). First published 1923.

chose a clean, new machine-made carpet from Templeton or Karastan, or a Catesby Linola Square, to some degree mitigated the psychic threat of this.

Furthermore, as discussed above, dirt is believed by anthropologists such as Mary Douglas to be important in the management of social and psychological boundaries.<sup>172</sup> Imported handmade patterned pile carpets could be seen as both dirty and associated with alien forms of sensuality, thereby threatening the physical, social and emotional prohibitions of nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe and America. The choice of machine-made carpets can be read as a defensive strategy against threats inherent in both the materiality of a handmade carpet and the power relations between their subaltern producers and colonial consumers. As Judy Attfield notes in her discussion on reproduction furniture, 'truth is too dangerous to confront, and an illusion of authenticity is more acceptable'.<sup>173</sup>

Machine-made carpets damp down these threatening aspects of the response to handmade, imported patterned pile carpets, and at the same time, make space for a set of responses that are positive rather than defensive. One of the carpets important to the genesis of this thesis is a broadloom version of a Persian garden carpet in my parents' house, shown in figure 50. This soft, cosy carpet in subdued shades of green and pink is made by the Axminster machine process, and dates from about 2005. As I looked at and walked on this carpet on visits to my parents, it provoked the question of why such carpets did not receive the kind of

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<sup>172</sup> For example, Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

<sup>173</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*, p. 101.

serious assessment afforded to handmade, imported patterned pile carpets, and what experiences are thereby buried. This became one of the research questions in this thesis.



Figure 50: Machine-made Axminster carpet with Persian Garden design, wool, jute backing, England, c.2005. (Author's photograph)

A copy or version can also embody collective experience, alongside the kind of individual experience described above. The machine-made Bokhara carpet illustrated in figure 51, based on the handmade rugs of Turkmen nomads, offers a shared understanding of what a patterned pile carpet might be to the many people around the globe who own one. But at the same time, it is their carpet on

which their family have walked and sat, not too strange, and comfortable within their domestic interior.



Figure 51: Machine-made Bokhara carpet, polypropylene, Turkey, c.2015. (i-rugs.co.uk)

The impact of copies and versions on human experience and society has been a subject of intense debate. As discussed in the introduction and chapter two, Walter Benjamin's formulation of copying as a threat, and his assertion that the movement away from the authentic and unique leads to cultural degradation of

things, experiences and people, has had an enduring effect.<sup>174</sup> At the heart of Benjamin's argument is the idea of the unique aura of the original object:

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition [...] An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura.

Benjamin sees the aura as under threat:

[From]the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent towards overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.<sup>175</sup>

The European and North American orthodoxy's position on old, handmade, patterned pile carpets is authorised by Benjamin's ideas of 'tradition', 'uniqueness' and 'aura'; the orthodoxy's position on machine-made carpets by his ideas of 'contemporary masses' and 'reproduction'.

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<sup>174</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 214.

<sup>175</sup> Benjamin, p. 216.

Susan Stewart challenges the distinction Benjamin makes between the psychological work which can be done by a mass-produced copy versus an auratic original. In her analysis of the souvenir, Stewart demonstrates the power of the cheap, mass-produced piece of memorabilia from a location outside familiar experience to embody our memories of intense experience, and to enable a controlled encounter with the remote and Other.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore she repositions the socio-economic roles of both copies and originals, regarding the collection of both as an expression of a capitalist urge to amass surplus value. She asserts that handmaking is the least efficient way of producing objects with such a purpose, stating that 'the collection of handmade objects translates the time of manual labour into the simultaneity of conspicuous waste'.<sup>177</sup> Her approach destabilizes assumptions about the cultural and psychological superiority of both the authentic and the handmade.

Meanwhile, Hillel Schwartz has related human response to copies to the idea that we are beings created by the pairing of the double-helix of DNA.<sup>178</sup> From this he traces a psychologically and physically embedded attachment to copies and copying, which also has a mirror image of repulsion and fear. This manifests itself in anxiety about phenomena including Siamese twins and clones, things which are like us but are not us, and forms of identity theft.<sup>179</sup> He offers a new approach to understanding the sense of threat underlying the European and

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<sup>176</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, pp.132-169.

<sup>177</sup> Stewart, p.160-161, p.168.

<sup>178</sup> Schwartz, *Culture of the Copy*, pp. 287-289.

<sup>179</sup> Schwartz, pp. 256-261

North American orthodoxy's insistence on the authentic, as part of a conflicted unconscious human response to copies.

Benjamin and the European and North American orthodoxy arise from the same late nineteenth and early twentieth-century episteme, with its anxiety about industrialisation and mass production, and its desire to preserve exclusive, élite culture. Schwartz and Stewart write from both a different intellectual temporality, and from outside that temporality's own episteme, using cross-disciplinary analysis, and working from challenging and marginal objects. Their border thinking offers support to my critique of the binaries of the European and North American orthodoxy.<sup>180</sup> They help make space for my interpretations of the Axminster Persian garden carpet, and the Bokhara Turkman carpet described above, and provide tools for understanding why, at a level deeper than the practicalities of ease of purchase and hygiene, or the socio-economic perceptions of class and cultural capital, a person might choose to buy a mass-produced machine-made version rather than a handmade 'original'.

### **5. Templetons' negotiation between handmade patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia and their machine-made versions**

The managing partners and senior designers at Templetons were active agents in the development of a narrative of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, as they produced carpets for the Victorian parlour and the colonial

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<sup>180</sup> Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience', 1-23

lounge. They articulated what they believed about their carpets, and what they wanted their customers to believe, in a series of marketing pamphlets for their retailers. In this section I analyse these marketing materials to understand the ideological work Templeton expected their copies and versions of these carpets to do, just as in chapter two I described the ways in which the narratives constructed around the Ardabil carpet were used to explore European and North American aspirations, anxieties, and beliefs about themselves and others.<sup>181</sup> I explore how Templeton negotiated the binary between the handmade and the machine-made, the original and the version in these materials.

From the late nineteenth century, Templeton's versions included Caucasian and Anatolian village styles, Persian and Central Asian tribal styles, urban Persian and Indo-Persian floral styles, and prayer rugs from diverse geographies, alongside many looser hybrids with less identifiable source material. They were produced in different qualities and weights of wool, and a range of colours and sizes. Templeton developed a distinctive branding approach to communicate this kaleidoscope of options to retailers and customers.

In their early twentieth-century marketing materials, Templeton grouped their carpets into families, a process which echoed the taxonomies created by nineteenth and early twentieth-century carpet scholars, discussed in the

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<sup>181</sup> The marketing publications discussed in this section include *Rugs and Mats*, STOD/201/1/1/9; *Fine carpets* STOD/201/1/1/10, *The Trinitarias Carpet* STOD/201/1/1/7; *Catalogues for Retailers*, STOD/201/1/1/1/19; *Templeton Arran seamless Wilton Squares*, STOD/201/1/1/6; *Templeton presents carpets of distinction* (1952) STOD/201/1/2/2; *Two modern carpets designed by Frank Brangwyn R.A.* (1930), STOD/201/1/2/6. Apart from the last two pamphlets, the dates are ambiguous.



introduction and chapter one. Riegl and Bode, for example, grouped carpets into stylistically-related families, and associated those families with specific places.<sup>182</sup> Templeton in their turn created mock taxonomies which used place names to describe families of carpets with a shared quality of wool, or carpets with a shared domestic use, such as hearthrugs. The brand names they used for these groups of carpets; Arabian, Khotan, Mecca and Asiatic, reminded customers of the far reach of Britain's formal and informal empires, and the exotic popular resonance of these places. The term Asiatic is worth unpacking. The Asiatic carpet in figure 52 is Indo-Persian in design, but it is not described as such, or even as Asian, which might suggest a geography of production. Instead it is branded Asiatic, an ethnographic racial type inherited from Enlightenment philology, reflecting racial hierarchies commonly accepted in colonial Europe and America.<sup>183</sup> Throughout the marketing materials there is a mismatch between nomenclature and styles, discussed below. What was important was not accuracy, but an evocation of exoticism, and the creation of a carpet map which had imperial Britain at its centre.

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<sup>182</sup> Wilhelm Bode and Ernst Kuhnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, trans. by Charles Grant Ellis (Berlin: Klinkhardt and Biermann, 1958); Alois Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Leipzig:1891).

<sup>183</sup> Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empires: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 124-131; Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 123-148.



Figure 52: Machine-made Asiatic carpet, *Templeton Catalogue for Retailers*, Glasgow, early twentieth century. (STOD/201/1/1/1/1)

The Khotan rugs in figure 53 are typical of Templeton's versions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their palette has a low level of intensity, offering the prized faded effect of old carpets, and the high density of pattern and deep structuring borders of carpets used across South, Central and West Asia. They are often designed around a central medallion, a characteristic of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Persian carpets valued above all others in Europe and North America. The versions offered the main characteristics of the European and North American orthodoxy, in a hybrid that was likely to be familiar, fashionable and commercially successful.



Figure 53: Machine-made Khotan rugs, wool and cotton, *Templeton Catalogue for Retailers*, Glasgow, early twentieth century. (STOD/201/1/1/1/1)

The marketing pamphlet however attributes these rugs to Khotan, a quite different geographical and cultural reference. Khotan was a silk producing and trading centre at the eastern end of the Silk Roads. Khotan is further east than the geographies from which the rugs so named draw their style references. In 2020 Khotan is located in the Uyger autonomous region of Xinjiang, which despite its title is tightly controlled by China.

Khotan had a particular resonance amongst Templeton's consumers in Britain, Europe and across Britain's colonies, as one of the Silk Road excavations of Aurel Stein (1862-1926), and part of the early twentieth-century narrative of 'heroic' European archaeology.<sup>184</sup> After sixty years of carpet production, Templeton re-

<sup>184</sup> Jeanette Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein: Archaeological Explorer* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998).

exoticised increasingly familiar ‘oriental’ styles through brand descriptions associating them with novel expressions of colonial reach such as this. Like the Ardabil carpet in chapter two, Templeton’s Khotan carpets gained power from association with the contemporaneous colonial model of the heroic.

This thesis focuses on the carpets of South, Central and West Asia, but the twentieth century also saw the rise of Chinese carpets as a focus of European and North American interest. The cross-over in terminology here signals the existence of competing ‘orients’ in carpet manufacturing and reception, a subject for potential future study.



Figure 54: Machine-made Persian rugs in Arabian quality wool, *Templeton Catalogue for Retailers*, Glasgow, early twentieth century. (STOD/ 201/1/1/1/10)

The branding also articulates assumptions, sometimes false, about environments of production. The illustration of Templeton’s Persian rugs in their Arabian

quality of wool, show styles drawn from three distinct production environments. The carpet on the far left of figure 54 is a version of the tribal weavings of the nomadic Turkmen communities of Central Asia, with their narrow palette of red, cream and black, and minimalist series of geometric motifs. The central carpet is characterized by its structure, an echo of a mosque's prayer niche. Its style references Anatolian prayer rugs as much as those of Persia. The carpet on the far right is most characteristically Persian, a version of the densely patterned floral carpets with unsaturated colour palettes associated with nineteenth-century Persian urban workshops. 'Persia' in this marketing pamphlet is not a location of production or a style, but a brand indicator of exclusiveness and taste, just as 'Ardabil' is in the modern Pakistani carpet-manufacturing industry, discussed in chapter two and four. Meanwhile, the branding of the wool quality of these carpets as 'Arabian' evokes the association between carpets and the dreamlike eroticism of the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>185</sup> Arabia is not a major pile carpet weaving area, rather its adoption as a brand name by Templeton is an example of the process described by Said, whereby one part of Asia, and the qualities associated with it, is made to stand for the whole.<sup>186</sup>

The resonant descriptors of Templeton's carpet brands were at the greatest possible exotic remove from Glasgow, Chester and Manchester, and the pseudo-precision of their taxonomy suggested the arcane knowledge of dealers selling originals, giving Templeton carpets authority through their explicit relationship

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<sup>185</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 299-301; Warner, *Stranger Magic*, pp. 1-26.

<sup>186</sup> Said, pp. 40-60. This is a core argument throughout *Orientalism*. This section describes the origins of the dynamic.

with the carpets of geographies of indigenous production. The evocation of patterned pile carpets in Templeton's marketing materials aligns to powerful effect with the creative vigour of their *bricolage*, and the skilled flexibility of their production techniques and makers.

Contrasting interpretations of this process of hybridization in design, making and naming are possible. On the one hand it can be seen as an expression of what Adam Geczy describes as transorientalism:

Transorientalism denotes a self-conscious use of the Orient as a geographically uncircumscribed zone, whose cultural specifics are secondary to the imaginative uses to which it can be put [...] it is a loosening of the super-ego of empirical social frameworks and anthropological accuracy<sup>187</sup>

The vigorous creative reinvention conducted by Templeton can be read as loosening the framework of the European and North American orthodoxy and replacing it with a new imaginary expressing developing geopolitical and cultural relationships. Furthermore, Templeton's versions can be read as examples of the benign account of the appropriation of imperial material culture discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Templeton's domestication of the

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<sup>187</sup> Adam Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (London and New York; Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 6.

strangeness of the geographies under British rule brings them as close and familiar as a hearth rug.<sup>188</sup>

However, the self-conscious undermining of orientalism described by Geczy is accompanied by Templeton's participation in the Saidean imperial taxonomic project, and in the mechanism whereby all stories and histories become subaltern to the West.<sup>189</sup> Templeton appropriated the material culture and imaginary of the Other in a notably unreflexive way, instead seeing the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia as theirs for the taking throughout the 140 years of the active life of their business. In the intimate setting of the home, Templeton carpets offer both creative re-invention and a conduit for hegemonic ideology and assumptions.

Alongside their *bricolaged* versions and loose adaptations of handmade patterned pile carpets, Templeton also produced close copies of canonical carpets. Retailers' pamphlets offer copies of carpets from the V&A, the Louvre, and the Bardini collection in Florence, for example (figure 55, 56, 57).<sup>190</sup> These were offered, characteristically, in various colours and sizes, without medallions and with fringes, as required.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp.xix-xxi.

<sup>189</sup> For example, Chakrabarty, 'Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?', 1-26; Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience; Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 119-234; Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', pp. 271-313.

<sup>190</sup> *Fine carpets by Templeton*, STOD/ 201/1/1/10; *Templeton presents carpets of distinction*, STOD/201/1/2/2.

<sup>191</sup> See for example, *The Trinitarias Carpet*, STOD/201/1/1/7; *Catalogues for Retailers*, STOD/201/1/1/1/19; *Templeton Presents Carpets of Distinction*, STOD/201/1/2/2.



Figure 55: Templeton machine-made copy of Ardabil Carpet wool, cotton, jute, Glasgow, c.1930. (STOD 201/1/3/1/5, courtesy of Glasgow University Archives and Special Collections)





Figure 56: Machine-made copy of a carpet in the Louvre, *Templeton's Fine Carpets*, Glasgow, 1930s. (STOD/ 201/1/1/10, author's photograph)



Figure 57: Templeton machine-made copy of 'Bardini' carpet, wool, cotton, 414 x 301cm, Glasgow, 1930s. (V&A, London, T.94-1999)

These prestige products were more costly than a Khotan hearthrug produced for those of modest means. The price of the 1930s Bardini copy in figure 57 was around £23,<sup>192</sup> at a point when average wages in the UK were £165 per

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<sup>192</sup> <[collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O50329/carpet-james-templeton-company/](http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O50329/carpet-james-templeton-company/)> [Accessed 20 January 2017].

annum.<sup>193</sup> A Templeton Bardini copy therefore cost around two months' average wages, the equivalent of £4,000 in 2017.<sup>194</sup>

As discussed earlier, Templeton had a long-standing project to democratise patterned pile carpets. As late as 1952, an expensively produced marketing volume reminded Templeton's retailers and customers of the moral high ground occupied by their machine-made carpets:

In Persia about the 16<sup>th</sup> century they [hand-knotted carpets] reached an extremely high degree of excellence. They would be largely for use in Holy Places and Royal Palaces. But it is no longer the case of a few of the wealthiest Princes being each in possession of a single carpet in the weaving of which years of slave labour had been spent. Today carpets are manufactured so efficiently and in such quantity that they are available to all.<sup>195</sup>

However Templeton did not hold this position without conflicts. Not only did they produce some carpets beyond the means of most people, but they were attracted by the glamour of carpets produced for princes. In 1939, William Burrell bought the Wagner Garden Carpet (figure 58).<sup>196</sup> The carpet culture of

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<sup>193</sup> <economicshelp.org/blog/7480/economics/when-london-house-prices-were-350-in-the-1930s> [Accessed 20 January 2017].

<sup>194</sup> Office of National Statistics, 2017.<ons.gov.uk/search?q=average+salary> [Accessed 20 January 2017].

<sup>195</sup> *Templeton Presents Carpets of Distinction*, STOD 201/1/2/2, p.8.

<sup>196</sup> Sheila Canby, 'Eternal Springtime: A Persian Garden Carpet from the Burrell Collection'. <metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2018/eternal-springtime-wagner-garden-carpet>[Accessed 22 November 2018].

Glasgow consequently included a seventeenth-century Safavid carpet, from the apex of the European and North American orthodoxy. When a rare opportunity to buy a sixteenth-century Safavid carpet arose in the 1940s, Templeton, self-appointed guardian of the common person's right to have carpets of machine-made beauty in their homes, bought it, and used it in their marketing materials (figure 59). Possession of the Trinitarias carpet offered them status in the culturally competitive world of Glasgow's merchants and industrialists, commercial advantages through the association of their broad range of replicas and versions with an élite carpet and gave them domination of an eastern original. When Templetons purchased the Trinitarias they also purchased what Benjamin describes as the unique aura of the original, adding glamour and prestige to their copies of it.<sup>197</sup> Whilst Templetons' machine-made copies could not invoke what Freedgood calls 'the special consolation of the handmade',<sup>198</sup> they could now invoke an association with the 'antique', the renamed preference for the old which again supported the psychological flight from industrialisation and the nostalgia for a golden age of craftsmanship. The possession of the 'antique' also permitted the extension of an imagined family history into the past, providing a source of cultural capital to classes who regarded themselves as socially arrived.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', pp. 211-245.

<sup>198</sup> Freedgood, 'Fine fingers', p. 644.

<sup>199</sup> Judy Attfield, *Wild Things* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 99-120; Stefan Muthesius, 'Why do we buy old furniture? Aspects of the authentic antique in Britain 1870- 1910', *Art History*, vol. 11 no. 2 (June 1988), 231-254; Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).

Templeton's effort to align themselves with the European and North American orthodoxy did not, however, inhibit them from producing versions which adapted the Trinitarias's dimensions, offered multiple colourways, and, preferred, removed its medallion (figure 60).<sup>200</sup> Ironically, the Trinitarias is now believed to be a nineteenth-century Indian version of a Persian rug, a contentious type of carpet discussed in chapter four.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> *The Trinitarias Carpet, a Sixteenth Century Persian Masterpiece*, STOD 201/1/1/7.

<sup>201</sup> Walter B. Denny, < [ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-trinitarias-carpet-early-masterpiece-or-modern-reproduction](http://ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-trinitarias-carpet-early-masterpiece-or-modern-reproduction) > [Accessed 2 January 2017].



Figure 58: 'Wagner' Garden carpet, handknotted, cotton warps, silk wefts, wool pile, 531 x 432cm, Persia, seventeenth century. (Burrell Collection, 9.2)



Figure 59; 'Trinitarias' carpet, handknotted, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 1044 x 336cm, sixteenth century Safavid Persia or nineteenth century Northern India. (National Gallery of Victoria, 91-D5)



Figure 60: Templeton machine-made 'parquet square' copy of the Trinitarias carpet, Abbey quality wool, Glasgow, mid twentieth century. (STOD 201/ 1/1/7, author's photograph)

The marketing of Templeton's carpets was political. It tracked the path of colonialism and decolonisation. Its late nineteenth and early twentieth-century marketing materials expressed the identity of Britain as a superpower with global reach and control of resources. In the post-colonial era, its marketing continued to operate in support of a changing European and North American hegemonic agenda.

In 1951, *Templeton Presents Carpets of Distinction* evoked the production environment of indigenous carpets as a Persia of slaves, in contrast with an enlightened and democratic production environment for copies of those carpets in Britain. In 1953, Britain and the US carried out a coup in Iran to keep control

of its oil, deposing its elected prime minister.<sup>202</sup> Templeton's marketing materials played a part in priming public opinion to accept this. They participated in the narrative discussed in chapter one, which suggested that Persia's carpets were the birthright of the western middle-classes, and so was Iran's oil. Said makes a distinction between 'latent' orientalism, its eighteenth and nineteenth intellectual infrastructure, and 'manifest' orientalism, the operation of that infrastructure in practice.<sup>203</sup> The nexus of ideology, material culture and politics described above offers an example of how the latent and the manifest interact; the definition and appropriation of the Other was enacted at the same time in Glasgow textile factories and in street-fighting in Teheran.

## **Conclusion**

Templeton's carpets had the opposite relationship with the orthodoxy to that of the prestige, sixteenth-century Persian, handmade Ardabil. They were transgressive. This chapter has critiqued this privileging of handmade 'patterned pile carpets at the expense of machine-made versions, returning machine-made carpets to the narrative of these artifacts, and through them demonstrating the orthodoxy's constructed nature. The chapter thereby directly addresses the research questions of the thesis.

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<sup>202</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, The CIA, and the Roots of Modern US-Iranian Relations* (New York: The New Press, 2013).

<sup>203</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 201-226.



To examine why the positions of handmade carpets and machine-made carpets should be so polarized, the chapter laid aside necessarily subjective questions of taste in favour of a comparison of the fundamental processes of the design and making of machine-woven and handmade patterned pile carpets. This uncovered important continuities between the handmade and the machine-made. These continuities valorize the creative processes materialized in industrialised mass-production, complicating and undermining ideas of the uniqueness of a handmade patterned pile carpet from a geography of indigenous production, and the distinctiveness of the design, technology and materials of such a carpet.

The chapter has consequently made transparent the indissoluble points of resistance in the orthodoxy's objection to machine-made carpets, in particular, the uncertainty about where authorship and creativity lie in machine weaving, the changed status of the human hand in the work, and the elimination of the knot. I argued that these sticking points operate partly at levels of consciousness beyond the rational. On the other hand, some points of resistance are more straightforwardly commercial. Modestly priced rugs for the masses were easily dismissed by the orthodoxy. However, Templeton's costly machine-made copies of canonical carpets demonstrated that a machine-made carpet could also be a prestige object, if not a high status one in the judgement of carpet specialists, with consequent complications for the market in imported handmade patterned pile carpets.

Templeton's carpets offer an opportunity to critique the European and North American orthodoxy, but at the same time permit an analysis of the experiences

offered by machine-made carpets. The chapter has argued that machine-made carpets operate to damp down some of the threatening aspects of the materiality of handmade patterned pile carpets imported from the East, but share their potential to generate powerful emotional, memorial, aesthetic and sensual experiences.

The chapter shows that through their marketing, design and carpet acquisitions, Templeton's partners and designers consciously negotiated the ambiguous relationship between handmade and machine-made carpets. The narrative they developed demonstrates the persistent influence of the European and North American orthodoxy, in its unresolved tension between Templeton's proud claim to be providers of fine carpets to the masses, and their desire to associate themselves with the orthodoxy's canon. Furthermore, Templeton mobilized orientalist discourse for their commercial ends, thereby participating in the broader political discourse. This reinforces my argument that patterned pile carpets, be they handmade or machine-made, are susceptible to ideological use.

The attitudes to machine-made and handmade carpets discussed in this chapter have been underpinned by multiple versions of orientalism. Templeton's *bricolage* was part of the West's confident readiness to use the material culture of the Other as source materials for its imaginative and commercial purposes. Some consumers saw an imported handmade patterned pile carpet as a threatening encounter with alterity, and preferred machine-made versions. For other consumers, this alterity was desirable, and they responded to handmade carpets from countries of indigenous production as both an expression of

seductive exoticism and a demonstration of colonial influence. Meanwhile, the European and North American orthodoxy continued to assume its right to define and quality control the material culture of the subaltern, and to insist on the maintenance of tradition. In the next chapter, I discuss a group of carpets which, despite being handmade in a country of indigenous production, were regarded as transgressive as a result of the challenge they posed to these orientalist tropes.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Repossessing the patterned pile rug imaginary and its production: The carpet weaving industry of Punjab, 1860-2017**

#### **Introduction**

The carpets analysed in chapters two and three explore the extremes of the European and North American orthodoxy discussed in chapter one. I argued that the Ardabil carpet in the V&A was re-invented in nineteenth-century London as the materialization of the values of that orthodoxy, whereas the machine-made copies and versions of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia made by Templeton tested the limits of the orthodoxy's assumptions. In chapter four, I examine a set of carpets which like Templeton's carpets were perceived as transgressive by the orthodoxy, despite being handmade in traditional locations of production. I argue that this perception is rooted in the imperial politics manifested in the idea of 'traditional Indian crafts', in particular the disturbance that arises when a subaltern culture reclaims decision-making over its material culture from a coloniser which is invested in its own version of that culture's 'tradition'. Chapters two and three investigated the reinvention of the idea of these artifacts by the British imperial cultural and commercial establishment. In chapter four I take the next step in that analysis, investigating the consequences of the repossession of the idea of the patterned pile carpet by the indigenous carpet makers of an important colonial geography, Punjab, later Pakistan.

In their catalogue for the important 1997 V&A exhibition, 'Colours of the Indus', Askari and Crill summarise the scholarly view on Punjabi carpets:

Lahore was well known as one of the major centres of carpet weaving during the Mughal period [...] With such a pedigree it is surprising that the carpet industry seems to have declined almost to extinction by the late nineteenth century, with the exception of some production in the prisons. It was only after Partition in 1947 that pile carpet weaving, which today is a major element of Pakistan's economy, began to be revived, largely as a result of the influx of Muslim weavers from Indian centres such as Mirzapur, Amritsar as well as Kashmir. Assisted by government schemes for training and marketing, there are now thousands of workshops all over Pakistan, with the majority in the Punjab. Most of the carpets are woven to designs based on Turkmen, Baluch or classical Iranian patterns.<sup>1</sup>

Underneath this summary lies a complex aesthetic, ideological, social and economic context, which this chapter sets out to uncover. It expands the account from the scholarly focus on carpet weaving in British jails illustrated in the quote to include the less-studied area of innovation in the indigenous carpet weaving industry of pre- and post-partition Punjab. It challenges Askari and Crill's description of carpet weaving in pre-partition Punjab as a 'decline' and

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<sup>1</sup> Nasreen Askari and Rosemary Crill, *Colours of the Indus: Costume and Textiles of Pakistan* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum/Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1997), p.95.

interrogates their claim that the Pakistani industry is a government-sponsored industry of copies, and sets out to restore agency to indigenous weavers, entrepreneurs and traders. It situates Punjab in the ongoing global co-production of the idea and materiality of the patterned pile carpet.

Section one of this chapter outlines the Mughal context. I then focus on three episodes of change in carpet weaving in Punjab after its annexation by the East India Company in 1848. Section two examines carpet weaving within the British colonial infrastructure in Punjab, centred in Lahore. Section three investigates the independent indigenous Amritsar carpet industry. Section four analyses the post-partition and independence carpet industry of Pakistan, with Lahore in Pakistani Punjab as its commercial centre.

The interaction between Lahore and Amritsar is an important dynamic in this chapter. Since 1947 these two cities have been in two separate states; the largely Sikh city of Amritsar in India, and Lahore in largely Muslim Pakistan (figure 1). Amritsar is eighteen miles from the border with modern Pakistan and thirty miles away from the Pakistani capital Lahore, whereas it is almost 300 miles northwest of the Indian capital Delhi, and 135 miles from Chandigarh, the capital of its home state, Indian Punjab. The material culture of Amritsar is intimately connected with that of Pakistan, and it is still the habit of museums with South

Asian holdings to organize exhibitions that stress the continuity between Indian and Pakistani Punjab.<sup>2</sup>

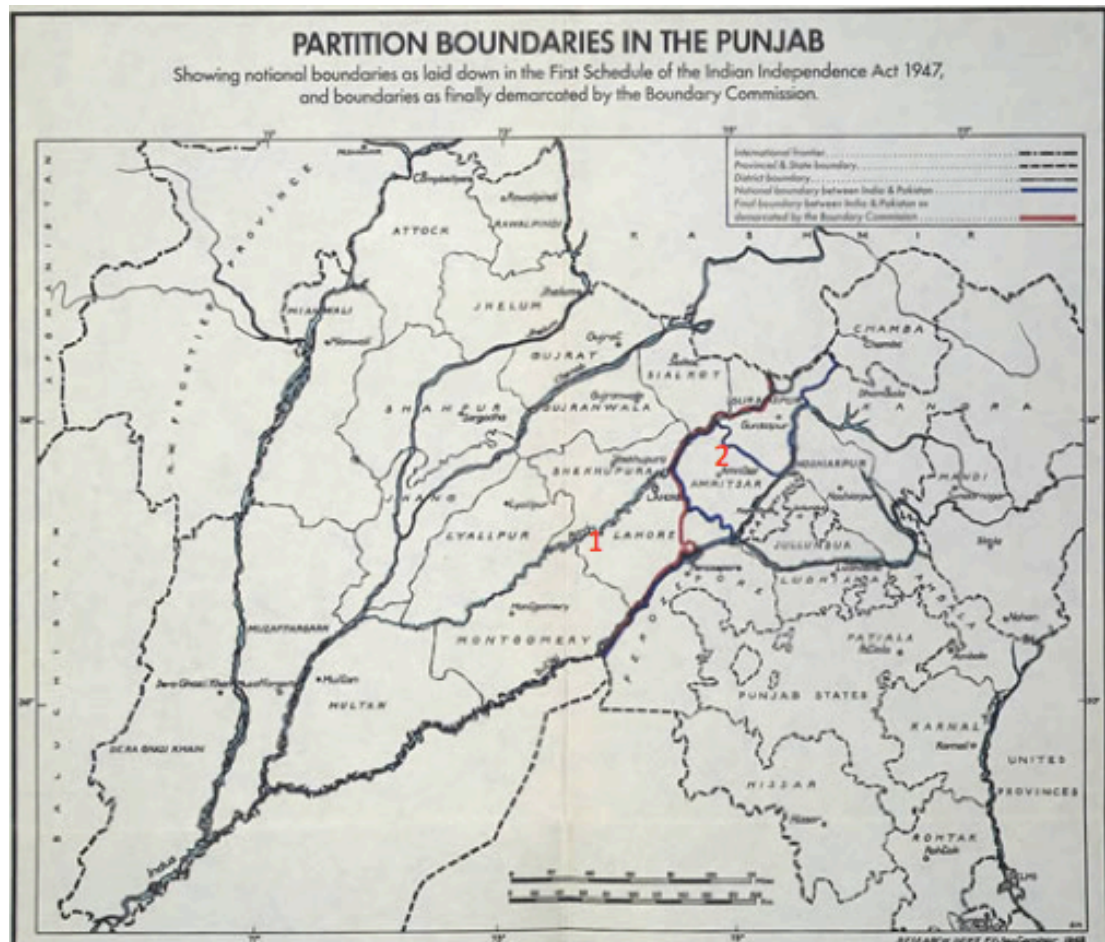


Figure 1: British Boundary Commission Map of Punjab, 1947. (British Library Board L/1/1/770). Lahore (1) and Amritsar (2) are thirty miles apart. The red line (on original map) is the 1947 border between India and Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> For example, a loan exhibition from the V&A collection, 'Crafts of the Punjab', Herbert Gallery, Coventry, December 2017; 'John Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London', V&A, London, January-April 2017.

Rich primary evidence exists on carpet weaving in India in the form of reports and surveys.<sup>3</sup> However, from the mid-nineteenth century through to independence, much of it was written under the auspices of the British Government in India. The India Office reports on Punjabi carpet weaving and of exhibitions of Punjabi crafts, manufacturing and resources referred to in this chapter,<sup>4</sup> were part of the effort to compile a complete working model of empire, and were written by British imperial officials. Both B.H. Baden Powell (1841-1901) and C. Latimer (mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries), whose work is referred to below, were British commissioners in Punjab. The instruments used to construct this model, for example, maps, surveys and censuses, were analysed by Benedict Anderson as part of the re-imagining and re-definition of communities by colonialists.<sup>5</sup> India was a particular focus for this effort, reflecting its key status amongst British imperial territories, resulting for instance in five multi-volume editions of *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* between 1881 and 1931.<sup>6</sup> Surveying and its role in constructing the British idea of India

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Somerset Playne, *The Bombay Presidency, The United Provinces, Punjab etc: Their History, People, Commerce and Natural Resources* (London: 1917-20); H.T. Harris, *A Monograph on the Carpet Weaving Industry of Southern India* (Madras: 1908); H.J.R. Twigg, *A Monograph on the Art and Practice of Carpet-Making in the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay: 1907); *Indian Industrial Commission, Minutes of Evidence* (Calcutta: 1916-18), 5 vols.; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India* (London: 1931).

<sup>4</sup> C. Latimer, *Monograph on Carpet-Making in the Punjab, 1905-6* (Lahore: 1907); B.H. Baden Powell, *Handbook of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab*, vol. 2 of *Handbook of the Economic Products of the Punjab* (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company, 1872); *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881-82: Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*, n.s. no. xxii (Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat Press, 1883).

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (1983), (London: Verso, 2006), pp.163-187.

<sup>6</sup> William Hunter Wilson, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881). Further editions were published in 1885-7, 1908, 1909, 1931. A parallel publication, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series* was also produced.



continues to be an area of study for historians of South Asia.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence of these caveats, whilst British reports on India are used in this chapter as data for historical analysis, they are also regarded critically as manifestations of hegemonic ideology. This is equally true of the records of the Department of Science and Art in London and its interactions with the British government in India, and writings by important contemporaneous British participants in the debate on Indian crafts, such as George Birdwood (1832-1917) and Caspar Purdon Clarke (1846-1911).<sup>8</sup>

A second issue arising from the contemporaneous archival sources available for this chapter is their relative lack of polyvocality. There is a limited amount of testimony from indigenous carpet producers in the India Office reports, and the inability of the subaltern to speak through hegemonic institutions, explored by Gayatri Spivak, is manifest in the primary materials for this research.<sup>9</sup> Where weavers' testimony could be found, it has been used, although it is often mediated through marketing materials and institutional reports. Consequently, I have used their carpets as important primary evidence in this chapter, setting their work in dialogue with imperial textual sources, when their voices are absent.

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India 1756-1843* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); Padmanabh Samarendra, 'Census in Colonial India and the Birth of Caste', *Economic and Political Weekly* (August 13-19, 2011), 51-58.

<sup>8</sup> G.C. Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), part ii; Caspar Purdon Clarke ed., *Oriental Carpets: The Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition at the Handels-Museum, Vienna* (London: South Kensington Museum, 1892). This is the English version of Alois Riegl and Arthur Scala, *Katalog der Ausstellung Orientalischer Teppiche im K. K. Handels-Museum* (Vienna: Verlag des K. K. Österr. Handels-Museum, 1891).

<sup>9</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', pp. 271-313.

The memoirs of non-institutional British and American contemporaneous commentators are used throughout the chapter to cast light on European and North American attitudes to the production of Indian carpets. These include British traveller and politician, W.S.Caine (1842-1903), American writer, J.K. Mumford (mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries), and American designer and entrepreneur Lockwood de Forest (1850-1932).<sup>10</sup> Caine and de Forest's presence in India is historically documented, and Mumford's work is based on his account of 'the carpet manufacturers I have visited up and down India'.<sup>11</sup> Mumford's *Oriental Carpets* was a standard work, used as a college textbook in the US.<sup>12</sup> In common with government reports, these first-hand contemporaneous testimonies of carpet making in India are analysed for historical data, but also regarded critically as outputs of hegemonic culture.

Economic and policy data is available for the nineteenth-century British industry, the Amritsar industry, and the Pakistani industry. It is patchy and unsystematic but is nevertheless an important source of primary evidence.<sup>13</sup> In common with

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<sup>10</sup> W.S. Caine *Picturesque India* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891); Mumford, *Oriental Carpets* (1903); Lockwood de Forest papers, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Series 1, Correspondence 1858-1931. <[aaa.si.edu/collections/lockwood-de-forest-papers-7429/series-1](http://aaa.si.edu/collections/lockwood-de-forest-papers-7429/series-1)>[Accessed 4 December 2018].

<sup>11</sup> Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, p.260.

<sup>12</sup> Fester, *Fine Arts Including Folly: A History of the Hajji Baba Club 1932-1960*, p.12, quoting Hajji Baba Club founder Arthur Dilley (1873-?).

<sup>13</sup> Feliccia Yacopino, *Threadlines Pakistan* (Karachi: Ministry of Industries, Government of Pakistan in concurrence with the United Nations Development Programme, 1977); *Pakistan Economic Survey* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan Finance Division Economic Advisors Wing, 1977); *Pakistan Export Promotion Bureau Data* (Islamabad: 2006); *Handmade Carpet Manufacturing* (Karachi: State Bank of Pakistan, 2015); The Pakistani Carpet Manufacturing and Export Association, <[pcmea.org.pk](http://pcmea.org.pk)>[multiple accession dates].

chapter two, commercial marketing materials have been studied to understand what producers, retailers and dealers in the Pakistani industry wish their consumers to believe about their carpets.<sup>14</sup>

It was part of the initial research plan for this project to visit Pakistan. With the help of a translator, I planned to interview contractors and designers to understand their processes of adaptation and design, and the extent to which weavers participated in this process. I planned to visit weaving and dyeing workshops to build a sense of the experience of workers. I also planned to visit government carpet weaving schools, to understand the training of commercial weavers and the expectations that are set for them. Throughout these discussions I aimed to gain insight into how the consumer is understood, and what part ideas of tradition play. It was frustrating to find that this fieldwork could not be put into effect, despite my repeated efforts, which I describe below.

I contacted the contemporary companies I intended to discuss by email and phone, but the response was very guarded, and did not lead to invitations to further discussions or visits. With the help of intermediaries in London, I attempted to gain the support of the trade department of the Pakistani Embassy. This initiative also stalled. Meanwhile, my academic institution, the Royal College of Art, gave my risk assessment of the research an amber grading, expressing a degree of concern.

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<sup>14</sup> Lahore Carpet Company, <lahorecarpet.com.>; Multan Oriental Hand Made carpet Company, <facebook.com/MOHMC>; PAK Persian Rugs, <pakpersianrugs.co.uk>, <pakpersianrugs.com> [Multiple accession dates].

The response of the Pakistani groups I contacted may have been affected by their experience of past academic, governmental and NGO researchers who have been highly critical of labour conditions in the South Asian carpet industry. The work of US groups on child slavery in Pakistani carpet weaving was mentioned to me on a number of occasions.<sup>15</sup> I was not able to build their confidence that my research did not have this as its primary focus, and of course, it is possible that the plan I developed might indeed have led to my gathering data and formulating views on the conditions of child weavers. My difficulties in carrying out the fieldwork I initially planned draws attention to the global network in which patterned pile carpets participate, and to the sensitized ideological debate around them.

Reflecting now on this period, I might have found leverage by continuing to try to build a relationship with the government weaving schools in Pakistan. As I develop this work in the future, I will also try to access the network of art schools in both Pakistan and India.

The limitations on fieldwork have impacted this thesis in both positive and negative ways. I have necessarily had to work closely from the carpets themselves, and this has kept a focus on materiality and design in this chapter. I

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Siddarth Kara, *Tainted Carpets: Slavery and Child Labour in India's Hand-Made Carpet Sector* (Cambridge Mass: FBX Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University, 2014); US Government Bureau of International Labor Affairs, *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*. <[dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/Pakistan](http://dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/Pakistan)> [Accessed 8 May 2019]

have analysed public marketing materials in detail to understand how Pakistani exporters wish their carpets to be perceived, thereby offering a methodology consistent with my analysis of Templetons' marketing materials, and permitting comparisons. However, it has also meant that the analysis in this chapter, which has as an important theme the degree to which South Asian carpets were wrestled back in Punjab and Pakistan from colonial control, is written from the colonial centre, London, and in a British voice.

As my difficulties in carrying out my fieldwork increased, I might have chosen a more accessible site. However, this would have meant sacrificing the opportunity to create an integrated story of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial interaction with patterned pile carpets in Punjab and Pakistan, made possible by the rich primary materials for the pre-independence period, and the extensive population of Pakistani carpets now in existence. This story of the loss of possession and then repossession by the independent local industry is central to my discussion of these artifacts as contingent constructions of meaning and value. Pakistani carpets are also one of the most explicit examples of the European and North American orthodoxy at work to marginalise carpets. To have replaced them by another example would have diminished that analysis.

The historiography of the British in India is rich. I have focused on commentaries dealing with British interaction with Indian crafts, and in particular those which deal with its carpets, for example, Tirthanker Roy's economic history of traditional industries in India, including carpet making, and Abigail McGowan's

investigation of jail carpets in the Bombay Presidency.<sup>16</sup> The broader study of the perception of Indian arts and crafts outside of India offers context, for example Arindam Dutta's analysis of the role of the Department of Art and Science in London, and Partha Mitter's exploration of the reception of Indian crafts in Europe from the Renaissance onwards.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the historiography of Punjab and Pakistan has undergone significant recent revision in response to the anniversaries of partition and independence in 2007 and 2017, and the centenary of the Amritsar massacre in 2019. Kim Wagner's reappraisal of the Punjabi context of the massacre is a notable example, and has contributed to my exploration of the economic and social context of the reinvention of Amritsar carpets in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>18</sup> Wagner's attempt to write outside the established Imperial narrative and his prioritising of local language sources evokes an indigenous rather than a colonial perspective on the city and its communities. His Amritsar is as much a city of traders and manufacturers as it is of political and military actors and has helped me build my account of a city of weavers and carpet contractors.

The historiography of partition and independence from 1947 has also undergone revision. Yasmin Khan's account of partition has turned the telescope away from the colonial story of West Pakistan's independence and focused it on local

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<sup>16</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*: Abigail McGowan, 'Convict Carpets'..

<sup>17</sup> Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*; Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*

<sup>18</sup> Kim A. Wagner, *Amritsar: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019).

perspectives and diverse experiences of diaspora, informing my evocation of the environment in which carpet-weaving was reconfigured in newly established West Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, cultural historian and literary critic Ananya Jahanari Kabir has further complicated the account of partition by drawing East Pakistan, formerly East Bengal, now Bangla Desh, into the discussion, exploring how Bangla culture was compromised by repeated cycles of partition, diaspora and independence since 1947.<sup>20</sup> Her work offers a corrective to the perspective that the nuclear state now known as Pakistan, formerly West Pakistan, is the only locus of muslim social and material culture in the South Asian subcontinent. The two communities are 2,000 kilometers apart, separated by the whole landmass of India, and Kabir poignantly evokes the individual and cultural impact of the memory of West Pakistan and its relationship with its sister community of Bangladeshis, a relationship which in 1971 had included military aggression. Whilst the carpet industry I discuss is sited in what was initially known as West Pakistan rather than Kabir's starting point in East Pakistan, her work has informed my thinking on the nature of memory and ideas of tradition in these related diasporic communities. Evocative detail of the early years of independence from Kavita Puri's recent collection of memories of British Asians who left Punjab during and after partition has similarly informed my exploration throughout this chapter of the relationship between carpet-makers and the idea

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<sup>19</sup> Yasmin Kahn, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Ananya Jahanari Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971 and Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013).

of tradition, as I have argued earlier in this thesis, itself a form of memory-making.<sup>21</sup>

This chapter makes an original contribution to the existing historiography. In its analysis of the carpets of pre-independence Punjab, it goes beyond Roy's analysis of the independent industry as part of the economic structure of India, undertaking an object-led ideological and material analysis of specific carpets. It sets McGowan's focus on British jail carpets within the less researched context of indigenous carpets. Furthermore, McGowan and Roy both follow the European and North American orthodoxy, accepting its valuations of aesthetic and material values within their broader analysis of Indian economic and cultural trends. This creates a reading of the carpet production of Punjab which institutionalizes the orthodoxy within the broader discipline of Indian history. As a consequence, my challenge to the orthodoxy in this chapter is an act of 'epistemic disobedience'.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile the chapter's focus on Punjab rather than the whole of India, and its use of the Punjab-specific primary resources described above, permits a situated analysis of a group of local carpets, using the tools of global design history to challenge broad-brush assumptions about these artifacts and their historical context. It brings two groups of carpets back into the discourse on patterned pile carpets, those of Amritsar, and those of Pakistan, which despite Pakistan's role as one of the largest global exporters of such carpets, have been subject to little study.

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<sup>21</sup> Kavita Puri, *Partition Voices* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience', 1–23.



I have described orientalism and decoloniality as the political framework for this thesis. This chapter moves between these two concepts. Its analysis of British attempts to define what an Indian traditional carpet should be exemplifies the manoeuvre which is central to Saidean analysis; the definition of the Other by the hegemonic power as a means of control.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile my analysis of the carpets of Amritsar and Pakistan exemplifies what Mignolo describes as 'border thinking'; the hybridization, flux and negotiation, outside accepted categories, involved in decoloniality.<sup>24</sup>

### **1. The carpet heritage of Punjab, 1526-1848**

A major inflection point in the history of Punjab and its textiles is the establishment of the Mughal dynasty (1526-1857). What is now Pakistani and Indian Punjab were the first territories in India conquered by the founding Mughal Emperor Babur (1483-1530). Babur's court and army were strongly influenced by Persian sensibility and technology. This intimacy with Persia remained a characteristic of Mughal life and material culture.<sup>25</sup> The early Mughal emperors established carpet weaving workshops and by the time of Emperor Akbar (1542-1605) the knotted-pile carpet weaving practices of India had been brought to a high level of courtly sophistication.<sup>26</sup> Unlike pile carpet weaving in Central and West Asia, in South Asia elite production does not seem to have co-

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<sup>23</sup> Said, *Orientalism*.

<sup>24</sup> Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*; Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

<sup>25</sup> Walker, *Flowers Under Foot*, pp. 3-15.

<sup>26</sup> Walker, *Flowers Under Foot*, pp. 3-15.

existed with a rural domestic industry. However, there was a history of production in urban workshops and small factories.<sup>27</sup>

Mughal carpet-making took advantage of exceptional materials, in the form of India's wide range of dyestuffs, and fine wools such as pashmina from goats. Mughal carpets weavers used a painterly colour mixing technique, which juxtaposed different shades of knots, and the fineness of pashmina permitted knot counts of up to 2,100 per square inch, giving precision and fluidity of design.<sup>28</sup>

Specialists on Mughal carpets generally group them into two main classes: the Persian style and the Floral.<sup>29</sup> The Persian style, also called Indo-Persian, contains hunting and garden motifs, along with blossoms, palmettes and tendrils of foliage (figure 2, 3, 4). Floral Mughal carpets use a botanical style very distinct from this. The organizing principle is the whole plant, sometimes with its roots (figure 5). The whole plant style found across Mughal media is sometimes attributed to the arrival of European herbals in India during the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Both types of Mughal carpets were hybrids, the Indo-Persian of Mughal sensibility and craft techniques with Persian courtly aesthetic

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<sup>27</sup> Walker, *Flowers Under Foot*, p. 27; Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p.199.

<sup>28</sup> Walker, *Flowers Under Foot*, p. 28, figure 7. For comparison, the London Ardabil averages 340 knots per square inch. In his conversion of individual colours in a chenille rope into knot equivalents, Tattersall suggests that Templeton carpets range from 42 to 100 knots per square inch. C.E.C. Tattersall, *A History of British Carpets* (Essex: F. Lewis Limited, 1934), p. 111.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, *Flowers under Foot*, pp. 29-147.

<sup>30</sup> R. Skelton, 'A Decorative Motif in Mughal Art', *Aspects of Indian Art: Papers Presented in a Symposium at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1970*, ed. by Pratapaditya Pal (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 147-152.

vocabulary, the Floral of the Mughal with a visual vocabulary potentially based on European botany.



Figure 2: Handknotted carpet, cotton and wool, 833 x 335cm, Lahore, late sixteenth to early seventeenth century, (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 17.190.858)



Figure 3: Detail of figure 2 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 17.190.858).



Figure 4: Detail of handknotted carpet, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 760 x 245 cm, Lahore, c.1630 (Girdlers' Livery Company, London). The carpet shows large blossoms and palmettes characteristic of Mughal Indo-Persian designs.



Figure 5: Handknotted carpet, cotton warps, cotton and silk wefts, wool pile, 155 x 103cm, Kashmir or Lahore, c.1650. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1974.149.2)

Mughal carpets were sought after in Europe, and were commissioned directly from Punjabi weavers by wealthy Europeans, who sometimes specified design components.<sup>31</sup> The Girdlers' carpet in figure 4 above is one, as is the Fremlin carpet in figure 6. The East India Company's Sir William Fremlin (1607-1646) commissioned a carpet in Lahore around 1640 which married Indo-Persian designs with his family coat of arms, which itself contained an elephant. As early as 1620, versions of Mughal carpets were made in Britain by British craftspeople. The British Kinghorne carpet in figure 7 has a close design relationship with the Mughal carpet in figure 8.

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<sup>31</sup> The focus of this thesis is on Europe and America. For a global survey see Yumiko Kamada, 'Flowers on Floats: The Production, Circulation, and Reception of Early Modern Indian Carpets' (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University: Unpublished PhD dissertation, 2011).





Figure 6: Detail of Fremlin carpet, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 599 x 249cm

Lahore, c.1640 (V&A, London, IM.1-1936)



Figure 7: Kinghorne carpet, handmade, 'turkeywork', wool, Britain, 518 x 240cm, Britain, c.1620. (National Museums of Scotland, 518 AE)



Figure 8: Handknotted carpet, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 820 x 320cm, India, seventeenth century. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975.1.2457)

The making and design of Mughal court carpets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was mediated between the imperial centres of South and West Asia including the Safavid cities Tabriz, Isfahan, Qazvin and the Mughal cities Agra and Lahore. The extended area of design and making included cities in Persia and Afghanistan such as Kashan and Herat, and in Europe, cities such as Edinburgh, London and Brussels, where carpets like the Kinghorne were commissioned and made. Mughal carpets offer an important example of what Janet Abu Lughod, writing about the earlier period 1250 to 1350, describes as an archipelago of interacting sites across Eurasia. The version of this archipelago which had developed by the time of the Mughal Empire, at its height in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, co-created the idea and materiality of the Indian carpet.<sup>32</sup> When European and North American carpet commentators of the period of the industrial revolution yearned back to a sixteenth and seventeenth-century golden age of local tradition, design and technology, and assumed a Eurocentric model of flows of influence and trade, they had to do so in the teeth of this earlier hybridity. This was the context against which the British began their project to return Indian carpets to their 'traditional' forms.

In the later part of the seventeenth century, Mughal imperial patronage of the arts declined, and the high-investment craft of elite carpet weaving, with its

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<sup>32</sup> Janet Abu Lughod, 'The World System in the Thirteenth Century: Dead End or Precursor?', *Islamic and European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order*, ed. by Michael Adas (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), pp. 75-100.

expensive materials, large requirement for skilled labour, and multi-year project completion times, declined with it.<sup>33</sup> The Punjabi court of the Sikh Emperor Rajit Singh (1780-1839) was famous for the opulence of its material culture, but the weaving of carpets was not a focus.<sup>34</sup> The extent to which the network of urban workshops in Punjab producing versions of Mughal court carpets for a larger group of consumers also declined is discussed below.

## **2. The British reinvention of the Indian carpet, 1860-1920**

From around 1860 the British began to participate in the Punjabi carpet making industry, creating another inflection point, again driven by imperial expansion and prestige. The British moved within twenty years from assessing Punjabi resources, crafts and industry to an interventionist programme, which actively exploited and took control of those resources. This intervention took different forms in different parts of the Indian textile industry with varying consequences. Parthasarathi and Wendt explore the dynamic at work in the Indian cotton industry during the nineteenth century,<sup>35</sup> pointing out the de-industrialisation of India by British colonialists, but also highlighting the impact the industry faced from broader European and North American competition, which they say, hit the Indian cotton industry 'like a jackhammer', causing a decline with profound economic and social consequences.<sup>36</sup> The intervention of the British in the carpet

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<sup>33</sup> Walker, *Flowers under Foot*, p.14.

<sup>34</sup> Susan Stronge, 'The Arts of the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh', *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, ed. by Susan Stronge (London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 1999), pp. 74-91.

<sup>35</sup> Prassannan Parthasarathi and Ian Wendt, 'Decline in Three Keys: Indian Cotton Manufacturing from the Late Eighteenth Century', *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 397-409.

<sup>36</sup> Parthasarathi and Wendt, 'Decline in Three Keys', p.405

industry in India had a different nuance. The handweaving of carpets did not compete with large-scale mechanised production of carpets in industrial centres like Glasgow, in the way that Indian handwoven cottons were seen as competition to industrially manufactured European and North American cotton. Rather, hand carpet weaving was seen as an additional commercial opportunity. The industry was consequently encouraged by the British, and grew in response to increased access to European and North American markets. However, the design content, dyes, and materials were subject to a British attempt to freeze-frame a static idea of a traditional Indian carpet, in contrast to the fluidity of the earlier Mughal model. The industry was encouraged, but design innovation was constrained.

Punjab was annexed by the British East India Company in 1849. This was the last major extension of British territory in India. In 1858 it came under the direct control of the British government along with EIC's other territories in India. British rule in Punjab had a particular character, 'the Punjab system', and is characterized by Kim Wagner as 'despotic paternalism', an assumption that Britain knew best, and a readiness to use its instruments of power to enforce that view.<sup>37</sup> The carpets of Punjab show that despotic paternalism at work, and its limitations.

### ***i. Changing British assessments of carpets in Punjab, 1860-1900***

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<sup>37</sup> Wagner, *Amritsar*, p.24.

Across India, the British government built a design infrastructure of regimental workshops, art schools, museums, government-controlled design publications, jail workshops and exhibitions. These were linked directly to the Department of Science and Art in London, which set the overall agenda.<sup>38</sup> A great deal of British administrative and intellectual energy went into controlling design in India.<sup>39</sup> Abigail McGowan has suggested that underlying this were political and economic issues:

The focus on ornament had been an attempt to limit the nature of the conversation [...] insisting that the pressing issue was design, not the materials and technologies used in crafts, or the economic or social status of the people who designed them.<sup>40</sup>

She sees it as essentially a repressive or displacement activity, to which I would add that it is also a vehicle for an account of India by the British which provides, in Mignolo's powerful description of coloniality at work, 'a warranty for the well-being and interests of the story-teller'.<sup>41</sup> The story-teller in this case is the British colonial government in India, and its well-being and interests lie in the displacement of attention from economic and social conditions in India, in support of the economic exploitation of India and Indians.

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<sup>38</sup> Dutta, *Bureaucracy of Beauty*, pp. 1-39.

<sup>39</sup> For an assessment of Indian involvement in the British design system see Abigail McGowan, ' "All that is Rare, Characteristic or Beautiful": Design and the Defence of Tradition in Colonial India, 1851-1903', *Journal of Material Culture*, vol.10 no.3 (2005), 263-86 (p. 276); Peter Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> McGowan "All that is Rare", p. 283.

<sup>41</sup> Mignolo, *On Decoloniality*, p.113.

In Punjab, this effort to control design was centralized in Lahore, at the Mayo School of Art, established in 1875, and the Lahore Museum, established in 1865. However, its reach was broad, through the surveys and exhibitions of Punjabi crafts, manufactures and resources organized from 1860 onwards. From 1860, Lahore was an important site in the British and Indian network which co-created the idea of traditional Indian crafts. This network connected the manufacturing cities and administrative centres of India with London, home to two important arbiters of taste and quality in domestic and imperial design, the DSA and the South Kensington Museum, to the manufacturing cities of Britain, with their hunger for design ideas, and to the web of art schools across both India and Britain, with their shared agenda. An important facilitator of this network was John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911), head of both the Lahore Museum and Mayo School of Art from 1875,<sup>42</sup> and editor of the influential *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, read across India and in Britain.<sup>43</sup>

Carpets were an important subject of debate in the development of the British idea of the Indian craft tradition. This section uses two exhibitions and their associated reports, one held in 1863 and one in 1881-2, to investigate the development in Punjab of the British idea of the Indian form of the handmade patterned pile carpet.<sup>44</sup> The involvement in both exhibitions of a single British

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<sup>42</sup> Now the Pakistan National College of Art in Lahore.

<sup>43</sup> Julius Bryant and Susan Weber eds., *John Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in London and the Punjab* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>44</sup> The 1863 exhibition formed the basis for B.H. Baden Powell, *Handbook of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab* (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company, 1872; the 1881-2 exhibition formed the basis for *Report on the Punjab Exhibition 1881-82: Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*



government official, B.H. Baden Powell (1841-1901), offers a continuous perspective. Baden Powell became the founding director of the Lahore Museum in 1865, buying many objects in the 1863 exhibition for its collection. The presiding spirit of the 1881-2 exhibition was John Lockwood Kipling, with Baden Powell as advisor to the organisers of the exhibition and contributor to the report. Although local Punjabi experts and dignitaries were included as trustees and prize-judges for the exhibitions, the voice of the reports is that of the British establishment in Punjab, at its work of codifying its empire. Furthermore, the twenty years between the exhibitions roughly coincides with a formative period in British India, from the transfer of the EIC's territories to the crown in 1858, to the crowning of Victoria as Empress of India in 1876. Together, the exhibitions give insight into the views of the British on Indian carpets at the beginning and end of the political process of taking possession of India.

Baden Powell's 1872 *Handbook* is an inventory of the resources and craft production of the area, using the 1863 exhibits as reference data. It primarily sets out to provide information of use for economic development by Europeans. However he also takes an aesthetic and socio-cultural position:

Notwithstanding the general backwardness of manufacturing skill, the commencement of European influence of the best kind on the manufacturers is clearly perceptible...even in the exclusively native art of

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(Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat Press, 1883), with contributions by B.H. Baden Powell.

shawl-making the value of European design and colour-teaching is to be traced in several of the productions of the Amritsar looms.<sup>45</sup>

The beneficial influence of European design standards perceived by Baden Powell was to be implemented through superior British schooling, replacing the traditional apprentice model of craft learning, which he suggests leads to stagnation:

The establishment of good industrial and design-art schools is now a desideratum...The establishment of such a school at Lahore has been determined on and will no doubt become a centre of improvement on all hands...mere empiric knowledge of certain rude processes...can be handed down from father to son, but can never lead to any advance or improvement.<sup>46</sup>

Baden Powell describes the benefits of European influence, using carpets such as that made in Axminster in figure 9 as his example:<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the best carpets of any kind are made at the Lahore Central Jail.

The prisoners have recently succeeded in producing pictures of birds,

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<sup>45</sup> Baden Powell, *Handbook* (1872), pp. xxi.

<sup>46</sup> Baden Powell, *Handbook* (1872), pp. xxi.

<sup>47</sup> Axminster was an established English location for the production of both handmade and machine-made carpets. The Axminster process, used internationally, was developed at the end of the nineteenth century, and like the earlier chenille process described in chapter three, was a technology for the machine-making of patterned pile carpets.

dogs etcetera in the carpet work, almost like the beautiful pictures which are so often seen on Brussels and pile rugs in England.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 9: Axminster carpet, Thomas Whitty Jr., handknotted wool, England, 1798.

(Powderham Castle collection, Devon)

The confidence in the superiority of British design and design skills manifested here is at odds with design reform initiatives in Britain, and their increasing turn towards non-British sources of design after the Great Exhibition, discussed in chapter one.<sup>49</sup> It also contrasts sharply with Baden Powell's description of what is required from exhibitors for the 1881-2 Punjab Exhibition. By then the design establishment in Punjab was fully aligned with prevailing views in London:

During the last few years there has been a great revival of public taste, in the course of which it has become universally recognized as a principle,

<sup>48</sup> Baden Powell, *Handbook* (1872), p.26. Jail carpets are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>49</sup> Abigail McGowan, "All that is Rare", 263-86. McGowan suggests a focus on the commercial from 1850 to 1880, and a focus on the traditional from 1880.

that all truly national and indigenous forms of art are valuable in themselves and worth preserving. We do not wish to see Indian workmen forsaking the beautiful patterns of Oriental carpets, and imitating the scrollwork and flowers on a Brussels carpet.<sup>50</sup>

The 'revival of public taste' was accompanied by a growing anxiety about the vulnerability of indigenous forms of art in the British design establishment, in London and across Britain's empire. Baden Powell in this quotation indicates the course of action expected of Punjabi carpet makers to protect its traditions, with an emphasis on preservation, and the static model of the patterned pile carpet discussed throughout this thesis.

The concern about a decline in Indian carpets intensified in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was expressed by representatives of the British design establishment. These included leading commentator on Indian arts Sir George Birdwood,<sup>51</sup> Vincent Robinson, the carpet dealer who sold the Ardabil to the V&A,<sup>52</sup> opinion-formers in the American market for Indian carpets, such as J.K. Mumford,<sup>53</sup> and Indian manufacturers such as Shaikh Gulam Sadik.<sup>54</sup> The decline was blamed by both British and Indian commentators on synthetic dyes, a dependence on exports which eroded design quality in favour of consumer taste, the influence of commercial traders in Europe and America who

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<sup>50</sup> B.H. Baden Powell, 'Memorandum for Exhibitors', *Report* (1883). Baden Powell refers to the Brussels process discussed in chapter three.

<sup>51</sup> Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, pp. 285-300;

<sup>52</sup> Robinson, 'Indian Carpets', *Catalogue of the 1891 Exhibition, Vienna*.

<sup>53</sup> Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, pp. 251-265.

<sup>54</sup> *Indian Industrial Commission*, vol. v (1916-18), p. 308.

specified the colours and designs required for their home markets, and the deskilling of dyers and weavers. These are recognizably the European and North American orthodoxy's objections to the effect of modernity on the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, discussed in chapter one. Roy, however, draws attention to the impact of a consignment sales process which worked to drive down prices, and pressure on costs from competition with jail workshops using free labour, suggesting that these economic factors affected quality at the cheaper end of the market.<sup>55</sup> This challenges the moral-aesthetic reading.

Despite British establishment voices speaking for Indian carpets, particularly those made in British jails to British specifications, for example Caspar Purdon Clarke of the South Kensington Museum,<sup>56</sup> a consensus formed that what Roy calls a 'crisis' in Indian carpet making existed in the later decades of the nineteenth century, and the idea of a lost tradition of Indian carpets came into being.

Throughout this thesis, I have taken a position of scepticism towards arcs of decline such as this, given the co-existence in any period of carpets of varying styles, levels of craftsmanship, technology and materials. Instead I have looked for the underlying issues driving taste decisions. It seems likely that Indian manufacturers followed British perceptions in part to protect their commercial interests; they needed to meet the tastes of their export market. However the decline insisted on by the British was partly an expression of their hegemonic control, a necessary precursor to a British reinvention of the Indian carpet. It

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<sup>55</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, pp. 202-211.

<sup>56</sup> Purdon Clarke, 'Oriental Carpets', *Catalogue of 1891 Exhibition, Vienna*.

legitimised the reinvention, positioning it, as in the case of the Ardabil carpet, as a colonial rescue.

In his 1881 memorandum to exhibitors, Baden Powell indicates the direction of the reinvention:

It is very much desired that loans of old and really indigenous specimens of art and manufacture may be procured [...] No prize will be given to any carpet not purely Oriental or original in design or not copied from a good Oriental original [...] special efforts should be made to borrow old Kabul, Persian, Herat and other rugs and carpets to serve as examples for guidance.<sup>57</sup>

The tone of Baden Powell's instructions to Punjabi carpet producers, collectors and dealers exemplifies the despotic paternalism of the British government in Punjab described by Wagner. The 'indigenous' sources Baden Powell specifies are not in fact Punjabi, but from further West, Persia and the border city of Herat between Persia and Afghanistan (figures 10, 11). In giving this strong steer towards Persian styles, Baden Powell both reinforced the Persian-dominated hierarchy established by the orthodoxy and reflected local political circumstances in India. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century Mughal court carpets were also highly valued by the orthodoxy, and Mughal Indo-Persian styles had a close connection with Persian carpets. However evoking Persia was more

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<sup>57</sup> Baden Powell, Report, (1883), p. 6-7.

attractive to the British in India than evoking the residual Mughal Empire. The figurehead of the 1857 resistance against the British was the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862), and the idea of the Mughal continued to offer a rallying point for opposition to the British.<sup>58</sup> What Wagner describes as the profound disturbance to the British sense of secure and inevitable control of their colonial territories created by the events of 1857 underpinned the British reinvention of the handmade patterned pile carpet in Punjab.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The events of 1857 have titles reflecting divergent political positions; The Sepoy Mutiny, the Indian Mutiny, The Indian Revolt, The Indian Rebellion, The First Indian War of Independence. I do not participate in the debate in this thesis. I use the terms 'the events of 1857', or 'The 1857 resistance to the British', in recognition of the spread of opinion.

<sup>59</sup> Wagner, *Amritsar*, pp. 1-17.



Figure 10: The Emperor's Carpet, handknotted silk warp and weft and wool pile, 759 x 339cm, Herat, Khorassan, 1550-1650. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 43.121.1)





Figure 11: detail of Emperor carpet. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 43.121.1)

## ***ii. Materialising the British ideal of the Indian carpet, 1880-1910.***

The British design infrastructure described earlier operated to reinforce the reinvention of Indian carpets. British art schools trained Indian designers to produce British-approved designs which were then used in both the Indian and British carpet industries. An example of this is the history of a set of watercolours painted by Indian art school students of designs from carpets in the collections of Indian aristocrats in Jaipur (figure 12). These were published as chromolithographs in London, and distributed across Britain and India.<sup>60</sup>

Exhibitions of Indian crafts and manufactures, held both in India and in Britain, and the awarding of prizes, reinforced British standards and expectations. The purchase of prize-winning objects for the South Kensington Museum offered wide access to them by British designers and manufacturers. This carpet system

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas Holbein Hendley, *Asian Carpets: XVI and XVII Century Designs from the Jaipur Palaces from Material Supplied with Permission of the Maharaja of Jaipur and Other Sources* (London: William Griggs, 1905).

was directed at the British domestic, European and American markets for carpets. There was some consumption amongst colonial administrators in India, and amongst prosperous Indians, but the latter often preferred a more cosmopolitan style of interior decorating, despite British efforts to steer them in the direction of the traditional.<sup>61</sup>



Figure 12: Watercolour on paper, Jaipur, India, 1900. (V&A, London, IM.249-1910).

Motif from a carpet made by the Royal Factory in Lahore for the Palace at Ambar, Jaipur in the seventeenth century.

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<sup>61</sup> McGowan, "All that is Rare", 276-282.

At the heart of this self-reinforcing system were carpet workshops in British jails, where prisoners produced carpets to British specifications.<sup>62</sup> Indian jails well-known for carpet-manufacture included Lahore and Amritsar, both in Punjab, and Agra, Yeraoda, Jaipur, Gwalior and Bikaner across British India. The manufacture of carpets in Punjabi jails dates from 1862.<sup>63</sup> The scale of jail weaving was significant in the later decades of the nineteenth century but declined from the beginning of the twentieth. Latimer gives an export value from Lahore jail as 4,000 rupees in each of the years 1903 to 1907 but remarks that 'it was considerably larger a decade or so ago'.<sup>64</sup> He estimates the number of weavers in Lahore jail as 50 in 1907. It has been suggested that weavers were drawn from an influx of long-term political prisoners in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> Jails bore no direct labour costs, giving them cost advantages over commercial production, and so were well-placed to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the oriental carpet boom. As a result, carpets were on a different footing to other types of jail production, which were not produced for export, but to defray the costs of the jail.<sup>66</sup>

The coercion inherent in jail production gave the British absolute control of a set of carpets made and sent into the world as 'Indian'. The only limitations on the creation of carpets expressing a British fantasy of these artifacts were the skills

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<sup>62</sup> For the Bombay Presidency, see McGowan, 'Convict Carpets', 391-416.

<sup>63</sup> Dr. A.M. Dallas, Reporter on Jail Carpets, *Report*, (1883), p. 57.

<sup>64</sup> Latimer, *Monograph on Carpet-Making in the Punjab, 1905-6*, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Roy attributes this to Birdwood. Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p. 206.

<sup>66</sup> Padmini Swaminathan, 'Prison as Factory: A Study of Jail Manufactures in the Madras Presidency', *Studies in History*, n.s. vol.11 no.1 (1995).

of the weavers, dyers, and loom-builders, the quality of the materials, and the effectiveness of the discipline of warders and superintendents of prisons.<sup>67</sup>

There was significant variation in skills. Perhaps the most famous jail carpet is that produced in the jail in Agra in 1892-3, a city associated with Mughal Emperor Akbar's imperial carpet weaving studio and presented to Queen Victoria in 1894 (figures 13,14).<sup>68</sup>

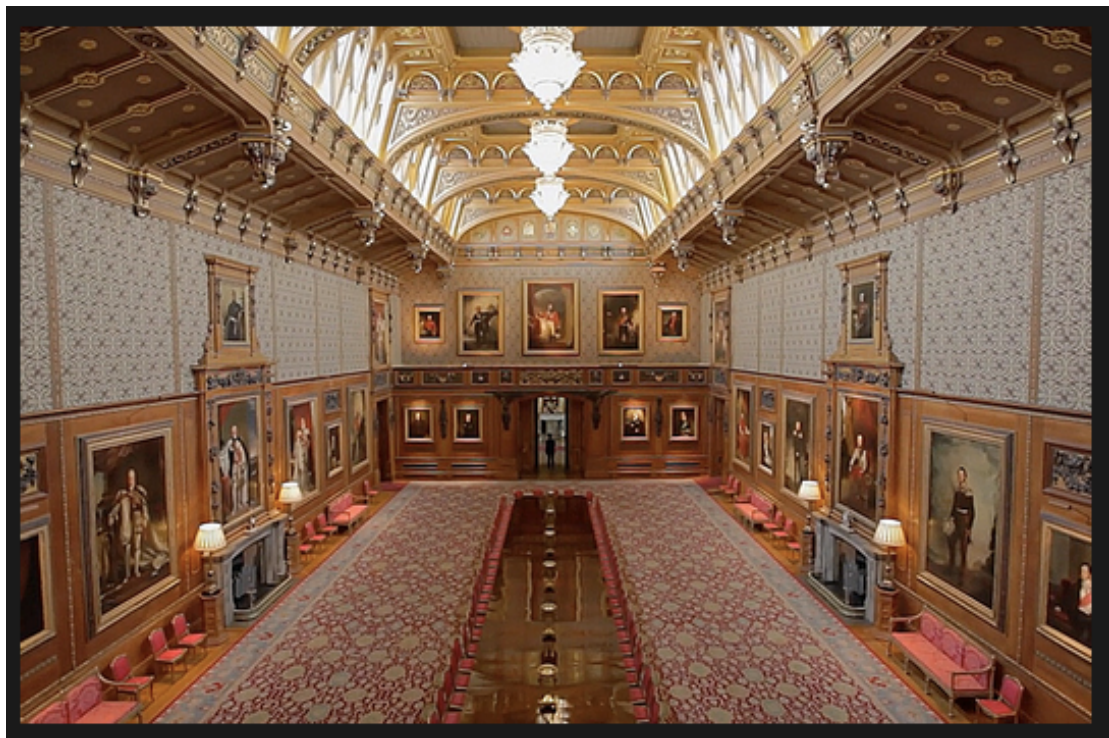


Figure 13: Handknotted carpet, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 23m x 12m, Agra Jail, India, 1893-4. (Royal Collection Trust, United Kingdom, RCIN 35837). Displayed in the Waterloo Chamber, Windsor Castle.

<sup>67</sup> Huge carpets such as the Agra carpet and the V&A's Ardabil required significant engineering skill in loom-building. Amritsar looms of more than thirty feet in width are recorded, worked by multiple weavers. Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> A contemporaneous account of Akbar's reign describes the Mughal royal workshops. Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. by H. Beveridge (London: Asiatic Society, 2010).



Figure 14: Detail of Agra Jail Carpet, with characteristic Indo-Persian floral motifs.

(Royal Collection Trust, United Kingdom, RCIN 35837)

The carpet is still displayed in the Waterloo Gallery at Windsor Castle, covered by a reproduction to protect it from visitors' feet. It is thought-provoking, given the tension between originals and copies in the European and North American relationship with these carpets, that this version of an Indo-Persian carpet is now covered by a copy of itself, to protect the original copy.<sup>69</sup> At the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of accomplishment of execution is the V&A's jail carpet in figure 15. The name of the jail cannot be deciphered as letters are reversed

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<sup>69</sup> In collaboration with Kajal Meghani, curator at the Royal Collection, I am researching the maker of the copy of the copy. Royal Collection records suggest it was made in Axminster.

and inverted. This may be because an illiterate weaver was trying to follow a written pattern.



Figure 15: Handknotted carpet, wool warps and wefts, silk pile, 104 x 73cm, unidentified jail, India, 1855-1879 (V&A, London, 8628 (IS))

Given the direct link between jail production and the British reimagining of the Indian carpet, carpets selected for special praise in the jail section of the 1881-2 Punjab exhibition offer insights into the work the British expected Indian carpets to do, and the operation of the British carpet system in Punjab. The prize-winning jail carpet was a copy of a carpet from the 'Maison de Louvre', probably a Parisian department store, rather than the museum:<sup>70</sup>

This is an exceptionally beautiful carpet; the design is very handsome, the colouring good, and the workmanship perfect. It is recommended that the first prize for Jail carpets be awarded to this.<sup>71</sup>

The carpet was so impressive that it was bought by Caspar Purdon Clarke for the South Kensington Museum.<sup>72</sup> Two knotted wool pile carpets from Lahore Central Jail are listed in the V&A's inventory of Casper Purdon Clarke's purchases from the 1881-2 Punjab exhibition, of which figure 16 was one.<sup>73</sup> The other is mislaid, having been sent out on loan as a design model by the Department of Science and Art to their art schools in Britain. It is not clear which of these carpets was the prize-winning carpet. The carpet which remains in the V&A has a field structure

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<sup>70</sup> Gwenaëlle Fellingier, deputy director of Islamic art at the Louvre, doubts whether such a carpet is in the Louvre's storage. I am grateful to Laure de Gramont and Dr. Theodora Zemek for their help in identifying Les Grands Magasins de Louvre, in the nineteenth century Palais Royal.

<sup>71</sup> Dallas, *Report* (1883), p.59.

<sup>72</sup> The price was 227 rupees, approximately £18 in 1881/2.

<sup>73</sup> The two carpets are inventory numbers 797, and 798. 798 is mislaid. Research has resulted in 797 being photographed for the V&A catalogue, and I have written a new public access catalogue description. If it can be proved that this carpet is the prize-winner, it will become a candidate for conservation. I am grateful for the collaboration of the V&A's South Asia curator, Avalon Fotheringham, in this investigation.

of wreaths and cartouches containing blossoms, and a strong palette of red, black and dark blue, with some fading. As well as its Indo-Persian *millefleurs* characteristics, it also has a relationship to urban Persian carpet making of the nineteenth century, in its all-over floral pattern. The second, mislaid, carpet is described in the inventory as a pattern of rows of *boteh*, stylized leaves, characteristic of Persian and Indo-Persian carpets, and similar to the designs in figures 17 and 18.



Figure 16: Handknotted wool carpet, 330 x 250cm, Lahore Central Jail, Punjab, c.1880.

(V&A, London, IS. 797-1883. Image courtesy of Avalon Fotheringham)





Figure 17: Handknotted wool carpet, Qashqai Federation, Persia, c.1900. (Knights Antiques)



Figure 18: Handknotted wool carpet, Agra Jail, India, c.1880. (Cotswold Oriental Rugs).

In the strictly controlled environment of British jails, carpets which matched British ideological and aesthetic requirements were made. Whichever of these two carpets was the winner, the taste celebrated by the jail prize in the 1880-81 Punjab exhibition was for Indo-Persian carpets with a close relationship to Persian styles, rather than, for example, the whole plant botanical styles of the later Mughal Empire.<sup>74</sup> These carpets were then sent to Britain, where they were deployed as models of traditional Indian carpets in Britain's art schools and its museum of decorative arts.

The V&A's 1881-2 Punjabi jail carpets highlight British and wider European ideas of authenticity in design tradition, what is truly indigenous, the mechanisms of design transfer and hybridity, and their connection with the market. They destabilize assumptions of centre and periphery. Paris and London, each an imperial metropolis, might claim to be the centre. London housed the institutions which were the arbiters of taste and controllers of means of production, whereas Paris was the location of the owner of the original of the prize-winning carpet. Equally Persia, a source of the Indo-Persian design tradition, might claim to be the centre, or Lahore, where the carpet was made, discussed, and exported to London. Understanding this carpet requires a networked approach to describing change in design, and one which is not static and traditional, but open to ongoing difference.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> McGowan, 'Convict Carpets', 398-405.

<sup>75</sup> Lambert and Lester, 'Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects', pp. 1-32; Glenn Adamson and Giorgio Riello 'Global Objects: Contention and Entanglement', *Writing the History of the Global*, Maxine Berg ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 177-195.

Despite the warm praise given to the prize-winning jail carpet in the 1881-2 exhibition, jail weaving was a contentious issue. On the one hand the British in Punjab believed that they had saved Punjabi carpet weaving from a terminal state of decline, and that Indian carpet weavers were themselves incapable of responding adequately to the commercial opportunities of the oriental carpet boom, either in productivity or quality:

I believe it is not too much to say that it is the Lahore Central Jail manufacture of these carpets which has kept it alive and even extended it in the Province.<sup>76</sup> [...] Had the Lahore Central Jail not taken up Messrs Watson and Bontor's [of Bond Street, London] orders for carpets, they would not have been executed.<sup>77</sup> [...] It seems to be a fact that excepting under European supervision, the effect of an increased demand has been to raise prices and deteriorate quality.<sup>78</sup>

The views expressed here by the British in Punjab align with those of Riegl and Purdon Clarke discussed in chapter one, who asserted that indigenous artisans and entrepreneurs could not operate autonomously within a global capitalist system, an industrialising production environment, or an international marketplace, without affronting what the dominant powers of the period, Europe and North America, viewed as universal laws of taste and quality in carpets.

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<sup>76</sup> W. Coldstream, *Report*, (1883), p. 61.

<sup>77</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 57.

<sup>78</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 45.

On the other hand the aesthetic value of jail carpets in Punjab and across India was questioned. George Birdwood, in his influential *Arts and Manufactures of India* of 1887, gave his judgement on the carpets of Lahore jail:

The dyes with which they are coloured are hideous, and the arrangement of the colours is harsh and inharmonious...[the carpets] are not copied in Persian dyes, but in local ones, compounded, I could believe, out of the jail medical stores.<sup>79</sup>

This again demonstrates the materialization through dyes of the nineteenth-century intelligensia's resistance to innovations in traditional crafts, seen throughout the thesis. It is accompanied as usual by the assertion of the supposed inherent superiority of Persian methods, although at this time, Persian dyers and carpet makers began experimenting with the new dyes, and Persia's government attempted, often unsuccessfully, to mitigate the impact of this on their export market for carpets by issuing decrees forbidding their use.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, Birdwood seems to ignore the exceptional history of dyes and dyeing

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<sup>79</sup> Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, pp. 258-300. Birdwood was arguably the most influential spokesperson on Indian material culture in the nineteenth century British arts establishment.

<sup>80</sup> Annette Ittig, 'CARPETS xi. Qajar Period', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/8, pp. 877-883. <[iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xi](http://iranicaonline.org/articles/carpets-xi)> [Accessed 8 February 2012]; Dorothy Armstrong, 'The Introduction of 'Synthetic' Dyes into Persian Carpet-Making in the Nineteenth Century', *Oxford Asian Textiles Group Magazine*, no. 56 (November 2013), 11-19.

in India, which had made their printed goods an engine of global trade since the sixteenth century.<sup>81</sup>

The stickiness of this aspect of the Euro- American orthodoxy is demonstrated in twenty-first-century secondary literature on jail carpets, It is worth examining the specific vocabulary of McGowan's account of dyes:

Yeraoda became a leader in the adaptation of historic Indian designs [...]The impact of Yeraoda Jail's carpets came not just in patterns but also in the colours used to render those patterns – specifically in the use of muted colours produced by natural dyes. From the beginning, convicts there employed only natural dyes, by-passing aniline dyes, which were cheaper and easier to use.<sup>82</sup>

The ideology of natural dyes and their intrinsic harmony is readily adopted in McGowan's description, as is the assumption that less skill is needed in the use of aniline dyes. McGowan shares assumptions about carpet making with the British Government establishment of which she is on economic and social matters clear-sightedly critical.

Birdwood's reading of carpets was part of his broader ideological position, that Indian artisans should be left 'alone and severely alone, to pursue in their own

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<sup>81</sup> Rosemary Crill, *The Fabric of India* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2015); Giorgio Riello 'The Globalization of Cotton Textiles: Indian Cottons, Europe and the North Atlantic World', *The Spinning World*, pp. 261-291.

<sup>82</sup> McGowan, 'Convict Carpets', 404-405.

markets, rural and urban, the artistic industries',<sup>83</sup> without the intervention of jails, schools or British exhibitions promoting the superiority of some craft techniques, designs and objects over others. The engaged tone of Birdwood's comments is notable and is characteristic of a dynamic discussed in chapters one and three, whereby a fastidiousness about the means of production was transformed into an aesthetic criticism. That fastidiousness could be triggered by the wretched living and working conditions of the industrial revolution, or as in this case, production under circumstances of coercion in prisons.

At the same time the position taken by Birdwood, a member of the British colonial establishment, expresses the ambivalence in the colonial attitude to their disciplinary institutions in India, for example, the prison carpet workshops and British art schools discussed in this chapter. Satudra Sen analyses this ambivalence:

Like other colonial disciplinary enclaves, the women's prison realised the ordering impulse of a European imperialism that was both challenged and sustained by the disorder it perceived in native societies.<sup>84</sup>

The necessity for British jails and schools, in effect, demonstrated the necessity of colonialism. Yet the impact of Sen's 'colonial disciplinary enclaves' was not wholeheartedly endorsed by the colonisers. A.M Dallas, Inspector General of

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Cecil L. Burns, 'The Functions of the Schools of Art in India', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 57, no. 2952 (June 18, 1909), 629-650.

<sup>84</sup> Satudra Sen, *Disciplined Natives: Race, Freedom and Confinement in Colonial India*, (Delhi: Primus Books, 2012), p.219.

Prisons in Punjab, and reporter on the 1881-2 Punjab Exhibition discussed above, moved prisoners who were thought suitable for rehabilitation out of prisons in Punjab, where rehabilitation did not seem to him possible.

Commenting on this, Sen notes:

If the prison, where the power of the state was supposed to be concentrated rather than diffused, is viewed as a locus of moral and social contamination rather than of redemption, then Dallas' desire to get convicts out of the prison becomes symptomatic of a larger ambivalence about the ability of the British to manage Indian criminals.<sup>85</sup>

This ambivalence is reflected in the lack of alignment in the interpretations of prison experience offered by twenty-first century historians, and in the sometimes contradictory glimpses of prisoners' experience of coerced weaving in jails which they record. Roy cites Harris's 1908 monograph on carpet-weaving in southern India, that 'the work appealed to prisoners, though spinning, regarded as women's work, was hated'.<sup>86</sup> McGowan cites a contrary view, quoting prison official C.H. Brierley's 1922 testimony that the monotony of the work was such that he was 'often asked by prisoners employed on carpet-making to send them to the road-work gang'.<sup>87</sup> Roy also suggests that some jail weavers became highly skilled, and were able to use this skill when they returned to society,<sup>88</sup> a vindication of what Sen describes as 'the ideological

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<sup>85</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p. 224

<sup>86</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p. 207.

<sup>87</sup> McGowan, 'Convict Carpets', 397.

<sup>88</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, pp. 206-219.

imperative of prison regimes' to inculcate 'the moral value of work'.<sup>89</sup> Again, McGowan takes a different view, suggesting that very few jail weavers chose to take up weaving after leaving jail. Furthermore McGowan asserts that jail weaving initiative was punitive and commercial, not rehabilitatory.<sup>90</sup> Sen provides an alternative reading, describing the 'pedagogical nature' of textile weaving in jails,<sup>91</sup> but agreeing that the strong element of rescue and rehabilitation in women's prisons was not so present in men's jails.<sup>92</sup> The divergence in views is partly a consequence of the divergence in the experience of men and women, and of inmates in the different parts of India recorded in the primary materials of these historians; southern India in the case of Roy in this example, and the Bombay Presidency in the case of McGowan, Punjab in the case of Sen. However the lack of historical consensus also demonstrates the unresolved nature of British attitudes to and intentions in their colonial prisons.

The framing offered by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* has been influential in the thinking of scholars of British prisons and penal colonies in India. Sen, for example, positions his study of the use of the prison and penal colony to identify and separate the Other and bring it into alignment with the hegemony, as an exploration of the overlap between Foucault and Said, by 'studying the making of norms in a world of deviance and difference'.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p.223

<sup>90</sup> McGowan, 'Convict Carpets', 411-413.

<sup>91</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p.222.

<sup>92</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p. 219.

<sup>93</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p.7.



Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish* helps clarify the divergence between historians of prison labour in India discussed above.<sup>94</sup> He identifies the primary objective of the European prison from the late eighteenth century onwards as 'the technical transformation of individuals'.<sup>95</sup> The offenders' liberty is withdrawn and they are subject to ongoing scrutiny, as they are reprogrammed through order, regularity and work. Foucault asks

What then is the function of penal labour? Not profit; nor even the formation of useful skills; but the constitution of power relations, an empty economic form, a schema of individual submission and of adjustments to a production apparatus.<sup>96</sup>

Carpet workshops in British prisons in India, did not conform to this model, even if the original intention of the British was that they should. They were not 'empty economic forms', rather they created an economically viable European and North American market, and the project of reinventing the Indian carpet for that market took priority over the 'schema for individual submission'. Consequently, carpet workshops in British jails in India were not the standardised disciplinary machines described by Foucault and gave rise to less standardised results in terms of the responses of prisoner weavers. This conflict between the ideological underpinnings of what Foucault calls 'the carceral archipelago',<sup>97</sup> the system of penal confinement developed in Europe from the late eighteenth

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<sup>94</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>95</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.233.

<sup>96</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.243.

<sup>97</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.297.

century onwards, and the objectives of the British in India to reinvent the patterned pile carpet and profit from that reinvention, contributes to the lack of consensus about the intentions and experience of prison work in British jails in India amongst commentators and historians discussed above.

Jail labour and jail discipline are important areas of debate in postcolonial and subaltern scholarship, where the British organization of punishment in South Asia, and its manipulation of subaltern bodies, has been read as a confrontational representation of the hegemony's coercion of both subaltern individuals and subaltern societies.<sup>98</sup> Foucault's analysis of the prison in part four of *Discipline and Punish* arises from his work on European and particularly French penal systems from the eighteenth century onwards,<sup>99</sup> but at the same time serves to throw some idiosyncratic characteristics of colonisers' prisons outside Europe into relief. Foucault stresses the blurring in the European system between criminal behaviour and behaviour which challenges the norm. In a coloniser's penal system, the norms of the colonised were not necessarily well-understood and the coloniser could not easily become one of Foucault's 'experts in normality',<sup>100</sup> hence the confusion between the criminal and the normative had the potential to be even more intense than in Europe. This undermines confidence in the criminality of the prison workers in the images and textual records discussed in this chapter and adds weight to Sen's assertion that the prison in India acted primarily as an incubator for the creation of compliant

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<sup>98</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*; David Arnold, 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology' in *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Gupta* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.148-184.

<sup>99</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 231-309.

<sup>100</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 228.

imperial subjects, accelerating the reshaping of Indian citizens to a colonial norm; in this case a norm of skilled weavers who accepted the moral value of work and the subjugation of their own creative powers to hegemonic taste.

Equally, Foucault's reading of incarceration as the inevitable preferred form of punishment because it removed liberty, 'a good that belongs to all in the same way and to which each individual is attached', is complicated if applied to the colonial prison, where the coloniser could not be confident that ideas of liberty belonged 'to all in the same way'.<sup>101</sup> Indeed Sen describes the preference of some female prisoners for the cell over the apparent relative liberty of the penal colony, with its expectations that they should find husbands and marry.<sup>102</sup>

Some direct insight into the first-hand experience of carpet-weavers in jails in Punjab and neighbouring Sindh can be found by examining contemporaneous reports and images. The report on the 1881-82 exhibition records that Lahore jail weavers were particularly skilled because these prisoners served the longest sentences, and therefore could develop their craft skills over time.<sup>103</sup> One of the carpets in the exhibition was woven in Lahore's female penitentiary, raising questions about what their crimes might have been, and where their children were.<sup>104</sup> The photograph in figure 19 shows a weaver in Karachi jail working on a flatwoven carpet or *dhurri*. It is one of a group of photographs displayed in the 1873 Universal Exhibition in Vienna to illustrate Indian crafts. Taken by a British

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<sup>101</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.233.

<sup>102</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p. 222.

<sup>103</sup> *Report*, (1883), pp. 57-8.

<sup>104</sup> *Report*, (1883), pp. 57-8.

photography company, and probably posed, the direct gaze of the jail weaver nevertheless challenges us to engage with his history and personality and humanizes him.



Figure 19: Prisoners weaving carpets in Karachi jail. Photograph Michie and Company c.1873. (Archaeological Survey of India, 1000/52 (4906)

A drawing by John Lockwood Kipling has the opposite effect (figure 20). The image has a strong focus on the equipment, which is rendered in detail, rather than on the artisans, who are mostly drawn from behind, only one given a sketchy face, and all of them shrouded in generic clothing. We cannot even see the point of contact between their human hands and the materials they work. Kipling's drawing gives insight into the buried processes of dehumanization and objectification within colonialism, which are shockingly manifest in the display of a group of thirty four artisans from Agra Jail, including weavers, alongside and

as equivalent to the exhibits in the 1886 'Colonial and Indian Exhibition' at the South Kensington Museum in London.<sup>105</sup>

The Kipling drawing also illustrates the harnessing of Indian prisoners to the technology and materials needed to produce stuff, and illuminates Foucault's observation that

disciplinary power appears to have the function [...] not so much of exploitation of the product as of coercive link with the apparatus of production'<sup>106</sup>

This disciplinary relationship with production is clear in prison carpet workshops in nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab, however the 'coercive link' established was not just with prison disciplines, but with the entire apparatus of colonialism. As Sen puts it:

When [prisoners] left prison, they could be expected to retain their productive habits and skills, and thus remain ideologically and economically connected to the colonial order.<sup>107</sup>

Sen sees British prisons in India as places of 'accelerated colonisation',<sup>108</sup> and the example of jail workshops and the carpets they produced shows not only the

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<sup>105</sup> Saloni Mathur, 'Living Ethnological Exhibits: The Case of 1886', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 15 no.4 (November 2000), 492-524.

<sup>106</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.153.

<sup>107</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p. 218.

<sup>108</sup> Sen, *Disciplined Natives*, p.219.

accelerated colonisation of both the body and soul of the prisoners, in Foucault's formulation, but also the accelerated colonisation of the carpets they produced. People and carpets were subject to the unmediated control of British economic and political power, and of British taste.



Figure 20: 'Three men from Amritsar jail working at a carpet loom', John Lockwood Kipling, pencil on paper, John Lockwood Kipling, 1870. (V&A, London, 0929:33/(IS))

I have argued in this section that in their interaction with Punjabi patterned pile carpets, the British had political, economic and ideological motives, which they translated into a vocabulary of aesthetics and cultural heritage. In chapters two and three, I argued that this dynamic was also at work in the reinvention of the Ardabil carpet, and the European and North American orthodoxy's marginalization of machine-made carpets. In both of these examples, the impact of the orthodoxy was indirect, executed through storytelling and models of taste.

However, in the strictly controlled environment of British jails, carpets which matched British ideological and aesthetic were physically made, rather than imaginatively reinvented, and the British were able to directly impose their expectations of carpets through the instruments of colonial power.

### **3. The Punjabi reinvention of the Indian carpet, Amritsar, 1880-1920**

Two processes of reinvention were carried out in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century India. Alongside that executed by the British through their colonial infrastructure, an independent indigenous carpet weaving industry based in Amritsar reinvented the patterned pile carpet for an international market.

Whilst jail carpet production was always relatively small, scale of production at Amritsar increased during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, permitting it to be described as ‘one of the most visible examples of the integration of artisans into a world market’.<sup>109</sup> The Amritsar industry was so successful that in 1897 the government of India created a separate heading in its trade figure for carpets and rugs exported from Punjab.<sup>110</sup> Exports peaked in 1899 at 856,270 rupees, and fell back to 503,982 rupees in 1907, as the oriental carpet boom passed its peak.<sup>111</sup> By contrast, the trade between Punjab and other provinces of India was a tenth of the export trade.<sup>112</sup> Lahore jail exported carpets

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<sup>109</sup> Roy *Traditional Industry*, p. 197.

<sup>110</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 5.

to only 1% of the value of Amritsar exports, 4,000 rupees, in the years between 1903 and 1907.

By the early twentieth century Amritsar was home to a number of major carpet weaving firms; East Indian Carpets, Chamba Lal, and Khan Bahadur Sheikh Gulam Hussun and Company. The biggest of these had up to 300 looms, alongside smaller workshops with ten or less.<sup>113</sup> Latimer in 1907 puts the number employed at 1800 men and boys, including dyers, weavers and carders, and an uncounted number of women spinning at home.<sup>114</sup>

Latimer's record draws attention to the gendering of carpet weaving in the independent Amritsar industry, where the involvement of women was restricted to spinning at home. Within the factory environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century independent Punjabi carpet weaving, the makers were largely male. In a 2012 lecture, Jon Thompson pointed out a geographical pattern in the gendering of weaving, arguing that the further East a carpet is made, the more likely the weaver is to be male.<sup>115</sup> He did not however attempt an explanation of this phenomenon. A number of factors may contribute to it. One is the preference within Muslim society for women to operate within the domestic rather than the public sphere. Related to this is what Tirthanker Roy and others describe as the historical concentration of carpet weaving in factories in Punjab and elsewhere in India, and the lack of a domestic carpet weaving industry in

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<sup>113</sup> *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, (1931), vol.ii part 2, pp. 89-90.

<sup>114</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> Jon Thompson, public lecture, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, November 2012.



villages and amongst tribes, such as that found in West Asia.<sup>116</sup> This domestic West Asian industry led to the development of high levels of skills in carpet design and carpet weaving amongst women. In Punjab the question of the gendering of production is complicated by the age of the weavers. The traditional use of boy weavers and the difficulty of eliminating the practice, despite late twentieth- and early twenty-first century concerns about child labour, are discussed throughout this chapter. Meanwhile, the gendering of carpet weaving in jails is less clear. References are made to both male and female jail weavers in the primary sources cited above. Traditional local habits and expectations of carpet-making may have had a less defining role in the coercive environment of the British prison.

The British establishment in India had a complex set of responses to this industry. On the one hand they encouraged economic growth, on the other, the British hesitated to abandon their control of design in carpets. An origin story developed for the industry which reflected this. In a memorandum on the carpets in the 1881-2 Punjab exhibition Dr. A.M. Dallas stated:

With the exception of a very few in Mooltan (and Bahawalpur) there were no carpet-weavers in the Punjab other than those trained in the jail.<sup>117</sup> [...]

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<sup>116</sup> Walker, *Flowers under Foot*, p. 27; Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p.199.

<sup>117</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 57. The Jail referred to is Lahore Central Jail. Mooltan, modern Multan, South Punjab, is 200 miles from Lahore.

The independent carpet trade has received a distinct impulse from the exhibition and promises at no distant date to be able to take the place of the jails.<sup>118</sup>

The use of the term independent alerts us to the degree to which jail carpets were normative, and the locally organised carpet making industry defined by its relation to the imperial power. The British also described the indigenous carpet industry as private, suggesting the degree of British identification with the Indian public space.

Twenty-five years later in 1907, this was still the government-endorsed story of British involvement in carpet weaving in Punjab.<sup>119</sup> The British account of an imperial mission to rescue the Punjabi industry from complete decline does not acknowledge other stimuli to growth. Skilled Kashmiri weavers and dyers moved to Punjab, fleeing first famine from 1840 onwards, then seeking work as the export shawl-weaving industry declined from 1870 onwards.<sup>120</sup> Dealers and entrepreneurs from Europe and North America arrived in India looking for new supply lines to meet the increased demand for imported handmade patterned pile carpets in their home countries during the oriental carpet boom. Meanwhile as Roy, working from both Indian and British sources, points out, there was a

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<sup>118</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 44.

<sup>119</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 20.

<sup>120</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 5; Jeffrey B. Spurr 'The Kashmir Shawl: Style and Markets' *Kashmir Shawls: the Tapi Collection*, ed. by Steven Cohen (Mumbai: Shoestring Publishers, 2012), pp. 28-53

continuation through the nineteenth century of an existing substantial factory and workshop-based carpet weaving industry in Punjab.<sup>121</sup>

When Punjabi entrepreneurs, dealers and weavers began to expand pile carpet weaving during the second half of the nineteenth century they did so for the export market, and this proved a formative element in their industry. Like Kashmir shawls and chintz before them, Amritsar carpets illustrate what Spurr describes as the 'sophisticated response to export imperatives across all major textile traditions' characteristic of India.<sup>122</sup> W.S.Caine, writing in 1888, describes the intimacy of the relationship between Amritsar and its overseas clients, as well as giving a sense of the scale of the enterprise.

Some of the finest carpets in India are woven at Amritsar. One dealer just inside the first gate, entered from the railway station and hotels, employs from seven hundred to one thousand hands in carpet weaving [...] He works mainly for three or four great London firms.<sup>123</sup>

The industry was not exclusively focused on British export markets, however and its intimacy with other export markets is notable. Lockwood de Forest (1850-1932) was an American designer associated with the Aesthetic movement in the US, and a champion of Indian crafts.<sup>124</sup> De Forest had bought jail carpets for clients in the US, such as Louis Comfort Tiffany's interiors business, and

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<sup>121</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, pp. 221-230.

<sup>122</sup> Spurr, 'The Kashmir Shawl', p.30

<sup>123</sup> Caine, *Picturesque India*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>124</sup> Roberta A. Mayer, *Lockwood de Forest: Furnishing the Gilded Age with a Passion for India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

Sloane's department store in New York. Jail goods were banned in the US in 1894, and de Forest needed alternative sources of supply. In collaboration with the Hutheesing family of Indian industrialists, de Forest set up carpet manufacturing and export businesses in Ahmadabad and Amritsar. The Hutheesings provided capital, factories and weavers, and de Forest specified the style and quality of the carpets. These carpets were repositioned in marketing materials addressing European and North American consumers. The advertisement for Sloane's 'oriental rugs' in figure 21 replaces the Indian jail or factory as the source of its exotic goods by Arabia and its desert. As the discussion of Templeton's marketing in chapter three argued, Arabia often stood in for the whole of the Eurasian carpet weaving belt in the European and North American imagining of patterned pile carpets, an example of the impulse to make the Other generic.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 40-60.

SOME HOLIDAY  
SUGGESTIONS  
from the  
**ORIENT**

**W. & J. SLOANE**

**ORIENTAL RUGS**

◀ A genuine Oriental Rug possesses distinct individuality, and is at the same time adaptable to an unusual degree. While it may in itself form the basis for an entire scheme of furnishing, it will also harmonize with furniture and decorations of widely differing styles and periods. Furthermore, the genuine Oriental Rug has a lasting value, both decorative and monetary.

◀ By importing direct from the best Eastern markets, we are enabled to assemble and offer an unequalled selection of Oriental weaves with an absolute confidence that gives enhanced value to our guarantee of genuineness.

**BROADWAY AND NINETEENTH ST., NEW YORK**

Figure 21: Advertisement for W. & J. Sloane department store, New York. (Lockwood de Forest, *Indian Domestic Architecture*, back matter, 1885)

Amritsar and Lahore were cities of different character in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the novel *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling stresses the contrast between Lahore with its 'house of wonders', bazaar and ancient soothsayers, and the telegraph and railway of Amritsar.<sup>126</sup> Both cities were modernizing, and

<sup>126</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Macmillan, 1901). The 'house of wonders' described in chapter one is the Lahore Museum, where his father J.L. Kipling was curator.

Kipling was writing to a creative and political agenda, however Amritsar was industrializing rapidly.<sup>127</sup> This brought with it population shifts, changing socio-economic relationships, and their consequences. The 1883 Report on the 1881-2 Punjab exhibition explains that Amritsar could not send its required inventory of crafts because of an epidemic.<sup>128</sup> Meanwhile, as charted by Wagner, pre-1919 Amritsar witnessed the growth of political activism.<sup>129</sup>

Lahore was the centre of British government in Punjab, and of its military presence. Amritsar had only a small garrison. Equally Amritsar was not at the centre of the British craft and design establishment, unlike Lahore, home of the Lahore Museum and Mayo School of Art. Amritsar's school of art was established in 1928 by Sikh artist Gurdit Singh. The pressure to follow the style guidance of the British government and arts establishment was as a consequence less intense in Amritsar. Instead the production of Amritsar carpets was mediated by entrepreneurs, dealers and buyers who understood the commercial market in North America and Europe.

A new hybrid emerged in Amritsar to meet a European and North American taste which was not so fixated on reviving 'traditional' Indian crafts as was the British government in India. Indeed, the imposition of a British idea of a handmade patterned pile carpet on the traditional carpet-making area of Punjab had loosened the bonds of identity between independent Punjabi weavers and their

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<sup>127</sup> Wagner, *Amritsar*, pp. 19-38.

<sup>128</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 22.

<sup>129</sup> Wagner, *Amritsar*, pp. 18-98.

own Mughal and pre-Mughal styles of carpets. Once that bond was broken, energy was released for a heterodox reimagining of these artifacts.



Figure 22: Handknotted carpet, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, Amritsar, c 1890.

(Doris Leslie Blau, New York)

The Amritsar carpet in figure 22 is an adaptation of Indo-Persian scrolling vine and blossom designs. Because the motifs are relatively large, and the spiral pattern on a single layer, the design is more easily read than the multi-layer spirals and small and detailed floral patterns found in many Indo-Persian carpets. Furthermore, the carpet has no other major field structures such as niches, compartments or medallions to add to its complexity. Amritsar carpets also tended to have a long, thick pile, difficult to detect in a photographic image. Deep pile was associated with the idea of luxury, a term frequently attached to the broadloom carpeting increasingly available in Europe and North America. The readability of the designs, muted palette without strong primaries or contrasts, and sensuous materials met with success in the export market.





Figure 23: Handknotted carpet, cotton, wool, Amritsar, c.1900. (Doris Leslie Blau, New York)

The Amritsar carpet in figure 23 shows a more extreme expression of this style direction. The palette has almost no contrast, so that the design hovers

ambiguously. The borders are narrow, and act as a simple framing device for the field rather than an independent element of the design. The motifs are simplified into almost sketchy references to Indo-Persian flowers and palmettes. If furniture were placed on this carpet it would not abruptly disrupt the pattern.

The Amritsar combination of large, simplified motifs and dense, long pile is a reversal of what is often found in accomplished West, Central and South Asian carpets. There, small detailed motifs and fine short pile permit high-definition, intricate designs. The blurring created by long pile and large motifs is increased by the subduing of the palette. This gives a watery impression, that does not insist on its centrality in the visual field or compromise the overall western interior scheme, in particular the need for furniture to sit on the carpets, and to break into the pattern.

The palette and design of Amritsar carpets are subdued, and the carpet itself has been subdued to a changed set of expectations. It is a complex task to identify where in the carpet network the subduing took place. The financial capital of London and New York, dealers and taste-makers in European and North American markets, the capital and skills of entrepreneurial Indian manufacturers, and the community of makers, many of them self-organising Kashmiri, all have a claim to being major agents. The common orientalist and post-colonial assumption that something is being done to the East by the West is not the obvious conclusion here, and once again the mapping of change in carpet making challenges linear and binary models of transfer and influence.

Time has done its work and Amritsar carpets are now valued as antiques of high aesthetic and sensual appeal, commanding high prices. Figure 22 was for sale in 2017 for \$150,000, when an attractive nineteenth-century village carpet could be purchased for £2,000.<sup>130</sup> But the enthusiasm for them shown by twenty-first-century dealers and collectors was not shared by the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European and North American orthodoxy, or the British in Punjab. Respected American commentator J.K. Mumford dismissed them in 1902 as the products of a 'purely commercial' system.<sup>131</sup>

The agency of local 'independent and 'private' producers of Amritsar carpets unsettled the British establishment in Punjab. The British were challenged by the participation of Amritsar carpets in the global market for carpets, the design hybridity which arose from that, and the production methods of Amritsar carpets. In 1907, Latimer asserted:

Even at its best it [the Amritsar carpet] is a trade product and not a work of art [...], containing elements the most diverse, thrown together to suit the exigencies of fashion in Europe and America.<sup>132</sup>

Latimer, a British government official in Punjab, spoke to and for the British establishment, indeed his monograph is prefaced by a recommendation from Eric MacLagan, Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, to the Secretary of the Government of India's Commerce and Industry Department at the imperial

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<sup>130</sup> <[dorisleslieblau.com/amritsar-indian-rugs](http://dorisleslieblau.com/amritsar-indian-rugs)> [Accessed 7 December 2017]

<sup>131</sup> Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, p. 252.

<sup>132</sup> Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 18.

centre in Delhi.<sup>133</sup> The values which sit behind Latimer's negative assessment are foundational to the European and North American orthodoxy; the distrust of commercial trade and export, the desire to freeze-frame a static and unchanging tradition, and the assumption that a class of canonical carpets can be defined by western perceptions of 'a work of art'.

Alongside this concern about design hybridity and participation in an international market, sat an anxiety about production methods. Again, the British response was multi-faceted, disturbed on the one hand by challenges to ideas of handmaking and the single authorship of craft objects which were central to the European and North American orthodoxy, but on the other, engaged by the implications for economic productivity arising from the Amritsar method.

The importance of Kashmiri shawl weavers and their methods to the creation of the Amritsar carpet industry was noted by contemporaneous commentators:

Many of the Kashmir customs have been abandoned, but one important feature still prevails. A rug, or pattern, is divided into sections, as many as there are weavers at work upon the looms, and in a book are written down in Kashmiri characters all the stitches in each section, with the colors, and the exact sequence in which they must be put in [...] It is the

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<sup>133</sup> Eric MacLagan later became director of the V&A, illustrating the intimacy of the political and arts establishment across India and Britain.

task of one boy to read off these stitches, day in and day out, through the making of many carpets.<sup>134</sup>

This distinctive Kashmiri weaving process was demonstrated in one of the most popular exhibits in the 1881-2 Punjab exhibition, an analysis of the Kashmiri carpet weaving language contributed by a Dr. Leither. The reporter compares the language with the perforated cards of the Jacquard loom in Europe, and concludes:

Dr. Leither's analysis demonstrates how little foundation there is in the oft-repeated assertion that the Indian craftsman is himself the designer of his work [...] In reality the great mass of Kashmiri weavers have little more freedom than the pierced cards in a European pattern loom, and the designer, as in Europe, is the paramount authority.<sup>135</sup>

This quotation gives us insight into how the British in India thought about craft. The use of the terms craft and design suggest a clear separation in the mind of the British colonial officer writing, between making and choice of ornamentation. There is a verbal transfer of design control from the artisan to an executive arm described here as 'the designer'. That 'designer' of carpets to a colonial official in British India was not a single person, but an infrastructure of schools, exhibitions, periodicals and publications, and jails.

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<sup>134</sup> Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, pp. 257-258.

<sup>135</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 31.

At the same time, the popularity of the exhibit and the specificity of the *Report's* description demonstrate the nineteenth-century European and American fascination with how things worked, with stripping away the unfamiliar and rendering it transparent, codifiable, ownable and replicable. Alongside this is an unmistakable excitement at the idea that Kashmiri shawls, long regarded in Europe and America as objects of high aesthetic value, were not the result of creative freedom, but of discipline. The possibility is raised of human weavers being as efficient and controlled as 'the pierced cards in a European pattern loom', like automata, or the 'cyborg/artisan' Dutta identifies as an ideal of British-organised craft industries in India.<sup>136</sup>

This view was in tension with the British emphasis on tradition in Indian crafts, and in direct conflict with the European and North American orthodoxy's vision of a pre-industrial golden age of carpet weaving. The Kashmiri weaving process inhabited the same discomfiting end of the continuum as the machine-made carpets discussed in chapter three, where design and making are separate functions, *bricolage* and hybridization are endorsed, and authorship shared amongst different specialist workers. These characteristics raised questions amongst late nineteenth and twentieth-century commentators on Amritsar carpets about the location of creativity, particularly as Amritsar producers not only Kashmiri shawl but jail disciplines. In 1887, for instance, Chamba Lal and Company, a large enterprise, employed a Mr. Blake, previously deputy supervisor

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<sup>136</sup> Dutta, *Bureaucracy of Beauty*, pp. 191-233.

of the Lahore Jail workshop.<sup>137</sup> In 1903, Mumford gave a view of the impact of this:

Individuality in design was suppressed [in Amritsar], an advantage which the contracting firms have never been able to obtain in dealing with the Turkish, Persian or Caucasian weavers [who] weave upon looms reared in their own houses, where, free from superintendence, they often exercise their own ingenuity, and give to the fabrics a touch now and then of the true Oriental character[...]. This lesson was learned from the jail system and [...] the weavers of the great carpet centres work in droves, within walls and under guard.<sup>138</sup>

Like the British colonial officer describing Dr. Leithner's exhibit, Mumford considered the relationship between creative freedom and discipline. But unlike the former, who saw a possible complementarity between them, since Kashmiri shawls were recognisably still élite aesthetic objects, Mumford connected personal creativity with 'freedom from supervision'.

For Mumford and others suspicious of the impact of the British on Indian crafts, late nineteenth-century Indian carpet making was a site where the vulnerable, children, refugees, and those defined as offenders by the colonial power, were

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<sup>137</sup> C. Latimer, 'Carpet Making in the Punjab', *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* 17 no. 131 (1916), 15–26 (p.24.); Latimer, *Carpet-Making in the Punjab 1905-6*, p. 5.

<sup>138</sup> Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, pp. 257-8. Mumford overstates the uniqueness to India of factory disciplines in handweaving carpets. As discussed in chapter one, similar production environments existed in Turkey and Persia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

surveilled, deprived of key elements of their humanity, their autonomy and creativity, and reduced to the status of serfs from that of artisans. Mumford's description presages the framing used by Foucault in his exploration of the relationship between imprisonment and the emergence of modernity. The image in figure 24 of child weavers in a major Amritsar carpet factory was used in a British Government Report in 1917, and the clean and orderly environment it represents may have been intended to reassure the report's British readers about these issues.<sup>139</sup>

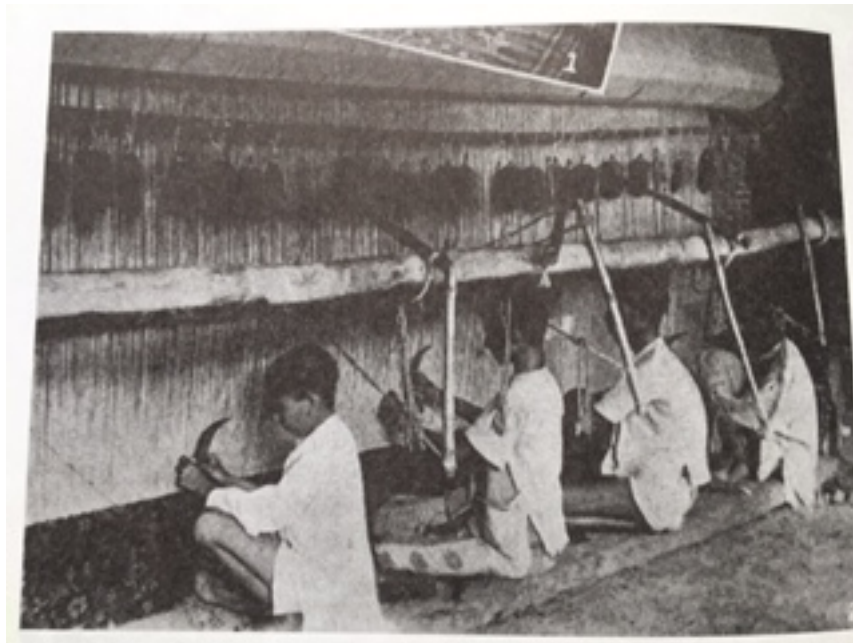


Figure 24. Shaik Gulam Hussun's factory, Amritsar, c.1915. (Somerset Playne, *The Bombay Presidency*, 1917-20, p. 616)

I argue that these contemporaneous ideas about supervision, authorship and creativity fall into the same category as the debates described earlier in this thesis about dyes and machine-weaving. They are shorthand for complex

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<sup>139</sup> Playne, *Bombay Presidency*, p. 616



ideological debates reflecting highly specific issues of their times, rather than 'eternal verities' about the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia. Two debates are being conducted in the discussion of production methods in Amritsar carpets. The first concerns the relationship between factory production methods and incarceration, and the degree of intention in both to dehumanise and control for the economic ends, discussed in chapter one. The second is the debate on division of labour, defined by Morris as the most destructive aspect of the industrial system, discussed in chapters one and three. In Amritsar, division of labour separated design from making, offending the European and North American perception of the dependence of creativity on single authorship.

Amritsar's demonstration that carpet weaving in areas of traditional production could thrive in an industrialised and international market without European guidance undermined the colonial difference the British attempted to establish between themselves and the local population through traditional crafts.<sup>140</sup> The British claimed ownership of modernity and global reach,<sup>141</sup> and sought to contain Indians within their traditions, in a hegemonic denial of the coevalness of the subaltern and the Other.<sup>142</sup> The reclaiming and reinvention of Indian carpet design and production by an autonomous indigenous industry operating internationally was a significant challenge to colonial difference and hence to colonial power. The suggestion that autonomous commercial success came at the

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<sup>140</sup> McGowan, "All that is Rare", 276.

<sup>141</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*, p. 43.

<sup>142</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 31.

expense of 'quality' was a British defence against this, as much as a reflection on the accomplishment of the carpets.

The Amritsar industry's success was built on a number of commercial principles; giving the export trade what it wanted in terms of design, mobilising at scale to exploit local artisanal advantages, communications infrastructure and natural resources, and keeping very close to intermediaries between the industry and the far-away consumer. It intensified existing production disciplines and cost controls through the absorption of jail disciplines into indigenous processes. The Amritsar model gave carpet weaving in this historic area of fine artisanship and exceptional raw materials a commercial and global flavor; a modern flavour which has challenged the palette of carpet connoisseurs, and which formed the basis of the equally contested carpet industry of Pakistan.

#### **4. Carpets from and for the world, Pakistan 1947 -2017**

The British left Punjab in 1947 after a century of rule. At the point of independence and partition, carpet weaving was still in operation in Amritsar, although it had declined from its peak in the 1930s.<sup>143</sup> The new nation-state of Pakistan built on the skills and business model of Amritsar carpet making to create one of its biggest export industries. Pakistan was the site of a further reinvention of the idea of the patterned pile carpet by the indigenous industry rather than the colonial power. The repossession of its material culture by this

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<sup>143</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p. 215.

former colony, and the global impact of the industry it created, destabilized the European and North American orthodoxy, and particularly the assumptions of power relations which were embedded in it.

Indian independence and partition was enacted in 1947. What had been Punjab was divided into Indian Punjab and Pakistani Punjab, along geographical and religious lines, with a diaspora, sometimes forced, of Muslims to both West and East Pakistan (modern Bangladesh), and of Sikhs and Hindus to India (figure 25) The number of people on the move is illustrated by the Indian and Pakistan census returns of 1951, where 7.2 million people were recorded as displaced in Pakistan, and a similar number in India.<sup>144</sup> Figures for the number of deaths range from 200,000 to one million,<sup>145</sup> and stories of the ferocity and brutality of inter-religious violence continue to surface.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *Census of Pakistan, 1951*, Bulletins 1-5 (Karachi: Office of the Census Commissioner, Government of Pakistan, Ministry of the Interior, 1951-54).

<sup>145</sup> Khan, *The Great Partition*, pp.128-167.

<sup>146</sup> Puri, *Partition Voices*.

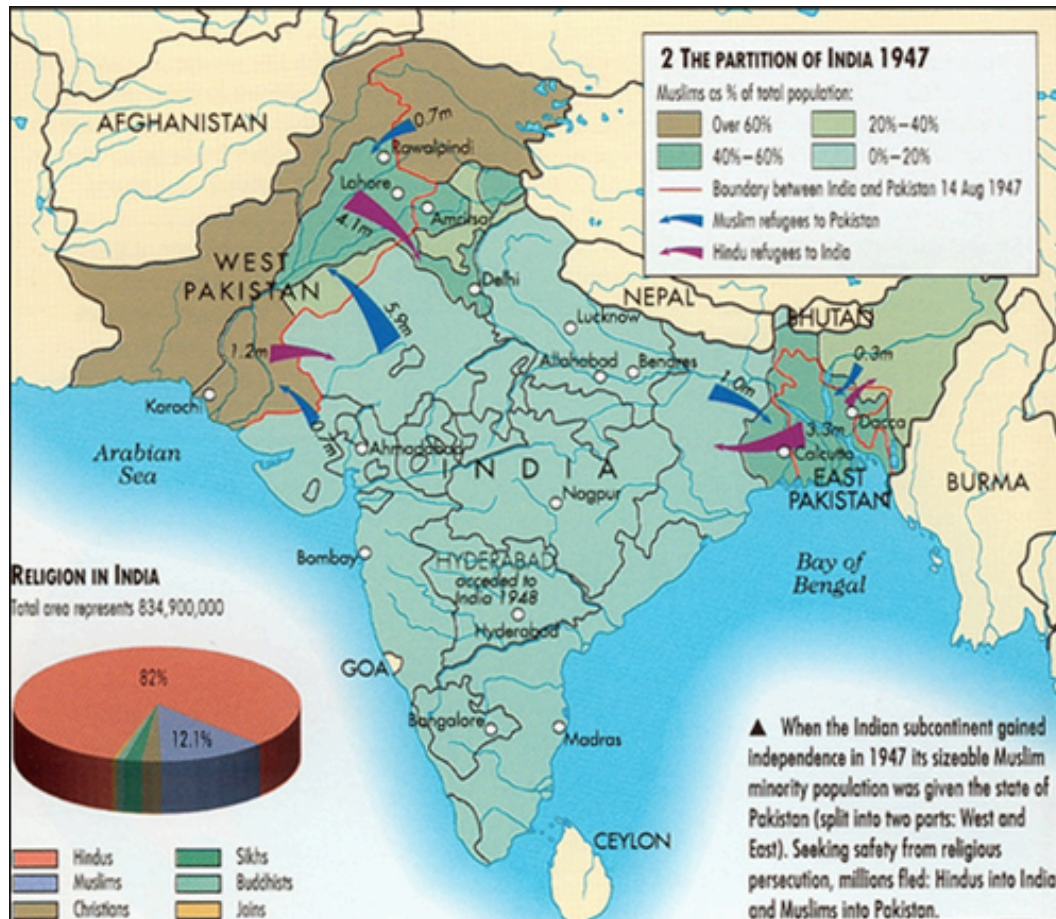


Figure 25: Movement of peoples at 1947 partition of India and Pakistan. ([columbia.edu](http://columbia.edu))

When Punjab was divided by partition, Amritsar's population of Muslim weavers moved to Pakistan. Their lives and skills became part of the creation of the new state. On their present-day websites, two carpet companies based in Punjab, the Lahore Carpet Company and the Multan Oriental Handmade Carpet Company, both claim that they were established in 1947.<sup>147</sup> Lahore-based PAK Persian Carpet Company makes a subtly different claim, that it became home for the émigré Muslim weavers of Amritsar. Recognising the marketing appeal of this, it makes this claim on the section of its website which shows its replicas and

<sup>147</sup> <[lahorecarpet.com](http://lahorecarpet.com)>; <Multan Oriental Hand Made Carpet Company facebook.com/MOHMC>. [Multiple accessions].

versions of Amritsar rugs.<sup>148</sup> These three modern carpet making companies see their firms, weaving and trade as part of the origin story of their nation.

***i. The development of Pakistan's export industry in handmade carpets***

The carpet weaving industry recovered slowly after partition, and required government intervention. The process undertaken to stimulate it bears the marks of the longer history of carpets in Punjab and of the British imperial method. Schools were at the centre of the process, promulgating government-endorsed technical and design skills. A training centre for teachers was opened in 1956. Fifteen weaving schools were established between 1957 and 1972, and according to a later a government report this had grown to over a hundred by 1977, furnished with 2,000 carpet looms providing the industry with over 3,000 skilled craftsmen each year.<sup>149</sup> Alongside this was a broader government-sponsored infrastructure, including the Pakistan Carpet Manufacturing and Exporting Association (PCMEA), founded in 1960, which still plays a significant part in the carpet making industry in Pakistan.<sup>150</sup>

The marks of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century history of carpet weaving in Punjab, particularly in Amritsar, on the Pakistani industry can be seen in its strong focus on exports. This is reflected in the equivalent weighting of exports and manufacture in the PCMEA's title and mandate, and in

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<sup>148</sup> <[pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles](http://pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles)> [Multiple accessions]

<sup>149</sup> Yacopino, *Threadlines Pakistan*, pp. 122-124.

<sup>150</sup> <[pcmea.com.pk/historypage](http://pcmea.com.pk/historypage)> [Multiple accessions]

the export subsidy scheme established in 1960, which gave carpets gave up to 40% relief on export duty.<sup>151</sup> In 1977, 95% of carpets were produced for export.<sup>152</sup> In 2005-2006, a peak of production and export in carpets when 2.83 million square metres of carpet were exported valued at \$171.23 million dollars, the export proportion had risen to 99% of handmade carpets.<sup>153</sup> As in Amritsar, this export focus had a direct impact on the types of carpets woven in Pakistan, as I go on to discuss below.

Critical to Pakistan's export-focused model was the role of the contractor. In 2015 more than 90% of Pakistani handwoven carpets were woven for contractors, who provided design and colour specifications, materials, carried out quality control, and acted as intermediaries with the major export houses (figure 26). Only 10% were sold independently and locally.<sup>154</sup> This business model again echoes the structure of the Amritsar industry. As Roy remarks 'Pakistan seemed to receive, along with Muslim weavers, vestiges of the institutions that formerly governed urban weaving in North India'.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Handmade Carpet Manufacturing* (Karachi: State Bank of Pakistan, 2015), pp.18-21. The State Bank is Pakistan's Central Bank.

<sup>152</sup> Yacopino, *Threadlines Pakistan*, p.122.

<sup>153</sup> Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, *Carpet Industry* (2006). <tdap.gov.pk/tdap-statistics> [Accessed 15 January 2018]. Classified as a small or cottage industry when the Pakistan Provincial Small Industries Corporation was established in 1972, carpet weaving was still absent from Pakistan's largest industries in the 2015 figures.

<sup>154</sup> State Bank, *Carpet Manufacturing*, p. 24.

<sup>155</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p. 228.

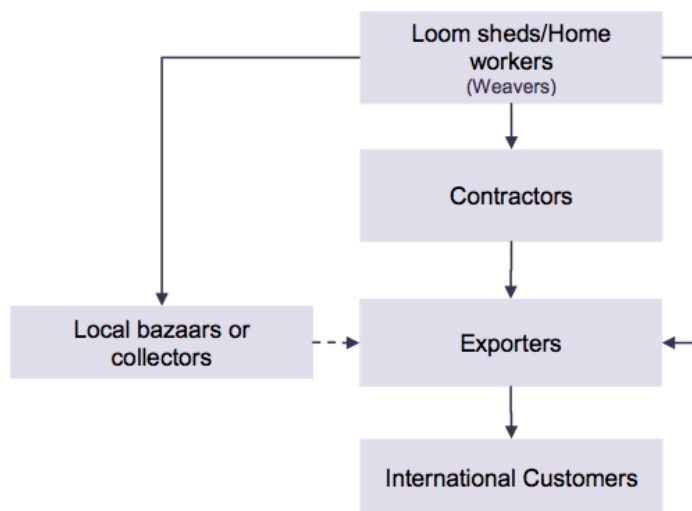
**Figure 5.4-a: Business Model**

Figure 26: Business model of Pakistani carpet weaving industry. (State Bank of Pakistan, *Handmade Carpet Manufacturing*, p.24, 2015)

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Pakistani carpet industry continues to benefit from the trade embargo on Iran, but faces competition from India, China, and Turkey. China is not only Pakistan's competitor in the now global market for handmade carpets, it soon will be an investor. As part of China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, a memorandum has been signed to collaborate and provide research and development facilities for carpet making.<sup>156</sup> The major hegemonic power of the nineteenth century, Britain, was removed from Punjab in 1947 after a century of dominance. Seventy years later, the twenty-first-century hegemonic power, China, is beginning to participate in the Pakistani economy and its carpet weaving industry. Future

<sup>156</sup> State Bank, *Carpet Manufacturing*, p.13. The memorandum is between the Chinese Trade Delegation and the Pakistani Carpet Manufacturing and Export Association.

historians of carpets will have an opportunity to see how Chinese hegemonic ideology is materialised through patterned pile carpets.

I have described the thriving carpet industry in Pakistan as transgressive. As was also the case with Templeton's machine-made carpets, the acceptance by consumers which led to commercial success did not go hand in hand with acceptance by the European and North American orthodoxy, and the connoisseurs, scholars, curators, dealers and commentators who created and endorsed it. Below, I discuss how making, materials and design in the Pakistani carpet making industry post-independence challenged both the longstanding values of the European and North American orthodoxy, and in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the sensibilities of consumers. Using the marketing materials of Pakistani producers and exporter, I analyse how the industry negotiated this.

### ***ii. Making and materials in Pakistani carpet weaving***

At the level of international trade there are commonalities between the Amritsar and Pakistani industries, but there are significant differences at the level of the weaving shed. The large urban factories and workshops managing complex contractual systems recorded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seem not to have revived in Pakistan. Instead workshops became smaller, and their location more widely-distributed across rural as well as urban areas. It is estimated that 60% of carpet-making businesses employed fewer than twenty people, 60% had no formal financial processes, and that these units are



mostly rural.<sup>157</sup> However, this is not a description of a move to family-run businesses from factory production. Highly disciplined weaving environments employing young boys and controlled by contractors continue to be normal in Pakistan, as they were in Amritsar.<sup>158</sup> The major export houses, however, would like to suggest that a family-run cottage industry is their supply source, aware that this resonates with romantic ideas of production environments held by overseas buyers, and reassures them about exploitation of the vulnerable in carpet making. For example, the PAK Persian Carpet Company,<sup>159</sup> a leading Pakistani exporter, shows images of benign-looking heads of family businesses they claim supply them (figure 27):

Many customers have expressed an interest in the origins of the beautiful colors found in their rugs. Mr. Muhammad Tufail, a master-dyer with over 30 years of experience who runs his own business dying wool for companies such as Pak Persian, kindly agreed to be interviewed. Please note that the interview has been translated into English from Punjabi by PAK Persian's staff.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> State Bank, *Carpet Manufacturing*, p. 23.

<sup>158</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, pp. 225-229.

<sup>159</sup> PAK Persian also sells versions of non-Persian types.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Muhammed Tufail. <[pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles](http://pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles)> [Accessed 8 December 2017]



Figure 27: Muhammed Tufail, Pakistani dye master. (PAK Persian Carpet Company)

The evocation of familial carpet making by PAK Persian is partly an attempt to preempt late twentieth and twenty-first-century anxieties about the use of child labour in Pakistan, and the decline in sales which followed adverse publicity at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>161</sup> Individual carpet manufacturing and exporting companies run educational and health projects for child weavers, which they publicise in their target markets.<sup>162</sup> At an industry-wide level, PCMEA participates in international projects and seeks to reassure its European and North American customers of the health and education benefits available to child

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<sup>161</sup> For example Human Rights Watch, *Contemporary Forms of Slavery in Pakistan* (1 July 1995), <refworld.org > [accessed 14 July 2019]; Jonathan Silvers, 'Child Labor in Pakistan', *The Atlantic*, (1 February 1996).

<sup>162</sup> The Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company's project providing education and basic healthcare to child weavers, *Care and Fair Germany/Pakistan*, targets one of its main markets, Germany. < lahorecarpet.com > [Accessed 7 February 2018]

weavers.<sup>163</sup> However as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, the use of child labour in carpet weaving in Punjab has what Roy describes as ‘old roots’, and it is difficult to either eliminate or police.<sup>164</sup>

Pakistani manufacturers and exporters also show themselves aware of resistance that might arise to their processes of making from the longstanding influence of the European and North American orthodoxy. The distinctive method at the heart of carpet weaving in nineteenth-century Amritsar is shared by the Pakistani industry. Designs and materials are sourced by contractors who hand them down to weavers and quality control the product. This division of labour brings with it questions of the separation of making and designing, and the implications of craft production under external discipline which were discussed earlier in this chapter, and in chapters one and three.<sup>165</sup> The marketing materials of Pakistani exporters and producers seek to negotiate objections to this by mobilizing the narrative and psychological advantages handweaving possesses for their international consumers.

The Pakistani PAK Persian Carpet Company website carries a number of interviews with its makers. The website names the workers who are interviewed or photographed, as part of their positioning of themselves as enlightened

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<sup>163</sup> PCMEA advertises its NGO, The Child Care Foundation, and the International Labour Organisation’s campaign against the use of child labour in carpet weaving. <[pcmea.com.pk/historypage](http://pcmea.com.pk/historypage)> [Accessed 5 January 2017]

<sup>164</sup> Roy, *Traditional Industry*, p. 221.

<sup>165</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, pp. 215-221, on the obligation to protest against crafts carried out under duress.

employers, and their carpets as the products of a benign environment. One of the questions asked in the interview is how the makers learned their craft:

Did you have any formal training in making carpets? If so, who taught you and what were the basic things that you learned?

"I was taught to read the carpet weaving language and learned how to make knots at the first company I worked for. The training was provided by the other weavers there."<sup>166</sup>

There are cosy implications here of traditional apprenticeship and the acquisition of intellectually challenging language skills. The PAK Persian website shows us a seasoned master weaver following a complex *talim* (figure 28). The Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company website offers another trope of carpet weaving, attractive groups of female weavers using these technologies (figure 29, 30)<sup>167</sup> However the knot plan and *talim* are the same contentious technology as that described by Mumford in Amritsar in 1903,<sup>168</sup> and shown in Dr. Leithner's 1881-82 exhibit of the Kashmiri shawl weaving language.<sup>169</sup> The images suggest that PAK Persian Carpets and the Lahore Carpet Manufacturing company are attempting to manage the negative implications of Dutta's 'cyborg/artisan', to meet their consumers' preference for ideas of individual authorship and personal creativity.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Interview with Mohammed Akbar. <pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles> [Accessed December 8, 2017]

<sup>167</sup> *Introducing the Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company*, Black Box Video, <youtube.com/watch?v=mCNNQ9b-gyY> [Accessed 5 November 2017]

<sup>168</sup> Mumford, *Oriental Carpets*, pp. 257-8.

<sup>169</sup> *Report*, (1883), p. 31.

<sup>170</sup> Dutta, *Bureaucracy of Beauty*, pp. 191-233.



Figure 28: Mohammed Akbar, Pakistani weaver. (PAK Persian Carpet Company). Shown here weaving an Ardabil-style carpet, with his plan for the carpet.

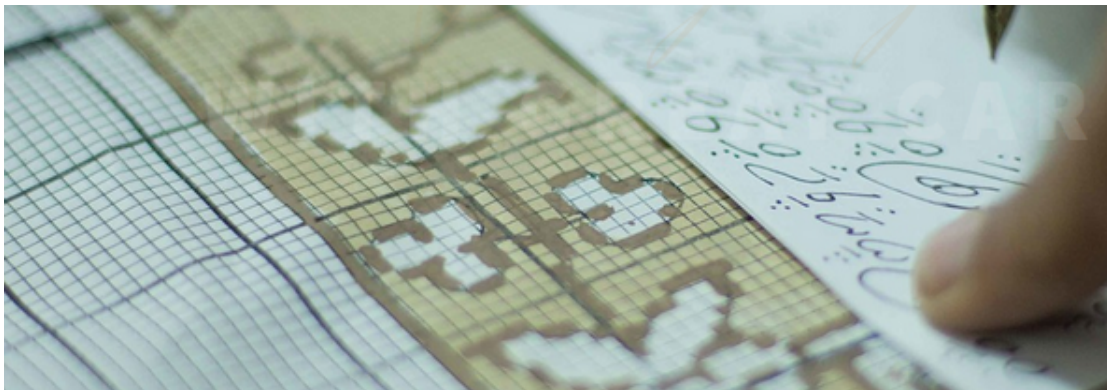


Figure 29: Knot plan and *talim* (instructions in carpet weaving language). (Still from *Introducing the Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company*, Black Box Video).



Figure 30: Weaver, Pakistan, c.2016. (Still from *Introducing the Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company*)

These websites seek to distract the eye of the consumer from other weaving realities. Weaving continues to be done in Pakistan by groups of illiterate and inexperienced workers, following instructions shouted out to them by a supervisor who has control of the knot plan and *talim*.<sup>171</sup> This shouting is sometimes described as ‘singing’ or ‘chanting,’ both in the western imagining of carpet making and the Pakistani preemptive negotiation of western objections.<sup>172</sup> Such vocabulary gives greater opportunity for the evocation of something domestic, social, and even mystical, orientalising an experience which can also be imagined as coercive and relentless.

Dye-types have long been an area of contention in carpet making and carpet trading, and an article of faith amongst connoisseurs, collectors, dealers and commentators. As discussed throughout this thesis, dye ideology is a pre-

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<sup>171</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Contemporary Forms of Slavery in Pakistan*.

<sup>172</sup> This trope is found in many books on oriental carpets, the vocabulary varying according to the romanticism of the author.

eminent example of an apparently aesthetic issue standing in as proxy for political and socio-economic issues, and for a nostalgia for the pre-industrial. Inorganic dyes are used extensively in Pakistan today, often in the same carpet as organic dyes. In chapter one of this thesis I discussed the human eye's limitations in discriminating between the two types. Despite this, the use of inorganic dyes in Pakistani carpets has damaged their reputation amongst those who have inherited nineteenth and early twentieth-century moral-aesthetic view of dyes. Consequently, the skills involved in dyeing with inorganic materials, a difficult process which falls within David Pye's 'craftsmanship of risk', have been marginalized, in common with skills of artisans who managed and maintained machine looms and spinning machines, discussed in chapter two.<sup>173</sup>

The ambition at the higher-price end of production in Pakistan is to replicate the Persian palette which has been endorsed by collectors, dealers, connoisseurs and commentators, and which offers the greatest cultural capital to affluent developed world consumers who are attuned to these judgements. Brand identities are built around the trustworthiness of dyes. In an example of preemptive negotiation of objections to the dyes in their carpets, the PAK Persian website includes an interview with a dyer, Muhammed Tufail, whose list of ingredients leaves us in no doubt of their organic nature, suggesting that some of them could be eaten:

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<sup>173</sup> Pye, *The Nature of Art and Workmanship*, pp. 20-24.

5. Can you please give us some examples of the materials used in dyeing wool? What types of plants or minerals are used as natural dyes?

" For example, for certain shades of green we use nutshells. For shades of pink, we use the gum of the Rattan tree. For shades of beige we use wood of the "Char Magaz" trees (almond, pumpkin, cantaloupe, and water melon). For shades of light camel, we use sweet root/black sugar and wood of the "Char Magaz".<sup>174</sup>

The Pakistan State Bank's flowchart of the carpet weaving industry in figure 26 makes it clear that there is at least one intermediary, the contractor, between the exporter and the weavers and dyers. Consequently, whatever the marketing claim of exporters such as PAK Persian, neither consumers nor exporters can be sure whether their dyes are inorganic or organic, and can only know whether the richness, intensity, and range of colours pleases them.

A negotiation with the expectations of the export market is also conducted around wool. Amongst the varieties of wool available to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Punjabi industry was the exceptionally fine, soft wool of goats, pashmina or pashm.<sup>175</sup> Pashmina is a trigger-word in the European and North American orthodoxy. It is often found in Mughal rugs produced for élite customers in royal workshops. In 1977 0.93 million square meters of handmade

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Muhammed Tufail.

<[pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles](http://pakpersianrugs.co.uk/oriental-persian-rug-articles)> [Accessed 4 December 2017]

<sup>175</sup> In an unusual inversion of the prevailing Persophilia, Latimer in 1907 complained about the 'so-called Pashmina from Kerman used to adulterate Pashm'. Latimer, *Carpet-making in the Punjab*, 1905-6, p.9.



carpets were exported from Pakistan.<sup>176</sup> By 2006 this had risen to 2.83 million square meters.<sup>177</sup> The huge scale of this industry meant that sources of wool had to be found elsewhere. Like Templeton, Pakistani carpet weavers turned to New Zealand merino wool. Pakistani exporters and manufacturers have strongly urged the qualities of this wool in their marketing. Their vocabulary echoes that of dealers selling nineteenth-century Amritsar carpets, and of Templeton's marketing pamphlets; 'luxurious', with 'soft' and 'long' pile, which is both 'silky' and 'hardwearing'. The fanfare diverts attention from the fact that Pakistan's scale industry cannot depend on the local materials so prized by the orthodoxy, and particularly not scarce pashmina.

The marketing materials of both the Pakistani exporters and manufacturers in this chapter, and of Templeton in chapter three, operate to distract the consumer from actual and perceived objections to the materials and making of their carpets. Templeton set out to create associations with distant and exotic lands of indigenous production, and to divert their consumers' imaginations from the machines and factories of Glasgow. Pakistani exporters and manufacturers wish to evoke a benign image of a local production environment, and to strengthen their claim to authenticity and tradition. However, despite this effort, and their commercial success, the European and North American orthodoxy continues to distrust Pakistani carpets as trade products.

### ***iii. Ornament and design in Pakistani carpet weaving***

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<sup>176</sup> *Pakistan Economic Survey* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan Finance Division Economic Advisors Wing, 1977), p. 55.

<sup>177</sup> Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, *Carpet Industry* (2006). <tdap.gov.pk/tdap-statistics> [Accessed 15 January 2018]

The visual plane of a patterned pile carpet has been fought over by many interest groups. In both Amritsar and Pakistan that visual plane was repossessed by an indigenous industry which responded more strongly to commercial demands than to the precepts of the European and North American orthodoxy.

Furthermore, carpet producers chose not to revive indigenous traditions, for example the Mughal, instead using heterodox models and 'wandering designs', to create a series of hybrids for export. Their design practice challenges the orthodoxy's commitment to a static and sacrosanct tradition of design, discussed in chapters one and three. The pile carpets of Pakistan's mass market industry are consequently viewed as objects with little aesthetic, historical, or craft interest by the European and North American orthodoxy, evidenced by the lack of assessments of Pakistani designs from its recognized authorities. Most of the carpets that will be discussed in this section fall into this category, and consequently have no historiography.

Pakistani carpets draw on motifs and pattern structures from across Eurasia, and are discussed here in three groups. The first is similar to Templeton's output, and includes close copies of canonical carpets, and looser versions of traditional families. The second is a set of carpets which have undergone radical *bricolage*, assembling unexpected combinations of motifs, experimenting with scale, and using pattern structure in unexpected ways. The third is a type of carpets branded 'Bokhara', which have transformed the carpets of the nomadic Turkmen tribes of West and Central Asia into a global bestseller.

Like Templeton, the Pakistani industry leverages prestige carpets as a brand name. The Ardabil is a particular favourite (figure 31). Carpets offered under the Ardabil name are not copies of that carpet, but modified versions of its design components. The name Ardabil is used to suggest Persian, old, traditional, and élite, qualities the consuming public values, influenced by the taste rules created by the European and North American orthodoxy.



Figure 31: Ardabil carpet. (V&A, London, 272-1893)



Figure 32: Handknotted version of Ardabil carpet, New Zealand wool, Pakistan, c. 2016, (PAK Persian Carpet Company)

The PAK Persian carpet in figure 32 retains the field structure of medallion, lamps and corner-pieces, and the border structure of cartouches found in its model. It loses the all-over spiral and blossom design. As a consequence, the impact of the dark-blue field and the most dramatic motifs is increased. Even in the image the depth of its pile can be guessed at, unlike the short pile of the original, deliberately sheared to reveal the precision and complexity of the design. Its dimensions are squarer than those of the originals, to suite modern living spaces. The version has an appealing drama and glamour.

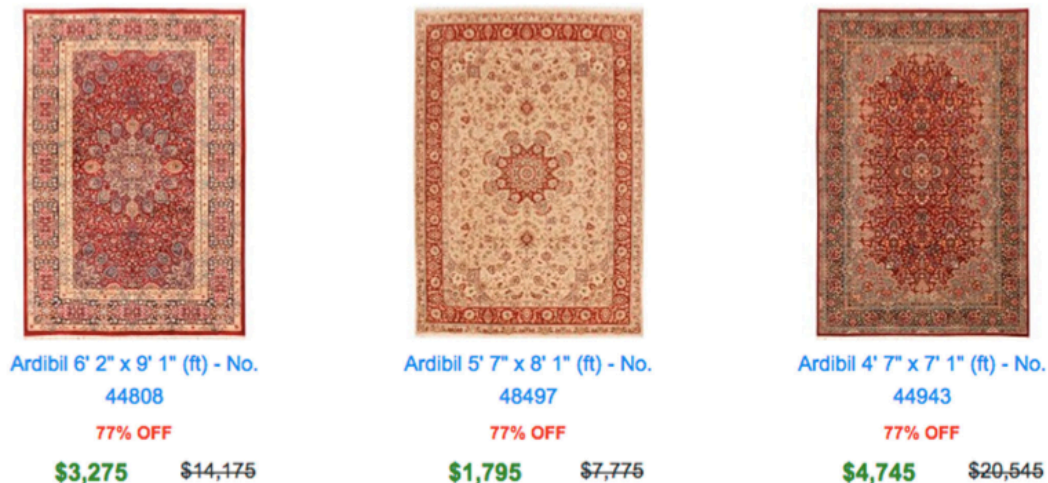


Figure 33: Handknotted 'Ardabil' carpets New Zealand wool, Pakistan, c. 2016. (ALRUGS Pakistan)

The versions of the Ardabil carpet in figure 33 retain the model's corner pieces, and an echo of its mosque lamps and its swirling field pattern of vines and blossoms, but adapt its central medallion, borders and colour scheme. The term 'Ardabil' here is used as an evocation of ideas of Safavid Persia, as much as a description of a design. These versions, often dismissed as low-value trade products by the orthodoxy, materialize the imaginative encounter of their designers and makers with the Ardabil, and their tacit, creative and intellectual skills.

The second loose grouping of Pakistani carpets employ what I have described as radical *bricolage*. Whilst copies and versions such as those discussed above adapt existing designs, radical *bricolage* disrupts familiar ideas of motif combinations, pattern structures and scale, producing innovations in the visual plane. Across the geographies of the Eurasian rug weaving belt, and during the centuries for which records exist, groups of weavers developed idiosyncratic

and recognizable combinations of motifs and structures. The Turkmen preferred rows of identical *gul* motifs (figure 34). Persian and Indo-Persian carpets were structured with medallions, compartments evoking gardens with streams and ponds, or the hunt, or lattices containing flowers (figure 35). Carpets woven across Eurasia contained pointed arches referencing a mosque's *mihrab* or prayer niche (figure 36). Some Caucasian weavers produced fields structured as diagonal stripes, with abstract geometrical or floral motifs (figure 37). Borders and field guards contained and resolved the design.



Figure 34: Turkman carpet, handknotted, wool, 279 x 184cm, Central Asia, 1800-1850. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.100.45). This carpet uses the *gul* (stylized flower motif) of the Tekke tribe.



Figure 35: Garden carpet, handknotted, cotton warp and weft, wool pile, 309 x 190cm, Kurdistan, Persia, 1750-1800. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 22.100.128)



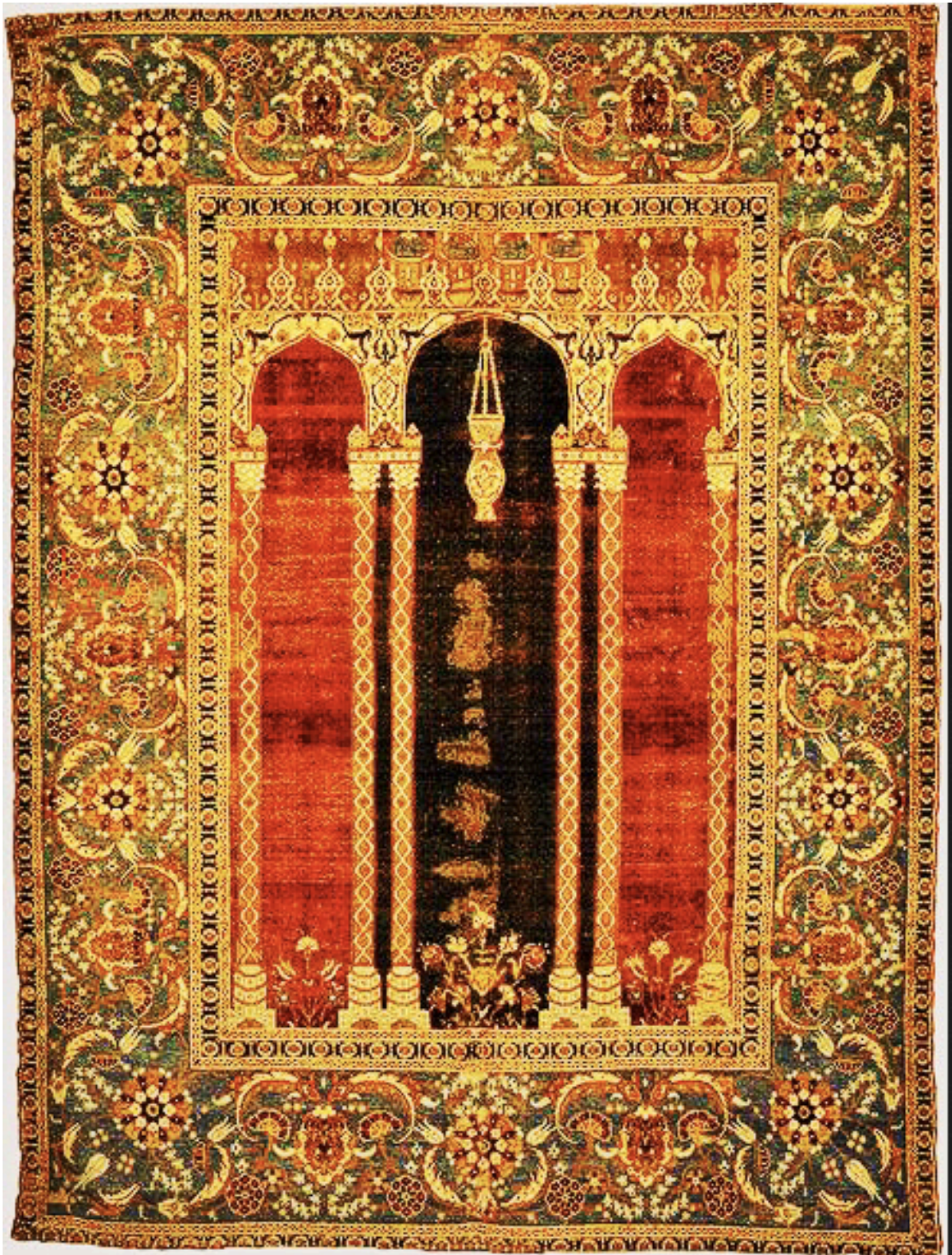


Figure 36; Ottoman Court Prayer rug, handknotted, silk warp and weft, wool and cotton pile, 172x127cm, Istanbul, Turkey, c.1575-90. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 22.100.51)



Figure 37: Gendje village carpet, handknotted wool, Caucasus, nineteenth century.  
(Azerbaijan Rug Company)

This degree of diversity may seem to be already so rich as to permit no radical adaptation. However, a person who looks at many carpets forms a visual association between types of motif, their scale and pattern structure. Such people, and I am one, are surprised by a motif we associate with one type of structure appearing in a different one, or at a different scale. Familiarity has led us to expect certain types of motifs in borders and others in the field. The Pakistani practice of radical *bricolage* upsets these expectations.



Figure 38: Handknotted carpet, wool and cotton, Pakistan, c. 2017. (Lahore Carpet Company)

In the contemporary Pakistani carpet in figure 8, the very large *botehs*, the leaf motif often described as paisley, spring out of a central motif which is not quite a flower and not quite a medallion. The equivalence in scale between the medallion, the *boteh* and the border motifs is disconcerting. That equivalence is emphasized by the fact that the border and the field are the same colour. The only separation between field and border is single field guards running almost like dotted lines. These are all novel, and to the traditionalist, possibly threatening adaptations.



Figure 39: Handknotted carpet, wool and cotton, Pakistan, c. 2017. (Lahore Carpet Company)

In figure 39, familiar expectations of dimensions within the design are again challenged. The floral motifs of the border are considerably larger than the designs in the field, and the border is wide compared to the field. This in itself is not unusual, but a wide border is generally comprised of a series of narrower stripes, each containing smaller motifs. The motifs in the border are Indo-Persian blooms and palmettes hung on spiraling foliage. The field is a complex design which draws on both Caucasian geometry and Indo-Persian garden styles. The design of the border and the design of the field could be switched, and the question arises in the viewer as to whether somewhere there is a carpet with a turquoise field of Indo-Persian design, and red borders of Caucasian/ Indo-Persian gardens. If the viewer's paradigm of response to carpets is to be able to recognize local carpet styles and to associate them with times and places, as is

often the case with connoisseurs, dealers, collectors and commentators, the kind of radical transcultural and transgeographical hybrid shown in figures 38 and 39 is challenging. On the other hand, it can be viewed as an exciting release of creative energy, arising from a more flexible and contingent view of tradition than that taken, for example, by British imperialists.

Amongst the Pakistani industry's copies and versions of individual canonical carpets and prized groups of carpets, those branded Bokhara have a special status (figure 40). One major global dealer states that 90% of *mori* (non-Iranian styles) sold are Bokharas.<sup>178</sup> The numbers may be unprovable, but the impact of the Bokhara is clear. They are sold by major retailers and found in homes across the globe. Bokhara, a Silk Roads city in modern Uzbekistan, was and is a major carpet trading centre, rather than a centre of production, but like Khotan in Templeton's marketing, it may as well only exist in the imagination, as its purpose is to evoke exoticism.

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<sup>178</sup> Figures from Carpet Vista, online Swedish carpet dealer claiming to be the largest in the world.  
< [carpetencyclopedia.com/styles-origin/pakistani-carpets](http://carpetencyclopedia.com/styles-origin/pakistani-carpets) > [Accessed January 6, 2018]



Figure 40: Left, handknotted Bokhara carpet, New Zealand wool, 182x122cm Pakistan, c.2017, \$599. (Walmart Online Store, US). Right, similar carpet, £675. (John Lewis Online, UK)

A Bokhara carpet is a version of the weavings of the Turkmen tribes of Central Asia and the borders of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan (figure 41). Turkmenistan now exists as a nation-state, but some Turkmen tribes remain nomadic. Jon Thompson, writing in the 1980s, stressed the inaccessibility and intellectual exclusivity of old Turkmen tribal carpet designs:

Carpets with recognizable animals or human figures are always popular in the West, perhaps because we feel at ease with representational art. Turkmen carpets are, with some notable exceptions, severely abstract

[...]. Recent interest [has arisen] in Turkmen carpets as an authentic and refined expression of 'primitive' art.<sup>179</sup>

The confrontation between the Pakistani industry and the European and North American orthodoxy over Bokhara carpets is marked. The commercial transformation of this exclusive 'authentic and refined expression of "primitive" art' into affordable rugs made using factory disciplines, in places and social organisations distant from their original sites of production, using materials sourced globally, and sold online and in stores across the world, has cast a shadow over the orthodoxy's response to Pakistani carpets more broadly.

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<sup>179</sup> Jon Thompson, 'Turkmen Carpet Weavings', *Turkmen: Tribal Carpets and Traditions*, ed. by Louise Mackie and Jon Thompson (Washington: Textile Museum, 1980), p. 60.



Figure 41: Turkman carpet, handknotted wool, 182x122cm, Turkmenistan, eighteenth century. (Textile Museum, Washington, R37.5.2). This carpet uses the *gul* (flower motif) of the Yomut tribe.

However, they are very successful amongst consumers. Like Templeton carpets, they meet the need to bring the authentic and the exotic near, but not too near, avoiding confrontation with contemporary western assumptions about hygiene



and interior design. This can be seen in the setting for the new Bokhara in John Lewis 's online advertisement in figure 42, which unlike early collector Arthur Irwine's attempt to turn his flat into a Turkmen tent in the 1920s, is just a hint of the mysterious tribal world of the Silk Roads, adding cachet to an otherwise light, clean-lined and clean interior. The geometry of their repeating *guls*, rebranded by dealers and manufacturers as ' the timeless elephants' foot design',<sup>180</sup> fits well with twentieth and twenty-first-century interiors and tastes which have absorbed and domesticated the impact of various forms of modernism. For many people across the globe who live intimately with Bokhara rugs, they are the definition of an exotic patterned pile carpet. For the connoisseurs, writers, dealers and collectors who follow the European and North American orthodoxy, they are the definition of trade products.



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<sup>180</sup> <[therugseller.co.uk/bokhara-rugs-in-red](http://therugseller.co.uk/bokhara-rugs-in-red)>[Accessed 20 January 2018]

Figure 42: Left, collector Arthur Irwine's flat with old Turkmen weavings, New York, 1920s. (Hajji Baba Club, New York). Right, handknotted wool Bokhara carpet, Pakistan c.2017. (John Lewis Online UK)

The Bokhara's domination of Pakistani production is partly driven by globalising markets, changing taste, and increasing industrialization in Pakistan, but is also driven by politics. From 1979 to 1989 the Soviet Union fought a war against Mujehaddin guerillas in Afghanistan, one of the world's most contested regions in recent centuries. Refugees fled to Pakistan and Iran to escape the violence, amongst them Turkmen carpet weaving tribes. This gave Pakistan an advantage of cheap skilled labour in the global carpet market, labour with particular skills in the weaving of Turkman carpets (figure 43). The weaving environment in Sawabi refugee camp in Pakistan's Kyber Pakhtunkhwa was described by a British journalist:

Six hundred thousand people live in this amorphous, infinitely expandable Central Asian village sitting on the Panjabi plain. [...] Everyone continues doing what they have been doing for the last five or eight years, which for the Turkomans is primarily weaving carpets.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Chris Walter, 'Turkomans in Exile', *Oriental Rug Review*, vol. 9 no. 5, (June/July 1989), 28-31, (p. 28).



Figure 43: 'Six young Turkomen weavers work simultaneously on a new Bokara design carpet in Sawabi camp, Pakistan'. (*Oriental Rug Review*, June/July, 1989, p. 28, Image and caption Chris Walter)

Refugee weaving was not a marginal aid-supported activity, but part of the mainstream supply chain for the Pakistani carpet weaving industry. Wools and dyes were provided by contractors who provided finished carpets to exporters, for distribution into the global market.<sup>182</sup> During the 1990s, refugees began to return home, actively encouraged from 2002 by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.<sup>183</sup> The return accelerated, and UNHCR revised their 2016 prediction of 221,000 refugees leaving Pakistan to 365,000.<sup>184</sup> In 2015, the Pakistan State Bank identified refugee repatriation as a risk to the carpet industry.<sup>185</sup> The impact of this loss of skilled labour has contributed to a collapse

<sup>182</sup> For Afghan tribal refugee weavers in Pakistan, see Parsons, *The Carpets of Afghanistan*, pp. 208-214.

<sup>183</sup> Conducted by UNHCR's Voluntary Return Assistance Programme.

<sup>184</sup> *Repatriation of Afghan Refugees from Pakistan. Revised Supplementary Appeal* (Geneva: UNHCR, Sept-Dec 2016).

<unhcr.org> [Accessed 3 January 2018]

<sup>185</sup> State Bank, *Carpet Manufacturing*, p. 13.

in exports of Pakistani carpets, which declined from 17,015 million Pakistani rupees in 2014, to 8,054 million in 2017.<sup>186</sup>

The carpet makers of Pakistan continued and intensified a process of negotiation between their own traditions of weaving practice and style, popular consumer taste, and the European and North American orthodoxy, which had begun in Amritsar. Since 1947 there has been a growing scholarly and popular awareness of the tropes of orientalism, and how they manifest themselves in areas like material culture. What can be seen in the Pakistani industry is a knowing playing back to its international consumers of the European and North-American orthodoxy's ideas about areas such as dyes, handweaving, family organization of labour, association with canonical carpets, in support of the industry's commercial objectives. Alongside this is an experimental energy in Pakistani carpets, which, whilst still market-focused, appears unconstrained by the orthodoxy, and supports a radical form of the *bricolage* which I have argued is the fundamental process for the design and regeneration of these artifacts.

## **Conclusion**

Amongst carpet specialists 'export carpet' and 'trade carpet' are terms of suspicion, implying a break with the local, the traditional and the authentic. Consequently, suspicion of an industry that focused from the late nineteenth

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<sup>186</sup> <[ceicdata.com/en/pakistan/trade-statistics-by-economic-categories-and-commodity-group-annual/exports-annual-value-carpets—rugs](http://ceicdata.com/en/pakistan/trade-statistics-by-economic-categories-and-commodity-group-annual/exports-annual-value-carpets—rugs)> [Accessed July 2019] 1 Pakistani rupee was worth 0.52 British pounds on 10 August 2019.

century onwards on export wares, and today produces more than 90% of its carpets for export, was and continues to be high. It may then be unsurprising that the response amongst European and North American carpet experts and enthusiasts to my intention to work on the Pakistani carpet weaving industry was to question why anyone seriously interested in carpets might think commercial Pakistani copies and versions worthy of study.

In response to this I have argued in this chapter that rather than defining these carpets as an exceptional example of commercialization, they can instead be seen as an accelerated example of the process of hybridization which is common across the historical development of material culture, driven by the shared factors of war and territorial expansion, movements of peoples, changes in taste and consumption, developments in technology and the organization of production, and transforming international markets for goods and raw materials. What is notable, but not unique, in Punjab and Pakistan is the pace and scale at which hybridization took place. The history of their carpets since 1860 provides a compressed and readable model of the networked transgeographical and transcultural change in material culture which is the intellectual territory of global design history.<sup>187</sup>

Between 1860 and 1930, then between 1947 and the present day, nodes in the network of Punjabi and Pakistani carpet making included Lahore, Amritsar, Sawabi refugee camp, Herat, Bokhara, Paris, London, New York, New Zealand,

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<sup>187</sup> Examples in other media are discussed in Adamson, Riello and Teasley, *Global Design History*; Gerritsen and Riello, *The Global Lives of Things*.

Moscow, the borderlands of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. The directions of the loops of taste, trade, and manufacture have repeatedly doubled back, at speed. As Adamson and Riello put it in their discussion of sweatshops in Pakistan:

How can we adequately formulate a politics of production, when our understanding of labouring conditions changes more slowly than the conditions themselves do?<sup>188</sup>

The pattern continues. Pakistan's carpet weaving industry is now in the midst of the world's latest shift, as Beijing invests in its own, and in Pakistan's carpet industry.

The chapter uncovers the disturbance caused when the colonized repossess their material culture from the coloniser. The British in Punjab believed themselves to be returning Indian carpet weaving to its traditions. Instead, I demonstrate that their efforts were absorbed by local agents into a century and a half of focus on the development of carpets for export, and the excavation of many different carpet traditions to please a geographically shifting and fickle non-local market. This repossession of the patterned pile carpet imaginary and its production by a subaltern population of entrepreneurs, producers and weavers is an example of the kind of pointed challenge material culture can offer to hegemonic power. It also demonstrates the enduring resistance offered to such challenges by the

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<sup>188</sup> Adamson and Riello, 'Global Objects: Contention and Entanglement', p.192.

structures of hegemonic taste; in the case of carpets, the European and North American orthodoxy.

The study of Punjabi and Pakistani carpets reveals the operation of the European and North American orthodoxy within a highly sensitive colonial and postcolonial environment. The chapter throws light on the ways in which the narrative the West created about these art initiate, express and reinforce orientalist ideas about the Other, against a changing political context. The ideas about carpets enshrined in the orthodoxy are deeply marked by their colonial origins, and the particular orientalism of that period. However, the uses to which the orthodoxy is put in post-independence, decolonized Pakistan demonstrates how the tropes of orientalism can be used knowingly by indigenous carpet producers for their own purposes and illustrate Bhabha's discussion of the contingent and sometimes counter-intuitive nature of postcolonial hybridity.<sup>189</sup>

Meanwhile, the chapter has again demonstrated that carpets made under supervision in factories, to commercially influenced designs, share characteristics of design and making with carpets endorsed by the European and North American orthodoxy.

In the introduction to the thesis, I expressed the ambition to write material history, both a history through objects and a history of objects. By taking the perspective and using the tools of global design history and imperial networks, I

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<sup>189</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

have uncovered in this chapter a series of unexplored historical dynamics and expressions of subaltern agency. I also described my ambition to write from the borders, in Mignolo's phrase, using neglected local histories to challenge a Eurocentric narrative.<sup>190</sup> By subjecting the Punjabi and Pakistani carpet industries, their participants and carpets to a scholarly analysis which they have often been denied, I have returned them to the narrative, and offered a new perspective on the sources and impact of their heterodox borrowings.

Rumbling in the background of the story of carpets in Punjab and Pakistan are the troubled histories of these people and geographies,<sup>191</sup> and the tragic history of textiles more broadly.<sup>192</sup> The brutal partition of Punjab has had a direct effect on the development of the region and its carpet industry, as has the ongoing devastation of Afghanistan and its people. When writing about Amritsar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is impossible to forget the British massacre in 1919 of unarmed protestors and pilgrims. The high involvement of the vulnerable and young in textile production is an unavoidable presence in this chapter and throughout this thesis. But weaving also frees and empowers humans. Turkmen refugees walked away from the trouble they were in, built a loom, and started weaving, and their lives, again.

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<sup>190</sup> Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, pp. 49-91.

<sup>191</sup> Wagner, *Amritsar*; Khan, *The Great Partition*.

<sup>192</sup> Adamson, *Invention of Craft*, pp. 214-222.



## **Conclusion**

The question in the title of this thesis 'What is an 'oriental' carpet?' was a genuine expression of puzzlement on my part, after many years of looking at, thinking about and living with these artifacts. It arose from my sense of a gap between what I read about patterned pile carpets in the accepted canon of commentaries on the one hand, and on the other, questions I had about their design and making and the impact that they have on the people who interact with them. As I began my research, I felt a strong sense of rejection of the accepted canon of European and North American commentaries which I read, with their taxonomic and aesthetic accounts. I wanted to explore that gap and that rejection.

I envisaged a two-part approach; the first part a critique of the tradition of scholarship which produced the taxonomic and aesthetic accounts about which I had reservations, the second an experiment in applying a different kind of thinking to these artifacts. In this experiment, I wished to explore the special kinds of creativity found in the weaving of patterned pile carpets and the special kinds of emotional and psychological responses people have to them. I planned to give myself the best opportunity to explore this territory by giving detailed attention to carpets which lay outside the conventional hierarchy of patterned pile carpets. Having completed my PhD research, I believe even more that this is a worthwhile approach to thinking about these artifacts, but I also now realise that the project I originally envisaged is larger than a single thesis. Consequently, I had to make a series of definitions and reductions in scope which have had an impact on the focus and balance of the thesis.

I began by critiquing what I have described sceptically as the 'eternal verities' of patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia, in what I envisioned as an initial step in creating space for alternative ways of thinking about these artifacts. To do this critique justice, and thereby unsettle the deeply-rooted acceptance of 'the eternal verities' in both scholarship and popular interest in carpets, required analysis of the history of the development of this body of thought, its connection with the historical context of colonialism and post-colonialism, and a deconstruction of it in practice. The challenge of doing this to an appropriately scholarly level has balanced the thesis towards an analysis of the orthodoxy, rather than the identification of a cohesive alternative to it. Chapters one and two are built around this critique, and it is strongly present in chapters three and four.

Even with this level of attention, I could not fully critique the many different local scholarly traditions and set them in conversation with the predominantly European and North American cluster of commentators from the mid-nineteenth through to the late-twentieth centuries which I identify as the source of orthodox thinking on patterned pile carpets from South, Central and West Asia. The traditions of Turkish and Russian scholarship have not been fully explored here, for instance. Furthermore, I have represented the European and North American orthodoxy itself as a consistent and internally coherent agent, again a simplification of the multiple voices and shades of opinion within it. This has been done in the interest of meeting my objective to examine the orthodoxy's agency at work. Furthermore, the focus on Persian carpets amongst that

foundational European and North American cluster of commentators has led to a degree of focus on Persian carpets in the thesis, although I have systematically set out to broaden the types of carpets which I include in my discussion.

This European and North American orientation leaves the thesis open to the accusations that it speaks to the West from the West about the West, and that this limits the challenge it can make to orientalist ideas about Asian patterned pile carpets. This is exacerbated by the difficulties I faced in doing fieldwork in Pakistan. Despite these limitations, the focus on European and North American thinking made possible the examination of what I believe is a potential answer to the question ‘What is an ‘oriental’ carpet’; that it is a construct, a set of ideas developed to support the hegemonic values of colonialism, an argument that I continue to believe is an important one to make, and to which I believe this thesis makes an original contribution.

The result of this balance towards deconstruction of the orthodoxy is that I have made less progress with the development of a single cohesive alternative model of thinking about carpets than I initially hoped. However, throughout the thesis there is extensive discussion of a range of non-traditional approaches; particularly ways of thinking about creativity in carpet-making, and about the experiential relationship between carpets and people. In chapters two, three and four, carpets are analysed as global objects in a transnational and transcultural cycle of co-creation between makers, designers, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, consumers and users, rather than by following a model of countries of consumption and countries of production. In chapters three and four there is

analysis of the types of creativity inherent in carpet-making. I stress, for example, the tacit dimension of these skills and the extent to which that tactility informs both the working and living experience of makers. I analyse the role of borrowing, copying and versioning, and illuminate how carpet makers and designers participate in the ongoing flux of *bricolage*, rather than analysing carpets either as representatives of tradition or expressions of a linear model of influence. Throughout the thesis there is an effort at the rehabilitation of machine-making, and a critique of the preference for the handmade. There is also a critique of the drive to absorb certain carpets into an initially western and now global hierarchy of unique art objects made in élite studios by exceptionally creative artists, and of the associated neglect of the values of batch production and the workshops in which these objects were often produced.

I examine the deeper levels of human response to carpets throughout the thesis but particularly in chapter three. I explore, for instance, the role of the handmade in managing anxieties about the industrialisation of labour, and the machine-made as a way of managing anxieties about the dirty and the Other. I explore the erotics of carpets and their settings. I investigate the role of pattern in personality development, and the unconscious needs it consequently meets in adults. Looping back to creativity, I suggest that part of the maker's creativity as she weaves carpets out of scraps of wool, and hence creates order from chaos, is in the access she has to these deeper levels of consciousness. Much more could be done, but I believe that this thesis has opened up the conversation on carpets to support further work in these areas, and that this is one of its important contributions to knowledge.

There are many difficulties in writing a critique of an approach which has itself defined the vocabulary commonly in use. Many things have had to be renamed and redefined to unsettle assumptions, and some of those renamings are clumsy and themselves raise further questions. The definition of these artifacts as the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia, rather than as 'oriental' carpets, is an example. It is an attempt to scope a group of carpets with strong technical and design links by their geography of production, without describing those geographies or those carpets in anachronistic or culturally inappropriate ways. However, the renaming, as well as being inelegant, raises other questions about boundaries, and the permeability between them. Chinese carpets, Nepalese and Tibetan carpets, eastern and northern European carpets, Spanish and North African carpets, Asian and European Russian carpets have strong relationships with the group I study in this thesis, and all boundaries are to some degree artificial. However, it remains the case that a group of carpets traditionally known as 'oriental' have stronger relationships with each other than they have with other types of carpets and have given rise to the controversies and debates I discuss in this thesis, with their special relationship to colonialism and post-colonialism. Given these caveats, I go on below to discuss the ground covered by the thesis and the contributions it makes.

In my attempt to answer the question 'What is an 'oriental' carpet?', beginning from the premise that the answer did not lie in what I have described as the European and North American orthodoxy, I set out to identify the gap between orthodox accounts of these artifacts and the biographies of particular carpets,

and to conduct this analysis on a range of carpets, some from within the European and North American canon and some marginalised or excluded by it. I mined these exclusions and gaps for alternative, multiple answers to the question posed in the title of the thesis. I executed this by exploring two examples of the orthodoxy in action; the reinvention of the Ardabil carpet after its arrival in London, and the reimagining and remaking of Indian carpets in the jails of British India. These were placed in dialogue with two examples of carpets which transgress the orthodoxy; the machine-made carpets of Templeton in Glasgow, and the handmade export carpets of Amritsar and Pakistan.

To lay the foundations for this, I began in chapter one by deconstructing the work of major intellectual contributors to the European and North American orthodoxy, and the practice of those who enact and police it. I demonstrated that their thinking is part of the intellectual discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as much or more than it is about carpets. I established the connection between Riegl's thinking on carpets and the nineteenth-century search for origins. I identified Bode's effort to absorb carpets into European structures of knowledge as part of the broader imperial taxonomic project. I showed the relationship between Riegl's and Morris's focus on freeze-framing the patterned pile carpets of South Central and West Asia at a pre-industrial moment, and Europe and North America's fear of modernity and co-existing desire to claim modernity exclusively for itself.<sup>1</sup> I identified the connection between Pope's Persophilia and both the racial assumptions of the late nineteenth and twentieth

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<sup>1</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, pp. 181-241; Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History', 1-26.

centuries,<sup>2</sup> and a specialized form of European and North American colonialism, oil politics. I demonstrated the link between Beattie's work on the structure of carpets and the emphasis on the scientific which emerged after the Second World War. As I have discussed above, I have represented the European and North American orthodoxy as a consistent and internally coherent agent, and thereby simplified the multiple voices and shades of opinion within it. Further future work might include a more detailed analysis of its internal debates. Equally the focus on European and North American voices necessitated by the objectives of the research leaves space for future work on other voices, and the conversations between them.<sup>3</sup>

To illustrate the process by which the orthodoxy re-imagines a carpet in the interests of the ideology it serves, and the factors which make a carpet particularly suitable for such re-imagining, I analysed the Ardabil, now in the V&A, which strikingly materializes the process of reinvention. I examined the narratives that were created around this élite carpet after its arrival in the West, demonstrating the complex and contradictory agendas at work. It became the orthodox object that I tracked throughout the chapters of the thesis, where I set it in dialogue with the other carpets discussed there, carpets which often transgressed the expectations and values of the European and North American orthodoxy.

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<sup>2</sup> Kadoi and Szanto, *The Shaping of Persian Art*, pp.1-21.

<sup>3</sup> Volait, 'Appropriating Orientalism?', pp. 131-155.

The first dialogue was with carpets made by machine in Templeton's nineteenth and twentieth-century factories in Glasgow. I examined Templeton carpets as a test case to challenge the orthodoxy's clear binary between authentic and inauthentic methods of production, and its devaluing of carpets produced by supposedly inauthentic methods. I proposed instead that there are complex, multi-directional flows of skills, making, and experience of carpets. This proposition is central to the exploration of alternative approaches to these artifacts which I have begun in this thesis. Alongside this I examined how Templeton positioned their machine-made carpets in relation to ideas of canonical carpets like the Ardabil and of the East more broadly. This contributed to my ongoing analysis of the role that patterned pile carpets play in constructing an idea of the East, an idea of the East which in turn constructs the idea of the patterned pile carpet. I demonstrated that despite their transgressive nature, and their low status in the hierarchy, once they are in the world, machine-made carpets too participate in the psychological, political, social and economic work that these artifacts are expected to do in Europe and America.

The second dialogue, in chapter four, is with handmade copies and versions of both canonical carpets like the Ardabil, and other types of 'traditional' carpets, made for export by the indigenous carpet industry of Punjab, during the period of British rule and after Pakistani independence. I explored how these carpets, handmade in a geography with a distinguished history of carpet weaving, and hence apparently within the orthodoxy's boundaries, at the same time offered it a complex challenge. I showed that by drawing on materials, designs and technologies from diverse sources across the Eurasian weaving belt, and by



participating in a globalizing market for finished carpets and materials, Punjabi and Pakistani carpets affront the orthodoxy's focus on the local, unchanging and non-commercial. My analysis thereby offered an example of how the orthodoxy attempts to restrict the participation of colonial, para-colonial and postcolonial weavers in their own cultural production, and in the global market in which most cultural production now operates.

The analysis in chapter four also illustrated how Punjabi and Pakistani carpets unsettled colonial and postcolonial power relations. This was shown in its examination of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century dialectic between the Punjabi indigenous industry and the British view of the 'traditional' Indian carpet; and its analysis of the role of the carpet industry in Pakistani identity-formation. Throughout the chapter, I highlighted the repossession of both the imaginary and the production of patterned pile carpets in this once-colonial geography, and how the hegemony responded to that repossession, thereby illustrating the potential for the direct political impact of these artifacts.

As discussed in chapter four, the period in which this thesis was written (2016-2019) has been a rich time in which to study Pakistani history. The anniversaries of partition and independence in 2007 and 2017, and the centenary of the Amritsar massacre in 2019 have stimulated new readings of Punjabi and Pakistani history.<sup>4</sup> This thesis contributes to this new historiography from the perspective of global design history and material culture history.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Wagner, *Amritsar*, (2019); Puri, *Partition Voices*, (2019); Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias*, (2013), Khan, *The Great Partition*, (2017).

Throughout the thesis, I continuously challenged the values which are enshrined in the orthodoxy, and which are used as the mechanism for discriminating between 'better' and worse' carpets. I assessed whether there is a point of clear separation between originals and versions, handmade and machine-made, local and global, pre- and post-industrial, antique and modern, court atelier and urban workshop, village and nomadic; separations which might justify the bounded and exclusive nature of the orthodoxy. I argued instead that these carpets are part of multi-directional flows of technology, making, design, materials, trade and experience, and changing networks, in which the boundaries are highly permeable.

If these artifacts exist in such flows and networks, why then are certain nodes of more significance to the European and North American orthodoxy than others? In answer, I contend throughout the thesis that the orthodoxy is not a measure of the quality of carpets, but an expression of what Said defined as orientalism, of the colonizer defining the colonized for their own political, economic, social, ideological and psychological purposes, creating knowledge which is then embedded in markets, social and state institutions, the academy and in individuals. I layer onto Said's fundamental insight the perceptions of later thinkers. I advance the case that the orthodoxy's privileging of old carpets over contemporary production is a demonstration of what Johannes Fabian describes as a denial of coevalness, an inability to encounter the Other on equal terms in

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the present.<sup>5</sup> I argue that its rejection of carpets made for export by indigenous weavers in colonies and former colonies is connected to the desire to control the independent participation of subaltern groups in global markets, in their own cultural production, and in modernity itself, as discussed by both Chakrabarty and Spivak.<sup>6</sup> Following Glenn Adamson, I maintain that the particular qualities valued by the European and North American orthodoxy are tightly connected to a desire to retreat from the trauma of modernity, industrialization and globalization, and that patterned pile carpets were set to work in the West to offer an alternative to the conditions that the West itself had brought into being.<sup>7</sup> Building on these readings, I conclude that the European and North American orthodoxy is an attempt to deny an autonomous, adaptive present and future for these carpets and their makers, one, however, which continues to fail in its purpose in the face of the vigour, economic necessity and creativity of carpet weaving.

Writers on postcolonialism and decoloniality have stressed the great difficulty for scholars in breaking out of colonial systems of thought, and the danger of complicity in them, given that the writing and materialisation of academic history takes place within museums, teaching institutions and disciplines which have themselves historically been Eurocentric both in geographical focus and periodicity. The discussion of the patterned pile carpets of South, Central and West Asia is an example of such a deeply embedded colonialist epistemology,

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<sup>5</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

<sup>6</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'; Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*.

<sup>7</sup> Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, pp. 181-241.

and offers the temptation of complicity. Walter D. Mignolo urges 'epistemic disobedience' and 'border thinking' to create space for new accounts.<sup>8</sup> In my own effort at border thinking, I am aware of the danger of replacing the orientalist narrative by other Eurocentric and European and North American narratives from the very period whose ideology I deconstruct, for example, the idea of the energizing force of industrialization, or of the beneficial participation of subaltern groups in global finance and trade. I do not mean to suggest that I prefer these narratives to those valued by the European and North American orthodoxy. Rather my epistemic disobedience is to insist on the broadening of ways of thinking about patterned pile carpets, of which such contentious framings are a legitimate part and which this thesis begins to explore.

The thesis critiques the European and North American orthodoxy of South, Central Asian patterned pile carpets at an unusually fundamental level. Currently, the assumptions of the orthodoxy still dominate carpet scholarship, shown in my discussion of the literature on carpets by historians of India in chapter four, and my analysis of current carpet scholarship in Islamic art history in the introduction. The level of critique in the thesis has made it possible to more completely uncover the ideological work the West expects patterned pile carpets to perform in response to particular historical pressures. Meanwhile, it rescues from scholarly neglect important populations of carpets which form most people's experience of these artifacts. Perhaps most importantly, it repositions them in the discussion about creativity, how we make things, and

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<sup>8</sup> Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience', 1-23.

how that making changes across time and space, a discussion within which their role has previously been restricted to that of exemplars of the traditional and the Other.

As I have unpicked the way that these carpets have been assessed in Europe and America since the mid nineteenth century, and placed them within a different model, I have also uncovered areas which it has not been possible to fully explore, but which could form the basis for further research. One direction of further study would be to explore the materials involved in carpet making more deeply. Dyes and wool have been of importance in this thesis. As discussed in the introduction, dyes have received some scholarly attention.<sup>9</sup> However, a study of dyes and colour in patterned pile carpets from outside the assumptions of the orthodoxy would be an important contribution. Equally, an examination of the transfer from locally sourced wool to other sources, such as the New Zealand Merino discussed here, would be a contribution to the understanding of carpets in the industrialised world, a field which I have attempted to rehabilitate in this thesis.

I have focused on South, Central and West Asian carpets, but a parallel enquiry into European and North American narratives of Chinese carpets, for example, would offer insight into diverse and competing 'orients' constructed in the West. Meanwhile, in recent decades, the nineteenth and twentieth-century European

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<sup>9</sup> Harald Bohmer, *Koekboya: Natural Dyes and Textiles: A Colour Journey from Turkey to India and Beyond*, trans. by Lawrence E. Fogelberg (Ganderkese, Germany: Remhob, 2002).

and North American orthodoxy has expanded its reach to become global, not only through globalising trade and production, but through the opening of new museums of Islamic art and of textiles in countries across Asia.<sup>10</sup> It would be a valuable project to investigate the interaction between the old orthodoxy and these new mediations.

In parallel with this, contemporary artists in geographies with long traditions of carpet weaving have in recent decades begun to reimagine that tradition.

Important examples are the work of the Iranian artist Parviz Tanavoli and the Azerbaijani designer Faig Ahmed. In figure 1, Tarnavoli uses the traditional medium of carpet to investigate Islamic ideas of female purity and sexuality. His carpet has an opening to represent the vagina, in which the jug used for washing has been placed. Ahmed's carpets are designed digitally, then handwoven by Azeri female weavers. Ahmed's design process challenges orthodox and traditional ideas of design and making discussed in this thesis. The carpet in figure 2 also challenges the fixity of the design vocabulary of the patterned pile carpet, dissolving a traditional design into streams of raw colour. The study of such carpet designers would be a valuable contribution to the cultural history of the carpet.

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<sup>10</sup> Examples include the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (opened 2008), the Mashad carpet Museum, Iran (opened 2016), Louvre Abu Dhabi (opened 2017), and museums across the former Soviet Central Asian territories, opened since the millennium.



Figure 1: Parviz Tanavoli, 'Innovation in Art', mixed media, 1964. (Guggenheim, © 2019, CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, Burrell Collection, all rights reserved. Abu Dhabi)



Figure 2: Faig Ahmed, 'Liquid', wool, cotton, 2014, Azerbaijan. (FaigAhmed.com)

This thesis has focused on the development of an orthodoxy imagined by scholars, and enacted in museums, educational institutions, factories, workshops and markets. It has stressed the connection between political and cultural agendas and ways of thinking about carpets, and has set out to analyse these using the methodologies of global design history, orientalism, postcolonialism and decoloniality.<sup>11</sup> It has these used objects to illuminate the global, and in the

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<sup>11</sup> Adamson, Riello and Teasley, *Global Design History*; Gerritson and Riello, *Global Lives of Things*; Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience'; Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*; Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern speak?'



cases of the Ardabil carpet and Templeton, it has also used UK domestic case-studies to illuminate the global. The carpet as an object has provided fertile ground for the investigation of international histories and ideologies.

The thesis has also begun an investigation into the human-carpet bond, and its often unconscious and conflicted drivers.<sup>12</sup> This manifests itself ultimately in personal taste. As Lubbock and Bourdieu have made clear, taste is a composite of personal response conditioned by what is authorized by the social class to which the individual aspires, and what it is possible to like given his or her social, educational and financial status.<sup>13</sup> As part of my effort at epistemic disobedience and self-reflexivity, and to help the reader understand the position I take, I discuss below how my own preferences, my resistance to the orthodoxy, and my taste has been constructed.

I have a clear visual preference for geometric designs executed with contrasting colours such as that seen in figure 3. This may partially explain my detachment from the naturalistic designs, complex palette and fine materials of Safavid carpets. I respond strongly to signs of the human hand but found in my examination of Templeton carpets that I could respond equally strongly if that human hand had been operating a machine (figure 4). I like the mistakes people make, whatever kind of technology and materials they use. I see a connection in this with the imaginative bridge historians build with temporally or

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<sup>12</sup> Warner, *Stranger Magic*, Attfield, *Wild Things*, Stewart, *On Longing*.

<sup>13</sup> Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Bourdieu, *La Distinction*.

geographically distant objects and people when they conduct historical reconstructions.<sup>14</sup> The mistakes take us to the heart of the difficult process of making. I am a snob when it comes to the *recherché*, I like carpets that are inaccessible and austere, consequently I am a fan of Turkmen rugs. I believe that an important source of this is my desire for intellectual capital, and a fascination with the remote that is shared by many people who have had a circumscribed childhood. I love stories, and my two favourite carpets are ones that embody real and imagined memories, one bought for me by my son in Baku, over a cup of mint tea with the dealer (he tells me), and one that Jon Thompson told me was of the type made by the bride and mother-in-law for a Turkmen wedding (figure 5,6). My most common response when I look at a carpet is not how many knots does it have and are its dyes natural, but 'how did she do that, what was she thinking when she made it?' I have a strong respect and empathy for makers, in the factory or the tent. If a carpet is rejected as of no interest, I immediately wish to fight for the underdog, and defend it against the powers of authority and received wisdom. None of this has anything to do with a hierarchy of better and worse carpets, and everything to do with my psychopathology and educational, social, political, economic and ideological background. I have argued in this thesis that this is not only true of me, but of all commentators on these artifacts.

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Ulinka Rublak, 'Renaissance Dress, Cultures of Making and the Period Eye', *West 86<sup>th</sup>*, vol.23 no.1 (2016), 6-34.



Figure 3: Handknotted wool carpet, Caucasus, late nineteenth century. (Author's collection)



Figure 4: A chenille caterpillar escapes from the border of a Templeton copy of the Bardini carpet, c1930, Victoria and Albert Museum, Clothworkers' Centre. Author's photograph.



Figure 5: Flatwoven wool and cotton carpet, Azerbaijan, c. 2016. (Author's collection)



Figure 6: Turkmen carpet, handknotted wool, late nineteenth century, Central Asia.

(Author's collection)

In conclusion, the answer to the question posed in the title of this thesis ‘What is an ‘oriental’ carpet?’ is that it is a material and conceptual construct, moving through an archipelago of sites of production, trade and exchange, at work to meet the needs of state institutions, commercial enterprises and societies, but also of individuals. It is an imagined object for its producers, consumers, and opinion-formers, a fantasy and often utopian object, and what the fantasy contains shifts according to where those groups are in time and space and, as individuals, where we are in our emotional lives. To give an example of this I will return one more time to the Ardabil carpet. In 2018, the émigré Iranian community based in Ealing, London since the Iranian Revolution in 1978, made a community film celebrating the carpets they had rescued from a home that many of them can no longer visit.<sup>15</sup> This memory work was the purpose of the film, which includes moving accounts of the role the carpets played in their former and current homes, and the circumstances under which they chose to rescue their carpets. Alongside this, there was a persistent celebration of the Ardabil carpet in the V&A. The participants referenced its perfection, antiquity, fabulous monetary value, and its role in symbolizing Persia in the West. However, they also read the love and respect demonstrated for it in the Jameel Gallery at the V&A in London as a representation of the love and respect their adopted country feels for their community. Iranian émigrés in London have reimagined the

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<sup>15</sup> London Iranian Association, *The Cultural Heritage of the Iranian Carpet in Britain* (2018). Funded by the UK National Lottery Heritage Fund.  
<[youtube.com/watch?v=sHd7jSdOVEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHd7jSdOVEw) > [Accessed August 2018]

Ardabil to meet their needs, and the Ardabil has a further life as their utopian fantasy.

## Glossary

**Abrash:** Rows of knots of a different colour introduced into a block of colour in a carpet. Caused by the weaver deliberately or accidentally picking up a different shade of wool for part of her knotting. Highly prized in handmade carpets, and replicable in machine-made carpets.



Figure 1: Handknotted wool carpet, Caucasus, late nineteenth century. (Author's collection). Abrash is visible in the centre, where runs of pink loops have been made.

**Arabesque:** Split leaf forms, one of which grows from the tip of another.

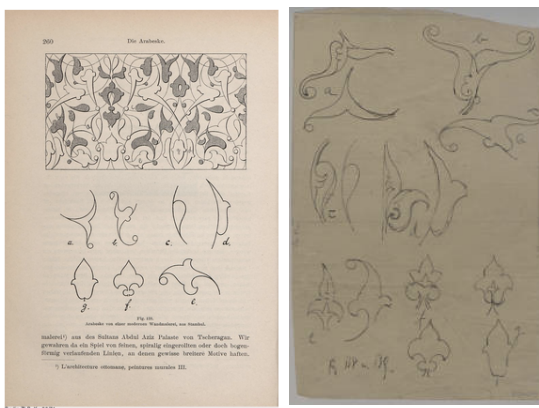


Figure 2: Arabesque analyses. (Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen*, 1893; Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Box 21, Folder 11, Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington).



**Axminster Process:** Mechanised process for production of machine-woven patterned pile carpets, operational from second half of nineteenth century.

**Baluch:** Nomadic tribe from borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

**Borders:** Panels which frame the design of a patterned pile carpet (see figure 3)

**Boteh:** Leaf design used in Indian, Pakistani and Iranian textiles. Also known as Paisley as a result of its use in nineteenth-century Scottish weaving of versions of Kashmir shawls.



Figure 3: Handknotted wool carpet with repeated rows of *boteh*, Qashqai Federation, Persia, c.1900. (Knights Antiques)

**Brussels Process:** Mechanised process for production of deeply looped machine-woven patterned carpets, operational from late eighteenth century.

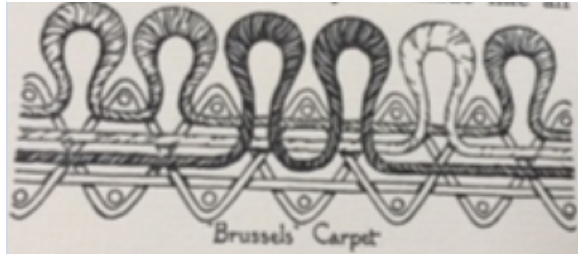


Figure 4: Brussels carpet structure. (C.E.C. Tattersall, *British Carpets*, 1934, p.113). Wefts are shown in cross section as circles. The pattern and pile is made by the deeply looped warp threads.

**Cartouche:** Lozenge-shaped motif in carpet design.



Figure 5: Cartouche in border of Ardabil carpet (V&A, London, 272-1983)

**Chenille Process:** Mechanised process for production of patterned pile carpets, operational from 1840.

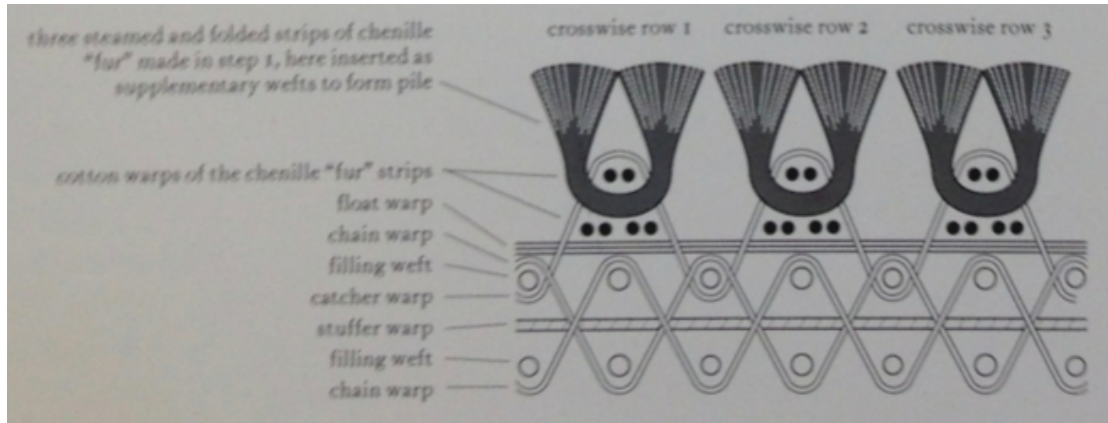


Figure 6: Structure of a machine-made chenille carpet. (Sarah B. Sherill)

**Chromotography:** Laboratory process for separating constituent parts of a mixture. Used in identification of dyes in carpets.

**Cloud bands:** Asian design motif found across media.



Figure 7: Cloudbands in border of Ardabil carpet (V&A, London, 272-1893)

**Cochineal:** Red insect dye originally found in Latin America.

**Corner solutions:** Designs to enable the weaver to resolve the meeting point of the horizontal and vertical borders of a carpet.



Figure 8: Handknotted wool carpet, Caucasus, mid-twentieth century. (Author's collection)

**Depressed warps:** A second level of warps, creating a carpet with warps in two planes. Gives a heavier carpet and is often used in 'Vase' carpets.

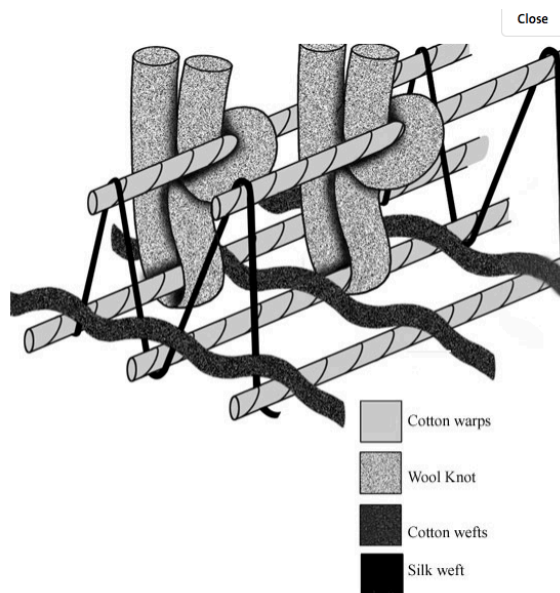


Figure 9: 'Vase' carpet structure with depressed warps. Drawing Pauline Webber and Danny Norman. (V&A, London)

**Digital microscopy:** A laboratory technique permitting detailed computer analysis of a magnified image. Used to identify the structure and components of fibres in carpets.

**Drawloom:** A loom carrying out two operations, weaving, and the lifting out of groups of warp threads from the main warp, the groups changing as the weaving progresses. This allows more complex patterns to be woven. It is operated by two people, the weaver and the drawboy. It has the same conceptual basis as the eighteenth-century Jacquard Loom, which replaces the drawboy with punch cards to lift out groups of warp threads. There is evidence of its use in China from the sixth or seventh century CE.



Figure 10: Drawloom c. 2012. (Korean Cultural Heritage Administration). The male figure is playing the role of drawboy.

**Field:** Main central space of carpet design.



Figure 11: Ardabil carpet (V&A, London, 272-1893). Red outlines field.

**Fieldguards:** Narrow bands between the central field and the main borders in a carpet design. seen outside the field in figure 11.

**Ghiordes knot:** Symmetrical knot, also known as a Turkish knot.

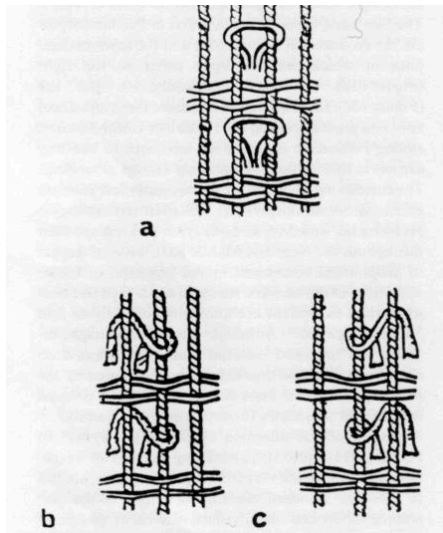


Figure 12: Carpet knot types. (Wikicommons): a) Ghiordes or symmetrical knot; b) asymmetrical knot open right; c) asymmetrical knot open left.

**Gul:** Stylised floral designs. Important component of the design of Turkman carpets, where each tribe has its own *gul*. Sometimes known as ‘elephant’s foot’ design.

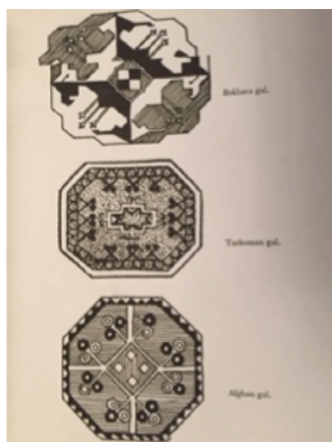


Figure 13: Turkmen, Bokhara and Afghan guls. (Hermann Haack, *Oriental Rugs*)

**Heddle:** Component of loom which lifts alternate warp threads, permitting a weft thread to be shot directly through without being interwoven. See also shed.

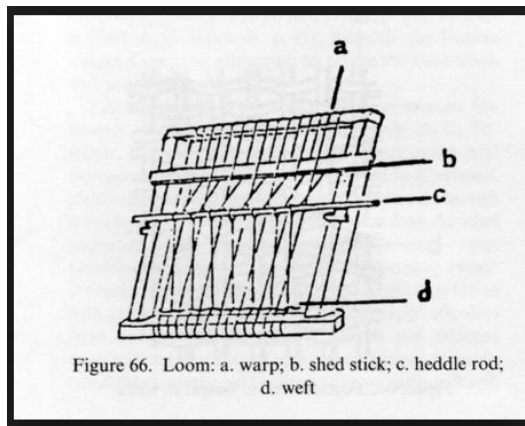


Figure 14: Shed and heddle on Iranian handloom. (Wikicommons)

**Hemp:** Fibre made from the hemp plant. Often use for canvas sails, and heavy backings.

**Jute:** Fibre made from plant grown in South Asia. Used in nineteenth and twentieth centuries as backing for machine-made carpets.

**Kilim:** Flatwoven carpet, without knots or pile. The pattern is constructed by the warp and weft threads.

**Knot:** A loop inserted around the warp threads of a knotted pile carpet. The line of loops is secured by the weft threads above and below it. Multiple knots create the pile of the carpet, and its pattern.

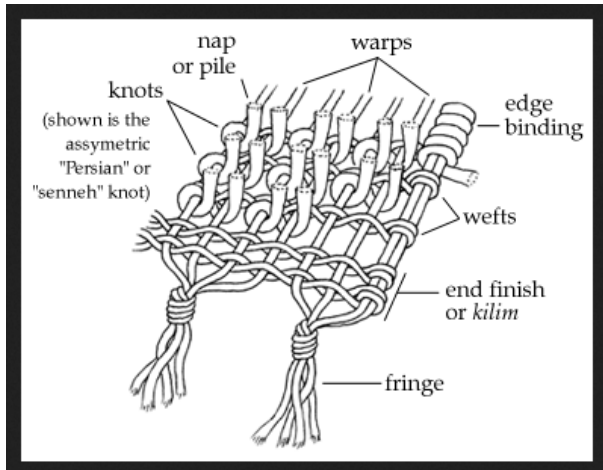


Figure 15: Structure of knotted pile carpet. (Wikicommons)

**Loom:** Frame on which warp threads are strung under tension, as basis for textile weaving.

**Madder:** Plant producing red dye. Found across Eurasia.

**Medallion:** Large central motif in the field of some patterned pile carpets.

Particularly associated with sixteenth and seventeenth-century Safavid carpets



Exhibit 16: Detail of Ardabil carpet. Medallion is inside the red box.



**Mihrab:** Prayer niche in a Mosque. Used as a motif in carpet design.

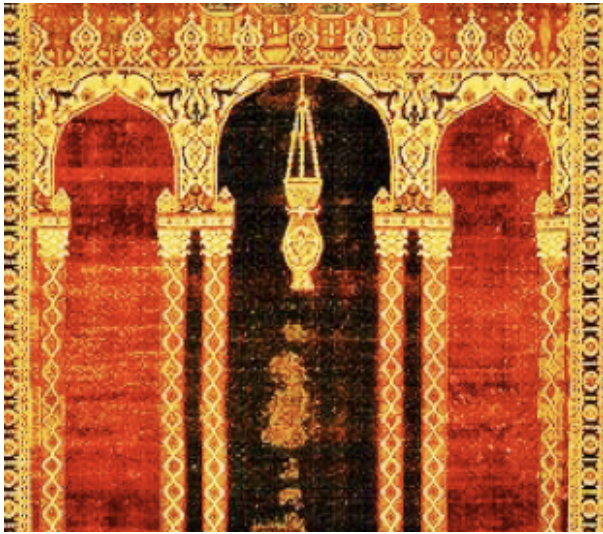


Figure 17: Ottoman Court Prayer rug, handknotted, silk warp and weft, wool and cotton pile, 172x127cm, Istanbul, Turkey, c.1575-90. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 22.100.51)

**Millefleurs:** Multiple rows of flowers across the field, associated with Indo-Persian carpets and Persian carpets from urban workshops.



Figure 18: Handknotted wool carpet, Lahore Central Jail, 1881-2. (V&A, London, IS.797-1883)

**Mori:** Non-Iranian styles of carpet designs.

**Multi-spectral imaging:** Laboratory technique which permits analysis of wavebands invisible to the human eye. Used in analysis of carpet dyes and fibres.

**Natural dyes:** Dyes produced from organic materials such as plants, insects and shellfish. It has a secondary implication that such dyes are not produced by industrial methods.

**Naqash:** Master weaver

**Naqba:** 'Disaster', Palestinian term for the departure of Palestinians in 1948 from the territories which became Israel.

**Narcho gashtai:** 'Wandering design', Afghan term for borrowed designs which are associated with neither tribe nor family.

**Organic dyes:** See natural dyes.

**Palmette:** Design motif resembling the spread fan-shaped leaves of a palm tree.

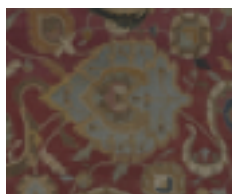


Figure 19: Detail of handknotted carpet, cotton warps and wefts, wool pile, 820 x 320cm, India, seventeenth century. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975.1.2457)

**Pashmina:** Fine goat wool, often associated with Kashmir.

**Pashm:** Pashmina.

**Pendant:** Element of medallion motif.



Figure 20: Detail of Ardabil carpet showing pendants

**Persian knot:** Asymmetrical knot in carpet weaving, also known as Senneh. See also Ghiordes knot.

**Pile:** Deep velvety surface of a knotted pile carpet, created by multiple dense rows of loops of wool inserted around warp threads, and held secure by weft threads.

**Plying:** The twisting together of two strands of yarn.

**Rya:** Patterned pile carpets historically made in Sweden. Noted for their long pile and monochrome palette.

**Scrolling vine:** Motif in carpet design of intertwined tendrils and stems.



Figure 21: Detail of Ardabil carpet with scrolling vine pattern.

**Senneh knot:** See Persian knot.

**Shed:** The temporary separation between warp threads, achieved by the heddle, through which the weft threads pass.

**S-spun:** The direction of twist of a single strand of spun yarn, conforming to the diagonal of the letter S. See also Z-spun.

**Supplementary wefts:** Wefts introduced to produce a special effect or pattern, for example the local use of metal-wrapped threads. These wefts do not extend the full width of the carpet. This is also known as brocade technique.

**Synthetic dyes:** Dyes made from inorganic materials and/or by processes of industrial synthesis.

**Talim:** Instructions for a carpet design employing a series of symbols known as a carpet-weaving language.



Figure 22: Knot plan and *talim* for handwoven carpet, Pakistan, c. 2015. (Lahore Carpet Manufacturing Company)

**Tchi:** See cloudbands.

**Turkish knot:** See Ghiordes knot.

**Ustad:** Carpet weaving supervisor in workshop or factory.

**Wagireh:** Carpet sample containing design components from multiple carpets which are not integrated into a single pattern, and which the weaver can use for design inspiration.



Figure 23: *Wagireh* (pattern sampler), handknotted, wool, Bijar tribal area, Iran, early twentieth century. (Oturn.com)

**Warp:** Lengthwise tensioned threads on a loom, which provide stability to the structure of a carpet.

**Weft:** Widthwise untensioned threads, which are interwoven with the warp threads to provide the body of the carpet. In a pile carpet these play no role in the pattern, which is constructed by the knots.

**Z-spun:** The direction of twist of a single strand of spun yarn, conforming to the diagonal of the letter Z. See also S-spun.

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