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2021

PHOTOGRAPHY MEMORY BELONGING:

A STUDY OF TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITY MEDIATED THROUGH STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of PhD



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Word Count

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise indicated, is original work of the author. 63,271 words

Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary high-street studio photography in my local area, of north London, from studios which are owned by first- and second- generation 'Turkish' migrants, at a time when the presence of these on the high street is rapidly changing. In examining these photographs and the photography studio I use the prism of photography as an alternative way of understanding the mores of the local community. I am interested in how cultural traditions are visualised, localised and mediated through studio photography. I archive some of the photographs made in the studios and seek to find new possibilities of uncovering hidden histories by thinking through the construction of localised transcultural identities in these studios. I weave together multi-disciplinary research methods, such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, photo elicitation, photographic ethnographies as well as taking photographs to find new ways of eliciting knowledge. In order to contextualise the empirical research, I draw from Western art and photographic histories of representational portraiture within a socio-cultural context and introduce a post-colonial critique of Orientalism as a theoretical research method. Building on the secondary literature I look at continuities between early Ottoman-Turkish photography and my contemporary case study. Using creative visual practice-as-research, I create my own visual responses through the written text, this includes, *Cartographies of the Local*, *The Book of Backgrounds*, *The Sampler*, *The Unnamed Sitter* and *The Emotional life of Transcultural Photographs*. With the potential also to be realised as material objects such as photobooks, prints for exhibition or digital displays, they respond to the theoretical research and to the examined photographs. These multi-disciplinary methods in their straddling of boundaries between textual and visual research, and textual and visual 'arguments', prove crucial to enabling a close analysis of my case study, and are key to forming the aesthetic and material investigations of the research. The thesis concludes by moving the research into the family home in order to examine the mnemonic value of family photographs. In doing this, I investigate the critical relationship between photography, memory and migration. Thereby, I ask questions

about the politics of representation and investigate how alternative histories can be uncovered using visual methods.

INDEX

Acknowledgements	2
Word Count	4
Abstract	5
Illustrations	9
Preface	14
Introduction	19
<i>Cartographies of the Local</i>	23
The photography studio as a research site	32
Visualising the Anglo-Turkish community.....	34
Research process	38
<i>Primary Research I: Studio Research</i>	53
Belda Productions	54
Berfin Studios	58
Click Digital	64
Coban	67
Kibris Studio.....	70
Platin Studios.....	76
TAC Digital.....	79
Chapter overview	82
Chapter 2	88
The Studio Photograph as a Conceptual Framework	88
The studio portrait as a genre of photography.....	95
The visual 'habitus' of the studio photograph	108
Backgrounds as foregrounds	113
Concluding comments.....	114
<i>The Book of Backgrounds</i>	116
Quotes included in the text	130
<i>Publication layout</i>	131
<i>The Sampler</i>	135
Publication layout	142
Chapter 3	146
The Occidental Frame	146
Orientalism as visual culture	151
Early Ottoman photography	158
The Abdul Hamid II albums	162
The entangled pillar	163
Concluding comments.....	167
<i>The Unnamed Sitter</i>	170
Chapter 4	182
Doing Transcultural Photography	182
Costume as a cultural performance	185
The transcultural wedding portrait that travels.....	189
Fashioning transcultural practices	193

Concluding comments.....	202
<i>Primary Research II</i>	204
Chapter 5	216
Family Portraits: Looking at Photographs as Mnemonic Devices	216
The process of research	219
Reading the photographs	223
Mnemonic connections of the image-objects.....	227
The audible narrative.....	230
Photography and memorial practices	233
Concluding comments.....	237
<i>The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs</i>	240
Conclusion	247
Bibliography	262

Illustrations

Preface

Figure XI A Beautiful Sunset (2009) © Caroline Molloy

Introduction

Figure 1.1 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Private Interior IV* (2013-2018) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.2 *Digital sketchbook I*, Turkish coffee shops and outside panelling, Green Lanes and Stoke Newington High Street (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.3 *Digital sketchbook II*, Turkish barbers - Green Lanes (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.4 *Digital sketchbook III*, TAC Wedding, shopfront - Bruce Grove (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.5 *Digital sketchbook IV*, Afro hairdressers - Kingsland Road, Balls Pond Road, Tottenham High Road (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.6 *Digital sketchbook V*, Plastic water bottles, Green Lanes (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.7 *Digital sketchbook VI*, Close up of travel agent's visuals and outside of mosque Stoke Newington High Street, on local map with names of shops (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.8 *Digital sketchbook VII*, Polish toy shopfront, plastic head in hairdresser on local map with names of shops, Stamford Hill (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.9. *Digital sketchbook VIII*, Wall Art, Tottenham, Bruce Grove, Stoke Newington (2020) © Caroline Molloy

Figures 1.10 Digital screen grabs of children's portraits, Platin Studios (2016)

Figures 1.11 Digital screen grabs of children's portraits, Platin Studios (2016)

Figure 1.12 screen grab map of local neighbourhood with photography studios marked

Figure 1.13 Assorted digital backgrounds available for studio portraits (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.14 Assorted digital backgrounds available for studio portraits (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.15 Assorted digital backgrounds available for studio portraits (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.16 Assorted digital backgrounds available for studio portraits (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.17 Assorted digital backgrounds available for studio portraits (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.18 Assorted digital backgrounds available for studio portraits (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.19 Documentation of formal circumcision studio portrait (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.20 Documentation of formal circumcision studio portrait (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.21 Documentation of formal circumcision studio portrait (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 1.22 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.23 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.24 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.25 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.26 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.27 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.28 Documentation of a circumcision party (2011/12) Berfin Studios

Figure 1.29 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.30 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.31 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.32 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.33 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.34 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.35 Assorted children's studio portraits on display on the walls of Click Digital (2012)

Figure 1.36 Documentation of Wedding with Coban, focus on Yalcin Coban (2012)
© Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.37 Documentation of Wedding with Coban, focus on Yalcin Coban (2012)
© Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.38 Screen grab from @cobanwedding - instagram (2020)

Figure 1.39 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.40 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.41 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.42 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.43 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.44 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.45 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.46 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.47 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.48 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.49 documentary photographs of Mr Sahil in Kibris Studio (2016) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.50 Assorted arches - columns/pillars digital backgrounds available for studio portraits at Platin Studios (2017)

Figure 1.51 Assorted arches - columns/pillars digital backgrounds available for studio portraits at Platin Studios (2017)

Figures 1.52 Interior with columns/pillars, table and vase digital background available for studio portraits at Platin Studios (2017)

Figure 1.53 Luxurious interior with pillars, marble table and vase, Platin Studios (2017)

Figure 1.54 Photograph of TAC Digital studio shop front (2014) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 1.55 Wedding photograph sourced from <https://www.tacdigitalservices.com> (accessed 2014). This URL is no longer live.

Figures 1.56 Wedding photograph sourced from <https://www.tacdigitalservices.com> (accessed 2014). This URL is no longer live.

Figure 1.57 Examples of venue décor available for hire (Arabian backdrop) sourced from <https://www.tacweddingservices.com/arabian-backdrops> (sourced 24 8 20)

Figure 1.58 Examples of venue décor available for hire (Arabian backdrop) sourced from <https://www.tacweddingservices.com/arabian-backdrops> (sourced 24 8 20)

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1 Copy of circumcision portrait hanging on the wall in (2011/12) Berfin Studios (close up)

Figure 2.2 Copy of Wedding portrait hanging on the wall in the client reception (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 2.3 Copy of family portrait hanging on the wall in the client reception (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 2.4 Copy of family portrait hanging on the wall in the client reception (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 2.5 Computer screen grab of digital mise-en-scène studio background available (2012) © Belda Productions

Figure 2.6 Computer screen grab of of 'suit and tie' digital mise-en-scène studio background available (2012) © Belda Productions

Figure 2.7 Computer screen grab of digital mise-en-scène studio background available (2012) © Belda Productions

Figures 2.8 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection. H. Goodman. Photographer. Margate Studio.

Figure 2.9 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection. (no details on the photograph).

Figure 2.10 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection John Tredray. Artist & photographer. Hastings.

Figure 2.11 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection J. Willey. Photographer. Louth.

Figure 2.12 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection E. Jeffray. Landscape and portrait photographer. Grimsby and London.

Figure 2.13 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection J. Willey. Photographer. Louth.

Figure 2.14 Digital studio background body in dress, swather of curtain, side table (2011/12) Belda Productions

Figure 2.15 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photograph, chair/swathe of curtain (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection

Figure 2.16 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs, table, plant, window (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection

Figure 2.17 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs, table, plant, window (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection

Figure 2.18 Side table and potted plant, carte-de-visite (2020) *The Book of Backgrounds* (7) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.19 Walter Benjamin text (1934:261), *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (17) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.20 Chair and curtain, carte-de-visite, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (19) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.21 Window, curtain, dresser, ornamental vase and back of carte-de-visite C. Chambers, Pimlico, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (15) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.22 Painted arch background with round wooden pedestal side table and back of carte-de-visite, J Lazenby, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (13) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.23 Decorative side table and chaise lounge carte-de-visite, F G Christopher, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (21) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.24 Man and Top Hat I, Man and Top Hat II, Man and Top Hat III, *Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (28) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.25 Man and Top Hat IV, Man and Top Hat V, Man and Top Hat VI, *Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (29) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.26 Hands I, carte-de-visite *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (24) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.27 Audrey Linkman quote (1993:46), *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (39) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.28 Hands II, carte-de-visite, *The Book of backgrounds* 2020 (32) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.2933 Hands III, carte-de-visite, *The Book of backgrounds* 2020 (41) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.30 Cowboy on a horse, digital studio portrait background, *The Sampler* (6-7) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.31 Cartoon characters, digital studio portrait figures, *The Sampler* (10-11) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.32 Ready-made digital mise-en-scène for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (8-9) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.33 Ready-made digital mise-en-scène princess outfit with flowers for studio portrait, *The Sampler* (18-19) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.34 Ready-made 'suit and tie' digital mise-en-scène for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (20-21)

Figure 2.39 Digital backgrounds pillars/columns - Pergamon and the Colosseum, *The Sampler* (38-39) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.40 Ready-made 'suit and tie' digital mise-en-scène for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (24-25) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.41 Assorted pillars/columns digital studio portrait backgrounds, *The Sampler* (28-29) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.42 Churches digital backgrounds for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (34-35) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.43 Church interior digital backgrounds for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (36-37) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.44 London Eye, digital studio background, *The Sampler* (40-41) © Caroline Molloy

Figure 2.45 Autumn trees digital studio background, *The Sampler* (32-33) © Caroline Molloy

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1 Screen grab of digital studio backgrounds of the pillar/columns at the ruins of Pergamon (2012) © Belda Production

Figure 3.2 Screen grab of assorted digital studio backgrounds including the ruins of Pergamon and the Colosseum (2016) © Platin Studios

Figure 3.3 *The Unnamed Sitter I*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.4 *The Unnamed Sitter II*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.5 *The Unnamed Sitter III*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.6 *The Unnamed Sitter IV*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.7 *The Unnamed Sitter V*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.8 *The Unnamed Sitter VI*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.9 *The Unnamed Sitter VII*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.10 *The Unnamed Sitter VIII*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.11 *The Unnamed Sitter IX*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.12 *The Unnamed Sitter X*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.13 *The Unnamed Sitter XI*, 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 3.14 *The Unnamed Sitter XII* 2020 © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.15 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.16 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.17 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.18 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.19 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.21 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.22 process experiments © Caroline Molloy
 Figures 3.23 process experiments © Caroline Molloy

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Portraits presented on the walls of Berfin Studio. This includes a selection of wedding portraits, family portraits and circumcision portraits (2012)
 Figure 4.2 Wedding portrait (2012) Belda Productions (previously presented in the introduction and in chapter 2)
 Figure 4.3 Pre-wedding photograph, London (2020) www.joystudios.co.uk found using Instagram search term #chineseweddinglondon
 Figure 4.4 Pre-wedding photograph, London (2020) www.joystudios.co.uk found using Instagram search term #chineseweddinglondon 2020
 Figure 4.5 Pre-wedding photograph, London (2020) www.joystudios.co.uk found using Instagram search term #chineseweddinglondon
 Figure 4.6 Pre-wedding photograph, London (2020) www.joystudios.co.uk found using Instagram search term #chineseweddinglondon
 Figure 4.7 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.8 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.9 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.10 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.11 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.12 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.13 Photography documentation of formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with Berfin Studios (2011/12) © Caroline Molloy (previously featured in chapter 1)
 Figure 4.14 *George's Story – Family Interior (I)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.15 *George's Story – Family Interior (II)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.16 *George's Story – Family Interior (III)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.17 *George's Story – Family Interior (IV)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.18 *George's Story – Family Interior (V)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.19, *George's Story – Family Interior (VI)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.20, *George's Story – Family Interior (VII)* (2017) © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 4.21 Kamber's family photographs, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.22 Kamber's family photographs, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.23 Kamber's family photographs, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.24 Kamber's family photographs, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.25 Eren Leyla's son, Family photographs, collected (2014)

Figure 4.26 Leyla and her husband in Hackney, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.27 Leyla family portrait, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.28 Leyla and the Women's group at DYMAR Community Centre, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.29 Leyla and the Women's group at DYMAR Community Centre, collected (2014)
 photo repeat
 Figure 4.30 Leyla with the factory workers, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.31 Leyla stitching in the factory, collected (2014)
 Figure 4.32 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.33 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.34 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.35 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.36 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.37 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.38 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.39 Mercan's family album – her son's circumcision album, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.40 Mercan's home village in Turkey – covered in snow. This photograph was used as the digital background of one of her studio portraits on display in the family home, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.41 Metta as a young woman (date unknown), collected (2014)
 Figures 4.42 Gaye's family albums – close up of her nephew, collected (2016)
 Figure 4.43 Gaye and her two sisters in posing for a family portrait in Turkey (exact date unknown, circa 1985-7). Gaye sits in the centre of the photograph, collected (2016)

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1 Mercan's daughter straight after her birth, personal family album circa 2001, collected (2016)
 Figure 5.2 Mercan, the mayor of Haringgay, Mercan's husband, personal family album circa 2006, collected (2016)
 Figure 5.3 Mercan's son's circumcision portrait, personal family album 2007 (*seen in Primary Research II*), collected (2016)
 Figure 5.4 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Private Interior I* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 5.5 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior II* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 5.6 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior III* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 5.7 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior IV* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 5.8 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Private Interior V* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 5.9 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior VI* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy
 Figure 5.10 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior VII* 2013-2018 © Caroline Molloy

Preface

My interest in studio photography dates back more than ten years, prior to the start of the PhD research. My fascination started during a holiday in Kerala (2008) during which I became intrigued by the number of photography studios that operated within the same geographical area. I was earning a living as a photographer at the time and was curious about the relationship between high-street photography and its connection to the local community. After a prolonged conversation with one of the local photographers about the events he photographed, I became interested in how the prism of photography could be used as an alternative way of looking at the socio-cultural mores of the neighbourhood. I then returned to the same area for 3 more extended visits (2009-11) in order to investigate further how the businesses operated and interacted within the community. During these visits, I interviewed photographers, observed and documented them taking photographs, made a visual photographic record of the elaborate studio spaces, portraits of the photographers, collected studio ephemera and looked at the photographic archives in the studios. At the same time, I endeavoured to learn more about how to investigate social and cultural customs and traditions so enrolled on a master's degree in Visual Anthropology, at Goldsmiths, University of London (2009-2011). These studies gave me training in film-making and ethnographic research methods and encouraged me to experiment and develop my own approach to research methods. Although there are limits to research when selecting a subject to investigate in another country, these formative studies informed my thinking, and together with my photographic skills helped me develop a research methodology that was developed further in this PhD research.



Figure XI: A beautiful sunset with white picket fence, pillar, houseplant and plastic chair (2009) from the series Untouched Copy. This photograph was taken in one of the local photography studios in Fort Cochin, Kerala. This studio background was used for all of the portraits and was one of twenty-one photography studios that operated in the same local area. During the period in which I made repeated visits to the studios, many of the studios closed and I noted a change in how the photographs were made. The studios that remained open abandoned the elaborate static studio background and white-washed their studios. The portrait background was then added to the photographic in the digital post-production.

I became curious about the role of studio photography and the photography studio played in my own neighbourhood of north London. Living in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural area such as north London, that encompasses a range of different communities, I was interested in examining the role of contemporary high street studio photography and the photography practices that emanate out of the local studios in order to better understand the values and traditions of my local community. I became aware that although there have been numerous historical studies of studio photography that draw from photographic archives, as I will go on to discuss in this thesis, there is limited research that looks at studio photography while the work is made, and no research to date that looks at studio photography at the crucial moment when digital photography replaced analogue photography. To undertake research in the local studios, I needed to undertake empirical ethnographic research and build an archive of contemporary studio photographs as primary research to draw from. I also used my skills as a photographer as a way of creating new knowledge through creative visual practice. Drawing from the research methods developed with the case study in Kerala, the initial research in some of the north London studios was undertaken prior to the start of the PhD (2011). This preliminary research formed the basis of the PhD proposal. This process was maintained and refined during the first stage of the PhD research process, mostly between 2012 -2016, which saw the studios change and adapt to the needs of the local clientele.

The research process was not linear and indeed to some extent moved backward and forward between the observational, the visual and the written word. For example, having undertaken the initial primary research in the studios (2011/12-2016) I then drew from photographic and art historical research in order to understand how the history of studio photography could deepen an understanding of what I was observing in the contemporary studios (2013-16). I became interested in the symbolism of the studio background and how that could be read as a language that reflects and communicates the aims and aspirations of the portrait sitter. This led to my creative visual practice that reworked, curated and presented the studio backgrounds seen in the studio of my contemporary case study in north

London, in *The Sampler* (2016) and the historical carte-de-viste portrait photographs examined as part of the research process in *The Book of Backgrounds* (2016-20). In reworking and representing these studio mise-en-scène (without the sitter), I aim to make connections between the contemporary and historical studio portraits. The multi-dimensional approach to research gave me the opportunity to reflect on my empirical and visual research and draw from secondary theoretical research to ground and articulate my thinking.

During the primary research process, I thought carefully about my role as an academic and researcher with a background in photography and visual anthropology, and how to position myself in relation to the case study – that is as a geographical local but outsider to many of the resident communities who frequented the photography studios. In order to position *this* case study, I also drew on a post-colonial reading of Orientalism (2014-18) and thought about not only the relevance of an art historical reading of the studio photography but also how post-colonial theory informs my thinking. A number of specific research questions emerged, some of which were then developed into the main tenet of the thesis. For instance, on close inspection of the photographs made, I noticed the creative and playful ways in which the final photographs were fashioned and was intrigued to understand how and why they were made. Drawing from migration studies I sought to understand how the photography studio can be recognised as a political space through which transcultural identities are experimented with and performed, and in doing so can give visibility to the local diasporic communities. To develop these ideas further, I also examined a selection of personally owned studio portraits alongside of vernacular family photographs, which for the research participants became a way of remembering and building both familial and collective cultural narratives. This required me to undertake research in family homes (2014-2018). Although this moved away from the studio as the initial research site, it was a crucial process in understanding the mnemonic value of photographs for local diasporic communities. This was explored with both the written word and with my photographs *The Emotional Life of*

Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interiors that document the familial spaces in which the photographs are part of the visual fabric of the home.

In contrast to the research questions that position these studio photographs and photography studios within a transcultural context, a number of questions arose around gender and representation. I was particularly interested in the contrast in the depiction of women in the East and West seen in historical photographs. In addition to this, I looked at the role of female photographers in the studios, of which there were very few, and the connection my female participants had with the broader community outside of the familial home. Crucially my relationship as a female photographer/academic/researcher and writer is pivotal to these points and did not pass by unnoticed. This has been referenced at different points in the thesis. However, although these questions have been acknowledged and indeed explored to some extent within the thesis, and furthermore do have potential to be revisited and expanded on further, they have not been developed within the remit of this thesis because they are divergent to the main argument of the thesis. In this thesis I focus on the role of studio photography and the photography studio as an alternative way of commemorating and making visible a diasporic community.

Introduction

This thesis looks at contemporary high-street studio photography in my local area of north London and in doing so, I examine how the practices and rituals of the local community are experimented with, performed and visualised with photography.¹ Through this examination I aim to deepen my knowledge of the mores of local community and draw attention to the mediation of transcultural identity through studio photography. This is timely research in that it started at an historical moment which coincided with the introduction of digital photography, and the concomitant paradigm shift in the methods of taking and making studio photographs. These changes see the studios that seem to have been fixtures of the local high street reconfiguring their presence or closing their premises. As a photographer and academic, trained in visual anthropology, I am interested in the relationship between photography and culture. Within this context, the photography studio seemed a suitable place to commence the research. As a long-term resident of north London, my research is positioned in my neighbourhood in order to develop an engaged relationship with the network of local photography studios and the community within which they exist. As a process of the research I also attempt to create a living/open-ended archive of visual material that may otherwise be overlooked or even discarded. Through this material I aim to understand the value of the photographs as well as document the fugitive presence of photography studios on the high street as sites of visual production. In order to understand the underpinning of this research I then position these studios within an historical context before moving the research into the family home in order to look at the mnemonic value of the photographs for their owners. In looking not just at how the photographs are made but also at how they are used I aim to investigate how they are given meaning and in doing so locate these photographs within a socio-cultural context. I draw on existing histories of studio photography, which are examined in chapters 2 and 3, as well as relevant art-historical and post-

¹ This PhD project was appraised and passed ethics approval institutionally.

colonial theories in order to theoretically contextualise the empirical and visual research. Alongside this visual and textual research, I weave creative visual responses through the text that build on and articulate the theoretical research.



Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 This image was taken in one of the family homes during the research process during Primary Research II. It is included here to give a flavour of the research. It documents one of the family photographs as presented in the home. It is part of the series 'The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Private Interior IV' (2013-2018). It is a digital composite portrait of Zerinary, Leyla's youngest daughter, made by Platin Studios. Leyla told me she couldn't decide which portrait of her daughter to feature in the image so decided to have both versions, that is Zerinary aged one, and Zerinary aged two. Alongside of the two versions of Zerinary both Mickey Mouse and Pluto are featured. When I first came across this image it seemed very strange, but as I built an archive of studio photography it became apparent that it is a common practice to see the same person appear more than once in the one digital portrait. © Caroline Molloy

This introduction is broken into distinct sections that include a summary of the background to the research area, contextualisation and positioning of myself in relation to the research - in which I introduce the neighbourhood through both the written word and visual creative practice. I then identify studio photography and the photographic studio as the subject of research and expand on the focus of the research which looks at how transcultural identity is mediated through studio photography. I share a sample of the raw archival material gathered during the research process and introduce the notion of the affective power of photography in negotiating collective diasporic identities. I then give an overview of the research methods which includes empirical, theoretical, visual and ethnographic methods before I conclude the introduction by outlining how the argument is built through subsequent chapters.

Building on the histories of early studio photography, in recent years there has also seen a surge of interest in exhibiting vernacular studio photography archives, in a Western art gallery context. For example, there is a history of looking at subaltern African studio photography such as photographs made by East-African photographers Seydou Keia and Malick Sidibé that dates back to the 1990s. A different but related example is that of the Harry Jacobs archive, which includes photographs taken in his commercial high-street photography studio, located in Brixton from the late 1950s-1999. A selection of this archive was exhibited at the Photographers Gallery in 2002, and again in Brixton in 2018. In addition, there are 'The Belle Vue Studio Archive', held in the National Media Museum in Bradford, which documents the large Asian diasporic community in Bradford; and Autograph's 'missing chapter' sourced in the Hulton archive which contests the representation of people of colour in the late nineteenth-century.² More recently the portrait studio photographs of Maganbhai Patel (Masterji) who ran a portrait studio in Coventry from the 1950s until 2000 exhibited as part of the winning bid for City of Culture 2021 have been highlighted. (O'Hagen 2016, Molloy 2016b). Although there is a

² 'The Missing Chapter' was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery (2016) and written about by O'Hagen (2014), Molloy (2016c).

rich history of studio photography which I go on to argue is globally pervasive, and a growing interest in the studio archive as a socio-cultural resource, there are scant examples of contemporary studio photography contextually examined in the historical moment they were made, and no examples of looking at digital studio photography.

The visual material I bring together for this thesis aims to present a 'pre-history' (Hall 2001:98) at a specific historical moment that captures and collates a living archive of the Anglo-Turkish diaspora and in doing so makes visible in an academic context the north London Anglo-Turkish community. As reminded by cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall (2001) when writing about constituting an archive it needs to be considered that

No archive arises out of thin air. Each archive has a 'pre-history', in the sense of prior conditions of existence. (Hall 2001:89)

This thesis demonstrates the continuities between the conceptual framework of historical studio practices and this contemporary case study and adds to the existing literature by making the connection between the production of photographs and how transcultural identities are shaped.³ Having identified that the north London photography studios in my study are all owned by first- and second- generation Turkish migrants, and that the majority (but not all) of their clients are Anglo-Turkish, I go on to argue that the photography studio and the practices that emanate out of these studios are an integral

³ The terms 'transnational' and 'transcultural' are used in anthropology and migration studies and are both referred to in this thesis. In order to follow the thread of the thesis, I qualify here my use of both words. Transnational can be understood as across nations. It commonly refers to a community of people who have migrated across borders for economic or political reasons. For example, this could equally apply to a group of British expatriates who have chosen to live exclusively within a British community outside Britain, as it can to a diasporic group of political or economic migrants who have moved across borders. Transcultural refers to cross-cultural activities/practices that have evolved through cultural exchanges of ideas and practices. This term is commonly attributed to Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (Alonso, Oiarzabal 2010), (Cohen, Fischer 2018), (Kraidy 2005), (Pratt 2006), (Sigona *et al.* 2015).

way of experimenting with the mediation of transcultural Anglo-Turkish identity.⁴

Cartographies of the Local

Cartographies of the Local is a body of creative visual practice developed as part of the research process. A sample of this visual research is included in the thesis to offer visual context to the neighbourhood in which the research takes place and to present insight into my observations of the research area. Within the neighbourhood, I notice vibrant and fluid alchemy of tastes, smells, colours and cultural practices, and aim to chronicle the minutiae of these observations. The focus of this work is deliberately broad, it uses photography to look at the intersections of visual culture within the neighbourhood and points towards the interconnection of transcultural identities in the place I call home. The work was made over a long period of time and includes photographs made with on film, digital and mobile telephone images. It also includes a range of collected ephemera and reflective notes. The work is collated using a sketchbook-style method of organically recording visuals, notes and formative ideas. This becomes a starting point of creative possibilities which is an integral process of seeing, knowing and registering my relationship with the locale. The work offers a visual survey the local neighbourhood and is a prelude to the research in the north London photography studios.

⁴ Notably one photographer commented that despite the close proximity of the studios they were able to co-exist in the same vicinity precisely because they draw their clientele through familial and social association with their Turkish home villages.

Cartographies of the local

Photography

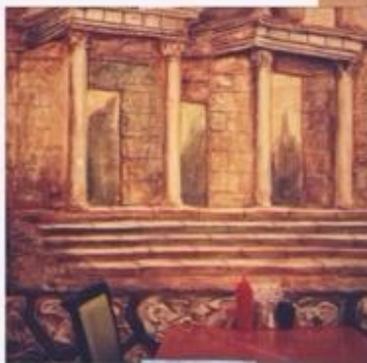


Figure 1.2 *Digital sketchbook I*
Turkish coffee shops and outside panelling
Green Lanes and Stoke Newington High Street 2020

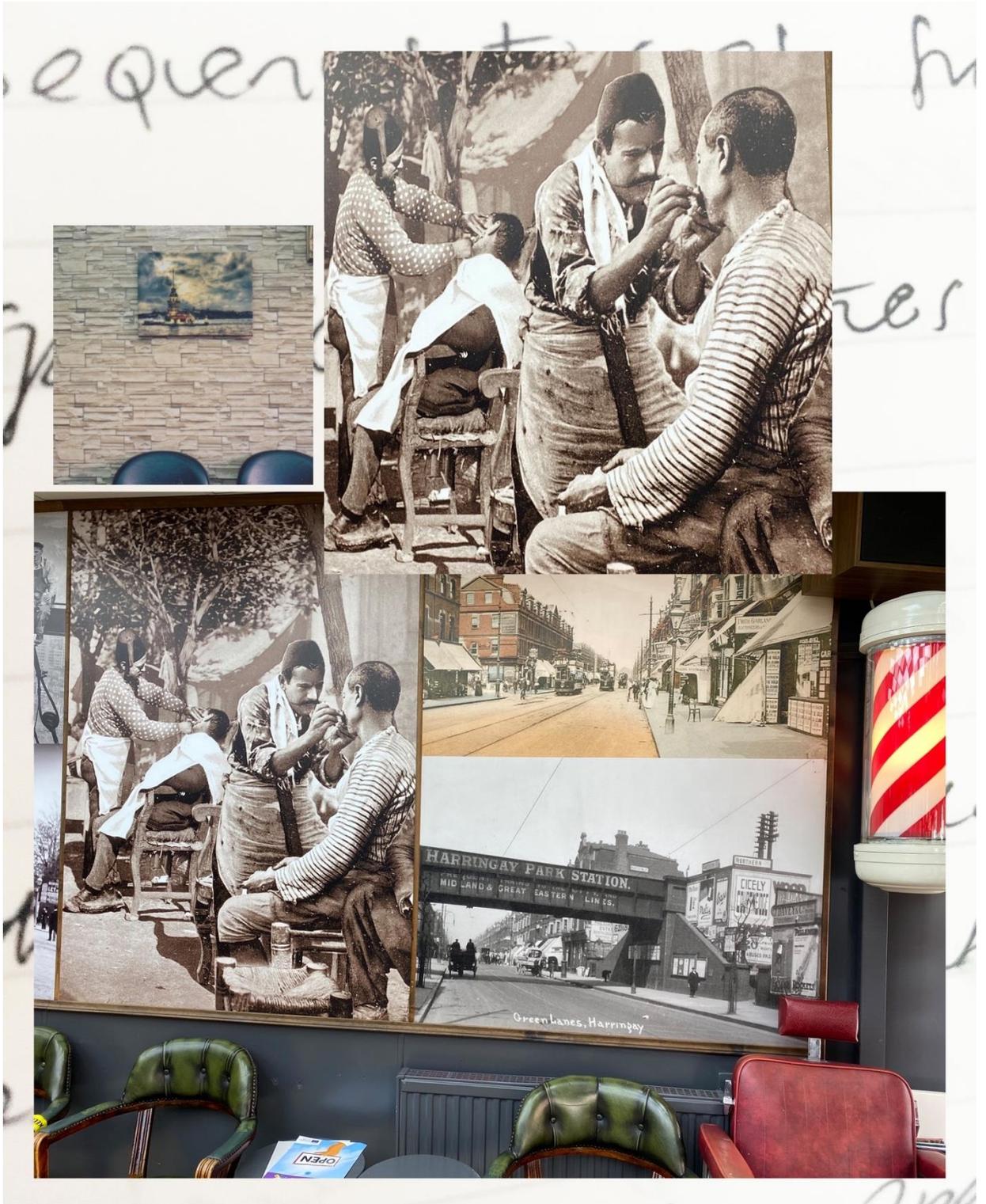


Figure 1.3 *Digital sketchbook II*
Turkish barbers - Green Lanes 2020



Figure 1.4 *Digital sketchbook III*
TAC Wedding, shopfront - Bruce Grove 2020



Figure 1.5 *Digital sketchbook IV*
Afro hairdressers - Kingsland Road, Balls Pond Road, Tottenham High Road 2020



Figure 1.6 *Digital sketchbook V*
Plastic water bottles, Green Lanes 2020



Figure 1.7 *Digital sketchbook VI*

Close up of travel agent's visuals and outside of mosque Stoke Newington High Street, on local map with names of shops 2020

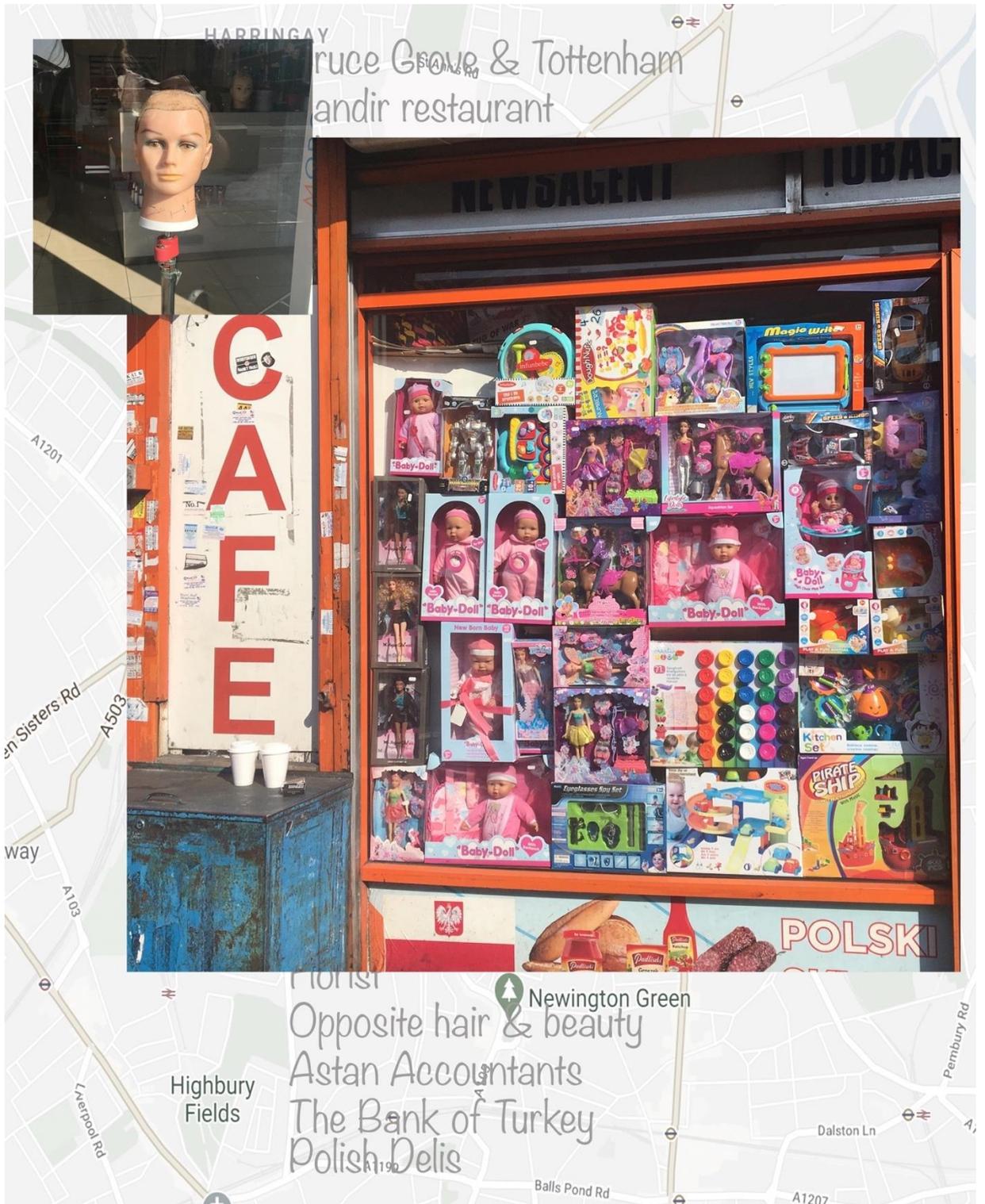


Figure 1.8 Digital sketchbook VII
 Polish toy shopfront, plastic head in hairdresser on local map with names of shops,
 Stamford Hill 2020



Figure 1.9. *Digital sketchbook VIII*
Wall Art, Tottenham, Bruce Grove, Stoke Newington 2020

The photography studio as a research site

The impetus for this research starts in a moment of looking into the window of one of these photography studios on my high-street in 2011. My gaze fixes on one photograph. For me this is an unusual image of a young boy aged seven or eight. He is wearing a formal white outfit, inclusive of fur-trimmed white cape and cap, embellished with silver trim, and he is holding a decorative sceptre. In contrast to the formality of the outfit, his pose is informal. He is seated on the ground and is smiling at the camera. His portrait has been repositioned in front of a waterfall in digital post-production, so that to the viewer it appears that the boy is, impossibly, seated in front of the waterfall. What I find puzzling about this photograph is what I see as a disjuncture between the foreground portrait and the digital background - why a waterfall as the background of this portrait? It is a fascinating phantasmagorical photograph that raises many questions about the constructed image. This photograph is also indicative of the many studied for this research. As a curious observer, trained in visual anthropology as well as being local to this area, I am interested to know more about the motivation and making of these photographic images, and intrigued to understand the significance of the digitised background, the story that is being told through these images. In the reflection of the photography studio window on the surface of the glass, I see my own face staring back at me. I can feel the wind rushing past and hear the noise of traffic behind me. I gaze beyond my own image and see the red buses and black cabs in motion, on the busy north London street behind me. This is where the research begins, in a phantasmatic space of reflections and representations, overlaying what is familiar to me and what is not, in front of this glass-fronted photography studio which becomes one of the research sites.

At the time of the main body of research (2012-16), there are seven photography studios within the same vicinity. My interactions with each studio vary, they include participant observation, photographic documentation, interviews (some of which are recorded) and online research. Five of the studios sit within a four-mile stretch, on the A10 in north

London.⁵ Four of these are located in close proximity on Stoke Newington High Street and a fifth can be found further along the road next to the large banqueting hall in Tottenham.⁶ There are two additional photography studios in the same area of London, sited at different points on Green Lanes, a road which runs perpendicular to the A10.⁷ As I have already highlighted, these studios are exclusively owned and worked in by first- and second-generation Turkish migrants. Their remit is to cater for the needs of the local community, which is historically, but not exclusively, a diasporic Turkish community. They are almost entirely surrounded by other Turkish businesses, such as the local bank, hairdressers, travel agents and all of the restaurants.⁸ It quickly became apparent that, although the research takes place in my geographical locale, I am an outsider to the research. This point is highlighted by one participant-photographer during an interview, who remarks that although his business is in London, this neighbourhood is really a little Turkish town.⁹ Having identified that the studios are Turkish-owned, in a way that seems to reflect the traditions of the Turkish community in London, it is then significant to consider how socio-cultural identities are experimented with, performed and then visualised in the photographic practices that emanate out of the studios. Hall's (2006) writing on cultural identity is helpful when thinking through reimagining diasporic cultural identities afresh. He highlights the fluidity with which diasporic identities are configured.

Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.
(Hall 2006:439)

⁵ On this section of the A10, between Stoke Newington and Tottenham the road changes name three times; Stoke Newington High Street becomes Stamford Hill and finally High Road.

⁶ Stamford Hill sits between Stoke Newington and Tottenham. This area claims to have the largest population of Hasidic Jews in Europe. There are no photography studios on Stamford Hill.

⁷ It was quite common to find that the local Turkish clients who frequent the studios came from the same hometowns as the owners of the photography studios that they visit.

⁸ It is noted that on occasion Kurdish/Turkish owned Kebab shops have chosen Turkish names for their shops, instead of Kurdish names.

⁹ See appendix I, which includes the Birkbeck ethical review form (submitted 2019) and sample content form.

I am attentive as to how and where these transformations take place and question whether the photography studio is a place in which these changes happen. It may seem unusual to think of and through the photography studio as a research site. However, if photography is understood as a key tool through that visually records and documents key events, the photography studio can and the photographic practices that emanate out of the studio, can be understood as sites in which transcultural identities are experimented with and reconfigured. To explain this further I refer to Nando Sigona, Alan Gamlen, Giulia Liberatore, and H  l  ne Neveu Kringelbach, (2015:XXI) who, when writing about places of diaspora, argue that transnational spaces are places in which diasporic transcultural practices take place. These are places of agency, they suggest, where diasporic communities meet-greet and reconfigure their identities. Sigona *et al.* (2015) identify churches and schools as transnational spaces. These are places in which a sense of cultural belonging is fostered. As I argue in this thesis, a sense of belonging can be created in a photography studio, when visually capturing cultural practices, as much as it can over a coffee and conversation in a church or school, as suggested by Sigona *et al.* (2015). Following this line of thought I put forward the idea that the photography studio and more broadly the commercial photography that emanates out of the studio, as transnational practices of self-recognition, wherein identities are fashioned.

Visualising the Anglo-Turkish community

It is worth repeating that all the photography studios in north London are owned by first- and second-generation Turkish migrants and although this is my local neighbourhood of London, this is a community I am not part of. It is important to reflect on the fact that although the research commenced as an observational approach to studying the studios it soon became apparent that there was a distinct aesthetic and set of practices that were taking place in the studios, that were unique to this cluster of Anglo-Turkish studios. In order to understand a little more about the patterns of Turkish migration to England, some contextual secondary research was needed. Firstly though, I highlight that the use of the label 'Turkish' can be misleading. It infers a

homogenous group identity, and this is not the case. In using the word 'Turkish' the multifaceted subtleties of cultural, ethnic, geographical, religious and national histories are often overlooked. For example, in his discussion of the complexity of the 'Turkish' identity, Ihsan Yilmaz (2005:386) points out that 'the folk of the Anatolian tribal people and villagers differ[ed] considerably, [even] in the Ottoman State'. Ipek Demir (2012) who writing about the diasporic Turkish community in England is also helpful in reminding the reader that there is a long history of Turkish migration to England, and that there has been a Turkish community in England since Ottoman times. In arguing that the motivation for migration has changed over the years, he explains that it was the political unrest in Cyprus in the 1950s and 1960s that saw a large migration of Turkish people to London, and economic problems in the 1970s and 1980s caused an influx of immigration from mainland Turkey. He adds that Turkish migrants congregate in the same areas of London as other migrants from their hometown, conspicuously settling in Stoke Newington, Manor House and Green Lanes – also 'my' neighbourhood and the site of my research.

Although initially I imagine there is a collective sense of belonging to a diasporic Turkish community, it quickly becomes apparent that belonging to a diasporic Turkish community means something quite different to everyone I speak with. Many different identities with contradictory interests and divergent forms of identification shelter under the same diasporic umbrella.¹⁰ Specific statistics around the size of population, background, ethnicity, religion and culture of the Turkish diaspora in London are unreliable.¹¹ Even

¹⁰ For further reading around the construction of diasporic communities see Brah (1996) whose writing on diaspora challenges the concept of a standardised diasporic identity (her example is an 'Asian' Identity) based on nation-state and Walter (2010) who writes about the intersection of different (Irish and Jewish) diasporic communities, who inhabit the same area of London. For specific writing around North London Kurdish/Turkish communities see Demir (2012) and Erel (2010).

¹¹ For specific information about Kurdish/Turkish migrants Erel (2010) writes that estimates of Kurdish/Turkish population in England vary from 54,000 to 150,000 depending on who is counting. He notes that most of the community are settled in London. However, despite a clear visual presence on the high street, there is limited visual evidence to support the fact that there is an historical Turkish community in north London/Harringay. For example, extensive research in Harringay cultural library reveals only two photographs that show diasporic Turkish businesses on the high street.

in self-identifying as part of a diasporic Turkish community, research participants disagree about what exactly this means. They differ in points of intersection and self-recognition, religious allegiances, politics, culture, ethnicities and even first language which suggests cohesion is simultaneously contested and built in many ways. The people I speak with initially identify themselves as Turkish or Anglo-Turkish. However, during extended conversations the complexities of individual identities start to emerge. This includes participants who, to name a few, self-identify as Turkish, Kurdish, Anglo-Turkish, London-Turkish/Kurdish-Turkish/Turkish-Londoners/Turkish Cypriots, Alevi Kurds, as well as ethnic Turks. This identification seems to differ depending on who is asking.¹² I found 'Anglo-Turkish' to be the most consistent form of identification and will within this thesis refer to the diasporic Turkish community as Anglo-Turkish. It is prudent however to note that in the same way the term 'Turkish' is overarching and complicated so is the word 'Anglo-Turkish'.¹³ For example, when writing about the cohesion of the Turkish diasporic community in London, Demir (2012) points out that despite historical and political tensions from different ethnic members of the community, common ground is found through a shared homeland, that is the homeland of Turkey. Surprisingly he goes on to say that in fact - although this may seem contradictory - there are more tensions between first- and second-generation Turkish migrants than between different ethnic Turkish migrants from the same generation. According to Demir second- generation ethnic Kurds and ethnic Turks find points of intersection and connection in ways they do not with their parents' generation. This point is more broadly discussed by Sara Ahmed (2000)

¹² Indeed, one participant claimed to be Turkish, throughout the interview. Only on the point of leaving her home did she mention she was in fact Kurdish. For political reasons, she had spent many years performing 'Turkish' to an external world and was cautious in revealing her Kurdish ethnicity.

¹³ As well as the participants from the Anglo-Turkish community I worked with in north London, there is a broader Anglo-Turkish diaspora, whom I was able to access through the Anglo-Turkish Society <http://www.angloturkishsociety.org.uk/>. The remit of this society aims to strengthen and develop historical ties of friendship and understanding between diasporic Anglo-Turkish people. In addition, there is the Turkish Cypriot Community Association <http://tcca.org/> who provide culturally, linguistically and religiously sensitive services to Turkish and Kurdish speakers residing in the UK.

when she writes about diasporic communities. She suggests that there are commonalities in all migrant communities.

The very experience of leaving home and 'becoming a stranger' involves the creation of a new 'community of strangers', a common bond with those others who have 'shared' the experience of living overseas. (Ahmed 2000:84)

Thus, Ahmed puts forward the idea that forming a community, and creating a sense of belonging, is as much about sharing a lack of home, as it is about sharing an inherited past. This idea is built on by Sigona *et al.* (2015) who suggest that the diasporic networks that emerge are as much about a shared habitus. To understand this term, it is useful to refer to Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of the 'habitus'. He argues that our sense of place in the world is determined by our internalised structures and schemes of perception. The structures which he refers to as our habitus, govern our aesthetic, social, economic and cultural tastes. According to Sigona *et al.* the habitus is equally navigated through immigration restrictions, as having a shared homeland. This informs my thinking about the community of research, which is not in fact a 'Turkish' community as initially suggested, instead they re-identify, even if loosely, as an Anglo version of a Turkish community, that is an Anglo-Turkish community with independent practices that separate them from a Turkish community in Turkey.

Following this line of thinking it is useful to consider the Anglo-Turkish community as what Benedict Anderson (1983) refers to as an 'Imagined community' – that is a social construct of people who perceive themselves as part of the same group, with similar interests, or those who collectively identify with each other despite the fact they may never meet face to face. Anderson uses this term as a way of defining 'nation', however it seems equally to apply to members of a diasporic community. This point is made by Anna Pechurina (2015) when writing about the Anglo- Russian community. She uses the term 'imagined community' to articulate a self-defined Russian-diasporic community. Her writing further opens up and examines the concept

of an 'imagined diasporic' community. She suggests 'nation-ness' can be understood as a practice realised by people who 'imagine' themselves as a collective, in a sense those who have self-defined notions of belonging, rather than just an imposed form of identification. This she argues is increasingly relevant in a world where homeland and belonging are increasingly blurred.

Research process

This section of the introduction outlines my position within the research process and the methods engaged with for this study and presents some of the raw archive of material collected during the research process. I have identified that the starting place for the research is the photography studio in north London, which is my neighbourhood and suggest the studio is a place in which identities can be experimented with, performed and configured. In relation to the field of research my role is fluid, as I have a background working as a photographer, I have training in visual anthropology and now work within a critical academic framework. The methods of research I engage with are across disciplines: at different, or even at the same, times, I am an ethnographer, I gather oral histories, I am a photographer and an archivist. In addition to which I draw from interdisciplinary theoretical methods to frame the research process. The methods include traditional qualitative ethnographic research methods, such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews (some of which are recorded), photo elicitation and photographic ethnography. In addition, I use photography in a number of different ways as a part of the research process. The subject of the research is photography but, in addition to this, photography is itself a tool of research, documentation and exchange. Photography is also a method used as a visual response to the empirical and theoretical research to 'elaborate' my findings. The different approaches are methodological experiments that operate in tandem with the written research. Within this thesis the photography sits between, in front of, and behind the academic writing.

When thinking through the 'local' neighbourhood as a place in which to situate the research I draw from Lippard's (1997) writing on the *Lure of the Local*. She refers to the word 'local' as the pull of a place that operates within us. She writes about the complex network between the known and unknown within our local area which give us a sense of place and adds that the rich tapestry of the local is often overlooked. This she describes as essentially an integrated web of cultural amalgamations.

Places bear the records of hybrid culture, hybrid histories that must be woven into a new mainstream. They are our background in every sense.

(Lippard 1997:8)

In this context I write about where I live in north London. I moved to London twenty plus years ago for career opportunities, for the first ten years I moved around frequently, living in twelve properties in four different neighbourhoods.¹⁴ My decisions about where to live were mostly governed by economics and a desire to be in close proximity to where I worked and studied. Ten years ago, I moved to a property in north London that was near where I worked at the time. I have remained in this property for a decade and call it home. During the short commute between home and work, from north to east London, I cycled through a number of different neighbourhoods. Although there are no physical boundaries to cross during the commute, the neighbourhoods are different from each other, and often distinct in their identities. Examples of this are the many Turkish-owned, late-night kebab houses on Stoke Newington High Street and along Green Lanes, which sit alongside Turkish-owned hairdressers, beauticians, barbers, photography studios and general stores, as shown above in *Cartographies of the Local*. In addition to this, within the same vicinity, on and around Ridley Road market, vibrant Afro-Caribbean fabrics are sold alongside Afro hair and beauty

¹⁴ In order to contextualise myself in the text, the complexities of my own background are important. I am white British and was brought up in north Hampshire and moved to London via the West Midlands. My parents are Irish and Welsh, they met in Wales and moved to southern England for work opportunities. I bring an Irish-Catholic heritage and Welsh familial links to London with me.

products and fresh Caribbean vegetables. There are also see kosher butchers on Stamford Hill that sit alongside the newly arrived Polish delis. This interweaving of smells, colour, tastes and cultural practices within the one area are rich with vibrancy and this is one of the main reasons I have remained in the same area for some time. To clarify what I mean by interweaving of cultures I refer to the creative practice of transculturation. Transculturation (as referred already referred to in foot note ⁶), is a term frequently referred to in migration and anthropological studies which is commonly attributed to Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940). Ortiz (1940) refers to transculturation as the conscious exchange and the merging of cross-cultural practices.

In an attempt to understand my own relationship to the 'local' neighbourhood I find Ahmed's (2000) ideas about the relationship between strangers, embodiment and community helpful. She unpicks the relationship between home and the local as a place of belonging, which is defined by what one smells, hears, touches, feels and remembers. She argues that 'home' is a lived experience of locality that intrudes into our every sense. Avtar Brah's (1996) writing also resonates with my thinking about how to know the local neighbourhood. She writes about the intellectual surveying of landscape in post-war Britain in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, as an under-researched aspect of the 'diaspora space' of England.¹⁵

In the diaspora space called 'England' [...] African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian, Jewish and other diasporas intersect amongst themselves as well as with the entity constructed as 'Englishness' thoroughly reinscribing it in the process. (Brah 1996:209)

¹⁵ It is helpful to qualify 'diasporic' which is used throughout the thesis. The origins of the term 'diasporic' comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "to scatter about". A more common use of 'diasporic' is to define as a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland, who have since moved to places other than their place of birth/heritage. My use of 'diasporic' begins with Hall's (1999) use of 'diasporic' as a heterogeneous community which sits 'in between' cultures, and as he argues is constantly reproducing itself anew.

Although her writings are not specifically about London, I recognise this diasporic space called 'England' that she writes of, as my local area. Brah and Ahmed's writings capture the essence of my experience of daily journeys through London. She identifies that these intersections arise through shared geographical locations. I am curious about the patterns of cultural intersection that flourish in the areas which I traverse. Despite no fixed boundaries to define and inscribe socio-cultural geographic places in London, areas are often (although no longer exclusively) inhabited by people who originate from the same home country. My working pattern and commute to work has since changed. However, my interest and engagement in my surrounding area - my locale - remains constant. With a curiosity in the hybrid nature of my neighbourhood as a starting point to frame the research, I investigate photography studios in north London as places in which traditions, rituals and life affirming events are confirmed and, secondly, I move forward and look at the mnemonic value of these same photographs for their owners.¹⁶

Ironically, I commenced this research because I thought engaging with a case study in my own neighbourhood would mean I would have a good understanding of the local community and how photography was used within it. However, it soon became apparent that my position within the research was complicated. I am a long-term local resident in the neighbourhood but an outsider to the Anglo-Turkish community, which means in relation to the research place and subject I concurrently oscillate between outsider and insider. Arguably, there are specific advantages and challenges when positing oneself as an insider and an outsider within the research framework, which are not easy to navigate. As a photographer I am accustomed with everyday commercial photography practices and yet within the local photography studios there are rituals and practices that are unfamiliar to me. For example, I recognise the graduation and family portraits on display in the studio shop fronts, but I am a tentative observer of ritual celebrations such as

¹⁶The term 'hybridity' draws from Bhabha (1994) who uses it in relation to his analysis of identity in post-colonial literature to describe an individual who has access to two or more cultural identities.

circumcision parties for which I have no frame of reference.¹⁷ My interest in paying attention to these photographs is in order to recognise the socio-cultural meaning of these unfamiliar practices. Conversely, as an outsider to the community and being unfamiliar with some of the kinds of photographs produced, I am quick to spot patterns and repetitions and in doing so I become curious to understand the meaning of these photographs. For example, a close examination of the studio photographs I studied reveals that *all* of the children's portraits have animated Western cartoon characters, such as Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck digitally integrated into the portrait.¹⁸ This I find intriguing. It is a normative practice within all of the studios and yet it is something that is unfamiliar and quite unusual to my eye. I recall conversations with a number of participant-photographers about the digital backgrounds and props that are added to the children's portraits (see figures 1.10 and 1.11 as an example of this). What I found interesting is that all of the photographers interviewed could not understand why this observation was of interest to me. This is an ordinary everyday practice in these studios which is not considered significant. This highlights the point that aesthetic tastes and judgement are not universal and causes me to reflect on whether my interest in these portraits, perceived as banal by the participant-photographers, would have piqued my curiosity in quite the same way had they been every-day familiar aesthetics with which I was accustomed.

¹⁷ I am deliberate in writing 'circumcision ritual parties', not 'ritual ceremony'. The circumcision party and circumcision ritual are asynchronous.

¹⁸ Figures 1.3, 1.2 and 1.3 are indicative of the digitally assembled children's portraits made in Figure 1.1, this illustration is an interior shot taken in the home of one of the research participants. The photograph includes a digitally assembled family portrait hanging on the wall of the participant. This portrait contains the participant's daughter aged one and also aged two! It also includes an animated Goofy and Mickey Mouse on a tractor. Figures 1.2 and 1.3 are screen grabs taken when interviewing one of the participants who works in Platin Studios on Green Lanes. During the interview the participant showed me some of the recent portraits made in the studio. These children's portraits are a sample of these. Alongside the children animated figures include Mickey Mouse, five of the dwarfs, Winnie the Pooh, Tigger and Piglet.



Figure 1.10



Figure 1.11

Figures 1.10- 1.11 Digital screen grabs of children's portraits, Platin Studios 2016. These images act as examples of how portraiture and cartoon characters are cohesively integrated into the same portrait image.

Some of anthropology's main concerns are with the social and cultural relations of any 'one' culture. This includes a close examination of cultural identities and notions of 'otherness', an examination of which is complex and requires great sensitivity. Despite points of connection and commonality, there are challenges involved in undertaking research outside one's own cultural experience. I am mindful that there is a danger of misunderstanding and generalising cultural practices or patterns of behaviour. In relation to the research I have experimented with a number of ways to mitigate this position. For example, I introduce an auto-ethnographic approach to position myself in the text. It is understood that auto-ethnography is a critical way of negotiating between personal experience and a wider discourse of cultural, political and social meaning. In adopting an auto-ethnographic approach, I become part of the research and inevitably I am part of the written word. In doing so, instead of becoming an unseen presence in the research, my reflective experience becomes visible in the narrative text. The boundaries between myself and the research blur and the subjectivity of my identity and epistemological view of the world is written into the text. By using an autoethnographic approach I acknowledge the value in the personal and experiential, although this approach is sometimes rejected by wider social-scientific community as being too idiosyncratic to have a wider cultural appeal. From my perspective, auto-ethnography provides a robust framework with which I can make visible any gaps in knowledge and therefore contextualise my position as the researcher. It gives me the space to experiment and collaborate with participants through complex dialogues.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau's (1994) writing about documentary practices can be drawn on in order to highlight the potential risk of making generalisations about communities when documenting them from an outsider's point of view. She draws attention to the danger of enacting a voyeurism when attempting to document any community from an outsider's viewpoint.

Inside or out, one remains confronted with the ethical and political issues posed by Sontag and Rosler, where it is a question of the representation of the other, where the analysis depends on notions of

voyeurism and objectification, tourism or imperialism. (Solomon-Godeau 1994:XX)

Although the complexities of being an outsider to a community as highlighted by Solomon-Godeau cannot be obscured, it should be acknowledged that research allows the opportunity of negotiating across cultural lines. In order to contextualise the reading of the research, which is inevitably amplified by my own understanding of the world, I adopt a reflexive approach to interpreting the research. This is a narrative-led account of the research. My approach aligns with Kim Etherington's (2004) articulation of a reflexive researcher. She argues that to be a reflexive researcher is to notice and question personal reactions to situations that are unfamiliar, in the same way one might query unexpected responses to the familiar. After all, our initial understanding of any situation is informed by the familiar epistemological understanding of the world around us. As already highlighted, this is what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as our 'habitus'. Inevitably, my race, gender, culture, history, class and politics all have an impact on my understanding of the world around me and influence my interpretation of the research. For example, during the research in the family home, I note that each time I enter someone's home I am surprised that I am not offered a cup of tea. This for me is a familiar and expected ritual that has little to do with thirst. It is a gesture from a host (tea maker/giver) that concurrently welcomes and symbolically offers friendship. In this scenario, the tea becomes a social agent through which social bonds are formed. In offering/accepting the cup of tea I enter into a social exchange with the host in that home. If I am deprived of this ritual, I am uncertain about how to start and build social bonds. Through a reflexive approach to interpreting the research process I am conscious of how my own experience and contexts inform my interpretation of any one situation. In developing a reflexive practice as an ethnographic researcher, I aim to find understanding within the familiar and unfamiliar. Examining the photography studio as a site of research gives me the opportunity to raise a number of questions about the aesthetics and style of images created in the studio. Moreover, this allows me to examine the agency of the images made. Then, in order to investigate the mnemonic

value of the photographic images for the owners of the images and examine how these images inform their diasporic identity and sense of belonging, I shift the research site to the family home and employ a biographical narrative approach to working with photographs.

It should be pointed out that although the home is not the primary focus of this research, the research does move into the family home in order to investigate the affective power of the photography for the participants. In doing so inevitably raises home as a diasporic space of belonging. Beyond the construction of 'home' as a place of dwelling, home can be understood as a place where meaning is made. This is particularly pertinent when home and homemaking are remade in a country other than a place of birth. Home, house, migration and belonging after all can be seen as interconnected points that are expressed through a variety of social customs and behaviours. Examining 'home' as a transnational practice is a complex issue in which even the relationship with home as a geographical location is contested. A common migrant experience of home is a biographical knowledge between two locals; locals that link country of birth to country of residence. As anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) argues, a transnational 'home' is better understood as a 'trans-local' practice. He describes the 'trans-local' as a practice that enables the cultural links between home(land) and host locale to remain connected, which he explains is a re-territorialisation of ideas, lifestyles and emotions that are embedded in past experiences. Paolo Boccagni (2017) builds on this argument by reminding the reader that the construct of transnational home is not a binary concept located in one place. It is not unusual within diasporic communities, to see the concept of 'home' straddling two countries.

Migration in itself is a source of de-naturalization of the home. As it reveals how its familiarity and obviousness has been culturally constructed and is ultimately fictitious. In a common sensical understanding, migration can simply be framed as a way of leaving home behind, and possibly re-establishing it elsewhere – although the

'here' and 'there' need not be in opposition with each other. (Boccagni 2017:XXIII)

Boccagni suggests that within a diasporic home, past attachment to home(land) are co-constructed with new concepts of home in a new land. In connecting the two locales, a diasporic 'home' inherits practices from both the host country, and the familial home(land). The relationship with familial home(land) is continued with both virtual and physical journeys to the country of origin. The virtual journeys can be understood as online interactions with family and friends who reside in the country of birth, that is via the telephone and engagement with various social media, or as cultural interactions with radio, television, printed materials, music and films from the homeland. In addition to which, inherited familial cultural experiences are passed down through family lines. For my research participants of Turkish origin, physical interactions to connect to home(land) are constantly renegotiated. These include regular journeys to Turkey to see friends and family who remain in Turkey. My participants also invest in their Turkish heritage in their host community of London. They do this by regularly socialising within diasporic Turkish (Anglo-Turkish) networks such as local Turkish community social clubs and societies. In connecting to place of origin, that is home(land), in different ways transnational links remain active. These practices of a 'trans-local' can also be seen in the homes of my participants in a number of ways. I note visual objects in the homes I visit that link 'home' to the home(land) of Turkey. These objects include ordinary everyday Turkish 'objects' on display in the home, such as an evil eye amulet, or a calendar celebrating Turkish memorial sites which are symbolic of familial home(land) attachments. I also observe a number of practices in the home which are grounded in Turkish heritage. The practices include the choice of cuisine prepared in the home which is usually Turkish, and I note that if the television is switched on in the main living areas, it is frequently tuned into Turkish (satellite TV) television channels.¹⁹ These examples demonstrate that the research is broader than

¹⁹ When enquiring about the choice of cuisine, I was often invited to share a Turkish breakfast with my participants and their families and on enquiring about the choice of TV

just examining the family photographs. In fact, arguably the interacting with participants in their homes and reflecting on these encounters is an equally valuable part of the research process. For the participants practices from place of origin home(land) of birth, are an important part of everyday living in a new homeland (that is the place of residence). These transcultural practices give my participants a constant push and pull between their home(land) as place of birth and home(land) as a place of residence. In this context, home and belonging is something that is 'felt' rather than anchored to a specific place. As suggested by feminist writer bell hooks (2008) when writing about home, it can be understood as a space with which we have a special relationship through which emotional ties and meaningful relationships are entangled. For hooks a home is a place that is imprinted with ancestral traces, fragments from here and there through which meaning is made. As I will discuss in this thesis, the photographs discussed can be understood as entangled objects in the home, imbued with meaning.

To find participants to contribute to the research at first, I first interviewed photographers in the photography studios in 2009-11 and then continued conversations with customers in the studios between 2012-16. In addition, I conducted a photographic memory workshop at one of the local Anglo-Kurdish/Turkish community centres (2014) and I asked for introductions to friends of friends and contacted the online Anglo-Turkish community (2014-18). Conducting research within public-facing businesses such as the photography studios did not present many complications in terms of oral communication. However, this was not the case when working in the Anglo-Turkish community centre and in family homes. During this part of the research, I worked predominately with women who had not socialised very much outside of their immediate family and community. I do not speak Turkish and my participants' English was often limited. Therefore, communication was complicated, because we did not always have a common language between us. The consequence of this was that, at times,

channel, it was quite usual to be given the latest instalment of one of the many popular Turkish soap operas.

family members, the children, husbands and nephews, helped with the translation of the interviews and added to the narratives shared. Although this was an unintended consequence, this process provided an interesting insight into how collective narratives are configured.²⁰ When moving the research into the family home the research process employs a biographical narrative-led approach that draws from personal family albums. This method encourages participants to discuss personal and collective accounts associated with their photographs. I shared my research aims with the participants and requested that they share and discuss a selection of photographs with which they had a mnemonic connection. Through these photographs the past was brought to the present and in doing so familial narratives were shared. From these narratives I am able to learn more about everyday practices of the participants, and to reflect on the personal and cultural value of the photographs for their owners.²¹

My approach towards photography as a research method, draws from the much-cited primary source of John Collier (1978), who first named the use of photography as research method as 'photo elicitation'. He argues that using photographs as the basis of interviews elicits longer and more in-depth conversations. Collier advocates that the camera as visual tool invites the biographical style discussions around the photograph. That is to say, instead of relying on formal, oral interviews, photographs are used to elicit in-depth biographical narratives. He describes how the photograph replaces the notebook in examining human interaction. Photography, he argues, facilitates a process of grasping, observing and relating to new cultures. However, he adds that in order to access the value of the research, a verbal analysis of the visual process is needed. In short, according to Collier, a photograph can be a product of an encounter and the start of a conversation

²⁰ An example of this is discussed in depth in chapter 5.

²¹ There is a current turn in contemporary photography towards employing photography as socially engaged practice when working with a community, however this is not the focus of this research. Exemplary examples of socially engaged photography include Ewald (1985, 2010), Goldberg (2009), Luvera (2011), Spence (1990), Terril (2016), and Valverdes (2010) who in fact worked collaboratively with Kurdish-Turkish women in North-London. I highlight that the emphasis of this research is concerned with visualising transcultural identities and although portraiture was used as a form of exchange its use is under-developed in terms of a socially engaged practice.

that is then expanded through analysis and reflection.

'Photo elicitation', is now considered a reputable interdisciplinary research method for evoking information in the photographic, visual anthropological and sociological disciplines. Current photographic, visual anthropological and sociological approaches to working with photography as a research methodology follow anthropologist J. Scherer's (1992) thinking (which builds on Collier's formative theory). Scherer categorises photographs as 'cultural artefacts' which give meaning to the political, economic, and socio-cultural (Scherer 1992:33). Photo-historian Annette Kuhn (1995) when writing about photography as information, suggests that photographs can be understood as memory texts. She writes that prompts and memories from the past are embedded in photographs and can be reclaimed in the present using a 'photo elicitation' method of research. Additional influential examples of 'photo elicitation' as a research method also include social historian Penny Tinkler (1996) who looks at the challenges of working with photographic sources for research, ethnographer Sarah Pink (2001) and geographer Gillian Rose (2010) whose names are synonymous with using photography as a visual research method. Whether photographs are referred to as cultural artefacts as Scherer suggests, or as memory texts as advocated by Kuhn, the method of eliciting information from the photographic image has proven to be an essential research method through which to evoke mnemonic narrative conversations with participants during the research process.

In order to navigate the breadth of research undertaken within a critical structure I draw from interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. For example, art historian Marët Westermann's (2005) theory of the anthropologies of art have been particularly helpful in terms of thinking through ways of theoretically contextualising the subject of this thesis. Her writing emerges out of the 2003 interdisciplinary Clark Conference at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts that brought together art historians and anthropologists' overlapping methodological enquiries. Acknowledging that disciplinary boundaries are not fixed, Westermann's writing looks at interdisciplinary crossovers between art history's concern

with aesthetics and form in relation to history, and anthropology's interest in meaning. This is a relatively new cross-disciplinary area of research that equally draws from art history and anthropological/visual anthropological scholarship. It includes scholars such as Arnd Schneider and Chris Wright, whose primary inter-disciplinary dialogues between art and anthropology (2006, 2010, 2013) uses anthropological methods to examine contemporary art. In addition, more recently Gretchen Bakke and Marina Peterson's (2017) writing on art and anthropology in the edited reader *Anthropology of Art* is a useful reference to draw from. In this publication Bakke and Peterson bring together a collection of essays that broadly look at the arts through an anthropological register, that is as multifaceted social processes that look at the making of, looking at, interacting with, and the circulation of, the arts.²² This way of working encourages the application of a variety of disciplinary methods in order to understand the critical contexts of visual art. This trajectory of focus can also be applied more broadly to visual culture and is a helpful way of thinking through the existing literature that informs this thesis. I will go on to speak of how the literature informs the empirical and visual research in the following overview of each chapter. However, before doing this I share a sample of archival material gathered for this study as *Primary Research I*. The visuals are accompanied by contextual reflections that collectively start to build an open-ended living archive, which seeks to make visible the Anglo-Turkish community who frequent the north London photography studios. Arguably, although there are similar photography studios that document special occasions, such as weddings, parties and cultural events that can be found across London and indeed across the country, *each* of these studios serve the needs of the local community and in doing so create a localised visual identity. I share a sample of the visuals gathered in dialogue with individual studios during the research process. This includes documentation of the photographs made to authenticate traditions, rituals and celebrate life affirming events (made in both the studio and on location with photographic teams that work for the studios), links to video

²² The purview of the scope of this publication includes primary anthropological texts alongside ethnographic engagements with visual arts, performance, music and culinary practices.

clips, screen grabs taken from video interviews that focus on the post-production of the photographs and websites links.

The process of gathering the material was slow and qualitative and the interactions I had with each studio differ. Some studios invited me into their premises and allowed me to sit and watch their daily activities. Based on my observations, I conducted in-depth interviews with practising photographers. Some conversations focused on the specialisms of the studios, others led to conversations around specific areas of practice, such as the choice of digital portrait backgrounds and what outfits should be worn in the photographs. In addition, I was also invited to attend off-site events on a number of occasions, which gave me a better understanding of the clientele and the breadth of the business.²³ Inevitably the scope of research in each studio exceeds what is included in this thesis, the work featured is indicative of the range of visuals gathered during the research process and is the starting point for the critical discussions within the body of this thesis. In the following section of the introduction I share some of the primary visual research collated and annotated, in order to give a flavour of the research that has informed my thinking.

²³ One photography studio didn't interact with me; however, I was able to research their photographs online via their website, so their voice is captured within this thesis.

Primary Research I: Studio Research

Belda Productions: High Road, Tottenham (2011-2014)

Berfin Studios: Stoke Newington Road (2011-2015)

Click Digital: Stoke Newington High Street (2011-2020)

Coban: Stoke Newington High Street (2011-2016)

Kibris Studio: Green Lanes (2014)

Platin Studios: Green Lanes (2016)

TAC Digital: Stoke Newington Road and High Road (2011-2020)

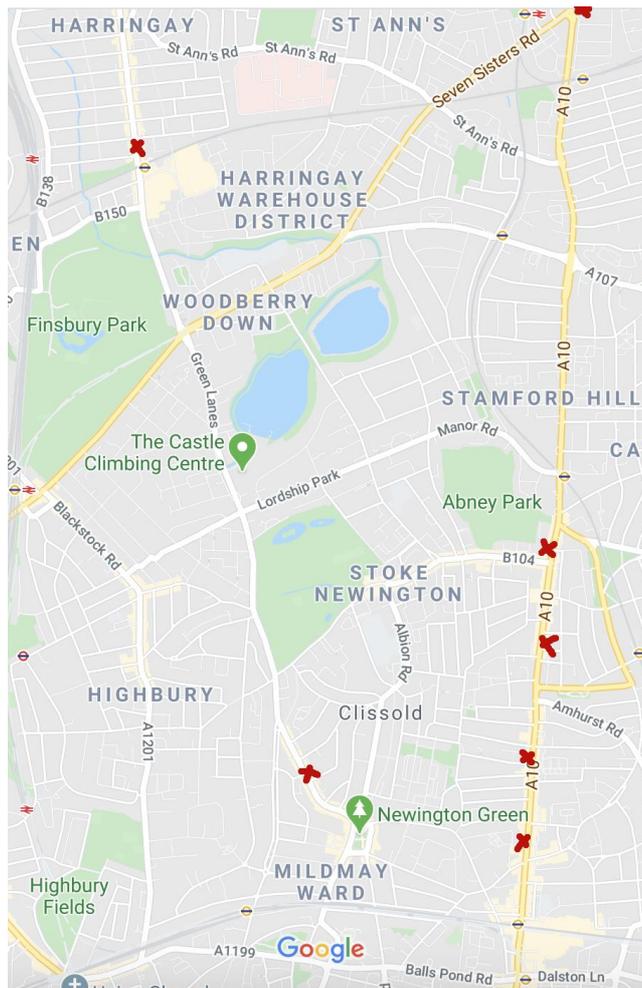


Figure 1.12

Map of local neighbourhood with photography studios marked with an 'X'

Belda Productions

At the time of the primary research (2012-2016) Belda Productions was a busy photography and videography studio on High Road in Tottenham. It had a team of photographers working in multiple studios on the same premises. The owners were Turkish nationals and all of the working photographers are first- or second- generation Turkish migrants. On site, the studio made family portraits, formal wedding studio portraits and passport photographs. Alongside this, small teams of photographers documented local life affirming events such as Turkish wedding ceremonies, graduations and circumcision parties on location. The business works in collaboration with local banqueting halls, caterers, costume hire and hairdressers to furnish all of the customers' needs. The studio portraits are made against a white background and digital mise-en-scène backgrounds are added to the portrait in digital post-production. I was particularly intrigued by how the backgrounds were selected – what choices were made and why, and then how they were applied to the studio portraits. The visuals included in this section of the chapter are extracted as screen grabs from video documentation I made in the studio and an interview with one of the working photographers at Belda Productions. The visuals are presented to share a flavour of the visual research and themes that emerged. They are shared with the permission of the studio owners and participant photographers. The images include examples of the off-the-shelf, ready-made digital portrait backgrounds provided by the studios to add to the studio portraits in post-production. There is also a link to the video-film clip captures part of an interview with one of the photographers speaking about these backgrounds. The website <https://www.beldaproductions.com> is no longer a live link.

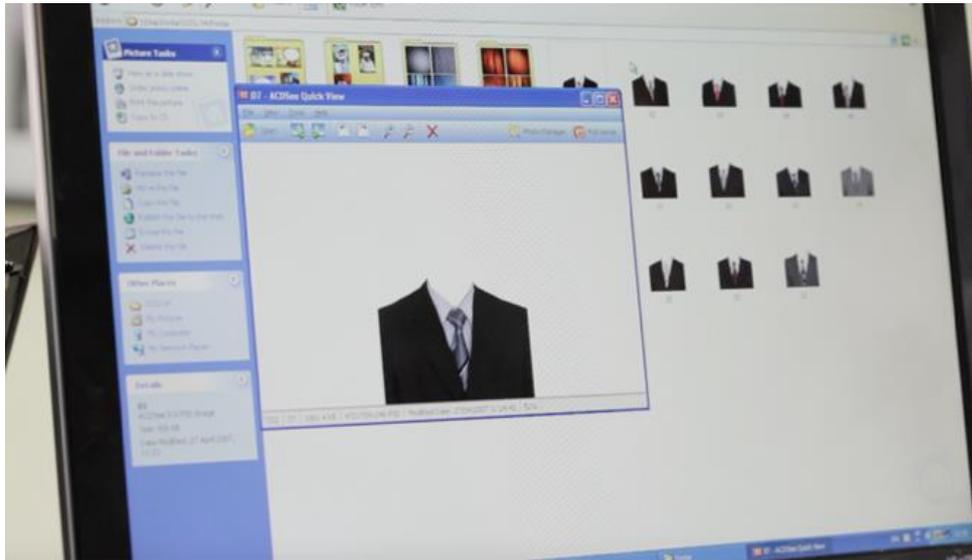


Figure 1.13



Figure 1.14

Figures 1.13 and 1.14, made 2011/12 are examples of the ready-made mise-en-scène studio backgrounds that can be found on the computers in Belda Production. In Figure 1.13 there are a range of ready-made images of suits and ties available for selection. The customer chooses a suit and tie and has his face dropped into the pre-assembled photograph. This is a common practice at the studio for customers who would like to have a standard passport photograph made. Figure 1.14 is a celebratory mise-en-scène portrait background. It includes a body in a formal dress holding a bouquet of flowers. The body stands in a garden, in front of a wickerwork chair. A female head and shoulders can be dropped into the mise-en-scène to complete the portrait. These examples demonstrate that even just a head can be added to a pre-existing mise-en-scène to create a portrait. Further examples of digital studio backgrounds are featured in 'The Sampler' publication.



Figure 1.15



Figure 1.16

Figures 1.15-1.16 made 2011/12 feature two of the ready-made studio portrait surround backgrounds which are popular choices to add children's portraits. A range of animated figures and make-believe worlds are included in these backgrounds to accompany the child's portrait. This style of backgrounds is can be found in all of the studios studied during the research and are discussed in more depth in chapter 2.



Figure 1.17

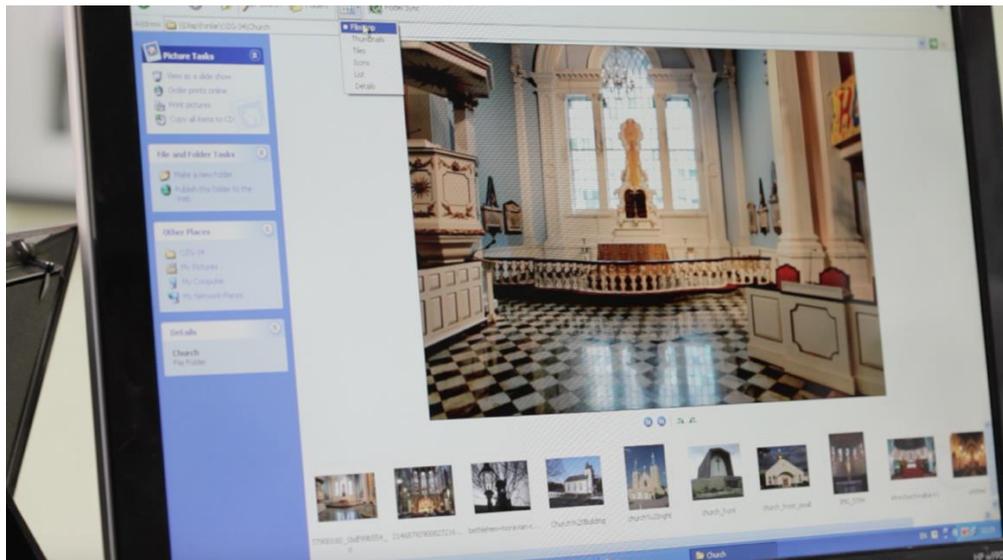


Figure 1.18

Figure 1.17, 2011/12 is a studio portrait background ground in Belda Productions bank of digital studio backgrounds. The background presents the ancient ruins of Pergamon in eastern Turkey. The photographer interviewed tells me this background is a popular choice for customers who frequent the studio. This background is discussed in chapter 3 in the context of drawing from Post-Colonial theory of Orientalism as a way of understanding the potential intended connotations of the background as part of a portrait. Figure 1.18 2011/12 presents a selection of churches. As a potential portrait background for a mainly Muslim clientele this portrait background intrigued me. The photographer talking me through the backgrounds tells me that customers choose the background because they like it not because for religious reasons.

Backgrounds as Foregrounds (2011/12 1 minute 56 seconds)

<https://vimeo.com/119930259>

This ethnographic video clip is an extract from a video interview with one of the participant photographers, Hatun Gumus at Belda Productions that refers to the digital studio backgrounds that are applied to formal portraits made by the studio. She explains which digital backgrounds are popular with her customers and describes how she guides the customer to choose specific portrait backgrounds. Additional content from the full interview is referenced in chapter 2 in a critical context that discusses the cultural importance of the studio portrait background. The following visuals are screen grabs captured in the longer video interview with the participant photographer. This interview helps to create the context for the visual aesthetics applied to studio portraits in Belda Productions which are analysed in chapter 2 and included in *The Sampler*.

Berfin Studios

Berfin Studios was first visited in 2011. It is a small, family-run, digital photography and videography business located on Stoke Newington High Street. According to the owner, most of the customers who frequent the studio either come from his hometown in Turkey or are connected to it through familial relationships. This makes him a trusted photographer for his customers. Choosing a photographer connected to a familial hometown is common practice for all the Turkish-owned studios within the vicinity. Each studio has a different clientele which draws from connections to home villages in Turkey. This the owner suggests is why so many photography studios are able to exist side by side on the same high street in London. He tells me that he adapts his photography practices to suit the needs of his clientele, whom he says are keen to commemorate their family events and cultural practices with photographs and videography, as well as embrace new localised practices.

On the premises, there was a small studio in the basement but most of the photography and videography is undertaken off-site. This work involves working in tandem with local Turkish hairdressers and the neighbouring

banqueting hall where many family celebrations take place. It also requires hiring a separate photography studio adjacent to the banqueting hall to make formal portraits prior to the reportage style documentation of the events. The studio premises is a place in which to display previous jobs, receive customers, and undertake the digital post-production work. Whilst I am unconvinced that the studio owner fully understood my motivation for the research, for him the business is a money-making, commercial enterprise that adapts its practices to suit the needs of his clients, he nevertheless was extremely generous in allowing me to spend time in the studio, attend off-site events, and undertake follow up conversations with a number of photographers working at the studio. The visuals featured in this section of the chapter include a links to some of my video clips, still photographs I took during a circumcision party I was invited to attend with the studio, and close up images of the photographs on display on the walls of the studio. All of the visuals are showcased with the permission of the studio owner and where possible the people in the photographs.

Smile Please (6 seconds) <https://vimeo.com/230339336>

The above vimeo link (2011) presents a short observational film-clip that documents the making of a studio portrait by Belda Productions, that took place to commemorate the circumcision ritual. This portrait session took place prior to the celebratory circumcision party. The photographer, Zubeyde Karatas directs the sitter (the young boy) how to perform and pose in the photograph. The following stills (below) are taken from my photographic documentation of both the portrait session prior to the celebration party and during the event and are shared with the permission of the attending studio and clients. The following images are taken as screen grabs from my documentation of this portrait session.



Figure 1.19

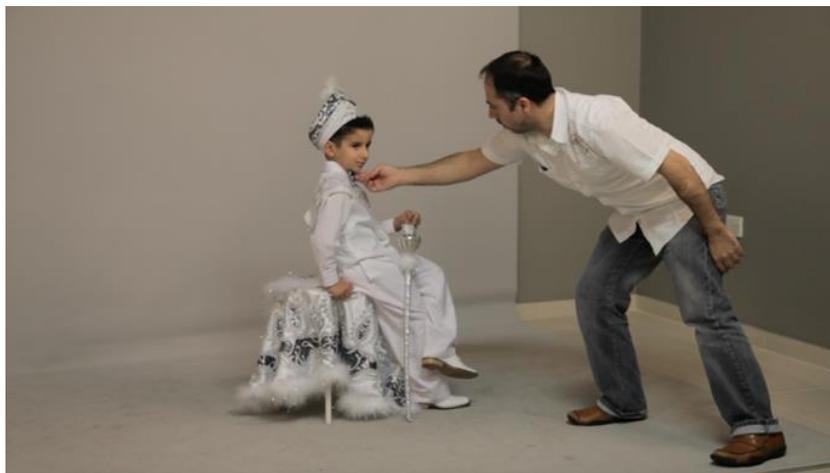


Figure 1.20



Figure 1.21

Figure 1.19-1.21 These are a selection of screen grabs taken from my documentation of the formal studio portrait session made of a young boy in his ceremonial circumcision outfit, with his parents. The portraits were made to commemorate circumcision ritual. These images witness the photographer and assistant changing roles and directing the young boy on how to pose for the commemorative circumcision portrait. (2011) © Caroline Molloy

Boy on the Horse (2011/12 47 seconds) <https://vimeo.com/230338763>

This film clip is an extract from an extended video interview with one of the participant photographers, Zubeyda Karatas, from Berfin Studios, who discusses the practice of the circumcised boy arriving at his celebratory circumcision party on a horse. This particular event is critically analysed in the context of transcultural practices in chapter 4. The following visuals were taken during a circumcision celebration party in north London in 2011.



Figure 1.22



Figure 1.23



Figure 1.24



Figure 1.25



Figure 1.26



Figure 1.27



Figure 1.28

Figures 1.22- 1.28 Are screen grabs taken from my video documentation of the circumcision party that Berfin Studios documented (2011). These still images tell a story. They are crucial images that document the young boy, in his ceremonial circumcision outfit, celebrating his circumcision party. It includes stills of the boy and his friends entering the white limousine and then being placed on white horse before he is led into the large banqueting hall, full of guests. These images are discussed in chapter 4 when describing the process of celebrating the circumcision ritual as transcultural practice that conflates historical and new cultural practices.

Berfin Studios has since rebranded as Berfin Video and relocated to Edmonton, which is five miles north of the premises visited during the research. It continues to offer photography and video services aimed to the Anglo-Turkish community. Examples of their current portfolio can be seen on their website: <https://tinyurl.com/y5p8pb7v> and business facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/berfinvideo> In the original premises they have

been replaced by Aktuel Photography, which is a high street print processing shop <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Photographer/Aktuel-Photography-139501699>

Click Digital

Click Digital is strategically located on the busy corner of Church Street and Stoke Newington High Street, in Stoke Newington. This studio was first visited in 2011, it is owned by and employs exclusively Turkish nationals and yet it is also one of the more generic studios in the area, as it serves the needs of a broader local community. The customers are passing trade, which includes customers from the Anglo-Turkish community, the local Jewish community, Afro-Caribbean and white British customers. The premises has a small studio space on site with a white background that is used as the pre-digital portrait background for children's portraits and passport photographs made on site. In addition to the photographic services provided, the business also sells digital memory cards, photo frames, prints photos and makes bespoke photo albums.

A complex understanding of portraiture and representation can be seen in the portraits displayed on the walls of Click Digital studio, a sample of which are included below. It is common practice for the same person to appear more than once in a portrait photograph, alongside cartoon characters. In doing this, the realism of the portrait is replaced by imaginative make-believe worlds that are inhabited by both the sitter and cartoon characters. This aesthetic is not unique to Click Digital, similar repetition of the same sitters appearing more than once in a photograph, and children interacting with cartoon characters can also be seen in the photography archives of Belda Productions, Berfin Studios and Platin Studios. However, in the Click Digital portraits, there is a particular creative flare with which these photographs are digitally composited. I attribute these creative designs to the photographer who carries out the digital post-production on the photographs. In addition to the creative portrait composites, much energy is invested into the design and

output of the bespoke photo albums made by this studio. Examples of these photographs and books are on display in the studio, and a selection of them are presented in this section of the chapter. They are shared with permission of Click Digital photography studio. Unusually, this studio does not have an online presence, instead it relies on passing trade.



Figure 1.29



Figure 1.30



Figure 1.31



Figure 1.32



Figure 1.33



Figure 1.34



Figure 1.35

Figures 1.29-1.35 2011/12 These images are copies of photographs made by Click Digital. There is an ease to the portraits which are digitally montaged. They frequently see the same child appearing more than once in the one photograph and in dialogue with animated cartoon characters. When I asked the studio photographer about the style of photographs, I was told that children like cartoons. Figure 1.35 presents the ready-made animal onesies in which the child's head can be dropped in.

Coban

Coban is an established family owned business on Stoke Newington High Street owned by father and son, that draws from Anglo-Turkish networks to employ additional staff when needed. At the time of the research which started in 2011, the business mostly documented cultural events with both photography and videography for Anglo-Turkish customers. Yalcin Coban (the son) was running the business, his mother was doing the books and

administration on a part-time basis and his father was the second photographer at larger photography events. Yalcin was thinking through new ways of updating the business and broadening the clientele. This included experimenting with creative, informal, on-location engagement portraits as a precursor to documenting wedding events. This he hoped would attract what he referred to as 'high-end', younger clients. There is a small photography studio on the premises but most of their business is location-based documentation of cultural events in association with the neighbouring banqueting halls.



Figure 1.36



Figure 1.37

Figures 1.36-1.37 (2011/12) The photographs in this section are my images that records Yalcin (the son), the owner of Coban studios, whilst he documents two

different wedding parties. As owner of the studio, he was the lead of team of photographers who documented the wedding party. My focus was on Yalcin and how he moved through the event. These photographs are shared with the permission of Coban photography studio.

Since the initial research the profile of the business has changed. As far as the high street is concerned Coban has rebranded as a bespoke lifestyle shop and is run by Yalcin and his brother Kimi. If 'Coban – photography Stoke Newington High Street' is typed into a google search engine traffic is redirected to <https://lifeinparadigm.com/> this website is run by Coban and hosts a range of fashionable menswear which can be purchased online or at the shop. However, there is still a photography business associated with the family which can be found at <https://www.cobanweddings.com/> (the exact URL is needed to find this weblink) and on Instagram [@cobanweddings](https://www.instagram.com/cobanweddings), which has 19,000 followers. The wedding photographs are elaborate and high end



Figure 1.38

Figure 1.38 is a screen grab from @cobanwedding on instagram (2020). The portrait of the Bride has been taken outside of St Pancras Hotel in London and posted just before lockdown, it has attracted 1115 likes. The is one of many

Wedding photographs that can be found on the @cobanwedding instagram account. The amount of likes to this image evidences it is a popular account and that are working within the locality aswell as in the studio and Turkish owned reception banquetting halls.

Kibris Studio

At the time of the research (2016) Mr Sahil, the owner of Kibris Studio on Green Lanes, was waiting for the sale of his business premises to be finalised. He had run Kibris Studio as a successful analogue photography business since the 1980s, which included having a portrait studio and darkroom at the back of the premises. He made family portraits on site and documented cultural events for Anglo-Turkish clients. Now an elderly man, he had not kept up with the technological changes in photography, that is the shift from analogue to digital photography, and his commercial practice had ceased to be operational for some years. The premises was in need of necessary repairs, the studio space was inaccessible, the shop front had an overwhelming amount of unfiled paperwork that required major organisation and most of his photographic archive had been lost or destroyed. With no family to spend time with, Mr Sahil still walked to work every day in a suit and tie and sat in the studio shop front. As a long-time resident of the area he continued to have social interactions with his business neighbours such as the owner of the next-door book shop, the newly established coffee shop, the Turkish social club across and street, and a number of other local businesses.

Mr Sahil was willing to speak to me about his memories as a photographer. Over a number of conversations, he shared stories about his early career as a photographer in London before setting up his business in Green Lanes. He had come over to England in the 1950s from Cyprus and originally set up his business near Regents Street in London. This area of London has a history as a fashionable place in which to run a photography premises that dates back to the nineteenth century. For example, Richard Beard opened the first commercial photographic studio in Britain in Regents Street in 1840, which was shortly followed by Antoine Claudet's Temple of Photography also in

Regent Street.²⁴ This area has remained a centre for entertainment in celebrity spheres which continues to attract the rich and famous. Mr Sahil specifically spoke of taking celebrity portraits at the fashionable Café Royal by night, processing and printing them to sell the following evening. He remembers the Café Royal as a glamorous place to see celebrities of the day and a place in which to be seen. For him it provided an opportunity to make portraits of rich, famous and influential customers. Specifically, he spoke of the grace of Princess Margaret, who he photographed at the Café Royal on a number of occasions.

Although there was no visual evidence of Mr Sahil's fascinating history of photographing celebrities at the Café Royal in his studio on Green Lanes, Mr Sahil's eyes lit up when retelling stories of his early years as a photographer in the West End of London. The photographs on display in his shop front told a different story, one that closely connected him to the Anglo-Turkish community in north London, as a commercial photographer. On the walls a number of colour-drained photographs of events and social occasions were displayed. These photographs evidenced his relationship with the diasporic Turkish community and are the last remaining visual evidence of his photography business. Between the time-worn commercial portrait photographs that adorned the walls, incongruously hung Mr Sahil's majestic lion taken on a trip to Longleat Safari Park many years earlier. With a mischievous smile, Mr Sahil told me of how he painted extra teeth onto the Lion, so it appeared more menacing. This photograph hangs as a reminder that Mr Sahil was more than a local commercial photographer that documented events for the Anglo-Turkish community. Indeed, at a time before digital manipulation and imaginative digital post-production, his photograph of the lion reminds us of his skill as a creative photographer (see Figure 1.51). The following photographs were taken in the shop front of Kibris Studio and are used in this chapter with the permission of Mr Sahil.

²⁴ Claudet initially run a photography studio at the Adelaide Gallery on the Strand, that at the Colosseum at Regent Park before opening his studio in Regent Street in 1851 (Monteiro 2008) (Edwards 2012).



Figure 1.39



Figure 1.40



Figure 1.41



Figure 1.42



Figure 1.43



Figure 1.44



Figure 1.45



Figure 1.46



Figure 1.47



Figure 1.48



Figure 1.49

Figures 1.39-1.49 (2012) document Kibris Studio as Mr Sahil is packing up his archive and closing the shop. It includes a number of animated portraits of Mr Sahil, almost overwhelmed by the accumulated administration paperwork and some of the sign painting outside of the studio (Figures 1.39&1.48). These photographs document one of the many animated conversations we shared. Figure 1.46 is a still image of one of several visual talisman mementos that anchor Mr Sahil to his Turkish-Cypriot heritage. Figure 1.49 is in display in the shopfront. It is a remnant of one of the many Turkish events Mr Sahil once documented.

Platin Studios

Platin Studios is based in Harringay, on Green Lanes. It sits between a Turkish Barber and the Turkish Bank. It is owned by Turkish Nationals and the photographers are temporary Turkish migrants who work in the studios for a couple of years before returning back to Turkey. My interaction with this studio did not take place until 2017 when I noted that that the Platin Studios logo appeared on many of the family photographs studied as research in participant's family homes. When I asked about the studio, I was told it was an aspirational studio to visit so I set about trying to find it. For me this was the most challenging of all the studio interviews because there was no common language between myself and the photographers I met at the studios. This meant that the interviews were stilted, repetitive and relied at points on assumptions. What can be concluded from my time in this studio was that the clientele of the studios must have also been Turkish speakers.

I was unable to probe much beyond the popularity and aesthetics of the photographs and what services were offered by the studio. As well as formal studio portraits the studio offers pregnancy photoshoots and covers events such as birthday parties and baby showers, wedding parties and circumcision parties. In addition, Platin Studios offer videography and aerial photographs. What intrigued me about this studio style was the elaborate styling of the studio shoots and choices of backgrounds. The digital ready-made backgrounds available to add to the studio portraits were extensive. They included everything from a wide range of elaborate pillars and curtains, to suburban Western sitting rooms, cars and geometric patterns. However, despite this, the photographer I spoke with indicated that geometric patterns were becoming increasingly popular. This allowed for more elaborate costumes and poses. In the photographs made in Platin Studios the customers really do perform for the camera. The posing of the customers is mannered to echo the meaning of the portrait. This includes a couple enacting stereotypical gestures of 'love and romance' for their wedding portraits and children playfully interacting with imaginary cartoon characters which would be added to the portrait in digital post-production. The screen

grabs in this chapter are shared with the permission of the participating photographers, further photographs can be found on Platin Studios website <http://www.studioplatin.co.uk> and on their facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/platinlondon>.

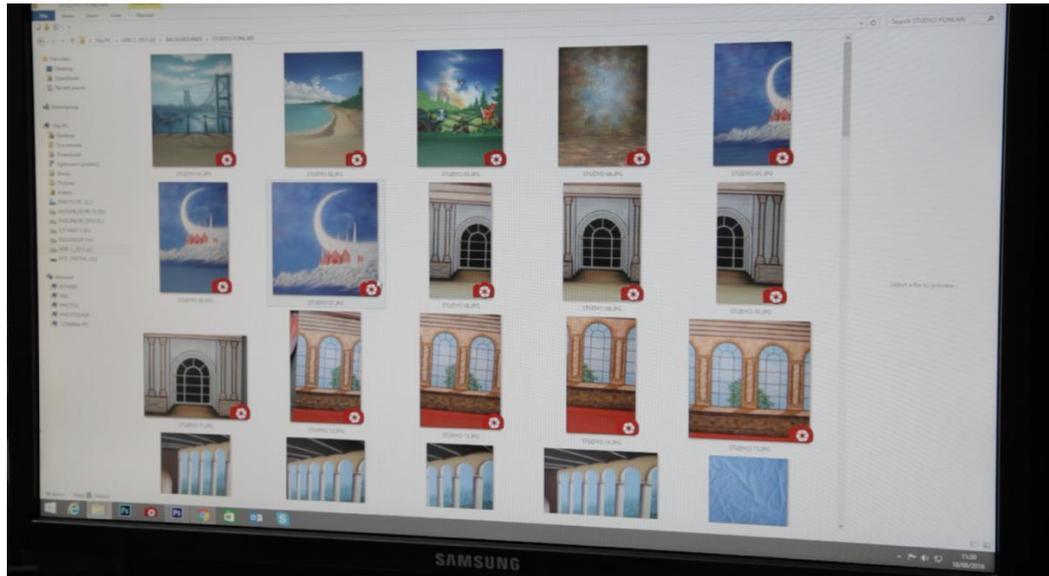


Figure 1.50

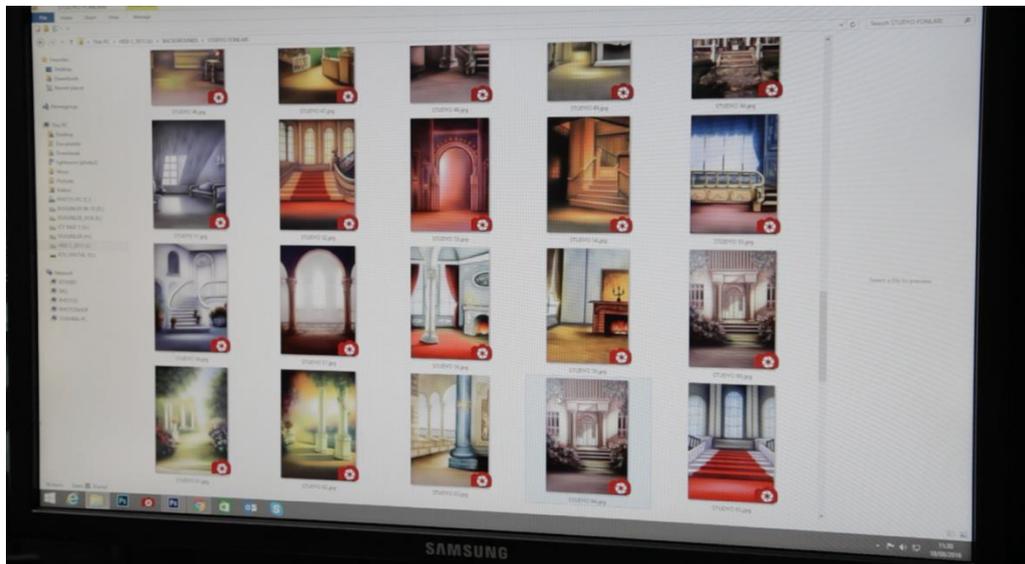


Figure 1.51

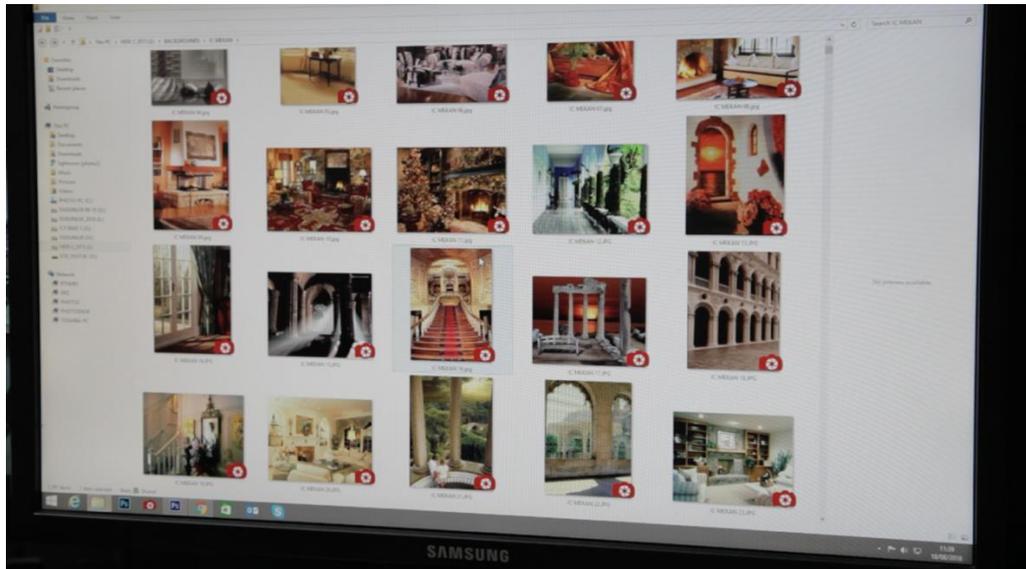


Figure 1.52

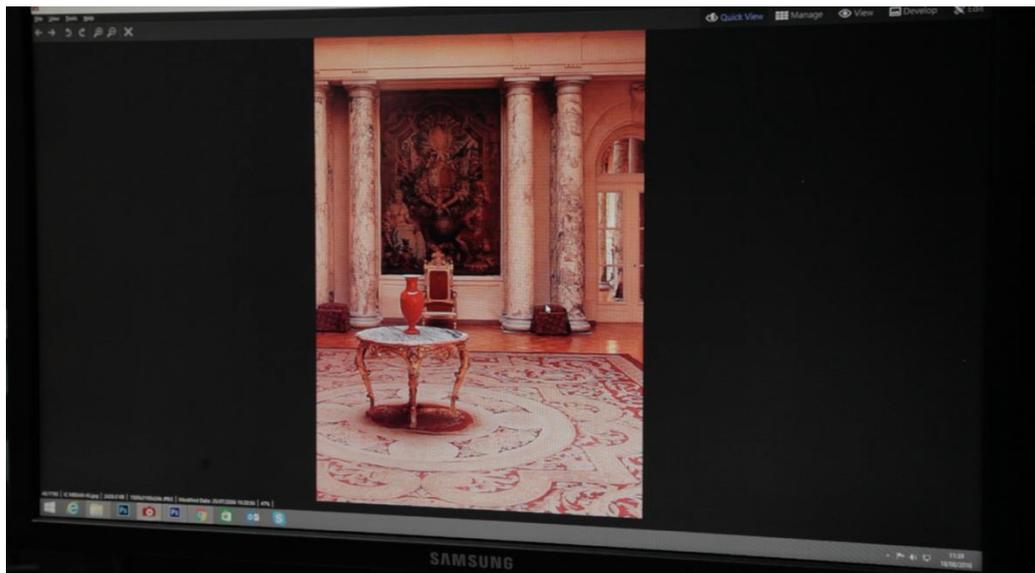


Figure 1.53

Figures 1.50-1.53 Are screen grabs taken of the digital backgrounds available to add to studio portraits in Platin Studios 2017. They were made when interviewing one of the studio photographers at the studio. I found it particularly interesting how the legacy of the pillar and curtain continued to repeat itself in this contemporary case study – as seen in these examples. This I will go on and discuss in chapter 2 when establishing the language of studio photography and in chapter 3 when I look at the relationship between the pillar and the Orientalist gaze.

TAC Digital

At the time of the primary research which started in 2011, the photography studio, TAC Digital operated on Stoke Newington High Street. This business sat next to its adjoining business TAC Wedding, a large costume hire/purchase showroom that catered for ceremonial weddings and circumcision parties. The concept of the multiple businesses is to cater for all of the clients' needs within the one business. These businesses are owned and run by two Kurdish-Turkish brothers. When I asked if I could find out more about their photography business the owners expressed suspicion about my interest and declined permission to further my request. Nevertheless, as a prominent business in the area that caters predominately for the Anglo-Turkish community I was keen to ensure their contribution is represented in this living-archive. However, because I have had no personal interaction with these businesses the information shared in this chapter is observational - sourced from the street and via their webpages.



Figure 1.54

Figure 1.54 This is a photograph of the outside shop front of what was the photography part of TAC wedding (2011) © Caroline Molloy



Figure 1.55



Figure 1.56

Figure 1.55-1.56 are screen grabs taken from TAC Wedding website in 2014 <https://www.tacdigitalservices.com> (accessed 2014). These wedding photographs were taken in the studio and then digitally montaged to make the final portrait. The photographs were taken in the photography studio, asynchronous to the actual marriage ceremony in order to visually commemorate the ritual. This aspect of the website is no longer accessible which suggests photography is no longer part of the service.

Between the initial primary research (2011/12) and the compiling of the archive of visual material, the business strands of TAC Digital and TAC Wedding have amalgamated and moved location from Stoke Newington High Street to Bruce Grove. There is now a modest shop front TAC Wedding on the high street in Bruce Grove that offers wedding and circumcision costumes for sales and hire, as well as other services, including event

photography. In addition to TAC Wedding's presence on the high street they also have a retail showroom in N17 (closed during Covid 19 - 2020), in which they display the venue decoration props also available for hire. The emphasis has moved away from separate businesses, instead they offer a host of event services under the one business, inclusive of everything from bespoke furniture and props for events, flowers, cakes. The following visuals are screen grab examples of the available services on offer. All images are taken from website 2020.

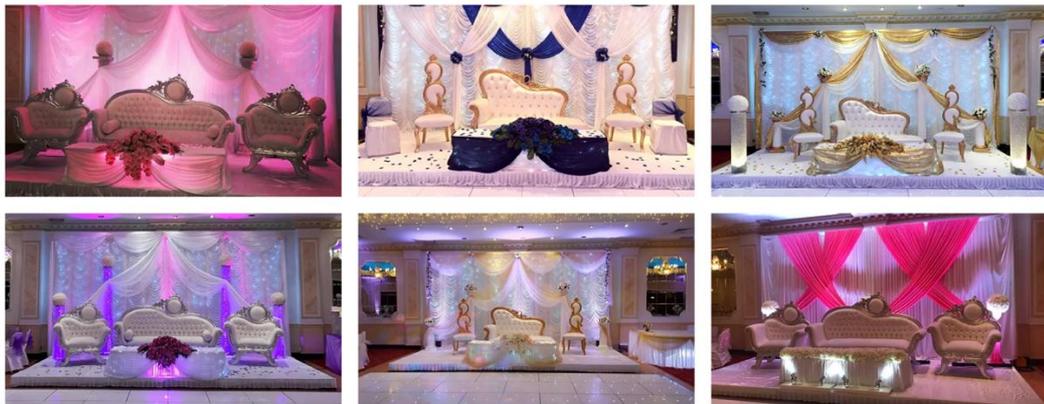


Figure 1.57



GIANT HALO ARCH

FLORAL ARCH
(CAKE SWING CAN ALSO BE ADDED)

Figure 1.58

Figure 1.57 includes examples of venue décor available for hire (Arabian backdrop) sourced from <https://www.tacweddingservices.com/arabian-backdrops> (sourced 24 8 20). Figure 1.58 To quote the website, to add the 'Wow' factor at any event, exclusive floral arches can be used to add visual impact. <https://www.tacweddingservices.com/copy-of-love-table> (sourced 24 8 20)

What can be concluded from examining the website is they have good connections with a number of local north London venues and have strategic suppliers with whom they collaborate in order to offer a range of services. The overall unique selling point of TAC Wedding seems to be offering one service that can cater for all the needs of the client. However, there is no longer evidence that photography services are offered as part of the business model. The photography on the website <https://www.tacweddingservices.com/>, facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/TacWeddingServices/> and Instagram page @tacweddingservices only includes examples of the range of services offered.

Chapter overview

To conclude the introduction, I give an overview of the chapters and discuss how they build an argument through the thesis. It can be noted that the visual practice is treated as a source of knowledge in the thesis and is weaved through the written word as both reference material and creative visual practice and in doing this, I offer an alternative method of articulating knowledge. Having presented the context of research at the start of the introduction including *Cartographies of the Local* that visually map the neighbourhood, and a sample of *Primary Research 1*, which is the living archive of photographs gathered from the photography studios during the research process, in chapter 2 'The studio photograph as a conceptual framework', I examine the genre of studio photography. There is an established history of looking at studio photography which is based predominantly on retrospective analyses of vernacular photographic studio archives. Within this context the photographs can be understood as dynamic objects that are active in time and space, as historians Constanza Caraffa and Tiziana Serena (2015) have suggested. In employing retrospective analyses to historical photographs, it becomes apparent that the role and character of the photographs change at different points of time. For example, the re-reading of historical studio photographs outside the time they were made, allows for divergent reading of the photographs within specific

political, economic and cultural contexts. It is not unusual to find that studio photographs have been overlooked as objects of sustained academic research and analysis within the time frame they were made. However, once they become historical artefacts – and if they have been preserved and archived - reconsidering them at a subsequent historical moment opens up new ways in which to understand them. The focus of the chapter looks at the history of studio photography in relation to this contemporary case study. I build an argument that frames studio photography within a socio-political context. To do this I draw from established secondary research that examines early histories of studio photography, first as a visual and then as a cultural framework within a broader geographical context. I draw from a number of scholarly sources such as photo-historians Audrey Linkman (1993, 2000), Steve Edwards (2006) and Kate Flint (2015) who make links between early studio photography, painting and the social aspirations of the sitter and then complicate these ideas by referring to John Plunket (2003) and Patrizia Di Bello (2007) who suggest that the process of visiting Victorian photography in itself was a socio-cultural activity. I then look at studio photography from a broader perspective of representational power, knowledge, class and culture by drawing from anthropological scholars such as Christopher Pinney (1997, 2008, 2003, 2011, 2013), who writes about the relationship between identity and performance in Indian studio photography, and Heike Behrend (2003, 2013) who argues for an alternative history of Kenya as seen through the prism of studio photography. In doing this I suggest that there is fluidity to the framework of studio photography that is adapted to reflect the tastes and desires of the community. The idea of reading studio photography as a conceptual framework is then reviewed in relation to a sample of the collected photographs, gathered as part of the research in the north London photography studios. I introduce a comparative analysis that draws on synergies between past and present studio photographs and question how digital technologies have disrupted and diversified visual traditions of representation. Using the example of one photograph, the chapter concludes by introducing the idea that these contemporary studio photographs can be viewed as a methodological

continuum of historical photography studio photography that showcase the mores of the local neighbourhood.

The following two visual responses, *The Book of Backgrounds* and *The Sampler*, also allude to socio-cultural context of studio photography. They use visual methods to create parallel experiences of knowledge in collaboration with the written text. These bodies of work draw from the primary research specifically examine the background – surround and propping of a studio portrait as a way of anchoring the meaning of the portrait. *The Book of Backgrounds* comes out of a close reading of a large sample of early English carte-de-visite studio photographs, taken between 1858- 1862 which were collected as part of the research process. Using the original photographs as a starting point, they are digitally reworked using absence, presence and repetition to highlight the construct of the studio photograph. *The Sampler*, is a distilled taster of the digital studio backgrounds examined as part of the *Primary Research I*. It draws from the large catalogue of digital portrait backgrounds collected and presents the backgrounds, yet unanchored to specific studios, the work aims to find connections between the available backgrounds. These bodies of work echo the argument made in the text placing an emphasis on the importance of the studio background in understanding the context of the portrait.

To underpin the contemporary case study that looks at Anglo-Turkish photography in north London, in chapter 3, 'The Occidental Frame', I broaden the secondary theoretical research to look at the history of early Ottoman-Turkish studio photography. I introduce a post-colonial reading of Orientalism as a potential way of analysing historical Ottoman photography and then look for continuities with my contemporary case study. I suggest that, despite the hegemony of Orientalist aesthetics visible in early Ottoman photography, new narratives of self-recognition emerged as transcultural exchanges of ideas and aesthetics between the Occidental and the Oriental took place. In offering alternative ways of reading studio photography I attempt to complicate binary readings of the photographs and suggest that many of the visual tropes seen in them have in fact transcended their original

meaning and can be understood in multiple ways depending on the trajectory of the reading. In investigating the history of Ottoman/Turkish histories of photography I nuance and refine the reading of this case study.

The Unnamed Sitter, responds to research undertaken on the Ken Jacobson collection of Orientalist photography which was studied as part of the research for chapter 3. In his (2007) book *Odaliques and Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839-1925* Jacobson aims to create a comprehensive archive of all of the early Ottoman photography studios. Jacobson's writing focuses heavily on the aesthetic qualities of the presented photographs and the accuracy of locating the studios and their histories. However, he fails to either identify or even mention any of the semi-naked female sitters in the original photographs. Although this visual response does not respond to the main trajectory of the thesis, *The Unnamed Sitter* is a visceral and unapologetic reaction to the representation of women in the Jacobson archive. In the work I aim to highlight the unequal power dynamic between the subjects of the photographs, who remain objectified and anonymous and the identified, named photographers. I am interested in what it means to look at these portraits through a twenty-first century lens and in doing so I highlight the Orientalist perspective of these photographs. A selection of the original photographs are represented - re-cropped and digitally manipulated to highlight the nudity of the unnamed semi-naked sitters. The gestures and moiré patterns of the process are deliberately embedded into the new images as a reminder of the discourse within which these images now exist. In an attempt to highlight the scopophilia of these photographs they are presented alongside of a selection of original carte-de-visite photographs made at the same historical moment.

Having introduced the idea of transcultural exchange of ideas and aesthetics in the early chapters of the thesis in chapter 4, 'Doing Photography as a Transcultural Practice', I build on the idea of creative practices of transculturation. Hinging discussions on specific examples that draw from the gathered research, this chapter asks critical questions about the mediation of transcultural identities that are experimented with and captured by the

photography studios. I think through the photography studio as a transnational space in which transcultural identities can be experimented with and performed. To anchor these ideas, I again draw from Hall's (1984) early writing around diasporic identity in studio photography. He commences the conversation around the representation of diasporic identities in photography, and although his writing specifically examines black diasporic identities in studio photography his theory of considering the mediation of cultural identity in the photographs is pivotal in grounding my thinking about how transcultural identities are experimented with and performed in the photography studio. These ideas are theoretically grounded further by Sigona *et al.*'s (2015) writings about transnational spaces (introduced early on in this introduction), together with Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) theory of 'contact zones' and Homi Bhabha's (1994) theory of the 'third space'. I conclude this chapter by suggesting that 'Invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 2012) emerge out of these transcultural practices. In drawing from these relevant theories, I argue that photography studios are places in which identities are visually formalised, and in this case study they are places in which transcultural identities are experimented with and performed.

I then move the research out of the photography studio and at first into the local community centre, and then the family home in order to focus on the mnemonic value of the photographs for their owners. This is a conscious move in order to examine the affect of the photographs and investigate the critical relationship between photography, memory and belonging. This includes a sample of *Primary Research II* which catalogues and introduces some of the personal owned images studied. Chapter 5, 'Family Photographs: Looking at Photographs as Mnemonic Devices' specifically draws on one case study, from *Primary Research II*, which is indicative of the research, and opens up an in-depth analysis of this encounter. I expand on the traditional photo-elicitation methods to examine the selected photographs and explore the emotional 'affect' of these photographs for the owner. In doing this I examine how memory and the imagination inform this research participant's sense of identity and belonging. The final visual response, *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs* presents carefully composed

photographs made in the family homes where *Primary Research II* took place. In chapter 5, I attempt to understand these photographs as mnemonic photographic objects and go on to suggest that they are crucial in giving insight into diasporic identity. I discuss how the photographs are caressed, passed around and talked about and position them as active agents within the family home. In choosing to record them in this way I am able to reframe them as important socio-cultural signifiers in the everyday lives of the research participants.

The conclusion brings together the arguments built through the thesis and looks at the mediation of transcultural identity through the prism of studio photography. I argue that whilst there are an increasing number of case studies that present retrospective analysis of studio photography within a socio-cultural context, this thesis is original in focusing on a contemporary - digital case study, which examines photographic practices at the time the photography is made. In doing this, I look at how contemporary studio photography can be historicised both socially and culturally at a time when the presence of the studio on the high street is changing. I conclude by summarising the contribution of this thesis in developing new ways of thinking through transcultural identities.

Chapter 2

The Studio Photograph as a Conceptual Framework

Having commenced the research in the high-street photography studios in my local area, I sought to deepen my understanding of the history of studio photography in order to attempt to grasp the meaning of the photographs. To do this, in this chapter I draw from secondary research that looks at historical photographic studio practices. I attempt to better appreciate the purpose and meaning of the photographs, and articulate further the contextual framework for my research.²⁵ To ground these discussions, first I look at the social relations of constructed early studio portraits, situating the practices as the beginning of a genre of photography, which, 160 years later, still underpins the visual framework seen in contemporary, high street studio photographs such as the studios I investigate. Beyond an initial reading of the aesthetics of studio photography, this chapter then draws on anthropological methods to examine the cultural importance of studio photography for the consumer. I highlight that whilst a high-street studio portrait may appear clichéd and not reveal very much about the individuality of the sitter, examining the framework of the photograph, that is the repetition of visual elements seen in the photographs, as well as their agency, can elucidate insight into the cultural values and social aspirations imbued in and constructed by the photograph.

In recent decades there has been a growing recognition of the value of a photographic studio portrait, beyond its vernacular use.²⁶ A classic and much

²⁵ I note that most of the names of the contemporary photography studios do not include the term 'photography studio'. Whilst they may informally refer to themselves as a photography studio, they more frequently use the words 'digital' and/or 'productions' in the naming of their businesses. This is done to update the context of the businesses, which include both digital photography and videography. However, in order to follow the narrative thread around studio photography, I continue to generically refer to the contemporary studios as 'photography studios'.

²⁶ When I write vernacular, I use the word to refer to the original use of a studio photograph for its owners.

cited example of this is how, using an 1887 studio portrait photograph of Kafka to illustrate his point, Walter Benjamin (1977:61) dismissed the possibility that a photographic studio portrait could provide an 'auratic' encounter because of its repetitive and formulaic nature.²⁷ More recently, Geoffrey Batchen (2002) places studio photography within a genre of vernacular photography that has been largely ignored by a critical gaze. This is an argument he develops further in 2008 when he comments on the absence of alternative histories of photography.

"A History" soon became "The History" and this has meant that a modernist art historical discourse, with its narrow emphasis on avant-garde practice and aesthetics remained the dominant way of talking about photography's history throughout the twentieth century, whether this "talk" took the form of books or exhibitions. (Batchen 2008:125)

Batchen highlights how significant photographic histories, such as the history of studio photography, have been marginalised. Expanding this argument, he comments on the perceived threat of the 'ethnographic turn' (2008:121) in contemporary photographic writing. He states that an ethnographic reading of a photograph challenges key aesthetic judgement values employed by a traditional art historical reading. Such a reading, he argues, considers the agency of the photograph over its aesthetics. It places an emphasis on what the photograph is doing and when I write this, I mean the socio-cultural meaning of a photograph, above what it looks like. An ethnographic approach to examining studio photography is also recommended by Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (2003) when they highlight parallel photographic histories that culturally contextualise a photograph. In addition to which, more recently scholars Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (2013), and then Stephen Sheehi (2016), address this argument. They concentrate on

²⁷ Benjamin, Walter (2008) described the aura as something inherent in an original, an unreproducible artwork. Duttlinger (2008:81) when writing about Benjamin and the aura of photography, points out that Benjamin discussed the Kafka studio portrait in three separate texts, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (2008), 'Franz Kafka on the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' (2008), 'A Short History of Photography' (1977).

culturally specific readings in studio photography. In addition, Pinney (1997, 2008) and Appadurai (1997) have debated about the social relations of Indian studio photography, which is followed by Behrend's (2003, 2013) culturally specific writing that examines the studio photographs of the East-African Likoni- Ferry photographers. Their discussions open up broader conversations about analogue studio photography, in relation to representational power, knowledge, class and culture, as well as social aspirations. As a way of analysing my research, I draw from these histories and discuss the impact digital technologies has had on the genre of studio photography.



Figure 2.1

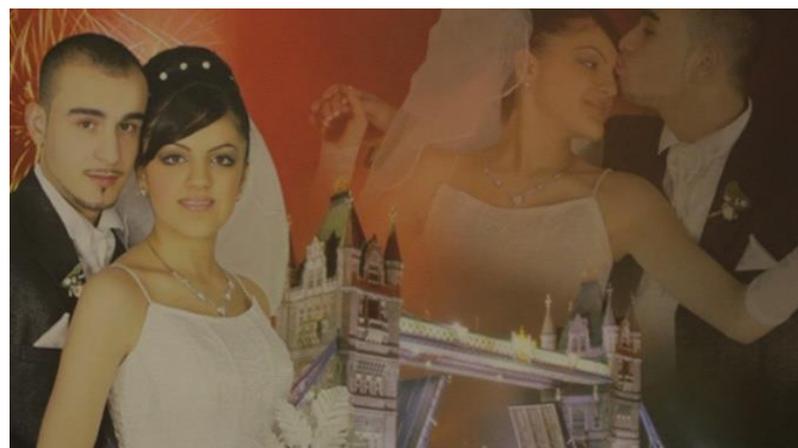


Figure 2.2

Figure 2.1 and 2.2 are copies of portraits that hang on the wall of Belda Productions (2011/12). They are included here as examples of how the same subject appears multiple times in the one image. Both of these portraits were made in the studio and then digitally compiled in post-production to make the complete image presented. Figure 2.1 is a commemorative circumcision portrait, which has the young boy dressed in

his formal circumcision outfit. Figure 2.2 is a wedding portrait. In this image the couple appear twice, either side of Tower bridge. This image is discussed further within this chapter and again in the subsequent chapter in the context of transcultural photography.



Figure 2.3



Figure 2.4



Figure 2.5



Figure 2.6

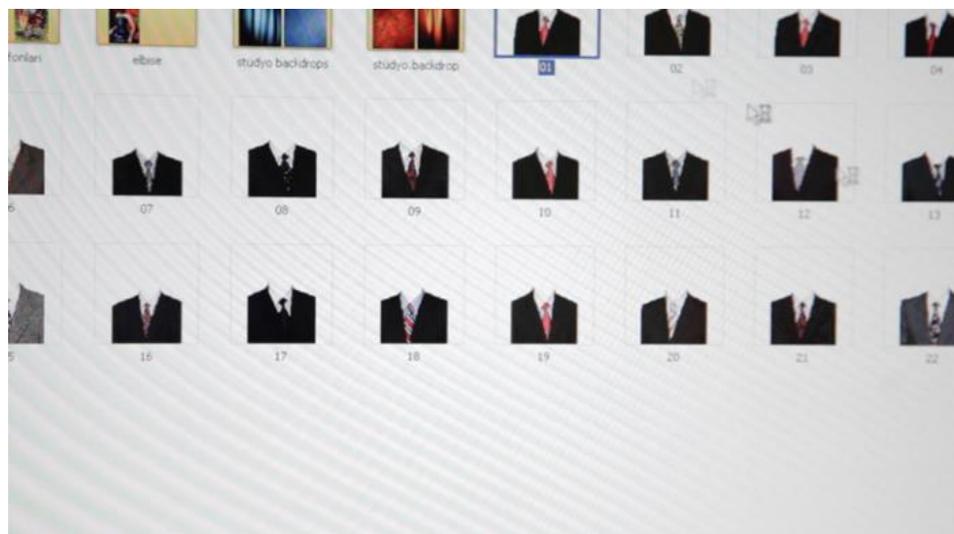


Figure 2.7

Figures 2.3 and Figures 2.4 (2011) are copies of portraits on display in Belda Productions. They are included to highlight the point that even some 160 years after the beginning of studio photography there is a continuity between the portrait backgrounds used in early studio portraits and this contemporary case study. Figure 2.5 (2012) Is another example of digital mise-en-scène that can be found around a child's portrait and is included to emphasise this point, this image was grabbed from Belda Productions (2011/12). Figures 2.6 and 2.7 (2011) are screen grabs taken from Belda Productions during an interview with one of the photographers. They are included to highlight the variety of ready-made digital mise-en-scènes available for customers to choose. In Figure 2.6 a child's head has been dropped into the ready-made portrait. In Figure 2.7 although a variation of this image is already featured in the introduction (Figure 1.3) I have again featured a selection of suits and ties, which is discussed in this chapter, so the reader can study the vast selection of digital portrait backgrounds available in the computer image banks at Belda Productions.

The photographs featured in this chapter (figures 2.1- 2.7) are drawn from *Primary Research I* and supplement the work visual already included in the introduction to this thesis. They are presented in this chapter to highlight specific points raised in the text. They are indicative of the many photographs I looked at during the research process and are included to share a flavour of the material I examined. Some of the images are copies of the photographs on display in the photography studios, others are screen grabs taken from one of the video interviews made with one of the participant photographers, in which we discussed the range of available digital backgrounds and the participants contribution in constructing the aesthetics of the photographs.²⁸

During interviews with the studio photographers, I asked questions about their practices, such as who are the customers and what events were documented/recorded by the studios? I also enquired about the advantages of digital photography as a photographic process. The responses indicated that digital photography has enabled more adaptable working methods for commercial photographic practices, such as documenting social events, weddings, family and circumcision parties. In addition, digital photography allows more flexibility when constructing studio portraits. The photographer is no longer reliant on the physicality of the photographic studio to make a completed portrait likeness and the customer is not constrained by the background and props in the studio. Today customers can have their portrait likeness taken against a blank wall in the studio, and the background is digitally added to their portrait afterwards. This process gives the sitter more choice about the background with which to have a portrait made, which as Pinney (2008) suggests when writing about analogue studio photography, raises questions about the relationship between photography and the real. In fact, I argue that the connection between an event, people and objects in the real world is not essential for digital photographic images. On asking further questions concerning which digital backgrounds are popular with customers in the studios and why, it emerges that perhaps surprisingly, despite the wide

²⁸ Ibid <https://vimeo.com/119930259>

variety of customised digital backgrounds available, customers invariably rely on the photographer to guide them when selecting a background for their portrait. As one photographer recounted, even though clients can choose their own background from a potentially limitless supply of customised digital backdrops images, clients invariably wanted the photographers to do so by:

Basically, getting their minds into our mind and try to figure what they want, yeah (Caroline Molloy video clip: <https://vimeo.com/119930259> 1.36-1.39)

According to this photographer, the digital portrait backgrounds most frequently used include contemporary British landscapes, churches and cityscapes that visually denote London, England. I was surprised that churches were a popular choice of background for Anglo-Turkish Muslim weddings.²⁹ This I found unexpected and questioned the photographer about this, whose response was:

Like I said, it's not about the religion when it comes to pictures. They prefer to have something nice, like the architecture is done and the colour (Caroline Molloy video clip: <https://vimeo.com/119930259> 0.25 - 0.42)

Digital technologies allow the use of pre-assembled images for more than just the backdrop to the photograph. Whereas an analogue studio portrait would use the same studio setting – background, furniture, props – to denote the aspirations of the customer, in a digital studio the image of the customer can be added to any number of different digital ‘mise-en-scène’ backgrounds. The customer is photographed in the bare, white studio, and digitally relocated in a variety of different ways. These can include a suit, shirt and tie combination, designed specifically for male passport photographs (figure 2.7), or a wedding set-up and wardrobe inclusive of the outfit for the bride and groom and a woman’s evening dress, situated in front

²⁹ This point is returned to in chapter 4 in the context of cross-cultural appropriation.

of a swath of curtain. I was also told by more than one photographer that digitally adding recognisable Western cartoon characters, such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, to a child's portrait is particularly popular. To assist my analysis of contemporary digital studio photography and make links between the past and the present, a study of early histories of studio photography is required.

The studio portrait as a genre of photography

This section of the chapter looks at studio photography within the context of a genre and then goes on to argue that there are visual continuities between early Victorian studio photography and contemporary high-street photographic practices. However, comprehending the rhetoric of the studio portrait photograph is more complex than it at first appears. I highlight in this chapter how studio photographs can be understood in different ways. I look at stylistic forms of representation seen in early studio photography, examine the visual methods used in the photographs, and raise questions about the motivations for having a studio portrait made. Recognising that studio practices have been understood differently at different historical points, it is interesting to note that Charles Dickens as early as 1862 raised poignant questions about the purpose and suitability of the background and props used in carte-de-visite portraits. He noticed how although backgrounds sometimes attempted to match the profession of the sitter, they often included visually lavish props and backdrops unrelated to professional identity:

and there is also a pillar and curtain - but who are those for? What is the profession of that unhappy and misguided wretch who is supposed to pass his life in a perpetual environment of pillar and curtain? (Dickens 1862:165-168)

Dickens hints at the absurdity of having a photographic studio portrait made within such incongruous surroundings, using seemingly meaningless visual props. His writing infers mistrust of the lasting implications of being

associated with such studio-determined settings, and questions what the resulting photograph can possibly reveal about its sitter. He was not the only one. As pointed out by Steve Edwards (2006), readers of the *Photographic News* in 1859-60 were also critical of the studio background and props used by photography studios.³⁰ Comments by anonymised readers published in this journal show the readers' cynicism towards studio photography, referring specifically to the use of backgrounds that were 'poorly chosen', even 'grotesque' and 'a perfect marvel of bad taste' (Edwards 2006:259). Pejorative comments also complained of 'clumsily positioned props' that look 'absurd' in the photograph (Edwards 2006:261). These comments not only raise questions about the tastes denoted in the studio photograph, they also reflect a desire of the readers to distance themselves from the visual propping used in photographs. The material analysed by Edwards (2006) reminds the contemporary reader that Victorian audiences did not always idealise studio photography in quite the same way a retrospective reading of a studio photograph may assume.³¹ Identifying the difference between how an historical studio photograph was understood within the time it was made and a contemporary reading of the same photograph is a helpful way of thinking through reactions to contemporary high-street photographic studio practices, which on occasion are discussed critically.

Drawing from scholarly writing of early Victorian studio photography from Audrey Linkman (1993, 2000), Patrizia Di Bello (2007), John Plunkett (2003), Steve Edwards (1990, 2006) and Elizabeth Siegal (2010), I build a theoretical framework with which to discuss contemporary photographic practices. I discuss how early studio photography adopted and appropriated

³⁰ *The Photographic News*, later called *The Journal of Photography*, appeared in the mid-nineteenth century and was later replaced by *The Quarterly Review*. Discussions in the journals were mostly focused around the technical making of the photograph, reader comments were anonymised.

³¹ There are increasingly more articles focused on the social relations of Victorian studio photography in academic journals such as *Photographies*, *Photography and Culture*, *The History of Photography* and *Victorian Studies*; for example, Flint (2015) 'Surround, Background, and the Overlooked' in *Victorian Studies*, 57 (3) 449-461 Indiana Press and Garden, W. (2007) 'Photographic Space and the Indian Portrait Studio' in *Double Dialogues*, 7 (2).

existing forms of representation seen in portrait painting. My examination of early studio photography in this chapter, is predominately Anglo-centric; however, a comparable study could be made looking at early European and North American studio photography. This secondary research is English specific so links can be drawn between historical British photographic practices and my contemporary case study of studio practices in north London. Having discussed early photographic studio histories, the chapter then discusses studio photography within a broader cultural context and concludes by looking at how digital technologies have disrupted and diversified studio practices.

According to Plunkett (2003:59), studio photography first became popular in England after 1851, when the unpatented details of collodion negative processes were published. However, he argues that it was not until the photographer Disderi published his *carte-de-viste* photographic studio portrait of Napoleon in 1858, that a commercial interest in studio photography became more widespread. Di Bello (2007), when discussing the Victorian studio as a fashionable place in which to be seen, draws attention to the ubiquity of early studio portraits, specifically the craze of making, collecting and exchanging *carte-de-visite* portraits during the 1860s, which was commonly referred to at the time as 'cartomania'. Figures 2.8 – 2.13, are examples of commercial Victorian *carte-de-visite* portraits. Drawn from my personal collection of Victorian portrait photographs made between 1854 and the middle of the 1860s, they have been selected as examples of early photographic studio portraits in order to situate discussions about the genre in a visual historical context.³² Although the sitters' personal biographies are missing, certain observations can be made about both the photographs and the sitters in them. The photographs are generic in presentation, similar in size, tone, composition, as well as setting. Collectively they demonstrate visual repetition through conformity of pose, clothing and background. The similarities show the visual homogeneity of early British studio photography.

³² Although exact dating of the featured *carte-de-visite* studio photographs are unknown, using Linkman's (2000) *The Expert Guide to Date Victorian Family Photographs*, the height of popularity of the *carte-de-visite* was between 1854-1860.

There is a stamp on the back of several of the photographs that locates them to specific photographic studios. Although some of the backs of the photographs are blank or the type is illegible, others situate the photographic studios across Britain, in Cheapside London, Haymarket London, Margate, Exeter, Swansea, Louth or Hereford.³³ The breadth of studio locations demonstrates that early studio photography practices were consistent across different locations.



Figure 2.8



Figure 2.9



Figure 2.10



Figure 2.11



Figure 2.12



Figure 2.13

Figures 2.8 - 2.13 Carte-de-visite studio portrait photographs (Circa 1854-64), taken from the author's personal collection. They are featured here as visual examples of typical carte-de-visite portraits. As I discuss in the text, I am interested in the

³³ Comparable studio portrait photographs were simultaneously made across the United Kingdom and in other parts of western Europe and North America.

gendered posing of the sitters in the photographs as well as the connotation's of the studio backgrounds. Some of the photographs have author biographical details on the back of the photograph. Figure 2.8 H. Goodman. Photographer. Margate Studio. Figure 2.9 No details on the photograph. Figure 2.10 John Tredray. Artist & photographer. Hastings. Figure 2.11 J. Willey. Photographer. Louth. Figure 2.12 E. Jeffray. Landscape and portrait photographer. Grimsby and London. Figure 2.13 J. Willey. Photographer. Louth.



Figure 2.14



Figure 2.15

Figure 2.16

Figure 2.17

Figure 2.14 2011/12 Belda Productions features a ready-made digital mise-en-scène in which the customers head can be dropped into the image to complete the portrait. It is featured here show the connections between it and the background mise-en-scène of featured carte-de-viste portraits Figures 2.15-17, which are typical examples of studio portraits circa 1854-64, taken from the author's personal collection. Figure 2.17 J. Tredray. Artist & Photographer. Hastings. Figure 2.20 has no studio information on the photograph. Figure 2.21 Wiley. Photographer. Louth.

Note that repetition of the drapes and windows/view beyond the window, as props in both the carte-de-visite portrait photographs and the selected contemporary images. In the corner of figure 2.8 and figure 2.20 a round, side table with a potted plant on it can be seen. This suggests a linear connection between these images.

In terms of understanding the visual framework of early Victorian studio photographs, Linkman's (1993, 2000) analysis of the construction of early Victorian studio photographs and Anne Bermingham's (1987) discussions of the social etiquette of deportment are important references for my analysis. In her research at the Greater Manchester County Record Office, Linkman (2000) developed a formal methodological guide about how to date a Victorian family photograph, which built on her 1993 investigations into Victorian photography. The guide highlights key factors with which to examine and date a photograph, such as identifying the photographic processes and an analysis of the aesthetics seen in the image. She explains that different photographic processes were concurrently being developed inclusive of the Daguerreotype in 1839, Calotype in 1840, Tintype in 1853, Albumen prints/Carte-de-visite from the late 1854 throughout the 1860s and the cabinet card in the 1860s.

In her earlier publication, Linkman (1993) shows how the photographic studio portrait mimicked the visual tropes seen in the painted portrait tradition. This drew reference from neo-classical aesthetics and was required to both flatter the aristocratic sitter and denote their social status. Marcia Pointon (1993) discusses the painted portrait as a national language of representation, responsible for shaping and defining mechanisms of class:

portraiture was – and is – to be understood as one of the ways in which social groups and individuals (collectively and individually) represent themselves; portraiture – the acts of portrayal – is always more than the sum of its parts. (Pointon 1993:4)

The painter used a system of visual emblems to denote actual aristocratic status, or plausible aspirations to the same. By this I mean, the visual depiction of the sitter dressed and posed majestically is encircled by opulent

surroundings such as classical architecture, the country manor or a large estate. These compositions are deliberately purposeful in order to suggest the power and status of the sitter. According to Andrew Wilton (1992:XX) the painted portrait, sometimes referred to as the 'Grand Manner' portrait, is visually influenced by the aesthetics seen in Classical Greek sculpture, Catholic Italian Renaissance portrait painting, and Calvinist Dutch painting styles.³⁴ As a way of denoting both wealth and status, it was not unusual to see a drawing room, the corner of a library or even a picturesque landscape as a background in a painted portrait. As Linkman (1993) argues, these visual scenarios used to contextualise painted portraits were then copied and mass produced to use in the photographic studio portrait.³⁵ Visual connections between the backgrounds used in painted portraits, with their symbolic use of classical style arches, Romanesque plinths and swaths of curtain, as the construction of the background in the nineteenth-century cartes-de-visite I collected (see example figures 2.13-2.18) can be seen. Arguably although links can be seen between the painted and photographic mise-en-scène backgrounds minimal attention is paid to the realism of these backgrounds in the carte-de-visite portraits. In this context, the incongruously placed pillars and curtains that Dickens (1862) refers to can then be understood as objects of symbolism, which have been added to the portrait likeness to indicate the generic social aspirations of the sitter. As Linkman writes:

³⁴ Wilton (1992) indicates that the 'Grand Manner' painted portrait, was sometimes referred to as the 'swagger portrait.' His research suggests that the first reference of the term, 'swagger portrait' was used to describe Shakespeare's character Puck in 'A Midsummers Night Dream', a character who was associated with pretension and insolence. He writes that individual styles of painting the Grand Manner portraits differed according to the painters' temperament, religion and country of origin. English Grand Manner paintings were popular in England between 1650 and 1825. Notable portrait painters were Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 - 1792) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727 - 1788).

³⁵ Linkman (1993:52) credits Antoine Claudet in 1842, with the introduction of the pictorial background into the photographic studio. Although she adds it was not until the 1860s this became commercially popular. This argument is also made by Edwards (2014), whose extended essay 'Temple of Photography', describes Claudet's allegoric painted studio walls in Regent Street (opened according to Edwards 1851) as being crucial in positioning Claudet as a leading figure in photography.

These backdrops, suggestive as they were of wealth and social advantage, made an important contribution to the idealization of the sitter (Linkman 1993:52)

In addition to the background, Linkman asks the reader to take note of the sitter's clothing, pose and the studio props seen in Victorian studio photographs. The role of the props in the photograph, she argues, visually signals aspirational attributes of the sitter in that photograph. For example, a book is used as a propping device, placed on a bureau or in the hands of the sitter (see figures 2.13 and 2.14). For the sitter and the viewer, the book symbolises a generic possession of knowledge. These visual elements Linkman (1993:52) claims made an important contribution to characterising the social and class aspirations, rather than realities, of the sitter.

Bermingham's (1987) study insightfully connects compositional techniques used to characterise the social status of the sitter in the 'Grand Manner' painted portrait, to coded gestures of deportment seen in traditional eighteenth-century etiquette guides.³⁶ When speaking about the etiquette books, Bermingham outlines their purpose of signalling aristocratic social status. She argues that the guides were devised around the idea that a system of social standing and status needed to be preserved and in adopting specific postural deportment gestures, as suggested by the guides, the social and gender status of the sitter is metaphorically implied. She writes:

The etiquette books regularized bodily movements and encoded them into a network of social and class meaning. Deportment could facilitate social intercourse and forestall misunderstandings only if its gestural signs were uniform, appropriate and unambiguous.
(Bermingham 1987:22)

³⁶ It should be clarified that the aristocracy would have been taught etiquette and deportment, the published etiquette guides were made for the aspiring middle class wanting to acquire the appearance of aristocratic cultural capital.

Birmingham goes on to explain how the coded system of representation seen in the guides, was adopted by portrait painters as a way of indicating the sitter's aspirational status. As the same postures can be seen in both painted portraits and the Victorian studio photograph, Birmingham's observations also apply to the social aspirations of the sitter in the portrait photograph. This theory is reiterated by Siegel (2010) who uses a copy of *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* (published in America in 1870) to illustrate this point. According to Siegel:

For six months in 1870, *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* provided its photographic and lay readers with a regular illustrated guide called "Suggestions for Posing" (Siegel 2010:43)

Echoing the suggestions seen in the etiquette guides, the bulletin offered to the photographer recommendations about how to pose the sitter, paying particular attention to the sitter's deportment. In the examples, carte-de-viste portraits (figures 2.16 - 2.18) the male sitter is posed facing straight or almost straight on to the camera. His gaze is either directly facing the camera or purposefully looking away and his expression is serious. His apparel is formal and appears expensive, that is a smart suit and tie. One arm casually rests on an elegant chair or a decorative plinth, the other arm is vertical and echoes the line of his body or is positioned on his hip. Echoing the compositional techniques of the painted portrait, these are typical examples of how the figure in the carte-de-visite was ordinarily a full-length figure so the costume and accompanying setting were visible.³⁷ The deportment of the female sitter in both the painted portrait and the studio photograph was markedly different from that of a male sitter. The suggested etiquette reinforced gender stereotypes of the time. For example, in a comparable studio photograph of a woman, she is more likely to be sitting, and a nearby table becomes a prop on which she leans. Her hands are clasped or holding

³⁷ In line with portrait depictions in the 'Grand Manner' painted portrait, the etiquette of representation in the studio photograph was usually to depict the sitters' full length body. However, sometimes, the photographic studio portrait only recorded the sitter's face and part of their body.

a book. Her costume, such as an elaborate crinoline dress, is selected as smart attire for wearing in the parlour. For the male sitter standing in the studio photograph intrinsically inferred self-assurance. His staid pose implies ownership of the environment in which he stands. Whereas the female sitter's pose alluded to bourgeois Victorian feminine values of 'grace' and 'containment', as described by Linkman.

The pose of a lady should not have that boldness of action which you would give a man but be modest and retiring, the arms describing gentle curves, and feet never apart (Linkman 1993:46)

The expression in the photograph also assists the characterisation of the sitter. The absence of a smile in Victorian studio portraits reflects the deportment expected of the sitters, who were to look serious in their portrait. This was established in painted portraits and can also be traced back to coded eighteenth-century etiquette guides. In a contemporary studio photograph, it is acceptable and, on most occasions, preferable for the sitter to be smiling. It is now commonly understood that the smile signifies the sitter is relaxed and at ease in the photograph. However, smiling in the Victorian portrait was not considered desirable. Beyond fears of displaying bad teeth and the impossibility of holding a smile for the length of time needed to capture the photographic likeness, depicting a sitter with a smile in a portrait indicated a break in polite etiquette. According to Angus Trumble, (2004) who writes about the history of the smile, Victorians saw smiling in their portrait images as obscene. After analysing the depiction of a smile in both historical literature and art history, Trumble shows how, he writes:

Most teeth and open mouths in art belonged to dirty old men, misers, drunks, whores, gypsies, people undergoing religious ecstasy, dwarfs, lunatics, monsters, ghosts, the possessed and the damned. (Trumble 2004:XXXI)

His analysis suggests that holding a smile in either a photographic or a painted portrait was thought to be foolish. Careful attention was paid to self-

representation in a portrait. Wearing a smile, he argues, was considered undignified and something from which the sitter would want to distance themselves. Root (1864) cited by Tanya Sheehan (2014:129), who specifically writes about facial gestures in early studio portraiture, supports this point by suggesting that wearing a toothy smile in a Victorian studio portrait would have been seen as 'aesthetically and socially transgressive', and seen as a break away from bourgeois respectability. These analyses start to clarify some of the social reasons for the serious expressions seen in historical portrait paintings and then in early studio photography. Having a portrait commissioned in Victorian England would have required an investment of both time and money. That portrait likeness maybe the only visual representation of the sitter or at least would need to represent that sitter for an inordinate amount of time, therefore careful consideration would have been needed to ensure the image was suitably appropriate.

It should be noted that whilst it may seem straightforward to retrospectively analyse a Victorian studio photograph through a prism that emphasizes the aesthetics of the image, looking at the Victorian photograph within a broader historical and cultural framework requires a different reading. Plunkett (2003), Edwards (1990, 2006) and Di Bello (2007, 2011) suggest more detailed readings of the Victorian studio photograph. They raise questions about the agency of the photograph and the audience's reception of it at the time. According to Di Bello (2007) the popularity of the studio photograph, specifically during the 1860s partly grew due to the excitement associated with celebrities who frequented the photographic studio.³⁸ Di Bello remarks that beyond an interest in the look of the photograph, the thrill of being associated with the 'celebrity-du-jour' fuelled a curiosity about having a photographic portrait likeness taken. She notes that trading on assumed

³⁸ There is disagreement over whom was considered a celebrity in Victorian England. According to Plunkett (2003:64), notable celebrities would include royalty, politicians, artists and leading politicians during the 1860s-70s. He noted, a change in the hierarchy of the celebrity status during the 1880s-90s, which was inclusive of actors, singers and sportsman of the day, all of which joined the social ranks of the photographed celebrity. However, Di Bello (2011), suggested that actors, singers and socialites achieved celebrity status much earlier than indicated by Plunkett (2003).

connections with celebrities and in a bid to attract custom, it was customary for the photographic studio to showcase celebrity portrait photographs in their street-facing display windows. This is a visual tradition that has remained popular and can be seen in contemporary, high-street photography studios.

Di Bello's (2011) research highlights that the act of being photographed in the studio portrait was as much about buying into an imagined connection with the world of celebrity, as it was about being associated with the visual metaphors conveyed by the photograph. By emphasizing the fashion of having a photographic studio portrait made during the 1860s, Di Bello introduces the idea that the agency of the photograph also impacted on its popularity. She reminds the reader that it is not always what the photograph looks like but also what the photograph facilitates, that should be considered when thinking through its value. Her analysis invites the reader to challenge Linkman's claims that the popularity of studio photography was driven by the sitter's desire to be linked to the visual elements seen in the photograph. Di Bello suggests that having a studio photograph made evidences a desire to participate in the modern and desirable activity of being photographed. This explanation helps develop a better understanding about why a Victorian sitter may have chosen to have their portrait likeness made alongside of seemingly out of place studio props, such as the pillar and curtain. They were not only intended to signify particular locations or attributes of the sitter, but the fact that the photograph was taken in a photographic studio, as a fashionable location to see and be seen. Arguably although the studios of this case study may not be considered fashionable places in which to be seen, the client's association with the studios comes from personal recommendations. That is the studios are endorsed from friends in the local community or because the studio owner comes from the same part of Turkey as either the client or client's family.

Linkman (1993) comments that the development of photographic processes in the mid-nineteenth century meant that the keep-sake portrait, desired by the aspiring bourgeoisie middle-class, became an affordable commodity. A

painted portrait likeness would have been out of reach for most of the Victorian middle class. New photographic technologies and with it less expensive production costs, enabled the production and circulation of photographic studio portraits of friends, colleagues, loved ones and notable celebrities, to be collated and curated in the photographic album. Arguably, the act of having a professional portrait made signified the social and class aspirations of the sitter. However, Plunkett's (2003) reading of early studio photography questions Linkman's theory that the sitters in the studio photograph were the aspiring Victorian middle class. He asks readers to rethink this supposition. Problematising Linkman's theories, he queries whether the reasonably priced photographic studio portrait, instead of attracting aspirational middle-class sitters, did in fact facilitate the 'status elevation' (Plunkett 2003:76) of the working-class sitter. That is a working-class sitter who was able to enact an aspirational Victorian middle-class identity in the photograph. Thinking through Plunkett's suggestion that the studio photograph enabled 'class elevation', may also account for the anonymised critical comments published in the *Photographic News*. If the photographic studio portrait did in fact raise the working-class status of the sitter, the middle-class reader of the journal may have used uncomplimentary comments to distance themselves from the aspirations of the lower-middle-class or working-class sitter. Plunkett's reading of the social position of the sitter, succeeds in complicating reading of the Victorian studio photograph.

Further questions about the participation of the sitter in the overall presentation of their portrait likeness are raised by Edwards (1990). He reminds the reader that the construction of the studio photograph was as much to do with the photographer's 'imaginaire' (Edwards 1990:64) as it was about a dialogue between the photographer and the sitter. Edwards implies that the sitter may have been a passive participant in their own portrait likeness, who was guided by the photographer's eye. Drawing on this point, it is unclear whether the sitter belonged to the bourgeois Victorian middle class, aspired to belong to it or indeed how active the sitter was in contributing to the construction of their own visual likeness. However, it can also be ascertained that the sitter chose to have their portrait likeness made

in the studio and in doing this, the sitter is identified with the values connoted with that genre of photography. Collective comparisons can be drawn from the repetitive visuals seen in Victorian studio portraits. Each element of the photograph is strategically selected to connote 'a' Victorian England.

Victorian studio photography sits at the beginning of a genre of photography that has since evolved. This visual framework can be seen as the start of a genre of photography that has continued beyond the nineteenth century. Although a definite link to social aspirations may have been lost, the visual links between early Victorian studio photography and contemporary studio practices can be seen. Similar visual elements have transcended the genre, such as strangely placed props, swathes of curtains, and classical arches that are visible in both Victorian and contemporary studio photographs (see figures 2.3, 2.8, 2.19 - 2.21). This suggests an historical connection between the past and present. To broaden discussions of studio photography beyond its early histories and make connections with contemporary studio practices, the next section of the chapter looks at the genre of studio photography within a wider cultural context.

The visual 'habitus' of the studio photograph

To extend the understanding of studio photography beyond its Victorian origins, the last section of this chapter discusses the studio photograph as a visual 'habitus' (Pinney 2008:23), asking critical questions in relation to power and knowledge. It also looks at cultural and ethnic representations seen in the photograph.³⁹ Drawing from Clifford Geertz (1972), who advocated an 'hermeneutic' interpretative approach to understanding the meaning of something, anthropologist Pinney (2008) discusses studio photography from a hermeneutic anthropological perspective.⁴⁰ This perspective encourages an interpretive reading of the photograph that asks the reader to think specifically about the photograph within the context of

³⁹ Pinney (2008:23) first suggested the term 'habitus' in relation to studio photography, it has since been adopted in common vernacular when discussing the studio photography, see Behdad and Garten (2013) and Sheehi (2016).

⁴⁰ Geertz (1972) advocated that attention should be paid to the symbolism of social actions, rather than the actual social action, i.e. understanding the meaning and intent of something.

intent and cultural meaning. In his analysis of Indian photographic practices, Pinney suggests that early Indian studio photographs are inscribed within a colonial 'habitus' (Pinney 2008:23). Pinney's use of the term builds on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of the 'habitus' (as introduced in the introductory chapter). Bourdieu argues that our sense of place in the world is determined by our internalised structures and schemes of perception, which govern our aesthetic, social, economic and cultural tastes. All of this, Bourdieu reasons, becomes reinforced ideological structures with which one identifies themselves. Pinney's appropriation of the term habitus specifically locates it in a visual domain, which he argues is imbedded in the studio photograph. In the same way Bourdieu claims our cultural habitus is built into our intrinsic being, Pinney suggests that the visual allegories seen in the studio photograph, such as background and props, can be read as the cultural habitus of the sitter in the photograph.

In his writing, Pinney points to early Indian studio photography, made by local Indian photographers, used the same visual symbols, backgrounds and props, seen in Victorian studio photographs. In doing this, they mimicked the imperial ideologies and social aspirations seen in the Victorian photographs. However, Pinney shows how the backgrounds and props seen in Indian studio photographs were soon supplanted with backgrounds and props to suit the desires of the local Indian clientele. He claims that whilst early Indian studio photography could be seen as a 'receptacle' for colonial intentions, great innovation is demonstrated by local photographers, who adapted their visual practices to meet the desires and social mores of the local sitters. Pinney's analysis recognises the fluidity with which the local Indian photographer became a 're-producer' of the habitus in the photograph.

To explain the 'habitus' further I refer to Pinney's (1997) earlier writing of Indian studio photography (although this point was not theorised until much later). He notes that, some of the photographic studio backgrounds available in Indian photographic studios depicted far off places. Initially, he argues, the background was used to solve the inaccessibility of specific geographical locations. He observes that over time, and despite the availability of more

advanced photographic technologies and access to the real location, the props and studio backgrounds seen earlier in Indian studio photographs remained popular with local sitters. This leads Pinney to conclude that the sitters are more interested in the visual symbolism of a studio background than whether it was a 'real' background. Using the example of the Taj Mahal mausoleum, an Indian symbol of love, to explain this point, Pinney shows how the authenticity of the background is less important than what it symbolises.⁴¹ He explains that in a studio photograph, the painted studio background of the Taj Mahal can symbolically stand in place of the real Taj Mahal mausoleum. The message of the photograph says 'we are in love', and it is this love we want to celebrate by being photographed by a professional photographer, rather than 'we visited the Taj Mahal'. Thus, he resolves that the painted Taj Mahal background has transcended the actual mausoleum, acting as a symbol of endless love and as such has proved to be an enduringly popular background of choice for couples across India. Pinney's analysis recognises the sophistication with which studio backgrounds and props are replaced to meet the cultural needs and desires of the local Indian clientele. In addition, he raises questions around the relationship between realism and symbolism in the photograph. He illustrates specific changes in the habitus of the photograph that are culturally specific. His analysis demonstrates that although the process of constructing an Indian studio photograph remains the same as the methodologies seen in early Victorian studio practices, the background and propping of the photographs is localised and culturally precise.

Pinney's cultural analysis of the habitus of a studio photograph can be understood within a broader framework than his own research. One example of this is illustrated by Behrend's (2003) essay on east African analogue studio photography. In her research, she explains how the use of backgrounds in east African studio photography visually authenticate an

⁴¹ The Taj Mahal is a marble mausoleum in the Indian city of Agra. Made in the mid-seventeenth century, to house the Mughal Emperor Shah Janan's favourite wife, Mumtaz Muhal. It is considered a jewel of Muslim art in India and a symbol of love.

'experience' for the sitter.⁴² Whilst this initially sounds unremarkable, as photography has traditionally been understood as a way of validating an experience, she goes on to explain that for most of the sitters, some of the 'real' experiences are not available. For instance, the local clientele may not have an electric fridge or television set in their home or have the opportunity to travel. The act of sitting in the photography studio in front of the painted background, such as two-dimensional images of televisions, full fridges, disproportionate aeroplanes or far-off places becomes *the* experience, rather than evidence of an experience. Behrend articulates that this indicates the blurring of boundaries between the real and the symbolic. It allows the photograph to transcend the real, and in doing this the studio space become somewhere in which to imagine and create a 'real' experience. She argues, that the photograph has become the 'surrogate' for the real experience (Behrend 2003:231), an experience the sitter may otherwise be excluded from. This examination demonstrates the need to understand the habitus of the photograph within its own cultural context.⁴³

This framework of reading the studio photograph can equally be applied to my case study, north London contemporary studio photography, that includes the use of digital technologies to create portraits. For example, questions can be asked about the wedding portrait figure 2.2 which was made by Belda Productions (photography studio), for a newly married couple to mark their wedding ceremony. The portrait was made asynchronously to the wedding ceremony, with the purpose of visually commemorating this union. The couple are dressed in western-style wedding outfits and appear twice in the same photograph. The background of their portrait is Tower Bridge which is an instantly recognisable symbol of London and one that is frequently used as a background for wedding photographs in the studios I researched. The portrait is a visual metaphor which in the digital studio does not need to be a painted (or photographed) backdrop but can be assembled

⁴² Barthes (1977:85) is a classic example of how photography has been discussed as a tool to 'authenticate' an experience. He writes that a photograph can be understood as an evidential force that exceeds the power of representation.

⁴³ Further discussion of the habitus of the studio photograph, specifically in relation to an Orientalist framework is discussed in chapter 4.

in digital post-production, drawing from a range of ready-made digital backgrounds. If the visual habitus of the photograph is examined, that is the background surround is scrutinised, the meaning of the photograph can be revealed. The photograph was not actually taken in front of Tower Bridge and does not pretend to be so. In selecting this ready-made digital image as a background for their wedding portrait, the customers choose to signal to their intended audience, that is their extended families in Turkey, that their marriage took place in London. The implications of this arguably signify the success of mobilities of having the wedding ceremony in a Western country. The ready-made image of Tower Bridge could have equally been Big Ben or the London Eye, the point remains the same; to symbolically show – rather than document or prove to the audience that the photograph came from London, and that the wedding took place there. To illustrate this, the background needed to be an instantly recognisable iconic image that denotes London. It should be noted that as with both Pinney and Behrend's case studies, there is a blurring between the symbolic and the real, in that the 'realism' of the photograph is less important than what it connotes. This is true of this image; in this photograph the intention is to share the news that the marriage union has taken place in London with their extended family network in Turkey. In doing this, the couple are communicating their trans-local migratory identities as a newlywed couple, who also belong to an Anglo-Turkish diaspora.

Parallels can be drawn between this family portrait and the studio portraits made at Dyche photography studios in Birmingham, which were almost exclusively frequented by diasporic communities from the 1950 through to the 1990s.⁴⁴ In both the Dyche studio portraits and the photographs from my study with the use of symbolic visual tropes to demonstrate the successes of mobility and migration to family networks in their home country can be seen. Referring to these studio portraits, Stuart Hall (1984) touches on the complexities of the representation of black diasporic identities in his essay 'Reconstruction Work: Images of post war black settlement'. This same

⁴⁴ The 'Dyche Studio Archive' is part of the Birmingham central library collection.

archive of studio portraiture is also referred to by Kieran Connell (2012), when writing about inner-city British identity and Tina Campt (2017) whose critical survey of photography and the archive in relation to the African diaspora has informed my thinking of visualising diasporic identities. She argues that the photographs contribute to a choral diasporic narrative that transmits a desire to be visible. Although Hall (1984), Connell (2012) and Campt (2017) specifically speak about raising the visibility of *black* diasporic identities, arguably their writing is equally relevant when thinking through the complexities of *any* diasporic identity.

Backgrounds as foregrounds

The importance of the relationship between the sitter and the background in the studio photograph is crucial in determining the meaning of the photograph. When thinking about subaltern studio photography, as part of a post-colonial discourse, Appadurai (1997) suggests that there is an ambiguous relationship between the foreground and the background in the studio photograph and asks for a rethinking of that relationship. It is the background, he asserts, that adds the crucial context integral to locating the meaning of the photograph, and thus drives how it is understood. Appadurai invites the reader to reconsider how the studio photograph is read. Instead of assuming the sitter to be the subject of the photograph, he recommends reconfiguring this notion, and suggests that a more insightful way of reading the photograph is for the background to be thought of as the subject of the photograph, animated by the sitter. This argument is echoed by Edwards (2006), when discussing Victorian studio photography. Edwards maintains that the key substance of the studio portrait is its background. Whilst the sitter in the photographs change, the studio background, props and costume are predetermined and remain the same over a period of time, thus indicating what Pinney has since called the *habitus* of the photograph as fixed. Adding to this debate, Kate Flint's (2015) reading of Elkins's (2011) writing, also places the studio background as the linchpin to understanding the photograph. If figure 2.2 is returned to as an example of this, the background of the wedding portrait is the linchpin of the photograph

responsible in locating its cultural meaning of it. In this photograph, Tower Bridge, as a recognisable landmark in London, is used symbolically. It acts as a visual allegory that signals to the audience, the family networks in Turkey, that the marriage took place in the West, in London, England.

Concluding comments

In this chapter I have looked at how studio photography as a genre opens up a dialogue between methods of representation established in historical photographic studio practices with those seen in contemporary studio practices. I have laid out a framework with which to analyse the genre of studio photography by discussing its histories and methodologies. It has shown how studio photography as a genre can transcend historical moments and geographical localities. In doing this, it encourages the reader to consider studio photography, beyond its phantasmagorical aesthetics, within its own cultural context. As a starting point for this analysis, I drew from Linkman's (1993, 2000) theories about the allegoric symbolism of the studio photograph and how it indicated the social aspirations of the sitter in the photograph. Drawing from Edwards (1990, 2009), Di Bello (2007, 2011) and Plunkett's (2003) examinations of Victorian studio photography, I remind the reader that there is more than aesthetics at play when trying to take meaning from the studio photograph. Their conflicting interpretations of Victorian studio photography prompt us to consider the complexities of reading a studio photograph. To broaden this understanding of studio photography within a culturally specific context, I drew from anthropological readings of studio photography that look at the agency of the photograph. I consider Pinney's (2008) suggestion that the studio photograph should be considered as a visual 'habitus', particularly productive as a way of analysing the social and cultural intentions of the studio photograph. I then draw Hall's writing (1984), Connell (2012) and Campt (2017) who ground the conversation around the mediation of transcultural identities in the photography studio.

I then returned to my case study and examine how these are relevant theories that can be drawn on. My analysis is anchored in an examination of

analogue studio photography, even though my research looks at digital photographic studio practices. The use of digital technologies has enabled a wider selection of backgrounds/mise-en-scène to add to, enrich and situate the meaning of the portrait. In doing this, there is more scope to expand the visual habitus of the studio photograph. Arguably, rather than a radical break caused by digital technologies, digital photography has opened up imaginative ways in which to make studio portraits that blur boundaries between the real and symbolic, the imagined and the actual. Undeterred by the democratising effects of digital photography, studio photography still has a presence, if dwindling, on the high street. However, there has been a skill shift in the making of a portrait, which is no longer limited by the physical space of the studio pre-existing the arrival of the sitters. The digital infrastructure enables the likeness to be completed and given meaning in the computer. The wide availability of digital portrait backgrounds, props and mise-en-scène has enabled a greater fluidity in creating portrait likenesses.⁴⁵ With an increasingly broad-range of online digital backgrounds and props available to add to the studio portrait, there are more opportunities to visually anchor it. In fact, it can be argued that with a potentially limitless range available, the selection of the digital background and supporting props can be seen as more culturally specific than ever before, and that layers or subtleties of meaning might be embedded not only within specific subcultures – the varieties of ‘Turkish’ identities in London – but even within specific families and their reimagining of such identity. The background and props, digital mise-en-scène as well as the costumes and customer department in the photographs create the visual habitus of the photograph, whether in an analogue photograph or digitally compiled photograph remains integral to its reading. In the research for the thesis there is a reciprocal relationship between the theoretical research and my visual practice as research, which throughout the thesis have informed each other. The following sections - *The Book of Backgrounds* and *The Sampler* are both creative visual research that examine the portrait mise-en-scène in studio

⁴⁵ I note that during later visits to the studios, that the fashions of digital portrait backgrounds had changed and that monotone coloured patterns were becoming increasingly popular.

portraiture. They are informed by the theoretical readings and reflections on studio photography but instead of using the written work, they use a visual register to explore these ideas. *The Book of Backgrounds* works with a sample of early studio backgrounds and *The Sampler* re-presents some of the digital backgrounds from this case study.

The Book of Backgrounds

I have drawn attention to the relationship between this contemporary case study of studio photography and its establishing histories in order to understand the value of the photographs and their importance in raising the visibility of the local community. To do this I have drawn from secondary theoretical research. In *The Book of Backgrounds* I create a visual argument that respond to the preceding theoretical writing which looks at the histories of studio photography. It is a companion to the writing that uses visual methods to create a parallel experience in collaboration with the secondary theoretical research. The aim of the work is to examine the studio photograph as a conceptual framework through which aspirational aims of the portrait can be anchored. The body of work *The Book of Backgrounds* emanates out of a close reading of a large sample of early English carte-de-visite studio photographs, taken between 1858-1862 which were collected as part of the research process. Using absence, presence and repetition seen in the original photographs, they are reworked using digital technologies to draw attention to their construct and enact the insight that backgrounds, props, accessories and deportment are the actual subject of the photographs.

The book is divided into three chapters, 'Studioscapes', 'Men in Top Hats' and 'The Department Guide'. The first chapter, 'Studioscapes', includes the front and back of a selection of English carte-de-visite studio photographs. Each 'Studioscape' sits alongside of the back of the same carte-de-visite, which confirms its geographical location. Working on the premise that the background of the photograph and props denote the socio-cultural

aspirations of the sitter, and in fact as Flint (2015) suggests the background and surround is actually the linchpin of the photograph. The sitter in the original carte-de-visite is digitally removed from the photograph – poignantly this is the inverse operation of the digital studio photographer who adds a background to a sitter’s portrait. In removing the sitter from the image, the reader is able to examine the background and props in the featured photographs unhindered by the presence of the sitter. The book is punctuated by quotes from prominent critical scholars such as Benjamin (1931), Dickens (1862), Linkman (1993) and more recently Bahattin Öztuncay (2015), who express their opinions of early studio photography. In the middle of the book, the visual flow is interrupted by the ‘Men in Top Hats’, a title drawn from that given by the seller to one of the collections of studio photographs I purchased from eBay. As a shorter interlude, it draws attention to the repetition of the sitters’ apparel, which was often hired to wear for the photograph. In the concluding chapter of the book, ‘The Grammar of Deportment’, everything disappears except the deportment gestures of the female sitter in the photographs. *The Book of Backgrounds* refers to its historical origins in mid-nineteenth photography catalogues – the carte-de-visite images are their original size, surrounded with white space. It is designed as a stand-alone 5-7inch book, to be reproduced at its original size allow for visual breathing space around each image. Presented in this thesis is a substantial example of pages from *The Book of Backgrounds* and a thumbnail presentation of the full publication.



Figure 2.18 Side table and potted plant, carte-de-visite, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (7)

...: So one contemporary
English professional journal wrote
*'In painted pictures the pillar had
the appearance of possibility, but the manner in which it is
used in photography it is absurd, for it usually stands on
a carpet. There is no-one, however, who has to be
convinced that marble or stone pillars do not require a
carpet as a foundation.'*
*It was the time when those studios appeared with
draperies and palm-trees, tapestries and casels, looking
like a cross between an execution and a representation,
between torture chamber and a throne....*

Walter Benjamin (1934:261)

Figure 2.19 Walter Benjamin text (1934:261), *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (17)



Figure 2.20 Chair and curtain, carte-de-visite, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (19)



Figure 2.21 Window, curtain, dresser, ornamental vase and back of carte-de-visite C. Chambers, Pimlico, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (15)



Figure 2.22 Painted arch background with round wooden pedestal side table and back of carte-de-visite, J Lazenby, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (13)



Figure 2.23 Decorative side table and chaise lounge carte-de-visite, F G Christopher, *The Book of Backgrounds* 2020 (21)



Figure 2.24 Man and Top Hat I, Man and Top Hat II, Man and Top Hat III,
Book of Backgrounds 2020 (28)

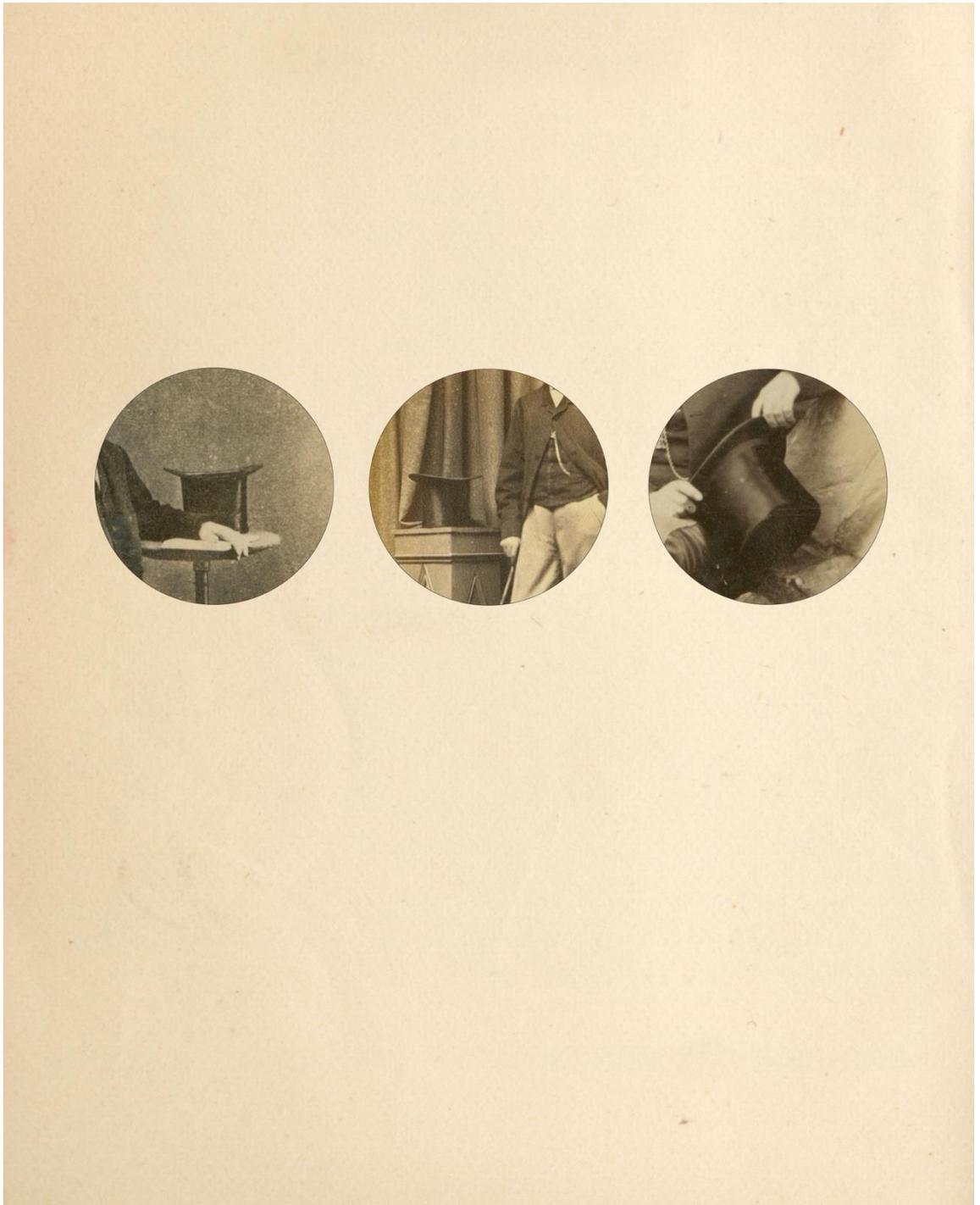


Figure 2.25 Man and Top Hat IV, Man and Top Hat V, Man and Top Hat VI,
Book of Backgrounds 2020 (29)



Figure 2.26 Hands I, carte-de-visite
The Book of Backgrounds 2020 (24)

The pose of a lady should not have that boldness of action which you would give a man but be modest and retiring, the arms describing gentle curves, and feet never apart

Audrey Linkman 1993:46

Figure 2.27 Audrey Linkman quote (1993:46),
The Book of Backgrounds 2020 (39)



Figure 2.28 Hands II, carte-de-visite,
The Book of backgrounds 2020 (32)



Figure 2.29 Hands III, carte-de-visite,
The Book of backgrounds 2020 (41)

Quotes included in the text

One contemporary English professional journal wrote: ' In painted pictures the pillar had the appearance of possibility, but the manner in which it is used in photography is absurd, for it usually stands on a carpet. There is no one, however, who has to be convinced that marble or stone pillars do not require a carpet as foundation.' It was the time when those studios appeared with draperies and palm-trees, tapestries and easels, looking like a cross between an execution and a representation, between a torture chamber and a throne room (Walter Benjamin 1934: 261)

The background is intended for private and non-professional persons, and there is also a pillar and curtain – What is the profession of that unhappy and misguided wretch who is supposed to pass his life in a perpetual environment of pillar and curtain (Charles Dickens 1862: 165)

The pose of a lady should not have that boldness of action which you would give a man but be modest and retiring, the arms describing gentle curves, and feet never apart (Audrey Linkman 1993: 46)

In the 1840s and 1850s daguerreotype and calotype photographers usually used braces or supports to make sure their subjects stayed perfectly still during exposure. Studios armchairs developed specialized features that were a torment to sitters, so that they were sometimes likened to dentists' chairs or electric chairs. Fearsome metal neck, head, and arm braces were employed to make sure that the subjects sat still (Bahattin Öztuncay 2015:90)

The background is usually for
 private and non-professional pictures,
 and there is also a "falter and wobble"
 but who are they for?
 What is the profession of that untidy and ungraceful world
 who is supposed to pass his life
 in a perpetual
 environment of falter and wobble?

Charles Sheeler 1892-1966



In our contemporary English professional world
 the painter pictures the faller but the photographer it is almost
 but the manner in which it is used in photography it is almost
 for it usually stands on a tripod.
 There is no one, however, who has to be concerned that models
 or other pictures do not appear to capture an impression.
 It was the time when these models appeared with
 figures and other trees, references and words,
 looking like a view between an occasion and a representation,
 between a scene and a scene.

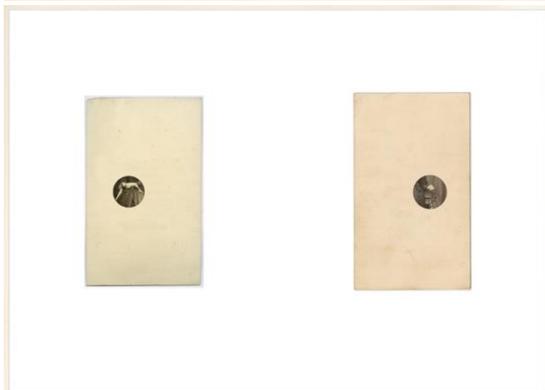
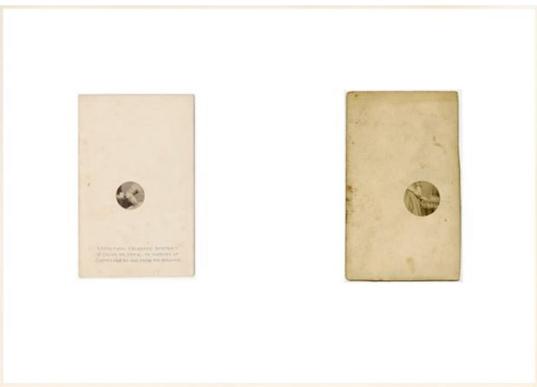
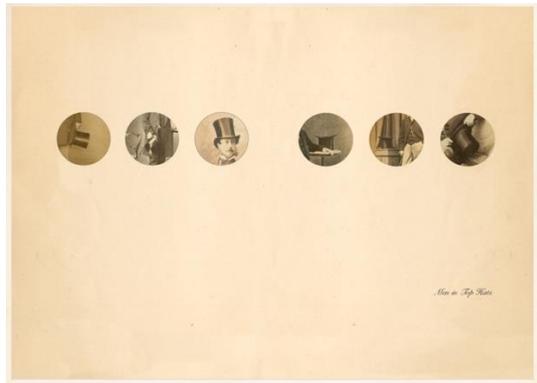
Walter Benjamin 1891-1940



In the 1850s and the 1860s photography and other
 photographers usually used lenses or supports
 to make sure their subjects stayed perfectly still during exposure.
 "Such cameras developed 'grainy' pictures
 that were a nuisance to artists,
 so that they were sometimes blind to their own
 or other views,
 However, metal and hand and now have more refined
 to make sure that the subjects are still.

Richard Avenary 1876-1957





The Sampler

The Sampler as a body of work is a creative visual response that works with some of the material sourced from the studied north London photography studios (a sample of which can be seen in *Primary Research I*). Working on the premise that there is a substantial amount of visual material gathered as part of the *Primary Research I*, the aim of *The Sampler* is to share a distilled selection of digital studio portrait backgrounds gathered as part of the research process and in doing so showcases the variety of visual patterns and repetitions of the backgrounds. Alongside the written word and *The Book of Backgrounds*, the work offers an opportunity to pay attention to backgrounds as possible ways of finding meaning in the photographs. The backgrounds are organised into specific groupings inclusive of 'Backgrounds for Children', 'The Mise-en-Scène', 'Inside/Out' and 'Exemplars' - which includes examples of studio portraits which use some of the digital backgrounds. The backgrounds are purposefully anonymised so collective connections can be made between them. There is a dominance of white space used in the page layouts to allow rhizomic associations between the different sampled digital backgrounds to emerge. In doing this, the reader is able to examine the rhythms of the backgrounds unanchored to a specific studio. The featured backgrounds present the hybrid mix of aesthetics, with competing visual signifiers, that disrupt any specific cultural taxonomies.

The work follows on from the written section of the thesis that investigates the histories of early studio photography. In doing this attention is drawn to the links between my contemporary case study and the secondary historical research on studio photography. The title of the publication connotes a type of 'trade catalogue' produced by manufacturers and wholesalers to market to retail professionals. In this publication it refers to a catalogue of studio backgrounds. It is a 6x 8inch publication that assembles, manages and presents a curated selection of these backgrounds. The front and back cover of the publication are light blue - a digital blue, that references the generic folders found on the computer screens at the studios, wherein the digital backgrounds are stored.



Figure 2.30 Cowboy on a horse, digital studio portrait background, *The Sampler* (6-7)
Figure 2.31 Cartoon characters, digital studio portrait figures, *The Sampler* (10-11)

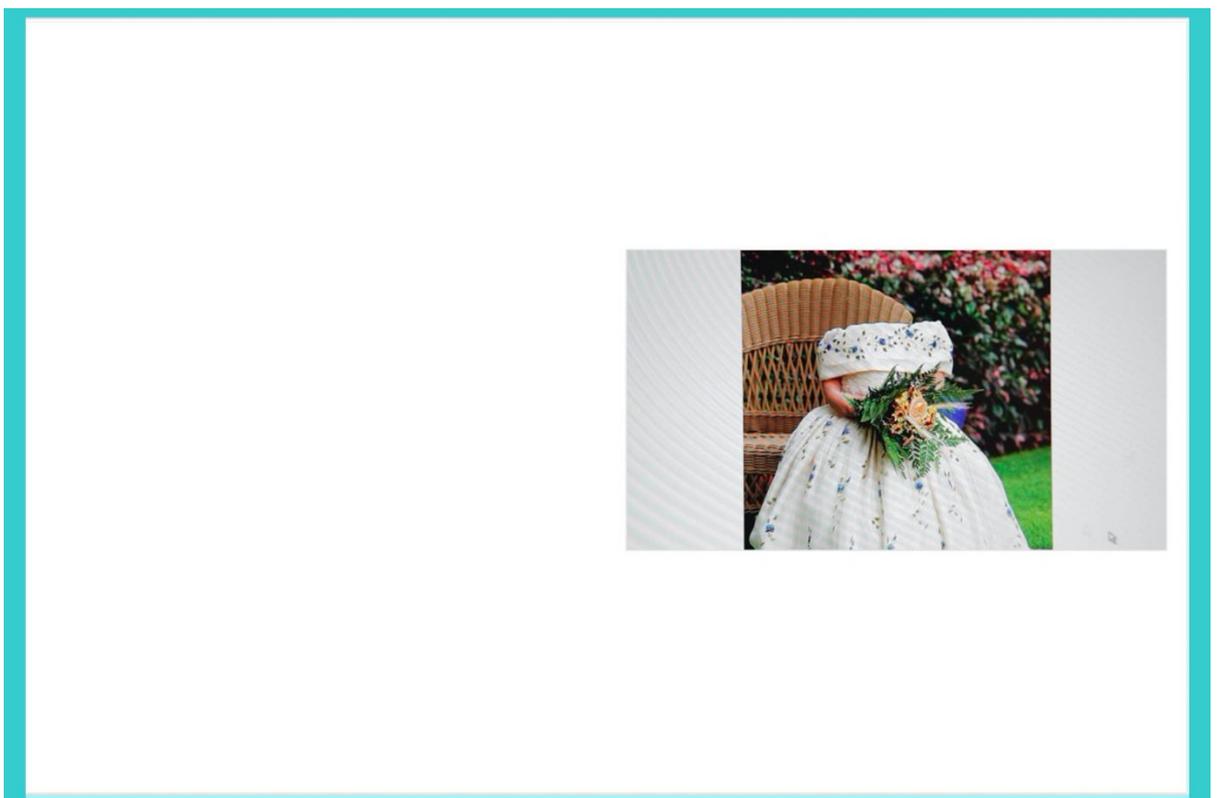


Figure 2.32 Ready-made digital mise-en-scène for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (8-9)

Figure 2.33 Ready-made digital mise-en-scène princess outfit with flowers for studio portrait, *The Sampler* (18-19)

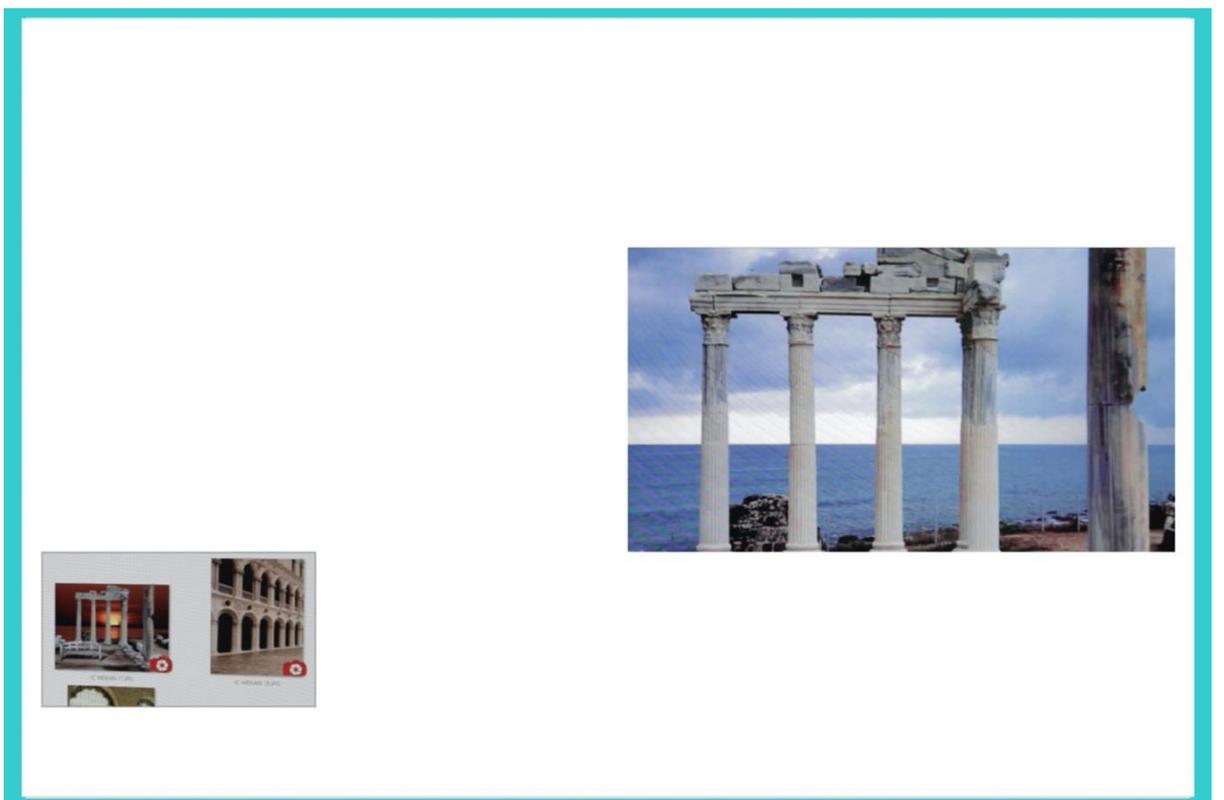
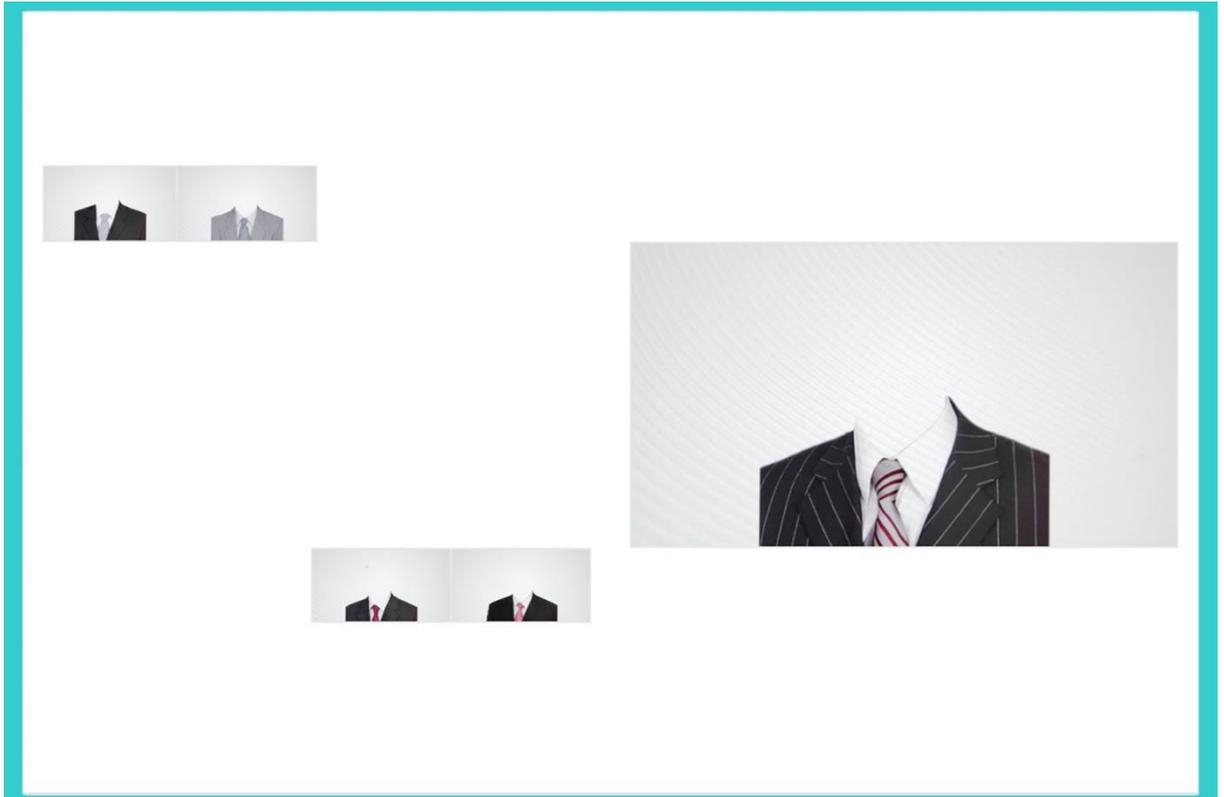


Figure 2.33 Ready-made 'suit and tie' digital mise-en-scène for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (20-21)

Figure 2.33 Digital backgrounds pillars/columns - Pergamon and the Colosseum, *The Sampler* (38-39)

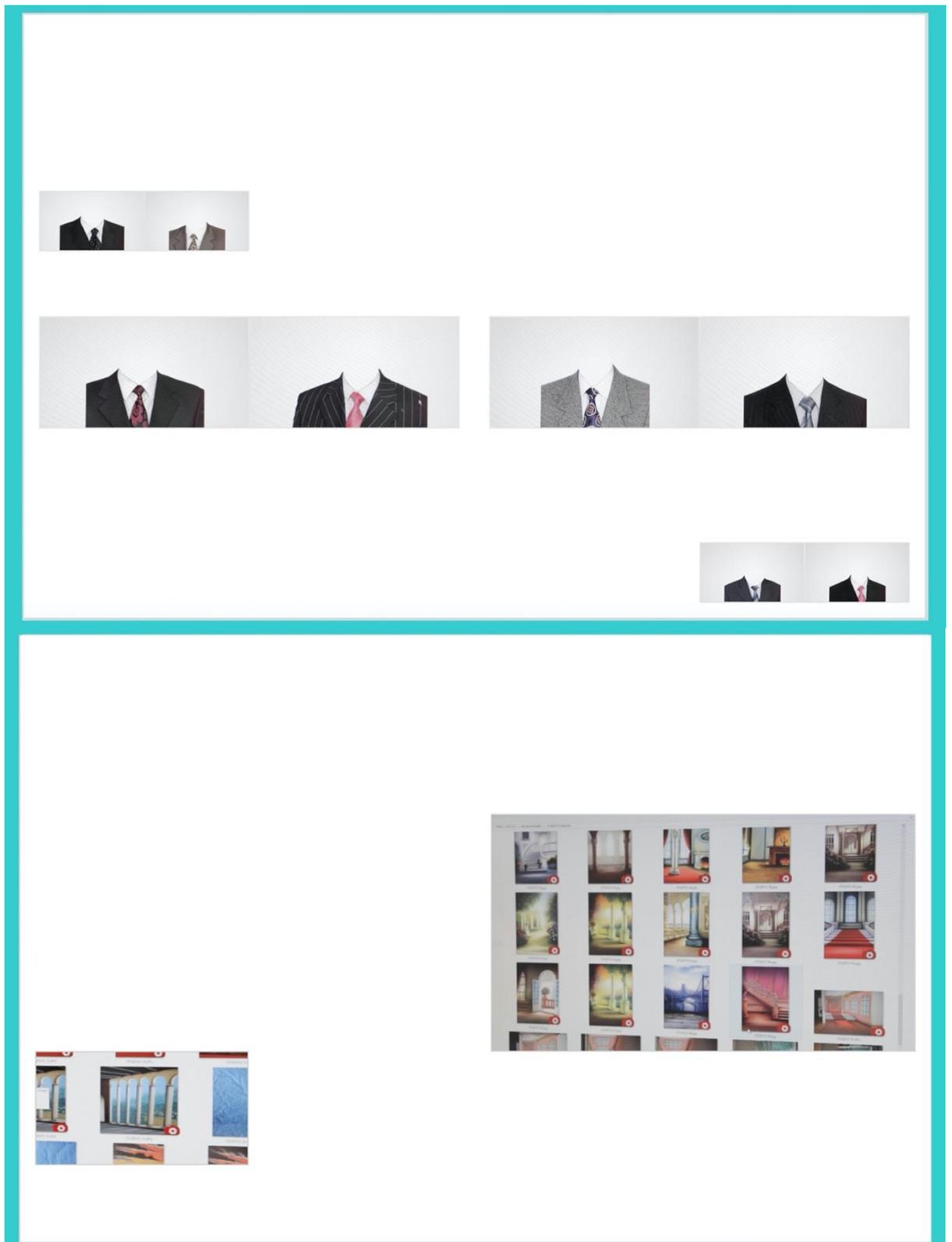


Figure 2.35 Ready-made 'suit and tie' digital mise-en-scène for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (24-25)

Figure 2.36 Assorted pillars/columns digital studio portrait backgrounds, *The Sampler* (28-29)

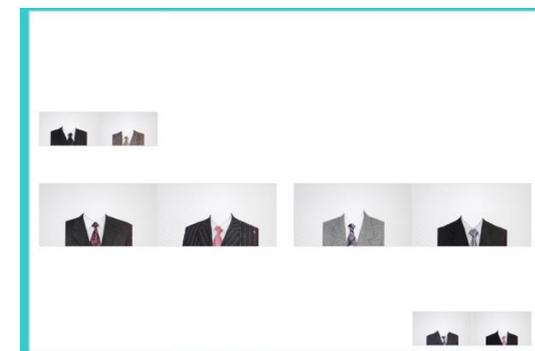
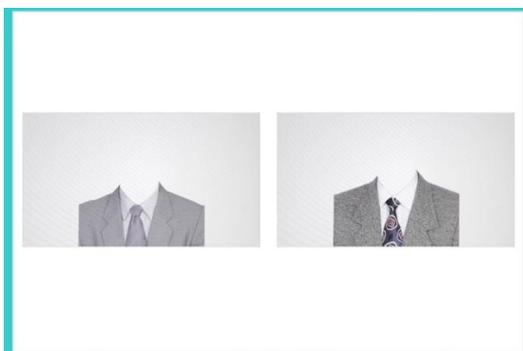
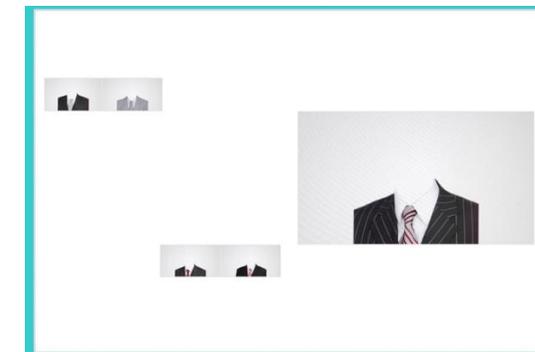
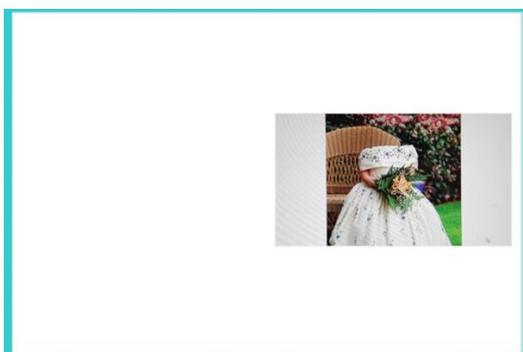
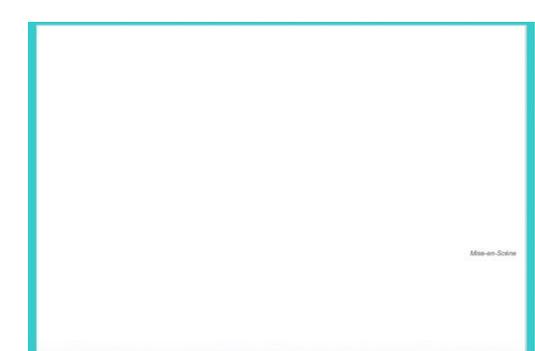
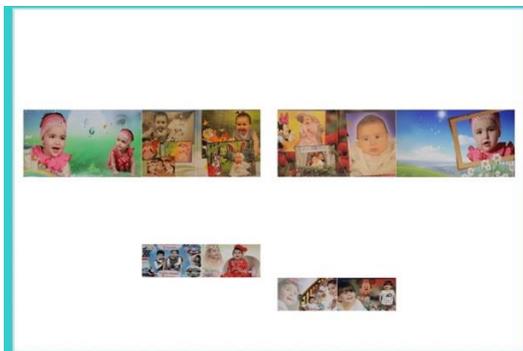


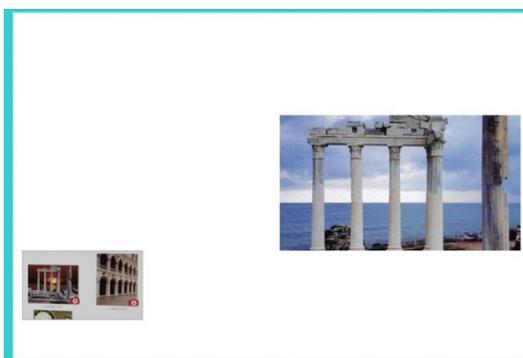
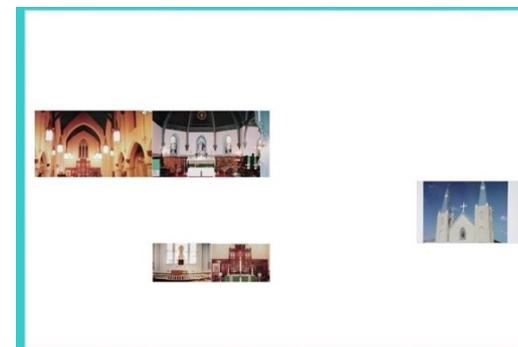
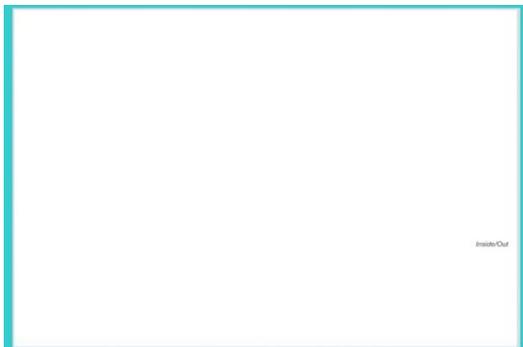
Figure 2.37 Churches digital backgrounds for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (34-35)

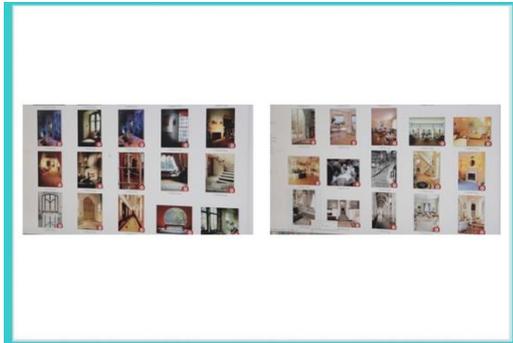
Figure 2.38 Church interior digital backgrounds for studio portraits, *The Sampler* (36-37)



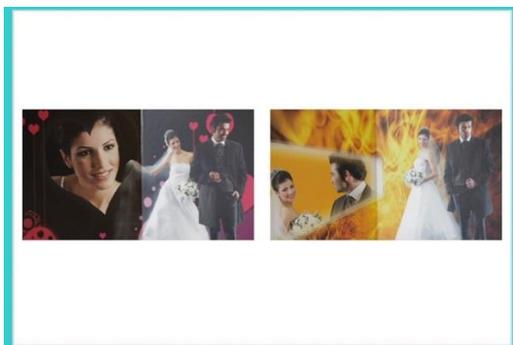
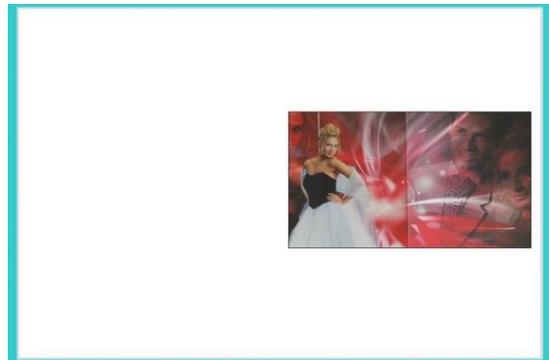
Figure 2.39 London Eye, digital studio background, *The Sampler* (40-41)
Figure 2.40 Autumn trees digital studio background, *The Sampler* (32-33)







Examples



With gratitude for their support with this research:
Frank Bello Productions, Studio Studios, Colman
Studios, Digital Express, Video Studio, Photo Studios.

Design © Caroline Malloy



Chapter 3

The Occidental Frame

In order to contextualise my contemporary research, already in this thesis I have established that studio photography as a genre of photography that has a longstanding and well documented history and have argued that early studio photography in Britain drew visual reference from the tradition of painted portraits and can be understood as a conceptual framework through which socio-cultural aspirations were experimented with and visualised. These ideas are visually experimented with in *The Book of Backgrounds* and then distilled and curated using some of the primary research gathered from the contemporary photography studios in *The Sampler*. My analysis complicates assumptions that studio photography is a straightforward portrait likeness, instead I have argued that the elements in the image such as the props, backgrounds, costumes and deportment of the sitter inform how the image constructs meaning and is read. Specifically, I explore how a studio photograph has a visual 'habitus'. This in itself is not a new idea, in chapter 2, I have drawn from a number of examples to reference this point, however, I go on to show how this framework is equally relevant even when examining contemporary studios, where digital technologies have enabled a certain creative freedom in how to construct a studio portrait. Drawing from historical research, I also introduce the idea that transcultural identities emerge in localised studio photography. To develop this idea further and locate these ideas more specifically to *this* case study, that looks at north London (Anglo-Turkish) studio photography, in this chapter I return to early histories of photography, this time early Ottoman photography. I do this in order to find connections between the photographs of my case study and Turkish histories of photography. My interest in these histories is not to recount photography histories comprehensively told elsewhere, instead I aim to find a way of underpinning my contemporary research that looks at how transcultural identities are seen through the studio photography. I introduce a

post-colonial critique of Orientalism, drawing from Said (1978), as a framework through which to examine the visual strategies seen in early Ottoman photography and explore how the prism of Orientalism informs my reading of the photographs of my contemporary case study.

For instance, we can look at figures 3.1 and 3.2, both screengrabs taken from two video interviews with participant photographers. Figure 3.1 is a portrait background that sits in the image bank at 'Belda Productions'.⁴⁶ It shows the ruins of an ancient Greek temple, set against a blue sky and sea. Figure 3.2 features a number of studio backgrounds from 'Platin Studios'.⁴⁷ I am interested in the background in the centre on the top row of this image, which is also a ruin of an ancient Greek temple – one of the antecedents of the 'pillars' seen in nineteenth-century cartes-de-visit photographs. On close inspection of these two figures, although the settings differ in time of day, it is apparent that the ruins in both of them are the same; they both show the same four symmetrical columns that hold up the remains of an entablature structure, to the right of which a less stable column stands independently from the main four columned structure. The repetition of the ancient ruins found in more than one bank of digital *mise-en-scènes* suggests there is an appetite for ancient Greek architectural columns as a (digital) backdrop for studio portraits. This chapter examines the origins of these types of backgrounds and suggests divergent ways of reading them.

⁴⁶ 'Belda Productions' is one of the 7 photography studios in which the initial primary research takes place. It is located on the A1 in Tottenham.

⁴⁷ 'Patlin Studios' is one of the 7 photography studios in which the initial primary research takes place. It is located in Green Lanes, approximately 2 miles from 'Belda Productions'.



Figure 3.1

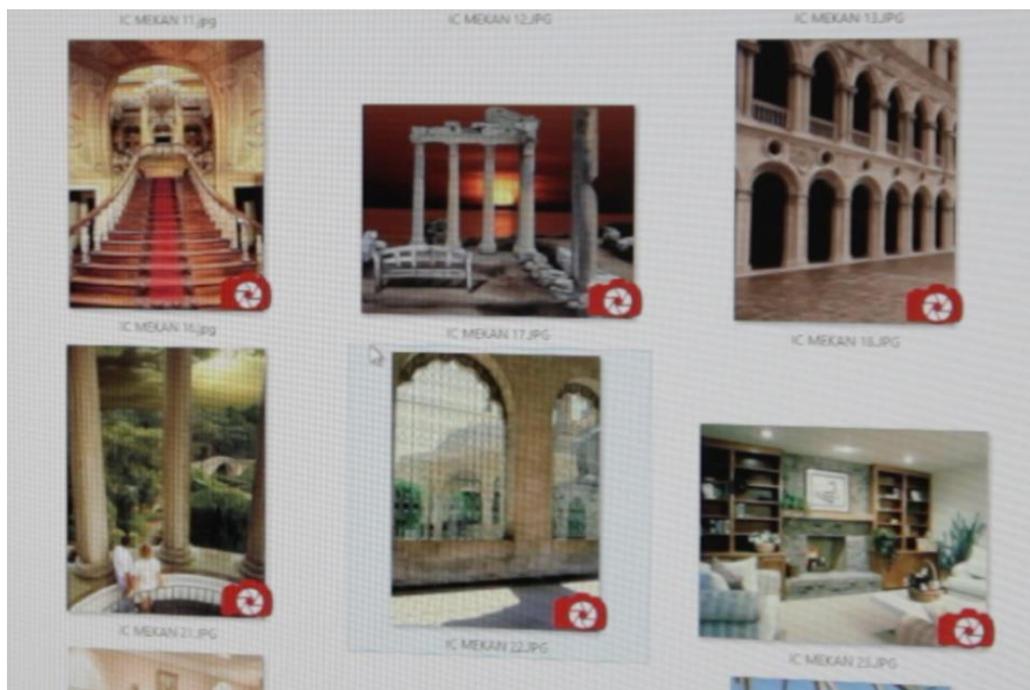


Figure 3.2

Figure 3.1 Screen grab of digital studio backgrounds of the pillar/columns at the ruins of Pergamon © Belda Production 2011/1 (also featured in the opening chapter as Figure 1.17). Figure 3.2 Screen grab of assorted digital studio backgrounds including the ruins of Pergamon and the Colosseum © Platin Studios 2016. These screen grabs have been featured in this chapter to highlight the popularity of the same portrait background in different photography studios and to evidence a visual relationship between the pillar /column and curtain seen in historical studio photographs and its repetition in contemporary studio photography.

As introduced in chapter 2, there are increasingly multiple histories of photography that broaden debates around the photographic image beyond the western canon, look at practices marginalised by dominant discourses and argue for culturally specific readings of photographic images. In this chapter, I introduce the histories of Ottoman Turkish photography have been covered extensively by writers such as Bahattin Öztuncay (2003), who maps the development of early photographic processes and the growth of photography in Constantinople (now Istanbul) during the Ottoman period by creating a detailed inventory of the photographers and photography studios in that city in the period 1840-1914; Davidian, V. K., Pattie, S. P., Stepan-Sarcission, G. (2012), who raise the visibility of the Armenian relationship with early Ottoman-Turkish photography; and Enig Özendes (1998) whose monograph of the Abdullah brothers places them at the centre of early Ottoman-Turkish photography.⁴⁸ In addition, I look at Ken Jacobson's (2007) book, *Odaliques and Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839-1925*, that draw from his personal archive. The Jacobson Archive is one of the most comprehensive collections of Ottoman-Turkish photography which include information about photography studios and photographers across the North-African coast of Algeria and Alexandria in the south of the Empire, and Athens, Beirut and the Empire's capital of Constantinople in the north of the Ottoman Empire. However, trajectory of his writing focuses heavily on the aesthetic qualities of the examined images.⁴⁹ Considering the diversity of histories and geographies of the Ottoman Empire it is not surprising that Behdad (2016), when writing about Ottoman photography, points out that histories of Ottoman photography cannot be simplified.⁵⁰ This is a point also

⁴⁸ Davidian *et al.* (2012) write that due to extensive mercantile presence of Armenians in Europe, they were pioneers in introducing many European inventions to the Ottoman Empire, inclusive of photography. There two reasons for this they state, firstly a large number of Armenians were dispensing chemists, which meant they were more familiar with the chemistry processes used in early photography but more importantly they were exempt, as Christians, from authoritative prohibition put in place by religious authorities who opposed photography because it reproduced the human image.

⁴⁹ For example, Micklewright (2016) usefully points out the problematic use of the word 'exotic,' in Jacobson's writing of early Ottoman photography. She notes his frequent and uncritical use of the word, is regularly applied as a descriptive adjective.

⁵⁰ It is difficult to pinpoint the exact histories of Turkish photography with clarity, because the borders of modern-day Turkey sit in what is only a part of what was the expansive Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, with Istanbul as the capital, spread across what is now modern-day Turkey, through the middle East, down to Egypt and across to Iraq. It also

made by Sheehi (2016) when writing about Ottoman Arab photography. Sheehi writes that the elite classes of Iran embraced photography enthusiastically very soon after its invention in Europe, choosing to represent themselves in honorific poses. This means that the history of early photography in Iran, which would have been nominally managed under Ottoman rule, developed much more quickly than that of Ottoman-Turkish photography which was slower to progress.

The title of this chapter, 'The Occidental Frame', references Said's (1978) seminal post-colonial book *Orientalism*. In this text Said lays out a framework through which the Oriental world is constructed through the ocular lens of the West.⁵¹ Said's asserts that the Oriental Near-East, as imagined through a Western lens, depicts the East as a world of timeless customs and rituals untouched by time and modernity. In doing this Said defines 'Orientalism' as a Western construction of the East, for Western consumption. His thinking derives from examining a wide range of Western imperialist writing from poets and novelists, to philosophers and economists. He writes that the 'Orient' is politically and ideologically imagined through these partial bodies of text, which he argues are deeply embedded with Western hegemonic ideas that bear limited resemblance to the actual places and cultures defined as the 'Orient'.⁵² Drawing from Foucault's theory of power, he shows that there is an imbalance of power in this construction of the Orient, which, he argues, masks a network of imperialist interests, and is a reductive articulation of the histories, traditions and vocabularies of the Near and Middle East, created to serve the interests and fantasies of the West. This

included Athens in Greece and Alexandria in Egypt. Reflecting on this through a contemporary lens it is accurate to acknowledge that the Ottoman Empire included a wealth of regional and cultural geographies, which can be more precisely described as Ottoman, Persian and Ottoman-Egyptian, each with converging photographic histories.

⁵¹ Said (1978) refers to the Oriental world as the Near-East and Asia, that is the biblical lands and spice routes, that is the whole of Levant and India. Recognising that the European idea of the East is too broad to encapsulate in one text, he refers to an Anglo-French construction of the Near-East and Asia, and notably later, post WWII, the American construction of the Far East, which focuses on Indochina, Japan and Korea.

⁵² It should be noted that when writing 'The gaze of the West and of framings of the East', Nair-Venugopal (2012:7) points out that for many in the Orient such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan the East was never the East until it came into contact with, and was constructed as such by the West.

has the dual purpose of establishing a culturally inferior Orient that does not embrace modernisation, and at the same time justifies and perpetuates European dominance. What is frequently obscured in the overarching Orientalist narrative is the intrinsic relationship between the East and the West. That is, in defining the Orient, as the 'other', an opposite to the self, in fact an identity of the self (all that is not 'the other') is defined. This Said refers to as the 'Occidental', a framework which sits in opposition to the 'other'.

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident". (Said 1978:2)

My use of Said's term 'Occidental', for the title of this chapter therefore refers to the political and ideological dominance embedded in the visual construction of the Orient, which I will go on to argue, informs some of the visual strategies seen in early Ottoman photography, traces of which can be seen in the contemporary images examined for this research.

Orientalism as visual culture

I have introduced Said's (1978) much cited identification of 'Orientalism' as a critical framework through which the East is constructed by the West. Although many contemporary scholars such as Nicolas Mirzoeff (1995), Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts (2002) to name a few, contest the broad reading of Orientalism in visual culture as too generalised, I introduce this concept as a starting point in order to anchor broader ways in which histories of photography can be understood. I then move forward to look at how these theories help contextualise readings of my contemporary case study, such as the digital portrait backgrounds seen in figures 3.1 and 3.2 in this chapter. To discuss the Near-East as depicted in visual culture, I now look at how an Orientalist framework has been adopted in the visual realm. This in itself is not new, 'Orientalism' is a common post-colonial reference point through which to evaluate and question the representation of the subaltern 'other' in visual culture. A broad range of academics from different disciplines refer to

this framework when interpreting visual culture, such as cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall (2013) in his text 'The spectacle of the Other' in *Representations*.⁵³ In this text, Hall uses Orientalism, amongst other post-colonial theories, to deconstruct the clichés and stereotyping seen in contemporary popular visual culture. In addition, anthropologist Deborah Poole (1997) refers to 'Orientalism' to establish a counter-narrative that frames the Andean image world and see photo-historian Stavros Karayanni (2014) apply 'Orientalism' to early photographic works that depict Cyprus. These are by no means the only examples of employing 'Orientalism' as a critical framework to examine visual culture, they are cited to illustrate broader reading around this area and highlight the ubiquity of this reference point. My interest in Orientalism as a relevant theory for this research is to make connections between Orientalist readings of early Ottoman photography traces of these readings that filter in my contemporary case study.

Firstly, however, it would be remiss not to refer to two seminal and much cited texts that are generally considered the primary texts that consciously link Orientalism to visual culture. That is Linda Nochlin's (2002) essay *The Imaginary Orient* and Malek Alloula's (1986) *The Colonial Harem*.⁵⁴ Said's analysis of *Orientalism* is grounded in the literary, whilst Nochlin and Alloula situate these ideas within the visual realm, thus placing the visual within a framework of Orientalism. Nochlin (2002) looks at the visual motifs of Orientalism through her detailed art historical reading of Jean-Léon Gérôme's work *The Snake Charmer*, painted in the late 1860s.⁵⁵ In order to understand the content and context of Orientalist painting, I refer to Julia Kuehn (2011) whose writing about Orientalist painting states that it was pioneered by the French, then developed by the British and other European

⁵³ 'The spectacle of the 'Other' was first published in the 1st edition of *Representations* in 1997. Whilst the publication has since been updated a number of times. This essay remains a relevant primary post-colonial text that can be read in current editions of *Representations*.

⁵⁴ 'The Imaginary Orient', was originally written and published in 1983 in *Art in America*, five years after the first edition of Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*. The text is the same as the 2002 version, which I was able to access.

⁵⁵ The date of when *The Snake Charmer* was painted differs from text to text. Nochlin records it as the late 1860s. This painting was used on the cover of the 1st edition of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

nations. She writes that the content of the paintings includes stereotypical depictions of the fantasy of an Eastern world, inclusive of imagined histories and sexual myths.⁵⁶ This I will go on to discuss in relation to Nochlin (2002) analysis of *The Snake Charmer*. Alloula (1986), in his analysis of picture postcards made by the colonising French forces in Algeria at the beginning of the twentieth century examines the visualisation of Orientalism. Although neither of these examples are specific to representations of Turkey, they nevertheless do visualise 'imagined' scenes with an Orientalist agenda, by which I mean, they use stereotypical visual references to suggest a romanticised Orient. This is point commented on by Frederick Bohrer (2003), when writing about Orientalism in visual culture. He writes that Orientalist paintings depict an 'Imaginary Orient' without referring to precise geographical locations. That is an imagined Near-East without a hint of modernisation, a Near-East of depopulated landscapes and ancient architectural antiquities, languid locals, semi-naked reclining odalisques in exotic harems, and picturesque markets, merchants, bath houses and mosques.⁵⁷ These visual motifs collectively connote Orientalist ideals and stereotypes, which embody European ideas of the Near-East, frozen in time.

According to Nochlin, *The Snake Charmer* draws from an Orientalist framework which was designed to ignore traces of modernisation, to construct a picturesque tableau that depicts an alluring and imaginary image of the East.⁵⁸ At the centre of the painting, with his back to the viewer, a naked young boy, the snake charmer, performs for the courtier audience. Drawing from an art historical discourse Nochlin shows how this painting can be read as symptomatic of the Western fascination with the mystery of the East. Her analysis of the visual language of Orientalist painting highlights the

⁵⁶ In reference to sexual myths, it is worth noting that the Harem paintings, painted by foreign (French) male painters such as Jean Léon Gérôme and Eugène Delacroix, who would have never entered into an Ottoman Harem.

⁵⁷ The use of the word 'languid' is referenced from Nochlin's (1983) description of the indigenous 'Oriental' population. In this context, the word infers laziness and cultural decadence, as cited by Mackenzie (1995). It is broadly used by Bohrer (2003) and Thackery 1844 cited by Robert (2007).

⁵⁸ Due to the precise detailing in Orientalist painting, at the time they were described as ethnographic depictions of cultural life, despite the fact they oscillate somewhere between the representational and an imagined scenario (Bohrer 2003).

relationship between colonial stereotyping and what she refers to as the 'exotic', 'other'. In this context I use the word 'exotic' within a critical post-colonial context that acknowledges that there is a power dynamic that suggests a particular mode of perception that renders people, objects and places strange, encoded in the term. When analysing the symbolism of the painting Nochlin writes that it should be:

considered as visual document of nineteenth-century colonialist ideology, an iconic distillation of the Westerners notion of the Orient, couched in the language of would-be transparent naturalism. (Nochlin 2002:70)

By this she means, like many Orientalist paintings which emerged out of imperialist Europe, the Near-East is here depicted as an 'exotic' East for the consumption of Western audiences.

Alloula (1986) also looks at the relationship between colonialism and Orientalism in his analysis of French picture postcards made at the beginning of the twentieth century by the French-colonial forces in Algeria to send back home to France. He suggests that photographic picture postcards operate in a space already inhabited by Orientalist painting. The postcards employ stereotypical motifs such as traditional architecture - traditional houses, tombs and fountains - to appropriate the East for the Western colonist gaze. In doing this they seek to anticipate the desire of the user, that is represent an imperialist impression of Algeria untouched by time. Thereby, the postcards transform indigenous Algerian private life into a public and political space. Alloula's writing is most insightful when he deconstructs the postcards of bare-breasted Algerian women, which were made by French photographers for Western audiences. Despite the fact that Algerian women were hidden behind the veil and essentially inaccessible, these images connote Algerian women as sexually available. They are what Alloula calls Orientalist erotica.

History knows no other society in which women have been photographed on such a large scale to be delivered to the public view. (Alloula 1989:5)

Alloula's analysis deduces that the postcards present the erotic body of the Oriental woman as a Frenchman's Oriental fantasy. Thus, he sets up a binary opposition between the European coloniser as producer and consumer of the images and the subject of the postcard who he refers to as being the victimised object of that gaze. These two essays are the starting point through which I discuss Orientalism in the context of visual culture. They illustrate the significant role of Orientalism in visualising Empire. There is further evidence of the relationship between painting and photography in depicting the East in Jacobson's (2007) writing about this point. He highlights that Gérôme was known to use photography as an aide-de-memoire in his paintings. He presents a copy of the Abdullah Brothers photograph of the mosaics that decorated the Imperial Palace courtyard in Topkapi Palace by the c.1860s, owned by Gérôme, alongside Gérôme's *Snake Charmer* painting. The similarity between the two backgrounds is unmistakable.

This of course is only a brief introduction which is somewhat over-arching in its scope, nevertheless it is a necessary step to think through Orientalism in the visual realm. In the same way Said writes of Orientalist texts as a construct of the Near-East made by the West for the West, Orientalist visual culture (that is both painting and photography) speaks back to a Western audience about its fantasies and desires. Within this framework Orientalism in visual culture can be understood as what Hal Foster (1998) refers to as a 'scopic' regime, that is a visual regime with an embedded hegemonic power dynamic. This suggests that there to be different epistemological ways of seeing and understanding the world. An Occidental view of the world seen through the prism of Orientalism presents an authorised version of the East by the West, which is both stereotypical and reductive. The purpose of introducing Orientalist theory in my thesis is to provide the cultural and political context with which to understand the kind of images seen in early

Ottoman-Turkish photography. In doing this, I go on to investigate how this influences contemporary images.⁵⁹

It should be noted, however, that despite the fact that primary critiques of Orientalism in visual culture are somewhat binary in their analysis, contemporary readings of Orientalist visual culture are now being re-evaluated to include the voices of non-Western artists, audiences and patrons; in addition to the agency of indigenous artists. A careful examination of this discourse reveals a far more complex and nuanced relationship between the Occidental and the Oriental. For example, according to Michelle Woodward (2003) Ottoman painter Osman Hamdi Bey (an Ottoman-Turkish national), trained in Paris in the 1860s under Gérôme and found his artistic identity through an engagement with European culture. In addition, there are also contemporary readings of Orientalist visual culture, such as Bohrer (2003) Roberts (2005) and Julia Kuehn (2011) who complicate Said's binary Orientalist framework. Using distinctly different reference points, they argue that Orientalism as a term to classify images of the East is far too broad. Instead they suggest a more complex relationship when analysing the relationship between Orientalism and visual culture. This is a relationship in which images are in constant negotiation between object, scene, artistic process or the painter's/photographer's objective. There are specific examples of contemporary critical scholars who draw from and problematise 'Orientalism' as a point of opposition, in relation to Ottoman photography, including Zeynep Çelik (1996), Behdad and Gartlen (2013), and Behdad (2016). The trajectory of their focus looks at the tension between Orientalist and modernising representations in early Ottoman photography. For example, Behdad when writing about Orientalism in the context of early Ottoman photography, argues:

⁵⁹ It should be noted that Bohrer (2003) when writing about Orientalism claims that Orientalist artists frequently never set foot in the country they were painting. Whilst this generally considered to be true, there are, exceptions to this, such as female Orientalist artists Henrietta Brown and Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann, whom according to Reina Lewis (2005) and Julia Kuehn (2011) were invited to the women's quarters (the harems) in Constantinople and then went on to paint these scenes.

that Orientalism should be understood not merely as an ideological discourse of power or as a neutral art historical position but rather as a network of aesthetic, economic and political relationships that cross national and international boundaries. (Behdad 2013:12-13)

This, he goes on to explain, is an indispensable way of understanding nineteenth-century Ottoman photography in relation to relevant politics, commerce, and how they informed visual aesthetics. Notwithstanding that there is a power dynamic involved in Orientalism, evidence suggests that there was also an active transcultural trafficking of ideas and aesthetics between European and non-European cultures in the mid-nineteenth century. For example, the British-Orientalist painter John Frederick Lewis resided in Ottoman Cairo between 1841 and 1851. During this period, he was described by author William Makepeace Thackeray as living and dressing like an Oriental (cited by Roberts 2005:71-72). This by no means was an isolated account, the impact of Orientalism can be seen in the work of British photographer Roger Fenton who passed through Istanbul on his way to the Crimean War in the mid-1850s. On his return to London, he created a series of Orientalist tableau studio photographs 'Pasha and Baydère' (1858). These photographs were made in his London portrait studio and include depictions of harem fantasies, dancing women and Paschas. In contrast, Roberts (2007:143) writes about the dual portrait commissioned by Princess Nazli Hanim of the Egyptian Khedival dynasty as examples that aim to revise Orientalist stereotyping. In the two portraits Hanim takes control of her self-imaging and challenges Oriental depictions of Ottoman women. This she does by her performance in each image. In her portrait Hanim demonstrates a conscious awareness of visual strategies of Orientalism by composing herself against the same palm tree backgrounds for two quite different portraits. In one portrait she is dressed in European clothing and adopts modest gestures as expected of a European upper-class woman at the time. In the other she parodies the Orientalist harem-style costume, inclusive of the slanted Fez that sits on top of her untethered curls. In her portraits Hanim has crafted two distinct representations. In doing this she plays cross-cultural dressing off against itself and demonstrates an effective

awareness of the Occidental visual strategies of Orientalism. She deliberately reframes herself as the 'other' and in doing so seizes control of her own representation. Thereby she self-Orientalises her own image and demonstrates she is a participant in fashioning her own representation. In this examples Hanim cleverly engages with the Orientalist gaze and elucidates the complexities and interrelated histories of Orientalism and the two-way exchange of ideas between East and West. The examples challenge Orientalism as a binary narrative, instead suggesting there were more nuanced responses and interactions between the East and West, which saw exchanges in visual culture influenced by the flow of ideas across cultures. There is additional literature that examines self-Orientalisation within comparative contexts, such as Lisa Lau (2009) who writes about the self-Orientalising of diasporic South Asian female writers. This text builds on Tony Mitchell's (2004:110) earlier writing on self-Orientalism that looks at Pan-Asian Pop Cultural Flows in Dick Lee's Transit Lounge. Mitchell's writing is particularly insightful in understanding the concept of self-Orientalism, he argues that there is a value and empowerment involved in self-Orientalising practices. Although his case study diverges from the Ottoman-Turkish context, his point is the same, that is in re-deploying Orientalist stereotypes in contrasting contexts new possibilities for bypassing rigid stereotypes and expressing a playful form of identity politics between East and West open up. Through these analyses a connection can be seen between Said's foundational Orientalist politics and contemporary readings of the visual culture of Orientalism. In doing this, complex transcultural relationships with Orientalism are highlighted.

Early Ottoman photography

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter there are increasingly divergent histories of Ottoman photography emerging, which means that tracing specific Ottoman-Turkish histories is complicated. This is compounded by poor records and complicated patterns of migration across the Ottoman Empire. This meant that photographic images were often misplaced, lost or given away along with studio ownership. It was not

unusual for studios to change hands through familial or community lines. In doing this, chattels of the studio such as the records, archives and negatives were incorporated into the holding establishments. In these circumstances, records were often mislaid, negatives were lost, and original authorship forgotten.⁶⁰ Also, there was the great fire of 1870 in which many of the Istanbul photography studios, along with their archives were destroyed (Ertem 2011:296). This means the pool of images available for research is small, and precise histories are sketchy. An exception to this is written about by Ahmet Ersoy (2016), who highlights that photographic images were printed and circulated in image-oriented Ottoman-Turkish journals published in the late nineteenth century. These consist of photographic images submitted by readers with an array of intersecting perspectives such as Ottoman patriarchal, European scientific, orientalist, self-orientalist and conservative images. These images, according to Ersoy, performed as active agents in shaping collective urban memories, through which Ottoman readers developed a new awareness of their broader surroundings.

In order to contextualise the relevance of the early history of Ottoman photography I outline its growth in the Ottoman Empire. Photography arrived in Istanbul in the mid-nineteenth century, shortly after its introduction into Europe and was almost exclusively handled by non-Turkish (non-Muslim) nationals, such as Greeks and Armenians (Allen 1984, Öztuncay 2003). In search of commercial success, photographers often catered for touristic desires, which arguably informed early depictions of an Orientalist Ottoman Empire. This is highlighted by Behdad (2016), when writing about Orientalist photography. He points out that what is often overlooked when looking at

⁶⁰ For example, one of the renowned Ottoman photography studios the 'Abdullah Brothers Studio', who worked under the patronage of both Sultan Abdülaziz (1863-1878) and Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1890), and who according to Öztuncay (2015:80) created an international appetite for Ottoman photography when their work was included in the 1867 Paris universal exhibition, set up a number of photographic studio franchises across the Ottoman Empire, opening and closing them concurrently. Between 1858 and 1899 they ran a photography studio in the Pera area of Istanbul, which along with the Sirkeci regions were popular areas for photography studios in the mid-late nineteenth century. Alongside of which, at the request of the Egyptian Khedive, they also ran an additional studio in Cairo, Egypt. In 1899 these studios were sold to Sébah and Joaillier Studios and notably the ownership of the negatives migrated to Sébah and Joaillier Studios.

early Ottoman photography was that in the pursuit of business, Ottoman photographers actively created self-Orientalising photographs to appeal to their Occidental clients. To do this they embraced the style and imagery seen in existing Orientalist painting. This included making a taxonomy of occupational 'types' of people engaged in activities constructed as 'timeless', such as brewing and selling coffee, praying, or playing musical instruments, in addition to photographic images of 'harem' girls. Within this context, individual and social details that did not perpetuate an Orientalist narrative were frequently excluded. The popularity of these kinds of images reflected nineteenth-century Europe's obsession with cataloguing, collection and attempting to explain the world. For example, Ayshe Erdogu (1999:272) writes of the West's enthusiasm for Ottoman types, as evidenced, for example, by their reproduction being regularly printed in the *Illustrated London News* in the 1850s and 1860s.

Photography, with its pseudo-scientific methods, proved to be a suitable process of visually authenticating the imagined geography of the Near-East. For example, according to Öztuncay (2003) Pascal Sébah's (1873) book *La Costumes Populaire de la Turquie*, was at the time considered the most important printed photographic work of Istanbul. It includes 74 photographs of Turkish folk-costumes that use Orientalist strategies to construct the images. This includes fixed poses of occupational and 'exotic' types (as referred to by Sébah).⁶¹ This is what Behdad and Garten (2013:2) analyse as 'photo-exoticism', a mode of representation that reduces people to occupational and sexualised 'types'.⁶² When writing about photography in Constantinople, Jacobson (2007) has contributed to this discussion. He points out that the history of Ottoman photography has historically been the history of Orientalist photography, which he argues was created as

⁶¹ It should be noted that according to Eldem (2015) it was not unusual to see the same non-Muslim model posing for different 'types' of ethnic person/costume. As a deliberate strategy to rewrite Orientalist representations, in 1892 the government prohibited photographers from taking pictures of Greek and Armenian Christian women wearing Muslim costume. Thus, ultimately the photographing of ethnographic occupational and obelisk 'types', was outlawed.

⁶² Sheehi (2016) notes that in 1892 the Abdullah brothers' studio was seized and negatives confiscated under the directive of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. This was in response to their photographic images of Christian women posing as Muslim 'types' of women.

authorised statements about the East for the West. In doing this he draws attention to the fact that historically there has only been one reading of Ottoman photography.

Çelik (2002) when writing about the wealth of perspectives that contribute to the histories of Ottoman photography highlights that European Orientalist paradigms were not simply appropriated into Ottoman photography. She reminds the reader that there were active exchanges between the sitters and photographers, which she suggests, see photography stand in defiance of an Orientalist narrative. There is an agency to the images, she argues which she refers to as a corrective process. This she explains is where the photographer and sitter make their own choices about how they want to be represented in the photographs. Through this process of exchange, the visualisation of cultural imperialism is challenged, and local identities were reimagined. Comparable points are made by Pinney (1997), discussed in chapter 2, when writing about the agency of local (indigenous) photographers in India. He writes that these photographers adapted their visual practices to meet the desires and social mores of the local sitters; for example, the image of the Taj Mahal as a background for portraits to visually signify 'love'. Writing about the agency of the local Ottoman photographer, Behdad and Gartlen (2013) draw from Çelik, who problematises generic visual representations of the Orient. They argue that a traditional Orientalist framework obscures subtle nuances and cultural inconsistencies, and at the very least fails to acknowledge that there is an agency to the photographs. When I write agency, I suggest an ownership by the Ottoman photographer/sitter in claiming the rights of their own identity in photographs. As I shall go on to discuss, a highly visible example of this are the Abdul Hamid II albums, which are referred to by a number of Ottoman scholars such as Allen (1984), Çelik (1996), Shaw (2009), Behdad and Garlan (2013), Ersoy (2016), Koureas (2014) and Güssel (2016).

The Abdul Hamid II albums

With the backdrop of a failing Empire, the Ottoman Empire was looking to modernise and reform. The reign of Abdul Hamid II spanned critical years (1842- 1918) in Ottoman history that saw the expansion of government services and bureaucracy, including the building of infrastructures and the provision of general public education and health care (Güsell 2016), as well as the decline of the Empire. Visual culture became a medium through which to articulate a Modern Ottoman identity, separate from hegemonic Orientalist representations. For Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the introduction of photography provided an opportunity for dialogue with the West and to challenge dominant Orientalist narratives. The albums evidence an attempt to re-write the Orientalist story. To do this, Western traditions were adopted and adapted, and the scopoc regime of the Orientalist narrative was rewritten. This was a chance to build a counter-narrative that challenged the established Orientalist depiction of the Ottoman world. The albums were specifically targeted for a Western audience, with the aim of creating a portrait of the Ottoman Empire which was both modern and progressive. To achieve this, in 1893 Sultan Abdul Hamid II commissioned the 51 albums of photographs (inclusive of 1,819 photographs) which were concurrently given to the British Library in London and the Library of Congress in America.⁶³ The albums are made up of distinct categories which include landscape, and scenes that depict education and historical monuments, in addition to the documentation of industrial and military developments.⁶⁴ Notably, what is deliberately absent from the albums are traditional Orientalist photographs, such as ethnic Ottoman 'types' and 'harem girls', which were popular at the

⁶³ The recorded date of the presentation of the Abdul Hamid II albums to the British Library and the National Library in America, is inconsistent in different publications, see Koureas (2014), Allen (1984) and Çelik (1996). It is recorded as both 1893 and 1894. In order to be consistent in the writing of this thesis, I will refer to the presentation date as 1893. Most writers concur that the photographs in the 'Abdul Hamid II Albums' were commissioned to carefully build a progressive narrative of the Ottoman Empire. However, Allen (1984) writing much earlier about these albums, believes the images to have been sourced from the Sultan's own private collection of photographs. Over half of the photographic images in the album were made by the Armenian 'Abdullah Brothers Studios,' who were patronised by Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

⁶⁴ Koureas (2014) reads the albums as a way of demonstrating military and industrial strength at a time of increasing destabilisation of the Ottoman Empire.

time with Western audiences. This act of re-visualising the Ottoman empire indicates an active engagement in re-writing an external facing Ottoman narrative, which according to Çelik (1996) was a deliberate attempt to disrupt hegemonic Orientalist representations of the East for the consumption of the West. In these carefully curated albums, a remodelled and modernised Ottoman Empire is depicted, wherein already constituted cultural Orientalist signs are omitted.

The entangled pillar

Having set up an argument that situates early Ottoman photography within an Orientalist framework, and then complicated this reading, I return to my contemporary case study and examine traces of Orientalism seen in the images. To do this, I refer to the two digital portrait backgrounds introduced at the beginning of this chapter, that is figures 3.1 and 3.2 and discuss them in the context of Orientalism. A cursory glance at these digital backgrounds shows us the same Greco-Roman temple ruins, similar to what have seen in early studio portraits (both painted and in early photography). These are Classicist columns/pillars that can be seen in early studio photography which draw their lineage from portrait paintings. By classicism I am referring to ideas around the arts, architecture and culture of ancient Greco-Roman civilisations. The concept of Classicism is associated with order, proportion, symmetry and harmony, which conformed to an established and well understood proportional arrangement, as articulated for example by Roman author, architect and civil engineer Vitruvius in the 1st Century BC. The ideas of classicism were revived during the Renaissance period that emerged out of Italy around 1400 AD marking the beginning of a period of rebirth and reinvention. Inspired by a humanist interest in classicism and classical scholarship from the ancient world, the Renaissance commenced a neo-classicism that drew from and imitated the aesthetics of classicism. This was the beginning of the patronage of the arts which included portrait painting. As discussed in chapter 2, when Wilton (1992) and Pointon (1993) reference this point in relation to the language of representation seen in painted portrait, they highlight that the painted portrait is visually influenced by the

aesthetics of classicism. Props, such as the pillar-column, and curtain were used in paintings to denote wealth and status. Linkman (1993) when writing about the link between portrait painting and early photographic studio portraits argues these emblematic props, used to contextualise painted portraits, were copied and mass produced to use in the photographic studio portrait. In making this transition to photographic portraiture Linkman argues that the props continued to be used to visually signify aspiration and status.

Following this line of thinking, it is reasonable to suppose that the discussed digital backgrounds (figures 3.1 and 3.2) that contain Greco-Roman antiquities follow a traditional art historical reading that suggests that the surround of the portrait echoes the symbolic aspiration of the sitter. However, the subsequent ideas offer an alternative Orientalist reading of these Greco-Roman digital backgrounds. Using google reverse the Greco-Roman temple ruins in figures 3.1 and 3.2, can be located as images of ionic columns of the Greek temple erected in the city of Pergamon during the Greek Hellenistic period, when Pergamon was part of Asian Minor, which was then part of the Greek Empire. These are the ruins of an important historical and cultural structure in which religious figures such as Zeus would have been honoured. After a number of changes of Empire that saw the redrawing of maps these temple ruins of Pergamon now exist within the borders of modern-day Turkey and this particular digital portrait background is available in more than one of the north London photography studios, who have an Anglo-Turkish clientele. This makes initial reading of these backgrounds complex.

Ancient Greek architecture, in this case the monolithic Greco-Roman column, has a history that is different from that of the intricate Islamic Ottoman architecture of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, discussed in this chapter in relation to the visual culture of Orientalism. It can be assumed that an art historical analysis of these digital backgrounds in line with the argument in chapter 4 would be the logical way to understand these digital backgrounds, however, introducing a critique of Orientalism complicates how these backgrounds are read. I explain further, the characteristics of the Greek antiquities without a hint of modernisation as adhering to the

framework of Orientalism. For an example of this, the photographs by nineteenth-century Scottish photographer John Thomson, which are written about by Geoffrey Belknap (2014), Hercules Papaioannou (2014) and Nicos Philippou (2014) can be examined in the context of an imperial Occidental gaze. Thomson lived in the Far-East between 1862-1872 before turning his gaze to Cyprus in 1878. He made many photographs of foreign places, spaces and people (Belknap 2014: 74), which accompanied by his reflections, were published as travel photography books for Western audiences. They include *Illustrations of China and its People* (1873-74), *The Straits of Malacca* (1875), *The Land and People of China* (1876) and *Through Cyprus with a Camera* (1879). For the purpose of this analysis, I am specifically interested in his landscape and architectural photographs, that is his photographs of places, which depict classical antiquities and historical sites. Philippou (2014:28-29) when writing about the Orientalist depiction of Cyprus in early photography, describes Thomson as being preoccupied with providing cultural classifications in his photographs, which he goes on to describe as images of a glorious classical and medieval past visualised against a dilapidated post-Ottoman present.⁶⁵ In these photographs Thomson constructs an Orientalist version of ancient Cyprus, devoid of modernisation. Nikos Panayotopoulos (2009) writing about cultural colonialism and the construction of classical Greece is helpful in making the connection with how photographs of classical Greek antiquities are understood within a framework of Orientalism. He argues that a classical Greek aesthetic is constructed in terms of the Western view of the world arranged through a prism of Orientalism. He asserts that pictorial documentation of Greece focuses on stereotypical perceptions of antiquities and historical sites; wherein, modern Greek architecture is almost non-existent (Panayotopoulos 2009:185). This he argues is an antiquated Greece frozen in time, represented with some consistency to Orientalist impulses.⁶⁶ He refers to a nineteenth-century Western preponderance of Greek ruins as conveying a number of meanings, for example he writes that they are:

⁶⁵ Thomson's time in Cyprus (1878) coincided with the reshaping of the Ottoman Empire. This was the year the British assumed administration of the Island.

⁶⁶ Panayotopoulos (2009) makes similar observations of the Western construction of Egypt.

emblems lost in times, they expressed modern society's desire to recover the cultures of other places and other epochs, the authenticity it imagines it has lost in its own. (Panayotopoulos 2009:185)

This he asserts connects with a Western desire to associate with a lost authenticity. Thomson's photographs adopt this timeless aesthetic and in doing so reproduce systems of visual coding that are tied up in Western Oriental aesthetics. This is not the only example that situates early Western photography within an Orientalist construct, it does however succeed in illustrating the breadth of visual aesthetics that shape the tastes and preconceptions of Orientalist architectural landscape photography. Panayotopoulos (2009) also uses a selection of popular early twentieth-century (1925-1929) photographs by Nelly, to demonstrate the continued dialogue between stereotypical depictions of ancient Greece contextualised as Orientalist images.⁶⁷ According to Panayotopoulos, Nelly's photographic studies of male nudes, taken in front of ancient Greek ruins, reflect a neo-classical aesthetic that was commonly recognised as depicting an historical version of ancient Greece. This Panayotopoulos argues recreates symbolic stereotypes of ancient Greece within a framework of Orientalism. For example, attention is paid to the proportion, symmetry and balance of the nudes, who are photographed against monolithic Greek columns. Whilst there is a recognised conflict between the imagined Occidental projections of the Orient, in this case the study of the nudes photographed in front of Greek antiquities, and that of the Orient, strategies of Orientalism remain a pervasive hegemonic approach through which the Near-East is visualised. Following this line of thinking a direct connection between the digital Greek antiquities used as a portrait background in my contemporary case study and an Orientalist reading can be made. This association may not have been made without the context provided by Panayotopoulos (2009) when writing about the deliberate Orientalist visual strategies seen in Thomson's (1862-

⁶⁷ Nelly, born in Turkey, as Elli Sousyoutzoglou-Seriadari, was trained in photography in Dresden 1925-1929.

78) and Nelly's (1925-29) photographs. In addition, Karayanni (2014) and Philippou (2014) write specifically about Cypriot architecture as an Oriental legacy. This perspective of reading these backgrounds within a prism of Orientalism offers an alternative way of thinking about readings of my contemporary case study. In offering an alternative reading of the studio background I complicate Western art historical reading of the pillar-column and curtain and in doing so raise questions about its usage in the studio photograph.

Concluding comments

This chapter builds on chapter 2, which forms an argument that the framework of studio photography offers insight into socio-cultural aspirations of the sitter. The strength of this theory is that it can potentially, if nuanced, apply to *any* contemporary case study. The focus of this thesis looks at how the 'transcultural' is mediated through photographs. In order to give context to *this* north London Anglo-Turkish case I have again returned to historical studio photography, specifically early Ottoman photography and have looked more broadly at Orientalist representation of the Ottoman world in visual culture. Drawing from Said (1978) post-colonial Orientalist theory, I look at how Orientalism is envisioned in both painting and photography. Using both Nochlin's (2002) analysis of Gérôme's Orientalist painting *Snake Charmer*, made in the late 1860s and Alloula's (1989) analysis of French colonial picture postcards made in Algeria at the beginning of the twentieth century, Said's post-colonial theory of Orientalism is discussed within the context of visual culture. In introducing this approach, I explore how Orientalist strategies (consciously or unconsciously) inform the visual approaches used in my contemporary case study. For example, I look at the two digital studio backgrounds of Greek antiquities, figures 3.1 and 3.2, and discuss them in the context of an Orientalist reading. This complicates binary readings of the studio background and suggests that depending on the trajectory with which work is read differing conclusions can be determined. Indeed, this suggests that an entangled history of the pillar and curtain, as discussed by Dickens (1864) and Edwards (2006,1990), which are deeply interwoven into the

visual aesthetics of early English studio photography, can carry alternative connections depending on how they are evaluated. This raises the question of who actually claims ownership of the pillar-column and curtain as an historical object in visual culture. In fact, it is useful to question whether the use of the pillar-column and curtain as props in early studio photography, although ubiquitous had at this point lost their art historical referent. If the photographic studio was a fashionable place to be seen in as Di Bello (2007) suggests (see chapter 2), perhaps it should be considered that the pillar-column and curtain had transcended their original meaning? Instead of signifying aspiration and status as Linkman (1993) argues, the pillar-column and curtain within the context of the studio photograph becomes a figurative representation of the photographic studio itself. By this I mean the pillar-column and curtain in the photographic studio portrait becomes a visual framework that directly signifies the vernacular language of studio photography. This point complicates any - one reading of the studio portrait and may start to answer why the pillar-column is universally used in studio portraiture across the world. It also supports the perplexing response frequently heard from participant photographers involved in this research, who when asked why particular background choices are selected, replied with either 'because it is nice' or 'because it is popular'. Following this line of thinking, no longer is the pillar-column merely used as a portrait background to denote aspirations, wealth, power or indeed an Orientalist version of the world. Instead the pillar-column becomes an identifiable visual symbol to signify that the photograph is a constructed studio portrait.

Drawing from a post-colonial critique of Orientalism, this chapter succeeds in complicating binary readings of Ottoman-Turkish studio photography. In doing this, I highlight the instability of the pillar-curtain as a visual trope in studio photography and thus offer a new way of reading these objects of allegory. I demonstrate there is a continuity between historical studio photographs and those of my contemporary case study and highlight the complexity in the visual culture of both historical Ottoman-Turkish photographs and the contemporary photographs of my case study. I emphasize that although there is a dominant narrative of Orientalism visible

in early Ottoman photography, which Behdad and Gartlan (2013) argue is indispensable ways of accessing nineteenth-century Ottoman photography it is not the only narrative present in Ottoman images. I refer to Çelik (1996:202), who when writing about the visual culture of Orientalism reminds the reader that while undoubtedly Said's post-colonial theory of Orientalism marks a turning point in awareness of viewing the Near-East through an Occidental European framework, this theory does not account for the subtle nuances and discrepancies, wherein counter-narratives take place. Examples of counter narratives discussed in this chapter include the much-cited Abdul Hamid II Albums, commissioned in 1893 to give to the British Library and the Library of Congress, in which Abdul Hamid II made a conscious choice to depict a progressive and modernised Ottoman Empire. The Abdul Hamid II albums demonstrate the agency of Ottoman photography in establishing a counter-narrative that challenges the Orientalists colonial gaze. In addition, Roberts (2005,2007) analysis of the Nazli Hanim portraits reveals the transcultural flow of ideas and aesthetics between the Occidental and the Oriental. Furthermore, Fenton and Lewis are discussed to highlight the reversed flow of Orientalist ideas and practices. Photographer Fenton responded to and created a series of studio photographs inspired by Orientalist aesthetics and Lewis, a painter of Orientalist tradition reportedly lived and dressed like an Oriental (Roberts 2007). In offering a complexity to reading historical Ottoman-Turkish studio photographs and indeed drawing parallels between historical studio photographs and my contemporary case study I introduce the idea of transcultural exchanges that take place in the photography studios in north London which will be developed in chapter 4.

The Unnamed Sitter

This visual response is made in answer to the research undertaken on early Ottoman photography. It is an instinctive response made in reaction to the representation of women in early Ottoman photography as seen in the Jacobson archive. Drawing from Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), I introduced a post-colonial framework as a way of examining the visual strategies seen in early Ottoman photography and exploring how Orientalist practices inform the making of it, before moving on to examine how this resonates in my contemporary case study. I find Nochlin (1983) and Alloula's (1986) writing helpful in applying Orientalist theory to visual culture. Specifically, Alloula's writing about 'Orientalist erotica' of French colonial picture postcards, what Behdad and Gartlan (2013:2) call 'photo-exoticism' is helpful in understanding the implicit power dynamic embedded in many of the Orientalist photographs I examined. This informs my thinking when looking at the Ken Jacobson collection of Orientalist photographs. In his (2007) book *Odalisques and Arabesques: Orientalist Photography 1839-1925*. Jacobson's pays attention to the location of the photography studios and where possible attributes each image to a photographer. However, he fails to either discuss or identify any of the semi-naked sitters in the images and focuses his writing on the aesthetics qualities of the photographs.⁶⁸ Micklewright (2016) when writing about Ottoman photography, points out that Jacobson is unanalytical of the implications of the image construction, and frequently uses the word 'exotic' uncritically.

Whilst *The Unnamed Sitter*, does not advance the main theory of the thesis that looks at how transcultural identities are experimented with through the photographs, it is a visceral retort on behalf of the unidentified, unnamed semi-naked sitters in the photographs featured in Jacobson's publication. The work demonstrates my visual process of thinking and developing ideas

⁶⁸ The images re-appropriated in this body of work draw from photographs attributed to the Circle of Huber and Lehnert & Landrock.

around the representation of Ottoman women in early photography. Examining the images from the Jacobson publication, I am acutely aware of the contrast in representation of these semi-naked women compared with the women in the many Victorian carte-de-visite photographs studied as part of this research, which were made in the same historical period. Against this background, I felt compelled to respond to the Jacobson archive collection.

The Unnamed Sitter is a re-presentation of a selection of the original photographs in the Jacobson collection.⁶⁹ I am interested in what it means to look at portrait images such as these through a Western twenty-first century framework. This is a lens that has the weight of decolonisation and which more commonly views photographs through a screen rather than as a material object in print. With this in mind, this experimental work responds to the original photographs by using digital photoshop processes to highlight the difficulties of the original photographs. The images are re-cropped and digitally manipulated to purposely hide the nudity and the identity of the sitters in them. The gestures and moiré patterns of the process are deliberately embedded into the new images as a reminder to the discourse within which these images now exist. The final presentation of these images is intended to be viewed through a digital screen to reflect twenty-first century photographic digital processes. Although this work is not completely resolved, in employing digital technologies to re-present and reframe these historical photographs, the aim is to highlight the objectification and scopophilia of late nineteenth-century Orientalist portrait photographs.

⁶⁹ The original images can be found in Jacobson, K. (2007) *Odaliques & arabesques: orientalist photography 1839-1925*. London: Quaritch.



Figure 3.3 *The Unnamed Sitter I*, 2020



Figure 3.4 *The Unnamed Sitter II*, 2020

Figure 3.5 *The Unnamed Sitter III*, 2020

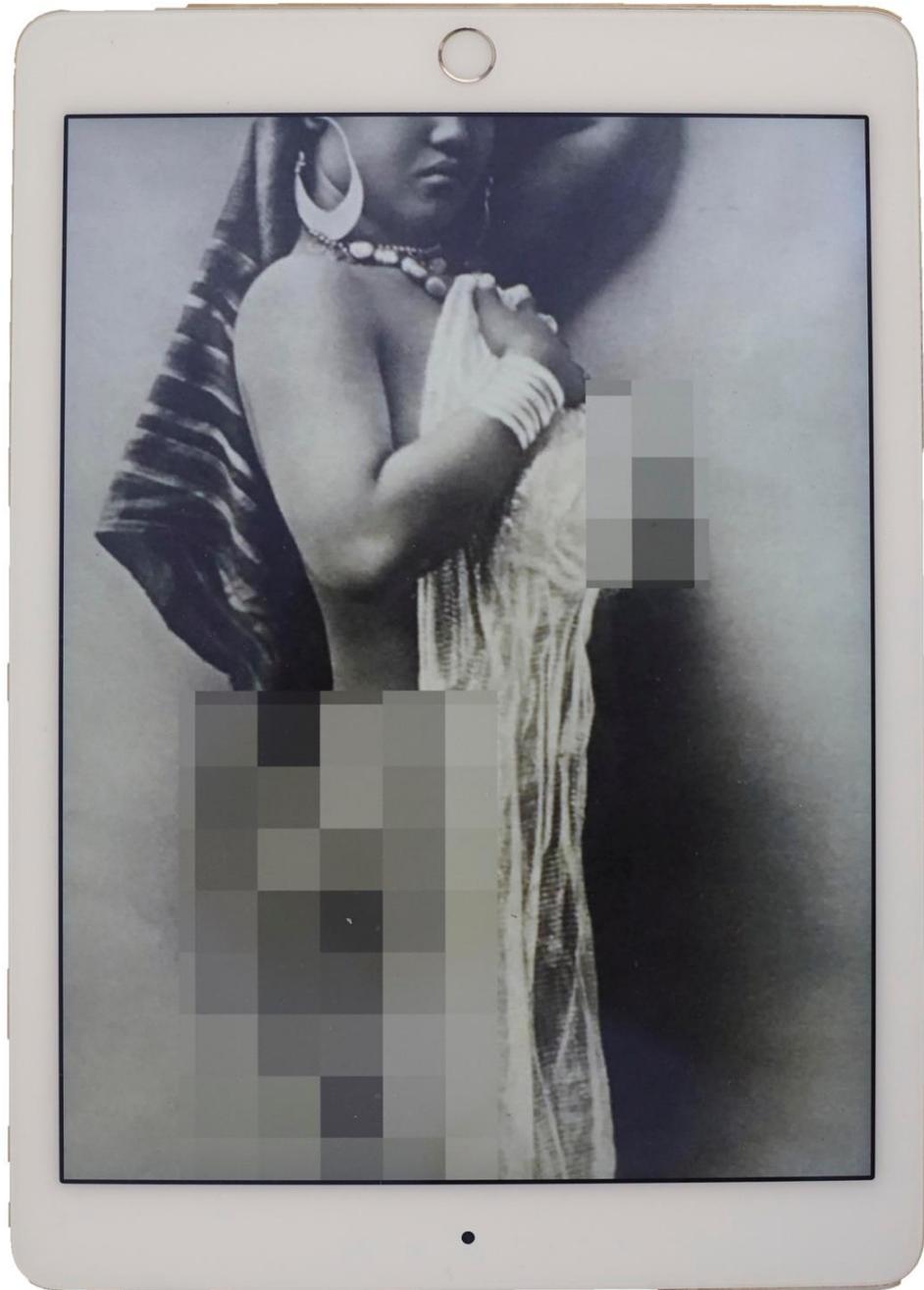


Figure 3.6 *The Unnamed Sitter IV* 2020



Figure 3.7 *The Unnamed Sitter V*, 2020
Figure 3.8 *The Unnamed Sitter VI*, 2020



Figure 3.9 *The Unnamed Sitter VII*, 2020



Figure 3.10 *The Unnamed Sitter VIII*, 2020



Figure 3.11 *The Unnamed Sitter IX*, 2020



Figure 3.12 *The Unnamed Sitter X* 2020
Figure 3.13 *The Unnamed Sitter XI* 2020

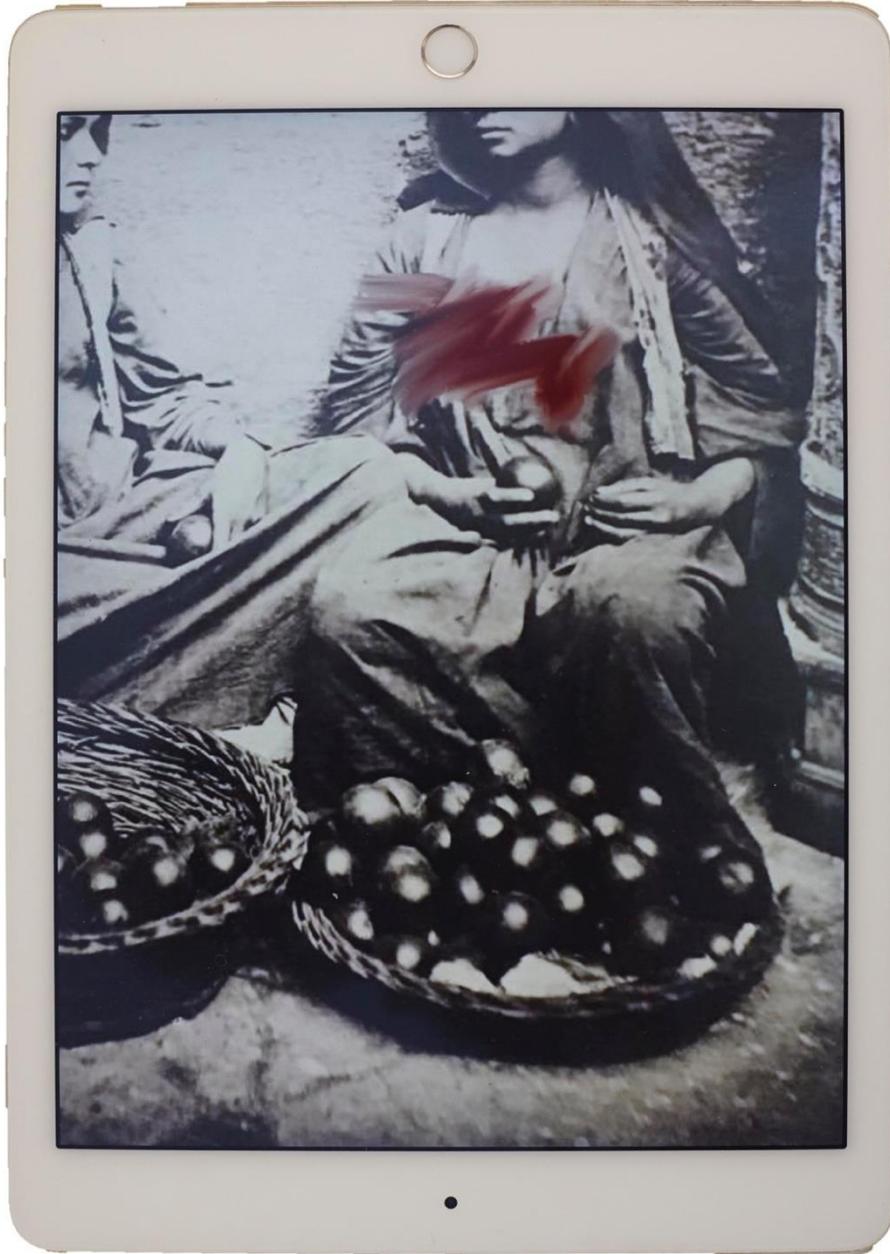


Figure 3.14 *The Unnamed Sitter XII* 2020



Figures 3.15-3.23 process experiments

Chapter 4

Doing Transcultural Photography

At the beginning of this thesis I locate my research area as north London and the research site as the photography studio within this area. This is a culturally diverse area with a large diasporic Turkish community, who have a dominant presence on the high street. Within a small radius, Turkish-owned barbers, beauticians, banks, restaurants and corner shops sit alongside Afro-Caribbean fabric shops and market stalls, Kosher butchers and Polish delis. Yet despite the diversity of the neighbourhood all of the photography studios in this area are owned by first- and second- generation Turkish migrants. I want to deepen my understanding and contextualize my fascination with the photographs in the studio shop fronts and in doing so better appreciate the mores of the local community. I am curious to know more about these photographs, specifically how cultural traditions are visualised, localised and configured through these photographs. I have already argued that the photographs act as socio-cultural objects that offer insight into the mores of the local community and drawn on secondary English and Turkish histories of photography as well as visual research to do this. In this chapter I introduce the notion of a transcultural exchange of ideas and practices that unfurl in the process of making the photographs and reflect on how they mediate transcultural identity. This builds on previous chapters that look at studio photography within a broader conceptual framework, which is followed by post-colonial readings of Orientalism, and an analysis of the history of photography and visual culture in Turkey at the time of the Ottoman Empire. These foundational chapters create the basis on which to examine my case study.

Then notion of transcultural exchanges implies that here are immutable links between cultures, identities and specific spaces. This is an argument that has been developed in migration studies by writers such as Sigona *et al.*

(2015:XXI) who when writing about the evolution of diasporic identities in host countries distinguish transnational spaces as places in which transcultural identities are negotiated. According to Sigona *et al.* these are spaces of agency in which a sense of belonging is fostered and wherein diasporic communities 'meet-greet' each other and reconfigure their identities. I put forward the idea here that that photography studios are important as transnational spaces in which ideas of diasporic cultural identity are negotiated. In order to do this, I will first look at photographs made by the studios and then move on to think about the transcultural exchange of practices observed during my research. I am interested in how these practices mix cultural and symbolic traditions to establish a continuity between an historical past with new ideas of cultural representation. This could be described as an 'invented tradition', as Eric Hobsbawm (2012:1-2) has argued in his seminal sociological text that looks at the re-inventing of traditions in order help navigate new and unfamiliar territories. I recognise that there is an overlap in understanding the terms 'tradition' and 'custom'. Drawing from Hobsbawm, a tradition can be seen as a set of formalised practices that have been passed down over generations and observed by most people in a society or culture. He describes a custom as a common way of doing things which is can be short lived and even observed only at a micro/family or individual level. He argues that through repetition and time, a custom can become a tradition. He defines an 'invented tradition' as a set of practices or rituals of symbolic nature which seek to advocate certain values and norms by performative repetition. According to Hobsbawm, the 'invented' part of the tradition is conflated with an existing historical practice to imply a continuity with the past, although in reality this may not be the case. I employ this concept to think through how transcultural identities are configured, and how photography can memorialise this process. In developing this argument, I suggest these photographic practices enable participants to claim ownership of their transcultural identities.

Another way of evoking the transcultural aspects of photographic studio practices is through Mary Louise Pratt's (1992:2) post-colonial theorization of 'contact zones', which provides a framework for imagining these photography

studios as transnational spaces in which creative transcultural activities take place. Pratt argues that 'contact zones' are social spaces in which different cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other. For example, London a global city, is a place in which multiple cross-cultural exchanges simultaneously take place, as a 'contact zone'. In encountering each other in a contact zone, Pratt argues, traditional ideas and cultural practices transfer and evolve. Homi Bhabha is also helpful to understand the zone of cultural contact as a 'third space' (1994:36), which he describes as somewhere where meaning is mobilised and produced through the interaction of two cultures. This 'third space' the potential for creative hybrid possibilities that enable new cultural imaginings to emerge. However, it is important to note that in the context of these cultural exchanges in both the 'contact zone' or the 'third space' there may be an unequal power dynamic. Pratt is careful to highlight that in the colonial 'contact zones' there is an asymmetrical balance of power and domination that inevitably affects the intersection of ideas and cultural practices. Catherine Cummings (2017), draws on Pratt in her own research that looks at hybridity realised through cultural exchange. She looks at the conceptual instability of an object such as Queen Victoria's Samoan bonnet, which draws on signifiers from one culture and reappropriates them with another. She goes on to suggest that although there is a perceived domination and subordination of peoples in the 'contact zone', the subordinate peoples (the colonised peoples) are able to have agency in shaping their identities by determining what they choose to absorb into their own cultural practices.⁷⁰ Although my case study is not a colonial context, as with all transcultural exchanges, it is important to recognise that there is a complicated power dynamic between the two overlapping cultures. The point I aim to reiterate here in this chapter is that the subjects of this study demonstrate an agency in determining their own representational identities.

⁷⁰ Cummings (2017) uses the terms 'dominant' and 'subordinate' to mean, coloniser and colonised peoples.

Costume as a cultural performance

The idea of local (indigenous) photographers and sitters, claiming agency in how they shape their identities through visual representation in portrait photographs is something I have already raised in chapter 2, when I introduced Pinney's (1997) study of Indian photography. He argues that there is great agency demonstrated by local photographers who adapt visual practices imported by the colonisers to meet the desires and tastes of the local sitter. This point is raised again when I discuss Roberts' (2007) analysis of the Princess Hamin self-portraits and is developed more specifically in the context of Ottoman-Turkish photography. I examine the complicated relationship early Ottoman-Turkish photography has with Orientalism, where Orientalist motifs were taken on and developed in Ottoman photographic culture not only in productions for the Western market, but also used by Ottoman subjects, in a kind of performance of identity. In this chapter I relate these ideas to my case study, by looking at how visual signifiers denote both traditional and invented cultural practices, through which ownership of one's own identity can be claimed. As one walks past the photography studios on my local high street, like many of the businesses around them, examples of the merchandise are displayed in the windows. For the photography studio this is a selection of still photographic images that demonstrate the expertise of that studio. When entering any of these premises the display of photographic images in the shop-front windows continue in the presentation cabinets and along the walls. An example of this can be seen in figure 4.1, the presentation wall in 'Berfin Studios'. This wall is enveloped by a bricolage of commemorative portraits made by the studio. These include wedding portraits, family portraits and commemorative circumcision portraits. These portraits may look generic and visually predictable repetitions of the same types of commemorative portrait. However, within this stylistic uniformity what is often forgotten in a cursory glance is that each photograph is 'someone's' special event and it is precisely within this context that they have value and meaning.

I am particularly interested in the commemorative circumcision portraits, see examples figures 4.1-4.5, as examples of invented traditions. These are portrait images I am unfamiliar with and am curious to know more about them. First, I discuss the costumes in the photographs. My research around the history of these outfits, draws from Kaya Sahin (2018) who writes about the cultural performance of the Ottoman circumcision ceremony. He highlights the following information about this practice and its history. The photographs are immediately identifiable by the traditional ceremonial Ottoman-Turkish costume, a *sûnnet* (circumcision) outfit, worn by the young boy in each photograph.⁷¹ These outfits are worn symbolically as a cultural statement that draws from an historical Ottoman-Turkish tradition wherein Ottoman princes wore expensive distinctive outfits adorned with jewellery to their circumcision celebrations. Today's outfits are variations on a white satin three-piece suit with a fur trimmed cape embellished with silver trim, a beaded cap, and sometimes a white sceptre is held. The function of the outfit is ceremonial, it acts as a visual signifier to indicate and celebrate that the boy wearing it has been through the circumcision ritual.⁷² The *sûnnet* circumcision outfit symbolically links the circumcision ritual to the wearer's familial Ottoman-Turkish heritage.⁷³ In wearing this outfit it becomes a symbolic visual marker of the ritual. The circumcision portrait visually

⁷¹ Sources differ in terms of the name of the circumcision outfit and circumcision ritual. Sahin (2018) who writes specifically about Ottoman-Turkish practices, refers to the circumcision outfit as the *sûnnet* outfit. The Encyclopedia Britannica refs to *Khitân* as the Islamic ritual of circumcision. Moving forward to avoid confusion on this point, I will align with my participants preference to simply refer to the ceremonial outfit worn by the young boy at his circumcision party and ceremonial ritual simply as a circumcision outfit.

⁷² I am reminded at this point of my own first Holy communion and the dress I wore on this occasion. The dress is white, is reminiscent of a wedding dress and is typical of all the dresses worn by young Catholic girls to celebrate the sacrament of the first Holy communion. The first Holy communion sacrament is an important rite of passage in Roman-Catholic religion in which the young Catholic girl or boy receives the Holy Eucharist, that is the body of Christ for the first time. By the time I receive my first Holy communion dress, it has been passed down from a cousin to my sister and then onto me. I wore it for this sacrament and can be seen wearing it again at my birthday party in the following year which suggests it was kept as a precious item of clothing that was only used on special occasions. In the same way my white dress is a visual signifier of this sacred ritual of receiving the Holy sacrament of the Eucharist for the first-time and links me to my Irish Roman-Catholic heritage.

⁷³ There is only one supplier of circumcision outfits in the north-London vicinity, who have no online presence. In addition to supplying circumcision outfits, they also have Bride and Groom outfits. Each outfit costs between £75-£350, depending on associated accessories such as the bejewelled cap, cape and sceptre.

confirms and commemorate the circumcision ritual. What is notable about these portraits is the imaginative use of digital technologies in combining the background with the foreground, that is the portrait sitter with the digitally imagined background. In these portraits a range of digital backgrounds behind the subjects can be seen, each which each carry a host of individual connotations, inclusive of the boy floating in the sky, the boy sitting by a mountain, a lake, the boy sitting in a cartoon world of make-believe and, of course, the boy with his family in front of the ubiquitous pillar-column. The creativity with which these backgrounds are augment and personalised can be seen. As such meaning is made through these portraits and it can be speculated that these young boys in their circumcision outfits are for a day at least, little bejewelled princes, as they are symbolically welcomed into the community as young Muslim men.



Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1 is a photograph of one of the walls in Berfin Studios 2012. The photographs were reproduced as one continuous wallpaper of commemorative portraits. This included weddings and circumcision portraits. It illustrates the popularity of ceremonial circumcision portraits in which the young boy wears the formal circumcision outfit.



Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4



Figure 4.5



Figure 4.6

Figure 4.2 Copy of Wedding portrait hanging on the wall in the client reception at Belda Productions (close up) 2011/12. It is featured as an example of the studio photographs examined in chapter 2, and again in this chapter where it is discussed in the context of the relationship between the 'real' and the imagined. Figures 4.3-4.6 are pre-wedding photograph, London www.joystudios.co.uk found using Instagram search term #chineseweddinglondon 2020. They have been included to offer a comparison to how the north London digital studios use the digital background to suggest London, whereas Figures 4.3-4.6 the couples are actually posing in front of Tower Bridge a key landmark in London.

The transcultural wedding portrait that travels

In order to develop an argument that the digital background enhances the meaning of the portrait and indeed demonstrates great creativity in doing so, I return to the wedding portrait discussed in chapter 2 represented as figure 4.2 and expand the examination of this portrait. At the time of gathering this information, the actual material photograph can be seen on display in Belda Productions reception area, printed on canvas approximately 20x30 inches hanging on the lime green wall. It is one of the many exemplar portraits that showcase the creative skills of the studio, which the participant photographer tells me was made by the couple to send back to their family in London. It is common practice in the Anglo-Turkish community to have a formal studio portrait made of the wedding couple to mark the act of marriage. This forms part of the wedding album, alongside of documentation of the wedding ceremony and celebration party. The album becomes part of the tangible visual evidence of this wedding ritual. I now expand discussions of this photograph, in the context of performing transcultural photography.

To frame the meaning of this photograph we can locate it as part of the wedding ritual. We know the wedding ritual to be an organised practice where an intimate and private relationship intersects with the public and unites two people in marriage. Cele Otnes and Elizabeth Pleck (2003) when writing about Western wedding practices in *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of a Lavish Wedding*, allude to the importance of photography in visualising and memorialising the wedding ceremony:

Given that the memories of the wedding are supposed to last a lifetime; it is essential there be a broad range of artifacts upon which to rely to resuscitate those memories [...] the photographs of the event are the most important relics [...] Photos provide the bride and the groom with tangible evidence that they had their day to shine as the stars of their social network and provide them with means of reviving their belief in 'happily ever after'. (Otnes and Pleck 2003:18)

This is a helpful reference point through which to anchor this portrait. This photography has a specific function, it visually confirms the marriage union has taken place. The facial expressions pose and clothing of the couple all contribute to the reading of this as a wedding portrait. The couple wear traditional Western style wedding costumes. The bride wears a white wedding dress with veil, and the groom a traditional black tuxedo, with a white flower in his lapel. According to Chrys Ingraham (2008) in his book *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*, the white wedding dress in Western culture is worn by a bride to visually symbolise virginity, purity, modesty and the morality of the bride. This history is deeply rooted in Victorian English history, as popularised by Queen Victoria who wore a white wedding dress at her wedding in 1840. He writes that although the style, design and colour of wedding dresses historically diverges widely in different parts of the world, in accordance of local religions, customs and practices, the wearing of a white wedding dress as part of the marriage ceremony has become a normalised wedding practice around the world.⁷⁴

Jens Ruchatz's (2018) writing on wedding photography is the point of departure to further situate the connotations of this photograph. He writes that the history of wedding portraiture dates back to the 1870s, when it first became popular. Although the advancement of photographic technologies enables more flexibility when documenting a contemporary wedding ceremony and celebrations, the formal wedding portrait remains a pervasive symbol of the marriage union. This photograph adopts recognisable poses to visualise and narrate a love marriage union. The couple assume generic poses that Charles Lewis (1998) when writing about contemporary professional wedding photography, suggests speaks allegorically of love and romance. In this photograph they appear twice, which is not unusual in the portrait photographs studied as part of this research. The dual and

⁷⁴ Micklewright (1989) when writing about late-nineteenth century Ottoman wedding costumes points out that although contemporary Turkish wedding dress fashions include European white lace-trimmed wedding dresses, a Turkish bride in the second half of the nineteenth century would have worn wedding costumes that were not pleasing to European tastes. She writes that they were exuberant or gaudy combinations of different colours and fabrics.

sometimes triple use of the same 'actors' in the photograph is used as a narrative storytelling technique to amplify the message of the image. In this photograph, one version of the couple is anchored to the left-hand side of the photograph, their gaze is direct to the camera, they stand close together to suggest the close relationship between them. In the second version they appear more faintly, stretching from the middle to the right side of the photograph. The bride smiles at the groom and leans her head towards him, their arms are entwined. In contemporary photography it is customary that the smile denotes happiness, as discussed already in chapter 2. The groom appears to be kissing the bride on her head. The couple appear absorbed with each other in an intimate tryst. They are performing the role of a couple in 'love' for the camera and the people that will look at the photograph – family, friends, themselves when older, their children. Intersected between the two versions of the couple, at the centre of the photograph is an image of Tower Bridge. As raised in chapter 2, in this photograph, Tower Bridge is used as a background to symbolically anchor the image to London. Behind the wedding couple and Tower Bridge, the background is orange, scattered with orange/yellow flecks. It reads as a sky lit by fireworks, a practice commonly undertaken to mark important celebrations. This is an allegoric photographic image that is constructed on the computer in digital post-production. The realism of the photograph is less important than the message – in this case that the couple were married in a Western country and in doing so embody the successes of migratory transcultural Anglo-Turkish identities.⁷⁵

Seeking to critically locate meaning of this wedding portrait, my thinking is influenced by Crang, Dwyer, and Jackson (2003), who when writing about imaginative Indian commodity culture (their research is based on clothing and food), suggest that commodity culture provides an alternative way of advancing our understanding of contemporary transnationality. They suggest

⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that although this image could have been made in front of Tower Bridge, the Chinese weddings in London, see figures 4.3-4.6, they are taken from the 500+ Instagram posts #ChineseWeddingLondon. However, the customers have chosen to have a formal studio portrait made. Thus, suggesting the symbolism of the image is more important than the realism.

meaning is defined in the form, use and the trajectories of an object. This photographic object, that is the wedding portrait has an unwavering message of the union of this couple in matrimony. It is a pictorial marker of the union. However, to understand the photograph within a socio-global context it needs to be examined in relation to its mobilities. It has not been made as a single-sited object; it is a transnational object that travels across geographic boundaries. To explain this idea further I refer to Stuart Hall (1984), who writes about the circulation of diasporic photographs as multi-sited objects. He refers to the Birmingham Dyche Archive of studio portraits, as an archive of diasporic portraits made to travel. In these portraits, the sitters are dressed in their best outfits. They position themselves next to studio props such as a telephone, a record player, a television or a car. In doing this, the photographs hold a message of success and material prosperity. This message is sent from the host country of England, to friends and family who remain in the familial Caribbean home(land). Tina Campt (2012) also writing about this archive, highlights the complex social relations of these image-objects as messages that carry desire and aspirations. In this photograph the message not only confirms the marital status of the couple in the photograph, it also visually confirms the achievement of migration. In the same way the sitters in the Dyche studio archive perform the successes of migration for their loved ones in their country of birth, by posing in their best clothes and surrounding themselves with material wealth, the couple in this photograph perform the success of migration. By posing in their western wedding attire in front of (even symbolically) a recognisable architectural icon in London they communicate that the marriage took place in London.

There is a transnational relay of the message in the photograph, which is what anthropologist Deborah Poole (1997) refers to as the 'visual economy' of the image. Her research, based on Andean photography, looks at photographs as objects that are produced, organised and circulated across national and international boundaries. She argues that it is the relationship between visual images and people that gives them meaning. In the same way Hall and Campt discuss the 'visual economy' of diasporic portraits in the 'Dyche Archive', this photograph can also be understood as a diasporic

image that travels.⁷⁶ The 'visual economy' of this photograph, is to return to the home(land) of the customer and in doing so this image-object uses visual symbolism to connote the diasporic status and successes of the customer in the image. An analysis of the mobilities of this photograph gives it meaning within a global context. In 'Doing Family Photography' (2013) Rose argues that it is these networks of mobility that tell us about the social relations of any photograph. She claims that the most important thing that happens to family photographs is that they travel. This photographic image is no exception. The power of this photograph is the message it carries and how it is consumed. It shares news that confirms the marital status of the couple in the photograph, that this marriage took place in London and with it suggests the success of mobilities. In making a transnational journey this photograph bridges the temporal and geographical rupture of kinship links, separated across borders and fosters familial togetherness.

Fashioning transcultural practices

When cultural traditions, exchanges and ideas shift across cultural boundaries, from East to West and back again, inevitably new perspectives and innovative ideas emerge as rituals and traditions are re-invented and reimagined. This is not a new concept. As already discussed in chapter 3, there is a history of the transcultural exchange of ideas about Turkey or the Ottoman Empire or the Near-East, a significantly orientalist word itself that dates back to the sixteenth century. For example, according to cultural historian Onur Inal (2011:249) who writes about cross-cultural fashions in 'Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes', there is a new generation of historians that continue to challenge a hegemonic Orientalist historiography that distinctly defines 'us' and 'them' socio-cultural perspectives. She argues that cross-cultural interactions between the British and Ottoman cultures date back to the late sixteenth century, when British merchants, travellers, mercenaries, artists and migrants mingled with Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Levantines in Ottoman borderlands. She goes on to state that although early

⁷⁶ Hall's (1984) writing pre-dates but speaks to the term 'visual economy'.

records are imprecise it is known that Henry VIII appeared as a Turkish sultan in the English court in 1530. In addition to this, she cites Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who, as wife of the British ambassador in Constantinople lived there between 1716 and 1718, as having a considerable impact on the interchange of fashion between British and Ottoman cultures. Inal's argument aims to destabilise the dichotomy of the dominant narrative of Orientalism by suggesting there have been multi-directional transcultural exchanges of ideas throughout history. As an extension of this, as previously highlighted photography even in its early iteration has evidenced the transcultural flow of ideas in different ways. British photographer Roger Fenton used Orientalist strategies that recreated Western notions of the Near-East in his 1858 'Pasha and Baydère' studio portraits. In addition to this there are the two photographic portraits of Princess Hanim (mentioned above) in which self-Orientalising strategies are engaged with. These examples demonstrate that creative transculturation and indeed the practice of Orientalising of visual culture is not a new concept. In fact, these examples establish that there is an historical legacy of transcultural exchange of ideas and practices that have been visually evidenced by photography.

As an example of creative transcultural exchange, I draw from the primary research undertaken for this thesis. I refer to a celebration event that I attended as a research observer. I recall my observations of this event, reflect on comments made by a photographer who worked at the event and offer analysis in response to these observations. The occasion I recall is a celebration party that took place in north London to commemorate the circumcision ritual. The ritual is an essential rite of passage for young Muslim males to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood.⁷⁷ This party celebrates the circumcision ritual but is asynchronous to the actual ritual. During the celebrations the photography and video team visually document the event for their customers. Alongside this, I observe and document the

⁷⁷ Although there is no fixed age of circumcision for Turkish (Anglo-Turkish) Muslim boys, the circumcision ceremony commonly happens around seven years old.

practices unfolding during the day and formulate questions to follow up with one of the photographers at a later date.⁷⁸



Figure 4.7



Figure 4.8

Figures 4.7 - 4.8 A selection of these images have already been featured as examples in Primary Research I as Figures 1.19- 1.21. They are screen grabs from my video documentation of the formal studio portrait made before circumcision party with 2011/12 by Berfin Studios. They are re-presented in this chapter to align with specific writing around the mediation of transcultural practices as captured in by the photography studios.

⁷⁸ Highlights from this interview can be found at <https://vimeo.com/230338763>



Figure 4.9



Figure 4.10



Figure 4.11



Figure 4.12



Figure 4.13

Figures 4.9-4.13 have already been featured as part of Primary Research I (as Figure 1.23, 1.26, 1.29, 1.31, 1.32). They are re-presented here as a visual reference to support the writing around transcultural practices. The images see a limousine, the young boy in the limousine, and the boy on the white horse entering the banquet hall in front of the party guests. As discussed in the text I draw a link between the use of the limousine and British Hen party practices and see this process as an 'invented' tradition. I also draw links between the horse and historical Turkish circumcision ritual practices that date back to the mid-sixteenth century practices.

The photography and videography that takes place during the event begins with formal studio portraits of the circumcised boy and his family in the studio. After this, the event is documented at key points during the party celebrations. These include, the formal sit-down meal, the Turkish music and dancing and a ceremony in which the circumcised boy receives blessings in the form of money from the party guests.⁷⁹ What interests me about this event are the practices that happen between the key points of celebration. It is in these marginal spaces, by which I mean the processes that happen on the edges of the formal cultural practices, that are most frequently seen as creative performances of transculturation. For example, I recall the activities that happen after the formal studio portraits and before the evening party begins. The circumcised boy, together with a few of his friends is driven around London in a stretch limousine car for the afternoon. On returning to his guests for the evening celebration party, he is then led into a banqueting hall on horseback and is presented to 500 guests. When observing these events, my assumption is that the practices I witness are an original transcultural mix of practices. This is the case, but not in the way I first assume. To explain this further, I refer to these two practices in more detail.

In its modern use the limousine car, often referred to as the 'stretch limo', to be a luxury form of transport, associated with extravagance, luxury and wealth. It is a long wheel-based chauffeur driven sedan, usually black or white, used in high end business and often hired out for special celebration events such as weddings, prom/sweet sixteen and hen/stag parties.⁸⁰ However, it is the British 'hen' parties that are specifically referred to by one of the local photographers when I enquire about the origins of using a limousine car as part of the circumcision party celebrations. This participant suggests that the practice of travelling in a limousine car has been embraced

⁷⁹ Figures 4.10 and 4.14 are screen grabs taken from the documentation I made during the circumcision party celebrations. These are visual evidence that references the 'in between' practices, I discuss in this chapter.

⁸⁰ 'Stag' and 'hen' parties are single sex pre-wedding celebrations that take place to celebrate the final moments of freedom before marriage. 'Stag' and 'hen' are the British term for these celebration parties, in the USA they are referred to as 'bachelor' and 'bachelorette' parties.

from hen party practices to celebrate this important ritual for young Muslim boys. In doing this, the limousine as a symbol of luxury and extravagance has become a contributing part of the circumcision celebration event in London. My assumption is that the use of a limousine car is an out of place practice at the circumcision celebration event I observe. However, in a later conversation with the same photographer it becomes apparent that this is not the case. Indeed, according to this photographer, the practice of the boy being driven around London in a limousine car is a normative practice for *all* circumcision party celebrations within the Anglo-Turkish community. According to this photographer this is not an unusual activity. In embracing this practice, the influence of localised British cultural practices can be seen. I am suggesting here that association can be read in various ways; current uses of the limousine car have transcended as a signifier of luxury and excess to also connote extravagant behaviours. This can be seen within popular American culture where the limousine car is used as a visual signifier of extravagance in, for example, gangster rap videos. This includes, 2Pac *Gangster Party, I.T.* (2005), *Whatever You Like and Snoop Dogg* (2008), *Gangster luv. Ft The-Dream* (2009), who all use the Limousine car as a visual signifier of power and luxury in their official videos. In addition to this, extravagant behaviours are commonly echoed in hen and stag party practices. This is articulated by sociologist Beverly Skeggs (2005:966) when writing about class behaviours embodied in the practice of 'hen' parties in her book 'The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation'. She writes that 'hens' are framed as a hetero-sexualized presence, visible because of their loud, tasteless and vulgar behaviours, which are behaviours also adopted at sweet sixteen parties. However, within this context, it is also possible to consider that a practice frequently associated with a symbolic British working-class ritual that sees a young woman transition from maidenhood to womanhood has been absorbed into a young boy's circumcision party celebrations. Here I argue that the transitional nature of the rituals is important to our understanding of the association between these two practices. In parallel rites of passage, the hen transcends from maidenhood to womanhood, and the circumcised boy symbolically transitioning from boyhood to manhood.

Secondly, I recall witnessing the same circumcised boy being led into his celebration party on horseback. Having no experience of this, I mistakenly assume it to be a common Anglo-Turkish practice partaken as part of the celebration event. However, this is also not the case, the photographer tells me of the seven years she has practised photography in London, she has never before seen this practice, it is unfamiliar for her. However, further research of this practice reveals that it is a common-place cultural practice that takes place in the familial home village in Turkey of the family hosting the party. This practice is linked to the twenty-day Ottoman-Turkish circumcision celebrations of 1530 which saw the reimagining of cultural traditions, such as the male circumcision ritual elevated to a central ritual practice in Muslim societies. According to cultural historian Sahin (2018), part of the 1530 celebrations included the three Ottoman princes entering into the Hippodrome in Constantinople on horseback to be greeted by the Ottoman elite and commoners alike. In doing this, they actively performed their identities and proclaimed their place in the Ottoman social order. Sahin's argument asserts that performativity underlines everything involved in these celebrations. He argues that in the absence of performance there is neither ritual nor ceremony, and therefore the act of entering into the Hippodrome on horseback became an integral performative aspect to the celebrations. This practice remains popular in some of the smaller rural villages in Turkey but is no longer common in larger towns and cities. Reflecting on the conversation with the photographer, it can be understood that the family are attempting to maintain links with their familial cultural Muslim heritage by referencing a practice that continues to take place in their home village in Turkey.

To summarise these points, I pick up again on Hobsbawm's (2012) idea of the 'invented tradition', that is where a new practice is inserted with an historical practice to imply a continuity with the past and a relationship with the present. This can be seen through the conjoining of the two 'in between' practices, that is the practice of the boy with his friends travelling around London in a white limousine and that of the boy arriving at his circumcision celebration party on horseback. These become performative aspects of circumcision party celebrations in London. This links the ritual to the familial

cultural practices of the host family with their home (land). The inspiration derived from British celebratory practices, such as using a limousine car as a mode of transport to denote luxury and but also to mark ritual transformation within the culture. The former being a newly introduced practice to circumcision celebration parties in London and the latter is already a familiar practice within the party celebrations. In conflating these practices, the participant connects with both their home (land) and host (land) and in doing so affiliates himself with the London-based Anglo-Turkish community. What can be concluded from these observations is that the practices performed in the 'in between' spaces between the key points of celebration are neither exclusively British nor Turkish but an alchemy of cultural practices. In performing these blended transcultural ritual practices, the participant secures cultural recognition within the Anglo-Turkish community in London.

What comes into view as a result of this focus is that there is great creativity employed in the reimagining of ritual cultural practices. I highlight this example to demonstrate that the flow of ideas and exchange of practices happens in both directions.⁸¹ By this I mean that cultural practices travel with the Turkish-migrant community to their new home(land) of England, alongside of which the local practices of the host community of England are combined together. In doing this, the transcultural exchange of ideas and practices that take place are visually recorded by the studios, or more accurately as in this example are documented as photographic practices that emanate from the studios. Therefore, following this argument it can be reasoned that my research site, the photography studios, within the diasporic Turkish neighbourhood of London, can be conceptualised as a 'third space',

⁸¹ As a reminder that creative transculturation is a two-way flow of ideas and aesthetics, I draw attention to part of a conversation with one of the photographers I spoke with at one of the Anglo-Turkish studios in north London. In response to my question asking what photography studio he admired, he directed me to 'Studio Kemiksiz', which is located in his hometown of Malatya in eastern Turkey. When inspecting the 'Studio Kemiksiz' website, I am surprised to note that the studio premises has a number of physical mis-en-scène studio 'set ups', in which clients can step inside to have their portraits made. What is remarkable about these 'set ups' is that not only can faux-pillars and swathes of curtain be seen but also there is a street scene, inclusive of a brick wall, streetlamp and red glass panelled telephone box. This is a traditional British red telephone box which although is becoming less common on the English high street, remains a constant feature on British picture postcards.

a space in which Turkish and English culture meet and greet each other. It is a place wherein identities of the 'self' are experimented with, re-constructed and the photography becomes evidence of cross-cultural identity formulation.

Concluding comments

The emphasis of this chapter brings into focus the creative innovation with which transcultural identities are configured, confirmed and owned. The chapter draws from the primary empirical research undertaken in the diasporic Anglo-Turkish photography studios in north London, and as an extension of the studio, the commercial photographic practices that emanate from these studios. This includes a broad range of commercial still photography and moving image, such as the documentation of weddings, celebration parties and family portraits. I look at the photography studio as a site in which ideas and practices are experimented with, transferred and reconfigured. Drawing on Pratt's (1992) notion of the 'contact zone' as a place where cultural practices meet and where creative transcultural activities take place; together with Bhabha's (1994) idea of the 'third space' as a space that enables new cultural imaginings to emerge, I propose that the photography studio is a transnational space in which notions of identity and modernity are encouraged, conciliated and visually confirmed. I suggest that the studio is a space in which cultural practices are fluidly reshaped and transcultural practices emerge. Having proposed this theory, the chapter pivots around specific examples that draw from the primary research. I focus attention on photographic images that evidence identity mediation and then re-present a photograph, a wedding portrait, previously discussed in chapter 2 to examine it as a transnational object that travels. Through this image-object the 'visual economy' of the photograph is discussed. I refer to Poole (1997) who coins the phrase the 'visual economy' as the socio-global context in which image-objects are organised and circulated across national and international boundaries, and then to Rose (2013) who suggests that the image-object becomes a practice of doing transnational family. In doing this, I investigate the exchange of ideas and practices which take place in the studios in north London. The chapter concludes with a close examination of what I refer to as a transcultural practice. This example is a circumcision

celebration party I witness, during which I see a re-appropriation of existing practices to form new transcultural practices. This can be seen in both the appropriation of British cultural practices, alongside of traditional Turkish practices. I anchor this idea drawing from Hobsbawm's (2012) idea of an 'invented tradition', that inserts new practices with historical practices to imply a continuity with cultural rituals new and old.

This chapter shows how there is much to be learned about identity configuration when examining the transportation of ideas and practices across cultures. However, what I haven't as yet addressed is the mnemonic importance of the photographs for the image owners. Although this trajectory is less focused on the construction of the photograph it is an integral perspective to investigate in the context of examining transcultural identity as visualised through photography. In the following chapters I look at the emotional 'affect' of photographic images for their owners and investigate how a sense of belonging is fostered through the photographs. I make a close reading of a selections of family photographs from one case study and then follow on by showcasing my body of work. *The emotional life of transcultural photographs*, which features visual responses to family photographs in the home. In doing this, I move the research into the family home and investigate the critical relationship between photography, memory and belonging. However, before I move forward to discuss this one example, I present a sample of *Primary Research II*, which showcase some of the visual material collected during the research in family homes and at the memory workshop, alongside of this I present contextual antidotes to accompany the visual material.

Primary Research II

The primary research in the photography studios of north London enabled me to examine the breadth of photographs that emanate from the studios and in doing so I was able to think about how transcultural identities are configured. I looked at the aesthetics of the images and examined how the photographs help establish the visibility of the diasporic Turkish community in north London. What is missing within this research are investigations into the mnemonic value of the photographs for their owners and further analysis of how collective narratives and a sense of belonging can be built through these photographs. *Primary Research II* addresses this point. Having identified there is a gap in knowledge, the research design was adapted to focus on information about the emotional relationship the participants have with their photographs and thus investigates how belonging is established and meaning is made through these photographs. To do this I broadened the research remit. I look at to personally owned photographs, family vernacular photographs, some of which are studio photographs, and move the research site out the photography studio. I tried a number of different ways to find participants for this aspect of the research, this includes speaking with clients in the photography studios, running a photography memory-based workshop in one of the local community centres in north London (2014), contacting the Anglo-Turkish society and asking friends of friends for introductions (2014-15). The most successful approach proved to be using an ethnographic snowball method wherein one person recommended a friend/colleague-neighbour who may be interested in participating in the project and so on (2014-16). This led to a number of conversations about the family album in which questions around relationship with homeland, belonging and memory were raised. *Primary Research II* catalogues some of the photographs examined in family homes. Some of the visuals included in this section derive from the photographic memory workshop ran at the DYMAR Community Centre (2014). This community centre is a Kurdish/Turkish centre in Bruce Grove that offers social support, including women's services, education and language support in addition to general advice services for

Turkish, Kurdish, Turkish Cypriot and Alivite communities. I was introduced to this centre by my local car mechanic who identifies as Kurdish-Turkish. He introduced me to his friend from 'back-home' who is active in the Kurdish-Turkish community. This friend invited me to meet the media team at the DYMAR Community Centre, where I was also introduced to one of the centres' community organisers. After a number of social meetings, I proposed to run a pilot memory-based workshop which I ran at the same time as the children's Saturday afternoon music lessons. Running the workshop alongside of the music lessons meant the children were occupied and some of the adults were free to attend the workshop. However, this opportunity turned out to be challenging due to noise levels in the centre and language barriers between myself and participating workshop members. Some of the participants agreed to let me use their photographs and voices, others were happy to chat and indeed did inform my thinking but did not want to be identified so would not let me make copies of their photographs. Nevertheless, the workshop proved a useful 'first-meeting' which led onto follow up invitations to visit participants in their homes. Additional photographs catalogued in this section come out of the in-depth, qualitative interviews undertaken in family homes (2014-16). The following images show a selection of the archival photographs examined as part of the research process. I also include *George's Story* as part of *Primary Research II*. As I will go on and discuss although the photographs do not fit within the remit of examining Anglo-Turkish diaspora, the process of making these photographs was a crucial process in understanding and visually articulating an approach to capturing transcultural identities seen within the home.

Georges photographs

George is one of my local neighbours who permitted me to take photographs in his childhood family home shortly after his mother died in 2017. George is British with a Christian Greek-Cypriot heritage. These photographs do not specifically fit the purview of the thesis and therefore are not developed by visual research within the thesis. This research speaks to an ongoing interest in practices of transcultural identity. The opportunity of taking photographs in

George's familial home gave me the opportunity of thinking through how the interior of the family home can be understood as a place in which transcultural/trans-local identities are performed. What I was interested in investigating in these photographs, was the complex bricolage of cross-cultural identities that presented themselves throughout the home. I will go on to discuss these ideas in more depth in the following chapter, and the idiosyncrasy of family albums and how they perform as mnemonic devices. To conclude *Primary Research II*, these photographs - *George's Story* focus on the interior of his childhood familial home. This includes family photographs of George's mother and her grandchildren (George's children), which are casually displayed through the house, alongside a blend of talismans and trinkets. George's mother, a Greek-Cypriot had spent most of her adult life in London and yet her connection to her place of birth home(land) could be seen in the material culture of her home. This is visible in the display of the Greek orthodox religious icons throughout the home. In addition to these, there are ornamental china plates next to decorative miniature Greek urns, alongside a glass vitrine in the shape of Cyprus that holds memorabilia sand.

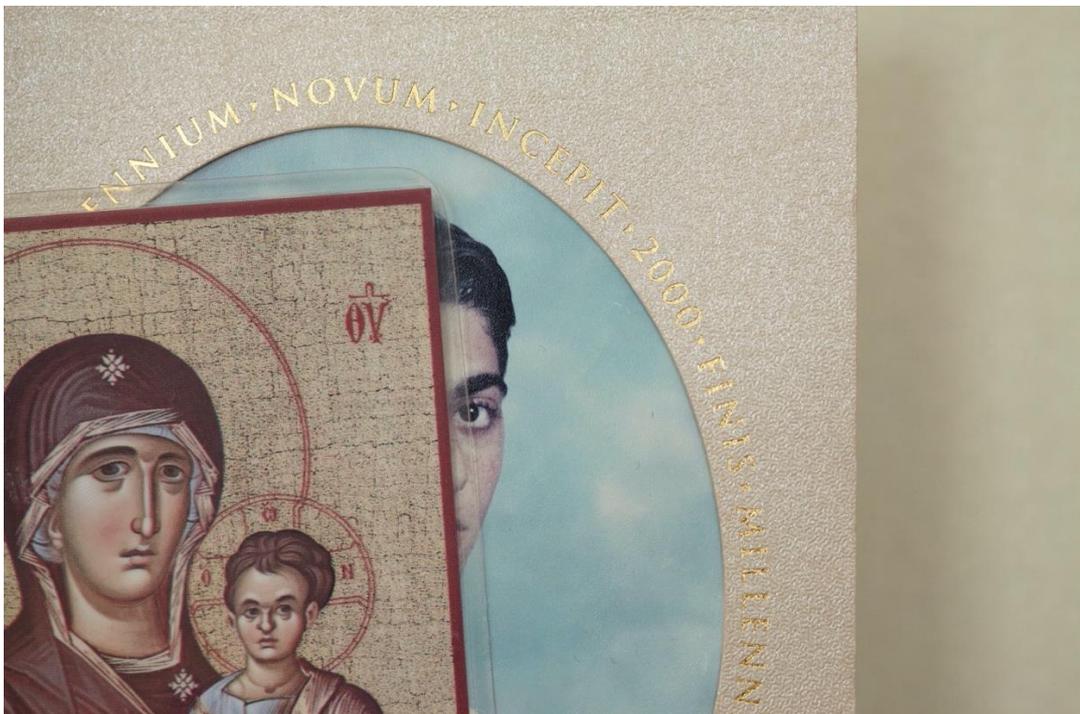


Figure 4.14



Figures 4.15



Figure 4.16



Figure 4.17



Figure 4.18



Figure 4.19



Figure 4.20

Figure 4.14 Figure 4.20 George's Story – Family Interior (I), (II), (III), (IV), (V), (VI), (VII), (VIII). Captured in one of my photographs – Figure 4.14 is a school portrait of a young boy which is overlaid by a laminated praying card of the Virgin Mary and Jesus as a young boy, are Latin words that broadly translate as something like - new beginning/new goal. Whilst these photographs more than likely mark the transition from one learning stage to another, I can't help but ponder on how they also, within the context of this work, signify new ways of seeing the ordinary and the everyday. These photographs stand in testament to - as referred to by Jo Spence (1986:83) – 'the personal is political'.⁸²

⁸² I have permission to share the photographs within this thesis.

Kamber's photographs

I met Kamber at the DYMAR Community Centre, when he attended the memory-based workshop I organised in 2014. He agreed to participate in the workshop and brought along a number of meaningful photographs of himself as a younger man. As a young man, he was an active participant in the PKK (the Kurdish Workers Party) and came to London in the 1980s to seek asylum. This is evidenced in Figures 4.21-24. The dialogue between us was not fluent because we did not have a common language. This meeting was a missed opportunity that highlighted my lack of preparation for the interview. I had not considered the limits of a common language between us and moving forward ensured there was always an interpreter available to support with translation. Given the opportunity to revisit these photographs with an interpreter I am intrigued to know more about Kamber's journey to Britain and his activities with the PKK.



Figures 4.21- 4.24

Leyla's photographs

Leyla was generous with time and her photographs. She participated in the photography memory workshop at the DYMAR centre in 2014, after which she invited me to her home a number of times where we did follow up interviews. She had collected and preserved a huge number of photographs that documented her early adult life in London. These in their entirety

covered 17 years and were overwhelming in terms of how to navigate. A number of themes emerged in the photographs. This included photographs of her children who were frequently photographed to send back to her extended family who remained in Turkey; photographs of Leyla with her children and her extended family in Turkey. There were also photographs of Leyla and her husband as young adults in London protesting about the treatment of the Kurds in Turkey, and a number of photographs of Leyla working at the sewing machines in north London. Leyla spoke a number of times about her love of her children and in particular her love of her son, this was reflected in the number of photographs of him. However, despite the quantity of photographs preserved there was a noticeable absence of recent photographs. Leyla's son at the time of the research was 20, in the photographs that were shared with me he was two or three years old, on occasion older but none of the photographs were current. I equate the lack of recent photographs to the development of digital photographic technologies. Even before the advent and ubiquity of camera phones, digital cameras meant that photographic prints could be bypassed. Instead Leyla sends digital files to her family in Turkey and in recent years hasn't printed any photographs for herself. Although I requested a number of times to see some more recent photographs this request was never followed up.



Figures 4.25- 4.28



Figure 4.29-4.30

Figures 4.25 Eren Leyla's son, Family photographs. Figures 4.26 Leyla and her Husband on a PKK march in Hackney, circa mid-1990s. Figure 4.27 Leyla and family in portrait. Figure 4.28 Leyla and the Women's group at DYMAR Community Centre (Figure 4.29 - repeated). Figure 4.30 - Figure 4.31 Leyla stitching in the north London factory.

Mercan's photographs

I visited Mercan's home in 2016. Her family albums were mostly studio-based and, on the whole, family portraits that visually documented cultural rites of passage. They included many photographs of her son in his circumcision outfit and formal family photographs. The photographs were preserved in display albums and were prepared for viewing on my arrival. The albums were presented with pride; however, it was the vernacular family photographs in particular, through which emotive narratives started to emerge. The following photographs are featured to give a flavour of Mercan's studio albums. A selected few vernacular photographs are presented and discussed in the following chapter withing the context of memory and belonging.

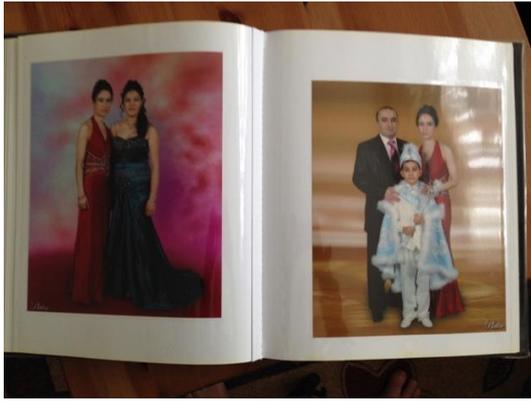


Figure 4.31

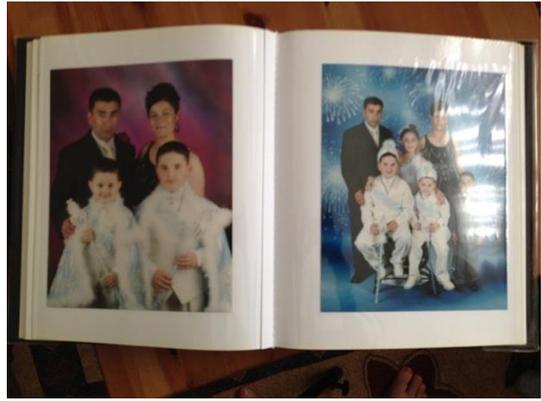


Figure 4.33

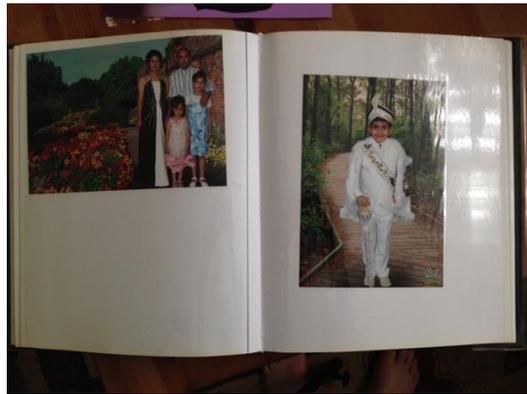


Figure 4.34



Figure 4.35



Figure 4.36



Figure 4.37

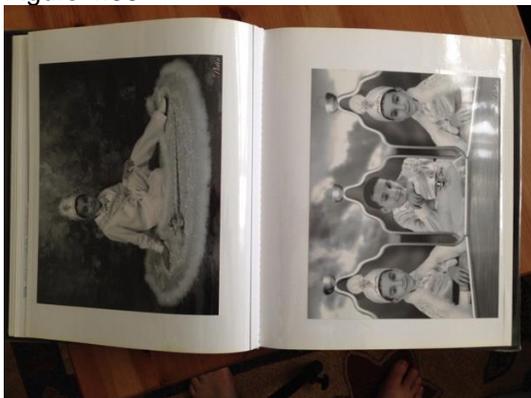


Figure 4.38



Figure 4.39

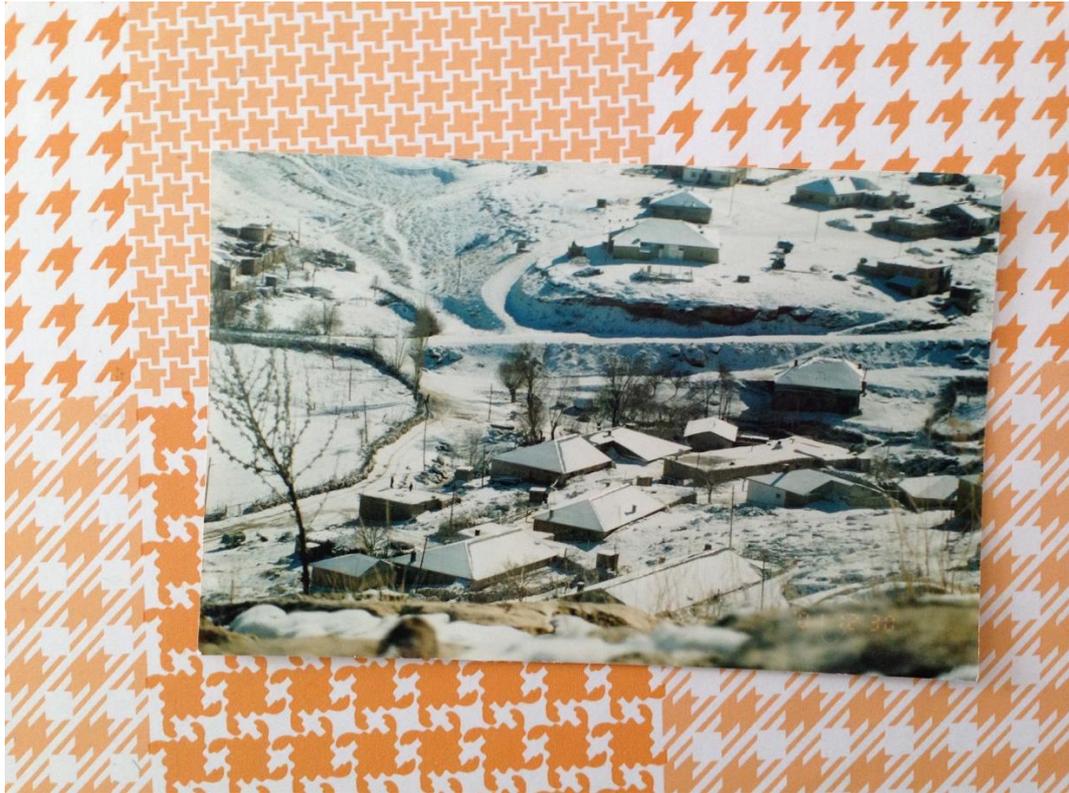


Figure 4.40

Figure 4.31- Figure 4.39 demonstrate the range of portrait studio photographs purchased by Mercan, made by Platin Studios to commemorate the circumcision ritual of her son. The featured photographs are only a selection of the extensive albums she commissioned. Mercan's son has been positioned in a variety of poses, on his own and alongside of his family. These portraits which have then been digitally relocated in front of a range of make-believe backgrounds, inclusive of animated cartoon characters, a white picket fence, a stone wall and natural landscapes. Figure 4.40 is a vernacular photograph of Mercan's home village, covered in snow. This background was taken from a series of vernacular photographs taken with the intention of using it as the digital background for one of the circumcision studio portraits that sits on one of the mantlepieces in her family home. Eventually, it was not selected as the background to use – the portrait can be seen in as Figure 5.9.

Metta's photographs

Metta brought along one photograph (and agreed I could reproduce this photograph), to the memory-based workshop at the DYMAR community centre in 2014. This is the only photograph she brought to the workshop and she told me the only photograph she had of herself as a young woman. She remembers this photograph with happiness as she recalls starting her new life in London. This is one of the photographs that I now look at and wish I had asked more questions about. Who is in the photograph with her and why

is this a significant photograph? When was it taken and why was it the only photograph? And I guess a primary question I omitted to ask was what had brought Metta to London anyway? Metta was not forthcoming with her narrative and although I saw her on a number of occasions after this at the DYMAR centre, I felt too shy to investigate this further. I do remember, however, one of the other workshop participants being very cross on my behalf that Metta had turned up with only one photograph and had very little to say about it. As I reflect on these interactions it is quite obvious that Metta had prepared her photograph ahead of time and willingly joined the workshop. It was my lack of preparation and probing with the questions that meant that our encounter into her relationship with her photograph never fully revealed itself.



Figure 4.41 Metta as a young woman (date unknown)

Gaye's photographs

I visited Gaye at her family home in 2017. She was at the time training as a psychologist and was interested in participating in the project. We met a number of times to discuss the aims and objectives of the project before I was invited into her family home. She has over 20 years of family photographs that documented her life in England. Most of her photographs are vernacular family photographs of family and friends, that capture her memories. Exact dates and circumstances have been forgotten, however, a couple of themes emerged through the interview. Gaye has worked hard to keep an intimacy with her two sisters despite the fact they all now live in different countries. Gaye has settled in England; one sister has remained in Turkey and another settled in Germany. For these sisters, photography has played an important part of keeping the familial connection between them. For example, to maintain that intimacy they photographed every aspect of the children's lives and shared them through photography. This can be seen in Gaye's many photographic albums.



Figure 4.42

Figure 4.42 is one of the examples of the many photography albums collected by Gaye since she has settled in England in the late 80s. To maintain familial closeness, she has built an archive of the growing families of her sisters. The photographs in this figure includes a close up of her nephews feet. This photograph

is of the feet of one of Gaye's nephew's shortly after his birth. With the rupture of migration she was not able to be with her sister at the birth. She requested a photograph of her new nephew's feet to feel the intimacy of him. This is a photograph that is over 15 years old but still held dearly. Gaye and her sisters continue the practice of exchanging photographs to stay close but in more recent years this practice has switched to Whats App exchanged via their mobile telephones.

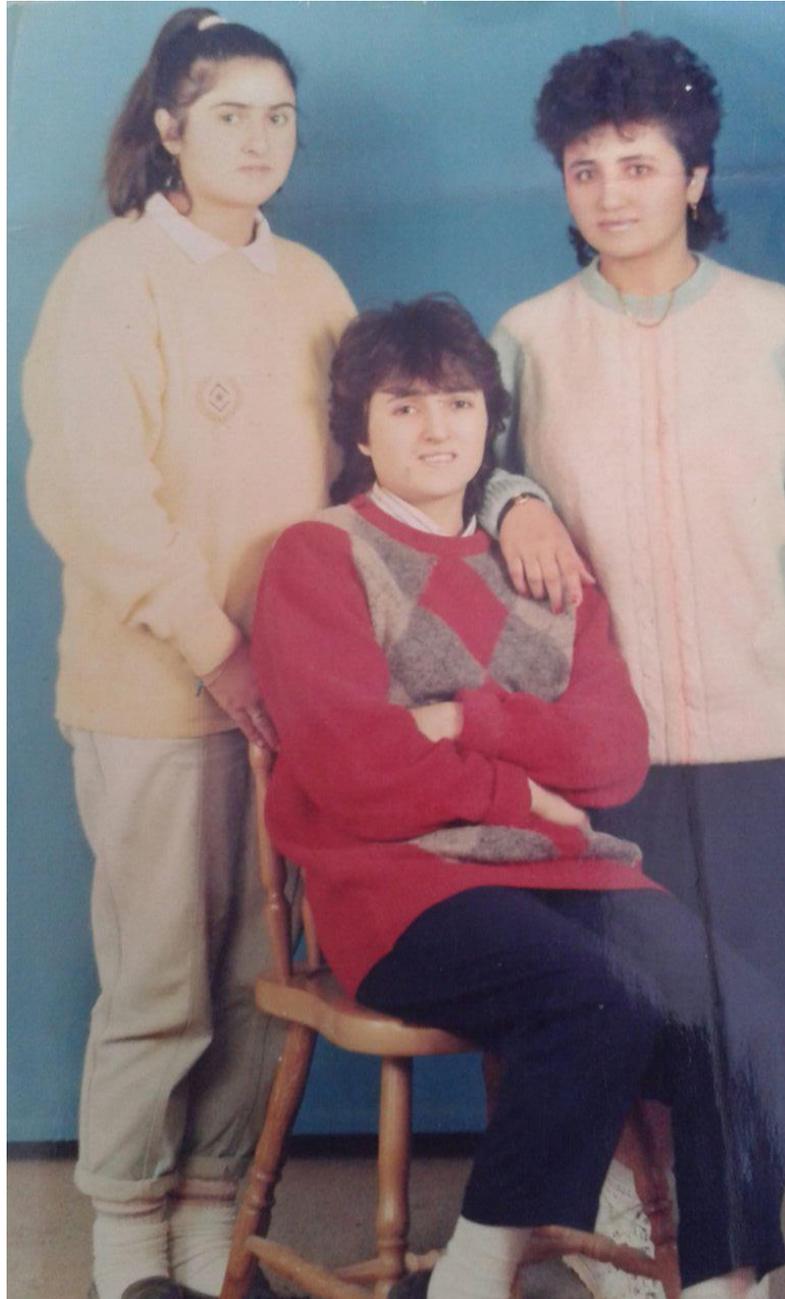


Figure 4.43

Figure 4.43 Gaye and her two sisters in posing for a family portrait in Turkey (exact date unknown – circa 1985-7). This photograph was commissioned at the request of her parents. Gaye sits in the centre of the photograph. This is an important photograph for Gaye – it was the last formal portrait the three sisters had made before she came to England to be a au pair. Although she has since returned to Turkey for holidays and to visit her family she never lived in Turkey again.

Chapter 5

Family Portraits: Looking at Photographs as Mnemonic Devices

In this thesis I have already argued that my research in north London photography studios can read through a conceptual framework that belongs to 160-year-old history and that this case study can offer insight into understanding the Anglo-Turkish community. To deepen this argument and strengthen my claim that photographs are an important part of identity building and creating a sense of belonging in this chapter I move the focus of this chapter to specifically look at the mnemonic value of the photographs studied as part of this research. I have examined the production of photographs and how this relates to the emergence of transcultural diasporic identities through these photographs. The primary and secondary research undertaken, alongside of the visual responses has enabled me to lay the groundwork for analysing these photographs. However, to develop the thesis more robustly around the mnemonic meaning of photographs for an Anglo-Turkish resident in the neighbourhood, I needed to adapt my research methods and think about how the photograph 'feels' as well as what it denotes and connotes. As introduced at the start of the research, in order to think critically about the mnemonic value of the photographs the research design and site needed to be redirected to owners of the photographs. This required the research site to be relocated to family photography, inclusive of studio and vernacular family photographs. To do this I move the research into the family home and investigate the critical relationship between photography and memory. A selection of the photographs collected during this process are catalogued in *Primary Research II*. This chapter investigates the emotional 'affect' of photographic images for their owners. To develop this idea, I share a selection of photographs sourced from one case study, that are indicative of the kinds of photographs studied. Through the material

culture of these family images, I explore how memory, belonging and loss are navigated.

There is a well-established history around the affective power of photography when animated through oral narration, by writers such as Annette Kuhn (1995, 2001), Martha Langford (2001), Patricia Holland (2006), Gillian Rose (2010) and Margaret Olin (2012) who argue that photographic images are essentially devices through which memory is created. In addition, Batchen (2004) refers to photographs as 'aide-de-mémoire', and Campt (2017) who reminds us to listen as well as look at photographs. Furthermore, in *Picturing the Family, Media, Narrative and Memory*, Silke Arnold de Simine (2018), builds on this literature by suggesting that a photograph simultaneously offers private and public insight into identity, adding that the idea of the family portrait has increasingly formed the basis for exploring collective pasts and cultural memory. There is an overlap in methodologies between art historical/photographic methods of photo-elicitation and that of visual anthropology. For example, anthropologist Sarah Pink when writing about the value of photography as form of knowing also points out that:

Photographs are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth. (Pink 2001: 17)

Although the cited writers' cross disciplinary boundaries and there are notable subtle nuances in their arguments, they all suggest photography is more than a visual practice, indeed the oral, the tactile and the visual are integral to the reading of a photographic image. Referring to these methods and intrigued to investigate the mnemonic value of photographic images for my research participants, I extend the research into the family home, to look at personal photographic images. In doing this, the intent of the research is to examine the emotional relationship my participants have with their photographs and investigate how this contributes to their sense of diasporic identity.

As the research site moves from the photography studio to the family home, the scope of the research shifts. At the beginning of the research the focus was on the constructions, aesthetics and symbolism of the photographs. However, to include research that studies the mnemonic relationship participants have with their photographs, the strategy for gathering research material needed to be reconsidered. The development of the research around photography, memory, and transnational belonging meant I needed to conduct in-depth qualitative research interviews with the owners of the photographs. In doing this, inevitably, the research moved into the family home. This shift made me consider what the concept of home is for as a diasporic transnational community living in a new (host) country. Arguably, the notion of 'home' is ever present in thinking through how diasporic communities relate to dual ideas of home that span across place of birth and the place of settlement. This point is raised in the introduction where questions about home and belonging are raised. To frame this discussion more precisely, I again refer to Ahmed (2000), who asks what it means as a migrant to leave behind a home as a place of belonging. She asks whether home can involve a co-existence of one's country of birth and country of residence when they are not the same place. This builds on Appadurai (1996) whose previous writing suggests a transnational home is more accurately described as a 'trans-local' home, that is a relationship with home and a sense of belonging which straddles more than one location. His writing implies a movable fluid experience of home, which is also advocated by Bell Hooks (2008) who writes:

Home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enable and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become (hooks 2008:148)

Following the argument that a transnational home is made up of interwoven 'trans-local', fragments from here and there, home can be understood as

somewhere less focused on location and more on an emotional relationship with what Lippard (1994) refers to as a multi-centred place called 'home'. After all, it is the imprinted ancestral traces that run through the home which is where meaning is made. These mnemonic traces, often as recollections imbued in objects in the home, as ways of investigating home as a place of belonging. This chapter looks at some of these objects, family photographs, figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, which are discussed as part of the research process. They are a mixture of home-made amateur family photographs and digital studio photographs. In this chapter I recall the interaction with one participant and her family in her family home. It feels appropriate within this context to refer to the main participant whose story is discussed by her name. With her consent to be named, this chapter shares Mercan's animated narratives that emanate out of her selected photographs. In doing this, the selected images act as mnemonic devices to retrieve Mercan's familial memories. One image-object is then examined in-depth. This one image-object, that has a physical presence in Mercan's home, is then examined within a critical context. It becomes a portal through which presence in absence, a common diasporic experience of family across borders, is explored. Through this image, collective cultural memories within a socio-global context are discussed. In conclusion to this chapter I look at the relationship Mercan's youngest daughter has with this one photograph. For Mercan's daughter, the photograph becomes what Hirsch (1997) calls a 'post-memory', through which she accesses her own traumatic familial history.

The process of research

To locate the research for this chapter I contextualise the research process relevant to this aspect of the study. Accessing participants' homes proves a more challenging task than I had anticipated. I share the same geographical 'local' with my participants, however, as raised in the introduction, culturally I am not part of the Anglo-Turkish community. I have a background in photography and visual anthropology, which I anticipated would afford me some common ground in the photography studios. However, given that I

needed to rethink the research process and assume a narrative-led research method this presented new challenges. In view of this situation, I am anxious about how to engage with the participants respectfully and sensitively. With the aim of finding willing participants to work with, I attempt a number of different ways to progress the research. This included, as an extension of the research in the photography studios, further conversations with some of the studio clients and then looking more broadly within the community to find ways of accessing participants. For example, as introduced in the previous chapter, I ran a memory-based workshop in one of the local community centres in north London which occurred through a complicated network of meetings. This opportunity turned out to be challenging due to noise levels in the centre and language barriers between myself and the participating workshop members. Nevertheless, it proved a useful 'first-meeting' which led onto follow up invitations to visit participants in their homes. In doing this, the encounters with each participant are in-depth, qualitative, and personal.

The meeting I recall in this chapter is an example of the complexity of the interviews with participants. I am introduced to Mercan through her eldest daughter, a young adult involved in the photographic industry in north London. I arrive at her home at the agreed time, carrying my camera, a note pad, a recording device and tripod. I have chocolates for Mercan and the offer of a family portrait in exchange for the interview.⁸³ On entering the home, I am very conscious of my performance as a guest. What I mean by this is I am uncertain how to interact in this family home. I am mindful of my outsider status and in acknowledging this I am aware that the practices and routines in this home maybe unfamiliar. I am conscious I could be perceived as impolite. For example, should I take off my shoes when I cross the threshold into the home? And having been invited into this private home, I am uncertain which rooms I am permitted to enter? I am thinking of sociologist Erving Goffman's (1959) primary and much cited writing on the

⁸³ Surprisingly although a family portrait was offered in exchange for the interview, this offer was rarely taken up by research participants. I can speculate that the participants had agreed to be interviewed to be polite and the slightly clumsy manner with which I conducted the interview didn't inspire them with confidence in my abilities to take a family portrait successfully.

presentation of the self in everyday life. He writes that 'performance' is not simply for special occasions, but in fact *all* interaction between actors (people) are performed, thus he argues the 'self', is presented in everyday life through specific gestures, expressions, practices and props. Within this context I am acutely aware that the presentation of the 'self' is cultural and that my performance as a stranger in this home may not meet the expectations of the host family. Initially, I am timid in asking questions, worried about how intrusive they appear and on reflection, I wonder what Mercan made of this nervous stranger on the threshold of her home, awaiting an invitation to enter her home?

Through contemplating questions such as how the home is organised, occupied and used, I start to familiarise myself with Mercan's place of home. The home is rented, which according to Mercan's daughter means permission to hang any visual mementos, inclusive of photographic images, are restricted by the lease agreement. As a consequence of this the home is decoratively sparse. I am searching for what anthropologist Daniel Miller (2008) in 'The Comfort of Things', refers to as objects that talk. He highlights that the objects with which we choose to surround ourselves reveal what he calls an 'authentic truth' (2008:2) about us, if they are listened to. Although I am unconvinced that Miller's use of the term 'authentic truth' accurately frames the idea of objects that talk, I agree that objects can talk – if animated with an oral narrative. However, I suggest this is a subjective narrative that informs the meaning of the object for the narrator, rather than an 'authentic truth' embedded in the object. Specifically, I am interested in photographic image-objects as the objects in the home that talk. This aligns with Elizabeth Edwards and Chris Morton (2015), and Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (2004b), writing about photographs as image-objects. They suggest that photographs are increasingly understood as mnemonic knowledge objects, which when discussed are imbued with personal and cultural meaning. The aim of narrating these images-objects in the home is to elicit narratives that otherwise might not be immediately present.

I had imagined the interview would be between myself and Mercan, discussing her relationship with her photographs. However, I underestimated the communication challenges we would face. I found that conducting interviews with Anglo-Turkish photographers in the high-street photography studios in our local area was mostly straightforward. The photographers are familiar with speaking English to customers inside and outside the Anglo-Turkish community. This is not always the case when conducting interviews in the family home. For example, on arriving at Mercan's home in north London, it quickly becomes apparent that the conversation is going to be a family affair, by this I mean that we have a collective conversation advocated through Mercan's eldest daughter, and the other family members present at the interview, who are her youngest daughter (who is 11) and her adult nephew. Although Mercan has lived in Britain for 14 years her interactions outside the family home and within the wider community has been limited. She stays at home with her children, only socialising outside the home in the local Kurdish-Turkish community centre, in north London. A consequence of this is that her command of English is limited, and I do not speak Turkish. A point of connection between us is when she learns my mother is Welsh. She was housed in Wales when she first arrived in Britain as an asylum seeker and remembers the compassion of her Welsh hosts. She likes the Welsh very much; she thinks they are friendly. I share memories of childhood summers spent with my grandparents in Wales. At this point she smiles broadly and is open to engage with my questions. Our conversation is bilingual and reliant on her eldest daughter to translate questions and answers between us. The pattern of the interview is, I ask a question in English and Mercan looks at her daughter for a Turkish translation, nodding to confirm she understands the question. It takes a short while to receive a response to my questions. The replies are discussed and contested between the family members in Turkish, before a collective response is agreed and shared with me in English. There are gaps, pauses, quizzical looks and disagreements between the participating family before the image narratives are relayed back to me in English. Something interesting arises through this process. Although there is a lack of clarity between Mercan's voice and that of her eldest daughter, what is clear is the emergence of a collective

narrative. Collective pronouns are used when discussing the photographs. They are referred to as 'ours', and 'we' is used when talking of the family's position in relation to the foretold narrative. This indicates a shared authorship to the narratives that illuminates the photographs.

Reading the photographs

One can ponder over what makes other people's family photographs so fascinating. They are the most ubiquitous sort of photography, which even when the subjects are unknown to us are intriguing to engage with. For Langford (2001) it is the intimacy in the narratives that reveals the value of the photographs. Olin (2012) highlights the interplay between touch and vision as a way of accessing the secrets of photographic images. She suggests that the photograph acts as a witness to the emotions embedded within it. I am curious about how seemingly generic family photographs, once animated, enable this family to reflect on their experience of migration and belonging. Accessing the stories that narrate these photographs is crucial to unlocking their emotional significance. To do this a mnemonic framework is needed, as advocated by Langford (2001), who suggests that an oral photographic performance is essential to elicit meaningful narratives around a photograph. This strategy she writes is a collective process through which deeply personal narratives emerge. Kuhn (2007) builds on this framework, suggesting that the photographic objects of discussion can be referred to as 'memory texts'. That is to say, she describes 'memory texts' as acts of memory which are performed with family images and albums. When discussing the value of the family photographic images as mnemonic devices Kuhn writes:

Personal and family photographs figure importantly in cultural memory, and memory work with photographs offers a particularly productive route to understanding the social and cultural uses and instrumentalities of memory.

(Kuhn 2007:283)

She goes on to write that memory work is not necessarily evidence of a 'truth' but can be seen as material to be mined for possibilities, adding that memory texts typically elicit a vignette of memories, anecdotes, fragments and feelings which are often not anchored to specific times. The process of recalling the narratives around photographs draws on our ability to recollect the past, which is a process of social remembering. Books are frequently relied on as is the internet as sources of knowledge whilst the value of remembering as a source of knowledge is often overlooked. This process of remembering through photographs allows recollections and preservations of our personal histories. To adopt a performative photographic method of photo-elicitation and enable these photographs to speak I ask Mercan to choose a selection of her family photographs to discuss.⁸⁴ I am uncertain exactly what to expect, similar situations have produced a mixture of self-organised photographic family albums, small quantities of loose 6x4 inch glossy colour photographs kept in plastic process sleeves, and in one case 11 years' worth of precious photographic memories compressed inside a tea cosy. In order to focus the conversation, after initial questions around the indexical organisation of the photographs, without further guidance I request that three photographs are selected to discuss more closely. Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 are chosen by Mercan. They are two vernacular family photographs and one professional studio portrait.

The subsequent discussed material gives a flavour of the biographical narratives that accompany Mercan's photographs. It quickly becomes apparent that she has chosen emotionally charged photographs to discuss. Her relationship with these photographs goes beyond the surface, by this I mean the construction of the photograph is secondary to emotions imbued in them. The following narratives offer insight into the emotional attachment Mercan has to these photographs.⁸⁵ In sharing a close reading of her photographs the importance they hold for Mercan can be understood, and at

⁸⁴ The research method was verbally explained to research participants when ethics forms were signed.

⁸⁵ I have permission to reproduce and discuss these family images. As there are currently no plans to reproduce these images outside this PhD research, I have decided not to redact facial features or use modesty bars across the images.

the same time gives an insight into her sense of belonging in Britain. In figure 5.1, a small baby is wrapped in a white blanket, a child's dummy lays on top of this baby. Gazing at this photograph, Mercan is momentarily lost for words. She is emotionally overcome and falters with her words. She holds her hand on her chest to calm her breathing; struggling to relay the narrative of this image. The baby in the photograph is her youngest daughter, who is now 11 years old. The photograph was taken shortly after she gave birth to her. Although it is unclear in the photograph, I am told that in this photograph the newly born baby lies in a hospital incubator. Mercan goes on to explain that she had a difficult delivery and nearly died in childbirth. My assumption is that in recalling this memory it evokes anxiety and pain connected to the trauma of birth and ask if this is the case. I am corrected in this assumption by Mercan's eldest daughter who confirms her mother is happy, really happy to see this photograph. For Mercan, the photograph signifies a great achievement. For Mercan this photograph signifies safety and security for her child – that is a healthy child born in Britain who has the right to apply to be a British citizen.



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2



Figure 5.3

Figure 5.1 Mercan's daughter straight after her birth, personal family album circa 200. Figure 5.2 Mercan, the Mayor of Haringey, Mercan's husband, personal family album circa 2006. Figure 5.3 Mercan's son's circumcision portrait, personal family album 2007. These images are discussed in following section of this chapter.

Mnemonic connections of the image-objects

There are three people in figure 5.2, these are Mercan, the Mayor of Haringay, and her now estranged husband. The photograph is taken indoors in a formal setting, in the background of the photograph hangs a 'Union Jack' flag. The Mayor wears his full formal civic regalia, inclusive of red cloak and ceremonial gold livery chain around his neck. Between Mercan and her husband, they hold a piece of A4 white paper towards the camera. Due to poor quality of the photograph, it is unclear what is on the paper and why this paper is important. However, the location and the gesture of presentation of the paper suggests this photograph evidences something significant. In fact, the paper marks an important milestone for Mercan. The photograph was made to commemorate the day she became a British citizen. She smiles at this image. For Mercan, this photographic image is an emotive object that symbolises her belonging to a new homeland. More than the paper certificate that authorises the citizenship, this image has the power to evoke the feeling of becoming a British citizen, and with it the guarantees of civil liberties and freedoms of being a British citizen.

A cursory glance at figure 5.3 without the cultural context leaves me perplexed. I find this photograph complex. I cannot locate its meaning, because the combination of elements in the photograph are unfamiliar and therefore difficult to read. It is a professional studio portrait of a young boy of maybe eight or nine years, made in a north London photography studio. As discussed in chapter 4, this style of digital portrait is commonly made to commemorate the circumcision ritual. In this photograph the boy wears the traditional white Ottoman-Turkish outfit worn for the occasion and sits on a child's rocking horse. Symbolic parallels can be drawn between the boy on the rocking horse and the practice of the boy riding into his circumcision celebrations on a horse, which is also discussed in some depth in chapter 4. By placing the young boy on the rocking horse this important ritual practice is connoted. In addition to the unusual props in the portrait, I find the background to this portrait visually confusing. Using digital post-production techniques, an animated world intersects with the boy's portrait. A bright

green background and animated caricatures have been digitally added to the portrait. The visual motifs draw from the countryside, this includes a green field, trees, butterflies, rabbits, a squirrel, a tortoise, a woodpecker, a treehouse and a white picket fence. As an outsider to the customs and visual tastes of the Anglo-Turkish community I cannot understand the logic of these visual motifs. I can see what they denote but the connotations are unclear. Questions directed to Mercan about the choice of background and surrounding portrait *mise-en-scène* fail to reveal any further information about the photograph. The construction of the photograph seems to have been determined by the photography studio that made it. Follow up questions with that studio reveals little additional information about this photograph.⁸⁶ However, I am advised that the *mise-en-scène* background of Western style motifs are generic images used with *all* of the children's portraits made in this Anglo-Turkish studio. The visual characters used with the portrait, according to the studio, are a testament to the fact that children like to see the colour, pattern and animals with their portraits.⁸⁷ In earlier chapters of this thesis I have introduced the idea that there is a history of transcultural exchanges of ideas that blur binary representations of Occidental and Oriental, here I also suggest that this image also demonstrates an active exchange of ideas and practices across cultures. With a reflexive awareness that my reading of the photograph derives from a hegemonic Occidental framework, I speculate on how the additional digital propping to this child's portrait informs its reading. I note that the visual propping in the image draws inspiration from a Western vocabulary of representation seen in children's animation, such as the white picket fence and animated animals. I am immediately reminded of the visual language used in the original Disney version of *Mary Poppins* (1964) film which has since been reimagined in *Mary Poppins Returns* (2018). Specifically, I recall the chalk drawing scene in which Mary, Bert and the children jump into the drawing and enter an enchanted, make-believe world. In this imagined world

⁸⁶ This image was assembled in one of the local Anglo-Turkish photography studios. Although the studio is identified during the research as many years have passed since it was made the person who made the image cannot be located.

⁸⁷ See *The Sampler*, for further examples of popular studio backgrounds in the Anglo-Turkish photography studios.

the adults and children interact with an animated *mise-en-scène*. They are carefree, safe and protected in this imaginary world. Although this hypothesis does not specifically answer my questions about the *mise-en-scène* portrait propping, I can see the influence of Western aesthetics and wonder whether the popularity of these make-believe worlds in the children's portraits metaphorically offer a pseudo-sanctuary for the children that inhabit them?

The discussed photograph, figure 5.3, is precious for Mercan, as it visually commemorates an important rite of passage for her only son. It has been carefully presented in a traditional family photographic album alongside 11 other photographic portraits of this boy of similar style and construction. When discussing this photograph, the cellophane film that holds it in place in the album is peeled back so it can be seen more clearly. Mercan gazes at the photograph, her hand brushes over it - she pauses, breathes and starts to tell me about this photograph. Within this oral framework, Mercan's memories and recollections are reignited and shared. Mercan's daughter explains that her mother is proud of these portraits, they are old photographs but remain significant visual markers of her son's transition through the important ritual of circumcision. Without the retrospective act of re-viewing these photographs and adding what Langford (2001) calls the 'oral photographic performance' to stimulate the photographic narrative; and making a close observation of the haptic relationship Mercan has with these images, I could have overlooked the crucial cultural significance of these photographs. Through this oral performance the nuances of these generic photographs are personalised.⁸⁸ The biographical narration that animates the photographs proves a successful method of piecing together Mercan's relationship with them. In selecting specific photographs and sharing these narratives the significance of these photographs can be heard. More about Mercan's relationship with her children, her own migrant experience and her connection to Britain is revealed and in enacting this process, Mercan's past is carried to the present.

⁸⁸ When I write generic, I mean they are common within the photography studios studied as part of this research.



Figure 5.4 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Private Interior I* 2013-2018

The audible narrative

Inevitably the conversation moves away from the selected photographs. My interest is piqued by a large digital family portrait on display in the main living room, figure 5.4 The photograph is approximately 20x40cm and is presented in a large golden frame. It sits on the mantelpiece, leaning against the chimney. I refer to Hurdley's (2006) social research that looks at the placement of objects in the family home, as a pivotal method through which to investigate the value of this image-object. Her research suggests that the management of a domestic display in the home is an active meaning-making process conceptualised as a performance for others. She adds that the

mantelpiece as the focal point of the room, and as the most public place in a family home it is the primary space on which to make a domestic display. It is a 'power space', she argues, on which objects of value are publicly viewed within the home. Hurdley's suggestion that the placement of objects on the mantelpiece is noteworthy. The discussed photograph (figure 5.4) is the only photograph on the mantelpiece, and moreover the only visual image on display in the home.⁸⁹ It is a treasured, it is placed in the most public place in the home and acts as an anchor in the room. In the prime viewing spot in the main living area that invites visitors to enquire about its narrative. I am intrigued to know more about this photographic image.

It is a complicated digital photograph that is pixilated, disjointed and lacks visual cohesion. I am told by Mercan that it is an important family portrait. However, it is an unconventional portrait that does not follow standard practices of formal familial portrait photography. It does not capture what Rose (2010) defines as family photography, this she describes as key moments of family life, such as births, weddings and marriages, when changes are commemorated. It comprises of four separate vernacular portrait images (one of the original images has two people in it) and an internet sourced background on which the portraits sit. The portraits are of Mercan's sister-in-law, that is her husband's sister; the husband of her sister-in-law, and their three children. Most of the photograph is taken up by the head and shoulders of the two adults, their portrait likeness is neatly anchored to the bottom of the image. The man wears a formal jacket over an unbuttoned checked shirt. The woman is dressed modestly in a long-sleeved patterned blouse, her hair is covered by a scarf. Their posture is that of a traditionally posed couple. What I mean by this is that the man's arms are placed around the shoulders of the woman, which suggests an intimate or familial relationship between them. The three-individual cameo-style portraits of children are placed across the top section of the photograph. All of the

⁸⁹ I have mentioned above that the lease agreement prohibits the hanging of any personal mementos on the wall. It is therefore noteworthy that this one photograph has been chosen to display on this mantelpiece.

portraits have been arranged on top of the digital golden wheat field background over which the sun is setting.

There are sparse visual references for the viewer to connate the meaning of this photograph and little interest is shown by Mercan in discussing its aesthetic qualities. When asking specific questions about its construction the responses are vague. Information about this digital image such as who commissioned it, who provided the original vernacular photographs and why the background was selected, lack clarity. Speculation can be made about the meaning of the background of this family portrait, a wheat field at sunset. Writer Annebella Pollen (2018) when writing about the ubiquity of mass-produced sunset photographs suggests that, although without doubt a sunset is a visual cliché, that is an idealised background with a conventional sameness, these repetitions exist as visual allegories that show what matters to the producers/owners of the photographs. My suggestion is this visual cliché is employed to emphasize the meaning of this image; in this context the sunset indicates the end of something. However, whether this is true or not cannot be confirmed because Mercan has in fact forgotten who commissioned the photograph and why aesthetics choices were decided, but despite this, the meaning of the photograph remains ever-present. Mercan's eldest daughter thinks an auntie commissioned it but is uncertain so can add nothing more to this question. What is interesting about this conversation is that although the details of its production lack clarity, the sharing of the narrative gathers momentum as the story unfolds. For Mercan, attention is paid to the meaning of the photograph, not what it looks like. Camp (2017), when writing about listening to images, speaks of how the narrative that accompanies an image gives us access to an affective register through which meaning is made. This photographic image sees the meaning shift from that of the original vernacular portraits as it is narrated. The connotation is unlocked by the significant narrative attributed to the image. The account that accompanies this image takes the audience beyond the visual surface and reveals a traumatic familial narrative. Against this narration, this photograph is audible. With the exception of the older man in the image, all the people depicted in this image died being illegally smuggled from Turkey

to Britain. It is a memorial family portrait constructed in digital post-production to remember and honour the family members in death. The meaning of this photograph is anchored by its narrative, within the wider cultural context of death, bereavement and photography.⁹⁰

Photography and memorial practices

In order to anchor meaning to this photograph I have undertaken secondary research around the cultural histories of Turkish photographic memorial practices, in addition to those that originate in Western Europe/North America. I note that when I first meet Mercan, she refers to herself as Turkish only through the biographic narrative conversation associated with figure 5.4 does it become apparent that she identifies as British, with a Kurdish-Turkish heritage. There is a geographical displacement of the ethnic-Kurds across the world, that means identifying cultural practices, such as memorial practices are complicated. In his introduction to Susan Meiselas (1997) book, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History*, Van Bruinessen writes about the lack of visibility of the Kurdish people and Kurdish culture. He highlights that there is no longer a homeland for Kurds. The country of Kurdistan he writes was dissolved after the WWII, when the Middle East was redrawn, and the Kurds were left with no homeland. In recent years, the Kurds have become a persecuted ethnic group that live on land that straddles the borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In Turkey, Kurdish language and practices are banned and Kurds are frequently a target of violence and discrimination. The Kurdish identity is assimilated and repressed under a broader Turkish identity. This makes the Kurds an ethnic culture subject to erasure, which means researching and identifying Kurdish cultural practices is complicated. Although there is no evidence of memorial

⁹⁰ This is a private image owned by my participant, which has been shared with her extended family. My participant has agreed to share the narrative of this image and I have been given permission to reproduce and discuss this image. However, there is politic in doing this. The people in this image have not given their permission to be either part of this image or this chapter. This presents an ethical dilemma that needs to be acknowledged, if not completely mitigated. Although it has become common practice to share images of the dead as narratives of migration, there is a responsibility with sharing any image when the subject of that image is unable to give consent. This includes acknowledging the privacy of the subjects and working sensitively with their image.

practices for ethnic Kurdish-Turks, this is not the case for Iraqi-Kurds. There are two current examples that demonstrate a resurgence of memorialising the Kurds. These are the above mentioned, Meiselas's (1997) work *Kurdistan: In the shadow of history*, online and in book format that brings together her photographs that evidence the genocide of Iraqi-Kurds, together with historical maps of the region, heritage portraits and archival documents that confirm the suppression of Kurdish identity inflicted on the Kurds under Saddam Hussain in Iraq, in the late 1980s.⁹¹ In addition, the online *The Kurdistan Memory Program*, in existence since 2004 that documents the plight of the Iraqi-Kurds through story-telling and pictures.⁹² Both case studies focus on the plight of Kurdish-Iraqis with an over-arching theme of the erasure of Kurdish history. These examples seek to counteract the erasure of the Kurds but neither example specifically mentions a history of memorial practices for ethnic-Kurds. When writing about the Anglo-Kurdish-Turkish community, Ipek Demir (2012) points out that it is a common occurrence for Kurdish-Turks to initially identify themselves as Turkish. In this instance, Demir refers to a Kurdish-Turkish identity as an 'invisible' diasporic community. In fact, he identifies that ethnic Kurds from Turkey, despite ethnic suppression in Turkey, find they have more in common with ethnic Turks from Turkey than ethnic Kurds who have other homelands, such as Syria, Iran and Iraq. This he suggests is because there is a shared homeland in Turkey. Thus, for reasons of both common homeland and ethnic security, ethnic Kurdish-Turks are often indistinguishable as a diasporic community in London from the diasporic Turkish community. Within this community Kurdish-Turks have adopted Turkish cultural practices and assimilate with a Turkish identity.

In the case of memorial practices there is not a history of remembering loved ones through photography in Turkey. According to Pelin Aytemiz (2013) there is not even a direct word in Turkish to define the ritual of photographing and depicting the dead. This he explains is because there is no tradition of

⁹¹ 'Kurdistan: In the shadow of history' was a long-term online archive project (1991-2008) <https://www.susanmeiselas.com/archive-projects/kurdistan/>

⁹² 'The Kurdistan Memory Program' <https://kurdistanmemoryprogramme.com/>

visually representing the living in Islamic culture. However, contrary to Aytemiz's assertion that there is no tradition of depicting the living in Islamic culture, contemporary scholars such as Behdad and Gartlen (2013), Öztuncay (2015) and Sheehi (2016) write about figurative photographic portrait in early Ottoman photography (discussed in chapter 7) .⁹³ Nonetheless, when writing about broader practices of remembering the dead through photography in early Ottoman photography, Öztuncay (2015) writes that it was quite a rare occurrence in the Ottoman Empire. This he equates to the fact that portraits of living people were frowned on by conservative Muslims, in addition to which, there was little demand for any kind of memorial photography from the Armenian and Greek communities in the Ottoman Empire.

Conversely, there is an established history of using photography as a memorial practice in Western Europe and North America.⁹⁴ An overview of this, starting with Victorian photography, can be read in Linkman's (2011) book *Photography and Death* which includes examples of post-mortem photography (historically referred to as the last sleep) which is the picturing of the deceased after death and funeral photography and includes documentary photographs of grief stricken mourners alongside of their recently deceased loved ones.⁹⁵ It also includes contemporary examples of practices of photography and death, such as Briony Campbell's (2010/11) *The Dad Project*. Campbell's *The Dad Project* investigates her relationship with her father as he is dying with cancer. Beyond catharsis, in this work she examines her relationship with death and mortality. Furthermore, Linkman refers to the production of memorial portraits of dead relatives as a Memento Mori, that is a memory in death. In Memento-Mori photographs, the deceased are represented when still alive, by this I mean it is common for vernacular family photographs to be used as Memento-Mori images. The discussed image, that sits on Mercan's mantelpiece, is a memory portrait

⁹³ As a reminder, see chapter 3 for further information about early Ottoman photography.

⁹⁴ The scope of memorial photography is a discipline in its own right that extends beyond the scope of this essay.

⁹⁵ Post-Mortem photography draws its history from 1600s posthumous commemorative painting.

created to remember loved ones in death. Anthropologist Jay Ruby (1995) when writing about the agency of photographs as part of memorial practices, highlights their value for the mourner. He writes:

Photographs of the deceased provide significant assistance in getting survivors to accept the finality of the loss and begin the essential reintegration of the mourner into society (Ruby 1995:174)

This digitally montaged photograph is a testament to the family members who did not survive the journey to a new life in Britain. Mercan recollects the tragic journey of her loved ones, alongside which she narrates her own journey to Britain. She imparts details of being hidden in an articulated lorry alone for many hours without food water or any idea of where she was. She draws on these traumatic memories to construct meaning in this image. Marita Sturken's (1999) writing on the multifaceted meaning imbued in photographs of the dead, is a useful reference point that discusses the value of memorial photography for the owner, she writes:

The personal photograph is an object of complex emotional and cultural meaning, an artifact used to conjure memory, nostalgia, and contemplation. The photograph of personal value is a talisman, in which the past is often perceived to reside so that is re(-)experienced. It evokes both memory and loss, both in a trace of life and the prospect of death. Yet while the photograph maybe perceived as a container for memory, it is not inhabited by memory as much as it produces it; it is a mechanism through which the past can be constructed and situated within the present. (Sturken 1999:178)

Sturken highlights that a photograph as an object of memory moves the past into the present. The kinds of photographs she refers to can typically be found in a diversity of places such as personal lockets and brooches (Ruby 1995, Batchen 2004) and Victorian photo albums (Linkman 2011). In addition, Batchen (2004) highlights that in addition to photography a memory portrait can also be an object from that person such as a lock of hair that is

carried with the owner/wearer. More recently Gil Pasternak (2010) expands this history by highlighting the presence of memorial photography as figurative photo-plaques on tomb stones in Israel.⁹⁶ In figure 5.4 the past is reconstructed in the present and the image-object is a container for memory.⁹⁷ This image performs as an emotionally charged mnemonic object, an image in memoriam. In presenting this photograph as a memorial image in an intimate setting, it is gazed at, touched and discussed, indeed it performs as what Batchen (2004) calls an 'aide-de-mémoire', that is an aid with which to remember. It contains a cultural narrative which is accessed through Mercan's biographical account. For Mercan's youngest daughter who was born in England, this image carries a history, an inherited traumatic memory but not a lived experience. This gives her a different relationship with the photograph. To better understand the fluidity of meaning of this photograph and how it enables mourning practices across generations, I refer to Hirsch's (1997) writing around 'post-memory'. When discussing her relationship to her own family history of the holocaust, Hirsch talks about 'post-memory' (Hirsch 1997:21-22). She speaks of 'post-memory' as a way of connecting with a past shaped by traumatic events to the present. She points out that 'post-memory' is an inherited memory, but not one that is experienced. Thus, Hirsch suggests that a trace of the memory can be transferred through the agency of the image. Through the prism of 'post-memory', Mercan's youngest daughter has commenced a conversation with the photograph and claimed ownership of the familial narrative.

Concluding comments

Drawing from a broader category of family photography, the focus of this chapter reflects on the mnemonic value of personal family photographs and how a sense of belonging can be created through the photographs. Although it moves away from the initial focus on studio photography, it is a crucial

⁹⁶ This point is also made by Ruby (1995). Memorial photography as figurative plaques on tomb stones is not specific to Israel. Memorial plaques can be seen across Europe in France, Italy and Greece. However, according to Pasternak (2010) it is noteworthy in Israel because it is a new and subversive practice.

⁹⁷ Ruby (1995) writes that there is a history to migrating images of the dead into images of living family members. He writes that in the absence of a family member (absence in death) this makes a family portrait complete.

move in order to understand the meaning and value placed on the photographs for the diasporic participants of this case study. Using one case study as an example, I look at how personal and familial memories are imbued in these images and look at how a sense of belonging is built through an affective register. Through these photographs Mercan navigates her relationship with her children and negotiates her sense of belonging in London, England. The family portrait (figure 5.4) that sits on the mantelpiece in the main living area, is a complex digitally constructed image, made in the photography studio using existing vernacular family portraits. This image is a counterpoint to the discussed three images vernacular images. In figures 5.1-5.3 there are moments of celebration and success. They are the birth of Mercan's youngest daughter in a Western hospital, her celebration of British citizenship and the freedom to celebrate and commemorate her son's circumcision rites of passage from boyhood to manhood. Figure 5.4 has a very different message; it is a testament to the family members who only made the journey in photographs and now live as an image in the homes of the family members who were unable to complete the journey to the new homeland.

Although specific details about the construction of the image remain vague, there is no mystery as to why this photograph was created. Meaning is made through an affective register, that is the oral narration and haptic interaction with this photograph, rather than its visual accuracy. This process is what Langford (2001) calls the social performance of memory, and for Kuhn (2011) it is a memory text. The photograph is what Batchen (2004:64) calls a 'tangible metaphor', whose significance rests on the narrative rather than the visual. In this instance, the photograph is a material marker for the untimely death of these family members. It becomes a place in which to remember them in death. In sharing the narrative attached to this photograph, it simultaneously offers private and public insight into its meaning. In doing this, Western European cultural practices of mourning the passing of loved ones with photography are adopted and adapted. The narrative becomes a coherent ritual through which grief is shared. It becomes a testament to the violent nature of death and plays an important role in mitigating the finality of

death. In the absence of the family members, their presence is mediated through this photograph. In sharing the narrative of the photograph, in addition to discussing her own vulnerabilities of arriving in Britain as an illegal migrant, Mercan positions herself within the socio-cultural network of the narrative. The meaning of this photograph goes beyond the personal, it speaks to a broader cultural narrative that hints at the fragility and rupture of migration. The narrative account is repeatedly told, and the memory shifts. In doing so, the past is re-negotiated in the present. The narrative transcends from a personal experience to a collective narrative, and finally it becomes a post-memory, as it is re-absorbed across generations into the present.⁹⁸ What I am suggesting is, in short, this photograph helps navigate this family's history. It allows recollections and presentations of a highly significant familial narrative and acts as a certification of continual presence of these family members and is a reminder of the lives unlived. In addition, it facilitates a collapse of boundaries between past and present and enables Mercan and her family to deal with the rupture that separates family members in death.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ This image is distributed to extended family members in order to commemorate the death of their loved ones.

⁹⁹ *In Doing Family Photography* (2010) Rose eloquently argues that looking at images of the dead requires active work from the viewer to enact ethical responsibility. She is critical of mass media usage of images of the dead, as a way of activating emotional responses to a media narrative. In using images in this way, she argues that the complexity of the image is reduced to symbols of grief. She adds although that there are no agreed universal ethics when viewing images of the dead, a process of reflection is needed. Rose advises at the very least an acknowledgement of this ethical issue and sensitivity to the subjects is required when using vernacular family images of people who are not able to give consent for the usage of their images.

The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs

The aim of the research in the family homes is to investigate the mnemonic value of the photographs for the owners. If I attempt to understand these photographs as mnemonic objects as I have suggested in the preceding text, they can also be understood as active agents in the home that tell a story for the owners. I have discussed how the photographs are caressed, passed around and talked about and I also highlight how they are displayed within the home reveals much about the value of the photographs. This is an argument pointed to more broadly by Hurdley (2006, 2013) when writing about materiality, memory and belonging. She foregrounds the idea that the display of objects in the home is paramount to understanding their meaning for the home dweller. She goes on to suggest that the practice of belonging is played out through the display of objects in the home; they are, she argues, act of remembering. *The emotional life of transcultural photographs* attempts to document the critical placing of the family photograph in the homes of the research participants. I purposely withhold specifics about each photograph, so the images suggest rather than describe their relationship with their surroundings. I am interested in how these photographs are woven into the lives of the participants and displayed in their homes. A long-lost loved one, a nephew growing up in another country, a prized album of important family events, everyone has some of these experiences – nuanced and personalised. This visual response attempts to capture some of the places of display of these most personal cherished photographs that sit within the fabric of the participants' homes.



Figure 5.5 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior II* 2013-2018

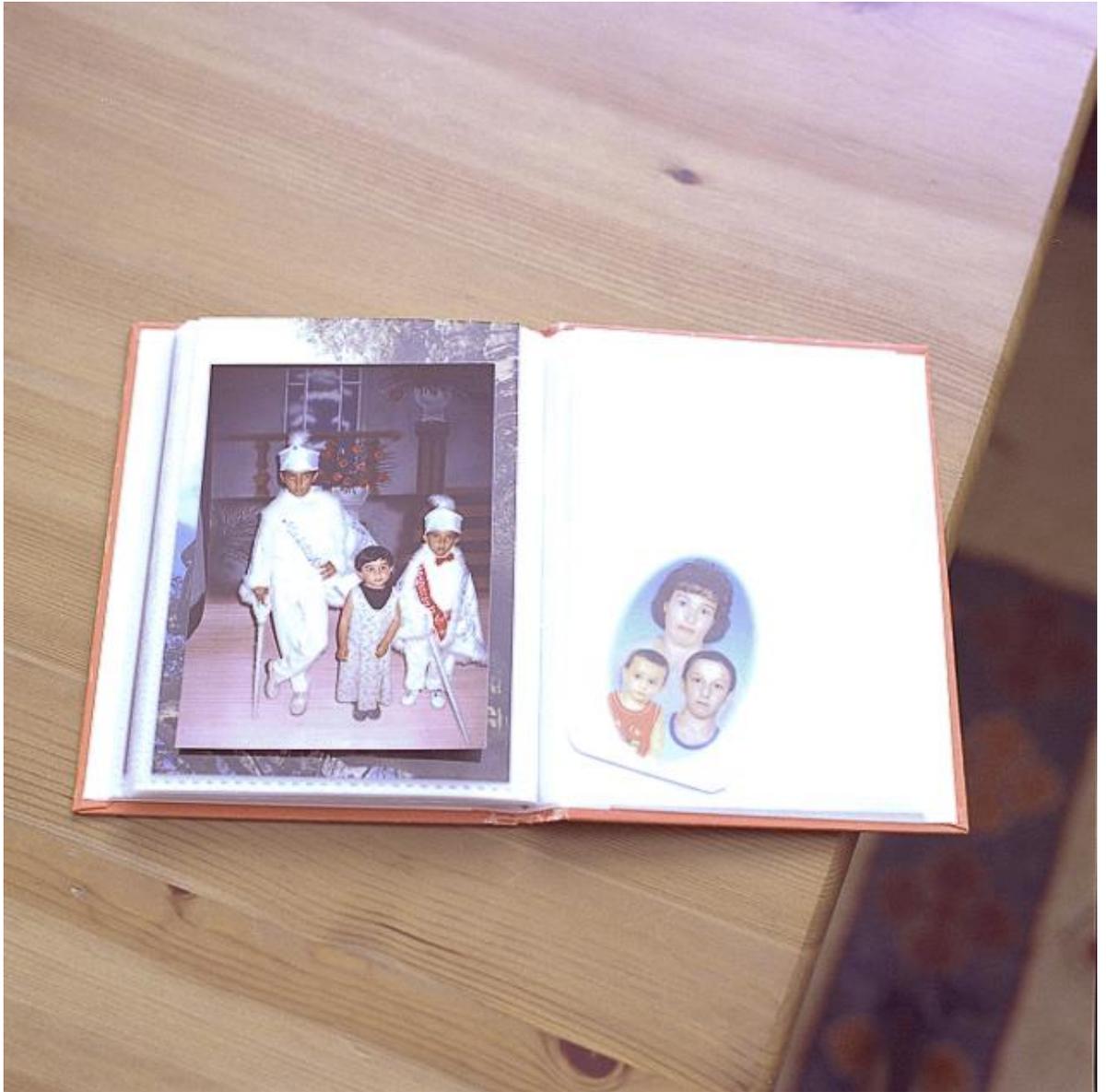


Figure 5.6 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior III 2013-2018*



Figure 5.7 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior IV* 2013-2018



Figure 5.8 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Private Interior V* 2013-2018
This photography is also featured in the introduction to offer a flavour of the visual research and is re-presented here in the broader context of this body of work.



Figure 5.9 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior VI* 2013-2018



Figure 5.10 *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs: Intimate Interior VII* 2013-2018

Conclusion

I begin this conclusion by highlighting and reflecting on some of the aims of the research, its parameters and the contribution it makes to new knowledge. The thesis looks at contemporary high-street studio photography made in my neighbourhood of north London. The research was undertaken in order to understand how transcultural Anglo-Turkish identities are experimented with and performed through studio photographs at a time when digital photography was being introduced into the studio and with it a paradigm shift in how images were made was taking place. The intention of the research is to examine the emergence of transcultural identities as visualised through the prism of photography and also consider the mnemonic value of the photographs for their diasporic owners. To do this I turned my critical eye onto high-street photographs and asked significant questions of the photographs. Arguably, looking at contemporary studio photography as a subject of research is a neglected and under researched category of photography, which is usually only studied when its productions are no longer in living use but archived as surviving specimen of past practices. In selecting a contemporary case study, I have been able to gather material from the studio photography at the time they were made and in doing so I built a living archive of photographs to examine. The main contribution of this thesis builds an argument which locates the photography studio as the site of research, wherein diasporic identities are mediated. Much literature has been referenced that retrospectively examines the socio-cultural meaning of studio photographs. Indeed, I establish this as the conceptual framework early on in the thesis, and as I will go on and summarise. In the case of the Dyche archive in Birmingham, I provide relevant literature (Camp 2017, Connell 2012, Hall 1984) to ground the argument of this thesis that looks at how diasporic communities mediate their identities in the studio space. I go on to claim that the photography studio is a transnational space in which

transcultural practices take place, which is both an original and unique contribution to the literature on studio photography. Therefore, my study extends the existing literature, and develops new ways of examining transcultural identity.

I contextualise this empirical research by drawing from a range of theoretical and contextual frameworks that place this study within existing histories of studio and vernacular photography. I use a range of observational ethnographic methods, interview techniques as well as visual documentation and creative responses to do this. As demonstrated in this thesis, studio photography as a genre plays an important role in capturing and authenticating traditions, rituals and life affirming events, such as family parties, weddings and formal studio portraits which can equally apply to the present as well as the past. The thesis contributes to an expanding interdisciplinary discussion of the affective and performative role of studio photography which can be cognised as culturally significant and adds to the existing literature that identifies the mnemonic value of photographs. I argue that creating and using these photographs is a meaning-making process that enables the reconfiguring of transcultural identities within the north London Anglo-Turkish diaspora, and that they play an important part in authenticating cultural traditions and rituals in the local community. More than that, these photographs are transformative in negotiating these diasporic cultural traditions as they change and evolve – become ‘transcultural’ (Hall 1996) and as such subject to the movements of history, culture and power. Thus, new ‘invented traditions’ (Hobsbawm 2012) emerge out of creative transcultural practices that take place in the studios and can be understood as important socio-cultural markers.

This qualitative study of north London studio photography, made at a particular historical moment, has been interpreted by my subjective reading of it. That is as a female photographer, visual anthropologist, academic and creative practitioner, who lives in the area but is not part of the community I researched. This process inevitably presented many challenges when gathering the information, such as where to position myself in relation to the

research and how to navigate an analysis of the information gathered. I am acutely aware that, not only could a different historical moment or geography yield diverse results, but also another researcher with different cultural biases and epistemological beliefs could impact on the interpretation of this research. Critically reflecting on this research journey, I wish I had had more confidence in my voice and clarity in my questions. Nevertheless, having undertaken the research for this thesis, I have developed a robust critical and visual vocabulary within which to analyse the researched photographs and observed practices. In doing so I have a better understanding of the complex cultural ways in which these extraordinary everyday photographs can be read. I recognise the naivety that inspired my initial interest in these photographs and influenced my reading and 'mis'-reading of them. I was unfamiliar with the cultural nuances as well epistemological differences that complicate fixed readings of these photographs. I no longer see the studied photographs as unanchored phantasmagorical objects or take for granted that knowing/unknowing cultural practices can be read universally. Instead I recognise these seemingly clichéd photographs as belonging to a complex and shifting socio-cultural dialogue that is attached to the ever-changing bricolage of north London and see photography as a key medium through which the story of diaspora is made visible.

The materials gathered in this thesis sit equally between the visual and the written word. As I will go on to discuss this has been a complex process to find a way through. Using multidisciplinary methods of research, I have been able to demonstrate the importance of both historical / theoretical research and practice-as-research as forms of knowledge. For example, in chapter 2 I build an argument that studio photography is a conceptual framework through which cultural aspirations can be understood drawing from both secondary literature that grounds my own empirical visual research and through my own creative practice in *The Book of Backgrounds* and *The Sampler*. The momentum of this dual process of research is rhizomatic in propelling the flow of ideas. By this I mean, the multidisciplinary research methods feed into the other and move my thinking forward. At times the words ground my ideas and at other points I am able to express ideas more

succinctly through visual research and creative practice. In doing this, I demonstrate the importance of using different disciplinary methods to gather research. It is important to acknowledge that frequently the visual is overlooked as a form of knowledge, however, within this thesis there is an interdependence between both methods of research. Whilst the written word derives from secondary theory as foundational knowledge to ground my thinking, the visual practice complicates a linear method of building knowledge through theory. Instead the visual practice enables complexities and contradictions to emerge and overlap. This has been a complicated process to navigate, reflect on, and finally coherently bring together. However, in doing so I am able to think through the nuances of the research processes. That is that there is a reciprocal relationship between theory and practice as vehicles of knowledge that sees the visual practice weave alongside of the written word. Where memory falters and theory reaches its limits, visual processes reignite and progress the ideas. In critically reflecting on the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice I am able to identify the implicit circular relationship between the different research methods.

Some of the visual research is testament to the process of developing knowledge and is more resolved than others. Indeed, the visual research and creative practice responds to different questions through the thesis. For example, I commenced the research by visually documenting my neighbourhood in order to locate myself. This is presented in the thesis as a formative digital sketchbook – *Cartographies of the Local*. The work was made over a long period of time and includes formal photographs taken on a 35mm digital camera, photographs on a medium format film camera and using a digital mobile telephone. These different methods of making images were combined into a digital sketchbook of ideas and observations. In this context as well as presenting my observations, this reflects the change in photographic technologies that took place during the research process. Although this work is not a stand-alone body of work, it is a vital part of the research process that visually documents, my responses and reflections to my local area. In this body of work, I aim to highlight to the reader my

subjective understanding of the neighbourhood. That is a process of thinking and knowing through visuals rather than through words. Working in this way enabled me to make visible the cultural complexity of the neighbourhood within which the photography studios exist. The examples of visual research presented in *Primary Research I*, uses visuals in different ways. I share a selection of the primary visual materials collected during the research process in the photography studios. This is a selection of my documentation of events, video interviews and examples of the digital studio backgrounds. The images featured aim to act as a living visual archive of studio ephemera, which is then drawn on at different points in the thesis to anchor the arguments of this thesis.

As I have discussed, unlike much of the existing literature on studio photography which is predominantly a retrospective analysis that examines what Tina Campt (2012) refers to as ‘orphaned’ archives – of materials generated by another historical moment - the archive of photographs presented in this thesis look at a contemporary case study at the time the photographs were taken.¹⁰⁰ I aimed to build what Hall (2001:89) refers to as ‘a living archive of diaspora’ and in doing so gathered together visual material that makes visible this diasporic Anglo-Turkish community in north London. Hall describes a ‘living archive’ as something that is present – ongoing – continuing – open ended and in its very nature as something fluid and ever-changing that is unfinished. The work that makes up this archive of photographs is indicative of the work examined and collectively gives the reader a flavour of the broader research. The benefit in doing this is to ‘notice’ and pay attention to the photographs as a way of deepening an understanding of the studied community. Having compiled this archive of visual materials, I then drew from this work in succeeding chapters in order to build a narrative that the photographs are crucial socio-cultural objects that contribute to an understanding of the local Anglo-Turkish transcultural identities of north London. To theoretically ground this idea, I have drawn

¹⁰⁰ Campt (2012) refers to ‘orphaned’ archives as photographic images that have lost part or all of their referent that locates them, that is either the maker of the photograph is missing, the subject in the photograph and/or the its owners have been forgotten.

from a wide range of literature that straddles critical disciplinary boundaries. This way of working encourages a broad analytical context with which to think through the examined photographs. I looked at the photographs as visual culture, through an anthropological, art historical and photo historians' lens. I also drew from relevant cultural studies and sociological contexts. In doing this I developed a vocabulary that investigated the social context as well as the construction of the photographs. This means that as well as examining what the photographs looked like, I also thought through their social relations. Thus, I looked at how meaning is built through these photographs.

I built an argument that this case study belongs to an historical continuum of studio photography that has a 160-year history. Noting that whilst a high-street studio portrait may appear clichéd and not reveal very much about the individuality of the sitter, examining the repetition of visual elements seen in the photographs, within a critical framework, cultural values and social aspirations of the sitter can be elucidated. I then went on to suggest that the background *mise-en-scène* in a studio portrait can be understood as a visual 'habitus', that locates the portrait within a specific cultural context. This is demonstrated both in the written and visual components of chapter 2. As I have highlighted, I draw from relevant theories to support this idea, and in the visual pieces I highlight the importance of the background in creating a visual 'habitus'. I discussed how studio photography is a meaning making process and illustrate this point, by making a close reading of one photograph collected as part of the primary research. The example I selected to discuss focuses on a wedding portrait of a young Turkish couple which was made to send back home to their family in Turkey. The background of Tower Bridge was added to this portrait in post-production. I discuss this recognisable landmark in London symbolically acts as a visual allegory that signals to the consumer of the photograph that the marriage took place in London, England. I suggested that this photograph has an important visual economy that communicates the successes of migration to family members in the home (land) of Turkey and conclude that this way of reading studio photography builds on a linear tradition that has travelled across historical

moments and geographical localities – not unlike the rituals and traditions enacted for and through the discussed photographs I examine in this case study. Thus, I conclude rather than digital technologies disrupting the demand for the studio portrait, they have in fact continued to offer creative ways in which to make a formal portrait that are conceptually consonant to those enabled by previous technologies such as painted backdrops.

The creative practice presented in *The Book of Backgrounds* and *The Sampler*, both specially look at the studio background/mise-en-scène of the studio portrait photographs. In *The Book of Backgrounds*, I re-presented a selection of English carte-de-visite photographs studied as part of the research process. The images are digitally reworked so that the ‘sitters’ are either obscured or removed from the photographs. In doing this, I invited the reader to spend time with these images and examine the backgrounds, props, and gestures that create the mise-en-scène of the portraits. Thus, I use alternative research methods to suggest that the propping of the portraits is pivotal to their reading. This aligns with Flint (2015), who puts forward the idea that the background is the linchpin of the photograph that gives it socio-cultural meaning. In the comparative study of *The Sampler* I draw from the archive of digital studio backgrounds gathered as part of the primary research. I curated a selection of these backgrounds in order to find comparisons in the studied backgrounds. The format for the books is not the same, in these complimentary approaches I reflect on and reference the nature of the original images. The choice and size of the images in *The Book of Backgrounds* have been carefully chosen to imitate the original photographs. In *The Sampler*, I drew reference from the professional industry trade catalogues produced to market to retail professionals and the glossy colour palette seen in the original printed photographs. These visual responses succeed in echoing the theory put forward by the written word, that the background is a crucial component to examine in order to understand the meaning of the photograph.

As I have mentioned, the articulation of studio photography as a conceptual framework can equally apply to any similar case study. I have referenced the

many historical case studies of studio photography to support this point and thus demonstrate its inherent pervasiveness. However, it is the nuances of each case study that reveals the mores of any specific community and further locates it historically, geographically and culturally. It is helpful to refer to geographer Doreen Massey (1994), when situating a specific case study. When writing about the character of a place, she describes it as a constructed articulation of social relations. There is fluidity, she argues, in understanding space and place, that is associated with an exact historical moment. This she refers to as an 'envelope of time'. The findings within this envelope of time are authentic to the research embarked on at that historical moment. However, even in the time it took to gather, articulate and reflect on the material, changes can be seen on the high street. For example, I saw Berfin Studios relocate five miles further north as the demographic of the community changed and although Coban continues to have a presence on Stoke Newington high street, the shop front no longer indicates it is a photography studio. It now advertises as a lifestyle store and undertakes photography commissions via an alternative website. These observations highlight the complexities of attempting to historicise research data in the temporal moment it is captured. In the relatively short amount of time it took to capture, analyse and reflect on the research the nuances of the information captured within the envelope of time have inevitably adapted changed.

To further articulate meaning for *this* case study I also examined relevant histories of Turkish studio photography in chapter 3. Drawing from a post-colonial critique of Orientalism, my analysis of the socio-political context of early Ottoman-Turkish photographs complicates ways in which historical Turkish photography is read. In doing this I set up an argument that situates early Ottoman photographs within a framework of Orientalism and then problematised this viewpoint by discussing examples that counteract this perspective. I then returned to my case study and used this same critical perspective as a way of examining images from the research of this case study. For example, I looked at two portrait backgrounds of Greco-Roman temple ruins sourced from different photography studios on the high street

and analysed them in the context of both art history and Orientalism. In relation to this, I was able to compare the continuities and challenges in reading photographs from different critical perspectives. Arguably these dual analyses destabilise any singular definitive analysis of the 'pillar-column and curtain' trope. This argument leads me to contemplate whether a recalibration of our understanding of the 'pillar-column and curtain', which is ubiquitously seen in both historical portrait painting and studio photography. Instead, I put forward the idea and thus contribute to existing literature on studio photography, that depending on the trajectory with which the studio photograph - with its 'pillar-column and curtain' trope, - is read, different conclusions can be determined. This offers a new viewpoint with which the construction of the studio portrait and the connotations of the portrait mise-en-scène can be understood. I propose that instead of the 'pillar-column and curtain' anchoring the portrait to either an art historical or a post-colonial reading of Orientalism, they have in fact transcended their original referent to become an identifiable visual symbol that signifies that the photograph is a constructed studio portrait. By this I mean the 'pillar-column and curtain' seen in the studio portrait may well sit on an entangled history, but within the photograph its meaning is redefined. I argue that in the studio portrait photograph, the 'pillar-column and curtain' denotes the vernacular language of studio photography itself – they are visual symbols which communicate - 'look, this portrait was made in a photographic studio!' This can be understood not unlike the performative sound of the 'shutter' that denotes 'I am taking a photograph!' that takes place in digital cameras and phones. This argument acknowledges that although there are continuities between historical studio photographs and my contemporary case study, the 'pillar-column and curtain' has surpassed their original meaning. They have in fact become representational icons of studio photography.

I have highlighted that some of the creative practice submitted for the thesis is process-led and whilst it contributes to my thinking, it does not always move forward the main trajectory of the thesis. *The Unnamed Sitter* is such a body of work. It responds to the affect of the research undertaken on the Jacobson Orientalist Archive. Whilst, drawing from a post-colonial reading of

Orientalism framed my understanding of early Ottoman photography, it did not fully account for the emotional impact some of these images had on me. The body of work *The Unnamed Sitter* works with and responds to the Orientalist photographs studied as part of the secondary research in chapter 3. The work sits in parallel with the post-colonial critique of Orientalism and is highly critical of the referenced Orientalist photographs. A selection of photographs sourced from the Ken Jacobson Archive of Orientalist photographs which were studied as part of the research are re-presented as a visual artistic counter-response to Orientalist photographs studied. As an artistic practice I interrupted the structure and framing of these archival photographs in order to challenge the governance with which these images were created. According to Jacobson, the photographs were made as preparatory studies for Orientalist paintings and within Jacobson's publication the photographers are named but the sitters are not identified. In my intervention of these photographs the named photographer is separated from the photograph and the nudity and identity of the unnamed sitter is obscured using crude post-production digital techniques. The gestures and moiré markings of this intervention are deliberate and visible in order to demonstrate the process of interference. The new images are designed to be seen through a digital screen as a comment on the criticality with which these images have been reframed. They are shown alongside of a selection of Victorian carte-de-visite photographs in order to highlight the contradictory methods of representation of Occidental and Oriental women at the same historical moment. This is important in giving pause to think through the power dynamic between the sitter and photographer in many of the early Ottoman photographs and within another context had the potential to be developed further, however, within the context of this thesis this work registers protest of the representation of Ottoman women and the power dynamic embedded in original photographs. Although it is developed further within this thesis, there is potential outside of this thesis to specifically investigate further the relationship between gender and representation.

Drawing from an history of creative transcultural exchange of ideas which is first introduced in chapter 3, I move forward to discuss the transcultural

exchange of ideas in my case study and in doing so show that the entangled relationship of ideas and aesthetics between the East and West can be seen in the photographic practices of this case study. To illustrate my point, I referred to a specific example of a circumcision party that I attended and documented during the research process. Through the observed practices I noticed exchanges in ideas and the emergence of new cultural practices. I then went on to voice the idea that these new ideas are experimented with and amalgamated with existing traditions and practices. These 'new' traditions and practices draw from both familial (Turkish) cultural histories and practices from the host country (England), and are visualised in photographs made by the north London photography studios. I highlight that the photographs cannot be explicitly classified as either English or Turkish, instead they exist as hybrid photographs that sit 'in between' fixed national identities. In developing this argument, I suggest that this case study offers insight into a unique Anglo-Turkish transcultural identity, located in north London. This case study places value on the process of change and puts forward the idea that the photographs visually memorialise these reconfigured identities. The creative transcultural exchange of ideas is fluid and as such continually informs the visualisation of an Anglo-Turkish diasporic identity as seen in the photographs. These photographs are integral in offering an alternative way with which to understand of transcultural identities.

To add to this point I return to my reference of Camp's (2017) notion of how photographs make diasporic identities visible. Camp describes the Dyche Archive of photographs as capturing the desires and aspirations of the diasporic sitters (even for just the duration of the photograph). Parallels can be seen in the contemporary studio photographs in which the sitter performs their aspirations, such as a portrait of a young boy in his circumcision outfit that confirms the circumcision ritual has taken place or a wedding portrait repositioned in front of Tower Bridge verifies the wedding took place in London. These photographs are made with the intention of keeping cultural traditions alive and sharing news with extended families in the home(land) of Turkey. Following this line of thinking I have put forward the idea that the

photography studio is a place in which a sense of belonging is fostered, and the community is visually memorialised. For the Anglo-Turkish community, the studio is a place in which acts of identity are experimented with, performed and captured in photographs. Most importantly however, the studio is a place in which the community envisage their own self-presentation (Goffman 1990) and in doing so establish the presence of the Anglo-Turkish community in the neighbourhood.

In order to ensure that the research also engages with the mnemonic value of the studied photographs and as a way of investigating how a sense of belonging is developed, I moved the research into the family home. I adopted traditional research methods of photo-elicitation to explore the processes of remembering and forgetting. Although this method is not new it was a necessary part of gathering knowledge undertaken in order to investigate the meaning of these photographs to their owners. In the selected sample of images presented in *Primary Research II* I share a selection of the catalogued family photographs, with anecdotes, examined at the DYMAR community centre and in the family homes of research participants. The photographs acted as prompts through which the past is brought to the present and memory work is done. The accompanying text locates my social interactions with the interviewees and gives further information about the photographs. In chapter 5, one of the case studies from *Primary Research II* is discussed in depth. I focused on a small sample of photographic images selected by one participant, who shared her own experience of arriving in Britain as an illegal immigrant. Using the photographic performance of touch and oral narration a coherent narrative of her experience of migration, grief, loss and belonging emerged. In doing this, she positions herself within a collective diasporic history. Her recollections are repeatedly told and retold, and her memories are defined. I hear her recall fragmented memories, through which a sense of belonging to Britain unfolds. What is interesting about this process, as with many of the interviews, is that all of the family network of this participant contributes to the conversation and thereby they begin to collectively claim ownership of the discussed familial narrative. I see the family work cohesively to agree the history that accompanies this

photograph and with passionate authority share that account with me. This allows me to see the discussed photographs within a broader familial context. It is particularly poignant when one photograph is discussed within in a framework of grief and loss. This digital, collaged photograph is a memorial to all of the family members of this participant who died being illegally smuggled from Turkey to Britain. Although specific details of each death have been forgotten there is little doubt about the affective power of this photographic image for this participant and her family. It becomes a portal through which presence in absence, a common diasporic experience for families across borders is felt. The traumatic memories that emerge through the photographs are reabsorbed into the present. Notably, the narrative is claimed as a post-memory (Hirsch, 1997), as the youngest daughter of this participant preserves, shares and adds to her mother's personal account. As I have suggested, within my reading of these personally owned family photographs they can be understood as mnemonic objects that have a presence in the family home. In *The Emotional Life of Transcultural Photographs* I present a selection of my own creative photographs that document some of the family photographs on display in the homes of the research participants. These family photographs can be seen as active objects embedded within the fabric of the home. My photographs are carefully composed to include the home interior and in doing this, I aim to be sensitive to how these photographs are preserved and presented as active social agents which are ever-present in the family homes of the research participants.

When I now walk down these same streets in my local neighbourhood, I continue to see and feel the vibrant character of the locale that sees Afro-Caribbean barbers exist next to Halal butchers and Turkish photography studios. However, as with all places and spaces, inevitably there are changes that see reconfigured businesses on the high street. 'Belda Productions' on Tottenham High Road has now closed, and their website is no longer operational. The premise has been amalgamated with the adjoining building to house a 'Sainsburys Local'. 'Berfin Studios' has relocated to Edmonton. The original premises on Stoke Newington High

Street is now occupied by a new photography studio, 'Aktuel: Photography & Video Print Services', with new owners. The photography still reflects what I have argued is an Anglo-Turkish aesthetic; in the shop front window there is a studio portrait of a young boy in circumcision outfits floating in clouds, however it is accompanied by framed portraits of Afro-Caribbean and white families celebrating cultural events. This change reflects the altering character of a more ethnically mixed neighbourhood. 'Click Digital' still operates on the corner of Stoke Newington Church Street and Stoke Newington High Street. This is one of the more generic studios that has seen very little change during the course of my research. The studio is still Turkish owned and specialise in passports and baby portraiture and continue to include animated cartoon characters alongside the baby portraits. They have also expanded their repertoire and as well as making family portraits they offer creative ways in which to disseminate the photographs. This includes mugs on which the portraits can be transferred, snow-globes that hold photographs and jewellery in which a loved one's face can be added. 'Coban' still runs a wedding business but this has receded from the high street. The shop front studio has rebranded as a bespoke life-style shop and is run by two brothers, including the one who run the photography studio when I undertook the research in the studio. There is still a photography studio at the back of the shop but it not public facing and is not included in any of the online publicity for the shop. There is a website for the wedding business but there is a distinct separation between the two businesses online. 'Kibris Studio' on Green Lanes has since closed and the owner has passed away. 'Platin Studios' in Haringay is still owned and operated by Turkish nationals and the clientele are mostly diasporic Anglo-Turkish customers. 'TAC Digital' at the time of the research, was a small photography studio alongside their sister business that was a large warehouse for wedding and celebration outfits aimed for Anglo-Turkish customers. The businesses have since moved from Stoke Newington High Street to High Road, in Bruce Grove (that is the same road but approximately five miles further north). The wedding company continues to cater specifically for the Anglo-Turkish community, although photography services are no longer offered as part of this business. The focus of the business centres on

the trade around the events such as hiring the venue décor, furniture and event catering can be arranged either online or through the new store.

Noticing these changes over time leads me to critically reflect on Massey's (1994) point that research is receptive to time, location as well as cultural histories and geographies. The neighbourhood still has an Anglo-Turkish presence, but even within the time period of the research the demographic of the population has broadened. This continues to be reflected in the diversity of local businesses. Some of the photography studios still exist but the shape of them has changed; a few have relocated, others have closed – as the local community has changed. Notably in a recent conversation with a photographer at Platin Studios, the photographer expressed his desire to distance himself from elaborate digital backgrounds seen in many of the studios during the research. The extravagant backgrounds he perceives as old fashioned and confirmed his clients preferred simple linear portrait backgrounds. This highlights the impossibility of identifying and fixing a definitive diasporic archive. Instead this observation aligns with Hall's (2001) point that living archives are fluid and continually subject to change. In highlighting this point, I remind the reader to continue to pay attention to these seemingly clichéd photographs in order to deepen an understanding of the mores of the local community.

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