

STATES OF AFFECT:  
TRAUMA IN PARTITION/POST-PARTITION SOUTH ASIA

By

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## ABSTRACT

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The Partition of the Indian subcontinent – into India and Pakistan in 1947 – was one of the crucial moments marking the break between the colonial and postcolonial era. My project is invested in exploring the Partition not merely in terms of the events of August 1947, but as an ongoing process that continues to splinter political, cultural, emotional and sexual life-worlds in South Asia. My dissertation seeks to map analytical pathways to locate the Partition and the attendant formations of minoritization and sectarian violence as continuing, unfolding processes that constitute postcolonial nation-building. It examines the far-reaching presence of these formations in current configurations of politics, culture and subjectivity by mobilizing the interdisciplinary scope of affect-mediated Trauma and Memory Studies and Postcolonial Studies, in conjunction with literary analysis. My project draws on a wide range of cultural artifacts such as poetry, cantillatory performance, mourning rituals, testimonials, archaeological ruins, short stories and novels to develop a heuristic and affective re-organization of post-Partition South Asia. It seeks to illuminate through frameworks of memory, melancholia, trauma, affect and postcoloniality how the *ongoing* effects of the past shape the present, which in turn, offers us ways to reimagine the future. This dissertation reaches out to recent work developing a *vernacular* framework to analyze violence, trauma and loss in South Asia. Critics of trauma theory argue that clinical approaches developed in specific Euro-American socio-cultural contexts often write over postcolonial systems of knowledge-making, mourning, and recovery.

Ananya Kabir, Kumkum Sangari, and other postcolonial critics are seeking to develop a vernacularized framework to view violence, trauma and loss in South Asia. It is at this challenging threshold of affect-mediated postcoloniality and trauma studies that my work asks to be located.

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To Ma, Baba, Onur

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## INTRODUCTION

### Partition and Affect-Mediated Postcolonial Trauma Studies

The Partition of the Indian subcontinent – into India and Pakistan in 1947 – was one of the crucial moments marking the break between the colonial and postcolonial era. My project is invested in exploring the Partition not merely in terms of the events of August 1947, but as an ongoing process that continues to splinter political, cultural, emotional and sexual life-worlds in South Asia. My dissertation seeks to map analytical pathways to locate the Partition and the attendant formations of minoritization and sectarian violence as continuing, unfolding processes that constitute postcolonial nation-building. It examines the far-reaching presence of these formations in current configurations of politics, culture and subjectivity by mobilizing the interdisciplinary scope of affect-mediated Trauma and Memory Studies and Postcolonial Studies, in conjunction with literary analysis, to ultimately, imagine more peaceable futures for the region. My project draws on a wide range of cultural artifacts such as poetry, cantillatory performance, mourning rituals, testimonials, archaeological ruins, short stories and novels to develop a heuristic and affective re-organization of post-Partition South Asia.

The creation of Pakistan as a homeland for South Asian Muslims involved the division of erstwhile British provinces of Bengal and Punjab along religious lines. At the same time, there were large-scale migrations and population exchanges of Hindu *sharanarthis*<sup>1</sup> from areas such as Sindh in Pakistan as well as of Muslim *mohajirs*<sup>2</sup> from the Gangetic heartlands and the Deccan to Pakistan, leaving these cultural spaces depleted. While the celebratory narratives of decolonization and nationhood marked the official historiographies of 1947, the trauma of

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<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit-derived term for refugees or shelter-seekers.

<sup>2</sup> Arabic-derived term with evocations of peripatetic migration from Mecca to Medina

Partition, in particular its ethnocidal sexualized violence, was largely elided in these constructions. According to revisionist historians such as Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence* (1998), Partition displaced about twelve million people; countless homes were abandoned or destroyed; properties, families, and cultures were divided as new, often contentious national borders were drawn over older ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities. Large-scale sectarian violence accompanied these movements. Estimates of the number of dead from ethnic cleansing, malnutrition, contagious diseases, etc. vary anywhere between the contemporary British figure of 20,000 to the later estimates of 2 million (Butalia 3). Butalia concluded that a million people died and, about 75000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion<sup>3</sup> (ibid). A number of refugee camps were set up and the fledgling Indian and Pakistani States grappled to come to terms with such extraordinary losses. Much of their practices, discourses and fantasies of nationhood and citizenship were indelibly marked by this struggle.

Until the 1980s, the Partition received virtually no discursive or material space in official historiography or memory. It was marked by an absolute silence and its memories encrypted in both public and private realms. As pointed out by Butalia (1998), there have been no public memorials or commemorative monuments on the Partition, neither have there been tribunals or courts of justice to provide legal/juridical restitution for the violence (361-362). Official Partition historiography by the nation-state has been marked, instead, by a preoccupation with bureaucratic frameworks. Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin point out in *Borders and Boundaries: Women In India's Partition* (1998), that there is an abundance of written material on the partition:

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<sup>3</sup> Studies of the violence as spilling outside of the “1947” time frame are relatively recent: those revise these figures considerably.

official records, documents, agreements and treaties, political histories, memoirs, etc., and “a vast amount of newspaper reports and pages of government information exist on the resettlement of refugees, on the transfer of power, division of assets, and records of Parliament debates” (3)<sup>4</sup>.

The 1990 and early 2000s saw a spurt of revisionist historiographical, sociological and cultural scholarship on the Partition. Feminist historians such as Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and historians of the Subaltern School like Gyanendra Pandey, and anthropologists like Veena Das, among others, reopened the Partition to scholarly analysis<sup>5</sup>. While Butalia and Menon were concerned in particular with feminist narratives and oral testimonies of violence, Pandey was interested in excavating the “little” voices and fragments that represented Partition outside the realms of dominant historiography<sup>6</sup>. Das was invested in examining the anthropology of pain and its language. She argued that literary language and tropes were more productive transmitters of suffering and pain than legal or sociological and empirical modes. In *Critical Events* (1995), Das writes about two theories of pain: its communicability versus its incommunicability. Questioning Scarry’s formulations on incommunicability of pain, Das argues through phenomenological methodologies for a more sensorial anthropology of pain. She posits that the language of the body mediates between individual and society when “discursive” language is “struck dumb” in situations of violence (184). Drawing on Wittgenstein, Das locates pain outside the individual body and by reclaiming it as an invitation to the other, locates it in the social realm (195). This external “turn” from incommunicability has a crucial role to play in later mappings of Partition

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<sup>4</sup> Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>5</sup> See Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence* (2006), *Remembering Partition* (2001); Veena Das *Mirrors of Violence* (1990); *Critical Events* (1995); *Life and Words* (2007) etc.

<sup>6</sup> Gyanendra Pandey (2001), reminds us that face-to face local communities have to live with disturbing memories [of the Partition] more uncertainly and continuously than nations and states. This particularly uneven mosaic of remembering and eliding that marks their memory-making (acknowledging the violence even as they seek to dismiss it) is informed crucially by not the pastness of Partition violence but its continuing presence. In the affective and creative productions of these “local” communities may be found traces of such continuing presence that sits at odds with the horizons of the nation-state.

as collective trauma. In the course of illustrating her theories, Das turned also to Urdu writers of *Fasaadat ke Adab*<sup>7</sup> to illustrate her arguments. Literary language provided metaphors and imagery for analysis of how the violence was interpreted and “internalized” communicated in everyday lives.

Due to the exceptional interdisciplinary scholarship provided by this “first wave” of Partition Scholars, silence, absence, “illegible” discourses such as rumor and gossip as well as empirical, positivist modes were excavated to reveal testimonial voices. Silence and forgetting were unraveled to be forms of memory. In the decades since then, Partition Studies has established itself as a significant field of inquiry. The question of why current scholarship continues to stage this “return” to the Partition persistently beleaguers its practitioners. Since many, though not all of these scholars are located in western academia, charges of exoticizing Partition or flogging a dead horse are rampant.

However, the grounds for a “return” as articulated by some of these “first wave” scholars stands as relevant today as it did then. Butalia, Pandey, Das and others reveal that one of the reasons why Partition’s specter was raised within the collective memory in those decades was the brutalizing sectarian violence against the Sikhs in 1984 and the gradual growth and entrenchment of *Hindutva* politics. The demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, the Mumbai riots, and the growing ghettoization and insecurity of minorities in India (and in the region), provided the grounds for a re-evaluation of the history of this violence and an ethical imperative to go back to the past to understand the future. In *Mourning the Nation* (2009), Bhaskar Sarkar speaks of a “proleptic melancholia” of the nation. The postcolonial nation is born in loss, he argues. It represents “the death of a collective dream at the moment of birth” (42). Sarkar

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<sup>7</sup> Literature of Riots by Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi writers of the Progressive Movement that often represented the violence in realist, stark modes.

contends that this proleptic melancholia “arises from a loss of futures and possibilities” (42). Works by Amrita Pritam, Qurratulain Hyder, Agha Shahid Ali and Githa Hariharan which my chapters examine, exhibit this proleptic awareness of a loss of future possibilities. At the same they use memorial routes to try to connect back to these very lost possibilities. Through my engagement with Pritam’s Partition lyric “Waris Shah” (1947), Hyder’s novel *Sita Betrayed* (1960), Ali’s poetry collection *A Country without a Post Office* (1997) and Hariharan’s novels *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009), my project, then, opens up a memorial terrain in South Asia where pasts, presents and futures are actively debated and recreated. The “return” to the Partition staged in my dissertation, should be located in this expanded memorial terrain.

In this memorial terrain, every act of sectarian violence is haunted by the Partition; “Pakistan or *Kabristan* (graveyard)! “ Go back to Pakistan!” etc. remain “catch phrases and slogans” regularly employed against the Muslim minority by “rioters.” This “haunting” is as much witnessed in the “sudden” flare-ups of sectarian violence such as the recent events in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, beginning on August 27, 2013, as in the protracted conflict around Kashmir whose roots lie in 1947 and beyond. Recent studies of social and political violence have urged us to look at the Partition violence and the subsequent communal “riots” as part of a “routine violence” that the State practices against its minorities (Pandey 2006). “Riots” as they are referred to, have been shown to be neither sudden, nor aberrant, but part of a sustained, systemic political terror that the nation-state practices towards its citizens and subjects<sup>8</sup>. Gyanendra Pandey’s *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (2006) offers us a way of talking about that terror. He writes: “There is a violence written into the making and

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Mahmood Mamdani’s conversation with Bhakti Shringarpure in “Warscapes”: <http://www.warscapes.com/conversations/conversation-mahmood-mamdani>

continuation of contemporary political arrangements, and into the production of majorities and minorities, which I have called routine violence” (Pandey 1). This is seen in “not the spectacular, explosive, visible moments only,” but in our very day lives and “especially in our behavior towards strangers” (Pandey 8). This production of minorities and majorities, of the violence written into the everyday encounters with the political, or alternately where the political becomes a subject of everyday life (manifest in our behavior towards strangers, for instance) is central to my analysis of the Post-Partition trauma-scape. The impact of Partition’s affective train on these everyday encounters as on the explosive ones, cannot be overstated, and makes the “return” to the Partition more urgent than ever. Hence, my project is interested in mapping the Partition not as events restricted to the violent months of 1947, but as an ongoing process casting its shadow on the Hindu-Muslim/India-Pakistan dyad that grips the region’s political, cultural and emotional lives. I will use frameworks from trauma and memory studies and postcolonial studies to explore this shadow further, not in terms of causality or determinism, but in terms of a critical relationship with the past.

A further reason to continue to frame the Partition within critical inquiries of memory and trauma may be understood in the context of developing theories of literary and cultural analysis of collective traumas like the Partition. The explorations in the decades of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s were predominantly occupied with testimonial narratives, oral histories, and empirical studies, since they developed out of the social sciences. However, Veena Das, Gyanendra Pandey, Dipesh Chakrabarty<sup>9</sup> and others also privileged looking at literary texts, to parse them for the semiotic depth and imagery that legal or historical narratives could not afford. In this context, literary scholarship on the Partition received a new lease. Realist naturalist depictions of

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty *Habitations of Modernity*, 2002.

violence, in particular the literature produced by the Progressive Movement (Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi) which had a wide critical life in Urdu/Hindi/Bengali Studies came to form the chief material for literary analysis by Anglophone scholars via translations<sup>10</sup>.

In the first phase of literary and cinematic studies of the Partition, feminist historiographers such as Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon offered a reading of testimonial literature, anthropologists like Veena Das privileged literary language as a viable vehicle of Partition's suffering and trauma, and works of Saadat Hasan Manto, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and others of the Progressive Movement came under the radar of Postcolonial Literary scholars globally and in India. Rather than official historiography of the riots and records of bureaucratic transfer and exchanges, these literary and affective representations offered archaeology of untold histories.

Literary studies of the Partition in English and Comparative programs gradually began to draw from the developing field of Trauma and Memory Studies. Developments in trauma theory as it applied to Holocaust representations came to form a critical route through which Partition was accessed in many of these readings. Gender, trauma and the novel became important sites of Partition inquiry<sup>11</sup>. Partition Scholarship drew on Freud-derived Caruthian models of literary trauma studies: in particular narrative disjunction and trauma<sup>12</sup>. If Veena Das had developed an

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<sup>10</sup> Thus compilations like Suvir Kaul's *The Partitions of Memory* (2002) and Alok Bhalla's *Partition Dialogues* (2006) paid attention to memoirs, testimonies, letters, petitions, monuments but also Saadat Hasan Manto's or Bhisham Sahni's stories.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance Ananya Jahanara Kabir's "Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women's Novels On The Partition Of India" (2005) or Jill Didur's *Unsettling Partitions: Literature, Gender and Memory* (2006) that include analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* or Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*.

<sup>12</sup> Holocaust Studies in particular has brought into focus the epistemology and politics of representing violence. Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) has argued that trauma is marked by belatedness and the search for a narrative that is never quite able to catch up with the belatedness and close the gap. Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman in *Testimony Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992) while discussing the poet Paul Celan argue about the failure of language and the impossibility of witnessing, and yet go on to affirm that in the aftermath of violence creative narrative remains one of the most important terrains where the implications of the trauma can be worked out. Trauma was thus developed into an "expository device" an excavation of symbolic language. Shoshana Felman in conjunction with Dori Laub, a psychiatrist working with Holocaust survivors, argued

anthropology of pain harnessing phenomenology to access Partition's grief, there was now an additional turn to Caruth's presentation of belatedness as a means to plumb trauma's symbolic language. Apart from the interest in narrative, Holocaust-derived models also cast witnessing and testimony in new light<sup>13</sup>. Shoshana Felman in conjunction with Dori Laub, a psychiatrist working with Holocaust survivors, had argued for trauma "as a radical crisis of witnessing ...an event eliminating its own witness, in part on basing her conclusions on Holocaust testimonies (Felman and Laub 1992; xvii).

The eventive model of trauma examined violent disruptions but Laura Brown had proposed in her groundbreaking essay, "Not Outside the Range: Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma" in Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), that the older frameworks for "calibrating" trauma had proved quite ineffective. She argued that anxiety, melancholia, withdrawal and other symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are not only long-term – belonging as they do to an extended temporality – but they can also spread laterally and intergenerationally through narrative and social transmissions and witnessing. Thus, not only may trauma be transmitted intergenerationally, but also among the members of a socio-political group. A number of fiction writers – many of them diasporic – like Shaun Singh Baldwin and Bapsi Sidhwa, began to stage second-generation returns to Partition traumas, opening up a transgenerational and diasporic terrain for situating Partition trauma. These allowed returns to be staged across *temporalities and spatialities*, showing the way forward to a more nuanced development of *collective* traumas.

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for trauma "as a radical crisis of witnessing ...an event eliminating its own witness, based in part on basing her conclusions on Holocaust testimonies (Felman and Laub 1992; xvii).

<sup>13</sup> See especially Priya Kumar, *Limiting Secularism* (2008) or Tarun K. Saint's *Witnessing Partition: Memory, History, Fiction* (2010).

Partition literary scholarship in all these phases outlined, focused mainly on the novel. The heightened focus on narrative disjuncture and trauma as semiotic excavation, while intervening into the cultural and political edict of silence, and bringing to life sexual and gender traumas, failed to address non-discursive or semi-discursive representations (music, dance, gesture, lyric, ritual) of cultural memories of the Partition. Moreover in focusing on the works of Progressives in translation or Anglophone novels and short stories staging transgenerational returns, works that defied easy categorization like Qurratulain Hyder or Jyotirmoyee Devi, for instance, were ignored. The eventive/exceptional model of trauma<sup>14</sup> and of Partition assumed by scholarship models ignored the slow insidious violence that had characterized much of Partition's experiences particularly for large section of the refugee population in West Bengal, or the minoritized Muslims in India. Qurratulain Hyder's evocations of Muslims in the Gangetic heartlands of northern India, for instance, reveal the devastating changes to the sociocultural fabric, even though these losses did not always follow the same cast as that of the brutalizing physical violence.

But Amrita Pritam, Qurratulain Hyder and the Bengali Jyotirmoyee Devi (not included in my dissertation) are some writers (contemporary to the Partition) who offer a perspective into the Partition's memorial terrain, angled from the narrative disjuncture or aporetic witnessing. Dismissed at first for reducing the political to the sentimental and romantic, scholars have recently begun revisiting them to develop frameworks for studying the Partition afresh through the theoretical pathways of affect-mediated postcolonial and trauma studies.

My project situates itself in with what I identify as a third and new phase of Partition scholarship which *builds on* the foundational materials to make further inroads via Affect Studies

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<sup>14</sup> Laura Brown argues that older psychological models for calibrating trauma used to focus on the "exceptionality" of the wounding event. This foreclosed a whole range of experiences which in many cases have lasting effects on women – for example sexual objectification, denial of access to resources, etc.

and Postcolonial Trauma Studies to analyze the little examined aspects of Partition's literary and cultural interpretations. I examine works like Amrita Pritam's 1947 lament to Waris Shah – a classic "Partition" lyric through renewed lenses of sensory mourning and memory, as well as short novels like Qurratulain Hyder's *Sita Betrayed* (1960) that have not been "read" as extensively. I also examine Agha Shahid Ali's poetry on the 1990s Intifada in the militarized Kashmir Valley (1997) and Koshur short stories translated and published in the 1990s that articulate Kashmiri traumas through affective and phantasmagoric frameworks. Finally, I examine Githa Hariharan's novels *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009) that bring a fresh understanding to the legacies of violence and loss of the region's ongoing Partitions in the context of the *Hindutva* State. Thus, looking at Partition as a recursive process, allows me to bring contemporary as well as mid-twentieth century artistic productions under the rubric of Partition Studies, allowing an expansive temporal as well as spatial mapping of memory communities. For instance, Pritam and Hyder's work mine pre-Partition affect-worlds of the Indo-Islamic genre of *qissas* (romances), Sufi Hindavi poetry and other cross-fertilized spaces that the Partition splintered. Agha Shahid Ali returns to his vernacular affect-worlds of Kashmiri Sufism and the Ghazal traditions of Indo-Muslim South Asia to mobilize mourning and memory communities that do not mesh easily either with the State's necropolitical subject, or with the violent delinking from Indianness or Indicness that the self-determination and "freedom" movement in Kashmir embraces. Part of the historicist aspects of my cultural analysis will restore the Indic as well as Islamic aspects of South Asia's cross-fertilized life-worlds. One of Partition's most acutely divisive effects are felt in the shrinking and erasure of these spaces. At the same time, I stage an intervention through Affect Studies into semi-discursive, visual, aural, sensorial aspects of creative productions that older theoretical models could not fully mobilize.

My work draws mostly from Indian scholarship on the Partition, but is also acutely aware of how India-centric studies of the region evacuate “other” South Asian narratives. Much work has been produced by scholars on cross-border Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi experiences of the Partition; my chapters draw from a few of them like Farina Mir and Ananya Kabir. I prefer to employ a South Asian framework for my dissertation as many of the examined works such as Pritam’s lyric, Hyder’s novels and Ali’s poetry have had cross-border *public lives*. Moreover, Hyder located herself at an angle from both nations as Chapter Two shows; her residence in and relationship with Pakistan, though stridently against its military dictatorial anti-progressive regime, continued to mine worlds that could not be defined by Nehru’s uniform vision of India either<sup>15</sup>. Agha Shahid Ali and the public lives of his poetry have a complicated relationship with the Indian State. Hence, the rubric “South Asian” appears to reflect the inclusive and expansive cultural and memorial realms my chapters trace. This is another key feature of Partition scholarship as many of the works in Punjabi, Urdu or Bengali (the linguistic and cultural communities, along with Koshur or Siraiki, splintered by Partitions) confound nation-statist boundaries. Ali’s poetry in its bricolage of languages mainly English, (although his use of English is inflected by Urdu syntax and cognates) and Hariharan’s “embodied” Indian English point us to South Asian Anglophone terrains (albeit carrying the burden of colonialist origins), that along with the linguistic terrains mentioned above, contain the affective *and* cognitive energies to invoke Partition’s ruptures and also gesture to re-orderings.

Excavating cultural histories of music, poetry, narrative, aural and visual representations, thus, presents a crucial part of my project. It is in these cultural histories that the cross-pollinated South Asias of my project come alive. Due to the finite space occupied by the dissertation, I have

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<sup>15</sup> For more on Nehru’s seamless uniform vision of a centralized Indian nation whose backward citizens needed to be educated and managed by a paternalistic State see Jyotsna Singh “*The Blind Age: Discovering a Postcolonial Nation*” (1996).

not been able to include all the historicist material, but intend to nuance them further as I develop these chapters into other projects. Literary Studies occupies a distinctive vantage point from which it can immerse itself in interdisciplinary worlds. Studies of Partition, I believe need to be situated in historicity and vernacularity<sup>16</sup> in order to fully develop frameworks for studying Partition's memorial realms. All the authors and artists I examine, repeatedly emphasize their interest in history as a space of vantage into understanding the region's cultural, political and emotional lives. As mentioned before, my project draws on a wide range of cultural artifacts such as poetry, cantillatory performance, mourning rituals, testimonials, archaeological ruins and short stories and novels, amongst others, to develop a heuristic and affective re-organization of South Asian trauma-scapes. By trauma-scapes, I refer to the post-Partition memorial terrain and the complex of affects, sensations, images, sounds, rhythms, performatives, representations etc. that engage with negotiating and interpreting this terrain.

### Accessing Partition through Affect and Trauma Studies

Studies of trauma, mourning and memory and melancholia have been influenced by the affective turn in the humanities and social sciences<sup>17</sup>. Studies of affect are a significant entry point into understanding embodied emotion, memory and trauma. They offer us among other things, a way to understand the subject's interaction with and immersion in the material, phenomenological world – a crucial aspect of understanding embodied, externalized and collective emotions such as those associated with socio-political losses. In their Introduction to

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<sup>16</sup> Sheldon Pollock understands vernacularization and the study of local worlds as rooted in historicity. Rather than viewing them as “natural” and “primeval”, vernacularization would study the processes of the formation of these local life worlds. See Pollock “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500” especially p. 41-42

<sup>17</sup> The investment in theoretical explorations of emotionality and affect in the mid-1990s – what Patricia Clough has identified as an “affective turn” in the humanities and social sciences<sup>1</sup>

*The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg present at least eight different theoretical orientations of affect in contemporary humanities. Stemming from Deleuzian and Spinozoan roots, understandings of affect have ranged further and in diffuse directions. As they put it, affect remains at its basic “a way to understand the body and its immersion in the world”, to understand “a body’s capacity to affect and be affected (2) Affect marks a body’s belonging to a world of encounters (2). It is this responsiveness of the body, its openness and entanglement with the sensory world that allows us both a way to analyze the materiality of trauma and to break out of the representational paradoxes and aporias that trauma theory wrestles with. One of the key vectors identified by Seigworth and Gregg is work “undertaken by feminists, queer theorists, disability activists, and subaltern peoples living under the thumb of a normativizing power—that attends to the hard and fast materialities, as well as the fleeting and flowing ephemera, of the daily and the workaday, [...], and of "experience" (understood in ways far more collective and "external" rather than individual and interior), where persistent, repetitious practices of power can simultaneously provide a body (or, better, collectivized bodies) with predicaments and potentials for realizing a world that subsists within and exceeds the horizons and boundaries of the norm(7.) It thus offers a way to access more nuanced psycho-analytically and post-structurally inflected understanding of violence and the body. Another vector is identified in critical discourses of the emotions (and histories of the emotions) that have progressively left behind the interiorized self or subjectivity ([...] to unfold regimes of expressivity that are tied much more to resonant worldings and diffusions of feeling (8). It is this trail that leads from exteriorization of emotion and the worlding of the body with its concomitant rejections of mind/body, emotion/cognition binary that is of particular import to studies of trauma.

Subaltern and Feminist recuperative work since the 1990s, as we have seen, has made deep inroads into examining testimonial archives of survivors of Partition trauma. At the same time, the heuristic significance of the affective field around the Partition has gained scholarly legitimacy. Lughod and Lutz' seminal formulation in *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (1990) asserts that emotions and affective states are "pragmatic acts and communicative performances" (11)<sup>18</sup> that reproduce the social and political field that surround and constitute them. They are cultural products reproduced in individuals in the form of embodied experience. Lutz and Abu-Lughod see emotions not as "internal states" but stress, instead, "the close involvement of emotion talk with issues of sociability and power – in short with "the politics of everyday life" (1-2). Emotions can function as idioms for communicating social tensions and conflict<sup>19</sup>.

One major trail within trauma studies' interaction with affect theory is that of Ananya Kabir whose interventions into Partition Studies are groundbreaking. She claims that lyrical, affective modes co-exist within narrative modes in South and West Asian cultural formations which might be more amenable than traditional state-sanctioned modes like statist historiography to understanding the sensorium of Partition. Her claim is not that affect or music is non-discursive. Music, rhythm or lyric have their own discursivity and narrative range, hence it might be more productive to situate affect and discourse not as binaries but at angles to one another. Her point, as I understand it, is to suggest an alternative to "telling a story" and to narrative, testimony and talk being the privileged means of reparation and healing. It is a way to bring somatic and kinesthetic readings into play along with traditional textual/semiotic readings with

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<sup>18</sup> Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

<sup>19</sup> In "Shifting Politics in Bedouin Love Poetry," Lila Abu-Lughod examines how emotions come to have new social meaning and a different social basis as social systems change in Egypt taking on socially disruptive and defiant roles (Lutz and Lughod, 24-45).

their reliance on linearity and linear temporality. She does not, thus, propose a universal model but a possible way of including cultural productions that have traditionally fallen outside the South Asian ‘partition narrative oeuvre’ with its over-reliance on the realist novel. Affect Theories for instance, help us open these linear modes of expression into somatic and sensual experiences. It is via routes such as these that we return to artists such as Amrita Pritam or Qurratulain Hyder derided as sentimental and clichéd, to uncover a yet unexplored storehouse of material to take Partition Studies to the next level.

The editors of “Towards a New Epistemology: The “Affective Turn” – Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula and Kostas Yannakopoulos – offer a way out of the impasse of an affect/discourse binary: they write that the theoretical engagement with emotions and affectivity in the mid-1990s drew on “psychoanalytically informed theories of subjectivity and subjection, theories of the body and embodiment, poststructuralist feminist theory, conversation of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory with political theory and critical analysis, queer theorisation of melancholy and trauma” (5) among others. Important anthropological work was done to illustrate that emotions “should not be regarded as pre-social, pre-ideological and pre-discursive psychological and individual states, but as social and cultural practices (5). One of the most important outcomes was the challenge to conventional (western) oppositions between emotion and reason, and discourse and affect (5). For instance, modes such as language came to be understood as more than an “instrumental vehicle of discursive expression,” and as a “corporeal, sensual experience” (6). I would argue that this deconstruction of discourse and affect point the way to exploring postcolonial contexts via cultural productions and formations that would otherwise not be accessible. For instance, classical music and dance in India while following what could be termed discursive modes can also be opened up to studies of exteriorization,

corporealization and collectivization of affect. Music, visual art, dance, ritual, architecture etc. can be brought into analysis not merely as texts, but also through more sensorial, emplaced ways. My chapter will demonstrate how individual and collective sites of memory and mourning are produced through interactions with affect and embodied emotion via some of these sites.

My work, then, is focused on understanding processes of mourning and memory in South Asia by exploring emotions as collectivized practices, gestures and representations. The editors of “Towards a New Epistemology: The “Affective Turn” suggest a productive tension between the notions of emotion, affect and *social* passion (6). Affect is, of course, semantically a slippery word to pin down; the notion of affect as “social passion,” as “political suffering and trauma affected by the other, but also as unconditional and response-able openness to be affected by others – to be shaped by the contact with others,” (6) forms the critical nub between cultural or literary representation and social or cultural trauma. This affective/sensory model allows us to bypass some aporias and erasures within Trauma Studies as it has been embraced in literary and social analysis. In the following section, I explain how.

The sensorial grounding that we find in artists like Pritam, Hyder, Ali and Hariharan that my dissertation explores, is rooted deeply in everyday habitus and practice; ways of responding to the world are profoundly entangled with the “vernacular” i.e. tropes of locality, elements of local “affect-worlds” (to borrow a term from Kabir again). Bringing them under the aegis of Trauma Studies cannot proceed solely along theoretical lines developed in other life-worlds. At the same time, we must not be caught up in the West/Rest binary as Michael Rothberg terms it. In “Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response” (2008), Michael Rothberg quotes Naoki Sakai, “the West is [n]either a geographic territory with an affiliated population, [n]or a unified cultural and social formation. It remains always a putative unity; its unity is preordained regardless of its

inherent fragmentation and dispersal. It is in fact a mythic unity” (Rothberg 227-8). Processes of colonization, decolonization, neo-imperialism etc. have been shown to make such binaries theoretically and materially void. Theoretical frameworks such as deconstruction and post-structuralism (the two foundational vectors of trauma studies in the humanities) are often accused of a Euro-American bias. Yet they have been shown by Robert Young, for instance, as born also of Franco-Maghrebian encounters (Algerian war of independence) and challenging enlightenment and Eurocentric ways of thinking. Frantz Fanon drew on phenomenology, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, among other sources in his theorization of colonial violence and trauma (Rothberg 228). Hence to repeat, my use of the term “vernacular” should not be interpreted as a move towards excavating the authentic or the indigenous, or reviving a mythical West/Rest binary but a move towards expanding and multiplying frameworks to understand the Partition and the continuing communal conflicts in the region.

Scholars of postcolonial trauma want to open the field up to questions of how societies other than those traditional trauma studies has explored - grapple with their *collective* traumas. Stef Craps in *Postcolonial Witnessing* (2013) points out that most of these early theorists were “blind” to traumas of non-western cultures (12). Like Craps, a number of scholars have recently pointed out that poststructuralism and psychoanalysis, the two main theoretical fields through which studies of trauma and memory entered literary analysis (via Caruth and Felman) have roots in Eurocentricism and hence might be incomplete. Irene Visser in her article “Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies” (2011) cautions against uncritically adopting the central templates of “western” understandings of trauma and, instead urges an incorporation of ‘non-western templates for psyche disorders related to trauma’ (272). Such a rerouting is in line with other contemporary demands for a diversification of postcolonial modes of address, such as

Leela Gandhi's call in *Postcolonial Theory*, for and engagement with non-western (African, Indian, Korean, Chinese) self-sufficient knowledge systems in order to "learn to speak more adequately to the world which it speaks for" and to "facilitate a democratic colloquium between the antagonistic inheritors of the colonial aftermath" (x)" (Visser 272).

"Trauma" studies in particular evolved out of processes of industrialization, modernization and the world wars and may need reworking in other contexts<sup>20</sup>. In *The Harmony of Illusions*, Allan Young (1995) reminds us that "trauma" was "invented in the late nineteenth century. "It is not timeless [but] glued together by the practices, technologies, and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated and represented "(5). Affect theory adds to these modalities the collective sensoria through which "trauma" is experienced, expressed and negotiated. Focusing, thus, on a narrow historicity and geography "glues" it together in limited ways.

Roger Luckhurst in his Introduction to *The Trauma Question* (2008) offers a mapping of the theoretical genealogy of "trauma" within cultural and literary studies. Seeing it as a "breach of disciplines" (as well as of skin and psychic boundaries,) he affirms via La Capra that "no genre or discipline can own trauma as a problem or can provide definitive boundaries for it (Luckhurst 4). Luckhurst provides a comprehensive review of trauma studies as a "knotty" complex (5). To paraphrase him, in 1980, "trauma" was first classified as a disease by the American Psychiatric Association. In the 80s and 90s, literary analysis (textualist, deconstructionist, located in the western academy) embraced studies in trauma. In this context, trauma has mostly been approached via "a semiotic, interpretive" lens that deconstructionist and poststructuralist criticism was particularly oriented towards (5). Luckhurst writes that these approaches harness the aporia inherent in a traumatic experience, i.e. the paradox in the

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<sup>20</sup> See, for e.g., Rebecca Saunders and Kamran Aghaie "Introduction: Mourning and Memory" p.16 in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 25, Number 1, 2005, pp. 16-29.

experience of trauma explained thus by Cathy Caruth (1996): “the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it (Caruth 102). A further Freudian paradox is provided by the strange *temporality* of traumatic memory: an event can be understood as traumatic *after* the fact, through the symptoms and flashbacks that these signs of disturbance produce (Luckhurst 5). Luckhurst concludes that “trauma as representational paradox and belated temporality translated into crises of representation and narrative time in literary analysis” (5). It was thus developed into an “expository device” an excavation of symbolic language.

Psychoanalytic theories with their reliance on Freudian foundations also depended also on “interpretive excavations” (8). This excavatory paradigm remained the dominant model in literary trauma studies. Stef Craps (2013), among other postcolonial trauma scholars, wants to move beyond this focus on a crisis in representation to the materialities (social and cultural) of trauma narratives and their conditions of production and reception. Ananya Kabir, as we have seen, posits the affective as a way around the representational paradox and moving beyond crises of representation and narrative exposition as ways to understand trauma in South and West Asia. My dissertation also argues that affect theory adds to the theoretical complex of trauma a collective, externalized sensoria through which “trauma” is experienced, expressed, negotiated.

Psychological models of understanding trauma have been largely focused on individual trauma. The means of restitution have often proceeded on “semiotic, linguistic, narrative, testimonial” lines rather than being embedded in social and material contexts. In their “Introduction to Mourning and Memory,” (2005) Rebecca Saunders and Kamran Scot Aghaie approach this problematic through the spatial and temporal aspects to collective memory and mourning. They draw attention to Ron Eyerman’s *Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2001), where he insists that “there is a difference between trauma as it affects

individuals and as a cultural process” and, specifically, that “as cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity” (Saunders and Agahie 17<sup>21</sup>). Saunders and Agahie follow the development of Eyerman’s theory of cultural trauma through his later work with Jeffrey Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, Neil Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004) where he argues that trauma thus produced is subject, along the way, to “stratificational hierarchies”—“the uneven distribution of material resources and the social networks that provide differential access to them” (Scott and Aghaie 21). Scholars of cultural trauma, and postcolonial trauma scholars, in particular, want to focus on the *materiality* of trauma and problematic of healing and reforming via material means. Frantz Fanon, in particular, is recuperated by most postcolonial trauma critics like Craps, Scott and Aghaie and others, for his significant contribution to this politically informed trauma studies<sup>22</sup>.

Ron Eyerman (2001), then, defines cultural trauma as a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group that has achieved some degree of cohesion (2). He agrees that the linking of the past to the present through representations and imagination locates memory in a textual discourse (3), but also urges a move to recognize “the impact of material culture on memory and identification” (8). Providing us a route to map affect onto the material, Eyerman asks for interventions into forms *not articulated through language* but through senses, or affective responses to music, art or physical geography (8). In his subsequent extension of the theoretical foundations of cultural and collective trauma, *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering* (2011), one of the contributors Nicolas Demertzis asserts that

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<sup>21</sup> See Ron Eyerman *Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)(2-3).

<sup>22</sup> Scott and Aghaie write that Fanon not only for re-embedded individuals within a social context and disrupted European psychology with African experience, but also for reintegrated the material meaning of trauma into a term that had largely become psychologized (20).

the fundamental elements of cultural trauma are memory, emotion and identity (146). The material and affective embedding of these social and collective configurations is thus a site of fascinating study.

My dissertation reaches out to recent work developing a *vernacular* material and affective framework to analyze violence, trauma and loss in South Asia. Critics of trauma theory and criticism argue that clinical approaches developed in specific socio-cultural contexts often write over postcolonial systems of knowledge-making, mourning, and recovery. Ananya Kabir, Kumkum Sangari, and other postcolonial critics are seeking to develop a vernacularized framework to view violence, trauma and loss in South Asia. In her analysis of Hyder's *Aag ka Darya* (1958) in "Viraha: A Trajectory in the Nehruvian Era," Kumkum Sangari (2011) for instance, offers a repositioning of *viraha* (drawn from Sufi, Bhakti and Sant representations of love, desire, separation and longing) as an "affective complex that could negotiate the Partition"<sup>23</sup> (Sangari 261). Ananya Kabir in "Affect, Body Place" (2014) suggests that while Freud-driven analysis of the unconscious – its structures and foundations – cannot be jettisoned, the language and social matrix through which the unconscious is expressed, the systems, rituals and gestures deployed, need attention (Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone 72-3). It is at this challenging threshold that my work on Partition asks to be located. In a similar vein, Ananya Kabir in her more recent work *Partition's Post-Amnesias* (2013), urges us to recuperate a vernacular vocabulary (accents, inflections, gestures that constitute embodied memory) that brings in its train histories of longing for specifically South Asian pasts<sup>24</sup>. *Viraha* and related concepts such as *ishq* or *moonjh* mediate a longing for places and states of mind that historical and personal circumstances keep out of reach (140). This is hauntingly captured, for instance, in writer

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<sup>23</sup> Kumkum Sangari, "Viraha: A Trajectory in the Nehruvian Era", *Poetics and Politics of Sufism and Bhakti in South Asia: Love, Loss and Liberation*, ed. Kavita Panjabi (Kolkata: Orient BlackSwan, 2011), 256-287.

<sup>24</sup> Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias*, 140.

Qurratulain Hyder's decision to return to India after her initial exodus to Pakistan, moved perhaps by what she refers to in her short story "Exiles" as "a conviction born of that love that some even call treason. This treason or treachery is nothing but the longing for the fragrance of jasmine blossoms" (Kabir 116), Thus, the uneven sense of belonging in post-Partition subjects, in particular Muslim minorities or non-heteronormative men and women, censured by the State as betrayal, often produces memories mediated by intransigent emotions. These affective complexes not only challenge unidimensional claims of the nation-state on intimacy, affect and belonging, but also provide cognitive frameworks to explore the affective and emotional faces of political formations<sup>25</sup>. My usage of the term "vernacular" is mediated by Sheldon Pollock<sup>26</sup> and Ananya Kabir<sup>27</sup>: in terms of its situatedness (Pollock<sup>28</sup>) and as linguistically and culturally inflected medium – in Kabir<sup>29</sup> as here – of South Asian melancholy and loss. As evinced by my chapters, in my usage, then, 'the vernacular' emerges as the two following modalities: as a means of reading Partition's memorial terrain outside homogeneous sectarian nationalist mappings (that occlude place-specific life-worlds) and two as vernacular (and a vernacular of) affective complexes as Partition narratives where a reading of emotions and affect not as interior states but as embodiments of habitus, socio-political phenomena, offers a cognitive mapping of

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<sup>25</sup> See for e.g. Begona Aretaxa, "Maddening States", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32.1 (2003): 393-410.

<sup>26</sup> Sheldon Pollock understands vernacularization and the study of local worlds as rooted in historicity. Rather than viewing them as "natural" and "primeval", vernacularization would study the processes of the formation of these local life worlds. See Pollock "India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500" especially p. 41-42.

<sup>27</sup> Ananya Jahanara Kabir in her essay "Secret Histories of Indian Modernism" (2011) has coined the term "vernacular" to cast the habitus and praxes that resist the State's cultural mandate. Her argument is in relation to the artist M.F. Hussain's creative work – she claims Hussain's art articulates an Indian Modernism predicated on a reclamation of the lost vernacular Muslim habitus that meshed with "a Sanskrit zed" past ( a loss doubly charged by Partition's fractures) from the reductive nationalist binary ((100-115). This should be read not an anti-secularist stance, but as an interrogation of the nation's foreclosure of difference. The attacks on Hussain through the 90s and his self-exile in 2006 speak tellingly of the increasingly clamorous mandate of the Hindu nation, eclipsing Muslim access to these vernaculars.

<sup>28</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Kabir *Post-Partition Amnesias and Secret Histories of Modernism*, 102.

Partition's detritus. Finally, it offers us a way to globalize and decolonize Holocaustian or Euro-American frameworks of understanding trauma, mourning and remaking.

### Ongoing Partition

In framing the Partition of South Asia within its memorial terrain and in terms of affect-mediated Postcolonial Trauma Theory, then, I lay the ground for a view of the past's remnants in the present (and stakes in the future,) that goes beyond causality or determinism. My argument is not to look at post-1947 South Asia through a deterministic lens, as I hope my chapters will elucidate. Nor am I linking the events of 1947 to later sectarian violence and minoritization "causally." On the contrary, what my dissertation seeks to illuminate are theoretical framings via studies of memory, melancholia, trauma, affect and postcoloniality that elucidate ways in which the *ongoing* effects of the past shape the present and offer us ways to reimagine the future. This, then, is the thread that ties together the various theoretical lenses I bring to my analysis of the region's exigencies. Both Postcolonial studies and trauma and memory studies are heuristic formations that are invested in the shadows cast by anterior events, in the co-existence of multiple temporalities and in a critical relationship between present and past in the interest of the future yet to come. It is this interleaving of Postcoloniality and Trauma that lies at the critical center of my interrogation; my chapters develop their overlaps and divergences, as they apply to literary and cultural analysis.

My framework of Partition's *haunting* of the political, cultural, emotional, and sexual lives of the region is in part drawn from trauma theory's premises. As Cathy Caruth sums up in her Introduction to the seminal *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), the literary and cultural explorations of trauma collected in her volume pivot on the fact that "trauma is not experienced

as a mere repression or defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment” (10). She develops, as we have seen, this belatedness into her thesis of literary aporia and the impossibility of witnessing, which is one strand in Literary Trauma Theory; the other, according to Irene Visser, is Judith Herman’s thesis of narrative not as aporia but as therapeutic healing, one with significantly greater potential for postcolonial reconfiguration of trauma with its investment in history, location and specificity (Visser 274).

Affect-mediated trauma theory, as I will argue, allows us to imagine other ways of relating trauma, in particular collective trauma, to how we live and respond to the world; it helps us locate and analyze a sensorium of trauma. My literary explorations of Partition trauma gesture to both aporetic and therapeutic models, while also going beyond them. Affect-mediated understandings of trauma look into the exteriorization of emotion and the worlding of the body. As I will argue sustainedly through my chapters, studies of affect are a significant entry point into understanding embodied emotion, memory and trauma.

To return to the latency and belatedness of trauma, however, we need to explore further its foundations in Freudian psychoanalysis. Irene Visser writes that in his early work on hysteria, (*Studies on Hysteria*, 1895), Freud engaged with the effects of trauma as painful experiences that had not yet been integrated into the personality, but having been repressed remained buried in the unconscious only to resurface later as disturbing symptoms (273). In his early formulations, Visser goes on to analyze, Freud was preoccupied with early childhood trauma of a sexual nature, which only became “retrospectively traumatic” (273). Thus, broadly speaking, trauma is imbricated in a painful *remembering*, in the intrusion of the painful past into the present, belatedly. Mourning, melancholia, memory and other temporally complex psychological,

cognitive, embodied states with external, material cognates (phenomenological, historical, social, political etc.) form a cluster that studies of trauma need to engage with.

The political and creative aspects of trauma and loss have been explored by much recent critical scholarship. David Eng and David Kazanjian's seminal volume *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (2003) lays out a clear-voiced framework for the political, collective and creative potential of loss in modernity. Their thesis that trauma and loss are productive rather than paralyzing turns on understanding modernity in terms of its "volatile potentiality" (5). Drawing on a Benjaminian vision of history as Janus-faced Angel, the editors lay out their intellectual vision of a field in which the past is brought to bear witness to the present – as a flash of emergence, an instant of emergency, and a moment of production. In this regard, [they sum up,] the past remains steadfastly alive for the political work of the present" (5). How may we understand this aliveness of the past in terms of the political work of the *postcolonial* present? As multiple critics, including Tim Brennan in "Subaltern Stakes" have established, "the term 'postcolonial' is constitutively troubled, [...], since it carries with it the strategic temporizing of its inception—the incongruity of its discursive tones and themes, in contrast with a rather blunter reality of imperial propaganda, foreign torture chambers and the stealing of others' lands" (*New Left Review* 89.) This "blunter reality" that extends in South Asia to violence perpetrated by the postcolonial State on those on its margins, belies the "post" in postcoloniality as a temporal division, and attests to the continuing need for a decolonizing program targeting the oppressive structures in political, social, cultural and epistemic systems and their practices. To span the fields of studies of trauma and studies of decolonizing work, then, this acknowledgement of the remainders of the past in the present is necessary.

Here, then, lies a heuristic and epistemic pathway to locate the Partition, minoritization and sectarian violence as ongoing, unfolding processes. The remainders and detritus of the ethnocidal violence of 1947 and its effects on psyches (individual, familial, collective), on citizenship, rights and other political structures, on the State's policies and mind-sets, on cultural schisms need to be explored - to understand how systems of oppression, exclusion and dehumanization continue to flourish, in order to be able to imagine a future that offers, perhaps, other ways of living and responding. The Partition of the Indian subcontinent – being one of the crucial moments marking the breach between the colonial and postcolonial era and having a *far-reaching* presence in current configurations of politics, culture and subjectivity, and needs to be understood further through the interleaving of postcolonial trauma studies. Jaya Kasibhatla, for instance, in her dissertation argues that the Indian State's views on citizenship and rights were founded in the enduring climate of Partition's violence and chaos; thus suspicion of treason and insurgency mark the State's view of citizenship. She reads the Emergency, its suspension of rights as an effect of the Partition. The colonial edifices of the postcolonial nations compound this problematic. She writes, "the coming into being of the citizen" took place in the crisis moment of Partition and this moment of emergence exerted a long-lasting influence on the definition of the citizen as that figure "who threatens to shatter the sovereign order" (Kasibhatla 7). "The citizen conceived in crisis therefore appears indistinguishable from the figure of the terrorist (13). Thus, the democratic institutions of modern India are rooted in the exigencies of the state of emergency which allows laws (of protection) to be suspended and places large bodies of its populations under constant surveillance, discipline, and threat of destruction. I will be examining these concerns more fully in Chapters Three and Four. This threatening figure of the citizen as shored up by the postcolonial nation has far-reaching effects in state-sponsored

violence as my chapters will illustrate. This brings me to an exploration of the affective faces of the political as they have been shaped by Partition's pervasive shadow.

### Accessing State Violence through Affect and Trauma Studies

To discuss the social and political aspects of Partition and post-Partition traumas, it becomes essential to take into account the postcolonial State (and para-statist formations.) Here, too, affect-mediated studies of these formations have much to offer. Given that the state is experienced by those on the margins through violence, in embodied, penetrative ways (Aretxaga 396) how may the body (understood as an emotional, psychic, sexual, corporeal, affective conglomerate) be reframed, affectively, to comment on state power? Commentators such as Taussig, Feldman, Aretxaga, and Kabir have illuminated how, in contexts of terror and spaces of death, the body and its languages, sounds, fluids and wounds may be read, not only to document the effects of terror and exhume the repressed, but also to understand negotiations with terror, and modes (mimetic, parodic, cryptic, confrontational, compromising etc.) of resistance and contestation to power<sup>30</sup>. Nation-state making in South Asia continues to be premised upon violent fantasies of what it means to inhabit and safeguard communal identities; gender and sexuality remain central to the everyday grounding and defending of these fantasies. Victims of genocidal rape and violence – in Partition and post-Partition contexts – continue to be reduced into real and tropic boundaries between national and religious groups. In the Indian context, the figure of the traitorous, violent, rapacious Muslim male has become the threat against which the State ceaselessly produces itself as screen and fetish, turning its paranoid gaze upon him while eliciting, in return, a similar fear and mistrust. Partition memories, then, haunt the psychic life of

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<sup>30</sup>See Taussig (1987), Feldman (1991), Aretxaga (2003), Kabir (2009).

the region and form the field through which further violence - in the name of the nation-state - is sanctioned and enacted against its “Others.” My work seeks to illuminate the affective, often violent faces of the nation-state while exploring concurrent modalities of belonging and community (in the region and globally) that may allow for more peaceable political trajectories.

Studies of the active involvement of the State in Partition violence are relatively recent. As Pandey reminds us (2001), the imperative to return to the Partition was born of the political exigencies of an increasingly communalized and violent India (6). Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh (2009), Vazira Zamindar (2007) and others are scholars of a new history of the Partition that helps widen our understanding of its nature as political violence. Talbot and Singh (2009), in particular, analyze how “violence emerged both as a political resource and as a reaction to an increasingly vitiated political atmosphere” (60). They argue that between the period 1946-1950, communal violence was “organized with the singular objective of clearing out minority populations” (61). While some historians of the violence judge the acts as moments of frenzy (84), others like Romila Thapar, Imtiaz Ahmed, and Dipankar Gupta while writing of the 2002 Gujarat violence, draw attention to shared features of communal violence such as “functional utility of riots to politicians, state complicity in the perpetration of organized acts of violence and delays in securing justice for the victims” (qtd in Talbot and Singh 84). Talbot and Singh affirm that all these features were present in the cycle of violence from 1946 to 1950. Far from being spontaneous and frenzied individual acts, Hindu “mobs”, Sikh *jathas* and Muslim tribal war parties were carefully planned, well financed and strongly armed organizations (86-87). Many ex-servicemen from the British Indian Army and the INA (Indian National Army) were in their ranks <sup>31</sup>(86). Often the rioters were directed by searchlights, microphones and signposts marking

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<sup>31</sup> See Copland, “The Master and the Maharajas for more data.

ethnicity of the victims (86). There is evidence that the lower ranks of political parties were involved as were the police of all three warring communities (86). Hence, while individual rioters may have been motivated by lust, loot or revenge, “they were operating in an environment in which such violence was socially [and politically] sanctioned” (88). Thus the State, its machinery and agents, its affects and ideologies, haunted (and continue to haunt) Partition and post-Partition violence.

How do we access the psychic lives of these political formations? The processes of mapping the political as it informs and is suffused by the “desires, fantasies and imagination” of individual subjects is a complex project as it involves a recognition of the “excesses” and instabilities that constitute these “systems” (as opposed to them being rational and abstract forms), an examination of the multiple sites in everyday life or under extraordinary conditions where these formations produce and reproduce themselves. It also involves looking at the nation, the state, and citizenship (membership in the political) as a set of ongoing practices, discourses, processes, effects and performatives (Butler 1990) that are also visceral, habitual, psychic, phantasmatic, (Navaro-Yashin 181) and thoroughly sexual (Aretxaga 2000, 2001, 2003). Clearly, this involves an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach involving political, anthropological, psychological, *affective* and literary prongs; an approach which, in recent years, has made substantial inroads. Much of the prior scholarship in this area has been critiqued for its inability to cross methodological and disciplinary borders: Srirupa Roy in *Beyond Belief* (2007), for example, cautions that structural-functionalist accounts of the political remain incomplete while psychological approaches ignore political and social structures (Roy 10-12). Affect-mediated postcolonial framings of Trauma Theory, might, I argue, help bridge this gap.

The Partition is seen as a unique foundational wound to the nation, framed as a severing and dismemberment with no parallels. Cultural and psychoanalytical analyses of the nation posit that the uniform, homogenous fantasy of the nation-state is constituted through loss. Much of the nation-state's policies and practices turn on it becoming a fetish-object (a screen or power) to conceal this loss. Recent scholarship has sought to re-frame loss and trauma in ways that reveal how they underpin political superstructures. It, further, studies how mourning and melancholia may transform into political solidarities. Much of my project remains committed to illuminating these transformations and solidarities, using literary, creative and cultural, works as units of analysis in conjunction with this recent scholarship. As Judith Butler sums up in her Afterword "After Loss, What Then?" in David Eng and David Kazanjian's *Loss* (2003), the understanding of loss as belonging to a "purely psychological or psychoanalytical discourse" has given way to a more inclusive, nuanced stance that studies loss as "constituting social, political, and aesthetic relations" ( Eng and Kazanjian 467). The general understanding developed from Freud's foundational essay "Mourning and Melancholia" is that unlike mourning, which succeeds at working through loss (healing the self), melancholia pathologically remains tied to the lost object refusing to let it go (the self turns against itself). In recent revisions to this theory, melancholy's devotion to the lost object is no longer seen in Freudian terms as a "pathology" or an incapacitation, but allows " a better understanding of melancholic attachments to loss [that] might depathologize those attachments, making visible not only their social bases but also their creative, unpredictable, political aspects "(Eng and Kazanjian 3). It is these sensual, creative and unpredictable political aspects of loss that my chapters seek to mobilize.

Chapter One "Re-thinking Trauma: Love and Longing in Amrita Pritam's Partition Lament," explores how lyrics/*nazms* composed by Punjabi poet Amrita Pritam in the immediate

aftermath of Partition, functioned - via their affective, imagic, auditory and performative modes – as channels for representations of female longing, vulnerability and grief as well as of female agency. Re-molding representations of *ishq* (love) inflected by Sufi and Vaishnava lineages, her widely read and performed (untitled) invocation to the Sufi poet Waris Shah (written in 1947, translated by the poet at a later unspecified date), contains resonances from pre-partition communities as well as Indo-Islamic performative and listening practices of the Punjab. These not only question the religious and nation-statist binaries in the region, but also counter the communalization and nationalization of female sexuality in the aftermath of the genocidal violence during and since partition. Through the vernacularized Indo-Islamic lyric tradition Pritam draws from, we can look afresh at connected Asian (a complex of South, Central and West) encounters offering a new and distinct access to the memorial terrains of Partition.

Chapter Two, “Palimpsests of Trauma: Excavating Memories in Qurratulain Hyder's *Sita Betrayed*” examines Hyder’s *Sita Haran* (1960, translated as *Sita Betrayed* by C.M. Naim in 1999) which re-creates poetic and affective histories of the sub-continent through a bricolage of vernacular literary, performative and archaeological sites. Mobilizing reinterpretations of cultural history, memory and geography, that evoke the irresolute, uncanny and melancholic, Hyder undertakes a critique of these materials of nation-making, opening them up to the region’s collective traumas. Nehru’s celebratory urge to map South Asia as an “ancient palimpsest” to “know if there was any real connection between the past and the present” (25) is unraveled in *Sita Betrayed* to cast spatialization, temporalization and collectivization in darker, irresolute terms. Hyder’s mattering of a post-Partition memorial terrain is characterized by repeated gestures of unearthing the past. It recuperates for instance archaeological sites and “heritage” monuments from statist fixity and uncovers – mostly via Sita Mirchandani’s penetrating

observations— subjacent graffiti, scrawls, and traces often under more manifest signs. These inscriptions, variously exuding insecurity, clandestineness, or mocking irony, as I will show, constitute an address at odds with that of the official Statist and Neo-Imperial stances. Moreover, in its excavation of traumatic interstitial histories of exile, the novel expands and multiplies its address to include global phenomena of “minoritization” and dispossession. Thus apart from minorities like Sindhi refugees in India, or *Mohajirs* from India’s heartlands in Pakistan (the stock characters who people Partition narratives), *Sita Betrayed* is radical in its constitution of a trans-South Asian and even global exilic ethos. By making the subjectivity of the *virahini* (woman separated from her lover in subcontinental literary and affective traditions) central to these entangled histories, while at the same time subverting its affective and migratory tropes, Hyder locates female vulnerability and loss within renewed frameworks. This allows Partition’s sexualized trauma to be interpreted and negotiated in the region’s collective memorial terrain.

In Chapter Three, “Death-Making Traumas: Dislocation of Pain in Post-Partition Kashmir,” my focus is on cultural productions that comment on the “Indian” post-Partition imaginary in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s. Reading translations of short stories in Kashmiri, written between 1950 and 1980 and translated in the 1990s and Agha Shahid Ali’s poetry from the collection *The Country without A Post Office* (1997) I examine how “ a sensorium of vulnerability” allows us to encounter the Indian state as it is experienced by those on the limits – here, the Kashmiri Muslim. My chapter reads injury and grief against their grains to reveal what they say about the phantasmatic and affective faces of the violent State (Indian and Pakistani). Through this reframing of vulnerability and grief, emerges a poetics and performative of the sensory, that disrupts the fetishization of the South Asian (here Kashmiri) Muslim as either victim or perpetrator in statist or global terror discourse.

Chapter Four, “Post-Partition Traumas: Entanglements of History and Memory in Githa Hariharan,” continues to analyze the post-Partition trauma-scape in the context of contemporary sectarian violence through the writings of Githa Hariharan. Hariharan engenders “a deep memorialization” through her novels *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009) “written out of grief” at the loss of textured non-Brahmanical histories, and the insidious flattening of public and private spaces of dissent. In *In Times of Siege*, Hariharan’s focus is on the cultural erasure of the traumatized minority subject, caught in the siege of the majoritarian mandate in 1990s India. Hariharan, furthermore, illuminates through this novel, a vision of a transhistorical grief which originates in a sense of alienation from hegemonic Statist investments. *Fugitive Histories*, the second novel I examine, grapples with the crisis of witnessing and “unrepresentability” that has been at the crux of Trauma and Literary Studies until recently. However, like many of the other writers and artists my dissertation has been exploring, Hariharan by representing “a haptic/somatic” text, by not psychologizing the violence, but also locating it in the material and collective realms, opens it up to a postcolonial analysis. The preoccupation with “nakedness”, “skin” and “vulnerability” that are recurring motifs, also develop of a sensorium of vulnerability, albeit in different ways than in Agha Shahid Ali. Hariharan’s representation of history and memory as entanglements with the Other, in other words, with the ethical aspects of historicizing and memorializing, make *Fugitive Histories* such a crucial intervention into the violence scarred post-Partition South Asian terrain.

To sum up, what political possibilities can remembrance and mourning offer? They may create an ongoing relationship with the past that allows critical reflection upon the present. The Partition’s claims over South Asia’s memories remain fierce; its shadows still lurk in stubborn recesses. Contestations over what “pasts” deserve affective investment and value, and to what

extent, continue to scar the factious present. Consequently, creative and commemorative productions – self-representations of collective identities, memories and traumas – become crucial channels of negotiation. It is some of these self-representations – from the Partition onwards – that my chapters map, to reveal unfolding political possibilities in South Asia, and beyond.

## CHAPTER 1

### Re-thinking Trauma: Love and Longing in Amrita Pritam

To go back to fantasy, a good deal of the literature on the state and violence shows the state not as the product of rational technologies of control but as the subject of excess that bypasses any rational functionality. What articulates this excess is fantasy (the fantasy of statehood, the fantasy of total control, the fantasy of appropriation of the other, the fantasy of heterosexual domesticity), which appears as a major component of political life and a key factor structuring power relations.

Begoña Aretxaga<sup>32</sup>

It can be argued that hysterics, mourners, and melancholics are all people who remember too much. Specialists in the past, they are consummate historians.

Caryl Flynn<sup>33</sup>

#### Introduction: Grief, Memory and Belonging Post- Partition

The remnants of the 1947 Partition of the “Indian” sub-continent cling to us even today. Its claims over South Asia’s memories remain fierce; its ghosts lurk in strange and everyday recesses. The emotional detritus of the partition continues to shape psychic, political and social formations across the region. In the recent extension of the theoretical foundations of cultural/collective trauma, *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering* (2011), Nicolas Demertzis asserts that a major traumatic event can influence the systems of reference of

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<sup>32</sup> “Maddening States” (2003), 402.

<sup>33</sup> *The New German Cinema: Music, History, and The Matter Of Style*, 55.

an entire society, and in the process change established, roles, rules, *habitus* and narratives<sup>34</sup> (145). The transformation of a traumatic event or a chain of events into cultural trauma is thus a fiercely contested process where memory, identity, emotion, and fantasy<sup>35</sup> are key players. The post-Partition memorial terrain of South Asia is thus overburdened and factious; it is haunted by the anamorphic shadow of the Hindu-Muslim binary. Fantasies of total control and appropriation of the Other appear as a major component of political life and a key factor structuring nation-statist formations in the region. Sexuality remains integral to these fantasies - victims of genocidal rape and violence continue to be reduced into real and tropic boundaries between national and religious groups. In the Indian context, the figure of the traitorous, violent, rapacious Muslim male has become the threat against which the State ceaselessly produces itself as screen and fetish, turning its paranoid gaze upon him while eliciting, in return, a similar fear and mistrust<sup>36</sup>. Hindutva campaigns against “Love Jihad” in contemporary India carry reminders of that communalization and fetishization of sexuality in everyday life<sup>37</sup>. Partition memories, then, haunt the psychic life of the region and form the field through which further violence – often in the name of the State - is sanctioned and enacted against its “Others”; this violence often takes on intimate, sexual charges.

The terrain of cultural memory, as Caryl Flinn, Michael Rothberg and others note, is multivalent and can carry the burden of several concurrent pasts. What does it mean, as Caryl

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<sup>34</sup> “The Drama of the Greek Civil War Trauma,” Nicolas Demertzis p. 145.

<sup>35</sup> I use fantasy here in the sense that Jacqueline Rose in dialogue with Freud uses in *States of Fantasy* (1996) where fantasy rather than representing a “grounds of licence and pleasure, is crucial to what makes group identification possible. I elucidate on this further on.

<sup>36</sup> See Begoña Aretxaga, “Maddening States” (2003), for more on the State as screen and fetish.

<sup>37</sup> For news articles on Love Jihad see <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/29/love-jihad-india-one-man-quest-prevent-it>; <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/love-jihad-and-religious-conversions-in-uttar-pradesh-659439>; and Charu Gupta’s opinion column <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-myth-of-love-jihad/>.

Flinn notes in the context of post-war Germany, to remember too much or too uncontrollably<sup>38</sup>?

What did it mean to remember too much in the decades immediately following Partition? During the late 1940s, 50s and 60s, in the midst of strident hostility between the newly formed nation-states, memories of pre-Partition life-worlds and modes of affinity formed an especially contentious site. The creation of Pakistan as a homeland for subcontinental Muslims and strident articulations of Hindu nationalism in India meant the loss of interconnected histories and identities. Memories of these interconnections were often censored by both India and Pakistan informed by their need to create fantasies of uniform, homogenous national communities. For instance, the national cultural policy of All India Radio actively promoted the “Hindu” aspects of classical music ignoring the historically rich cross-fertilization that had produced the music of North India<sup>39</sup> (Lelyveld 119). Yet, imaginaries where the communalization and nationalization of *affinity* were challenged remained in South Asia. One such site was the new style of film songs which used a “Hindi” that was in fact Urdu (and eroticized) and avoided the Sanskrit vocabulary one heard on post-independence radio” (Lelyveld 120). The cinema thus offered a style of music that challenged the aims of the national cultural policy. Kumkum Sangari demonstrates that songs in Hindi cinema in the decade of the 50s often carried darker tones than their context demanded. She reads in them the traces of emotions and affiliations that could not be contained by the censoring frameworks of cinema as the vehicle of national story-telling. Their dark motifs “functioned as ominous allusions with a missing referent ... almost as if the romantic sensorium was subliminally connected to other forms of this-worldly desire and loss”

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<sup>38</sup> Caryl Flinn, *The New German Cinema: Music, History, and The Matter Of Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 55.

<sup>39</sup> To make room for performers from music schools rather than Muslim dominated *gharanas* (musical lineages) Patel banned singers and musicians from the courtesan culture-anyone “whose private life was a public scandal.” 119 Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio Author(s): David Lelyveld Source: *Social Text*, No. 39 (Summer, 1994), pp. 111-127 Published by: Duke University Press Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466366>

(274) i.e. of the political realities of the Partition. Sangari argues that the filmic song can thus also be read as a “public missive, a cross-border message [...]” (280). Literature, similarly, challenged the nationalization of sensorial and emotive terrains. Embodied memories of pre-Partition life-worlds persisted “ex-centrally” (Ato Quayson<sup>40</sup>), for instance, in *mohajir*<sup>41</sup> Maulvi Sahab’s *diwangi* (eccentricity) in Joginder Paul’s Urdu novel *Khwabrau* (1990) which makes him believe that instead of Karachi he is still in his beloved Lucknow. In the same novel, Maulvi Sahab’s son yearns for the flavor of Malihabadi (a town near Lucknow famous for its mangoes) mangoes while another character tries to graft them in his new Karachi orchard<sup>42</sup>. In South Asia, post 1947, memorialization was particularly imperiled and emotionally fraught. The stakes involved in re-membling too much or too eccentrically were high. In this context, creative productions - self-representations of collective affinities and memories - became crucial channels of negotiation and contestation.

This chapter “Re-thinking Trauma: Love and Longing in Amrita Pritam's Partition Lament,” explores these memorial negotiations via *nazms*/lyrics<sup>43</sup> composed by Punjabi poet Amrita Pritam in the immediate aftermath of Partition, which mobilize vernacular<sup>44</sup> genealogies of affect (such as *ishq*, *virahaprem*) inflected by *cross-fertilized* Sufi, Vaishnavite and Sikh

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<sup>40</sup> In his article “Symbolisation Compulsions: Freud, African Literature and South Africa’s Process of Truth and Reconciliation” (2001), Ato Quayson asks “How is the narrative of the nation to be elaborated from the perspective of the ex-centric?” (192-3). He wants a greater engagement with the off-center view that falls outside “the perspectives of sanctioned historical tellings of the nation” (192) to find a referential locus for narrativizing South African traumas.

<sup>41</sup> A term borrowed from Arabic with evocations of *hijrat* (the historic migration from Mecca to Madina) to describe the refugees from North India who migrated to Pakistan. Hindu refugees were called *sharanarthi*.

<sup>42</sup> See *Writing Partition: Aesthetics and Ideology in Hindi and Urdu Literature*, Bodh Prakash, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Punjabi poetry, in particular the non-elite traditions that Pritam drew upon (she cites Sufi poets such as Sheikh Farid, Shah Husain, Waris Shah, Piloo and Hasham as her literary forebearers) were embedded in oral, cantillatory performative contexts. “I only loved the Sufi poets, their *kalam* (poetry). Hir Waris Shah was the first book I read from my heart.” Amrita Pritam cited in Nonica Dutta, “Transcending Religious Identities: Amrita Pritam and the Partition”, *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement, and Resettlement*, ed. Anjali Gera Roy, Nandi Bhatia (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley India, 2008), 4.

<sup>44</sup> By vernacular, I mean local and specific cultural worlds and identities. Sheldon Pollock understands vernacularization and the study of local worlds as rooted in historicity. Rather than viewing them as “natural” and “primeval”, vernacularization would study the processes of the formation of these local life worlds. See Pollock “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500” especially p. 41-42.

lineages, to locate a nationally intransigent post-Partition subject. Pritam's lyric channels – through its affective, imagic, auditory and performative modes – representations of female longing, vulnerability and grief as well as of female agency. Her widely read and performed (untitled) invocation to the Sufi poet Waris Shah (written in 1947, translated by the poet at a later unspecified date), contains resonances from pre-partition communities as well as Indo-Islamic performative and listening practices of the Punjab. These not only question the religious and nation-statist binaries in the region, but also counter the communalization and nationalization of female sexuality in the aftermath of the genocidal violence during and since partition. Post 1947, its renditions continue to perform renewed critiques of sectarian violence scarring the region. Through the vernacularized Indo-Islamic lyric tradition Pritam draws from, we can look afresh at connected Asian (a complex of South, Central and West) encounters offering a new and distinct access to the memorial terrains of Partition. Only recently are these cross-fertilized “vernacular” imaginaries and praxes being explored to provide us with an enriched understanding of the narratives, gestures, habitus, and rituals through which the post-Partition memorial terrain has taken shape. I posit that creative and aesthetic expressions of these imaginaries and praxes possess the semiotic and rhythmic depth as well as a sensory dimension that allows them to grapple with Partition's memory fields. These aesthetic representations go on to have what Maria Cizmiciu in *Performing Pain* (2011) calls “public lives of their own used by others to comment upon social reality” (24). They proliferate in reconfigured contexts and avatars and transgress cultural, national and generic boundaries. This reconfiguration allows the fantasies, desires and fears they publicize to be available for continual negotiation, interpretation and re-contextualization. These repertoires of representation, then, open up continuous possibilities of reparation and healing in Partition's trauma-scapes.

In the field of Partition Studies, much work has recently been done to dismantle orthodox heuristic frameworks that have taken the nation-state as their grounds. Gyanendra Pandey in *Remembering Partition* (2001), for instance, has urged that while “the discipline of history proceeds on the assumption of a fixed subject – society, nation, state, community etc., [...] accounts of history of shared experience in the past, serve to constitute these, their extent and boundaries” (4). Nationalist historiography in India has largely elided Partition trauma driven by the need to cast Partition as a new desirable political and/or constitutional arrangement “which did not deeply affect the central structures of Indian society or the broad contours of its history” (Pandey 4). However, survivor’s accounts pay close attention to Partition violence and its sundering of life-worlds - its “radical reconstitution of community and history” (7). Pandey reminds us that face-to face local communities have to live with disturbing memories [of the Partition] more uncertainly and continuously than nations and states.<sup>45</sup> This particularly uneven mosaic of remembering and eliding that marks their memory-making (acknowledging the violence even as they seek to dismiss it) is informed crucially by not the pastness of Partition violence but its continuing presence.<sup>46</sup> In the affective and creative productions of these “local” communities may be found traces of such continuing presence that sits at odds with the horizons of the nation-state. These fragmented uneven modalities and their affective histories carry the potential to enlarge our cultural and political imaginaries. This new understanding has influenced a turn towards sourcing affective and vernacular sites for forms of knowledge and critical thought that earlier remained relegated from serious study. Ananya Kabir (2005), in “Beyond Narrative: Song and Story in South Asia” urges us to recognize that in West Asia or in South Asia, [...], the deconstruction of [orthodox] historical narrative is a necessary step in the search

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<sup>45</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 177.

<sup>46</sup> Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 189.

for emotional and political resolutions of crises arising from the collective trauma of displacement and resettlement (34).<sup>47</sup> In South Asia, especially, she says, historical narrative in one guise or another –statist or anti-statist – has been granted the role of prime vehicle of identity formation [...] by focusing on narrative, both intra and inter-national conflicts are relegated to the category of *fait accomplis* whose conclusion is foregone depending on which narrative viewpoint one endorses; or worse they become “tragedies’ with no resolution in sight” (Kabir 32). What might an alternative to these foreclosed narratives like? Kabir suggests we delve into the affective, embodied and lyrical modalities that ubiquitously cut through South Asian cultural and historical formations to allow marginalized contours of Partition trauma to emerge. Kumkum Sangari (2011), examines the repertoires of love (*viraha*) emanating from medieval sacral and secular contexts that evolved over centuries and were reconfigured in the 1950s in cinematic and performative spaces to negotiate the pain and suffering of the Partition.<sup>48</sup> In a similar vein, Ananya Kabir in her more recent work *Partition’s Post-Amnesias* (2013), urges us to recuperate a vernacular vocabulary (accents, inflections, gestures that constitute embodied memory) that brings in its train histories of longing for specifically South Asian pasts” (23).<sup>49</sup> *Viraha* and related concepts such as *ishq* or *moonjh* mediate a longing for places and states of mind that historical and personal circumstances keep out of reach (Kabir 140). This is hauntingly captured, for instance, in writer Qurratulain Hyder’s decision to return to India after her initial exodus to Pakistan, moved perhaps by what she refers to in her short story “The Exiles” as “a conviction born of that love that some even call treason. This treason or treachery is nothing but the longing

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<sup>47</sup> Anaya Jahanara Kabir, “Beyond Narrative: Song and Story in South Asia”, *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings* 5.2 (2005): 34.

<sup>48</sup> Kumkum Sangari, “Viraha: A Trajectory in the Nehruvian Era”, *Poetics and Politics of Sufism and Bhakti in South Asia: Love, Loss and Liberation*, ed. Kavita Panjabi (Kolkata: Orient BlackSwan, 2011), 256-287.

<sup>49</sup> Ananya Kabir, *Partition’s Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971 and Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013), 23.

for the fragrance of jasmine blossoms” (qtd. in Kabir 116). Thus, the uneven sense of belonging in post-Partition subjects, in particular minorities or non-heteronormative men and women, censured by the State as betrayal, often produces memories mediated by intransigent emotions. These affective complexes not only challenge unidimensional claims of the nation-state on intimacy, affect and belonging, but also provide cognitive frameworks to explore the affective and emotional faces of political formations.

Viewing the Partition as cultural trauma that *transformed* narratives, habitus, gestures, roles and rules is important. The modalities of “vernacular memory” drawn from older cultural remnants and genealogies were refracted by the exigencies of newer political formations – they should not be read as *sui generis* but located in and shaped by the upheavals. While new directions in trauma studies offer many frameworks for situating loss in cultural and historical specificity, the dislocations of history, cultures and subjects brought on by trauma make such grounding open to limitations ((Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone xii). Ignoring the effects of dislocations on history, culture and psyches would be grossly counterintuitive. Thus, interrogating historical and memorial *formations*, the casting of subjects within them, and their *self-representations* remains central to my research project. So, while examining pre-Partition formations for the linguistic and social web they provided to narrate Partition traumas, it is worthwhile to note how the formations were inflected by the geo-political upheavals. The cross-fertilized literary and cultural genealogies examined here (the *qissa*, for e.g.) came to carry the burden of new dislocations which gradually led to their eclipse from northern India.

### Partition and the emotional life of the nation-state

My research is invested in mapping the affective and phantasmatic terrains of post-Partition; this *includes* the affective facets of the nation-state. The nation-state, its fantasies, memories and fears were equally shaped by the traumas of Partition. With respect to India (which remains the main focus of my exploration in this chapter), the months of communal violence that followed Partition are often remembered as “dark blots” on the story of national independence and nationalist self-hood. As mentioned in my Introduction, much of the State’s policies, institutions, images and fantasies of nationhood and citizenship were indelibly marked by this struggle. Srirupa Roy, in *Beyond Belief* (2007) and Jaya Kasibhatla in her dissertation “Constituting the Exception: Law, Literature and the State of Emergency in Postcolonial India” (2005) foreground the “dissonant,” “fractured” and anxiety-ridden political field through which the trauma of the partition came to saturate the emotional and material life of the nation-state. Roy foregrounds the anxiety, limitations, and failures that marked the state at this time arguing that if nation-statist discourses and practices placed the state at the heart of individual and national life, so that encounters with citizenship and nation hood were inevitably encounters with the munificence of the state<sup>50</sup>, they also illuminated the inherent limitations of such power (Srirupa Roy 21). The capital city of Delhi instead of personifying a strong, emergent nation was pock-marked and overrun by ever-increasing makeshift, filthy refugee camps. The state’s view of its center, its capital, then, was terrifying and demoralizing. Roy writes that for the delegates of the Constituent Assembly, gathered in this chaotic capital, “the present of the nation whose future they were deliberating was unsettled and indeterminate” (Roy 26) and their discourse marked by fears of the state’s and their own inadequacies and limitations (Roy 28). The view of

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<sup>50</sup> These encounters often opened up agential possibilities. See Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (2003) for e.g. or Ritwik Ghatak’s cityscapes.

the state's margins was even more threatening. Jaya Kasibhatla gives us the figure of the traitorous citizen, the potential insurgent and agitator against whom she claims much of the constitutional and legal apparatus of Indian state defined itself. She argues that "the citizen conceived in crisis therefore appears indistinguishable from the figure of the terrorist [...]the formative influence of [partition] in the making of postcolonial constitutions is a sign of the anxiety that the project of making the citizen is a project that unmakes sovereignty, rather than a project undertaken in the name of sovereign independence"(13). Thus, the democratic institutions of modern India are rooted in the exigencies of the state of emergency which allows laws (of protection) to be suspended and places large bodies of its populations under constant surveillance, discipline, and threat of destruction.

Far from being a rational, asexual and apathetic unit, the nation-state — as theorists of social and political violence argue — is suffused with emotion. My chapter would like to draw up a framework for exploring the psychic and phantasmatic field around Partition as a South Asian trauma. Given that nation-statist fantasies were a driving force behind Partition, its violence and its consequent shaping of the region, the psychic life of the nation-state takes on significance. The readings of Roy and Kasibhatla mentioned in the previous paragraph engage with the rituals and gestures through which the State expresses itself in the post- Partition affective terrain.

The post-Partition memorial terrain is marked by intercrossed vernacular imaginaries invested in mourning, longing for and commemorating specifically South Asian pasts<sup>51</sup>. It is also marked unequivocally by the affective and sexual faces of the nation-state formation<sup>52</sup>. To theorize this terrain, then, it becomes crucial to develop an explanation of how mourning and

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<sup>51</sup> Kabir (2013) 140.

<sup>52</sup> For the purposes of my analysis, I have presented them as two separate imaginaries; they do however overlap.

longing inform community-making. I would like to draw attention to Jacqueline Rose's seminal dialogue with Freud in *States of Fantasy*<sup>53</sup> (1996) where she claims that we cannot understand political identities and destinies without letting fantasy into the frame (Rose 4). Rose, following Freud, unhinges fantasy from its popular associations with "antisocial" and links it to what makes group identification possible claiming it is a precondition to social reality, indeed, its psychic glue (Rose 3). Freud, of course, specifically links fantasy in its role in group identification to *mourning* as a predominant tie that binds (Rose 3). Eric Santner (1990) and Bhaskar Sarkar (2009) tell us that mourning and melancholia are conditions of inhabiting modern (pathological) political formations, and thus grief and awareness of loss saturate the emotional and psychic life of the nation-states. Bhaskar Sarkar in *Mourning the Nation* (2009), analyzes how the post-partition Indian nation-state — saturated by grief and awareness of loss — has made mourning an imperative. The nation, he argues echoing Ernst Renan, is always born and experienced through loss — "be it the loss of difference, the loss of other forms of community life, even the loss of idealism that drives nationalist imagination and creativity" (Sarkar 303). Sarkar cautions us against the notion of a "collective" that mourns, against the assumption of a unified coherent national subject, revealing it to be a phantasmatic projection — a "chimera" (41). Yet, this fantasy of a unified collective informs the nation-state in the post-Partition memorial terrain. This helps us take Rose's arguments to an important conclusion, fantasy and chimeras can tell us a lot about modern statehoods and their controlling but fragile (Rose 10) structures. In the Indian nation-statist imaginary, the Partition is seen as a unique

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<sup>53</sup> Rose writes that the "fragility and the intransigence of modern statehood can be illuminated by placing it in dialogue with Freud. Pathological symptoms, Freud writes "are as a state within the state, an inaccessible party, useless for the commonwealth; yet they can succeed in overcoming the other so-called normal component and in forcing it into their service" (Freud 1939: 76). In her elucidation of this in "The Sexual Games of the Body Politic: Fantasy And State Violence In Northern Ireland" (2001), Begoña Aretxaga notes that Rose reverses the analogy Freud uses in *Moses and Monotheism* and suggests that the modern state too can be read as a symptom, as a social construction which contains an ungraspable excess and which relies on fantasy for an authority it cannot fully justify (Aretxaga 4).

foundational wound to the nation, framed as a severing and dismemberment with no parallels. Much of the nation-state's policies and practices turn on it becoming a fetish-object (a screen or power) to conceal this loss (Aretxaga).

How may we situate longing and mourning in formations that do not exemplify uniformity or wholeness? How may we situate longing and mourning, for instance, in the creative and cultural imaginaries strewn across the South Asian terrain that contest fantasies of control and appropriation? Recent scholarship has sought to re-frame mourning and melancholia into affect-states that may transform into political solidarities. What political possibilities can “remember[ing] too much” or “too eccentrically” in the post-Partition ethos offer? Mourning may create an ongoing relationship with the past that allows critical reflection upon the present. The general understanding developed from Freud's foundational essay “Mourning and Melancholia” is that unlike mourning, which succeeds at working through loss (healing the self), melancholia pathologically remains tied to the lost object refusing to let it go (the self turns against itself). Drawing on Freud's ambivalence, recent revisionist studies prefer to understand mourning and melancholia not as disparate but as overlapping aspects of grief<sup>54</sup>. In recent revisions to Freud, melancholy's devotion to the lost object is no longer seen as a “pathology” or an incapacitation, but allows “a better understanding of melancholic attachments to loss [that] might depathologize those attachments, making visible not only their social bases but also their creative, unpredictable, political aspects” (Eng and Kazanjian 3). Theorists of loss hold that prolonged, protracted grief carried forward and onward, facilitates the recognition that past structures of oppression, exclusion, or violence (responsible for the loss) remain in present day

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<sup>54</sup> In “Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States”, Melanie Klein argues that like mourning, melancholia moves in waves, alternating between mania and depression, and mourning rather than being a straightforward drive towards restoration of the ego-ideal, is also marked by destructive, aggressive and paranoid impulses that threaten the work of rebuilding the inner self (Ramazani 30)

social structures. Mourning and melancholia prod us to be alert since those structures carry the same power to injure as they did in the past. Thus, the past “remains steadfastly alive for the political work of the present” (Eng and Kazanjian 5). As Judith Butler sums up in her Afterword “After Loss, What Then?” in David Eng and David Kazanjian edited *Loss* (2003), the understanding of loss as belonging to a “purely psychological or psychoanalytical discourse” has given way to a more inclusive, nuanced stance that studies loss as “constituting social, political, and aesthetic relations” ( Eng and Kazanjian 467). Drawing this arc from psychological to social and aesthetic complexes, Jahan Ramazani in *The Poetry of Mourning* (1994), develops a framework for understanding how mourning under late-modern political systems is mimetically represented in the dissident elegy that undergoes a radical transformation by refusing healing as an outcome. My chapter will examine similar effects in the vernacular genres Partition lyric harnessed.

In the context of South Asia, “the refusal to let go” has several implications. There have been, and continue to be, several partitions in the region driven by religious ideologies. The Partition and its traumas are insistently called upon and permeate and haunt all subsequent communal violence that has split the region<sup>55</sup>. As my Introduction has made clear, the production of minorities and majorities, of the violence written into the everyday encounters with the political, or alternately where the political becomes a subject of everyday life (manifest in our behavior towards strangers, for instance) is central to my analysis of the Post-Partition trauma-scape. The impact of Partition’s affective train on these everyday encounters cannot be overstated. It is in these sites that we may locate the affective rituals and gestures of the State.

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<sup>55</sup> As Chapters Three and Four in my work will show.

The post-Partition affective terrain, then, is host to several imaginaries; nation-statist formations play a crucial role in this emotive field. Nation-state making in South Asia has been premised upon violent fantasies of what it means to inhabit and safeguard communal identities, and gender and sexuality remain central to the everyday *grounding* and *defending* of these fantasies. Mapping the affective and memorial lives of nation-states demands an examination of the multiple sites in everyday life where these formations produce and reproduce themselves. It also involves looking at these formations as a set of ongoing practices, discourses, and performatives (Butler 1990) that are visceral, habitual, psychic, phantasmatic, (Navaro-Yashin 181) and thoroughly sexual (Aretxaga 2000, 2001, 2003). This requires an interdisciplinary analysis incorporating political, anthropological, psychological and literary studies; an approach which, in recent years, has made substantial inroads. Much of the prior scholarship in this area has been critiqued for its inability to cross methodological and disciplinary borders: Srirupa Roy in *Beyond Belief* (2007), for example, cautions that structural-functionalist accounts of the political ignore the affective, while psychological approaches ignore political and social structures (Roy 10-12). In my exploration of the emotional and sexual fields that constitute the political as it is produced and reproduced in everyday life, I will be guided by the scholarship produced by Srirupa Roy, Begoña Aretxaga and Yael Navaro-Yashin who offers us far-reaching trans-disciplinary lenses.

To begin, it is important to lay out clearly the intersecting affective fields between the formations nation, state, and citizenship. Roy argues in *Beyond Belief* (2007), that while the nation, since Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), has been recognized for the powerful emotional field that consolidates it, the "state" remains under-analyzed in these terms. Until Anderson, however, she reminds us, the nation was also mostly studied in terms of its

materialist and sociopolitical determinants. *Imagined Communities* marked a theoretical turn by asking us to prioritize the emotional and psychic fields through which collectivities imagined, believed, or desired themselves as a community. Anderson focused on cultural identity and nation-making but did not analyze fully either the psychological drives, or, the “State” through which the nation authorized itself. This silence around the analysis of the state as a political formation permeated also by affect, desire, and fantasy, has marked subsequent scholarship, according to Roy. While studies of nationalism focused on identity, desire, imagination, the state continued to be studied as a set of “rational micro practices”, institutions, apparatuses and methods. Thus, the gaps in an affective scholarship on the state (i.e. studies recognizing it as driven by fantasy, desire, fear, etc.) need to be addressed.

Roy contends that the state, like the nation, is also a field of discourse and practice – it is established and reproduced in visible and everyday forms (Timothy Mitchell) and is intrinsic to the production of an imagined nationhood. Her work urges us to identify the effects of state-making and authorization in postcolonial India as “banal<sup>56</sup>” (22) as opposed to “magical” in Latin America or “coercive” in Syria (22). Its banality is marked by routineness, a carrying over of rationality associated with colonial governance (22). While her work is very important to understand state formation in the aftermath of the Partition of 1947, I would like to push her argument further and argue that while the state does represent the structures, discourse and effects through which the nation authorizes itself, it is limiting to look purely at the banal, bureaucratic or rational faces of the Indian state. The state has “myriad faces” (Yael Navaro-Yashin 2002). Looking at the claims of the Indian nation-state on the post- partition affective terrain, it becomes evident that apart from its banal routinizations, fear, anxiety, mistrust and

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<sup>56</sup> Michael Billig *Banal Nationalism* (1995).

uncertainty prevail and are embodied in the “bodies, habits, and internalized reactions of subjects” (Navaro-Yashin 181).

In her considerable body of work on the state, anthropologist Begoña Aretxaga draws together the theoretical skeins of the use of “fantasy,” “sexuality” and “emotion” in relation to the state apparatus. She writes in “The Sexual Games of the Body Politic: Fantasy And State Violence In Northern Ireland” (2001), “fantasy [...] appears as a major component of political life and a key structuring factor of power relations” (4). She understands fantasy here in its Freudian sense, “not as a purely illusory construction but as a form of reality in its own right, a scene whose structure traverses the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious (Laplanche and Pontalis 1989). [...] It is not opposed to social reality but constitutes what Rose calls its “psychic glue” (1996: 3) (Aretxaga 4). Aretxaga writes again in “Maddening States” (2003), that a good deal of the literature on the state and violence shows the state not as the product of rational technologies of control but as the subject of excess that bypasses any rational functionality. What articulates this excess is fantasy (the fantasy of statehood, the fantasy of total control, the fantasy of appropriation of the other, the fantasy of heterosexual domesticity), which appears as a major component of political life and a key factor structuring power relations (402). In “Fictional Reality: Paramilitary Death Squads and the Construction of State Terror in Spain,” (Sluka ed., 2001), Begoña Aretxaga proposes the “feeling state” (47). The state is “not as an aseptic image of rational micro-practices, but a state suffused with affect (61); this impinges upon not only how people imagine the state – and thus produce it as social fact – through a variety of discourses and practices, but also and equally important, “how state officials imagine the state and produce it through not only discourses and practices but arresting images and desires [...] at the center of which is the phantom of terrorism” (47). The state and its othered

subject produce mirroring fetishized images of each other. Again, in “Maddening States” (2003), Aretxaga observes that the state turns against its own citizens and the people,” becomes an object of fear and violence by a [power] that wants to have absolute control of a nation it is at once dividing and destroying” (Aretxaga 397). Thus the nation-statist formations occupying the post-Partition terrain are not asexual, disembodied, ungendered rational “micro-practices,” but are “suffused with affect” and thoroughly sexual (Aretxaga<sup>57</sup> 403). Partition violence – in particular, the sexually dismembering violence – was spurred on by the desire for separate statehoods claimed by discrete religious and/or national groups; hence the visceral, intimate and sexual fields of the political are important to archive in its context. Violence against the religious Other took a sexually brutal form: men and women’s bodies came to stand in for collective body politic; invested with the insignia of rival nation-states, they became the field through which political power flowed and reproduced itself. Feminist cultural productions, such as Amrita Pritam’s were significant sites which interpreted, contextualized and commemorated these encounters.

In what ways can literary and creative forms interpret these visceral excesses of the nation-state? The answer might lie in how specific literary and visual productions take on strategic roles based on how they are situated in relation to dominant socio-political systems, language, culture and identity. In that context, we may understand Pritam and the other writers my dissertation includes, to be producers of “minor literature” in the sense Deleuze and Guattari hold (1975)<sup>58</sup>. The first characteristic of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari claim, is not whether the language is minor or major, but whether it is affected by deterritorialization (Damon and Livingston 56). Just as writing became an impossibility for Jews in Nazi Prague (the impossibility of writing in German as well as the impossibility of writing in any other language

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<sup>57</sup> “Maddening States” 2003. See also Aretxaga 2001.

<sup>58</sup> I use their essay collected in Maria Damon and Ira Livingston’s *Poetry and Cultural Studies: A Reader* (2009).

bound them), writing is an impossibility for Pritam. Writing in Punjabi evokes in her a sense of loss, as the language, its history and its communities have been so violently splintered<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, writing about sexual trauma imposes another bind as it is culturally not permissible to allow it to enter openly into discourse. Yet, she can write in no other language, for no other language possesses the cultural and affective genealogy to both bear witness to the broken bonds in Punjab as well as evoke memories of pre-partition ways of seeing<sup>60</sup>. Her entry into language and literature is thus indelibly marked by this “impossibility” and her invocation to Waris Shah wrestles with this weight, while announcing it. Punjabi thus becomes appropriate for “strange and minor uses” (Damon and Livingston 56). The second major characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political (56). What in other literature goes down below, in the cellar, so to speak, here takes place in broad daylight (57); politics is not a substrata but their concentrated and conspicuous matter. Given their propensity to “uncover” the roots,, this analogy may be extended to argue that the phantasmatic and emotional substrata in discursive and material systems such as the political, then, become particularly available to these literatures to source and plumb. A third feature of minor literature is it allows the forging of alternative collectivities. Since the minor writer is already outside her fragile tenuous community, it allows her to express another possible community, forge another consciousness and sensibility (Damon and Livingston 57). Pritam’s position as a feminist writer, as well as her harnessing of liminal (in relation to the nation-state and its dominant religions) cultural sites will form part of my analysis.

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<sup>59</sup> In a 2001 interview with Nonica Dutta, Pritam says that “Punjabi suffused with Urdu and Persian *alfaz* (words), was my language. It was part of everyday speech (Interview with Pritam, New Delhi, 12 January 2001 qtd, in Dutta 4). Jasbir Jain writes in “Remembering Amrita” that the (cross-fertilized) language Amrita wrote in is the kind which is no longer in use as the dialects of eastern Punjab have thrown it into the background. (Economic and Political Weekly November 26, 2005 p. 4994).

<sup>60</sup> These pre-Partition ways of seeing are not free of communal conflict, although most scholars see the calcification of religious identities as an effect of colonial and nationalist processes.

A major concern of Pritam and other producers of critical literature during the partition such as Qurratulain Hyder, is the recognition of how violence is experienced on the margins of the nation-state on an everyday, routine basis. While many writers like Manto wrote of *the Fasadat ke Adab* (Partition Riots), many of the women writers in Urdu, Punjabi and other vernacular languages interwove into Partition violence the routine everyday vulnerability women experienced as liminal subjects (of patriarchy, of colonialism and of nationalism). Recent theories of state violence urge us to understand how nation-states become subjects visible and palpable in everyday life. Aretxaga in “Maddening States” (2003) offers us a strategy for studying the state by “focus[ing] on the multiple sites in which state processes and practices are recognized through their effects<sup>61</sup>” (398). Aretxaga’s theory of fantasy, desire, and terror as major components of political life, bridges Foucauldian notions of biopower and governmentality (the state as effects of technologies of power) with Taussig’s idea of the state as fetish. This allows us to study how a state can turn its fetishized other – its own people – into bodies to be governed and punished and made to live or die. This idea of the state as a symptom of the pathology of the modern world and its power structures, needs urgent contextualization in terms of the new Indian state’s paranoid, distrustful gaze directed against its refugees, its minority Muslim citizens, and sexually marginal (here, raped and thus “impure”) women.

The sites of everyday life on the margins provide an especially rich exploratory field of the arresting desires, fantasies and anxieties of the state (Aretxaga 2001, 20003). How is the state experienced by those on the margins? In “Maddening States” (2003), Aretxaga argues that abandonment and fear mark these encounters often played out in very intimate, embodied contexts – where violence and insecurity are experienced “close to the skin” (Aretxaga 396 ).

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<sup>61</sup> for more on state effects see Trouillot 2001, p. 126),

The body thus becomes the field through which the power of the state flows. The State haunts its subjects' habitus and memories<sup>62</sup>.

Understanding Partition as the central cultural trauma of the region, writers and artists returned to its losses repeatedly to access its affective histories, and to circulate *shared refrains* that throw light on these intimate and embodied everyday terrains. These shared refrains become — to borrow a phrase from Kai Erikson describing the social aspect of trauma — “almost like a common culture” (Caruth 190). In “Notes on Trauma and Community”, Kai Erikson argues that trauma can damage tissues that hold human groups intact; it can also “create social climates and moods” of loss, mistrust, fear and depression (Caruth 190). These social moods and shared affective refrains help us navigate the complex “everyday” post-Partition trauma-scape. The theme of love, separation and betrayal embodied in *viraha* and related concepts such as *ishq* or *moonjh* mediate as we have seen, a longing for places and states of mind that historical and personal circumstances keep out of reach.<sup>63</sup> They also become comments on the political exigencies of Partition. In the next section, I want to examine how Pritam's Partition lyric invoked *qissa*'s repertoires of affect to galvanize the post-Partition memorial terrain in South Asia.

### Vernacular Affects in Amrita Pritam's “Waris Shah”

When politics, religion, and humanism are transmitted in literature, human faith is transformed. I feel in my inner recesses a certain richness that is part of our common heritage. Guru Nanak, Baba Farid, Amir Khusro, Bulle Shah, Waris Shah, and Shah Latif – can we divide this whole lot

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<sup>62</sup> In “Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality” (2003) Andreas Huyssen argues, that memory in our times is “active, alive, embodied in the social – that is in individuals, groups, and nations (28).

<sup>63</sup> See Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias*, 140.

of poets into theirs and ours? No doubt we divided the territory – but tradition, music, art, and literature are not like geographical areas, they continue to remain undivided and are indivisible.

Krishna Sobti<sup>64</sup>

O king, reigning over the land – / What sort of *Jeth* [summer] has come? / No sky above our heads, no earth beneath our feet. / O king, reigning over the land / What sort of *Savan* [monsoon] has come? / We invited it in – this fate / Now, who can stop it?

Amrita Pritam<sup>65</sup>

Amrita Pritam's worldview was irrevocably shadowed by the Partition. In an interview with Nonica Dutta cited in "Transcending Religious Identities", she terms it a "*kainaati rishta*" which Dutta translates as a fraternal relationship with her universe (Dutta 1). It could also be termed an intimate haunting of emotional and perceptual frameworks. As Pritam herself puts it when urged to recollect: "What memories? I was overtaken by a storm of hatred [...] I was haunted by what I saw at the railway stations in Dehra Dun and Delhi. There was darkness all around. How could so many millions be dispossessed and displaced?" (Dutta 6). It is out of this haunted sensorium, that Pritam's most celebrated *nazm* was born; like Hyder's stubborn longing, Pritam too, responded to the savagery around her by catalyzing vernacular networks of affect and memory that insistently challenged the nation-statist or communal binaries. As Pritam writes in her autobiography *Shadows of Words* (2001), by invoking the Sufi poet and Pir Waris Shah as a

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<sup>64</sup> From "Memory and History: In Conversation with Krishna Sobti" in Ashok Bhalla edited *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* p. 138

<sup>65</sup> From (Untitled) *Baramahsa*. The *barahmasa* is a vernacular lyrical genre in the subcontinent; they are songs of the twelve months of the year with one stanza being devoted to each month. The *viraha barahmasa*, the most popular form of lyrical *barahmasa* describes the separation of a woman from her husband/lover during twelve months of the year.

witness to the times, she angered both Sikh and Hindu commentators, while Marxists admonished her for not using Lenin as a cementing figure (Pritam 9-10).

Through her lyric, Pritam chose instead to harness rich genealogies of affect animated by the Punjabi *qissa* – complex emotional, cognitive and sensorial networks that offered a commixture of female interiority, transgressive desire, and a pluralist sense of belonging and place – to negotiate the ruptures of Partition. WarisShah’s *Hir* (1766) represents the most widely known and performed *qissa*. Jeevan Deol in, “Sex, Social Critique and the Female Figure in Premodern Punjabi Poetry: Waris Shah’s *Hir*”, reminds us that unlike most other pre-modern texts, whose reputation is confined to literary or academic circles, *Hir* enjoys popular appeal. Its performances and renditions have continued well into the twenty-first century through portrayals in modern media – in film, folk and popular Sufi music (142).<sup>66</sup> Most crucially, the “affect-worlds<sup>67</sup>” of the *qissa* as a cross-referential genre gesture to an ideological horizon that incorporate in Farina Mir’s words “a widespread, religiously plural, and place-centered poetics of belonging strong enough and deeply embedded enough in society [...] that Punjab’s inhabitants shared, no matter what their religious persuasion, which were not easily assimilated to nationalist agendas”(Mir 6-7). Mir’s *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (2010) is an extensive study of the *qissa* as a Punjabi literary formation. She writes that the *qissa* is central to a genre of story-telling in verse with Perso-Islamic roots that became indigenized in South Asia during the medieval period through the adoption of Indian meters and narratives. It traveled through Central Asia and Persia during the medieval period, on

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<sup>66</sup> See “Sex, Social Critique and the Female Figure in Premodern Punjabi Poetry: Waris Shah’s *Hir*”, *Modern Asian Studies* 36. 1 (2002).

<sup>67</sup> Ananya Kabir has coined the term “affect-worlds” in “Affect, Body Place”, *The Future of Trauma Theory*, ed. Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone, (London: Routledge, 2014), 72-3 to compass embodied locales (epidermal, sensorial) that ground a subject’s emotional and cognitive relationship with the world. Trauma violently fractures these embodied networks as well as the psyche.

“routes shared by, court poets, merchants, traders, Sufis and mendicants” (7). Indian poets took up the genre by composing *qisse* principally in Persian, the court and literary language of much of north India during the medieval and early modern periods (Amir Khusraw (1254-1325) was one of them). Gradually, they were also adopted into vernacular literatures. Punjabi Sufi poets took up the genre in the early seventeenth century. Along with Persian romance narratives like *Laila-Majnun* or *Shirin-Farhad*, poets began to include stories that were local in origin, “situated in the local landscape and embedded in local social relations” (Mir 7). Romance narratives about lovers such as Hir-Ranjha, Mirza-Sahiban, Sassi-Punnun were not created by *qissa* composers; they had been part of vernacular oral and written repertoires (ibid.). Christopher Shackle (2000) identifies the *qissa* as an *Indo-Muslim* Punjabi literary heritage distinct from other parts of the Islamic world for its use of local stories (60).<sup>68</sup> Carla Petievich (2007) writes that many Sufi mystics proselytizing in rural Punjab adapted their spiritual messages to songs and stories that were already familiar to the audience (33)<sup>69</sup>. They very often referenced everyday life-worlds, in particular women’s activities such as spinning and weaving. Indo-Muslim poetry in Punjabi can be traced back to the twelfth century with couplets of the Sufi poet from the Chishti order Baba Farid or Farid ud-di Ganj-i-Shakkar (1173-1265). He adopted the Indic poetic convention of the feminine narrative voice as he spoke of the suffering/*viraha/hijr* of the Sufi separated from the Beloved (Petievich 6)<sup>70</sup>. The Sufi romances thus transmitted philosophies of divine love<sup>71</sup>;

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<sup>68</sup> Christopher Shackle, “Beyond Turk and Hindu: Crossing the Boundaries in Indo-Muslim Romance”, *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000), 60.

<sup>69</sup> Carla Petievich, *Introduction to When Men Speak as Women: Vocal Masquerade in Indo-Muslim Poetry* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33.

<sup>70</sup> Since articulations of contemporary Indo-Muslim identity are tied through historical and political contingencies with a strong masculinity, and poetry, both Urdu and vernacular poetry has come to be anxiously scanned for its effeminacy seen by many commentators as evidence of “a contamination from Indian or Hindu elements” in the South Asian environment. Critics suggested that it is distinctly foreign to Muslim culture (Petievich, 4). The politics of the *virahini* is thus fascinating.

Hir/Sohni/Sassi came to represent any human longing for union with the divine. Hir-Ranjha was so popular that a single *kafi* (verse), even a single couplet or refrain could convey complex Sufi ideas, partially through the use of metaphors the audience could relate to<sup>72</sup>. The narrative also worked allegorically in Sikh and Hindu devotionism, particularly in Bhakti allegories of Radha's yearning for union with Krishna<sup>73</sup>. Commentators have elaborated on the Vaishnavite and Nath<sup>74</sup> elements in different versions of the Hir narrative - Ranjha's flute-playing and adopting the role of cowherd evoke parallels with Krishna, and Hir's journey in the face of social censure to be with Ranjha echoes that of representations of Radha<sup>75</sup>. *Qissas* circulated within and animated a particular Punjabi sociocultural formation that could accommodate multiplicity and fluidity of religious identity "such that individuals could participate in shared notions of piety without distancing themselves from being Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian" (Mir 25). This fluidity was witnessed in syncretic literary forms, in the enmeshing of Persian, (later Urdu), and Punjabi, in the lability and exchangeability of devotional idioms (Mir 180-1), and in the shared sense of belonging to place. This plurality extended also to the sites of performance and circulation. They were performed in secular as well as religious spaces: theaters and *nautankis* (folk theaters), as well as Sufi shrines, Sikh gurudwaras where recitation or performance of Punjabi literature was central to ritual practices (Mir 16-17). In the 1920s and 30s, the *qissas*,

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<sup>71</sup> Love is a central tenet in Sufi thought: Sufis elaborated this idea by conceiving of two forms of love: *ishq-i-majazi* (phenomenal love) and *ishq-i-haqiqi* (real love) the interplay between these two and the related idea of *fana* or annihilation are central to *qissas* as Sufi allegories (Mir 156). *Fana*, a doctrine developed by Al-Junayd (d.910) is conceived as union with god during which the Sufi is absent from this world and the self. Upon returning to the mundane world, the Sufi experiences great suffering and sadness. This pain is reflected in Sufi writings as akin to that of separated lovers yearning to be united. Yearning is thus a sign of true love for the divine (Mir 156-157)

<sup>72</sup> See Mir, *The Social Space*, 159.

<sup>73</sup> See Mir, *The Social Space*, 160-164.

<sup>74</sup> See Christopher Shackle, "Transition and Transformation in Vaṛis Shah's Hir", *The Indian Narrative*, ed. Christopher Shackle and Rupert Shell (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 241-263.

<sup>75</sup> See Mir, *The Social Space*, 160-164.

especially *Hir-Ranjha* also became a part of Parsi theatrical and later cinematic repertoire<sup>76</sup>. In the context of violent communal divisions of the Partition, these older fluid affiliations<sup>77</sup> gained particular urgency.

### Deploying *ishq/viraha-prem* (love) as Partition lament

The Partition left multiple personal and collective fissures. Amrita Pritam's alienation which plays a significant role in her invocation of *Hir* was suffused by longing that had a personal as well as political basis. When Pritam, her husband and his family left Lahore in the riot-torn May of 1947, on what they believed was a short-term estrangement, she left behind a valued intellectual companion, the Urdu playwright Sajjad Haider as well as her lover, the poet Sadhir Ludhianvi. Ludhianvi later migrated to Bombay and became a successful lyricist<sup>78</sup>; Pritam has written poignantly about their long and difficult relationship in her autobiographies. It was primarily her fear of losing her two friends that haunted her on her journey from Lahore to Dehra Dun in early May 1947 (Pritam 7)<sup>79</sup>. On another train journey back to Dehradun from Delhi where she had gone to look for work and a place to live, she was haunted by both personal phantoms as well as the "homeless people with vacuous looks" (ibid.) that she encountered in the

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<sup>76</sup> The publicity shot of Imperial's Film Company's *Hir Ranjha* (1929) shows a deep and passionate kiss, starring Sulochana (Ruby Myers) the highest paid star in the country and her real life lover D. Bilimoria. A.R. Kardar also made the sound film *Hir and Ranjha* in Lahore in 1931.

<sup>77</sup> A number of commentators such as Farina Mir and Christopher Shackle believe that monolithic religious identities were a modern socio-political formation. Communalism was promoted[...] by the [nation]state and civil society, but not to the extent that other community affiliations disappeared. On the other hand, older ways of being remained immensely important to [Punjab's] inhabitants (Mir 24 )

<sup>78</sup> Ludhianvi was part of the artists instrumental in making cinema in the 1950s carry erotic, linguistic and stylistic charges that challenged nationalist acculturation of affect. Film songs by using cross-fertilized language and carrying excessively dark motifs contributed to a clandestine sharing of Partition trauma. Ludhianvi's Qawwali "Na to karavan ki talash hain" ("I am not in search of a caravan") from *Barsaat ki Raat* (A Rainy Night) 1960, harnesses the radio as what Sangari calls an "aural sign of *viraha* - a medium for emphasizing and overcoming separation as in the filmic motif of couples joined through the agency of a song broadcast on radio" (280). It also creates a cross-fertilized affect-scape through its mingling of Urdu, Brajbhasha and Punjabi, of Sufi and Vaishnavite imagery contributing to the *viraha-ishq* complex I explore.

<sup>79</sup> Amrita Pritam, *Shadows of Words*, (New Delhi: Macmillan India, 2001), 7.

capital's refugee camps. In her earlier autobiography *The Revenue Stamp* (1977), Pritam describes how verses from WarisShah's *Hir* helped her make sense of these losses: "On the way back to Dehradun, I could not fall asleep on the train. Verses from Waris Shah were haunting my mind: 'bhala mo'e te bichhre kaun mele... [How will the dead and departed meet again?]' (21)<sup>80</sup>.

The affective complex of the *qissa* is associated most emphatically with longing and with transgressive (female) desire. In her essay on "*Viraha*: A Trajectory in the Nehruvian Era," Kumkum Sangari (2011) traces the social and cultural meanings negotiated through literary and performative representations of love, such as the *qissa*. She argues that in devotional Bhakti, Sant and Sufi compositions, [of which the Punjabi Sufi *qissa* is a part] "the space of the heart or *mun* was enlarged in a way that could transgress the norm as well as embody the norm and betokened the emergence of a new interiority" (260). While allowing transgressive desire to articulate itself, it was ultimately contained by its sacred framework. Although doomed to fail (most *qissas* ended in tragedy,) desire was itself an act of choice exercised even, perhaps, most intensely, in the pain of separation. In the dense oral, written, visual, and performative repertoires of *ishq/viraha*, love came to be read as an "elective affinity" (264). In post-Partition Nehruvian India, love thus could become "a synonym for many freedoms including the freedom from religious ascriptions" (268). While *viraha/ishq* as a complex, and the *qissa* as a form evolved over time, it acquired between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, an "interactive density through oral, visual, *nautanki* and *jatra* (folk theater), Parsi theater and early cinematic representations so that it became readily accessible as a cross-referencing affective trope (263). Sangari in her analysis of the *viraha* complex emphatically links its accentuated longing with *agential* suffering. In Bhakti and Sufi representations, longing for union with the

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<sup>80</sup> Amrita Pritam, *The Revenue Stamp: An Autobiography*, trans. Krishna Gorowara ( New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1977), 21.

divine gains agentive charge marked by a claim to presence based on absence<sup>81</sup>. Thus it is from the position of the *virahini/mushaqin* that love can be enacted.

Pritam's account (1977) about the inception of her lyrical invocation to Waris Shah is worth looking at:

The pitch black darkness of the night was like a sign of the times" So piercing were the sighs the winds carried and echoed, it seemed we were back in mourning over this Watershed of History. The trees loomed larger and larger like sentinels of sorrow. There were patches of stark aridity in between like the mounds of massive graves. The words of WarisShah: 'how will the dead and departed meet again?' surged back and forth through my mind. I thought a great poet like him alone could lament the loss one Hirhad to bear. But who could lament the plight of a million Hirs today? I could think of no one better to chant my invocation to [...] In the moving train, my trembling fingers moved on to describe the pangs I went through (21).

Waris Shah's *Hir*, in this context takes on another resonance aside from her subversive choices in love. Sangari discusses how *viraha/ishq* helped negotiate the Partitioned subcontinent as "a migratory complex" (277). The *virahini*'s pain at separation from her lover is induced usually by male travel, often accompanied by male deceit, fickleness and profligacy (Sangari 280). Images of love and (emphatically male) travel intertwined with female vulnerability are central to the emotional and social world of *viraha*. The origins of *viraha prem* have been traced back to the genre of medieval vernacular Indic literature termed the *barahmahsa*: songs of the twelve months of the year, one stanza being devoted to each month. The *viraha barahmasa*, the most popular form of lyrical *barahmasa* is concerned with the separation of a wife from her husband

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<sup>81</sup> Sangari argues that medieval *Viraha* as a *bhava* [emotion] signifies not an emptiness but a fullness, or a claim to presence based on absence... [it] speaks an unfinished present, an incomplete time-in-the-making..." (Sangari 1990 113)

during twelve months of the year. Theories of its genesis vary<sup>82</sup>. Charlotte Vaudeville in *Barahmasa in Indian Literatures* (1986), elaborates that the song of the twelve months of the year is also that of everyday life – in particular the sensorial and affective (15-16). The *Viraha barahmasa* was focused on the emotions of the heroine and hinged on her sense of estrangement and vulnerability especially in relation to her surroundings. The causes of separation or its resolution were mostly evaded. If the husband did not return, the lyrics did not include a conclusion; if he did, it was briefly indicated, often in one single line. “The focus, therefore, [was] on the prolonged absence and longing” (Vaudeville 15) — in other words, with a female interiority that was responsive and alive. This unresolved longing of the *virahini/mushaqin* allowed female desire in allegorical and secular iterations to be voiced agentively and without stint.

Waris Shah’s *Hir* is located within similar agential networks that configure suffering as active and resonant. Moreover, according to Jeevan Deol (2002), Waris Shah’s *qissa* is marked by ambiguity when it comes to depiction of Hir’s sexuality and desire. In spite of a markedly subdued Hir, rendered through her containment within courtly love traditions (145), the *qissa* can be read as subversive on many grounds: for its social critique against hypocrisy of organized religion, its invectives against orthodox clergy and its defiance of sharia, and also for its re-writing of female desire (145-146). Although in the mode of an allegory of God and the Sufi soul, Waris Shah’s “Hir” has been noted for its earthiness, and raw erotic substrata. In particular, descriptions of Hir through “martialized and localized military references”, her defiance and aggression towards familial authority and the religious *qazi* make her a contentious figure (Deol 153-156) (See Fig. 4). The narrative is punctuated with betrayals by both familial and religious

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<sup>82</sup> D Zbavitel links it to the Krishnaita Bhakti movement but Vaudeville notes that the Bengali folk-*baromasi* could also have made its way into Vaishnavite poetry (Vaudeville 1986, 16-17).

authorities: the community colludes with Hir's uncle Keido to poison her for bringing them dishonor. Pritam harnesses these cadences of vulnerability and agency and draws new social meanings from them to mediate Partition's ruptures. She inaugurates agential representations of female vulnerability and grief that resonate with Partition's sexual traumas.

Jahan Ramazani (1994), contends that poetry's rich sonic structure and mourning conventions i.e. the incantatory, rhythmic, repetitive, kinesthetic, dimensions of poetry, – be it epic, elegy, ghazal- make it well-suited to performing grief. As an elegy, Pritam's lyrical invocation is marked by its cantillatory rhythms borrowing from narrative *qissa* traditions, well suited for oral renditions and performances. In the Punjabi version, the short staccato bursts of its opening “Ajj Aakhan WarisShah Nuu, / Kiton Qabraan Wichon Bol<sup>83</sup>, / Tey Ajj Kitaab-e-Ishq Daa, / Koi Agla Warka Phol” (Speak from the depths of the grave, / To Waris Shah I say / and add a new page to your saga of love today<sup>84</sup>) are incantatory, with a steady rhythm; the assonances and consonances allow a sonorous fluidity, making it easy to remember and reproduce. The lyric uses short syllables (one, two and at the most three) throughout, and the terse rhyme structure ABAB. Its idiomatic, sonorous and haunting qualities harnessing oral and rhythmic performative traditions, make it well-placed to enter social performative spaces. The emotional and psychic charge it carried, of course, ensured that it became widely known, read, and performed. WarisShah, is insistently invoked as a testimonial voice in the lyric, urged “Uth tak apna Punjab”( Awake! decry your Punjab). In a mirroring of the phantasmagoric night visions from her train ride, she summons him to witness the ghastly landscape of Punjab whose fields are tombs for millions of corpses, whose lifeline the river Chenab (famous as “the river of

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<sup>83</sup> Henceforth, I'll refer to poem with its opening lines in Punjabi and use the abbreviation AAWSN. Punjabi poetry, true to its oral, performative basis was very often untitled and known only by its opening lines or refrains.

<sup>84</sup> Amrita Pritam, “To Waris Shah”, *Selected Poems of Amrita Pritam* ed. Pritish Nandy, trans. Amrita Pritam (Calcutta: Dialogue Calcutta Publications, n.d.), n.p.

love” in the *qissa* imaginary) is red with blood. The horizon is stained, sunsets forecast the bloodshed, and the colors of the red cotton blossoms intimate the genocide. Systems of perceptual, sensorial and cognitive organization have shifted irrevocably.

In an early critique of the Sufis poet’s work, *Waris Shah 1730-1790: A Critical Appreciation of the Poet and his only Hir* R.K. Kuldip (1971), writes that one of the key features of *Hir* is “its “sententious couplets which are quotable, memorable” and often tend[ing] to the trivial (23) which makes them easy to reproduce and render. However, Waris Shah is well known for how he likes to play with the predictability his audience expects of him and the *qissa* form: even when a poetic figure or allusion is well known, he gives it a twist, a delightful new turn, often in a paradox (22). As a lyrical poet, his work stands out for its “terse, packed couplets, rich in associative values, secondary evocations of meaning, stimulating suggestiveness and a haunting quality (23). Pritam’s language and idioms evoke and harness the mnemonic and allusive charges of this cross-fertilized repertoire. As mentioned earlier (see note 21), her use of the Punjabi of the *qissas* marked by Urdu/Persian words evokes a syncretic organization of senses. For instance,

Iss Zarkhaiz *Zameen* (Urdu for fertile earth) Dey

Loon Loon Phuttiya *Zahar* (Urdu for poison)

Gitth Gitth Charhiyaan Laaliyan

Fuut Fuut Charrhiya Kaher [my emphasis] (17-20)

The sonic and sensory interplay of this Persianized Punjabi – an earthy figurative language here rooted in flowering and harvesting metaphors - is lyrically haunting and carries in its train the memories and sensations of inter-crossed everyday life-worlds. Pritam reproduces the oft-

repeated qissa image of coiling and stinging serpents deployed to represent the pangs of love and viraha;

Wey Waleesi Wha Phair,

Wan Wan Wagi Jaa,

Ohney Har Ikk Waans Di

Wanjli Diti Naag Banain

(And heavy with venom were the winds,

that blew through the forests,

transmuting into a snake,

The reed of each musical branch<sup>85</sup>.) (21-24)

In her recreation, the venomous winds turn every musical bamboo reed in the forest into serpents.

Instead of pangs of viraha, the much-used metaphor comes to represent the trauma of ethnocidal rape and violence ravaging Punjab.

Pehla Dang Madaariyan,

Mantar Gaye Guwaach,

Doojey Dang Di Lag Gayi,

Janey Khaney Nu Lag

(With sting after sting did the serpents,

suppress the voice of the people.) (25-28)

This act of “seeing” a ravaged Punjab carries echoes of recording and fashioning “Punjab” in other contexts – contexts made rich and vital by the qissas. “Few genres show a more powerful attachment to the specificities of place” than the qissa writes Shackle (59)<sup>86</sup>. Farina Mir agrees

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<sup>85</sup> All translations of the poem used here are Pritam’s.

<sup>86</sup> Shackle, “Beyond Hindu and Turk”, 59.

that since the earliest recorded *Hir-Ranjha qissa* by Damodar, the inclusion of specific places in the tale has been a constant narrative tradition. “Without these locales, *HirRanjha* ceases to be *HirRanjha*” (Mir 135). She identifies five such locations: Takht Hazara (Ranjha’s natal place), Jhang by the Chenab (Hir’s natal place), Rangpur (Seido’s natal place where Hir moves after her forced marriage), Tilla Jogian (Gorakhnath’s *dera* monastery where the Muslim Ranjha disguises himself as a Hindu Nath yogi,) and most importantly perhaps, the Chenab River (135). These places not only call forth well-recognized and iterated narrative events, but evoke a close relationship between person and place.

J.S. Grewal in “The World of Waris” (1984), writes that “in Waris Shah’s eyes, the social roots of an individual are as much as in his *watan* (homeland) or *des*<sup>87</sup> (country) as in his caste. The first question that Hir puts to Ranjha is about his *watan* as well as his *zat* (caste)”(111). “Punjab” emerges as a distinct topographical and affective entity, marked at the same time by orientations that pre-date modern (colonialist and nationalist) geopolitical alignments. WarisShah looks upon Rum and Sham, Khatan and Chin, Lanka and Kamrup as distinct lands. Bengal is a distinct country. The east up to Delhi is not Punjab. Kabul and Qandahar are not a part of Punjab. Kashmir is a distinct country. By this process of elimination, the land of the five rivers is the Punjab par excellence [...] though its boundaries are not specifically mentioned (Grewal 111). The understanding of a discrete topography and regional identity of the Punjab informs the *qissa*’s imaginary while locating it within an expansive Eurasian radius. This topography is first and foremost, an affective one. Mir (2010) establishes that by referring to particular natal places as *des*, *watan* etc., the *qissa* formation transforms them into “a map to places in the heart”(136). Place thus becomes formative of a person’s identity mediated by strong affective and sensorial

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<sup>87</sup> Waris Shah appears to identify *des* with the area in possession of a particular tribe or clan [...] larger than *des* is a geographical sub-region. The *doabs* or river banks are also sub-regions, he thus refers to the Jats of the Chenab or the songs of the Chenab. Overarching the *des* and the sub-region is the country of Punjab (Grewal 111).

ties. Ties of kinship, caste, and locality thus transcend sectarian divides. Phenomenologist Edward Casey (2004), holds that “remembering place is related closely to several auditory, visual and kinesthetic modalities” (189)<sup>88</sup>. They furnish convenient points of attachment for memories which are crucial to the engendering of a collectivity. “Place” Casey argues, “ remains central to [...] public memory that has become a horizon for future remembering of many others, not only those present at the moment of making (41- 42). Pritam draws on these affective and representational horizons while at the same time overturning many of the *qissa*’s idioms and perceptual underpinnings<sup>89</sup>. Additionally, while Pritam draws from conventions of other folk forms such as the *viraha baramahsa* where nature provides a resonance to suffering, her representations of a “poisoned” Punjab take on a critical political edge.

#### Love and loss as political effects

In Pritam’s lyric, the five life-giving rivers after whom Punj-ab is named (Persian *panj*:five, *ab*: water) are flowing with poison which is relentlessly seeping into and covering” the land; the winds blowing through the land are “heavy with venom” and each branch in the forest that once sang with the wind have been transformed into hissing snakes. The snakes “sting” into silence “the voice of the people. In *Partition Dialogues: Memories of Lost Home* (2006), Asok Bhalla writes: “after the Partition of 1947, most ties of community, notions of human association, piety, care disappear from the daily lives of the people [...].they discover that the new *bastis* (settlements) where the refugees settle are hostile and strange, godless places. These settlements

<sup>88</sup> Edward Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time” *Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 189.

<sup>89</sup> Note: In an interview to Deepali Dhingra in *The Times of India*, titled “Gulzar Recites for Amrita Pritam” on May 7, 2007, the poet and lyricist Gulzar discusses how Punjabi literature is indebted to Pritam for infusing it with new idioms to respond to the conditions of contemporary India. “We were inspired by her Punjabi imagery which was so different from the traditional Punjabi imagery found in poems. It was new. This was the major change she brought in poetry.”(<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bombay-times/Gulzar-recites-for-Amrita-Pritam/articleshow/2008708.cms>)

have no sacred spaces and no devotees. They are either infected places or are so utterly barren of human affections as to make life a graveyard of lamentations (8-9). The trope of a poisoned or an infected socius/polis was commonly employed in representations of Partition trauma; in Pritam, it takes on specific gendered connotations.

In “AAWSN,” Punjab becomes anthropomorphized and possessed by a malevolence that is vague, amorphous and therefore all the more terrifying. We are not told who has mingled poison, or why the winds are venomous. While the fear and terror are located in an indistinct source, emotions like grief or terror here are not merely internalized states transposed onto the landscape. They indicate a social mood. They also echo the role rumor played in public records of Partition violence. Gyan Pandey (2001) alerts us to the diffusiveness as opposed to specificity that characterized official reports of Partition violence – in particular sexual violence (68).

Pritam’s lyric is one of the earliest works to address the gendered lacuna in official and public discussions of partition violence. Her representation counters the communalization and nationalization of female sexuality in the aftermath of the genocidal violence. As pointed out by historians such as Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence* (1998), there have been no public memorials or archives on the partition neither have there been tribunals or courts of justice to provide legal/juridical restitution (361-362). These acts of violence have been discussed and archived in mainstream political forums such as the Constituent Assembly debates or nationalist newspapers through a limited nationalist lens that conflates women’s bodies and sexualities with the nation and sees the violence done to them as wounds to the nation-state. Butalia parses these records to demonstrate that the language of filth and cleansing was pervasive in Hindu nationalist discourse. Debates arose in the Parliament about the need to “recover” and “bring home” the abducted women, “purify” them, sometimes, by mass abortions called *safaya* (cleansing)

campaigns or by separating them from their “illegitimate” children. Only by bringing them back to their community, it was reasoned, could the nation be made morally whole. Accounts abound where “the women were now soiled...the families did not want to take back a polluted person” (162-163). Above all, the fear of the cohabitation and intimacy of Hindu women with Muslim men posed a threat to the Hindu ideal. Right-wing newspapers like *Organizer* reiterated that “The responsibility fell on their husbands and brothers to fight for them, to go to war, even to ‘burn themselves to ashes’ to bring them back into the fold despite their ‘pollution’ (Butalia 187)”.

In Pritam, the fear, terror and “poison” spreading through the land is ultimately traced back to the nation-statist collective: they are effects of its violent desires, not symptomatic of sexual defilement or shame. Yael Navaro-Yashin in her ethnography of Turkish political culture in *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (2002), offers us an incisive argument to understand how the state’s fantasies permeate and haunt the everyday lives and habitus of its subjects. The state produces “visceral (habitual, psychic, phantasmatic) effects on subjects of a political culture” (181). Political violence produces a panic and a terror that haunts the subjects (ibid.). This image of the state haunting its people is useful to understand Pritam’s lyric. The violence of nation-making permanently shadows the land and calls for an ongoing, protracted grief. Everyone is complicit in its cause and burdened with its aftermath. Given the nature of the ethnocide where ordinary people turned against and massacred one another (spurred by fantasies of statehood), grief — but equally guilt — envelops everyone.

Punjab is iconicized as Hir dying of poisoning by her own intimates. As “her” limbs turn blue, webs of trust and community lie broken and women are the ones most unmoored by the loss of trust. The state and its effects - the partition violence born of desire for statehood - haunt,

poison, and lay to waste the *everyday* lives, habits, and moods of the citizens. “threads s[are]napped from their shuttles”, “songs” “rent at the throat” and “spinning wheel’s hum” silenced; “branches heavy with swings / crack from peepul trees”; and “boats laden with trappings / [are]loosened from anchors to sink” (Waris Shah 24-31 ). In an image telling of the social fragmentation, women are “severed from their spinning-gatherings” and the land lies bereft, empty. Pritam’s deployment of the *Viraha baramahsa*’s and *qissa*’s “feminized everyday” to comment on the gendered devastation caused by the Partition inaugurates a new grammar into an already “interactively dense” complex.

Pritam enlarges on the socio-political charge of the *viraha-ishq* complex by locating the suffering female subject politically. “Where was lost the flute, where the songs of love sounded? / And all Ranjha's brothers forgot how to play the flute / Blood has rained on the soil, graves are oozing with blood, The princesses of love cry their hearts out in the graveyards” (Waris Shah 32-34) Pritam mediates her representation of the partition through the emotion of betrayal. She sees it as a betrayal of women by a patriarchal system involving the family, community and nation-state. Thus “each man [has] now turned a Keido” and a “despoiler of beauty and love.” The complicity of an entire community is emphasized. Thus the textures of meaning contained in “betrayal or “mistrust” that were central to the exigencies of romantic love in the *qissa*, shift, and “the everyday” emotions become powerful critiques of nation-state formation. That “betrayal and mistrust have been, and continue to be, every day commonplace states for women, is moreover, a telling comment on their historical marginalization.

Marjories Mueke in “Trust, Abuse of Trust and Mistrust among Cambodian Refugee Women(1995) has argued that “ trust” is both gendered and culturally inflected, and goes on trial even in intimate family spaces which have culturally functioned as supportive trust networks. In

the ruptured social space of Punjab in “AAWSN”, women are unmoored from their most intimate kinship and community bonds. As liminal subjects in patriarchal networks, women suffer greater abuse when these bonds are lost. Marjorie Mueke in ““Trust, Abuse of Trust and Mistrust among Cambodian Refugee Woman: A Cultural Interpretation” (1995)<sup>90</sup>, demonstrates that trust is culturally constructed. Trust in Cambodian women survivors of Khmer Rouge violence is informed by Buddhist doctrine and by Khmer folklore...it is also gendered. Therefore, responses to the traumas should be explained not only in terms of a universalist human psychology but also in terms of a more or less implicit cultural heritage (36). She affirms that the biosociocultural position of women confronts them more than men with trust as an issue in human relationships and with suffering when the bonds of trust are broken or abused (37). In Pritam, “a habitus of mistrust [...as] an agitated state of awareness” (Daniel and Knudsen 1-2)<sup>91</sup> impedes identification of vulnerability or betrayal with *victimization*. These affective states mobilize, instead, an interrogation of the relationships and power configurations that structure men and women’s bodies and sexualities, and of the fantasies through which the nation-state legitimizes itself<sup>92</sup>. Partition makes these encounters more visible and the violence more spectacular by bringing together a *network* of kinship, community, and nation-statist operations. Pritam is one of the writers who interrogates and explores this configuration with vigilance and clarity.

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<sup>90</sup> Marjorie Mueke, ““Trust, Abuse of Trust and Mistrust among Cambodian Refugee Woman: A Cultural Interpretation”, in *Mistrusting Refugees*, ed. E. Valentine Daniel and John Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>91</sup> E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, “Introduction to Mistrusting Refugees (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1-2. According to E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, victims of nation-state making such as refugees, are particularly positioned to develop critical attitudes towards dominant structures.

<sup>92</sup> As we have seen, the sites of everyday life on the margins provide an especially rich exploratory field of the arresting desires, fantasies and anxieties of the state (Begona Aretxaga 2001, 2003).

### Critical mourning and *viraha*: Re-contextualizing the elegy in Pritam

Jahan Ramazani in *The Poetry of Mourning* (1994) develops an inter-disciplinary framework from psychological and literary methodologies to locate how mourning under late-modern political systems is mimetically represented in the dissident elegy. The modern elegy undergoes a radical transformation by refusing healing as an outcome. My chapter will examine similar effects in the vernacular genres Partition lyric harnessed.

Ramazani in his Introduction to *The Poetry of Mourning: the Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994), interrogates our assumptions about Freud's ideal of "normal mourning" and his polarization of mourning and melancholia (28). He asserts that rather than seeing melancholia as pathological and mourning as a therapeutic ideal, Freud did admit in letters and other writings, that mourners [too] typically remain inconsolable, never filling the gap of loss (Ramazani 28). In Freudian terms, melancholia is burdened with severe self-criticism, by an inner splintering between two parts of the ego, one part narcissistically identified with the lost object and the other part attacking this encrypted object. Yet Freud also allowed that both mourning and melancholia share a tendency to self-reproach (Freud 251, 258), a cessation of interest in outside world, a loss of capacity to love (244). Given this overlap, "melancholic mourning" is the term Ramazani coins to analyze the protracted grief one often encounters in modern elegies (29) that respond to modern/late-modern losses. Modern elegists, he argues, reanimate, often violate elegiac traditions to respond to the experiences of late-modernity which are founded in loss. Rather than use the elegy as a therapeutic device to work through grief and create an aesthetic substitution for loss, their task is to exacerbate and prolong the grief. Ramazani, further, reminds us that poetry's rich sonic structure and mourning conventions i.e. the incantatory, rhythmic, repetitive,

kinesthetic, dimensions of poetry, – be it epic, elegy, ghazal- make it well-suited to performing grief (86), alerting us to the socio-political conditions that demand such protracted mourning.

Pritam as a writer may be located in modernity. According to Darshan Singh Maini, new Punjabi poetry began with Mohan Singh (1905-1978) and Amrita Pritam (1919 - 2005) (8). Her poetry, like that of many others at the time, was a response to modernity's losses: "the dark forces of fascism, the character of British imperialism, the heroic struggle of the Soviet Union, the tremendous upheaval in India, the Bengal famine etc."<sup>93</sup> (108). The following section explores Pritam's remaking of lyrical mourning conventions and her deployment of what Sangari has called the prolonged time of *viraha*. The prolonging of mourning may be located also in *viraha/ishq* as an emotive complex without closure. Sangari argues that medieval *viraha* as an affective configuration expressed sadness but without the elegiac closures of grief or nostalgia. As a *bhava*(affect), it signifies not an emptiness but a fullness, or a claim to presence based on absence...[it] speaks an unfinished present, an incomplete time-in-the-making...[T]he time of *viraha* is never fully resolved (Sangari 1990 113). Yet, the anticipation, unfinished presence and incomplete-time-in-the-making which are so essential a feature of the *ishq/viraha* complex *are* transformed in Pritam into analogues of protracted grief. Pritam's evocation of sundered social spaces and *preet diyan shahzadiyan* (princesses of love *qissas*) crying in the graveyards mutates the emotive terrain into something far darker and maleficent.

Rather than mourning to forget (the impulse to heal the self), the critical mourning enacted here powerfully burns into and shapes memory in the context of partition violence. Given the cooptation and erasures around sexual trauma, the critical mourning and memory work performed by "AAWSN" cannot be overstated. The Punjabi verses then, are incantatory, with a

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<sup>93</sup> *Studies in Punjabi Poetry*, Darshan Singh Maini. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1979.

steady rhythm. The cantillatory rhythms, sound repetitions and refrains make it well-suited to performing grief. The sound repetitions and the four lined refrain framing the lyric gave it open-endedness – as did the reflexive, intertextual *qissa* repertoire it cited. These iterative charges added to its feature as an open-ended, resonating artifact that could carry the burden of prolonging mourning. Apart from providing a sonic, rhythmic and temporal analogue to protracting grief, then, the cross-referential networks of representation it circulated within ensured its affective and semiotic resonance. The refrain “Ajj Aakhan WarisShah Nu, / Kiton Qabraan Wichon Bol / Tey Ajj Kitaab-e-Ishq Daa, / Koi Agla Warka Phol” (Speak from the depths of the grave, / To Waris Shah I say / and add a new page to your saga of love today) became a shorthand to evoke the losses of the shared post-Partition emotive terrain. The new avenues of aural circulation such as radio transmission, playback singing, recorded songs and new listening communities enabled a wider dispersal of sonic artifacts over a larger social dominion (Sangari 275) “Aaj akhan Waris Shah nu” was performed by Pakistani Punjabi artist Inayat Hussain Bhatti in the Pakistani Partition film *Kartar Singh* (1959). The refrain was the title of a play produced at the Lahore Al Hamra Arts Council in 1970 and then in 1972 and had various repeat performances in the city<sup>94</sup>. Contemporary Pakistani pop Sufi artist Asrar retains the refrain but goes on to add verses addressing contemporary losses in the post-Partition sub-continent<sup>95</sup>.

In terms of the *qissa*’s convention, invocation or address can carry many kinds of meaning<sup>96</sup>. By apostrophizing Waris Shah to speak from his grave, Pritam’s elegy addresses a

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<sup>94</sup> The play was written by Soofi Nisar Ahmad and was a poignant satire on how contemporary society had moved away from the ideals of love and justice symbolized by the Sufi poet (50 Years of Lahore Arts Council (Alhamra): An Overview; published by Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore in 2000).

<sup>95</sup> The addition of music and background scores expanded its sonic, affective and perceptual realms as shall see in the final section of the chapter.

<sup>96</sup> See Sangari and Deol.

specter, a present absence. We may draw some clues from Ramazani (2004) who says that in elegies the dead don't usually speak, and when they do, ghosts provide surrogate-perspectives for the poet. For the dead, of course, everything they see or hear or inhabit is an "afterworld" permeated by loss and ruin (Ramazani 131). What kind of surrogate perspective can Waris Shah afford? To Pritam, Waris Shah is less a representative of this afterworld of loss and ruin, and more a messenger from a shared memory terrain; he represents an absence, a loss, and an alternative to the present. Invoking him is a generative act – a fulfilment of presence. We may read this absence more productively through the emotive field of the *viraha* genre. In *baramahsa* poetic convention, as we have seen, the absence of the beloved enabled the *virahini*'s interiority and generated a responsive subjectivity. It represented the capacity of the heart to anchor, sustain and internalize what was materially absent, lost or unattainable<sup>97</sup>. In Bhakti, convention, absence or the act of recalling the (A)bsent marked (H)is presence. In Sufi modalities, the separation of the devotee from the Pir/Murshid was the moment the devotee had to internalize in order to understand the intensity of *ishq* (Sangari 272). Thus, Pritam's address to the absent Pir Waris Shah carries charismatic energy as it announces his presence. Pritam mobilizes the Sufi poet's role as a border-crossing emissary<sup>98</sup>, able to move between past and present, death and life, and more significantly between the communal and national borders violently established.

Undoubtedly Waris Shah animates the lyric, most powerfully as that which is present through absence. Through him the emotional and psychic lineaments of a shared pre-Partition memory terrain are being evoked. He thus represents an alternative to the present. In invoking him, Pritam also invokes an (im) possible alternative. However, it is ultimately the *virahini* whose ravaged interiority orients and illuminates the traumascapes. *Viraha*, as we have seen,

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<sup>97</sup> Sangari argues that this capacity of the heart to anchor, sustain and internalize what was materially absent, lost or unattainable became a powerful metaphor in the context of the partition (256)

<sup>98</sup> See *Embodying Charisma* (1998).

becomes a socio-political state; the *socius* is suffused with loss. (“Today, fields are lined with corpses, and blood fills the Chenab” the poem litanizes.) It is here that Pritam radicalizes the elegy. Instead of being substituted, sublated and laid to rest, the dead *permeate* lifeworlds, in effect, making forgetting impossible and blocking the withdrawal of affect<sup>99</sup>.

This prolonged mourning is expressed through the *viraha* complex drawing on its depictions of a desolate female interiority as well as its emplotment of suffering in the *virahini*’s lifeworld. The violence of nation-making permanently *haunts the land*<sup>100</sup> and calls for an ongoing, protracted grief. The enveloping of the entire *socius* in this loss is thus imperative. The material and affective world is complicit in its cause and *burdened* with its aftermath. Given the nature of the ethnocide where ordinary people turned against and massacred one another (spurred by fantasies of statehood), grief but equally guilt envelops everyone. Pritam’s unswerving and emphatic indictment is summed up in her words “ Ve aj sab ‘qaido’ ban gaye (everyone is a Keido today), implying a communal internalization of violence. Her lament that *all* of Ranjha’s brothers (*Raanjhey Dey Sab Weer Ajj*) have forgotten how to make the flute sing of love, not only mourns the erasure of cross-fertilized ways of being<sup>101</sup> but also colors the collective with its guilt. Waris Shah can thus, bear testimony (through an absent presence) and “Hir”, the framing text is surely harnessed for its syncretistic energies, but it is this new *metapoetic text*, this new chapter (*agla varka*) burdened by shared expanding grief, that can become the voice of Punjab’s “unfinished present” post -1947.

As we have seen, in his revisions of Freud’s ambivalent distinction between melancholia and mourning, Ramazani coins the term “melancholic mourning” to locate the protracted grief one often encounters in modern elegies (29). I see it also as a critically interrogative mourning.

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<sup>99</sup> The withdrawal of affect from a person, object or idea is termed decathexis in psychoanalysis.

<sup>100</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin

<sup>101</sup> drawing from cross- cultural tropes of Ranjha as a Krishnaite figure.

What political possibilities can this “critical refusal to let go” offer? Mourning and melancholia create an ongoing relationship with the past that allows critical reflection upon the present. Theorists of loss hold that the prolonged, protracted grief carried forward and onward, facilitates the recognition that past structures of oppression, exclusion, or violence (responsible for the loss) remain in present day socio-cultural structures. Mourning and melancholia prod us to be alert since those structures carry the same power to injure as they did in the past. The Partition elegy alerts us to the violent aspects of the nation-state that inhabit the post-Partition terrain. The nation mourns to forget and successfully metabolize Partition losses. When viewed through the lens of a “critical mourning”, however, Partition’s affective train “remains steadfastly alive”<sup>102</sup> to substantiate a shared citizenship.

Jonathan Flatley in *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (2008) offers us a paradigm to understand how mourning and melancholia can create shared citizenship. He too invokes the seminal “Mourning and Melancholia” where Freud argued that “the mood state long associated with melancholia was caused by the *failure* to mourn a loss. Instead of mourning, which Freud saw as a kind of libidinal decathexis from the lost object, the melancholic internalizes the lost object into his or her very subjectivity as a way of refusing to let the loss go” (Flatley 2). He goes on to argue that melancholia might offer us one way to engage with the pathologies of the modern world instead of inducing isolation and depression.

As such, melancholia forms the site in which the social origins of our emotional lives can be mapped out and from which we can see the other persons who share our losses and are subject to the same social forces. We might say that the melancholic concern with loss creates the mediating structure that enables a slogan—“The personal is political”—to

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<sup>102</sup> The past “remains steadfastly alive for the political work of the present” (Eng and Kazanjian 5).

become a historical-aesthetic methodology. This methodology's questions are: Whence these losses to which I have become attached? What social structures, discourses, institutions and processes have been at work in taking something valuable away from me? With whom do I share these losses or losses like them? What are the historical processes in which this moment of loss participates— in other words: how long has my misery been in preparation?"(Flatley 3)

This imaginary of shared losses, of being deeply entangled with the grief of others creates a global South Asian memory terrain. I am using "global" here as embodied, *connected* practices, habits, imaginaries and affects located in particular socio-cultural matrices<sup>103</sup>. This "global" vernacular — a South Asian imaginary spanning violent borders — may be understood as a critical affective state. Inhabiting this critical state allows us to ask what structures continue to create divisions and losses in the region. Thus Pritam's elegy retains the power to critique contemporary remains of the Partition and informs our understanding of late-modern South Asian traumas.

Pritam's autobiography and her interviews record how the lyric acquired talismanic properties as it was worn as an amulet by grieving Partition refugees, harnessed Sufi practices of immersive listening as it was performed at Waris Shah's shrine in Pakistan in the 70s and pulsed through 1950s radio airwaves (Dutta 7-8)<sup>104</sup> invoking unprecedented internationalist solidarities. The sensory and performative dimensions of Pritam's Partition lyric enabled it to proliferate through "public lives of [its] own" (Maria Cizmici, 2011) across the violent Indo-Pak border in multiple memorial contexts. In her interview with Nonica Datta, Pritam noted that "the poem is

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<sup>103</sup> For Deidre Mackay's research subjects, (Filipino migrants), the global "is an imaginary, a space of desire[...]". this global is for them, is about hope, possibility, and potential that emerge from their affective connections with other people (18).

<sup>104</sup> Pritam quoted in Nonica Dutta "Transcending Religious Identities", 7-8.

sung at the *mazar* (tomb) of Waris Shah in Multan (Pakistan) on the occasion of *Jashne Waris Shah*. People cried and sang when they heard the *nazm* over the radio (Pritam 1998:26). In her autobiography *The Revenue Stamp* (1977), Pritam mentions how in his foreword to a book by Faiz, Urdu poet Ahmed Nadeem Kazmi (sic) disclosed that he had read the poem in jail<sup>105</sup>. On his release he recounted seeing copies of it with common men who would weep when they read it (Pritam 1977, 21). The lyric then helped the traumatized Partition subjects to relocate themselves via the affective genealogy of the *qissa* formation to a shared pre-Partition memory terrain. It also enabled them to make new meanings in the post-Partition affective world and *live through* the trauma.

#### Framing Partition trauma through the “vernacular”<sup>106</sup>

In the following section, I would like to develop a framework for understanding Partition trauma and recovery in the South Asian context. Critics of Euro-American paradigms of trauma argue that clinical approaches developed in specific socio-cultural contexts often write over postcolonial systems of knowledge-making, mourning and recovery. Ananya Kabir, Kumkum Sangari and other postcolonial critics are seeking to develop a *vernacularized* framework to view violence, trauma and loss in South Asia. Trauma Studies has been critiqued for the scant attention that non-Euro-American contexts have received until recently and for uncritically importing Euro-American centric paradigms into other contexts. Michael Rothberg in his Preface to *The Future of Trauma Theory* (2014) argues behind the “apparently neutral and universal” hermeneutic of interdisciplinary trauma studies lies “specifics” rooted in particular social and economic contexts ((Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone xiii).). Stef Craps, one of the most

<sup>105</sup> Qazmi was arrested many times in the 50s and 70s because of his affiliation with the leftist Progressive Writers’ Association.

<sup>106</sup> By vernacular, I mean local and specific cultural worlds and identities. See note 13.

trenchant critics of the Eurocentric model argues in *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013) that medicalization and pathologization of traumatized subjects often deprives them of agency. Clinical understandings of trauma often replicate European mono-cultural constructs. Not only are clinical practices of therapy developed within specific cultural structures unhelpful in many postcolonial contexts, but the hierarchy of knowledge systems often ensures that local modes of making sense of pain and loss are evacuated. Ananya Kabir in “Affect, Body Place”(2014,) suggests that while Freud-driven analysis of the unconscious – its structures and foundations- cannot be jettisoned<sup>107</sup>, the language and social matrix through which the unconscious is expressed, the systems, rituals and gestures deployed, need attention. (Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone 72-3). It is at this challenging threshold that my analysis of Partition’s trauma-scapes asks to be located.

Pritam’s lyric mobilizes the charismatic and healing energies of shared subcontinental belief systems to offer modes of recuperation. These channels also open up unprecedented modes and gestures of mourning and memorialization. I will analyze one such context where Pritam’s lyric took on haptic (reliant on a sense of touch comingling with other sense) and charismatic properties to help refugees negotiate Partition traumas. In her July 16 2001 interview with Nonica Datta Pritam recalled that “In camps, people, dispossessed and dislocated, tied this *nazm* into a knot, and wore it as an amulet (Datta 7-8). The lyric then was materially embodied in a *ta’wiz*, which in turn, relocated their bodily and psychic suffering to a different meaning-making realm — that of the charismatic. A *ta’wiz* is a locket (metallic or cloth) containing paper inscribed with Quranic verses or other Islamic prayer symbols usually worn as an amulet. It is a popular practice among South Asian Muslims and Sufis (although many schools of theology

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<sup>107</sup> Kabir insists that “Modernity’s handmaiden has been the development of a theory of the unconscious, and modernity being a global phenomenon, the unconscious can hardly be done away with”(Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone 72-3).

consider it unIslamic); it circulates in ritual contexts of healing and protection. As cultural historians of the subcontinent note, veneration of Sufi saints and pirs and pleas for boons and cures across the subcontinent are not limited to followers of Sufi gnosis. Hindus, Christians and Sikhs participate in this belief-world “drawing on cognitive frameworks of illness and healing” (Oberoi qtd in Mir 176). Dominique-Sila Khan illustrates in *Crossing the Threshold* (2004) that two different communities would strike a sacred alliance with each other to protect and heal the Other in specific ritual contexts (32). Like Mir, Khan too demonstrates that identity was seen as part of a sectarian or caste tradition rather than as a monolithic “Hindu” or “Muslim” identity. This view allowed such transactions to take place without disturbing the identity of either party (34). Werbner and Basu’s *Embodying Charisma* (1998) provides a striking reading of these charismatic relationships as rooted in everyday, material worlds. The figure of the charismatic Sufi saint as a threshold person mediating between two distinct symbolic orders (sacred and worldly) is established as a significant aspect of Sufism(9). They locate the supplicants’ alliances with these figures in *everyday* life. In their Introduction, the authors ask us to look at the power of ritual as deriving not from belief as a set of *abstracted ideas* but from ritual as a complex set of transformative, embodied and negotiated ethical and aesthetic practice(8). Building on their framework, I argue that this complex of aesthetic and ethical practices with healing resonances helped cast the experiences of Partition in a similar frame of trial and consolation.

Werbner and Basu write

One important feature of journeys to Sufi shrines, anthropologists have shown, is that through overcoming of ordeals, sometimes (as in some initiation rites) actual, physical ordeals, at other times in the form of symbolic encounters with dangerous demons or ritual clowns (Kapferer 1983; Werbner 1989) supplicants perform a version of that

crossing themselves that Sufi *pirs* are thought to perform. Through then touching the saint's body, or through other forms of contact, they participate in the transmission of mystical threshold-crossing power to themselves (154-5).

Could we read in the refugees' ritual gestures (of touching the poem as a talisman) a similar plotting of Partition's ordeals within a healing, charismatic topos? This would enable the survivors to mourn the experiences while seeing in them agential meaning-making possibilities. Drawing on the genealogy of sacred *alliances* of healing entered into by different communities would also enable a *collective* mourning and memorialization of these experiences – a shared imaginary that repudiates sectarian or nation-statist divisions.

The state as the earlier sections of my chapter demonstrate, produces “visceral (habitual, psychic, phantasmatic) effects on subjects of a political culture” (Navaro-Yashin 181)<sup>108</sup>. The political violence of Partition produced a panic and a terror that haunted the subjects (ibid.). The refugees use the talismanic charge of the verse worn as a *ta'wiz* to counter the meanings inscribed on them by violent nation-statist fantasies. Feldman in his study of *The Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (1991) writes, “the ethnicity of the body is built in its dismemberment and disfigurement [...] violence constructs the ethnic body as the metonym of sectarian social space” (64). In post-Partition South Asian then, bodies became metonyms for sectarian nation-statist fantasies; women, especially, as we have seen became conflated violently with the nation-state. The acts of mutilating, hacking, and raping women carried the symbolic weight of disfiguring the nation and defiling the community (Butalia 175-198). The “charismatic” inscription of Pritam's lyric onto haptic objects (either worn as talisman or carried as mnemonic token) enabled Partition survivors to reclaim meaning over their bodies and the affect-worlds

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<sup>108</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 181.

they inhabit. These gestures and practices situate the subjects of Partition trauma as agents rather than pathologized vessels of national honor.

Kabir (2014) points out that one of the hurdles she encountered while dealing with trauma in non-European spaces was the “privileging of certain interpretive structures devolving around narrative” (65). Closure through talk or narrative is central to Freudian models of “successful” mourning that moves through stages rather than the circuitous “loop of repetitions” that melancholic psychic states get “trapped in” (65). Hence narrative genres like the film and the novel have gained precedence in literary trauma studies. Lyric poetry and song, she has argued resist incorporation within these closures. Ramazani as we have seen made the same argument for modernist elegiac poetry. My analysis demonstrates that apart from the aural and kinesthetic aspects of lyric poetry and song, there are other embodied extra-poetic contexts that need to be studied to understand the expression of Partition’s wounds. These gestures and practices offer a rich archive of mourning and memorialization in the post-Partition affective terrain.

Jeevan Deol in “Sex, Social Critique, and Hir “(2002) narrates yet another instance where a charismatic connection to Waris Shah helped relocate Partitioned Punjab within more peaceable horizons:

Arifwālā Station, March 1947.

In the aftermath of the Rawalpindi riots that began the mass migrations that marked the creation of India and Pakistan, a train full of fleeing Hindu and Sikh refugees stopped at the station, to be met by a mob of enraged Muslims. Led by slogan-shouting *maulavīs*, the crowd swarmed the platform with the intention of attacking the train. They were halted in their tracks by the sight and sound of a Sikh opium-addict hanging out of the door of one of the carriages singing verses from Waris Shah’s celebrated *Hīr* Hearing him

sing the lines criticizing the way the corrupt village mullā ignores his Islamic duty of hospitality by refusing the male protagonist Rānjhā the hospitality of the mosque on his first night away from his home village of Takht Hazārā, the mob stopped and refused to follow their leaders. The train left the station unscathed. Sābā Singh, a Punjabi critic who claims to have witnessed this ‘Partition miracle’ at Arifwālā, remarks: ‘His eyes half-closed, the opium-addict sang away, and hatred turned into fellow-feeling. Waris Shah’s words were working a miracle; the soul of the Punjab was speaking through Waris Shah’s soul’ (Suba Singh 1954, p. 203–10). (Deol 141)

The incident (whether real or imagined,) calls attention to the affective, aural, kinesthetic and charismatic modes of the collaborative vernacular culture that remained open for Partition survivors to mine. The affective and sensory histories of this cultural formation have been historically stored and transmitted through situated practices of immersive “listening”. In the following section I will elaborate on these practices of listening as critical memorialization. It is a practice that draws on somatic, affective, psychic, cognitive and charismatic modes to create archives of shared memory.

### *Listening as critical memorialization*

Nation-state making in post-Partition South Asia continues to be premised upon fantasies of what it means to inhabit and safeguard “natural” sectarian identities. Pritam harnesses the affective, auditory and performative modes of a collaborative vernacular culture to site critical memorial practices which evoke emotional and psychic states that fracture nation-statist certainties. The auditory, embodied and performative dimensions of lyric poetry enable it to

proliferate through “public lives of [its] own”<sup>109</sup> across the violent Indo-Pak border in multiple memorial contexts. Pritam’s autobiography and her interviews record how the lyric harnessed Sufi practices of immersive listening as it was performed at WarisShah’s shrine in Pakistan in the 70s and pulsed through 1950s radio airwaves invoking unprecedented internationalist solidarities.

Listening practices in poetry recitals in the Indic Sufi culture of the sub-continent are unique and *kafis* from *qissas* have been an integral part of these recitals. The concept of *sama* is often used to characterize this listening community. While *sama* has religious roots, it moves and resonates equally in the non-spiritual domain. It represents a set of practices for listening to compositions of Sufi mystical poetry set to music. Its chief feature is its participatory, collaborative nature – the space and relations produced are called *mahfil-i-sama* (Mir 106). *Mahfil-i-sama* translated as a gathering for listening, serves as a context for the Sufi’s encounter with the experience of mystical love through listening to mystical poetry set to music, but is an experience lay persons can participate in also. As Farina Mir (2010), writes, “the concept and sense crucial to *sama* is listening, the encounter is enhanced by powerful rhythm suggesting “*dhikr*” or “*zikhr*”(repetition of the name of God (ibid). This collaborative immersive “listening” — a “physical and psychological, somatic and cognitive act” (Becker 29)<sup>110</sup> — involves the transmission and engendering of affective and sensory histories. These acts of memorialization resonate equally with extra-musical contexts carrying inheritances from both Islamic Sufi and Indic subcontinental modes of audience participation. Uttara Asha Coorlawala

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<sup>109</sup> Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

<sup>110</sup> Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Emotion, Music, and Trancing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). She writes that trancing and deep listening “are initially aroused at a level of precognition that quickly expands in the brain to involve memory, feeling, and imagination. [These] processes are simultaneously physical and psychological, somatic and cognitive” (29).

(2003), offers us a map to read Indian classical dance choreographies and audiences as archives. “Each audience writes on the dancer’s interpretive body of dances, its own reading of those dances. [...] That imprinting [...] will inflect her next performance and consequent audience reading” (49). Thus, “each performance bears on its surface a history of audience readings while the (structure) body of the dance carries its aesthetic equivalents of that same history. The audience itself can be read as history. [...] The writing back and forth continues<sup>111</sup>” (49-50).

Practices of performing, composing, reading and listening to *qissas* had historically created collaborative social spaces. Usually but not always performed to musical accompaniment, these cultural practices were not confined to religious sites such as Sufi shrines but also became a part of secular life (Mir 120-121). For example, Mir includes an illustration (see fig.5) from Swynnerton’s compilation of *Romantic Tales from the Punjab* (1903), which shows a *mirasi* — a hereditary musician — responding to requests from a crowd at a wedding to perform *Hir Ranjha*. Mir cites Swynnerton’s accompanying description “The audience had set up the cry: Hir and Ranjha! Hir and Ranjha! O excellent *mirasi* tell us the story of Hir and Ranjha!” She goes on to note that in this “documented case, the performance was in the village ground beside a *pipal* tree, a space reserved also for gathering of village elders, panchayats etc.; the *mirasi* thus occupied a space associated with village communal activities (Mir 121). The collaborative give and take between performer and audience which marks aural and performative cultures in the sub-continent is evidenced here. As the example illustrates, in these contexts, the audience listen to a tale already known, and interacts with the performer during the performance, thus giving rise to networks of cross-referentiality. In this section, I would like to elaborate on

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<sup>111</sup> Uttara Asha Coorlawala, “It Matters for whom you Dance: Audience Participation in Rasa Theory”, *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance*, ed. Susan Kattwinkel (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), 49-50.

listening practices, audience participation and memory-formation within the cross-referential sonic/rhythmic cultures Pritam's lyric deploys.

In *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (1986), Regula Burckhardt Qureshi elaborates further on the interpretive exchanges engendered by these sonic/rhythmic cultures. She speaks primarily of the *Qawwali*. *Qawwali* is *sama* realized in practice; it reveals also the strong influence of Hindu religious music (83). However, these participatory conventions hold equally true for other devotional Sufi performances *and* non-devotional aural cultures<sup>112</sup> of the region. They are marked by a particular flexibility and adaptability to context, and a focus on the spiritual and emotional needs of the listener. So the focus lies not on the music (or cantillatory text), but more on the listener and what he draws from the experience including “extra-musical contexts” (Burckhardt Qureshi 5). Each listener pursuing his personal quest and “responds to the music (or cantillatory text) in his own way, according to his inner needs and the mood of the moment” (ibid). To arouse emotions of love to the point of ecstasy, words are effectively applied through the power of rhythmic repetition as practiced in *zikhr* (Burckhardt Qureshi 107). This power of words and rhythms *to evoke a particular mood or emotion* is significant. The referential meanings of *Qawwali* music (including words, rhythms, gestures and mood) form a flexible and dynamic archive from which the social, cultural, and political functions of this sonic culture can be assessed.

The citational and intertextual aspects of the sacred and secular music networks within which the *qissa*, *kafi* and Pritam's *nazm*/lyric belong, make them a particularly expansive medium of communal memory-making. In “Performing Al-Andalus – Remembering Al-Andalus,” (2007) Jonathan H. Shannon demonstrates that music

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<sup>112</sup> One such site is the *mushaira* - a traditional poetry symposium characterized by collaboration, dialogue, repetition, and innovation. When the poet recites the first line, the audience recites it back to him, there is a back and forth, poet repeats, audience follows suit.

disciplines bodily habits in such a way as to allow for the construction (invention) and reenactment (imagining) of communal memories and histories (Paul Connerton, among others, suggests that communal memories are formed and mediated through bodily practices (1989; see also Casey [1987] 2000). Therefore, analysis of musical practices [...] should reveal some of the ways in which communities imagine themselves and cultural others in the process of remembrance and memorialization (313).

I would like to examine an account Pritam gives of one such referential and archival performance of her lyric in her autobiography (1977)<sup>113</sup>.

In 1975, when the Pakistani littérateur from Multan, Mashqur Saabri visited Delhi on the occasion of an *Urs* [marriage of the pir with God, i.e. his death anniversary], he told me that for the past many years now, a *jashn-e-WarisShah* (celebration of WarisShah) is held annually which includes exhibitions of folk-arts, folk songs as well as a *mushaira*. This celebration always commences with my poem WarisShah. On a 100' x 80' stage, an elaborate set is made which includes Ranjha's forest and Hīr's destination as well. The poem is sung for about 25 minutes. The stage is absolutely shrouded in darkness and then smoke is shown billowing up in a spotlight, and then WarisShah rises from the grave... Famous singers from Pakistan sing each verse, and in accordance thereto, the scenes on the stage keep changing...and when the poem comes to its last part, such a loud echo is created as if the whole of creation is filled with love and happiness.

The performance — a re-enactment of communal memories — is inflected both by the affective compass of the *qissa* formation as well as by the affective histories of Partition. Pritam's disfigured necropolis haunts the vital, nourishing “map to places in the heart” (Mir 136)

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<sup>113</sup> The following is a loose translation by Sundeep Dougal under the title “Extract 1947” published in *Outlook, Web*, on October 31, 2005 <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/1947/229059>. His translation offers more details than that by Krishna Gorowara which I have used elsewhere in the article.

fashioned through the stage props. Speaking of the attachments of place and memory, Edward Casey (2004) writes that “in remembering we can be thrust back, transported, into the place we recall” (201). What does such transportation entail in this context? We are taken back to the “train of longing” that Kabir presents as an affective vein into South Asia’s conflicted pasts. What does such longing mean, moreover, in the middle of the bitter 1971 war between East and West Pakistan triangulated by India – a war most emphatically connected to the detritus of 1947? In “The Embodiment of Charisma” (1998), Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu write that Sufism and its cultural derivatives create their own “alternative texts— utopian experiential imaginaries of other, possible world orders” (8). Such experiential imaginaries have the power to produce shared emotional states and “shape a communal moral consciousness” (ibid). As we have seen throughout my argument, this affective horizon is located within specific vernacular formations that draw on rich inter-crossing histories to animate relationships between memory and identity that confound the polarized narratives of the region<sup>114</sup>. Recent renditions of Pritam’s invocation by Pakistani and Indian artists - Asrar (2012), Gulzar (2007) or the Wadali Brothers (2003) - become critiques of contemporary violence and partitions that continue to scar the region.

Indian poet, lyricist and filmmaker Gulzar’s rendition of the lyric in his 2007 album “Amrita recited by Gulzar” consists of a poetry recital accompanied by music. Here the recitation is a quiet, intense narration with background monosyllabic modifying vocals and strings as accompaniment. In an interview to *The Times of India*, Gulzar discusses how Punjabi literature is indebted to Pritam for infusing it with new idioms to respond to the conditions of

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<sup>114</sup> The palimpsestic past Pritam harnesses, though, is not a utopian reconstruction of a conflict-free homogeneous community like that projected by the nation-state. It is, on the other hand, a trenchant recognition both of the struggles that constituted it as well as the remnants which continue to haunt and shape its present. Pritam’s evocation of Sufism is not that of a brand of Islam sanitized and secured for consumption that it has come to represent for many in today’s Islamophobic world. It is, I argue, in Pritam as well as in other transcultural producers of the region, a script for a common collaborative culture.

contemporary India. He says “we were inspired by her Punjabi imagery which was so different from the traditional Punjabi imagery found in poems. It was new. This was the major change she brought in poetry.” (“Gulzar Recites for Amrita.”) Gulzar then locates his rendition within the poetic genealogies Pritam deploys, while noting at the same time, her radicalization of them.

In a second rendition by the Wadali Brothers, Sufi musicians and singers, we have a different mode of performance –here the *singing* delivery of the poem set to music is privileged. The music is slow, swelling, and mournful; it begins and ends with haunting chants of Waris Shah’s name in female vocals. Using, repetition, variation, and improvisation, the singers play with rising and varying notes and repetitions. There is constant interplay and exchange between the two singers; one singer intones a phrase, the other takes it up, embellishes, emphasizes, and amplifies its meaning through varying repetitions until the phrase/image is both burned into memory and the grief it evokes intensified. One of the most important conditions for *sama* is of course the arousal of mystical emotion. In a non-devotional context like “AAWSN,” the testimonial and affective development the lyric performs, requires “emotional arousal to be allowed to its culmination” just like in a *qawwali* (Burckhardt-Qureshi 119). The repetitions in varying tones serve to *emphasize and re-emphasize* the ruptures, traumas and divisions Pritam evokes. If the aim of the *sama* recital is to create “a new perception (Kapchan 475),<sup>115</sup>” the arousal enacted by the Wadali Brothers through the intensification and culmination of rhythms and sounds ushers in a new understanding of trauma, memory and its communities. A listening community glued by shared perceptions is created and reinforced among the audience. This

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<sup>115</sup> See Deborah Kapchan’s (2008) analysis Sufi listening practices and perceptual transformation in “The Promise of Sonic Translation: Performing the Festive Sacred in Morocco” (467-483).

version was part of the soundtrack of the cinematic adaptation of Pritam's Partition novel *Pinjar* (*The Skeleton*)<sup>116</sup> (2003); it thus mobilized rich multi-sensorial modalities.

"Amrita Pritam's *Waris Shah*" (2012) by the Pakistani artist Asrar went viral on the internet upon its release. In his version, while the original refrain is retained, the stanzas in between are replaced to voice contemporary echoes of violence in post-Partition South Asia. The lyrics echo some of the imagery (of the coiling snakes), words (*Dard-Mandaan Diya Dardiya*, (sufferer with those suffering) sounds and sensory geography of the original. However, in the spirit of the adaptability and reflexivity of performance outlined earlier, they are molded to critique current socio-political contexts. (The five rivers flow with oil rather than life-giving water; religion and sectarian differences churn brutalizing violence, honesty is up for sale and no one listens to the words of the suffering). Asrar, is a Lahore-based vocalist, composer, lyricist who runs his own production studio called Soul Speaks. He primarily uses the internet and social media as a platform for his work which may be termed Sufi Pop/Rock<sup>117</sup>. Another rendering of this lyric is performed by the Mekaal Hasan Band, a Sufi Rock band formed in Lahore and featuring Indian and Pakistani artists. The song features in their albums *Sampooran* (2004) and *Saptak* (2009); its dirge-like vocals are punctuated by the flute, carrying memories of the labile religious metaphors of the eclipsed *qissa* formation. These newer modalities of circulation occupying the South Asian global imaginary thus deploy and recreate unprecedented forms of shared listening and commemoration.

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<sup>116</sup>Directed by Chandra Prakash Dwivedi, the music had lyrics written by Gulzar.

<sup>117</sup> <http://tribune.com.pk/story/568636/asrar-searching-for-sufism-in-times-of-pop/>

## Conclusion

The plasticity, incantatory repetitiveness and depth of the lyric combined with the region's situated listening practices make it particularly amenable to travel across cultural, historical and generic boundaries. Commentators such as Jahan Ramazani (2009), Maria Cizmici (2011), and Michael Nijhawan (2007) among others have remarked on music's mobility (Cizmici 25), malleability (Cizmici 156), and sonic analogues to suffering (Cizmici 165). Thus, the testimonial attributes of lyric and music are strong: "music through its formal compositional elements, through embodied performance, through reception, through repeated contexts of performance performs a testimonial function" writes Cizmici (4). Farina Mir notes that Amrita Pritam invoking the ethos of this pre-Partition formation would never quite find something like it in either post-Partition India or Pakistan (183). While that is to an extent true, the lyric resonances of this formation continue to circulate in the post-Partition memorial terrain of South Asia. Crucial work is necessary to identify and sustain them.

In this chapter, I have explored the role of poetry and lyric in evoking critical mourning communities in the Post-Partition trauma-scape. In the context of South Asia, where cross-fertilized lineages vie with violent border-making practices, the cross-referential perambulations of affect, sound and rhythm demand study. Their role in shaping affective global imaginaries cannot be overstated. Michael Nijhawan addresses this issue by arguing that we need to move beyond the association between song and nationalism that older critics like Benedict Anderson privileged. Instead, by studying forms of popular culture and song in contested contexts such as post-partition Punjab or Palestine, where daily negotiation of borders is marked by violence, we can glimpse alternate [more inclusive] imaginaries (Nijhawan 146). As we have seen, Partition lyric (here Amrita Pritam's) has hewed sacred and secular poetic channels into the scarred post-

Partition memoryscape. These routes enable deeply connected solidarities sited on critical memory practices that interrupt violent nation-statist frames. By challenging the sublation and cooptation of Partition memory by Statist formations, these routes allow Partition's remnants to haunt and reshape an "unfinished [South Asian] present" (Sangari 1990 113). Through them, more peaceable trajectories for the region become possible.

## CHAPTER 2

### Palimpsests of Trauma: Excavating Memories in Qurratulain Hyder

The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me; it was an emotional experience which overpowered me.

Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>118</sup>

We may need to wander amidst multiple ruins and practice an archeology of the comparative imagination.

Michael Rothberg<sup>119</sup>

#### Introduction: Memorial Landscapes in South Asia

My dissertation reads the South Asian Partition as an ongoing presence rather than singularly bound to the events of 1947; a presence deeply imbricated in the traumas of postcolonial modernity. The Partition of the Indian subcontinent – into India and Pakistan in 1947, as my Introduction argued, was one of the crucial moments marking the break between the colonial and postcolonial era. It was a seminal event that violently pulled apart communities, politics, and cultures, deepening religious divisions that had not been as sharply drawn earlier. The political, social, and cultural divisions from this event haunt the region – from the borderlands of Kashmir to the heartlands of Ayodhya. The effects of sectarian violence (ironically) travel readily across militarized State borders – a mosque demolition by the Hindu right-wing on the banks of the Saryu (Ayodhya) in 1992 is mirrored concurrently by violence in

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<sup>118</sup> Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 27.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Rothberg, “Decolonizing Trauma Studies”, 233.

Bombay, the razing of temples in Lahore or mob attacks on Hindus in Dhaka. At such moments of crisis, but equally in “routine”<sup>120</sup> situations, the “minoritization” and “ghettoization” (Mufti 2007) created by the religious division of populations and districts in 1947 reverberate around the region to produce vexed subjectivities. The constitution of Pakistan (and later Bangladesh) as repositories for South Asia’s Muslims, created, both a vulnerability for “Indian Muslim” identities, histories and lives, as well as for the reciprocal minorities in the other nations in the region. In his book *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (2007), Aamir Mufti sifts the post-World War II Jewish Question in Europe through postcolonial filters of the vulnerability of the post-Partition Indian Muslim. He unravels the process of minoritization, via Arendt, to reveal staggeringly traumatic socio-cultural ruptures, thus displacing it from liberal secular narratives. Mufti writes, “For Arendt, the stateless were not simply a sign of the failed efforts of the League of Nations but rather a necessary product of its normalization of “state peoples” and “minorities.” Arendt’s analysis of the European crisis during the interwar years highlights the radical destabilization and re-inscription of the cultural and social totality at large that is inherent in the minoritization of any one social group or fragment of society” (138). The South Asian resonances of this radical destabilization of the socius – a corollary of citizenship, nationalism, secularism, Partition, exile – may be read as the trauma effects of what Mufti terms a common “globalized postcolonial modernity” (4). While the trajectory of the Indian Muslim, as identified by Mufti, is caught in its crosshairs, South Asia contains other identities marooned also by the exigencies of state and citizen making: Tamils in Sri Lanka, Bihari Muslims in Bangladesh, Gilgit-Baltis in Pakistan etc. to name a few.

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<sup>120</sup> Gyanendra Pandey in *Routine Violence* challenges official historiography’s framing of sectarian violence as spectacular, aberrant, eventful and instead excavates how violence permeates and is constitutive of everyday minority lives. “Riots” as they are referred to, are shown to be neither sudden, nor aberrant, but part of a sustained, systemic political terror that the nation-state practices towards its citizens and subjects.

While the violence against minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh has grown more alarming in recent years, the double bind on the “Indian Muslim” as citizen of a secular nation-state is particularly vexed. Writing of Partition’s anguished aftermath, Ayesha Jalal (2000) in *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850* illustrates the irresolvable “dilemma of a [post-Partition] subcontinental Muslim identity” caught between “binary opposites of secular nationalism and religious communalism” (568). This dilemma took on particular urgency in the immediate post-Partition years – where the Muslim minority in India, in particular, could align themselves with the post-independent nation-state, refuting the fact “of their inveterate disloyalty” only by yoking themselves to a Nehruvian composite culture and secular nationalism (569). This meant definitively “distancing themselves from the more controversial symbols of their religiously informed cultural identity” (569). Aamir Mufti (2007) contends that the Partition and Independence exacerbated the crisis over “a Muslim” identity created by the 1857 rebellion - and this crisis remains one of the “central dramas of political and cultural life in the three successor societies to British India.” (1-2). During the emergence of secular India, “the Muslim” was always already imprisoned within the Enlightenment derived binary of “secular/communist” disallowing expression of other nuances in the nation-state’s public sphere ( Mufti 5). However, as the elitist Nehruvian complex of political and intellectual secularism that had been tied to the 50 s and 60s postcolonial state in India inevitably collapsed, it revealed “the terrorized and terrifying figures of minority” with its attendant problematic around “assimilation, emancipation, separatism, conversion, the language of state protection and minority rights, uprooting, exile, and homelessness [...] (2-3). The normalization of *Hindutva* ideologies in political life also gained ascendancy at this time. In the section “On the Verge of India” Mufti, reads Nehru’s seminal nationalist mapping in *The Discovery of India* (1949),

against the grain to dig up nationalism's discomfort – Mufti variously describes as a “a perplexity”, “a perversity”, a “stubbornness” (Mufti 137) – with cultural and political imaginaries that make havoc of any notion of a coherent and self-contained national culture, and instead of the classical culture of the Indic world look outside this subcontinental sphere to medieval “Baghdad, Spain, Constantinople, central Asia, and elsewhere” (Nehru 262). The confident, celebratory tones<sup>121</sup> in *The Discovery of India*, with its seemingly casual dismissal of other narratives, have come to represent the height of Nehruvian vision. As we have seen, in Chapter One, however, anxieties and insecurities of the new state determined, even constituted, this confident screen. My current chapter argues that Urdu writer Qurratulain Hyder, who is often linked with this Nehruvian project of nationalizing a civilizational past, presents instead through *Sita Haran* (1960) translated as *Sita Betrayed* by C.M. Naim<sup>122</sup> in 1999, an uncanny and melancholic rendering of South Asia's memorial terrain, a rendering that, I argue, fractures nationalist narratives and praxes. By spatializing, temporalizing and collectivizing eeriness and melancholy through some of the very sites (geographic, historical, cultural, textual etc.) that Nehru visits on his “discovery” of India, Hyder's repeated excavations of trauma-infused palimpsests is located very much at an angle from Nehru's cooptive pluralism as also from Muslim separatism.

My chapter looks afresh at the moment of Partition and nation-building, focusing on the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, to excavate affective histories of South Asia obscured by “the

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<sup>121</sup> Nehru concludes these feelings were not in opposition to or in conflict with Indian nationalism, but Mufti's reads this against the grain, linking it also with other nationalisms. See, for instance, Nehru on the Khilafat movement, the Indian Muslim agitation on behalf of the Ottoman Caliphate after its defeat in the First World War (DI, 350); Note 9; p. 277.

<sup>122</sup> Hyder insisted on translating/transcreating her own work into English although as the process was slow, very few of these are available to English readers. “Sita Haran” remains the rare work she allowed someone else to translate (to C.M. Naim) after much persuasion (“Lost/Found in Translation: The Author as a Self-Translator”, M. Asaduddin, in Rakshanda Jalil ed. Qurratulain Hyder and *The River of Fire* (2011).

overpowering emotional experience “ (Nehru 27) of nationalism. Nehru’s exploratory urge to map South Asia as an “ancient palimpsest” to “know if there was any real connection between the past and the present” (Nehru 25) is echoed in Qurratulain Hyder’s novel *Sita Betrayed*, which, however, casts memorialization in uncanny, darker terms. Hyder constructs a trans-subcontinental trauma sensorium – a memorial landscape shaped by sensory experiences – to contain the marginalized, affective histories of the Partition *dispossessed* that are obscured by the celebratory narratives of the nation such as Nehru’s *The Discovery of India*. The protagonist of Hyder’s novel, Sita Mirchandani, a Sindhi refugee with a PhD in Sociology from Columbia University, is presented as a reader of obscure cultural and social histories that cannot quite be resolved within either the Nehruvian dialectic of antiquity within modernity that the new Indian nation confidently claimed, or the “newness” of an Islamic birth distanced from the subcontinent’s past, that Pakistan declared<sup>123</sup>. Her mapping of history and memory, as I will demonstrate, is structured via palimpsestic surfaces that represent a melancholic post- Partition South Asian landscape – one that also reflects the temporal breaks of history<sup>124</sup>.

The post-Partition affective terrain as we have seen in the previous chapter was, and continues to be, informed by intransigent longings and desire for “specifically South Asian pasts” (Kabir 23) that Partition had rendered inaccessible. However, this longing was punctured also by

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<sup>123</sup> Postcolonial Indian ness in Nehruvian imaginary and praxis comfortably went back to India’s pre-colonial *Sanskritic* past to cast its modernity. “Foreign influences often poured in and influenced that culture and were absorbed” writes Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 31. For Nehru’s discomfort with Indian Muslims’ search for cultural roots outside India in Baghdad, Spain and Constantinople, see esp. p. 262. Official Pakistani historiography in the 50s worked to erase this common South Asian past, looking instead to “the Arab element” to forge a new identity. See Aitzaz Ahsan, *The Indus Saga and the Making of Pakistan* (Oxford, New York and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10. See also a reading of Nehru’s “Tryst with Destiny” speech against Jinnah’s call for inaugurating “a titanic, unknown unparalleled plan” in Ananya Kabir, “Deep Topographies in Fiction of Uzma Aslam Khan”, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47.2 (May 2011): 173-185. See esp. p. 177.

<sup>124</sup> My use of palimpsests as a trope weaving materiality of memory in lived spaces with literary reading techniques is drawn from Andreas Huyseyn, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), esp. p.7

suspicion, bewilderment, and a sense of being caught between the familiar and the strange<sup>125</sup>.

Ayesha Jalal, in fact, coins the terms “elseness” to describe the ambivalence “mingling sameness with difference” (570) that categorizes the relationship between citizens of the rival states in post-Partition South Asia. (She uses it to refer to co-religionists of rival nation-states.) The imperatives of citizenship create a dynamic of suspicion based on a paradox of same but not quite (570). I would argue that this charge of “elseness”, this paradox of same and not quite, inflected with suspicion, resonates strongly with Partition severances. While Jalal uses it to refer to co-religionists of rival nation-states, it could, I posit be multiplied to configure the perplexing relationship between severed linguistic communities (Punjabi for instance, Urdu and Bengali). This uncanny and angled mirroring is also evident in post-Partition journeys across the border<sup>126</sup>. The trope of elseness, carries associations of elsewhere (or the dialectic between home and elsewhere) an affective and spatial valence that is particularly relevant to Partition’s displacements and migrations.

Qurratulain Hyder, in a sense, reads post-Partition, postcolonial 1950s South Asia along the axis of “elseness.” In *Sita Betrayed*, Hyder particularly focuses on the post-Partition landscape, which is inflected with memory; her depictions are characterized by repeated gestures of unearthing the past. However, instead of offering the “harmonious closures,” which Nehru privileged in his readings on Indian history, her post-Partition memorial landscape offers a Benjaminian “anti-consolation.”<sup>127</sup> Rather than being assimilated and digested into the present, the past is continuously disinterred in her narrative. The novel’s *mise-en-scène* is set up

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<sup>125</sup> See brief description of Joginder Paul’s Urdu novel *Khwabrau* (1990) from Chapter One, for instance.

<sup>126</sup> For instance, many first-hand accounts in the popular media refer to the “surprised” familiarity mingled with unsettlement that first-time travelers across South Asian borders feel. Amitav Ghosh’s *Shadow Lines* engages with this.

<sup>127</sup> See Martin Jay, “Against Consolation: Walter Benjamin and the Refusal to Mourn”, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 221-239.

repeatedly with relation to “place” as the site of these irresolute and conflicting memories and histories<sup>128</sup>. Hyder’s layered, expressive compositions of sensorially and mnemonically inflected South Asian “places” depict affective and spatial fault-lines, evocatively representing the Partition’s displacements and migrations, wherein hundreds of thousands of individuals lost their homes, families, and identities. My thesis is that Hyder mobilizes tropes of the palimpsest and of montage to construct spatial and temporal projections of mourning, melancholia, and memory<sup>129</sup>. Thus, importantly, this focus on affective landscapes and histories enables her to intervene in theories of postcolonial trauma, by producing a new repertoire of affects/effects. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens for instance, urge a move away from the pathologization and depoliticization of social trauma, seeking attentiveness to material (social and political) transformation alongside psychological and testimonial healing<sup>130</sup>. Expanding these critiques, my essay seeks to show how Hyder’s work can also be recuperated through postcolonial trauma and affect theory, affectively evoking Partition mourning and memory in materiality, while also challenging Euro-American centric theories of trauma. In doing so, it is at the same time, invested in moving beyond the “first wave” of Indian Partition scholarship with its focus on testimony, narrative, and the discursive – and heavily invested in realism and naturalism – on which I will elaborate on later.

The temporalization of elseness is not only spatially registered through the trope of a palimpsest, but rendered via mainly cinematic modes in Hyder. The novel’s *mise-en-scène* is set

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<sup>128</sup> There is critical precedent for the “cinematic” elements in Hyder’s work. See for instance, Aijaz Ahmad, *In The Mirror of Urdu: Recompositions of Nation and Community 1947-65* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993), 10. See also Kumkum Sangari, “Viraha: A Trajectory in the Nehruvian Era”, *Poetics and Politics of Sufism and Bhakti in South Asia: Love, Loss and Liberation*, ed. Kavita Panjabi (Kolkata: Orient Black Swan, 2011), 256-287.

<sup>129</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, *In The Mirror of Urdu*, argues that Hyder in *Aag ka Darya* deploys montage, very much Eisensteinian to assemble landscapes as regenerative, 10. Sukrita Paul Kumar in her interview with Hyder in *Conversations on Modernism* also brings up the author’s deployment of cinematic montages, 58.

<sup>130</sup> See Stef Craps and Gert Buelens, “Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels”, *Studies in the Novel* 40.1 and 2 (2008): esp. 4-6.

up repeatedly with relation to “place” as a container of intertwined and conflicting memories and histories. It recuperates, for instance archaeological sites and “heritage” monuments from statist fixity and uncovers – mostly via Sita Mirchandani’s penetrating observations– subjacent graffiti, scrawls, and traces often under more manifest signs. These inscriptions, variously exuding insecurity, clandestineness, or mocking irony, as I will show, constitute an address at odds with that of the official Statist and Neo-Imperial stances. This excavating impetus<sup>131</sup> extends to other surfaces, surfaces eroded and carved by Partition traumas: fragments of pre-Partition memory and affective sensoria are repeatedly unburied by characters, and cast their uncanny shadow on their contemporary habitus; artifacts lost or abandoned by fleeing refugees are unearthed by arriving ones; poems in inaccessible or half-remembered cross-pollinated vernaculars (like Sufi Hindavi poetry) have meanings ferreted out that haunt cross-religious (and national) romances; postcolonial landscapes are reimagined and carved anew through past literary and performative modes; traumatic histories encrypted within tombs, relics, ruins and memorials are revealed; dream and memory states, hallucinations and internal monologues unearth collective traumas, and so on.

In this chapter, I would like to continue my exploration of creative works that are situated eccentrically from formulaic representations of the Partition – and thus yield suppressed histories. While I agree with Ananya Kabir on the need for vernacularizing affect and trauma studies<sup>132</sup> to decenter it from Holocaustian paradigms, I also recognize that the “crisis of minority” (Aamir Mufti), statelessness and dislocation thrown up by the South Asian Partition is inextricably

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<sup>131</sup> The palimpsestic surfaces and excavating impetus is not an organizational metaphor I employ; Hyder deploys it as a trope as we shall see.

<sup>132</sup> See Kabir (2014) p. 72-73.

linked to the post-World War II situation; they were almost contemporaneous events<sup>133</sup> after all. Hyder's *Sita Betrayed* offers us a unique opportunity to locate a literary address to these synchronous, if definitively discrete events. Mufti creates an internationalist Third Worldist alignment between the Jewish Question, Palestinian dispossession and South Asia's minority crisis. In his Marxist critique of intertwined bourgeois liberal narratives of Enlightenment, Imperialism, Nationhood, Secularism and Citizenship, his attack on the evacuation of the public sphere of all signs of religio-cultural difference is defiantly not an anti-secularist gesture, but a rigorous critique of Enlightenment, European imperialism and its detritus. Kabir's critique is however against the *theories* of understanding cultural loss and trauma (often derived from the same Euro-American imperialist ethos) that need to be rethought when applying to distinct contexts of loss and healing. It brings us thus, to a theoretical engagement with the affective or memorial turn in literary and Postcolonial Studies.

### Theoretical Framing of Postcolonial Trauma, Affect and Partition Studies

As my Introduction has illuminated, studies of trauma, mourning and memory have been influenced by the affective turn in the humanities and social sciences<sup>134</sup>. Studies of affect, my work proposes are a significant entry point into understanding embodied emotion, memory and trauma. They offer us among other things, a way to understand the subject's interaction with and immersion in the material, phenomenological world – a crucial aspect of understanding embodied, externalized and collective emotions such as those associated with socio-political losses. Affect-mediated understandings of trauma allow us to read cultural productions that have

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<sup>133</sup> I owe the sharpness of this observation to Debali Mookerjee-Leonard's comment at the "Vernaculars, Memory and Globalization" Panel, ACLA, Seattle, March 26-29, 2015; Panel Chairs: Rini Bhattacharya Mehta and Gautam Basu Thakur.

<sup>134</sup> See for instance, Patricia Clough *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007).

traditionally fallen outside the South Asian ‘partition narrative oeuvre’ with its over-reliance on the realist novel. It is a way to bring somatic and kinesthetic readings into play along with traditional textual/semiotic readings with their reliance on linearity and linear temporality. My first chapter has argued that it is via these that we return to artists like Amrita Pritam derided as sentimental and clichéd, to uncover a yet unexplored storehouse of material to take Partition Studies to the next level. Qurratulain Hyder has also variously described her keen sense of sensorial grounding in the world. Particularly relevant to my current chapter is this sensorial grounding in place. Edward Casey in “Public Memory in Place and Time” (2004) offers a spatio-temporal cast to memory and affect studies. Public memory, he urges, is always attached to place: it occurs when people meet and interact and is enacted in a place (32). Not only does place produce memory it also embodies it. Remembering place is related closely to several auditory, visual and kinesthetic modalities (Casey 189) which furnish convenient points of attachment for memories (189). Partition Studies is slowly bringing within its purview cognitive and affective mapping of material traces of Partition trauma that embody spatial and temporal aspects of collective memory. Hyder’s novel is a fascinating study of memory and landscape in Sindh, Pakistan and Kandy, Sri Lanka inflected with the affective histories of these regions.

### Recasting Partition Studies through Affect

To reiterate, the varied trajectories of trauma and affect theory lend themselves to Partition scholarship and enable us to recuperate through Qurratulain Hyder’s work *situated* evocations of mourning and memory in South Asia. Speaking of Hyder’s unique locatedness, in “We just Stayed on the Ship to Bombay ...” Tea and Consequences With Qurratulain Hyder,” Laurel Steele writes:

[Hyder] made choices to represent a [post-Partition] reality that was unacceptable to many [...]. She rejected binary divisions when the larger society embraced those divisions. Urdu versus English (she claimed both); Muslim versus Hindu (she wrote of a syncretic culture where relationships were complex and symbiotic); India versus Pakistan (she wrote about both) to her, these divisions were simplistic and artificial (187)<sup>135</sup>.

Aijaz Ahmad in *In The Mirror of Urdu: Recompositions of Nation and Community 1947-65* (1993,) has written evocatively about how Urdu literary and cultural production in South Asia was irrevocably changed by the Partition and yet its linguistic and cultural communities overrode statist borders (3-4). It is important to point out here that while lyric poetry negotiated the Partition through metaphor and imagery, in most of immediate post-Partition Urdu fiction, there was a preoccupation with “documenting details” as if writing could provide *narrative* reparation from trauma (Ahmad 4). The noted short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto, for instance, belong to this trend and faith in naturalistic representation. The feelings of exile and dislocation, however, and “the memory of what had been left behind” returned to *lyrically* and affectively haunt the sub-continent’s fiction in the mid-1950s. Ahmad observes that many of these writers [including Hyder], were preoccupied with “a *sense* [my italics] precisely, of *location* [italics original] in particular communities and in [...] historical time” (5), thus giving them a pertinence with reference to an affective and sensorial reading. One important influence on the work of Hyder was the genre of the *Naya Afsana* (New Story) of the 1940 and 50s, which according to Bodh Prakash in *Writing Partition: Aesthetics and Ideology in Hindi and Urdu Literature* (2009) employed a psychologized realist stance to express contemporary situations employing newer perspectives (33). Some of the key themes of the New Story he identifies such as fear and

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<sup>135</sup> “We just Stayed on the Ship to Bombay ...” Tea and Consequences With Qurratulain Hyder,” *Annual of Urdu Studies* 23(2008): 187.

suspicion in personal relationships, the transience of human relationships, the focus on women's desires and sexualities are inflected in Qurratulain Hyder with Partition's traumas. It is these interweaving themes that are of interest to my study.

While stories in the earlier realist stage were focused on incidents, the New Story such as Hyder's focuses on an interior scape, feelings of alienation, and other tropes that were common to post-industrial West and to the post-colonies, albeit in different ways<sup>136</sup>. In Pakistani Urdu literature "*jadeediyat* (modernism) was inflected by the Liaquat Ali Khan and Ayub Khan military regimes. Urdu writers in tending to mine the worlds left behind in India, drew ire and charges of treason to the forward-looking project of the new Pakistani State (Prakash 40). In my understanding, then, the "inner realities" mapped by writers on *both* sides of the border – India and Pakistan – combined memory, affect, and the trauma of displacement in particularly *situated* ways, making them rich sources of study in postcolonial South Asian contexts One critic, Sukrita Paul Kumar, in " 'Amma Basant Kya Hoti Hai?': Turns of Centuries in *Aag ka Darya* ", (2011) helps us gain a situated understanding of displacement and memory<sup>137</sup>. Kumar reminds us that this groundbreaking Urdu novel was written in response to Hyder's niece in Karachi (a daughter of migrants from North India) asking what the Hindustani word for Spring *Basant* meant. This term was unusual to her as opposed to the Farsi-inflected term *Bahaar* due to post-Partition Statist linguistic regimes (107-116). With the loss of the Sanskrit word, was lost an entire sensorium embodied in North Indian (Ganges-Yamuna valley) Springs distinct from the marine and desert influences in Karachi. Paul Kumar in *The New Story: A Scrutiny of Modernity in Hindi and Urdu Short Fiction* (1990) also helps us chart how representations of Partition's dislocations in Hindi and Urdu literature interacted with modernist modes of representing

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<sup>136</sup> See Prakash (2009) 17-47.

<sup>137</sup> ", *Qurratulain Hyder and The River of Fire: The Meaning, Scope and Significance of her Legacy*, ed. Rakshanda Jalil ( Oxford, New York and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011)

fragmented ruptured twentieth century metropolitan worlds. She examines how the New Story related to “an incomplete comprehension of life” (evocative of the cognitive and temporal lag of trauma) through its new artistic modes, thus situating “the modern aesthetic” in the subcontinent within “its own socio-political and cultural history” (32)<sup>138</sup>.

Drawing on these modernist artistic modes, Qurratulain Hyder not only examines psychologized interiors, but also grafts them on to Partition’s traumatized landscapes. By blurring the divide between past/present, mind/body, cognition/emotion, inside/outside and private/ public via the sensorial apparatus she employs, she opens fresh affective routes to Partition’s individual and *social* losses. So, while *Sita Betrayed* produces an intensely subjective portrayal of Partition’s dispossession through Sita and her family, it is equally invested in locating that loss within a *collective* sensorial world. Here, to reiterate what I have stated earlier, affect-mediated postcolonial trauma theory with its access to how emotions are exteriorized or how sensoria are embodied, can offer us a more penetrating look into Hyder and keep her work intellectually alive<sup>139</sup>. Hyder’s composition of a sensorium<sup>140</sup> of trauma through tropes of the palimpsest and modes of the montage, as mentioned earlier, allow spatial and temporal projections of grief and memory. In sum, I believe, exploring her affective landscapes and their histories we can get a distinctive sense of material traumas as they permeated Partition history and shaped the conditions of postcoloniality that the subcontinent experienced as both independence and rupture.

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<sup>138</sup> Both Bodh Prakash and Paul Kumar briefly mention Hyder in their analyses; Prakash (2009) comments on her representation of intermingled histories and the “macrocosm” in *Aag ka Darya* (160), and Paul Kumar writes of “her beautiful merger of the past with the present and a fine treatment of human history with private sentiment in her short stories (31).

<sup>139</sup> Hyder in an interview with Sukrita Paul Kumar, *Conversations on Modernism* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1990), 53. Hyder acknowledges that both Urdu scholarship with its outmoded models and western academia where her works were not accessible mostly due to lack of translations – have ignored her leaving her works bereft of “a literary life.” This is of course, changing.

<sup>140</sup> By sensorium I mean a phenomenological world shaped by sensory experiences.

### Summary of *Sita Betrayed*

“Sita Betrayed” is difficult to summarize as it is densely allusive. It charts the course of a few years in Sita’s life (in the mid to late 1950s) after her return from Columbia University, her adulterous affair with a common friend, that leads to the collapse of her marriage with Jamil (although she does not ask for a divorce yet) and loss of claims of custody over her young son, Rahul. At the very start of the novel, on an ordinary November afternoon, Sita hears that Jamil has remarried<sup>141</sup> a Spanish colleague at the UN. The novel’s desultory, fragmented plot (if it may be called that), and casts her among various isolating, melancholic landscapes: in Delhi where she lives and works and moves among artist and theater friends, she remains isolated. Later, she travels with her cousin-in-law by marriage and friend, Bilqis, to Karachi for a family wedding where she meets the handsome and irreverent Irfan Kazmi. They grow emotionally closer as they undertake a journey through the landscapes of Sindh and Punjab, while being moved by the affective surroundings to unburden their memories to each other. They keep in touch clandestinely and later meet in Sri Lanka where Jamil and Irfan are both attending international conferences<sup>142</sup>. Sita plans to ask Irfan to negotiate with Jamil for custody rights over Rahul. The plan goes awry. She goes traveling among the ruins of Polonnaruwa where an American political scientist with an amateur interest in archaeology, Dr. Leslie Marsh and she meet and begin a brief relationship. She then returns to a (violently jealous) Irfan. Irfan and Jamil bond over a common linguistic Awadhi heritage of Sufi Hindavi poetry and Irfan musters up the courage to tell Jamil he wants to marry Sita. Sita and Irfan move to Paris and for a brief while seem happy.

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<sup>141</sup> Sita and Jamil had a religious ceremony so Jamil could remarry under the existing laws for Muslim marriage in 1950s India.

<sup>142</sup> In these conferences, we get a glimpse of the Non-Aligned Movement and international re-organization in the Cold War Era.

Soon after, news of Sita's father's demise in Delhi reaches them, and she leaves. While in Delhi during a bitterly cold winter, Irfan's letters grow rarer until they almost stop. She then enters into a liaison with an old acquaintance, a very famous Bengali painter. Irfan hears the rumors and decides to break his silence. In the meantime, Jamil's agrees to divorce her and Sita decides to return to Paris and writes Irfan a missive. On arriving in Paris on a cold rainy January afternoon, a strange man opens the door to their flat and tells the shocked Sita that Irfan Kazmi and Madame Kazmi (a young colleague) are on their honeymoon. The novel ends with strains of a familiar *viraha* ghazal and Iqbal's *Cordoba* returning to haunt Sita and memories of Bilqis lecturing on the transience and elusiveness of "real life" that cannot be captured and resolved in cinematic frames and shots. A strong gust of wind bangs the door shut on unresolved inner lives.

### Trauma-infused Palimpsests: Sindh

Woven into the narrative of *Sita Betrayed* are the material and affective histories of South Asia, which are imbricated into each other, and which emerge layer by layer, like a palimpsest. However, as I have mentioned in my introduction, she inflects these histories not with a sense of a Nehruvian celebration of India's pasts and future, but with a deep melancholy and irresolution. The repeated acts of a reading and disinterment of buried pasts by Sita, social historian par excellence and verbally expansive narrator of pasts - is consistently marked by an eerie, melancholy slant. This has a lot in common with what Elizabeth Bowen (one of Hyder's acknowledged influences<sup>143</sup>) calls spaces haunted by "presences" of "life in pre-inhabited places." (324). In Hyder, these presences in pre-inhabited places carry the weight of Partition's ruptures and minoritizations.

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<sup>143</sup> Hyder counts among her influences T.S Eliot, Virginia Woolf and especially Elizabeth Bowen (Narrative: A seminar, ed. Amiya Dev, p. 209. I will return to Bowen's haunted landscaped later in my chapter to elucidate parts of *Sita Betrayed*).

The first significant disinterment is performed interestingly not by Sita, but by her “annoyingly” (44) melancholic mother (clinging to pre-Partition memories of their grand house in Karachi) while entertaining Sita’s friends and Muslim sister-in-law in their humble new home in Delhi’s Karol Bagh “a small dark and narrow house that had been abandoned by some lower class Muslim family [their name Rahmat is inscribed on the house] during the Partition riots<sup>144</sup>,” (44). The description of the sparsely furnished room includes a large glossy print of the Hindu God Krishna above a massive almirah visibly reclaiming ‘Rahmat Manzil’. Sita’s mother probes behind this almirah and pulls out another framed print which says in Arabic “There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet. She wants Bilqis, Jamil’s cousin to take it so she doesn’t do something “improper by mistake” (44). In this gesture of probing behind and pulling out “material objects that had been hurriedly left behind, the uncovered past is emphatically permeated with resonances of insecurity, abandonment and dispossession. The portable steel trunks in the room are rem(a)inders of the Mirchandani’s mirroring journey from security and home ( Daulat Rai Mahal in Karachi) to “elateness.”

The complex spatialization through concealment and revelation and *mise-en-scène* of dispossession (embodied in the spare possessions in the house’s interior) and the inscription of the previous owner’s name retained on the house “Rahmat Manzil” announces “other” lives through their violent evacuations. When Bilqis and Sita are in Karachi for a family wedding, Bilqis berates her relatives for the absurdity of clinging on to old names of North Indian places in their recasting of Sindh as home. Mohajirs name their homes in memory of their places in Uttar Pradesh. Ram Bagh in Karachi, a familiar place from Sita’s childhood is renamed Aram Bagh to

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<sup>144</sup> In these abandoned houses with their abandoned relics and objects, we can read the material histories of displacement and homelessness. A large number of abandoned houses in cities like Delhi, Karachi, Lahore, Kolkata, and Dhaka were similarly occupied by new refugees after they had been hurriedly or forcefully vacated and become repositories of such relics.

de-Hinduize it. In displacements such as this one, where a single syllable deletes entire cultural and linguistic histories, yet retains traces of the disturbing original, we find more instances of the unsettling palimpsests Hyder employs to embody Partition trauma.

The unsettling I mention, can be explained further via Laura U Marks (2000) discussion of the memories of cultural displacement encoded in material objects. In *The Skin of the Film* (2000), Marks creates a succinct table for such “recollection- objects” (77). She uses Deleuzian terminology to explain how when an image surfaces from another place, another culture “it disrupts the coherence of the plane of the present culture[...] and brings its volatile contents to the present” (77). Most crucially for an affective reading, Marks argues that the meaning of objects is not encoded metaphorically but through physical contact (80). The psychologized landscapes materialized, in particular, through palimpsestic spaces like Sindh “Sita Betrayed” are strewn with recollection objects, most often partially obscured, that are activated through visceral contact, bringing together the senses, emotions, histories, all accruing to the meaning of the material objects, that I analyze in the next section.

While the urban palimpsests in Karachi evoke haunting presences, Hyder chooses to locate her most unsettling disinterments in the deserts and riverine islands of Sindh. Sita and Bilqis along with their cousins and Irfan decide to drive from Karachi to Lahore and along this nostalgic<sup>145</sup> journey, not only do Sita and Irfan get emotionally closer, but they do so by excavating memories and histories from the loss-infused landscape. In *Senses Still* (1994), Nadia Seremetakis reminds us that while nostalgia often carries a pejorative sense of romantic sentimentality in English, in its original Greek, it refers to “the desire or longing with burning pain to journey. It also evokes the sensory dimension of memory in exile and estrangement; it

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<sup>145</sup> For both Sita and Irfan, the ruin-dotted landscape evokes memories of past traces and erasures.

mixes bodily and emotional pain and ties painful experiences of spiritual and somatic exile to the notion of maturation [...]” (4). This affective understanding of nostalgia and memory in terms of the “transformative impact of the past” on the present (Seremetakis 4) is useful in my exploration of the melancholia that infuses this journey in Hyder.

Hyder then, recasts Sindh as a ruin dotted *mise-en-scène*; instead of statist archaeology, and the contemporary contestations between Hindus and Muslims over claiming the Indus and historical civilizations such as the Indus Valley, “place” here functions as a container for unsettled losses. Like Karen Till’s post-war Berlin in *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (2005), Sindh embodies a landscape of trauma *mattered* by “presences and absences, voids and ruins, intentional forgetting and painful remembering” (8). Hyder’s layered, expressive compositions uncover “minor” or marginalized histories and subjects of Partition trauma. There is a cruel but too familiar (in terms of its repetition in the narrative) irony in Sita’s pedagogical drive to interpret the landscape and its history to a disoriented and largely ignorant Irfan, when as a refugee in India they can be accessible to her only temporarily and mediated by the exigencies of citizenship<sup>146</sup>. Irfan’s discomfort with the landscape, his surprise and later his sense of inferiority (he is mockingly self-derisive about his weakness in history, his shame at not being able to converse in Sindhi with the feudal landlord while Sita “the outsider” can) as a cultural outsider are all signposts of his displacement as a *Mohajir* from North India. If Sita excavates personal and historical pasts from a once-familiar topography, Irfan uses his angled perspective as “outsider” to infuse global losses onto the ruins. Of course, he reads the ruins/runes for traces of his own dispossessed past in the Yamuna-Gangetic plains of India, but also invokes the homelessness and statelessness he has witnessed in his global travels.

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<sup>146</sup> See scene at the railway station in Lahore and the confusion of the police who cannot equate Sita’s alst name Jamil with her Indian citizenship and Pakistani relatives (Hyder 82-3).

Sita and Irfan's "discovery" of Sindh begins in the sand and dust-blown decrepit mud and reed houses of the ancient potters' city of Thatta that appear to Sita to "be inhabited by all the wretched and homeless souls in the world." Immediately then, the desolation and decrepitude assumes a material, "sedimented" dimension both via the ecological past of wind born erosions and deposits in the bordering Thar Desert and the rich cultural, intellectual and architectural past of the region embodied in the massive stone mausoleums and crypts in the City of the Dead on Makli Hill. Makli Hill is known to Sindhis as the burial place of *sawa lakh* (125000) saints in an area of roughly six miles. A study of this site *Makli Hill* by Annemarie Schimmel (1983), begins with her comments on the necropolis, and about the state's apathetic relationship with this heritage site<sup>147</sup>. Schimmel's cultural excavations present Thatta and the Makli Hill necropolis through various historical perspectives – from Orientalist accounts and eroticized traveler's tropes, to Amir Khusrau's frequent references to Thatta<sup>148</sup> all the way from the Gangetic heartlands. She also mentions the accounts of Sufi poets and scholars who congregated there in exile from Eastern Iran's Safavid dynasty. Sita reads the landscape through these exilic, migratory and cross-pollinated rubrics, but multiplies them with the Puranic/Indic casting of Sindh via Sanskrit epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* (a standard Nehruvian trope), moving through historical stages, conquests, migrations and confluences (Greek, Scythian, Buddhist). She talks at length about the labile and emotionally shared religious life-worlds of Sufism in Sindh. However, there is none of the essentialist Nehruvian *claiming* of South Asian

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<sup>147</sup> For more on the contesting claims of nation-statist versus popular collective memorialization in South Asia see *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*. Cultures of History 2. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. Guha Thakurtha writes "Sacred histories and public remembrance also carry authority and claim. The tension between nationalist valuation of monuments and the various alternative configurations in popular and collective memory plays a crucial role in the present in the region"

<sup>148</sup> Schimmel quotes Khusrau: "A cypress like you is not in Uch or Thatta, / A rose like your pretty face is certainly not existent" (Schimmel muses that it may be the playful rhyme of thatta with *albatta* (6).

pasts as solely “Indic.” Instead her evocations of these multiple histories are permeated with longing and anguish.

In contrast to Indian and Pakistani heuristic interpretive regimes, then, Sita continues to read the landscape and its features as runes of pain: for instance, she specifically recalls how she had hurt her leg badly once under a tree, prominent in the desert horizon (55), interrupting Irfan’s uncomfortable silence and surprise at the profusion of graves in Sindh (56) immediately after with an explosion of emotion: Don’t you see that this my land? My fields- my villages – my saints’ tombs? Sita asked with some anguish (55). In spite of Irfan’s apparently apathetic and sarcastic banter with Sita, he too eventually starts excavating buried pasts. He asks Sita why Hindus attach sacredness to the *pipal* tree (*Ficus religiosa* or the sacred fig) recalling that whenever Muharram *tazias* (processions) touched a pipal tree in Hardoi, riots would break out. The unsettling disinterment of violent specters challenges the syncretistic accounts of Sufi lifeworlds Sita had been painting. The challenge is quickly withdrawn, though when Irfan muses on how his mother too, moved by the syncreticism of shared lifeworlds, would light evening lamps, a Hindu ritual, under *pipal* trees. But the unsettlement lingers. Once again, the discovery of sedimented pasts does not thus proceed on the celebratory mode of Nehruvian national vision, but uncovers crypts as it were of both the Partition’s losses and of continuing post-Partition violence.

Later when Irfan asks Sita about her childhood in a Freudian move to relax her (59), memories of similar conversations with Jamil move her to a bitter anger. In response, Irfan lets his guard down and reveals *his* reading of the ruin-dotted landscape that carry reminders of other losses. You think I’m very unsentimental” he says, “but this question of a lost home bothers me too.” He then draws from his travels a phantasmagoric vision of “homeless people everywhere” in

West Berlin, Hong Kong, Jewish refugee ghettos in America, Palestinian camps in Jordan placing these in affective relation to “the sudden metamorphoses” four million people of South Asia have undergone in their “thoughts, their feelings, their reaction to events” (60) – a veritable description of cultural trauma. This, in turn, encourages Sita to wander among multiple ruins within the comparative archaeology of her experiences as a Partition refugee in transit camps at various Indian locations<sup>149</sup>. Hyder’s composition of an unsettling affective landscape that contains palimpsestic depths, allows “the minority subject” a measure and resonance that Nehruvian nationalism could not contain. Hyder’s creation of the postcolonial landscape as an expressive “container” of palimpsestic pasts through the representational modes and new perspectives of modernism needs to be the focus of further study.

Leaving behind the desolation, dust and wind-blown desert sands, the traveling party enters the Indus river plains, which are presented through the melancholic composition we have encountered previously. Hyder’s montages of the Sindhi landscape as layered pasts are far-removed from the dominant claims of either nation-state on the region. While the archaeological remains of the Indus Valley Civilization were claimed by Nehru as ‘priceless relics’ of *India*’s past, Pakistani historians like Aitzaz Ahsan went to lengths to historicize the separation of “the Indic” Gangetic plains and peninsular India from the Indus region, thus claiming its “multi-faceted” pasts for Pakistan<sup>150</sup>. Hyder, by spatializing melancholy through – the (then) abandoned Hindu temple complex at Sadh Belo or Bela, an island in the river Indus near the town of Sukkur, continues, instead, to excavate minor, dispossessed pasts. The temple’s large pavilions are inscribed with Kabir’s verses, locating it immediately in the labile sacred spaces of “Bhakti”

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<sup>149</sup> See epigraph to this chapter from Michael Rothberg, “Decolonizing Trauma Studies”, 233

<sup>150</sup> See esp. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 33-37 and Ahsan, *The Indus Saga*, 8-9.

culture, analogous to the fluid Sufi identities of Sindh that resist religious binaries<sup>151</sup>. In the new Islamic State, these spaces are left to desolation. The signs of “pre-inhabited lives” are embodied in the hostels and clubhouses which look “desolated and haunted” (Hyder 66). It is significant that only Sita and Irfan go around the island reading traces of obscured histories. The rest of the party, tired after the journey, watch them from a distance. We see Sita from their perspective – herself a haunted figure among the ruins. As Nadir, her brother-in-law watches “Sita climbing the steps of a dark, brooding temple [...]” he “feels sorry for her”(66). This visual of Sita, as a lone figure among landscapes of void or loss, recurs many times in the novel<sup>152</sup>.

The temple complexes of Sadh Bela have strange, hideous and frightening stone figures fixed to them (possibly fierce tantric manifestations of Hindu deities), which cast the site in an eerie light; this eeriness is, however, emphatically linked to the unsettled traumas of Partition. Right under these fierce protecting figures, is “graffiti”: Sita and Irfan read three separate injunctions scribbled onto the wall surfaces addressed to the Devi/ Mother Goddess begging her to protect them as they are “going away,” “running away” or “leaving [Her] behind” as they flee Partition violence for India. Each marking of graffiti mentions the exact day of the month in 1947, when they scraped their desperation and insecurity onto the walls. Partition trauma materially (through graffiti scraped onto stone) carves and erodes spaces of sacredness and piety. The visceral memory of the loss violently abrades the syncretic, labile affect-worlds embodied in

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<sup>151</sup> Kabir was a mystic poet and saint and an important figure in the Bhakti movement in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in South Asia; he was of labile religious identity and constructed syncretic religious subjects through his intensely emotional *dohas* or couplets. Hyder in “Novel and Short Story: Modern Narratives” in Amiya Dev ed., *Narrative: A Seminar*, 214 mentions her situatedness within the “humanism” of Sufism. For more on how the Bhakti and Sufi traditions informed cultural, political and affective spheres in South Asia, see *Poetics and Politics of Sufism and Bhakti in South Asia: Love, Loss and Liberation*, ed. Kavita Panjabi (Kolkata: Orient BlackSwan, 2011), esp. Introduction 1-52.

<sup>152</sup> This may be linked with representations of *viraha* focusing on the emotions of the heroine and hinging on her sense of estrangement and vulnerability especially in relation to her surroundings. For more see Kumkum Sangari, “Viraha: A Trajectory in the Nehruvian Era”, *Poetics and Politics of Sufism and Bhakti in South Asia: Love, Loss and Liberation*, ed. Kavita Panjabi (Kolkata: Orient BlackSwan, 2011), 256-287.

Kabir's engraved verses. In another desolate temple, they stumble upon a life-size idol of Radha (again evoking Bhakti affective spaces) that "lay overturned on the floor" "in the heavy gloom" of the dying light of the sun (Hyder 66). The violence frozen in that act of destruction and the abject position of "a life-like feminine figure haunt the atmosphere. Agitated, Irfan urges Sita to leave the temple. His agitation maybe understood further by excavating his embeddedness in the Awadhi (found in the city of Lucknow) culture of Hardoi in North India carved by Radha-Krishna/Bhakti affect-worlds. Sita immediately likens the place to a *ghost* town and reminisces about *her* childhood, with its myths linking dreams to evil spirits that fly through the air glowing like lamps. Eerily she points out signs of similar hauntings in the dusk around them. She adds that "Sadh Bela is the graveyard of [her] people" (67).

The visual rendering of light and gloom in this scene is cinematic<sup>153</sup>. In these scenes that I have sketched, the affective projections of trauma, absence and void onto the surrounding landscape and its multiple histories allows us access into the characters' interaction with and immersion in the material, phenomenological world. Instead of presenting trauma as individual pathologization, Hyder effects an externalization, a steeping and a grafting of loss and melancholia onto sensory and material worlds. Additionally, so many histories of myth, religion, and personal memory converge here that the ghosts that haunt are not mere interior states, but reveal a lot about loss as a collective haunting. This sense of a traumatic "climate" (Bowen 48) though she did not use the term *trauma* is to be found in Elizabeth Bowen. In her Preface to the American publication of *The Demon Lover*, Bowen writes that the hallucinations in her stories are not a peril; nor are they studies of mental peril. They are ways of completing fractured selves "emotionally torn and impoverished by changes" (49). These words resonate in Hyder's

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<sup>153</sup> See for instance, Michael Chion (1994) who writes in *Audi-Vision: Sound on Screen* "the world is in motion and chiaroscuro [...] cinema represents this" (167).

evocation of emotionally torn “climates” of what I have been calling a trauma sensorium—and of selves fractured by memories and collective histories. Furthermore, Bowen also observes that “during the [first world] war, the overcharged sub-consciousnesses [sic] of everybody overflowed and merged” (48). In these scenes of travel and emotional excavations in Sindh, as repeatedly in the novel, Hyder mobilizes a similar overflowing, surcharging and collective merging of Partition traumas.

Hyder’s spatialization of loss and its temporal breaks not only unmoors Sindh’s pasts from the conflicting claims of divided communities, but also colors the celebratory trajectory of postcolonial development in darker tones. Her excavation of Partition’s traumas transforms the Indus at Sukkur, with its massive barrages and efficient water management systems, into a riverscape of death. Sita’s childhood memories of decorating corpses of unmarried women in wedding finery, perhaps evoked by the overturned Radha idol – in turn evokes the hundreds of thousands of women raped and mutilated during Partition. In this climate of mourning Sita and Irfan share, there is an absence of specific references to Partition violence (*unlike the naturalistic stories in Partition literature,*) but the sensorium of void and eeriness creates a particular access to Partition’s trauma that discursive narration cannot simply capture in its supposed record of facts. Thus the “climates” Hyder composes need closer reading.

On Sukkur Barrage, against the “massive awe-inspiring dam” (symbolic of colonial and neo-colonial statist projects) Sita is framed as “utterly alone, entirely helpless, and totally a stranger (68). The narrative tells us that Sindh of 1957 offered no sense of belonging, the address (in both sense of the term) provided by the landscape is to a Sita Mirchandani of Karol Bagh, Delhi (68); it cuts her off from the emotional attachment she once could claim. Once again, the moonlight on the waves and the city lights in the distance interact with the darkness to add visual

depth to the scene of dislocation. Yet, in spite, or perhaps because, of Sita's impoverished claim, Sindh is even more firmly affirmed as belonging – contrary to statist logic – to those who are *most* dispossessed. In a biting retort to a teasing jibe from a cousin-in-law about *her* Sindh, Sita responds firmly that Sindh is neither hers nor the old feudal families' that have historically held socioeconomic prominence, but belongs to "those wretched *haris*<sup>154</sup> whom you have never felt the need to think about" (68). Hyder thus emphatically locates "Sindh" not within celebratory national pasts and futures, but within cultural and political losses arising out of *multiple minor* claims to the landscape by dispossessed subjects. By layering dispossession onto the landscape through trauma-infused palimpsests, graffiti, and visual depth, Hyder excavates affective histories of the Partition that typically remain unmined<sup>155</sup>. She opens a way to read Partition trauma not as individualized pathology or a crisis in representation, but as a *material* and affective transformation of memory and subjectivity.

### Trauma-infused Palimpsests: Sri Lanka

Hyder recasts Sri Lanka as she did Sindh as a ruin dotted *mise-en-scène*. By locating much of these sections among historical, architectural, ritualistic and literary remnants that point emphatically to palimpsestic Buddhist and Hindu pasts that cannot be contained under singular rubrics, she gestures to other affective and memorial fault-lines of postcolonial South Asia. Hyder's is a unique vision that embodies what Rothberg terms a practice of comparative imaginations. *Sita Betrayed* is in that sense a singular work that reads Partition as a *symptom* of postcolonial modernity, by bringing under its excavatory purview, other conflicts that were riving (and continue to splinter) the region. In *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity* (1994), David

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<sup>154</sup> from Harijans, a Child of Hari/Vishnu") is a term popularized by Mohandas Gandhi for referring to Dalits, or Untouchables.

<sup>155</sup> See Rothberg, "Decolonizing Trauma Studies", 225.

Little discusses how in the immediate aftermath of decolonization and during the Cold War years, religion came to occupy an increasingly prominent place in [global] questions of war and peace (ix). He reads Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka as “a response to colonialism, a deep sense of cultural isolation and insecurity, and to imperatives of nation-building” (x). He writes that the Buddhist revivalists’ objective was to restore to preeminence what they took to be the ancient prerogative of the Sinhala majority, and especially of its language and religion. Tamil revivalists, responding in part to Sinhala assertiveness, employed similar appeals by demanding a political arrangement favorable to protecting their ethnic identity and interests. In sum, Little argues, the conflict drove its emotional force from competing beliefs about legitimate rule and sacred authority (x) and historical, architectural, ritualistic remnants became (indeed remain) important battlegrounds.

The novel’s locatedness in the “pre-inhabited,” history-ridden spaces of central and north central Sri Lanka allows Sita Mirchandani’s excavatory drive to flourish once again, and her readings illuminate the landscapes and affect-worlds of historically *porous* South Indian and Sinhala civilizations marked by an intermixture of, religion, language, culture, architecture, literature etc., that the political vicissitudes of postcolonial Sri Lanka find impossible to acknowledge<sup>156</sup>.

A pattern of chronic intercommunal violence has marked the nation’s history since its independence in 1948. The political success of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in the elections of 1956 made the years 1956-8 quite turbulent in terms of Sinhala-Tamil civil riots. The first major outbreak of post-independence collective violence occurred in May 1958 which is the summer the events of the Sri Lankan segment of Hyder’s novel traces. The novel locates Sita’s

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<sup>156</sup> *Sita Betrayed* ‘s Sri Lankan sections are predominantly immersed in Buddhist life-worlds (temples, relics, statues, etc.) and is supported by Stanley Tambiah’s judgments on “how Buddhism as a collective and public religion [has been] interwoven with the changing politics of the island and how that meshing contribute[s] to ethnic conflicts” (3).

estrangement against the political turmoil, but does not enter into details. These historical details are as follows: the Tamil minority protested against the Sinhala-Buddhist government and its policies through civil disobedience (Gandhian *satyagraha*) demonstrations that provoked violent retaliation from the Sinhalese (Little 4). Nuwara Eliya and Polonnaruwa (central to Sita Mirchandani's experience of the island ) actually formed crucial nodes of anti-Tamil pogroms. In Polonnaruwa, many hundred Sinhalese attacked a train believed to be carrying Tamil passengers on May 22/23. A Sinhalese planter and mayor of Nuwara Eliya was shot dead and collective violence against Tamils spread in the north central and eastern provinces. In a conversation Sita has with a young, Tamil Sri Lankan journalist in a Colombo café, as newspaper reports of another big riot in the north fly about amidst another day of uncertainty in the capital, Sita somewhat naively asks why the groups riot "if they are all citizens of the same country" (139). Ramaswamy doesn't answer – "what a silly question to ask when you know everything" he mocks instead, and then asks her why there are riots in *her* country (140). They go on to discuss the ties between postcolonial nation-building and neo-imperialist and capitalist politics (140). In its excavation of interconnected histories of exile, then, the novel expands and multiplies its address to include a trans-South Asian, even global phenomena of "minoritization" and dispossession. Apart from minorities like Sindhi refugees in India, or *Mohajirs* from India's heartlands in Pakistan (the stock characters who people Partition narratives), *Sita Betrayed* is radical in its constitution of a trans-South Asian and a global exilic ethos.

The siting of Sita Mirchandani's affective sojourn through Sri Lanka's "heritage" monuments in exact concurrence with the outbreak of Tamil-Sinhala riots of May 1958 allows the co-mapping of multiple losses onto the landscape. These Sri Lankan sections are framed via rich intertextual repertoires: the poetry of Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* (Hindu) and Jaysi's

*Padmavat* (Hindavi Sufi Romance) which function – as translator C.M. Naim notes – as “auditory flotsam and jetsam [...] that recreate “what in cinematic terms would be called a mise en scene. They also underscore the emotional contents” (xiii). Both of these texts are marked by journeys to Sri Lanka (Sinhala *dvipa*) that involve a quest by a male hero (Ram and Ratansen) in search of a woman (Sita and Padmavat). Both texts are animated by a sense of *viraha* / longing in separation (Sita’s from Ram) and Ratansen’s first wife Nagamati’s sense of abandonment as her enamored husband goes in search of the famed queen Padmavat. In Hyder, crucially, the *virahini* trope is amplified to meet contemporary exigencies: the text makes clear references to its vision of an alienating modernity and postcoloniality, where the woman is, in particular, perpetually estranged. *Sita Betrayed* is radical in its constitution of a trans-South Asian and even global exilic ethos that is postcolonial. By making the subjectivity of the *virahini* (woman separated from her lover in subcontinental literary and affective traditions) central to these entangled exilic histories, while at the same time subverting its affective and migratory tropes, Hyder locates female vulnerability and loss anew within contemporary frameworks.

To return to C.M. Naim’s astute introductory comments, we are reminded of “equally rampant [Partition] violations that were not any less scarring for not being patently physical.” During the long (and indeed ongoing) season of betrayals that is postcolonial modernity, “violations of trust that breached psyches” (vi) are perhaps the most corrosive. He lays the ground for examining this work through the lens of trauma and affect theory when he links “betrayals by a series of men” in Hyder to “the deep ineluctable separation” the women feel from

their surroundings” (vi). The Sinhala section goes further towards alienating Sita Mirchandani in specifically gendered ways from her cultural sensorium<sup>157</sup>.

While the summer sun in Colombo, the red *palash* trees and sunbathing western tourists create a very different “climate” from the November gloom in Sindh, the archaeological landscapes are steeped in multiple melancholias, inflected by postcolonial conflicts as by gendered erasures and exclusions. To refresh our understanding of the novel’s plot, Sita travels to Colombo at the same time that Jamil and Irfan are attending international conferences. She intends to use Irfan as a mediator while negotiating with Jamil for custody rights over their son Rahul. However, the very condition of asking Irfan to mediate on her behalf becomes, later, symptomatic of a patriarchal alliance between the two men that exclude her even while eroticizing her. At first, Jamil, although remarried, is violently jealous of Irfan and rumors abound among the subcontinental conference-goers of how Irfan has played “Ravana” by abducting Sita from Jamil. Irfan casts this in an ironic light by worrying that this would spark off a political crisis between the two nations. Both in their animosity and later alliance, Sita is present to the men only as an object to either contest or bond over. Jamil and Irfan eventually exchange verses from Hindavi Sufi poetry (from their common Awadhi heritage) in a heavily allusive encounter to which Sita remains a cultural and gendered outsider. Irfan repeatedly cuts Sita off (albeit half-mockingly) while repeating *chaupahis* (couplets) from Tulsidas’ *Ramcharitmanas* and Jayasi’s *Padmavat* that a drunk Jamil had earlier recited to him. This cutting off and drowning of Sita’s voice by a palimpsest of male voices is significant. Even within labile cultural heritages like those of a historic Awadh where Sufi poets freely borrowed

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<sup>157</sup> The third and fourth sections of the novel located in the midst of a bitterly cold Delhi winter and a wet dismal Parisian January complete her sense of alienation, betrayal and abandonment by Irfan<sup>157</sup>. The finite space of the dissertation will prevent me from examining these fully.

from Hindu imagery to lay out Islamic theosophy, attention to women's voices and pain was absent. Thus these very cultural sites, cast by nationalists like Nehru as models of secular identity, of Hinduism's embracing' of the Other (a deeply flawed minoritizing logic) are in Hyder's text, a homosocial pact from which Sita's participation is repeatedly excluded (much like the modern nation-in-the making perhaps?) At the end of her stay in Sri Lanka, she is no closer to a divorce from Jamil or custody rights over Rahul. In spite of a brief "affair" with a travelling American scholar, Sita agrees to move with Irfan to Paris while waiting for a divorce<sup>158</sup>.

Sri Lanka then is the locus of unsettling palimpsests inflected with *gendered* dislocations. The most startling of these are embodied through the ironic graffiti scrawled on the Mirror Wall of Sigiriya (Lion-Rock) dating from the eight to the tenth centuries based on paleography. Sita visits these with the American political scientist with an amateur interest in archaeology, Dr Leslie Marsh who is ostensibly in South Asia on a pedagogical project of setting the natives right about their misguided leftist ideologies. Enamored with Sita, he follows her until they meet among the ruins of Polonnaruwa. Leslie is haunted by his wounding and imprisonment in Burma in World War II – incidentally as part of Lord Mountbatten's South East Asia command, he had been stationed in Kandy. Sri Lanka is thus the site of multiple interpenetrating traumas for both visitors. Leslie's neo-imperial pedagogy takes a bashing from Sita's effusive narrativizing of postcolonial histories of the landscape. Sita reads gendered dislocations<sup>159</sup> onto various palimpsestic pasts musealized around them in colonial and neo-colonial nationalist frames.

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<sup>158</sup> I will not have time here to examine the legal contexts that shaped her decisions.

<sup>159</sup> See for instance Sita's memory of the blood of King Vikarama's wife on a cloth exhibit that was spilled by British plunderers who had usurped his throne.

Sita's sense of gendered exile is mapped onto the affective surfaces of Sigiriya, arguably the island's most famous historical landmark, via palimpsestic re-inscriptions that are at a slant from official scripts. At the site of Sigiriya (Lion-Rock), a rock 200 meters high that rises over "a burnished farmland," Sita cryptically tells Leslie that "a sense of guilt can be as hard and immobile – even as frightening – as the rock of Sigiriya" (116). This exteriorization and lithification of affect once again conceals multiple traumatic sediments. On the one hand, she is, referring to the obscure (to Leslie) history of the usurper Kassapa or Kashyapa (477-95 AD) who having killed his father and driven out his half-brother the legitimate heir, Mogulna, built his fort at the top of the cliff-face and lived there for eighteen years until Mogulna returned from exile in India with a strong army and defeated him. Kashyapa then committed suicide on the battlefield (117). Hewn into the rock, are also *gendered* traumas: the king of Sri Lanka, Dhattusen, had a daughter who was married to his army chief. One day, after being struck by her husband with a whip, she complained to her father. The king commanded that the chief's mother be burned alive. The army chief colluded with Kashyapa to murder and usurp the latter's father, Dhattusen's throne. The vulnerability of women as exchange objects of patriarchal violence is thus materialized in stone, a reminder of their continuing role as pawns in personal (Sita-Jamil-Irfan triangle) or collective (Partition riots) contexts.<sup>160</sup> This materialization or monumentalization<sup>161</sup> of "minor" traumas locates them in the collective space, however obscurely.

As Joanna Williams writes in her article "The Construction of Gender in the Paintings and Graffiti in Sigiriya" (1997), on the western face of the cliff, "twenty-two mural paintings of [large-breasted, ample-hipped] women survive in irregular pockets of plaster" (56). Forty-two

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<sup>160</sup> The fratricidal violence evocative of sectarian violence, India as a site of exile, and Indian military might as a pawn in Sri Lankan power historically are other narratives of trauma carved in stone.

<sup>161</sup> The erasures of monumentalization and memorialization have been much talked about (Huyseyn for instance) but the subjacent, minor traces that require excavation *invite* an attentive engagement that may recast memory and forgetting in gendered terms.

feet *below* the extant paintings, on a wall are located 685 graffiti, some of them referring to the gallery as the Mirror Wall. “Inscribing a verse (often amusing and ironic) was an important part of the experience for many visitors between eighth and tenth centuries (58). To return to Hyder, Leslie is “engrossed” in the paintings reveling in their eroticism while Sita finds them “small”, “silly” paintings in comparison to Ajanta frescoes (117). Her derisiveness punctures the voyeurism inherent in Leslie’s marveling and she proclaims the desire to “look” instead at the subjacent Graffiti Wall. She chooses to selectively read the graffiti out to Leslie, ignoring the more misogynistic verses such as what Williams calls the pat comment that the women are indeed stony-hearted turning on the way the murals relate to the rough surface of the cliff“ (60). Sita then excavates from the palimpsestic surface (written over for centuries) verses that evoke melancholy and transience “Friend,[she reads] these pictures of golden girls are now damaged. Their colours have faded. Is there none alive now who loved them in their time?” (118). She also chooses to read one of six verses by identifiably female writers (Williams 64) “Listen you fools, we girls are addressing you. You who have come to Sigiriya and do nothing but sing songs and compose poems. Have you ever stopped to think that we are women and that we need wine<sup>162</sup>” (Hyder 118)? In this confident address, a (purportedly) female visitor allies with the “painted ladies” to berate the men who swoon with the self-importance of their own devotion. They are urged instead to focus on the needs of the very women they claim to adore: needs that they are clearly not intelligent enough to meet. This derisive, mocking voice exudes from under the deposits of centuries of voyeurism to fracture dominant modes of spectatorship and address. (Williams points out, via quotes from various historians that most interpretations of these murals cast them as “a generic harem for lesser gods” or “conventional signs denoting a willingness to

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<sup>162</sup> Williams translates this as “ As a woman, I feel for the painted ones / You dumb men, trying so hard to write songs. / None of you brought us nice rum and molasses (no. 272)” (64).

surrender superb physiques to masculine needs” (58). Through Sita’s reading of obscure “minor” histories and subjoined graffiti, Hyder opens access to a feminist excavation of material histories of trauma and violence. The scrawling of the two verses referred to above, on the rock surface casts the “monument’s” affective resonance not only in terms of its manifest parricidal guilt but also with multiple *gendered* vicissitudes.

Hyder then, excavates affective and material histories of trauma across South Asia, drawing attention, particularly to its gendered coordinates. Affective *postcolonial* landscapes are reimagined and carved anew through these coordinates. In a particularly startling sequence of over seven pages here in the Sri Lankan section of the novel, Sita’s stream of consciousness links dream and memory states, hallucinations, internal monologues, sounds and other sensations into a rapidly-moving montage. An analysis of this section will help elucidate further how the text brings somatic and kinesthetic readings into play along with traditional textual/semiotic readings with their reliance on linearity and linear temporality through the harnessing of cinematic and theatrical modes – in this case to convey the emotionally torn “climates” of gendered postcolonial traumas.

#### Cinematic rendering of affect-scapes

The section I wish to examine, comes right after Leslie Marsh and Sita’s interlude of four days and four nights in “The Grand Hotel” built in the style of English country houses in Nuwara Eliya – the city of lights– surrounded by the fragrance of wild roses and the music of distant waterfalls. In a move repeated several times in the novel, the prose narrative in this brief section is “poetic[ally] or musical[ly] scored – with textual fragments of auditory flotsam and jetsam” as Naim has observed (xiii) from Tulsidas’ *Ramcharitmanas*. In “Cinematic Narration in the

Modernist Novel” (1994), Gerald Gillespie has argued that the modernist novel (of Joyce, Bowen, Proust, Mann and others) drew on the world and techniques of *cinema* to effect sensory innovations. Developing on Lotman’s 1973 analysis of Rossellini’s *Generale della Rovere* (1959), Gillespie writes that “at its birth, the now independent cinema drew upon all the existing arts,[...]; the novelists were not slow in turning the tables and start borrowing from cinema (294). One reason this succeeded Gillespie thinks, “was the extraordinary assimilation of impressionistic techniques in prose narrative.” Writers like Joyce, Bowen and others often employed “cinematic concepts from black and white film” – very often “an unnamed observer’s semi-autobiographical impressions and thoughts written in a stream of consciousness style. In maturing modernism, the acceptance of dream structures was a fundamental factor unifying the narrative approaches of media, film and literary fiction” (301). Gillespie’s observations help us further understand how *Sita Betrayed*, as indeed many of Hyder’s novels, is acutely shaped by cinematic concepts and modes. In her interview with Sukrita Paul Kumar in *Conversations on Modernism* (1990), Hyder is asked about her stream of consciousness techniques (59). Hyder calls it “representation of inner life (60). She says that when she started monologues, interior monologues and other representations of inner life in the 40s, she was in her teens; “the technique” was born spontaneously from her surroundings. In her paper “Novel and Short Story: Modern Narratives” compiled in *Narrative: A Seminar* (1994), Hyder further speaks of “atmosphere” as her take-off point (208). Inner reality, time flow, symbolism [...] the Style comes with the theme and the environment (209). She links her apparatus both to the worlds of traditional Urdu *daastans* and novels as well as to “the form which is called futuristic<sup>163</sup> in the West (214).” I will discuss how Hyder’s melding of new modes of perceiving realism

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<sup>163</sup> She counts among her influences T.S Eliot, Virginia Woolf and especially Elizabeth Bowen. See *Narrative: A seminar*, ed. Amiya Dev, p. 209.

(psychological, cinematic etc.) to her vernacular grounding allow us to affectively map collective material traumas.

To depict Sita and Leslie's romantic interlude, the text employs verses from the *Ramcharitmanas* as a match cutting technique –a cinematic maneuver involving bridging through a metaphorical parallel. These verse fragments blur linear sequentiality of the narrative as they are most likely continuations from an earlier recitation by Sita's friend Hima's mother in Civil Lines, Old Delhi. These litanic segments deploy lush images from spring and the rainy season to describe the sensuous beauty of the forest where Rama desperately searches for Sita after her abduction. Thus, the erotic surcharge is shadowed by a sense of loss, separation and violence. In the following section, there is a quick-moving montage of textual segments – hallucinations, impressions, memories, temporal movements, rhythms, sensations, and most prolifically, sounds– which firmly situate the loss and violence within the sensorium of a traumatic postcolonial modernity. In fact, the title of the novel is to some extent explained here in terms of the *estrangement* that the condition of postcolonial modernity entails.

After their brief interlude in Nuwara Eliya, Sita and Leslie return to a resthouse at Kitugala (in between Kandy and Colombo) on the banks of the Kalini Ganga where, incidentally, much of the *Bridge on the River Kwai* was filmed. Leslie hurriedly leaves for Colombo on his way to Calcutta following an urgent telegraph summons, presumably related to his anti-socialist work. The darkening river and the falling night frame Sita against an eerie and loss-infused landscape. It is at this point that we enter a segment which is sometimes interior monologue, sometimes hallucination, sometimes memory and sometimes the ventriloquized voices of fictitious others.

The fast moving, polyphonic textual segments swell with a hallucinatory lushness and agitate with their overpowering and jarring sensations. The mood is set as the night is rendered in a montage of images, sounds, smells, that hypnotize as they unnerve: the night “was set loose in forests of sandalwood, ”it slumbered” on bushes of cardamom and clove, “lay” on the indolic white flowers, “rustled” like a snake on the river banks. The litany: “the night which was the crack of the lash, the melody of the flute, the reel of the bagpipe, the ripple of the sitar...” (125) palpates with dissonance and dread. One of the recurring images in the sequence that follows the mood-building is that of the procession of Buddha’s Tooth Relic in Kandy (Sita and Leslie had earlier visited the Temple of the Tooth in their archeological excursions). The procession begins normally enough with all ritualistic aspects on display, but suddenly shifts into the nightmarish and grotesque: “The Buddha lies sprawled laughing showing his teeth. He has false teeth. One set for eating, one set for show (125).” This image recalls with force the political crisis that postcolonial Sri Lanka lies immured in. Hyder, as noted, times Sita’s sojourn in Sri Lanka to coincide with the 1958 riots (anti-Tamil pogroms.) Thus, though the detailed events of May 1958 are absent from the fictitious space of the novel, these dream/hallucination segments offer vivid commentary. I have discussed before how Hyder blurs the divide between mind/body, cognition/emotion, inside/outside and private/ public via the sensorial apparatus she employs, and opens fresh affective routes to Partition and postcoloniality’s individual and *social* losses. In the long segment under study, then, by interweaving cinematic textures ( audio-vision, polyphony, sense of movement) into her stream of consciousness style, Hyder succeeds in locating the loss within a *collective* sensorial world.

Into the dream-order of images stray in lines (memories of overheard dialogues) from a rehearsal of the Sanskrit drama *Mudrarakhshasa* that Sita attended months ago in Delhi: “clouds

are thundering overhead, my beloved is far away”. The sense of *viraha* or longing in separation that marks this is flushed with the pangs of political alienation that the play is a masterful study in. Much later, another dialogue – auditory flotsam and jetsam - from the play floats in that affirms this political valence; the lines are an urgent claim by a guard about a spy– a man without a passport - trying to leave the king’s camp with an incriminating letter who has been put under arrest. Images of conflict, treason, incarceration and third degree torture rent the flow of impressions. Intermittently, the aural landscape of Sita’s memories is punctuated by lyrics from medieval Bengali Bhakti poetry sung by her fickle ex-lover the poet Qamrul Ismal Chowdhury (with whom she betrayed Jamil) and Projesh Chowdhury her progressive artist friend (with whom she will later betray Irfan.) As I have argued in Chapter One, much of the Bhakti strain of poetry with its focus on the heroine’s affective states and agential function has a transgressive edge. Here, this charge of transgression and a sense of past and proleptic betrayals darken the lush eroticism of the lyrics.

Very soon, this dark tone becomes more strident. The declamatory voice, as of an announcer at a (socialist) theater performance or a meeting, cuts short the pious interdictions of Anasuya, teacher of normative Hindu femininity in the *Ramayana*:

Virtue...devotion to one’s husband...innocence...fidelity ... Alas, alas Ladies and gentlemen! Comrades! Brothers and sisters! I beg to inform you that Sita is lost in the dreadful jungles of today’s world. She was abducted by the Ravana of today’s world. This world of ours which is divided into two camps. The world which is a prey to Anglo-American imperialism; in which innocent people are tortured but no hanuman comes to rescue them.... Lata dear, the microphone is dead ... Kailash ... Kailas Nath Mathur, please get the power turned on quick ... So, ladies and gentlemen, as I was saying, in

today's world where the demons of hydrogen bombs are ready to destroy human habitations, where the Sita's of Asia and Africa are daily abducted... You frauds, you who read the Ramayana, how many Muslim Sitas did you abduct in 1947? Just count them once. And you Muslim holy-warriors, you whose tongues never tire of cursing the tyrants of the seventh century, you tell me ... (127).

The impassioned plea in the conventional address of public speeches to "ladies and gentlemen" in an "audience" shifts as the third wall is breached to expose the audience/us as the complicit and the guilty. In a direct address, the customary trappings of public speaking or performance are shed, replaced by uncomfortable, probing questioning. This speech reframes the central drama of the epic (Sita's abduction by Ravana in the forest where she has entered exile with her husband Ram and his brother Lakshmana; her rescue by Rama and Hanuman leading an army of monkeys; the doubts cast on Sita's fidelity and chastity due to her incarceration by Ravana and her subsequent re-exile) in postcoloniality and in the post-Partition memorial terrain. More significantly, the exigencies of Partition, postcoloniality, neo-imperialism and communalism are placed in a unique *sensorium*. The trauma, shock and dissociation of those conditions is delivered through a unique montage of sounds that immediately follows: "humming of telephone wires, rumble of train wheels, sputter of motorboat engines, roar of aeroplanes, Whrr, whrr. Phat, phat. Bang, bang. Scoop. schloop" (127). This discordance of postcolonial modernity, of its distances and alienations is then intercut with fragmentary impressions from Sita's memories – impressions of the *shehnai* in Banaras, of drum players and *nauha* singers mourning Karbala at Muharram in Tulsipur, the flames of a bier on the banks of Sindh and childhood memories of dead women being ferried across the Indus in their bridal finery. These loss-infused memoryscapes serve to heighten the estrangement and unmooring Sita experiences at Kitugala,

Sri Lanka, while the “theater” of voices and dialogues points to a *community* of the estranged across South Asia. In my Introduction I have discussed how affect studies helps us situate and analyze “social passion,” – “as political suffering and trauma affected by the other, but also as unconditional and response-able openness to be affected by others” (Athanasiou, Hantzaroula and Yannakopoulos 6). Hyder’s intertwining of performative and filmic modes into her stream of consciousness technique helps create a visually, aurally and somatically rich sensorium. As embodied by this sensorium, emotions are no longer internal states; instead, through interaction with and immersion in the material, social and phenomenological world, they gain a clear externalization. Loss, disorientation, betrayal and estrangement, thus become social and political as much as psychological states, allowing in turn, an engagement with their socio-political cognates.

The segment ends with a shift back to the Sri Lankan life-worlds haunted with their violent histories of colonial and postcolonial conflict. In a strange hallucination, the ruins of the Lanka Tilaka Temple appear like a mouth full of teeth gaping open in a hideous smile, its sacred pond of lilies lies open like a malevolent sleepless eye. The dream/ stream of consciousness segment ends with Sita being “devoured by the [malevolent] forest” as other sounds of the ocean, the roads and highways of the harbor, grow silent and finally the only sound that is left is the voice of the night lulling, seducing, entrapping “come here... come here, near me ...come near me...come” (131).

### Conclusion

Qurratulain Hyder mobilizes both her experience as a script writer for film and her painter’s eye to compose visually and sensorially complex sensoria that resonate with the

region's memories and losses. Moreover, in its excavation of traumatic interstitial histories of exile, the novel expands and multiplies its address to include global phenomena of "minoritization" and dispossession. Thus apart from minorities like Sindhi refugees in India, or *mohajirs* from India's heartlands in Pakistan (the stock characters who people Partition narratives), *Sita Betrayed* is radical in its constitution of a trans-South Asian and even global exilic ethos drawing Sri Lanka in the 1950s torn apart by Tamil-Sinhala (Hindu-Buddhist) violence, and (albeit distant in the novel's plot) Eastern European refugees in America, Palestinians in Jordan, Japanese prisoners of war in Burma into the ambit of "a sudden[ly] metamorphos[ed]" post-Partition/World War II ethos (Hyder 60). Her configuring of the Partition as *long duree* <sup>164</sup> is compounded by the narrative expanding its spatial limits beyond "India" and "Pakistan." Hyder's work, I argue, is thus a unique instance of Partition literature that allows us to map the post-Partition memorial terrain along relational and comparative axes that Rothberg (2008) has termed "the juxtaposition of singular yet relational histories" or "multidirectional memory" (225).

Literary scholarship (vernacular and English) has failed to give Hyder's work adequate critical attention. Her uneasy, often belligerent attitude to Indian and Pakistani literary and political establishments has certainly contributed to the marginalization. Partition scholarship models relying heavily on *Fasadat ke Adab* (Riot Literature) or on the *Naya Afsana* (New Story) did not push their boundaries far enough to explore Hyder's unique approach to the Partition as the past's detritus in the present. The recent critical attention to her works <sup>165</sup> can only lead to a much more nuanced understanding of Partition as an ongoing trauma. Hyder's innovative techniques that accessed interior and psychologized states while being rooted in historicity and

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<sup>164</sup> Thus going against event-based models of trauma.

<sup>165</sup> Such as *Qurratulain Hyder and The River of Fire* (2011) Ed. Rakshanda Jalil.

the material, have enormous meaning for affect-mediated studies of trauma. It is a unique combination of the historical and the sensorial, angled with a penetrating psychologized stance that make her works critical sites of an “affective” reading of Partition.

I conclude with some thoughts and reflections on our journey into this novel. On the one hand, Qurratulain Hyder’s *Sita Betrayed* exhibits a proleptic awareness of a loss of future possibilities of the nation and community. At the same time, it uses memorial, affective, and material routes to try to connect back to these very lost possibilities. What can such awareness offer? In *Mourning the Nation*, Bhaskar Sarkar (2009) speaks of a “proleptic melancholia” of the nation. The postcolonial nation is born in loss, he argues. It represents “the death of a collective dream at the moment of birth” (42).

Sarkar contends that this proleptic melancholia “arises from a loss of futures and possibilities” (42). The “return” to the Partition staged in my essay, should be located in this expanded memorial terrain as the specter of this particular form of melancholia. Furthermore, the events in Gujarat 2002, the entrenchment of the Hindu nationalist State in India, and the growing insecurity of “minorities” across the nations of South Asia, make the “return” to the Partition more urgent than ever. In sum, my investment in re-examining the Partition through postcolonial trauma and affect theory stems from these exigencies. Hyder’s mobilization of melancholia and haunting offers us a way to understand how the South Asian Partition endorses the value and promise of affect-mediated postcolonial trauma theory.

## CHAPTER 3

### Death—Making Traumas: Dislocation of Pain in Post-Partition Kashmir

#### Introduction: A Sensorium of Vulnerability

Afzal Guru convicted for his role in the Parliament Attack of December 2001 was hanged in secret on Saturday 9 February 2012 and his body buried in the grounds of the Tihar Jail. It was a secret hanging like many others that the Indian State recently executed; the State's decision "to make death and let live"<sup>166</sup> in secrecy, has been an increasing feature of the postcolonial nation. The legality and constitutionality of Guru's hanging has been commented upon by a number of legal scholars and activists<sup>167</sup>. The State remains adamant that exceptions need to be made for aberrations to the body politic such as terrorism, in particular the Islamist secessionist anti-national terrorism that Guru, the alleged mastermind of the Parliamentary attacks, represents. His execution was immediately followed by unanimous support by Indian political parties across the spectrum. In Kashmir, of course, the narrative was quite different. There was an outpouring of protest and a strident demand for the body of Guru to be handed back to his family for the last rites. This was denied. Omar Abdullah, the then Chief Minister of Indian Jammu and Kashmir<sup>168</sup>, paid a visit to New Delhi to hold talks to request the transfer; however as of now, the body remains buried within Tihar Jail. The family was allegedly informed of the hanging a day later by post (the letter got delayed in the mail<sup>169</sup>). Their lawyers, in turn, sent a letter to the State<sup>170</sup> authorities stating that their clients "as citizens of India have rights which must be respected" and

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<sup>166</sup> Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p.83.

<sup>167</sup> See for example, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/an-execution-most-foul/article4428788.ece> or <http://kafila.org/2013/02/11/secret-hanging-a-major-setback-human-rights-watch-on-the-execution-of-afzal-guru/>

<sup>168</sup> His party The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference was in a coalition with the Indian National Congress, the party then heading the central government.

<sup>169</sup> <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Two-days-after-hanging-speed-post-reaches-Afzal-Gurus-family/articleshow/18444932.cms>

<sup>170</sup> <http://kafila.org/2013/02/10/afzal-gurus-family-demands-his-body/>

have asked for their “right” to give Guru a “dignified burial.” The Interior Minister (of the then Congress central government) had given permission to perform the last rites within the premises but rejected demands to return the body to Guru’s family. The demands for a dignified re-burial in Kashmir continue to simmer. In March 2015, a resolution to see the mortal remains of Guru returned, moved earlier in the State’s Legislative Assembly was dropped, much to the relief of the new BJP-led central government and the newly elected PDP-BJP alliance<sup>171</sup> in Kashmir.

I have chosen to begin my chapter with these events because both this chapter, and the larger project, are invested in questions around mourning and its affective and political fields. What does it mean to mourn under the conditions of late-modern postcolonial military occupation? What does it mean to grieve [from] death-haunted spaces in the largest democracy? How may these circuits of emotion disrupt the fantasies and desires of the nation-state? What may the response to this grief from the nation’s center tell us about vulnerability, injury and mourning as materials of power, sovereignty, and nation-state making in late modernity? These are some of the questions my chapter wishes to explore. I would also like to note that within this gesture of “asking for rights” (to grieve) that are so evidently under suspension (Kashmir has been under a State of Emergency since 1990), lies an entire political history of promise, fantasy, longing and violence – a history which has been mapped out overwhelmingly on the Kashmiri body. It is significant that the rights “asked for” are the rights to mourn and to practice rituals of care around death – a death executed by the rights-guarantor –the Indian state. It is also significant that even (especially) after death, the body of the “aberrant” Kashmiri continues to be the site of formations and contestations of political meaning and identity.

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<sup>171</sup> This rickety alliance came to power in March 2015. The alliance is rocked by instability and a Common Minimum Program drawn up had to be frequently cite to quell” the demands” of the People’s Democratic Party., with its political ideology of self-rule that is quite at odds with the Hindu nationalism of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance at the center.

My analysis of what I will identify as the “sensorium of vulnerability”<sup>172</sup> under occupation will begin with a study of the State and the work of State power as inflected through Agamben’s state of exception<sup>173</sup> and Mbembe’s idea of necropower<sup>174</sup>. Focus will be

- i) On the effects/affects (discursive, material, emotional) of the Indian State on Kashmiri bodies/identities and the effects, in return, on the State of Kashmiri identities/bodies.

Central to this affective journey that this chapter will take will be the cultural formations and performances of grieving that inform states of emergency such as Kashmir<sup>175</sup>.

- ii) On the power that functions as kind of necropower that subsists on violence and terror as means of governing bodies. Necropower does not allow for mourning, it only endlessly reproduces spectral “Others.” These “others” are spectral absences in the cultural and political imaginaries. The lyrical, and phantasmatic narratives and performatives I examine, create a “sensorium of vulnerability” to recorporealize these absences. They thus offer a way to restore cultural and political identities.

The concept of “Necropower” (Mbembe 2003) allows us to sense in embodied ways the terrorizing practices of the State and non-State actors in the Kashmir conflict. Since the body and the senses are important “material” for these power formations<sup>176</sup> (Taussig 128) they also, paradoxically, become important sites of counter-discourse. Necropower’s refusal to name death

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<sup>172</sup> Feldman (1991) mentions the “sensorium of death” (128) to describe the regime’s ordering of space, time, and the senses in contexts of incarceration.

<sup>173</sup> State of Exception, 2003.

<sup>174</sup> “Necropolitics”, 2003.

<sup>175</sup> By Kashmir, I refer to The Kashmir Valley in Indian Jammu and Kashmir which has been under a State of Emergency since 1990 and has been the site of a violent movement for self-determination. However, as most commentators recognize, “Kashmir” as a cultural and historical imaginary is a trans-Himalayan borderland sharing boundaries with India Pakistan and China. Since decolonization, the territory has been divided into Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir (JK comprising Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh), a smaller area under Pakistan control “Azad” Jammu and Kashmir and the Northern Territories, and Aksai Chin and Shaksam Valley under Chinese control (part of the Xinjian autonomous region” in China.

<sup>176</sup> In *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993), Taussig argues that in spaces of death, attempts to explain terror could barely be distinguished from the stories contained in those explanations – as if terror provided only inexplicable explanations of itself and thrived by so doing (128). This problem of meaning-making is decisive, he concludes, because terror is deeply dependent on sense and interpretation, terror nourished itself by destroying sense (128).

as death – while producing itself through corpses, disappearances, torture, and executions – as well as its desire to shift death and the ritual mourning around it to something secret and stealthy, create epistemic and material murk<sup>177</sup> (Taussig 121). As Allan Feldman persuasively argues in his foundational study of cultural constructions of violence and the body in Northern Ireland, *Formations of Violence* (1991), “the body made into a political artifact by an embodied act of violence is no less a political agent than the author(s) of violence” (7). Since political violence is “a mode of transcription [which] circulate[s] codes from one prescribed historiographical surface or agent to another” (7), bodies and bodily performatives can circulate and be deployed as texts/instruments bearing inscription and re-inscription of political meanings.

Given that the state is experienced by those on the margins through violence, in embodied, penetrative ways (Aretxaga 396) how may the body (understood as an emotional, psychic, sexual, corporeal conglomerate) be reframed against the grain, to reveal what it says about state power and its phantasmatic, sexual and affective faces? Commentators such as Taussig, Feldman, Aretxaga, and Kabir have commented on how, in contexts of terror and spaces of death, the body and its languages, sounds, fluids and wounds may be read, not only to document the effects of terror and exhume the repressed, but also to understand negotiations with terror, and modes (mimetic, parodic, cryptic, confrontational, compromising etc.) of resistance and contestation to power. Kashmiri literary and cultural production both in the context of the First Intifada (1989) militancy, as well as the post 2008 when the movement moved from militancy to *kani-jang* or stone-throwing war with widespread popular involvement, engage repeatedly with themes of grief, pain, mourning, death, neurosis, and disease. Bodies – imprisoned, paralyzed, tortured, amputated, injured, severed, disappeared and dead appear

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<sup>177</sup> *Mimesis and Alterity*. 121.

strewn across these representations. However, rather than vulnerability as victimhood, eternal suffering, or martyrdom, many of these lyrical, fragmentary, phantasmatic works engage with questions of what it means to survive, negotiate, resist and imagine “in vulnerability,” under militarization, under spaces of “maximum” surveillance, discipline, torture, and death (Mbembe 40).

Through this reframing of vulnerability and grief, emerges a poetics and performative of the sensory, that disrupts the fetishization of the Kashmiri as either victim or perpetrator in statist or dominant transnational discourse, and offers instead a layered, focused, multi-dimensional map to read and imagine Kashmir. Drawing on the representation of vulnerability in Kashmiri creative fiction, in Sufi and Shiite ritual, and in contemporary protests against State terror, I explore how Kashmiri Muslim bodies become important terrains to stage and re-stage practices that disrupt the power of the State to unmake worlds and unmake bodies (Scarry 1985). Bodies and bodily performatives are thus deployed as transformative interfaces of violence, space, and memory under militarization and occupation in Kashmir. The overwhelming physical and psychological toll of living under militarization, surveillance, and occupation are explored via cultural constructions and reconstructions of nakedness, injury, torture, incarceration, neurosis, madness, memory and pain. The lyric, short story and novel in English and Koshur deploy the sensory as an optic into everyday precarity and vulnerability. While discussing mourning and pain in these and other non-fictional and journalistic representations, I would also like to examine an alternate model of trauma which takes into account not only the rubric of repetition and return, but also the trajectory of post-traumatic *growth* and the political, cultural, and historical possibilities urged by that growth. Mourning, thus, opens up a crucial psychological and political vein in Kashmir and becomes a central aspect of Kashmiri cultural formations.

The “biological” basis of an “internal war that defends society against threats born of and in its own body” has been integral to modern political formations<sup>178</sup> (Foucault 216.)

Understanding the workings of bio-power in late-modern postcoloniality as “necropower” gives us a comprehensive lens into contexts such as Kashmir. Death-haunted spaces such as Kashmir where the state of exception is the rule, and permanent war or siege marks everyday life, are a prominent and proliferating feature of postcolonial modernity. According to Agamben’s by now well-known observation in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999), “the new transformation of sovereignty into modern biopolitics can be expressed by the formula to make live and to let die” (83). Bringing together Foucault’s concept of biopower and Carl Schmitt’s concept of the political, Giorgio Agamben has argued that what defines the transformation of sovereignty to biopower in modern nation-states is the power to call a state of exception, a social-political space of force ruled by a law beyond the law, where the law operates by suspending itself. These are the zones where according to Agamben sovereign power produces a difference between itself and bare life. Reduced to biological substance, the inhabitants are fetishized into an absolute Other against whom a “never-ending war” is waged. Late modernity thus gives to rise to new forms of social existence where whole populations are subjected to conditions of maximum destruction or confined to the status of the living dead (Mbembe 2003). These death-worlds become zones of exception where necropower – “repertoires of authority”, capillaries and hierarchies of power operating beyond distinctions of state and non-state institutions, and contesting sovereign claims, grind against each other for the rights to “make death” and mark, govern, and punish bodies and populations as disposable (Hansen 2005).

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<sup>178</sup> Michel Foucault “Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College de France:, 1975-76 (New York: Picador, 1997 p. 216.)

In the biopolitical regime of corpse-making (i.e. necropower), there can paradoxically be no “death”, no haunting and no mourning; instead, there are only endlessly reproduced spectral “Others”, criminals, terrorists and corporeal remains. Agamben (1999) refers to the Nazi camp as the limit or extreme situation that determined what was human and what was not. These were above all sites producing the “musselmann” (48). The musselmann stood for the extreme threshold between life and death, humanity and inhumanity. Mbembe (2003), referring to contemporary limit situations (which are the effects of necropower,) describes human remains of massacres as “simple relics of an unburied pain, empty, meaningless corporealities; strange [calcified] deposits plunged into cruel stupor.” The SS, Agamben reminds us, were forbidden from naming the dead as “corpses” or cadavers” and referred to them instead as *figuren* or dolls(50). The musselmann cannot die because it/he was never fully alive. This refusal of necropower to name death as death while ensuring it through its violent practices highlights a paradox in “the camp” or in states of permanent war whose implications I wish to explore. Importantly, while the nation-state is not the unitary source of power in these spaces, and a multiple field of forces is recognized, the state’s role in the management of the life and death of its “aberrant” populations remains a significant site of inquiry.

The intimate, sexual, and phantasmatic aspect of these violent technologies in death-haunted spaces has received scholarly attention. This intimacy that filters and subverts modern disciplinary practices and rational technologies of biopower had been noted by Foucault in his study of modern forms of punishment (Aretxaga 403). Feminist scholars of violence such as Begoña Aretxaga have established further, that political formations while projecting themselves as an abstract set of micro-practices are violent, sexual, and thoroughly suffused with affect (Aretxaga 2003). Fantasy, states of mind, and interiorization of the state’s authority are a crucial

element of modern political life. The violent, sexual, and phantasmatic “faces of the State” become even more apparent in its margins. In “Maddening States” (2003), Aretxaga argues that abandonment and fear mark these encounters often played out in very intimate, embodied contexts – where violence and insecurity are experienced “*close to the skin*[my emphasis]” (Aretxaga 396 ). Yael Navaro-Yashin too argues that the fear, uncertainty, anxiety, mistrust that mark political and social culture become embodied in the bodies, habits, internalized reactions of the subjects, *haunting* them (Navaro-Yashin 181). In Kashmir, then, the body becomes the field through which the power of the state flows and it is marked, *haunted* by practices such as surveillance, curfews, crackdowns, incarceration, torture, disappearance, sexual violations, and death. The skin and what lies inside, thus, become screens on which political meanings are inscribed and re-inscribed; bones, flesh, fluids, sounds, fragments, dreams and recesses of the body become scripts to be read for what it tells us about occupation, militarization and terror. These material and psychic traces viscerally counter the ghost-making practices of necropower. As mentioned earlier, Kashmiri creative and cultural formations engage specifically with the sensory as an optic into commenting on memory, trauma, vulnerability, and violence in everyday lives. Literary and Visual Studies remains an important area that can engage with “other ways of sensing these [death-haunted/ghosted] world[s]” (Ronak Kapadia qtd. in Gopinath 184). Under surveillance and militarization that seeks to make itself “routine” and “invisible” (Junaid 161), these somatic ways (auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) of interpreting pain and mourning remain significant to the “sensorium of vulnerability” I wish to explore in my chapter. A word of caution appears necessary here. Rather than a binary between materiality and discourse, what appears crucial in studies of affect-mediated trauma is an understanding of the dynamic between the two. As Elizabeth Povinelli (2006) has recently argued, feminist criticism often tends to assume that

to focus on “fleshy things” is to “forget that they are always stretching, reacting and forming their physiology in the domain of discourse(8); however, neither are the two sides mutually exclusive nor “homogeneous and reducible to a single axis” (8). It might be more productive, instead, Povinelli urges, to examine the “uneven distribution of flesh – the creation of life-worlds, death-worlds, and rotting-worlds” (8) in other words, the sensorially grounded production of “naked life” (Povinelli 202). I would argue that in my dissertation, intimacy, corporeality and sexuality are to be understood not only as economies of pleasure, nor only as economies of power and violence, but as entangled “webs or skeins” (Povinelli 8) deeply immersed in their affect-worlds. The liminal figures, “bare life” or “the Musselman” of Agamben, occupying the third space between citizen and human (“Necropolitics”), neither human nor inhuman, neither living nor dead, have increasingly become key products of modern political life. A study of such marginal or liminal figures – neither dead nor alive – leads us logically to a focus on states of trauma. Affect-mediated studies of trauma, as I have been arguing, allows this “uneven distribution of flesh” (Povinelli 8,) or the experience of the State “close to the skin” (Aretxaga 396) to be more fully understood.

As Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula and Kostas Yannakopoulos claim in “Towards a New Epistemology: The ‘Affective Turn’” (2008):

[This] relationship between desire, power, bodies, subjectivity, materiality, trauma and alterity structures the theoretical work on which theorists of emotion draw inspiration and epistemological tools. What is epistemologically crucial to this ‘affective turn’ is the transition from paradigms of crude social constructivism to psychoanalytically informed and Foucault-inspired poststructuralist reappropriations of the discursive closure, such as

those conducted in the context of theories of gender performativity and postcolonial studies. (Athanasίου, Hantzaroula and Yannakopoulos 8)

This interrelationship between trauma, affect, feminist psychoanalysis, postcolonial studies and Foucauldian studies of power help us develop a strong foundation to study violence, vulnerability, and pain in contexts of necropower. This enables a move away from endless reproductions of “victimhood” (that Trauma Studies is sometimes accused of) to make exploration of forms of agency possible. The authors further explain that a crucial “symptom” of the affective turn “is the move from a strictly constructivist account of the body as a material substratum of ensuing social inscription to a more refined exploration of the ‘mattering’ of the body, whereby agency emerges as a dynamic force – at once cognitive, psychic, affective and sensual – of performative surprise” (8).

To speak on Kashmir is to be polarized into statist /anti statist stances, to give voice to the violence is often to be accused of sedition or dissent against the state<sup>179</sup>. While the Indian state refuses to acknowledge the violence of its machineries in anything but protectionist terms and refuses see this as an “international conflict issue” Kashmir becomes (via US military investments in the region) embedded in what W J T Mitchell<sup>180</sup> describes as cloning discourses of a diffuse, omnipresent terrorism in global circuits of representation Within these paradoxes of protectionist discourses cast as anti-terrorism, the liminal or interstitial subjects of Kashmir (subjects both in the sense of subject-matter and in the sense of set of roles constructed by dominant ideological and cultural systems/values) become spectralized, ghost-like, lost. The Kashmiri’s local realities are evacuated. Kashmir Studies is itself trapped within nation-statist paradigms and it is critically important to rethink problematic categories, stances, and attitudes

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<sup>179</sup> In November 2010, the Delhi Police files a case of sedition against writer Arundhati Roy and others for anti-India statements at a seminar in New Delhi.

<sup>180</sup> W J T Mitchell *Cloning Terror*

that many “mainstream” Indians such as myself are sometimes complicit with. Speaking “for” Kashmiris from a relatively privileged position<sup>181</sup>, on the other hand, is fraught with ethical and epistemological problems. By braiding affect-mediated trauma, postcolonial studies, cultural history and literary analysis, these specificities may be better accessed. My analysis of short stories in Kashmiri, written between 1950 and 1980 and translated in the 1990s and Agha Shahid Ali’s poetry from the collection *The Country without A Post Office* (1997) illustrates how “a sensorium of vulnerability” allows us to encounter the Indian state as it is experienced by those on the limits – here, the Kashmiri Muslim. My chapter reads injury and grief against their grains to reveal what they say about the phantasmatic and affective faces of the violent State (Indian and Pakistani). Through this reframing of vulnerability and grief, emerges a poetics and performative of the sensory, that disrupts the fetishization of the South Asian (here Kashmiri) Muslim as either victim or perpetrator in statist or global terror discourse. My examination of how trauma and identity are inflected by affective and cultural histories adds specificity and situatedness to Kashmir’s local realities.

### History, Trauma and Identity in Kashmir

Questions of history, memory, and identity remain crucial to access Kashmiri cultural and psychic formations. Theorists of trauma and affect contend that the complex relationship between history and memory is [also] mediated through emotions. “Memory,” as Dominick LaCapra (1998) argues, “... poses questions to history in that it points to problems that are still alive or invested with emotion and value” (8). Moreover, quoting La Capra, Athanasiou, Hantzaroula and Yannakopoulos the authors of “Towards a New Epistemology: The ‘Affective

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<sup>181</sup> once again as an “Indian” and an academic

Turn” remind us that “memory is important to history because of the centrality of trauma and the importance of traumatic events in the construction of identity” (10). There is no dearth of traumatic, contested events in the history that has shaped Kashmir as a death-haunted region. It is, moreover, of great significance that this history has been mapped onto the template of the Kashmiri body and haunts the desires, fantasies, fears, and grief of subjects inhabiting this history. The Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir has been under a State of Emergency since 1990 when the Armed Forces Special Powers Act<sup>182</sup> was enforced as part of the Indian State’s draconian response to a Pakistan-backed popular armed movement in the region. However, the situation in Kashmir, the *halaat* as people refer to in everyday language<sup>183</sup>, involving the political demand for *azaadi* (independence), decades of increasing militarization, surveillance, and living under what most Kashmiris see as “occupation” by the Indian State, needs to be seen beyond the India/Pakistan, Hindu/Muslim dyad that the region’s nationalisms use as a lens.

India considers Kashmir as an *atoot ang* (an inalienable body part) and memories of the Partition, its vivisectionist violence and anatomization of the nation-state are recalled to evoke fear of similar violence and disintegration<sup>184</sup> if Kashmir were to be “given up”. Hence, reading Kashmir through the frames of the Partition is a fraught project. Yet, as my first chapter argues, the dismembered and violated bodies of women and men torn by this sectarian violence haunt the psychic life of the nation-state and form the field through which further violence in the name of the state is sanctioned and enacted against its “Others”. Moreover, the emotional, sexual and

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<sup>182</sup> the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) was passed on September 11, 1958, by the Parliament of India. It grants special powers to the armed forces in what the act terms as “disturbed and dangerous” areas in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It was later extended to Jammu and Kashmir as The Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990 in July 1990. It is one of the many “legal” apparatuses like the Public Safety Act (PSA) used by the Indian state to enforce permanent states of exception in areas where threats to its sovereignty are rife.

<sup>183</sup> See Muhammad Junaid’s *Death and Life under Occupation* in Kamala Visweswaran edited *Everyday Occupations* (2013).

<sup>184</sup> Mridu Rai “Making a Part Inalienable” (ed. Sanjay Kak 270).

phantasmic traces of the religious, social and political divisions on formations of citizenship, state and national community are traceable most clearly in the margins of the State and an analysis of everyday encounters with the State in Kashmir reveal the intimate, corporeal, fleshly circuits of State power as necropower. The figure of the traitorous, violent, Muslim Kashmiri has become the threat against which the Indian state ceaselessly produces itself as screen and fetish, turning its paranoid gaze upon him while evoking a similar fear and mistrust (Aretxaga) from the subject. As Jaya Kasibhatla has convincingly illustrated, the “coming into being of the citizen” took place in the crisis moment of Partition and this moment of emergence exerted a long-lasting influence on the definition of the citizen as that figure “who threatens to shatter the sovereign order” (Kasibhatla 7). “The citizen conceived in crisis therefore appears indistinguishable from the figure of the terrorist (13).

In the case of Kashmir, this fear and anxiety has historically been high due to the disputed “incorporation” of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union in 1947 and the conflicting “loyalties” of Kashmiris who see themselves as neither Indian nor Pakistani. Hence neither IJK nor Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas have been fully integrated into either state’s political systems and the people continue to be viewed with suspicion and paranoia<sup>185</sup>. In Pakistani nationalist narratives, Kashmir represents the unfinished business of the Partition; according to the logic of division of territories, the then Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir with its Hindu Dogra<sup>186</sup> ruler, but Muslim majority population should have been ceded to Pakistan. India maintains that to enforce that principle and “give away” Kashmir would endanger its secularist principles and endanger its territorial integrity. It needs Kashmir to maintain its secularist ideals, but also its desired wholeness. Neither nation can legitimate those voices in the

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<sup>185</sup> See Nosheen Ali’s *Grounding Militarism: Structures of Feeling and Force in Gilgit-Baltistan (Everyday Occupations*, ed. Kamala Visweswaran (2013), p. 85-114.

<sup>186</sup> Upper caste Hindus from Jammu region.

wide range of political stances in the region, which disrupt their nation-statist projects and fantasies<sup>187</sup>. As many commentators, for instance, Gowhar Fazili in “Kashmiri Marginalities” have argued “the dominant Kashmiri narrative imagines itself (rather than India or Pakistan, or China allied with Pakistan) to be at the center of the current political struggle”(Fazili 214). It draws from a long history of marginalization that predates modernity, tracing Kashmiri resistance to foreign occupation to the Mughal invasion of 1588 and the subsequent dispossession of Kashmiris, by the Afghan, Sikh, Dogra and Indian regime (Fazili 214)

Thus reading the Partition framing of Kashmir *askew*, and against itself, I would like to emphasize not the India/Pakistan or Hindu/Muslim dyad, but the implications of border and nation-making in a trans-Himalayan region that drew its cultural identity from multiple orientations. Kashmir with a population of 10 million forms the *boundary* zones produced continuously by India, Pakistan and China (and historically, by the British colonizers of the region.) In his study of the relationship between borderlanders and their statist rulers, in *The Bengal Borderland* (2005), William van Schendel contends that the state’s pursuit of territoriality – its strategy to exert complete control and authority over social and bio-political life within its territory – produces borders (van Schendel 3). Kashmir in common with other borderlands<sup>188</sup> has been employed symbolically to materially embody the nation’s history and sovereignty. Hence its denotation as India’s “*atoot ang*” (inalienable body part”) and Pakistan’s

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<sup>187</sup> The postcolonial states formed out of the sub-continent vowed to grant the rights and freedoms of citizens to its people. Yet, in the case of both Azad Kashmir (and Gilgit and Baltistan in Pakistan) and in IJK in India, this remains a deferred project. Chitra Zutshi, Nosheen Ali and others have commented on how both the nation-states deny full citizenship rights to Kashmiris (and inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan). Their loyalties remain suspect and thus the conferral of citizenship rights has been continually deferred. It is significant that neither the political system in Pakistan nor the one in India has internalized Kashmiris as a part of itself (Pakistan does not recognize Azad Kashmir as a province).

<sup>188</sup> Sumantra Bose points out, that Kashmir contains one of the world’s largest frontiers; “the regions’ topography facilitates infiltration and exfiltration at many points of almost a thousand kilometers of frontier – 740 kilometers of the LOC and another 200 kilometers of “working boundary” on Indian Jammu’s south-western border with Pakistan” (Bose 163).

*shah rag* (“jugular vein”). Dominant narratives sacralize borderlands and make them pawns in the performance of the nation’s sovereignty (Schendel 4). They also evacuate the struggles and negotiations that mark these contested regions. Hence it becomes impossible for the Indian State, for example, to legitimize any of the wide-ranging voices demanding different degrees of political rights across the pro-independence spectrum in Kashmir. Instead, it can view the desire for freedom only through the lens of Islamist terror or Pakistan sponsored militancy even when, militancy has more or less been replaced by unarmed popular resistance, evidenced in the popular protests and *kani jung* (war of stones) that has exploded in the Valley since summer of 2010.

Borderlanders often develop counter-narratives in which the historical significance of the border that separates them is minimized (Schendel 4) and which, I argue, challenge dominant memory and affective landscapes. The *trans-Himalayan* character of Kashmir, its deep historic and cultural relationships with, and pivotal role in, the Himalayan mountain chain – a historic part of the Silk Route traversing Tibet, Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria – are an integral part of Kashmiri cultural identity( Kaul/Kak 191). Kashmir then is the wider term I use to denote the trans-Himalayan region parts of which are occupied by India, Pakistan and China. As Nitasha Kaul reminds us, cartographically, the territory of Kashmir on a world map is divided into Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK called “Azad Kashmir” and “Northern Areas in Pakistan (including Gilgit-Baltistan), India Occupied Kashmir (IOK called “Jammu and Kashmir” including Ladakh and Kargil in India, and areas such as Aksai Chin and Shaksam Valley under Chinese control (part of the Xinjian autonomous region” in China (189). The focus of my chapter is however, on Kashmir Valley<sup>189</sup> which is the site of a

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<sup>189</sup> My focus is on the cultural narratives and memories around the Kashmiri movement for azaadi or freedom from India (Tehreek-e-azaadi,) the locus of which is in the Muslim dominant Kashmir Valley. Jammu with its Hindu

prolonged, state of emergency and a zone of permanent war impelled by an overwhelming political desire for freedom from Indian military occupation and varying range of demands for political rights and independence<sup>190</sup>.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to enter into a detailed analysis of the political history of the region, but I would like to briefly discuss IJK's accession to India, the special status granted and plebiscite promised, that did not materialize, to draw attention to the anxiety and fear that have fomented the Indian State's relationship with Kashmir. Anthropologist Begoña Aretxaga in "Maddening States" reiterates that the state and its "Other" (the insurgent, the separatist, and the terrorist) are fetishes of each other producing endlessly mirroring images of each other. The Kashmiri Muslim represents the fetish par excellence partly because from its inception, the nation-state has not been able to make an "absolute citizen" out of him. Kashmir's accession to the Indian state was marked by intense wavering, bargaining and it was provisional. Maharaja Hari Singh, the Dogra(Hindu) ruler of Muslim-majority Kashmir delayed his decision about whether to join India or Pakistan. In October 1947, armed tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier region entered Kashmir to join an internal revolt in the Poonch region. The tribesmen went on a violent rampage; the Maharaja requested help from India in quelling the revolt and invasion and signed the Instrument of Accession, acceding Kashmir to India. The accession at the time was seen as provisional, pending a plebiscite to determine the will of the Kashmiri people. Indian forces were airlifted to Srinagar to repel Pakistani militias and the fighting escalated into the first Indo-Pakistan War, with Pakistan disputing the accession and

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majority and Ladakh with its Buddhist majority do not view India as an occupying power, and Kargilis on the border are also dependent on the Indian military and identify themselves as Indians.

<sup>190</sup> In *A Diary of a Summer*, Suvir Kaul writes There are those in the pro-independence All Party Hurriyat Conference who are amenable to the development of political systems in IJ& K that will put into practice the autonomy, constitutionally available to the state. There are those who are more independentist and those (increasingly few) who desire a merger with the Islamic neighbor(Pakistan). To delegitimize this entire range of desires is an arrogant miscalculation [on the part of the Indian State (Kaul/Kak 24).

eventually sending in regular forces. In 1948, after referring the Kashmir dispute to the UN, a UN resolution was made calling for ceasefire and a plebiscite. On January 26, 1950 the Indian Constitution came into effect. Article 370 accorded autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian Union, with Indian jurisdiction restricted to defense, foreign affairs, and communication. In 1950 the National Conference party headed by Sheikh Abdullah called for elections (instead of a plebiscite) to create a Constituent Assembly to determine the future of Kashmir; it won all the seats in the 1951 elections. In July 1952, Sheikh Abdullah signed the Delhi Agreement providing for autonomy for J&K within India. In May 1954, barely two years later, however, the Constitution (Applicable to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 1954 came into force extending Indian jurisdiction over Kashmir, annulling the Delhi Agreement and curbing civil liberties<sup>191</sup>. This was driven, in large part, by right wing Hindu fears about Muslim dominance.

In *Kashmir in Crucible* (1967), a groundbreaking and significant analysis of the Kashmir “issue” Prem Nath Bazaz discusses what the events of 1954 meant in terms of the subsequent history of Kashmir and Kashmiri relations with India. The changes effected included the extension of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, approval of the Union Planning Commission of State development programs (Bazaz 71). On 26 January 1957, the Constituent Assembly enacted the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, stating it will be an integral part of the Indian Union<sup>192</sup>. On December 27 1964, the All India Hindu Mahasabha put forward a demand for promulgation of President’s Rule in Kashmir and repeal of article 370 (it was anti-secular and pro-Muslim they claimed). The demand, it was claimed, was in response to the ‘evil designs of China and Pakistan (Bazaz 85). Article 370 had, anyway, been a cipher, being dead in letter and

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<sup>191</sup> The editors Ali, Bhatt, Chatterji et al. of *Kashmir: A Case for Freedom* include a comprehensive timeline of events under “Chronology: 1947-2010” (vi-xiv).

<sup>192</sup> It is the force of this enactment that the family of Guru leverages to ask for rights as Indian citizens to conduct the last rites.

spirit for a long time since (Bose 69-70). In December 1964, India's Interior Minister announced that the Union government had decided to bring IJK under the purview of two of the most centralist and controversial provisions of the Indian constitution – Articles 356 and 357, which respectively empower the Center to dismiss elected governments of Indian states in the event of a breakdown of law and order and to assume their legislative mandate (Bose 81). In 1965, the Indian parliament passed a bill declaring Kashmir a province of India, claiming for India the power to appoint a governor, dismiss Kashmir's government and assume its legislative functions. Article 356 and 357 were applied to Kashmir; the National Conference government was replaced by the Congress and an increased militarization of Kashmir took place. There was a conspicuous increase in non-Kashmiri armed police presence in the valley in the decades of the 50s and 60s with the Central Reserve Police Force, Punjab Armed Police, Bihar Armed Police being stationed there; an armed section of Kashmir police was also raised (Bazaz 94).

Bazaz further writes that during the Indo-Pak war of 1964 and its aftermath, no distinctions were made by the State between the treacherous enemy and the “civilian Kashmiri (105) and this led to a permeating belief that every Kashmiri Muslim harbored infiltrators (105). In 1972, India and Pakistan signed the Simla Agreement which redesignated the UN ceasefire line in Kashmir as the Line of Control. 1984, Jagmohan Malhotra the New Delhi appointed governor, and a Hindu nationalist, dismissed the elected Farooq Abdullah government; protests erupted and curfew was imposed. Jagmohan assumed exclusive power in 1986. In 1989, armed resistance to Indian rule broke out and since then, Srinagar has been under permanent siege. In early 1990, a group of young men in the Kashmir valley launched a guerrilla revolt against Indian rule under the JKLF Front- with the objective to liberate IJK and reunite it with Pakistani Kashmir as a single state. They received weapons and training from a JKLF organization across

the border in AJK as well as from Pakistani military agencies (Bose 2-3). Although mass collective action and protests had been a recurring feature of politics in the Valley (1963 for example, see Bose 78, 79), The Valley exploded once again in 1990 with strong popular responses for *azaadi* in large pro-independence demonstrations. Claiming that its secular identity would be threatened by the secession of Kashmir – the only Muslim majority state – the Indian State responded with a brutal militaristic repression and reprisal targeting not only armed militants but “traitorous”, disloyal” Muslim” civilian communities that aided and sheltered the rebels. The Muslim but secularist JKLF’s dominance yielded by 1992-3 to the rise of a pro-Pakistan Islamist group Hizbul-Mujahideen. 1990-1995 may be seen as the intifada or uprising phase marked by mass demonstrations, strikes and calls for freedom to which the Indian state retaliated with militarization, (and paramilitarization) curfew, crackdown, interrogation, torture, imprisonment of suspected militants and their supporters (107).

Srinagar, thus, became a bunker city, a city under permanent siege. In “A Captive City” Wasim Bhat describes this bunker city where the gaze and the gun are permanently measuring, surveying, aiming:

The narrow streets are a maze of barricades check-points and bunkers, snarling and gnawing unending coils of concertina. Draped in camouflage nets, squat brick bunkers gaze at people through narrow slats. Memorizing faces and calculating their defenses against the multitude. From one bunker to the next and the next, the city is in omnipresent crosshairs. (Kak 102)

The militarization and emergency in Kashmir has been marked by recurring acts of violence and force by both state and anti-state actors shattering the fabric of everyday life, taking enormous physical and psychological toll. 70000 Kashmiris have been killed since 1989 by the Indian

State, (paramilitary and military personnel), militants and agents operating in the nefarious gray zone that lies between occupied and occupier. In December 2009 The International People's Tribunal On Human Rights And Justice In Indian-Administered Kashmir released a report entitled “Buried Evidence ” which documents about 2700 hidden, unmarked, and mass graves containing 2943 bodies mostly men across Bandipore, Kupwara, and Baramulla districts of Kashmir. The bodies bore the marks of torture; they were dragged through the night and buried next to schools, homes, and fields. The graves were dug by locals at the behest of military, paramilitary, and police forces. The Indian forces claim that these graves contain foreign militants, but they were revealed to be local inhabitants killed in “fake encounters” (extrajudicial killing of civilians in staged encounters with security forces) (Ali, Bhatt, Chatterji et al 111). By 2002 the popular armed rebellion was largely crushed but public support for Kashmir’s independence from India have deepened over the years and taken new forms. In Kashmir currently over 600,000 police and paramilitary personnel remain deployed making it the highest concentration of soldiers in the world, although militancy is at an ebb. While there has been an intense debate, especially in the recent years on the legality and constructional validity of the AFSPA, it continues to provide the juridical and material framework for justification of state violence and terror against the Kashmiris

In the summer of 2010, the Valley saw another upsurge in protests and the Indian army shot dead more than a hundred protestors, most of them teenagers (Ali, Bhatt, Chatterji et al 1) after a 17 year old Tufail Matoo was struck and killed by a tear gas canister fired at close range as he walked back from school. Tufail Matoo was caught in a cross-fire between the army and protestors who had erupted onto the streets of Srinagar to protest the “fake encounter’ killings of three unarmed civilians in Machil in Kupwara district north Kashmir in May 2010 by Rashtriya

(National) Rifles Unit. Tufail's death led to even larger emotionally surcharged demonstrations which resulted in more civilian killings. In four months 112 had been shot dead on the streets of Kashmir – mostly teenagers and young boys wielding stones. In place of the gun-wielding *mujahids*, Kashmir exploded with unarmed civilians, young men armed only with stones, their faces covered, the chests bared - the *sangbazan* (stone-throwers). The Indian State responded with providing futuristic new body-protective gear to its soldiers, whom one commentator in Srinagar called them Darth Vader in cheap plastic (Kak xiii). New non-lethal pressure pump pellet guns that could kill at close range sling-shot charges of glass marbles and pebbles, and “the pain gun” with beams of radiation that stimulate human nerve endings, while barely penetrating the skin and leaving no visible or permanent injury were the new weapons of necropower. They aimed for maximum damage but left little trace (Kak xxii) These crowds were dismissed by the Indian state as Pakistan sponsored militants, drug addicts, social malcontents, urban detritus, (xv). New platforms of dissent proliferated through Social Media, You Tube, Twitter where critical communities gathered to dissent and witness. A wide range of cultural and creative work was produced ranging from 19 year old rap artist MC Kash's “I Protest” – a litany of those killed that summer, to haunting poetry, to Malik Sajad's graphic narrative *The Kashmir Intifada*.

In the next sections, I would like to analyze a set of cultural and creative texts that seek to interpret and grieve the occupation through setting up a sensorium of vulnerability. Dependent on the body and pain for meaning-making, this sensory apparatus turns “the nation-body” confections that make Kashmir an *atoot ang* of India on their heads. As members of the Indian all-party delegation deputed to Kashmir in September 2010 met in the town of Tangmarg to assess the situation after the Summer of 2010, one Kashmir attendee asked “why don't you feel

our pain if we are a part of your body” (quoted in Mridu Rai 278<sup>193</sup>). It is this pain that the Indian State inflicts, but fathoms, not as pain but as the material for and effects of power, sovereignty, and nation-state making. It is this pain and grief – felt on the *skin* – that the sensorium of vulnerability seeks to make visible and palpable.

### Trauma sensorium in Kashmiri short stories

Muhammad Junaid, in “Death and Life under Occupation” (Visweswaran 2013), reminds us that occupation makes itself invisible despite its visible effects everywhere (161). It can, however, be made visible through its elements like the physical reorganization of space under it, its uses of violence, the discursive regime of “order and security”, or the emergency laws and ordinances on which it locates its exceptionalism (162). The occupying state’s power can also be parsed through its own visions of itself (illusions of a magical state) that it seeks to impose on the social world of the occupied (171). The occupying (violent, thoroughly sexual and fleshly) state that “haunts” the occupier as Navarro-Yashin has argued, may be located also in the bodies, habits, gestures, fears, and internalized reactions of subjects (Navarro-Yashin 181). In Kashmiri creative and cultural productions, these material as well as phantasmagoric effects of the occupying state become the subject of insistent, repeated scrutiny. Haunting, spectrality, fantasy and the uncanny become significant media to address loss, trauma, and dispossession. Avery Gordon in *Ghostly Matters* (1997) tells us that the ghost or the revenant is “one form by which something lost, or barely visible or seemingly not there [...] makes itself known or apparent to us in what can be a transformative recognition (8). Drawing from her stance, I have used the trope of haunting to i) recognize the barely visible occupation through its fleshly and psychic effects

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Quoted by Rai from Jyoti Thottam “Does India have an Endgame in Kashmir?” Time, New Delhi, 24 September 2010 (<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2021259,00.html>) (xxi)

and ii) make corporeal the spectral absences that the death-making occupation/emergency produce. In its popular sense, haunting also carries with it the implication of unresolved death(s); it serves as an uncanny and unnerving remi(a)nder of the corporeal body – usually of a body subjected to some terrible violence. Thus, it serves as a meaningful analytic into the necropolitical erasures and disappearances that mark vulnerability in everyday life in zones of terror such as Kashmir.

The following stories are taken from the collections *The Stranger Beside Me: Short Stories from Kashmir* (1994) and *Contemporary Kashmiri Short Stories* (1999) both commissioned by Sahitya Academy a national publishing house<sup>194</sup>. I also read alongside them more recent testimonies and non-fiction work collected in *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (2013) edited by Fahad Shah. Anees Hamadani's "The Burnt-Out Sun" and Hriday Kaul Bharathi's "The Sunless Tomorrow" are two among several short stories where the hospital/asylum/prison complex is evoked in cryptic, dream-like images. In these stories, the protagonists are *commanded* to go to menacing institutions (surreal combination of prison/torture chamber/psychiatric ward/operation theater) where they face interrogation, torture and incarceration. The short stories, perhaps owing to State censorship, assume the symbolic language of the unconscious. They convert into acceptable symbols the terrorizing actions of the magical dream-State (Taussig/Aretxaga) and illuminate the fantasies, fears, impulses and urges of both the occupied and the occupier. While the confusion, the dissociative logic and disjuncture evoke nightmare states, we may read these as maps of the haunting, intimate penetration by necropower and as evidence of its terrorizing effects (on the individual and social body.)

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<sup>194</sup> In *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* (2009), Ananya Kabir analyzes many of these stories.

In *Territory of Desire* (2009) Kabir argues that many of these short stories enact the Kashmiri trauma through “macabre but hardly otherworldly scenarios (Kabir 149), where the terror, fear, and paranoia are all the more debilitating because they are routine. The focus on “uncertain states of being”, “paralysis”, sense of being suspended” are, Kabir argues, ways of coming to terms with a particular state of being Kashmiri – a state produced by the technologies of the State. The Kashmiri subject becomes defined through the State’s myriad juridical and economic [ and I would stress sexual, intimate, and corporeal] registers to which he or she bears lifelong accountability. [...] What distinguishes the Kashmiri relationship with the State is the “constant knowledge that these invisible forms of power, can at any minute, be replaced by the naked display of an ability to exercise sovereignty” (Kabir 151). I would argue that in states of exception such as Kashmir, the invisible and naked forms of power do not dislodge each other; they are the coeval and equally terrifying effects of the occupying state’s power - “to impose its own visions of itself on the social world of the occupied (make it receptive to the illusions of magical state” (Visweswaran/Junaid 171). This sovereignty, Kabir contends, is exercised by the promulgation of uncertain states of being, rather than by outright execution or death, as necropolitics would declare (Kabir 151). I would contend that the production and promulgation of uncertain states of being are also integral to necropower, to the illusion-making and haunting tactics of the phantasmatic state. Through its various machineries and capillaries, some invisible, some nakedly violent, the State seeks to indelibly brand and imprint the Kashmiri Muslim body and mind with its traces.

While many of these earlier short stories rarely engage explicitly with State violence (unlike the recent productions by MC Kash, Malik Sajad and others), they illuminate the recesses of the Kashmiri subjects, and the haunting presence of the State. Jaqueline Rose offers us a map

to read this inversion. In *States of Fantasy* (1996), she first establishes that in the politics of conflict and occupation as in the Israeli-Palestinian context, fantasy plays a key role. “The reason the Israeli state cannot grant freedom [is because], so great is the charge of fantasy that were it to be granted, the nation would lose all inner rationale and collapse on itself (4). However, the “fatal proximity” between occupier and occupied offers a tactical advantage: “the occupier cannot hide anything from the occupied...to them the Israelis are not an enigma to be deciphered...there’s too much familiarity” (Rose quoting Hanan Ashrawi<sup>195</sup> 33). Rose gives another example: in his 1982 novel *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist: A Palestinian who became a Citizen of Israel*, Emil Habiby gives a light-hearted version of this “other” inverse occupation: “we fly the [Israeli] flag so they can see them with their own eyes,...we can see the flags of the state even when folded up inside people (note 58).p101). It is this x-ray vision into the State’s “flags” - symbolic of its desires, fears, paranoias, anxieties – that allows the occupied to breach the defenses of the formidable occupier and through an inverted, albeit precarious “occupation,” “dismember them from the inside<sup>196</sup>” (Rose 33).

Using these examples from cultural representations and testimonies of Israeli occupation, Rose establishes that the haunting State can be read in its nakedness and precarity *within* the haunted subjects they possess. ‘You occupy my land, my mind...and this can be turned on its head: you think you have the upper hand, but your unconscious only I can see (34). My analysis brings this framework to bear on the Kashmiri situation marked by the same fatal proximity and what commentators have referred to as the “gray zone”<sup>197</sup> of intimacy, collaboration and

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)Jay Murphy Interview with Hanan Mikhail-AShrawi in *For Palestine* 167-8.

<sup>196</sup>Rose quotes from Grossman’s *The Yellow Wind* where an Arab resident says: sometimes you push us so hard that we see how scared you are... we are dismembering you from the inside (56).

<sup>197</sup> Between the spaces of domination and resistance there inevitably lies a gray zone where in Primo Levi’s words “the two camps of masters and servants both diverge and converge. Collaboration to an extent becomes inevitable and the internalization of the regime also needs to be addressed (Visweswaran/Junaid ).

internalization between dominant and dominated. Kashmiri fiction, in particular the Koshur short stories I examine, mine this inverted occupation. Not only do they reveal the debilitating haunting of the Kashmiri subject by the State, but also harness and interpret strategies of countering and negotiation grounded in the body as recess, performance, matter, affect, and fantasy.

In Kashmiri every day parlance, this never-ending war is referred to as “*halaat*” (the situation), and its psychological effects summed up in the adoption of the innocuous-sounding “tension<sup>198</sup>”. A number of commentators label their situation as “captivity” (see Wasim Bhat, “Captive City”). Begoña Aretxaga in “Dirty Protests” (1995) describes how incarceration, long term insecurity, vulnerability and powerlessness such as that produced under incarceration and conflict produced peculiar phobias about bodily fragmentation: physical pain, insufficient diet, and constant humiliation evoked in the prisoners, in acute and extreme form, the vulnerability and powerlessness of childhood. The sense of permanent physical insecurity produced, as is frequently the case in these situations, anxieties about disfigurement (Goffman 1959:21; Scarry 1985:40-41).

These anxieties about disfigurement and bodily fragmentation are repeated in the three short stories under study and in multiple others in the collection. They represent fears and actualities in Kashmir. The violent anatomization of a body to its parts is a crucial step in inscribing it with political meanings. Theorists and anthropologists of violence like Allan

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<sup>198</sup> In his recent article “The Wounds of Kashmir’s Never-ending War,” Ravi Nessman analyzes the unrelenting toll the “situation” has taken emotionally and psychologically on Kashmiris. Drug abuse, depression, stress and mental illness are rampant (Kak 153). Over sixty years of conflict have led to 68, 000 people being killed and nearly every one of the Valley’s six million people has been touched by violence(154). According to figures provided by Dr. Mushtaq Margoob, a psychiatrist who has done extensive work with trauma in Kashmir, nearly 16 percent have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and 19 percent suffer from depression. The mental health network in Kashmir is overwhelming, with one hospital in Srinagar seeing 100,000 patients a year and another psychiatric ward documenting 40000. Suicidal thoughts, anxiety, paranoia, terror and somatic effects of these mental states are highly commonplace (Kak 155).

Feldman (1991), write that “the act of violence transposes the body whole into codified fragments which function as metonyms of the effaced body and of larger totalities” (69). I will draw on frameworks developed by scholars such as Aretxaga and Feldman who develop a revision of Foucauldian notions of power and the body. Using Feldman’s theorization of violence, body, space, and the command of power in *Formations of Violence* (1991), I will argue that the narratives forged in the short stories provide an alternative repository for these fragments and represent a re-membering, albeit a surrogate one. Feldman, following Foucault, recognizes that the command of necropower acts on bodies, on spaces, temporalities and senses reordering them to its power. He claims, however, that the imprisoned and tortured subject can through dissocation, rid these spaces, temporalities and sensations of the occupying regime’s meanings. Thus the individual body - metonymic (under torture) of the larger political body (here Kashmir) – is not only restored in narrative, but further, becomes the site of dissociation from the meanings of the regime, and hence, a site of resistance. I add that in addition to these functions, the recesses of the body invert the State’s occupation, and, fully knowing its fears and “flags” turns them against themselves. The process, though, as the stories show, is mutually destructive and irreversible.

In their revisions of Foucault in studies of political violence in Northern Ireland, specifically prison narratives, commentators such as Aretxaga and Feldman have argued that the subjectivity of the actors must be seen not only as the *products* of rational technologies of control but also a crucial element in *molding* any resistance to them (Aretxaga 130). If transformation of subjectivity is what is at stake in disciplinary practices [such as incarceration, interrogation, torture, body checks] the direction that such transformation takes may escape the panoptic control of the prison. It may instead hinge on a multiplicity of contingent cultural, historical, and

personal circumstance (Aretxaga 130).Feldman, too, for instance, has urged that the body made into a political artifact by an embodied act of violence is no less a political agent than the author(s) of violence (7).

While the body surrenders to the ritual violence and becomes invested with the meanings of the regime, there is a process of bifurcature or splintering that happens, whereby the prisoner can make his body the principle of dissociation from these rituals of domination (138). There are a number of ways in which this divestiture finds expression. One of the ways is by re-constituting” the severed, fragmented, subtracted” body (emblematic of the political body) through narrative of survival (119). There are other examples Feldman provides such as the experienced interrogatee using his body as an instrument (inverting Foucault’s formula) to manage the interrogation through managing his body. One such way is through silence; while he is stunned into silence (by the pain), the interrogatee’s maintaining of silence can be read as agentive splitting of his body into a part to be submitted to pain and a part to be transformed into a cipher to be forcibly broken and read (120). When he mimics his death and transforms his body into a cipher through silence, the body invests in its own appropriation by the interrogators as a detachable part of his political agency (138). Thus, a double political technology of the body emerges out of the interrogation process – and the body that emerges is no longer the same that went in – it has become a “bivalent” political instrument forged through a political rite of passage (120-143). My readings of “The Burnt Out Sun” and “The Sunless Tomorrow” turn on this dynamic.

“The Burnt-Out Sun” begins with the sovereign decision over the subject’s body: From the distance came the sound of a siren. [...] It was the ambulance siren and its call was for me. That is why I came out.[...] The matter had been settled at the top: I was sick and needed

treatment” (Hamadani 135). The narrator then follows two menacing strangers into an ambulance, terror-stricken. Necropower’s command over and power to rearrange temporality, space, and the senses through fear is in evidence, as throughout the hospital ride, the narrator is disoriented, confused, and loses sense of time: when my glance fell on them accidentally, it seemed that I had been watching them for ages” (136). This temporal disorientation is to intensify later.

He is taken to a dark cell, “where there was one bed and on it lay God knows what” (136). Although the narrative is not explicit about it, on close reading, it becomes evident that a bifurcation of subjectivity occurs here. The narrator splits into two: the thing” lying under the blood-soaked blanket and the gaze observing and narrating. Feldman demonstrates that through strategies such as disassociation, splitting, and bifurcation, the incarcerated/tortured body gains agentive function. Here we may say, the subject participates in allowing necropower to appropriate part of his body “as a detachable part of his political agency” (Feldman 138). While part of it is surrendered to the regime, part of it is retained and this bifurcature has tremendous meaning. It may signal as we have seen resistance (Feldman 120).

The perpetrators of violence and torture seek to penetrate the intimate spaces of the subject and as we have seen haunt it. Through incarceration and violence, the regime seeks to colonize the interiority of the subject and does so by reordering external and internal reality. In “The Burnt-Out Sun,” the prisoners seek to blot out all other realities except the immediacy of the cell. Hence, the world outside is walled out. The description of the cell with its stark, white walls, psychologically oppressive use of sound (an incessant drip-drip-drip) which made “his innards quiver under its shrill, piercing jabs” articulates well-honed strategies of necropower. As Feldman writes “the greatest fear of the experienced interrogatee is the acceptance of the central

illusion promoted by the interrogation space that it is absolute reality—it is the interior structure of his being, his origin, his body (121). The command reproduces what he calls “sensorium of death” (128) arranging architecture, light, sound, and “dynamics of coercion”. The goal is to extend into the reaches of the self and allow no depths, no recesses. There is voiding of time and sleep (126) and usually through absolute whiteness a topos of the same, the undifferentiated is imposed (127). In the story, the narrator wonders why the stark high walls are painted white, perhaps to bring some light, yet in the cell there is only darkness. Later his interrogators cryptically say that they are painted white as “one must get acquainted with death before it comes” (Hamadani 137). According to Feldman, white is the color of “total and exhaustive exposure in which nothing can be hidden or disguised, in which there are no recesses, no depths, only the self, reduced to a figure against a ground (127). The bifurcation of the subject, thus allows him to submit to the sensorium of death while “preserving” a part of himself. Towards the end of the narrative, this receives explicit acknowledgement. The narrator asserts

They took charge of me and laid me down on the white sheet, face upwards, brought some instruments and cut my face into two. They left one half linked to my skeletal form and severed the other. One of the two brought a cloth, and, wrapping the severed half of my face in it, put it in some safe place beyond my gaze. I could not understand anything at all. They said nothing nor did I venture to speak. 137.

Thus, the prisoner is subjected to anatomizing physical violence, where his body is metonymically fragmented and codified, to signal a fragmenting of the political body. However, by means of strategies such as bifurcation explained above, and through narrating his survival, the interrogatee/prisoner “re-members” his body. The narrative becomes as it were a surrogate repository of wholeness, both for the individual as well as the political Kashmiri body. A close-

reading makes this clearer: “then they picked me up and put a chain around my neck. I looked down and *felt* a locket that was suspended from it [my emphasis]. There was a number engraved on it. I tried very hard to read the number but could not. The fact was that my eyes had gone with the part of my face that had been removed so how could I read anything? (my emphasis,137).

It is significant that while he cannot read, he still retains a “gaze” grounded in proprioception and haptic (reliant on a sense of touch comingling with other sense) memory, where tactility, weight and sensation allow him to “look down” and “feel” the locket with the number that has been assigned to him. Ananya Kabir interprets the engraving as the indelible imprint of the State and yet, as I have argued using Feldman, the body also retains through its splitting, a resistive remainder. It is this remainder that is also a feature of “The Sunless Tomorrow” which I will analyze next.

In Hriday Kaul Bharathi’s “The Sunless Tomorrow,” the innocuous postman brings a message from the sun who has orders from an anonymous source to not rise tomorrow. These arbitrary orders (for the ambulance in the earlier story, or for the sun’s demise in this) are of course symptomatic of how necropower manages and coerces life and death in states of permanent war. The postman behaves mysteriously while delivering the telegram. His appearance too, is out of the ordinary, with leathery, wrinkled skin and monkey-like fur- more bestial than human (Bharathi 106). The postman scribbles a surreptitious note on the envelope telling the narrator that since he has changed into something more bestial, he has lost his power of speech and can only emit monkey-like screeches. As fear overcomes the narrator, “his knee-joints seem to have come unstuck”, and a mist comes down; two people materialize and hold him under his armpits to help him up. They are, the narrator, recognizes from the bones poking him,

two dressed-up skeletons. The last thing he feels is a bite by a cobra<sup>199</sup>. When he regains consciousness, he finds himself laid flat on a table in what looks like an operation-theater. The cryptic scene of torture (which could also be hallucinations under anesthesia) is set up with four people in white overalls with faces swathed in white bandages. The sensorium of death is completed with half a dozen overhead light bulbs giving out heat, with sounds of bones cracking as the masked skeletons moved, and their the cold corpse-like touch on his skin.

The wall is made up of countless leaves of books joined together. Ananya Kabir makes a brilliant analysis of this story from the point of view of Koshur language. I would like to point more closely to the sense of physical powerlessness, vulnerability, the command over time and once again, the forging and deployment of the prisoner's body as a weapon and as a bivalent instrument carrying both the meanings imposed by the torturing regime, as well as that of political resistance. Silence and speech here function as ordering of time, space and of power: verbal command and response order the temporal and spatial coordinates of this torture chamber/operation theater. The narrator refuses to speak and responds through gestures for he is afraid he will emit screeches instead of coherent speech. This silence again, following Feldman can be read as a splitting: by not giving in to the command to speak, the narrator controls the sensorium of death, albeit precariously. First, the interrogatee's maintaining of silence can be read as agentive splitting of his body into a part to be submitted to pain and a part to be transformed into a cipher to be forcibly broken and read ( Feldman 120). Second, interrogatees soon find out that they can control the timing of their own torture. They learn to read the torturers to know when to aggravate and provoke, when to be pliant, to "break the interrogation" as it were (Feldman 138). As the beating [or other form of physical violence] is inevitable, you

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<sup>199</sup> In Kashmiri mythology, the cobra (naga) is a ubiquitous figure and the myth about his swallowing up of the sun is remade through this story.

control its timing and the interrogation becomes a rite of passage (138-143). The interrogatee emerges both branded by the regime, but also having retained, and indeed created new contexts for political agency.

In “The Sunless Tomorrow” as the four agents of necropower crowd closer, they arrange it so the bulbs grow dim, but their heat more intense. “Come on now, call out a loud call, and then you will die,” they urge. Although the narrator is bathed in sweat, he does not call out; he waits, aggravating the situation, imposing his rhythm of time over that of the death-space. The choral, staccato command repeats itself in a crescendo until it reaches fever pitch: “Call! Call! Call! Call! All four roar” (Bharathi 109). It is only then that the narrator “opens his mouth stutters a a a... and screams”( Bharathi 109). The narrator tell us: “My scream is still ringing, even now, even here. As he turns “bestial,” he reconfirms “my scream is still ringing in the air. It continues, even now” (Bharathi 109). There are multiple ways in which this can be read. To become bestial, to emit “screeches” appears to be a sign of the dehumanization or degradation that torture produces in the subject. However, this “dehumanization” should be opened to further inquiry. Jean Amery tells us in his testimony *At The Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor of Auschwitz and its Realities* (1980) that he cannot corroborate that torture make someone lose their “human dignity” (28); he can however confirm that qualities of pain felt (under torture) are impossible to communicate (33). Yelling out in pain, capable of little resistance, the tortured person is “only a body and little else<sup>200</sup>” (33). Most significantly, he writes that “the tortured person feels a foreignness and amazement in the world that cannot be compensated by any form of subsequent human communication” (39). It is perhaps this

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<sup>200</sup> I turn to Amery to analyze “The Sunless Tomorrow” and “The Void” as they both recall to me the description of torture he provides: where torture can turn the subject and his head – in which are perhaps stored Kant and Hegel, and all nine symphonies, and the World as Will and Representation – into a shrilly squealing piglet at slaughter” (35).

foreignness, this out-of-sortness, which is incarnated in the leathery skin, monkey fur and screeches that both the postman and the narrator develop.

To return to the “scream”, it is crucial to note the bifurcation in the prisoner. On the one hand, he submits to “the codification of bestiality” imposed by the regime. The scream slowly turns into a screech and this codification/objectification is symbolic of the violence enacted on the larger political body. Yet, as mentioned earlier, there is a double politicization going on here and the prisoner’s body is also forged as a political agent through his silence and control of the tempo of torture. He also converts himself into a cipher to be decoded. In addition, what is most telling is that he has encrypted his experience in the narrative we encounter *after* the event; thus, while a part of him has been codified, objectified, and effaced by the torture, the remainder is reconstituted through narrative. I will return to the significance of this bivalence in my conclusion to this section.

Next, I want to elaborate further, how the cry of pain, the scream, reclaims agency through remaking time and space. The narrator’s last words are: “My scream is still ringing, even now, even here. As he turns “bestial,” he reconfirms “my scream is still ringing in the air. It continues, even now” (Bharathi 109). The here and the now, then, is re-created by the scream. The scream appears to exist independently in its own space and time. In *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (2000) Steven Connor writes that “[his voice comes from [him] first of all in a bodily sense (3). Inversely, voices can also produce bodies – vocalic bodies (35). He defines these as “the idea – which can take the form of a dream, [...] a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice” (35). The narrator’s scream may be said to incarnate “a

vocalic body” – one that maps and reorders the time-space of a violent necropower. It represents, like the narrative, yet another surrogate repository for the anatomized tortured body.

How may we read this surrogate vocalic body as marked by vulnerability, but also by political agency? How may we read it as “making the here and now?” Connor suggests that voice (or pure utterance like a cry or scream) can fragment and re-constitute space. “Voice allows space to be measured and substantiated [...] it begins to give rise to space in its arising (324). As the narrator stutters and then breaks into a full scream, the ascending pitches fabricate their own space. Connor notes that the cry is usually emitted from parts of the body that are not reserved for ordered thought (35) – here we have a glimpse of Amery’s squealing piglets or our story’s screeching monkey. This acoustic space, therefore, is marked by and hinges upon vulnerability. Other theorists of sound have elaborated on this auditory ontology. Brandon LaBelle (2010), argues that sound can create alternate/radical territories. Voice or cry can also carve time in its arising. Quoting Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan, LaBelle reiterates that, *acoustic space creates itself in time*, for “auditory space has no point of favored focus. It’s a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing a thing. It is not a pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment (33)”. It is critical that in “The Sunless Tomorrow,” these moments in time are also those remade by the interrogatee in the story (jointly with the torturers) by controlling tempo of command, response, silence and scream.

LaBelle, further, reminds us that theorists of the audio-visual like Michael Chion suggest, sound operates through a displacement or agitation, however minimal”( qtd. in LaBelle33, ). Sound, as the result of a series of material frictions or vibrations, arises from a given object or body to propagate and leave behind the original source— it brings the original source from *there*

*to here* [my emphasis]. This movement grants the feeling of a progression; it animates space (LaBelle 33). Under conditions of incarceration and torture, where time and space are ostensibly under the command of the necropolitical regime, the narrator's scream ruptures the bounds set and severely disrupts the dynamics of coercion (Feldman 128). It controls and remakes *time* as well as *space*. While it may appear that the cry of pain emitted during torture and interrogation embodies the state ventriloquizing its power through the interrogatee's body, following the trajectory of our argument, we can conclude that it also galvanizes new possibilities for political agency; it marks movement and progression as opposed to the void that the regime seeks to impose.

To conclude this section, I wish to reiterate that in the short stories analyzed, the subject that emerges out of interrogation/imprisonment/torture, is able to forge new political agency and frame the violence not as "dehumanizing" or bestializing" but as a political rite of passage. In contexts of violence, this reading offers a way to read trauma not (only) in terms of paralysis and victimhood, but also in terms of agency and progression. Recent theories of post-traumatic growth urge us to adopt this lens, albeit with care to not trivialize or erase the tremendous effects of trauma. The engagement with both the destructive as well as potentially creative aspects of political trauma in the stories studied above, allows me to do that.

#### Trauma sensorium in Agha Shahid Ali

The bodies of the aberrant Kashmiris, then, become important terrains to stage and re-stage practices that disrupt and modify the inscriptions of biopolitics. Commentators on prison narratives have written about the body becoming the sole, but embattled, site of resistance for the imprisoned. Stripped of everything else, imprisoned in a stark space, with the commandment

seeking to penetrate and map his senses and interiority, the body, its recesses, surfaces, sounds and fluids all become weapons to be deployed. In states of exception, necropower seeks to similarly impose “its own visions of itself” (illusions of a magical state) “on the social world of the occupied” (Junaid171). Simultaneously, it seeks to make itself and the death and pain it produces, invisible. Perhaps the most effective way of spectralizing death (and its corollary, care for the dead) in the context of Kashmir, is along the lines of what Haley Duschinski (2010) describes as “reproducing regimes of impunity”. She writes that “to counter imputed territorial infiltration, contamination, and transgression in the name of public safety, [these legal-political warsapes of violence and terror] ultimately require the production of a broad constituency of bystanders among the general citizenry who refuse or lack the political will to recognize disappearance, torture, and extrajudicial killing targeting specific groups as illegitimate forms of state brutality and violence”. She goes on to elaborate how this “general consensus” is built by directing violence towards certain segments of the citizenry marked as others and cast outside of the boundaries of the political community. It is this paradoxical juxtaposition of the ubiquitous sensorium of death, and the simultaneous evacuation of “pain” that made one Kashmiri member at the Indian all-party delegation deputed to Kashmir in September 2010 to ask “why don’t you feel our pain if we are a part of your body” (Mridu Rai 278).

This relationship between pain, bodily affect and power forms an important analytic to examine in Kashmir. The body as a metaphor is of course critical to fantasies of nationhood; the Kashmiri body is referred to in Indian nation-statist parlance as diseased, other and aberrant. Expurgated of the “secessionist” Kashmiri, the territory is remapped as an inalienable part of the Indian body politic. In Kashmiri representations, “the non-Kashmiri elision of the body from the landscape is countered by the [...] insistence on the body in the landscape” (Kabir 20).

The materiality of the body and its dynamics with power, memory, and representation provide a crucial foundation for a poetics of vulnerability and grief, which remains a central aspect of Kashmiri cultural formations. I have examined that in the context of the short stories in the previous section. In this section, I want to examine vulnerability, grief, and mourning in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry, specifically from the collection *The Country without A Post Office* (1997). The aesthetic and rhythmic contours of song and lyric are particularly rich mediums to evoke these complex and fraught relationships between vulnerability, grief and the political. Affectively intense public channels of grief and desire such as song, ghazal and elegy disrupt the inscriptions of necropower and remain key pathways for transmitting the story of Kashmir.

Ananya Kabir in her article "Beyond Narrative: Song and Story in South Asia" urges us to recognize that in West Asia or in South Asia, [...], the deconstruction of [historical] narrative is a necessary step in the search for emotional and political resolutions of crises arising from the collective trauma of displacement and resettlement (34). In the context of South Asia, she says, historical narrative in one guise or another –statist or anti-statist – has been granted the role of prime vehicle of identity formation[...]by focusing on narrative, both intra and inter-national conflicts are relegated to the category of *fait accomplis* whose conclusion is foregone depending on which narrative viewpoint one endorses; or worse they become "tragedies" with no resolution in sight" (32). In this, she echoes Gyanendra Pandey who in his article "In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today" (1991), had similarly argued that to challenge the state's construction of history, "fragments" such as "a weaver's diary" or "a collection of poems by an unknown poet" may be of central importance (571). Kabir nuances that stance further, by urging us to note that lyrical, affective and melodramatic modes flow *through* statist modes in many South and West Asian cultural formations. These disrupt

dominant narratives and render them permeable to other conflicting histories and emotional regimes<sup>201</sup> (32-33). Thus rather than positivist, empirical histories<sup>202</sup>, these lyrical pathways and the affective histories they transmit, enlarge what Pankaj Mishra, an important commentator on Kashmir, refers to as the “imperceptible” space Kashmir occupies in our ethical imagination (Ali, Bhatt, Chatterji, et al. 1).

Since the body, mourning, memory, fantasy and representation comprise crucial areas of contestation in Kashmir, they are simultaneously sites which are richly connected with these lyrical nodes. The poetics of vulnerability, grief, and mourning embedded in Agha Shahid Ali’s poetry draws its emotional charge from Sufi life-worlds and song, from Urdu poetry and song, from elegies from post-war Eastern Europe, from Sufi and Shiite mourning rituals, from the political desire for self-determination. Above all, it draws its energies from the need to make pain and “the skin” palpable, and connect to the political vein running through Kashmir.

According to Judith Butler (2003)<sup>203</sup>, mourning foregrounds the sensorial; it “displays the body in certain sensuousness [...] not without movement [psychic but also somatic movement] (Butler 472 ). This sensory, kinesthetic, and performative aspect of mourning finds an especially rich conduit in lyrical poetry. Jahan Ramazani in *Poetry of Mourning: the Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994) reminds us that poetry’s rich sonic structure and mourning conventions i.e. the incantatory, rhythmic, repetitive, kinesthetic, dimensions of poetry, – be it epic, elegy, ghazal-

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<sup>201</sup> Kabir uses the example of a Sufi Qawwali interrupting the nation-statist fantasy of the film *Mission Kashmir*; the Qawwali invokes alternate acoustic territories (La Belle) ruled by their radically alternate emotional and phantasmatic regimes (33-34). Another example, I can think of is from Agha Shahid Ali’s “Return to Harmony 3” where the exiled poet returns to a deserted home and picks up the dead telephone to hear the accidental notes of Mohammad Rafi’s (a celebrated singer in the Indian film industry) song about the pain of war. The phone, an instrument of bureaucratic and biopolitical management (its number has been “exiled” by government departments), is accidentally receiving unintended radio signals. The lyrical circuits transmitted disrupt the technologies of power by evoking the affective ties between two warring nations and communities.

<sup>202</sup> Chitrlekha Zutshi (2004) points out, the Valley has been evacuated of a history and a people by the frameworks of fantasy, fear, and control (Languages of Belonging).

<sup>203</sup> In Eng and Kazanjian’s *Loss* (2003).

make it well-suited to performing grief and sensoriality. Agha Shahid Ali is much attuned to the sounds, movements, surfaces, flows, recesses and projections of the vulnerable body.

Simultaneously through rich, layered lyric, Ali creates poetic practices that engage the interlocutor/audience in very tactile, immersive, embodied ways. The immersive practices make Kashmir “palpable” from New Delhi, Amherst, New York, or Sarajevo. Sound and listening, in particular, devise alternate territories and transmissions of affect that escape necropolitical pathways. The kind of participatory aesthetics/politics of palpability that Ali conjures is also mined from sub-continental and wider regional practices such as Sufi music, ghazal, or folk poetry. They predicate with startling immediacy, how identities and lives are formed in the context of extreme political and social dispossession, and allow us a means to access the unspeakable and ungrievable traumas of our South Asian century. One of the questions I’m interested in exploring through this section is as follows: how may we parse visual, aural, rhythmic and performative cultural expressions for strains of trauma and vulnerability?

Particularly in late-modern death-worlds like Kashmir where a culture of terror pervades, where imaginaries and everyday practices remain under siege, where the Indian State continues to frame meaning and interpretation (via various capillaries of necropower), how would we read the wounded, imprisoned, tortured, raped, dispossessed, imprisoned and insurgent body?

*The Country Without A Post Office* (1997) was written as a response to the political crisis in Kashmir in the early 1990s; as narrated to Lawrence Needham in an interview<sup>204</sup>, Ali notes he wrote the poems in response to the clampdown on communication with Kashmir (telephone calls were hard to put through, letters were not delivered, and above all he did not know when he would be able to return home), and also to emphasize Kashmir’s pluralistic history as a reminder

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<sup>204</sup> The Verse Book of Interviews (2005), ed. Henry and Zawacki, 133-146.

that “such struggles, legitimate as they are, can be hijacked by “elements” [...]”(139). Ananya Kabir cautions that “ethnic nationalisms, especially, when viewed as responses to national(ist) narratives, become trapped in an endless mirroring of self and other, charged only with an imitative agency” (Kabir 32). Ali coalesces lyrical scapes from a variety of inheritances: Sufi, Shiite, West and Central Asian, Kashmiri, Hindu, East European, Balkan, Modernist etc., to construct a transnational poetics of vulnerability.

The bricolage<sup>205</sup> and the “biryaniification”<sup>206</sup> Ali practices embodies the recognition that *Kashmir* is a complex imaginary, implicated and embedded in different contexts, programs and desires. The poems incarnate a longing for homeland, for Kashmir, but are mediated equally with a critique of limiting nationalisms. The very composite terrain Ali opens up through the images, sounds, rhythms, and gestures he coalesces, and in the very performance of this bricoleur identity - we find a critique of homogenizing world views – Indian, Pakistani, or Kashmiri. He takes advantage of the plasticity and elasticity of poetry to re-situate and re-shape Kashmiri cultural expression; these diverse contexts and cultures add other resonances to Kashmiri pain and stage its iteration and re-presentations in new networks and citations. This, in turn, offers new performatives and gestures to emerge that subsequent cultural expression mobilizes. At the same time, the poems enact an urgent call to attend to the “spectralized” suffering in Kashmir; they inaugurate a new poetics of mourning that is embodied and open-ended as I will demonstrate.

In the poems of *TCWAPO* (as well as the earlier *Half-Inch Himalayas*), Kashmir, home, family, childhood all seem so very far away. The experience of exile is crucial to *TCWAPO*. It

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<sup>205</sup> According to Ramazani, modernist bricolage—the synthetic use in early twentieth-century poetry of diverse cultural materials ready to hand—has helped postcolonial poets encode aesthetically the intersections among multiple cultural vectors. “Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity” (2006).

<sup>206</sup> *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets*, Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, 1997 (140). Biryani is a rice based dish whose history coalesces with the cultural and political migrations in West, Central and South Asia.

was written with the knowledge that unlike the other summers, Ali did not know when he would be able to go home to Srinagar again. However, the state of permanent war that produces this dispossession and uncertainty remains the pervasive condition haunting the collection.

The experience of “being unhomed” produces what Hamid Naficy in *An Accented Cinema*, identifies as an exilic orientation: marked by fragmentation, estrangement, multilinguality, epistolarity and asynchronicity. As a Kashmiri, Kashmir was permanently “far-off/ [...] far even from us who live here ” (“Dear Shahid” 1-2). While the sensory apparatus of exile is integral to Ali’s poetry, it is not by itself enough to illuminate its workings. The trauma of political dispossession and a feeling of being permanently “unhomed” are a central part of the Kashmiri (Hindu and Muslim) experience. The Kashmiri Muslim experience of living in a never-ending state of exception involves an everyday encounter with necropower’s command over and reordering of space, the senses, memory and representation. Ali, I would argue offers us a sensorium of vulnerability and grief to counter necropower’s sensorium of death.

Susan Buck-Morss in “Aesthetic and Anesthetic: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered” <sup>207</sup>1993), uses the term “synesthetic system” to demonstrate how our senses are not confined within the body’s physical boundaries, but expand into, and are dependent on the world around us: “The nervous system is not contained within the body’s limits. the circuit from sense-perception to motor response begins and ends in the world...as the source of stimuli and the arena for motor response, the external world must be included to complete the sensory circuit” (Buck-Morss 128).

Under the necropolitical regime, most senses and the worlds they inhabit, are blocked or re-made; hence it becomes crucial to develop alternate” ways of sensing (in)the world. This

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<sup>207</sup> Quoted in Rebecca Scherr, 2005, p.31).

sensorium of vulnerability involves learning to perceive and sense in alternate ways. Often, this involves, relying not on one sense alone, but learning to perceive trans-sensorially. Again, exilic sensory systems offer a close parallel. Explaining the exilic perception (as embodied and trans-sensorial, Naficy argues that the human body is perceived through external means (mirrors, photography, film, etc.) and internally by our own vision, organs of balance and proprioception (Sobchack 1999). Exile or traumatic displacement can throw the integrity of bodily perceptions out of array. In the Kashmiri context, occupation and political dispossession produce an estranging effect that can cause similar disarray. Subjection to necropolitical violence, too as we have seen causes dismorphism in internal as well as external perception. This takes on urgency in states of exception where phobias of fragmentation, paralysis and splitting recur.

The visual sense, in particular, appears to be the dominant mode of perceiving the contemporary world. It is, consequently, a fundamental locus of necropower. In her dissertation, *Syn/Aesthetics: Touch, Sound and Vision in the works of Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Muriel Rukeyser* (2005), Rebecca Scherr writes that Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Malek Alloula and other critics of a dominant visual culture stress that a politics of seeing is a reflection of the larger socio-political-economic landscape of a given culture which teaches us to interpret the visual world” (9). It is necropower’s views, therefore, that are constantly on display in Kashmir. Scherr adds that the “battles fought on the boundaries of a field of vision” – what may be made visible and what may not - are very significant (10). She references Foucault’s deployment of Jeremy Bentham’s “panopticon” to emphasize how the body and its senses become the material of surveillance and discipline. The Foucauldian Panopticon is a machine for producing the seeing/being seen dyad (217) where the seen is perpetually kept as an object of information, never as subject in communication.

This privileging of other forms of sensing takes on a special significance under states of emergency where exposure to the necropolitical gaze is relentless. As we have seen, few recesses to hide in are granted to those imprisoned in this state of permanent war. Ali is especially invested in mobilizing these other ways of seeing and sensing in exile and under occupation. Along with trans-sensoriality, Naficy illustrates that in representations of exilic memory or sensation, “the tactile optic” (Naficy28) is employed; this synthesizes *touch* and the *gaze* through the use of fetish objects, prosthetics, paranormal ways of looking and touching”(Naficy 28). Scherr quoting Jennifer Rodaway *Relational Sense* (1997) cautions us that sight is concerned with appearances. On its own, it gives us access only to surfaces; thus, vision (even outside states of permanent war) depends on the information provided by other senses and the memory to assist in the interpretation of visual images or surfaces (12). Given that under occupation, the gaze of the occupied subject is severely inhibited, reliance on other senses such as touch, hearing, affect, temperature, etc. becomes even more necessary to reclaim memory, space, and identity.

Ronak Kapadia in his analysis of *Index* an activist artistic responses to post 9/11 detentions argues that the attention to the visual in projects that engage with disappearance and surveillance inadvertently “replicates the link between vision and information central to the superpanopticon (Kapadia 2008<sup>208</sup>). Gopinath writes that in Kapadia’s reading of Ghani and Ganesh’s *Index*, to render the disappeared (materially and discursively) visible, the “warm data” collected by the questionnaire moves beyond the visual by evoking “heat, intensity, vibration, feeling, tactility, energy, affect” (Gopinath 184). We may bring this framework to bear on our reading of Ali.

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<sup>208</sup> Kapadia quoted in Gayatri Gopinath’s essay “Diasporic Re-Visions” in *Political Emotions* ed. Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, Ann Reynolds (2010)184.

In Ali's poetry, sound, tactility, affect, pain, heat, cold, blood and skin are recurring motifs. "I See Kashmir from New Delhi at Midnight" engages with the problem of how to sense Kashmir's pain, what sensory apparatus to employ to make it palpable to those "far from it" Memory is of central importance to identities formed in trauma: contemporary visual and aural turns in representations of unspeakable trauma recognize that a memory image is not visual or aural but multi-sensory and embodied (Marks 146). Laura Marks in *The Skin of the Film* (2000), develops the term haptic visuality; Marks proposes a way of understanding how intercultural cinema represents cultural experiences that might not always be available to vision: through a of haptic visuality, where vision functions as a sense of touch (Marks 22). Locating certain types of feminist, queer, intercultural film-making as a response to loss, she shows how these films "coax memories" and translate to the audiovisual medium, the knowledges of the body including the un-recordable memory of the senses (5). One of the ways cinema embodies cultural memory is by awakening memories of touch<sup>209</sup>.

Thus embodied, tactile memory and ways of seeing and experiencing the world are aesthetically and affectively ingrained in media representing trauma. Shahid Ali's poetry remains one such site. The crossing over of sense-perceptions and sensory memory (where sight or hearing become perceived as touch), I would say, are urgent ways to access the *corporeality* of elusive, spectralized death-haunted worlds. The longing for Kashmir that infuses Ali's poetry is incarnated in a longing to touch Kashmir, confirming thus its materiality, its tangibility in the face of various erasures.

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<sup>209</sup> For example, she analyzes how in *Her Sweetness Lingers* (1994) by Shani Mootoo, the love poem the film-maker reads on the soundtrack richly, sensuously evokes erotic desire for her lover while the camera like the words tentatively circles around the lover standing in a garden of vivid colors. The intimate camera shots, the buzzing sound of insects in the garden, overwhelm the viewer with a sense of immediacy, even with a sense of "humidity on the skin," with "the video's tactile, sensuously saturated caresses" (185-186).

In “I See Kashmir from New Delhi at Midnight,” this tactility of vision and hearing comes into effect with startling political implications. The poem begins: “one must wear jeweled ice in dry plains/to will the distant mountains to glass./ The city from where no news can come/is now so visible in its Curfewed night/that the worst is precise”(1-5). Thus the *touch* of jeweled ice (later revealed to be ruby-red blood encrusted snow) like a talisman allows the wearer a haptic vision – an ability to see through touch. This heightened vision is needed not only to cut through the granite of the Himalayas, but more impossibly, through the sense-ordering technologies of necropower. Through this transensorial view, Srinagar - which is under curfew and all information from it is heavily censored - is so palpable that “the worst becomes precise”. The use of “precision” indicates both the clarity of vision but also echoes the language of necropower which renders death invisible but employs precise, measured ways of producing it<sup>210</sup>.

What the poet (or his persona) sees, is that “from Zero Bridge/ a shadow chased by searchlights is running/away to I search of his body” (6-8). Zero Bridge was an iconic bridge across the River Jhelum which was dismantled in 2012. It is significant that according to one version, the bridge was originally called Zorr Bridge (Zorr is Deaf in Kashmiri) - said to be so named because it was constructed by a contractor who was deaf. In the 1990s, the bridge was closed to traffic as paramilitary bunkers were constructed on either side. The name assumes a cruel appositeness as it invokes the scene of a massacre in the early 1990s where those attending the funeral procession of Moulvi Farooq (assassinated by gunmen in 1990) were fired upon by the Indian army. Scores were killed with heaps of bloodied shoes found in the site later. “Search” here is in an entirely oppositional register to what the terms “search” and “crackdown” has congealed into

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<sup>210</sup> Such as the new pressure pump guns unleashed in Srinagar streets in 2010 which fires highly damaging pellets that penetrate the body and damage vital organs but hardly leave any external marks (Kak 35).

in Statists counter-insurgency discourse and practice in Kashmir. The transfer of meaning to a different topos here is important for counter-discourse to emerge.

The shadow appears to be able to mime the nothingness that the regime seeks to impose on it, in order to “slip, unseen into the cells”(12). As it nears the Interrogation Center, it shrinks almost to nothing, and then “is nothing” to deter detection (10-11). This returns us to the bifurcation and resistive tactics discussed earlier, where the Kashmiri becomes the very thing “a shadow”, a ghost that the regime seeks to make it into. However, this is a parodic miming of the State’s desires (Aretxaga 17). Aretxaga reminds us that Judith Butler (1993) has called this strategy “a parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command” (Butler 122). What sensory practices would help an interlocutor sense a shadow? The poem directs us to that. In the cell, Rizwan, and through him the poetic persona, witness a naked boy being tortured with the drippings from a burning tire; the boy screams “I know nothing” (15)!

The shadow, the nakedness and youth of the boy, the scream are all marked by a common denominator: they are ordinarily rendered invisible, inaudible by the commandement. Hence no news, no images of this vulnerability are allowed to escape<sup>211</sup>. However, using the haptic vision, they become palpable and hence, grievable. The shadow next beckons “console me” (16). The use of the bodily gesture “beckon” to convey words or an affect are an example of the synesthetic tactility Ali offers. It also points to how new readings need to be invented to interpret how bodily gestures, cultural habitus develop under conditions of fear and terror to take on new meaning. It is significant here that the poet-persona is sheened in moonlight in emptied Srinagar; the light of the moon materializes and affirms his paranormal bodily presence in Srinagar, a

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<sup>211</sup> See for example discussion of the Indian media and civil society’s silence on Kashmir in Fahad Shah’s *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (p.22,23, 238-40).

cityscape where Rizwan and he can meet only under paranormal circumstances. In these exceptional circumstances (made necessary incidentally by a state of exception called by the State), the poet does not have any assurance to give.

The poet (or his persona) recognizes the shadow as Rizwan – someone, perhaps a lover, from his past. Rizwan remains in “official discourse” *missing* in multiple sense of the term; in his absence a full citizen/human with protection and security from the nation-state, but also as a *geab gomut* or “disappeared man,” one of thousands who were abducted, tortured, killed, and either buried in mass graves<sup>212</sup> or left unburied in the mountains. Here, however, “the missing” materiality of Rizwan is restored as he first “beckons”(16), then speaks, telling the poet to “each night put Kashmir in your dreams” (28) and even touches him, “his hands crusted with snow” (29). Finally in a whisper confirming he has been “cold a long time” (30), the Kashmiri breaks the necropolitical taboo on “naming” death. In so doing, he emphatically disrupts the terror-making practices of the State.

What does it mean this message of Rizwan’s, “to put Kashmir in your dreams”? A dream-image or memory becomes a surrogate projection reconstituting Rizwan and also Kashmir. It represents a way of imagining and substantiating alternate possibilities: As Mohammad Junaid in his testimonial account “Forgetting” in Fahad Shah’s ed. *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (2013) writes,

Forgetting [...] is the condition for the continued possibility of life [...] under a violent occupation. Each day brings pain. Each new pain is worse than before. Gradually, one forgets the immediacy and *feltness* of such pain. In essence, one could say, forgetting and telling are similar – if violence dismembers life-worlds, amnesia and memorialization re-

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<sup>212</sup> See for example Angana P. Chatterji, P. Imroz et al *Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked and Mass Graves in Indian-administered Kashmir, A Preliminary Report*, Srinagar: International People’s Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-administered Kashmir, 2009.

members that torn-apart world – of course as a different, transmogrified fleeting home for life to continue to exist. (53)

The sensorial apparatus of memory and perception that Ali's elegiac lyrics mobilize allows this *feltness* and immediacy to be a part of the re-constituted Kashmiri imaginary.

"I See Kashmir..." like others in the collection also creates the elegy *anew* in the context of these modern political formations of violence. Ramazani says that in elegies the dead don't usually speak, and when they do, ghosts provide surrogate-perspectives for the poet. For the dead, of course everything they see or hear or inhabit is an "afterworld" permeated by loss and ruin (131). The ethical imperative of letting ghosts speak is urgent as has been often attested. Ali enriches poetic conventions such as prosopopeia: (actively personification of the dead) a move that threatens in other contexts to "destabilize the usual division between the living and the dead" (Ramazani 229). However given the death-worlds inhabited by Kashmiris, where death becomes not an external limit to life but an everyday condition of living in a state of exception, this destabilization perhaps gains a particular edge.

Rizwan guides him through the material traces of other spectralized deaths – blood on the road, the shoes of mourners who ran, or died in the firing. Grieving Rizwan becomes a grief for all the missing. Even in death, however, the Kashmiri body continues to be a battleground for meaning-making, indeed communicating through touch, temperature, skin and blood. The touch of Rizwan or other unburied Kashmiris, cold with ruby-red-blood-encrusted ice, is later revealed to be the "jeweled ice" the poet-persona "wears" to access Kashmiri vulnerability. In the transmutation of senses and surfaces, a new sensory emerges: the blood-encrusted snow which *films* unburied Kashmiri bodies like Rizwan's is transfigured into jeweled ocular lenses. The skin clings to all these surfaces: the jeweled drops of bloodied ice and the hyperocular lenses that are

fashioned out of these. Thus the penetrability and vulnerability of bodies in the face of necropolitical violence becomes at the same time the very means of perceiving them.

In “Dear Shahid”, the figures of Rizwan and the naked screaming boy reappear. News of Rizwan being killed is affirmed. The naked sixteen year old boy, meanwhile, bears indelible marks of torture. The doctor treating him mourns, “Did anything in his/line of fate reveal that the webs of his hands would be cut with a knife” (13-14)? Necropolitical formations seek to reduce bodies to legible scripts to be read, decoded, and classified. Rizwan’s lines remain unreadable, inspiring fear in these power regimes and a consequent application of a forensic gaze to slice open, look inside, decipher “enemy” bodies by force. Yet, the same penetrability (ruptured skin) and vulnerability also offer a sensory apparatus to perceive pain in spite of necropower’s ordering regime. Ronak Kapadia suggests that we pay attention to “other ways of sensing the world” and that the sonic may be a more generative site of critique and resistance (qtd. in Gopinath 184). Film and audiovisual theory, we have seen, offers us frameworks of representation that help reconfigure the sensory systems imposed by necropower. They also help us open up poetry, especially allusive, resonating, palimpsestic poetry such as Ali’s, to mine its audio-visual-rhythmic- kinesthetic-performative scope. In Ali, song, music and other acoustic and vocalic projections assume political significance. Ali builds on how vocalic bodies (fantasies, projections, surrogates that can inaugurate new ways of being a body) circulate as transformative interfaces of violence, space, memory and grief in spaces of death. Ali also demands, through his use of these vocalic bodies,, a “heightened, resonant listening from the reader”<sup>213</sup>. What does it mean to bring trans-sensorial imagination to our reading of poetry? What does Ali’s poetry allow us to hear haptically<sup>214</sup>?

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<sup>213</sup> Apart from Islamic inheritances, Hinduism and Sufism, western modernist influences (Eliot), East European post-poetry of occupation and siege (Mendelstam and Zbigniew Herbert) embed the landscape. Ali harnesses East

Voice, argues Connor, allows space to be measured and substantiated (34). Voice is the accomplice of space; it begins to give rise to space in its arising. Rising song evokes and carves in Ali's lyrics, spaces of memory, grief, and desire. The vocal rhythms transmitted, forge space, sensation, memory and grief in ways that escape the commandement of necropower. However, to inhabit the space they cave out requires us to perform an attentive, resonant, anxious, self-transformative listening. To listen is to strain toward meaning "that is not immediately accessible" (Nancy 2007, 6). This resonant, heightened listening can be mined for the possibly ethical encounter it allows with late modernity. This encounter may allow us to detect the barely audible frequencies, rhythms, and movements of Kashmiri (and postcolonial) trauma.

I would like to analyze in particular "I Dream I am the Only Passenger on Flight 423 to Srinagar" to understand this acoustic encounter. The poem begins mid-way: "and when we- as if from ashes - ascend/ into the cold where the heart must defend/ it wings of terror and even pity/and below us the haze of New Delhi/grays"(1-5). The dream stages a phantasmatic return home to Srinagar as in nearby Char-e-Sharif, the sacred shrine/tomb<sup>215</sup> of Nooruddin Rishi, one of Kashmir's most loved Sufi saints, is destroyed in a fire, during a military siege to capture 40 militants who had sought refuge there. The responsibility for starting the fire is disputed between the Indian Army and the militants.

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European voices and images mourning the losses of other cities and cultures under siege, linking St Petersburg, Warsaw, Sarajevo with Srinagar in a "a map of longing without limits"(title poem). The interlocutor is encouraged to listen for resonances /repetitions like the reappearance of the Sarajevo rose (imprint on urban concrete of mortar shelling) on ash filigreed roses on weeping chinar trees ("I Dream I am the Only Passenger on Flight 423 to Srinagar") or glass panes in Srinagar ("After the August Wedding...") or read in Kashmir's runes the ruins of Warsaw under Soviet occupation("The Pastoral," "The Correspondent").

<sup>214</sup> Drawing on visual trans-sensoriality, Lisa Coulthard develops the term haptic aurality to conceptualize an attentive, resonant, anxious, self-transformative listening. In "Haptic Aurality: Listening to the Films of Michael Haneke", Jean Luc Nancy and Peter Szendy provide Coulthard with maps for a philosophical, epistemological, and sensorial listening. According to Nancy, more than hearing and beyond pure understanding, the act of listening involves "an intensification and a concern, a curiosity (not complacency) or an anxiety" (Nancy 2007, 5).

<sup>215</sup> five to six hundred years old

The ascent into space is accompanied by the strains of a recording of the famous *ghazal* and *thumri*<sup>216</sup> singer Begum Akhtar playing in-flight. It is a song of grief with the haunting refrain: “In your eyes [...] I look for my wounds’ deep sea” (9-10) “It is to song that one must turn for flight” (7) affirms Ali, as he does in many other poems, to come to terms with the emotions (terror, pity) unleashed by necropower. As the notes rise and fill the commercial/nationalized space of the aeroplane, they carve out and *substantiate* a radical territory, forged through mourning. In *Acoustic Territories* (2010), Brendan LaBelle acknowledges that the inception of airwave communication inaugurated fantasies of alterity, radical ambiguity, and paranoia, but also made possible unprecedented solidarities and connections. “Electrifying visions of other worlds, galvanizing the interchange between earth and sky, and charging the air with a radical ambiguity, the transmission tower sets the scene for alien communications, utopian fantasy, an interlinking of minds, and a general unease and paranoia as to what may come speeding through the radio, the phone lines, the television, the broadband, to locate itself within the home. Thus transmission towers vacillate within the imagination to lend support to the fantasy of communicational technology— to extend the limits of the body, whether individual or political, social or aesthetic. (LaBelle 231). Above all, it continues to foster and transmit fantasies of radical individual, political, social or aesthetic transformation.

The radically transformative airspace of the song in flight provides a repository for an imperiled Kashmiri memory, grief, and homeland. The necropolitical regime frames, commands and seeks to contain these affective spaces. However, the song rises (phenomenologically and metaphorically) to become an excess, to take flight on “wings of terror/ and pity,” transforming

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<sup>216</sup> light songs influenced by Urdu-Persian poetry and sung in Hindi

the nationalized airwaves and airspace into an interface of imperiled Kashmiri bodies, vulnerabilities and desires. Significantly, in the song's haunting refrain, "In your eyes[...] I look for my wounds' deep sea," the eyes become reflective reservoirs of the beloved's wounds – once again, the sockets, films and fluids of the body become transensorial surfaces to screen trauma.

I wish to analyze this cryptic and densely allusive lyric to explore how acoustic/haptic bodies and spaces become the stage for performing an open-ended and radical grief. The strains of Begum Akhtar's song trigger trans-sensorial memories of her sudden death in 1974, and music, perfume, and color blend hypnotically into a terrible embodied grief: "Was her sari turquoise? [...]Heartbreak of perfume is mine again" (9, 13-4). The pilot interrupts the in-flight song recording, to announce the news of Char-e-Sharief's destruction. As Akhtar dissolves into cigarette smoke, the dream-image of the newspaper caption from 1974 announcing "BEGUM AKHTAR IS DEAD" (26-7) fades into "ITS WAR: [...]ARMY LAYS SIEGE TO SHRINE (42-3). What Michael Chion calls phantom sounds in film vocabulary, i.e. sound that the image suggests but that we don't hear, haunt the scene. The images of personal and romantic losses evoked by Akhtar's song underscore the absence of the missing sounds: of grief over the decimation of Kashmiri-ness. The grief of Kashmir, the intense longing for self-determination, intense in their absence (in nationalized spaces such as flight paths from New Delhi to Srinagar, or nationalized airwaves, or print media), can only be expressed through substitution, mediation, and fracture. Their presence via a haunting absence, however, radically disrupts the engineering and nationalization of soundscapes.

Second, by transposing the grief of losing Begum Akhtar with the burning down of Nooruddin Rishis' shrine, Ali inaugurates an open-ended, unresolved practice of grief. In death-haunted milieus, past losses are constantly, relentlessly added on to current losses; grief can

never be laid to rest, as the systems producing grief are relentless and permanent. Thus, instead of a conventional elegy, where mourning is a “resolving” of loss, signifying a forgetting ( in psychoanalytical terms a reinvestment of affect or a total assimilation of the other), we have here an elegiac stance, where, by constantly transposing grief objects, mourning is presented as interminable, irreconcilable and unassimilable.

The burning mausoleum here becomes a means to detect the sensorial emotions and memories inscribed in ritual performance and practice of Sufi cultures which comprise an important part of historicized Kashmiri-ness. Charar-e -Sharif, the mausoleum of the Valley’s patron saint, the 14th century Sufi mystic Sheikh Nooruddin Noorani, had been at the center of imagining a new political and cultural horizon for Kashmiris. *Azaadi* rallies took place in March 1990 at the shrine and a collective oath to struggle for self-determination was taken. Charar-e-Sharif was transformed to a resistive site (Junaid 178) by tying threads asking for intervention on behalf of azaadi (as many Kashmiri Muslims did), and by making it the rallying point of demonstrations. This “sanctuary” allows political Kashmiri desires to be transferred from the oppressive topos of Indian nation-statist significations to one outside its reach. Werbner and Basu have shown that for the citizens of postcolonial societies, a morally grounded charisma (embedded in Sufi Pirs or Saints) often acts as opposition and dissent to a biopolitical authority of the modern State (15). In the context of Kashmir, I would emphasize, that dissent takes on particularly urgent significance.

To return to the poem, Begum Akhtar dissolves surreally into Lal Ded the first mystic Sufi poet of the Kashmir valley, a woman of contested religious affiliation; and finally into Lal Ded’s spiritual successor Sheikh Nooruddin - whose faith also blurred sectarian borders. Akhtar, thus, ventriloquizes voices from a contested past of “syncretistic” Kashmiri-ness. Here as in “I

See Kashmir...” the emissaries from the dead/the dead speak – if briefly; the spirit of Noor-ud-din Rishi “still speak[ing] through five generations of poets” urges him to return to the shrine but then admits that “It is too late for threads in Chrar-e-Sharif”(65)! I use syncretic self-reflexively and cautiously here and in other parts of my dissertation. Werbner and Basu complicate facile theories of syncreticism in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cult* (1998). In contrast to the theories of an ‘indigenisation of Islam’ they want us to recognize equally the reverse process of an ‘Islamisation of the indigenous’ in South Asia. Thus, the space substantiated by song becomes a surrogate memorial/shrine to this syncretistic Kashmiriness as well as to the charge of resistance and self-determination that the shine had accrued in the context of popular Kashmiri political movements..

Lal Ded and Noor-ud-Rishi were both figures who crossed the Hindu-Muslim boundary. As Dominique Sila-Khan has argued in *Crossing the Threshold* (2004), studies of the sub-continent reveal that in movements such as the Rishi movement in Kashmir or other medieval movements in Bengal and Punjab, there have been alliances, sharing, and borrowing (44) between Islamic and Hindu communities which permitted the smooth passage of ideas, practices, and habits in all directions (50). Begum Akhtar (a secular Muslim singer/courtesan), as we have seen becomes a conduit to Lal Ded (female Kashmiri mystic) who in turn conjures Noor-ud-din Rishi also known as Nund Rishi (Rishi being the Hindu term for sage/religious mystic). A continuity may be found through them between the secular Indo-Muslim auralities evoked by the ghazal and the thumri and the sacral Sufi songs and rituals of the past that continue to be performed – a continuity that certainly complicates Kashmiri Pandit/Muslim binaries.

Chrar-e-Sharif, of course, represents those alternative emotional regimes and “utopian experiential imaginaries of other, possible world orders” I have mentioned in Chapter One.

Muslim and Brahmin Kashmiri have equivalent claims and membership rights in these social and ethical regimes. Through the figure of Noor-ud-din Rishi, the poem also goes on to make an emphatic critique of contemporary Kashmiri visions of imagined communities which foreclose this equivalence. Through his inclusive praxis, the figure of the Sufi mystic calls attention to the exclusions and erasures performed (violently) by some Kashmiri desires. (Noor-ud-din Rishi concedes: “It is too late for threads at Chrar-e-Sharif.”) Hence, this poem contains an indictment of Indian nation-statist imaginaries as well as homogenous Kashmiri Muslim ones that fail to include “others” in their utopian vision of desired homeland. The emotions of longing and desire for Kashmir that suffuse the poem are, themselves, also subject to interrogation. Walter Ong in *Orality & Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982), claims sound is evanescent, it is marked by impermanence. By the time we complete the syllables “ence”, the preceding sounds “imperma” are gone. No other sensory field totally resists a holding action, stabilization, in quite this way (Ong 31-32). Thus song, incantation, poetry share in common this evanescence. What we do not listen to in time is thus lost, and this moment of going out of existence is what interlocutors of Kashmir can internalize through the multi-sensorial evocations that Ali offers us. The vocalic bodies and territories carved out through evanescent sound, thus are also vulnerable to evanescence, and yet, they vivify with urgency, the need to vivify the struggle between contesting emotional and sensory regimes.

In the next section, I will return to the question I had begun my chapter with: What does it mean to mourn under conditions of permanent war? In an earlier section, I have discussed necropower’s refusal to name death as death and also its desires to shift death (and rituals and mourning around it) to something secret and stealthy. In the biopolitical regime of corpse-making, there can paradoxically be no “death”, no haunting, no mourning, only endlessly

reproduced spectral “Others”, criminals, terrorists, waste persons, and corporeal remains. The Kashmiri Muslim cannot be grieved since he cannot die because he was never fully alive<sup>217</sup>. In her acute analysis of the Israeli context, Meira Weiss in *Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society* demonstrates how social paradigms and political identities are articulated through the body. Processes of bereavement and commemoration of the fallen soldier, strictures on how to grieve, bury, and commemorate nation-statist “heroes” are linked to central projections and fantasies of national strength and regeneration (66). Especially in the wake of *fidayeen* violence, these practices help re-member the ruptured/splattered Israeli body politic.

In the Kashmiri Shiite context, public performances of mourning the Karbala add an especially flagrant and layered context to the politicization of grief. Moreover, as we have seen, the Sufi practice of commemorating and visiting mausoleums and shrines of saints provides another conduit for channeling outrage and grief. Corpses and relics (sacred and secular) become fetishes of a desire for self-determination, and mourning opens up a crucial political vein in Kashmir. Grief, care, and commemoration of death re-inscribe the rejected “othered” body with values and ideologies of the insurgent community, thus disrupting the inscriptions of the State (or non-State actors). It severely damages and threatens the project of corpse-making /nation-state engineering that mark postcolonial modernity, and turns the corpse into a screen for projecting collective imaginings beyond the nation-State.

I turn once again to Werbner and Basu’s *Embodied Charisma* to put together a reading. In their Introduction, the authors ask us to look at the power of ritual as deriving not from belief as a set of abstracted ideas but from ritual as a complex set of transformative, embodied, negotiated ethical and aesthetic practices, and the experiences which their enactment generates

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<sup>217</sup> Judith Butler mentions a similar paradoxical reasoning behind the US State’s inability to recognize and grieve those it kills in Iraq and Afghanistan.

(8). In “Muharram in Srinagar, 1992” and in “From Amherst to Kashmir” in *Rooms Are Never Finished*(2002), Muharram and its mourning rituals, affective expressions and practices taken on new meanings through reiteration and grafting; personal bereavement, political bereavement, become amalgamated with Zainab’s grief, (“From Amherst to Kashmir”) and with public rituals of The Day of *Ashura*. My focus here is on “Muharram in Srinagar, 1992”. Time and time again, the ritual of mourning Karbala and Hussein’s death has been harnessed by mourners in Shiite contexts to stage political protests, harnessing the political charge of the losses of Karbala<sup>218</sup>. Kashmir, in particular has a history of channeling Muharram for performing political grief. Crackdowns, curfews, and protests during Muharram are a common feature.

The poem begins “Death flies in, thin bureaucrat from the plains[...]our hands disappear” (1,3). (The necropolitical commandement goes through the morning schedule for making death:/ “Break their hands” (11) and [the peoples’] hands disappear. “He memorizes, clause by clause, the contract for Doomsday./ We mourn the martyrs of Karbala, our skin torn with chains”( 13-4). The blood of the mourners fills the streets; “O mourners, Hussain bleeds, so tear your skin with chains” (17), is the Kashmiri refrain that counters necropower’s amputational refrain: make “[their] hands disappear.” The amputational violence of the State is directed against those who dare to propose a mutilation of India’s *atoot ang*. The mourners enact a very important performative maneuver; they use their vulnerability and penetrability to displace the anatomizing gaze and practice of the State and create what Feldman calls in a different context “ a new empowering origin site<sup>219</sup>”(250). The Muharram mourners “tearing their skin with chains”

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<sup>218</sup> See for example the Muharram protests of December 1978 in Shahyad Square in Teheran against the Shah’s regime([http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2080036\\_2080037\\_2080043,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2080036_2080037_2080043,00.html)) or the recent police clash with protestors in Srinagar in November 2012 (<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/police-clash-with-protesters-in-srinagar-during-muharram-procession/307038-3-245.html>.)

<sup>219</sup> The starvation of the flesh in the Hunger Strike of 1981 was the inverting and bitter interiorization of the power of the state. Hunger striking to the death used the body of the prisoner to recodify and to transfer state power from

redirect and internalize the forensic gaze of the State onto their own bodies, opening it up for *screening* but not in the same clinical and biopolitical register of the state. While bleeding for Hussein, they also bleed. So what is performed and *screened* for us most visibly is the re-corporealization of death and pain. Instead of the “disappearance” of mutilated hands (and bodies), the blood that reddens and spatters the streets is a visual affirmation of the Kashmiri Muslim as an embodied, wounded subject. This “*broadcasting*” of “crimson” (36-7) is a powerful and tactile image Ali repeats in his works such as the “The Last Saffron” for example. Moreover, through incorporating this political act in what is primarily a bereavement ritual, the mourners create channels to publically mobilize *grief*. Finally, through situating their mourning in a sacred ritual, they seek to relocate death from “corpse-making” and “securocratic State apparatuses” to a different meaning-making topos. Sacred ritual as we have discussed, should be seen as transformative, embodied, negotiated ethical and aesthetic practices, and in this citation, the experience their enactment generates also take on politically charged significance. Every year the Muharram procession repeats all these accumulated meanings, taking on, in addition, the grief of new political losses; it thus becomes an iterative channel to perform grief and dissent rupturing the spectralizing and dehumanizing regimes. In 1992, the AFSPA, and the brutal militarization of Kashmir were its immediate matter. In 2014, there will be new losses to mourn in addition to the old.

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one topos to another. Subsequent sacralization of the dead hunger striker completed the process of purification and commemorated the subverting transfer of power from the state to the insurgent community with elaborate funeral processions and mortuary displays (237). Feldman, Allen. *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, 1991.

## Conclusion

Arundhati Roy in an article in *The Guardian*<sup>220</sup> had noted that 2013 and 2014 were going to be very significant years for South Asia. Elections were duly held in India, in Pakistan and in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The US had planned to complete the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, however it has decided to deploy a slower withdrawal and maintain a force of 9,800 until the end of 2015. Roy's warning that the chaos from an already seriously destabilized Pakistan will spill into Kashmir, as it has done before, remains urgent. Keeping the Kashmiri body in the foreground and creating channels through which the *material* and *collective* traumas can be broadcast is, thus, of vital importance.

In trauma theory, the ghostly trace is often used to signify melancholia's refusal to let the lost object go. The insistent, protracted clinging on to the lost object becomes very often a strategy of resistance and negotiation in states of permanent or slow violence as diverse as Argentina (The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) or Sri Lanka (e.g. Sasanka Perera's ethnographic work on spirit possessions and avenging ghosts as coping and commemorative mechanisms in Das et al edited *Remaking a World*). In the biopolitical regime of corpse-making, as we have seen, there can paradoxically be no "death", no haunting, no mourning, only endlessly reproduced spectral "Others". I have analyzed the sensorial apparatus of vulnerability created by the Kashmiri cultural imaginary to recognize these spectral others and uncanny presences. We have seen that at the same time terror "does away" with bodies, it also nourishes itself on and through the senses (Taussig); hence the sensorial becomes an important site of counter-discourse. The two short stories I explore, written most likely before the First Intifada, and Ali's lyrics composed in response to the violence in the early 1990s, offer a highly compressed, lyrical and

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<sup>220</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/feb/18/afzal-guru-dangerous-political-fallout>

diffusely phantasmagoric access to the sensorial. They offer a reading of injury and grief against their grains to reveal the phantasmatic and affective faces of the violent Indian State.

## CHAPTER 4

### Post-Partition Traumas: History and Memory in Githa Hariharan

*The past and the present are not entirely separate entities*” (italics original). The present is “a cumulative, multi-layered collage of past residues continually deposited through the cultural equivalent of the geological process of sedimentation.

Eviatar Zerubavel<sup>221</sup>

Between the homogenisation wrought by globalisation on the one hand and cultural nationalism on the other, we are witnessing more violent religious and ethnic conflict, more conservatism, more censorship. In short, shrinking spaces in which to think, read, write, and express ourselves artistically. In times of such siege, all significant art becomes offensive, striking against, opposing, revealing, resisting.

Githa Hariharan<sup>222</sup>

#### Introduction: Intercrossed Memories

The partition of the Indian sub-continent has led to a rupturing and rewriting of histories, memories, places, and affect-worlds<sup>223</sup>. The post-partition landscape of the region remains cratered with conflicts. What used to be rich, *intercrossed* life-worlds in South Asia are being flattened and shrunk to fit nation-statist frames. Contemporary political and psychological imperatives are making official distances between Kolkata and Karachi or Benaras and Bikrampur (near Dhaka) vaster, more insurmountable. My first two chapters dealt with post-

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<sup>221</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, 2003.

<sup>222</sup> Githa Hariharan, “Poetic, Politics, Praxis.” IACLALS Conference, Jawaharlal Nehru University. New Delhi. 23 January 2003. Keynote Address.

<sup>223</sup> The term as I have mentioned before is Ananya Kabir’s.

partition creative productions that mined the composite affect-worlds and geographies of the fragmented region to envision a *deeply* connected South Asia. They addressed the trauma of the partition through mobilizing shared cultural sites; this included performative forms such as Sufi lyric, or affective sensoria rooted in the vernacular and intimate ( via situated emotions like *viraha - the longing of separation or ishq -desire*) or in melancholic spatio-temporalities like “Sindh” and “Sri Lanka”. Amrita Pritam and Qurratulain Hyder, I argued, charted a trans-border feminist citizenship of South Asia challenging nation-statist constructs of love, intimacy, trust, and belonging.

In my fourth chapter, I argue that as partition’s ruptures harden and its frenzied violence gets repeated and amplified across borders, cross-national expressive worlds become the site of mnemonic contestations. What “We” as a nation-state accept as worthy of remembering i.e. as *public* memory, finds itself vehemently at odds with the shared memory of “ex-centric” (Ato Quayson<sup>224</sup>) collectivities or individuals. The re-writing of the Indian nation-state as *Hindutvavaadi* and the imprisoning of the minority under the majority’s cultural mandate has gained political and cultural prominence; the 1990s marked the destruction of the Babri Masjid (1992), the Bombay Riots (1992) and a growing vulnerability of the ex-centric citizen, in particular the Indian Muslim. The situation has, since then, worsened. A combination of global exigencies and a collective frustration with the centrist Congress has seen the Right-wing BJP come to power at the center twice (in 1998-2004 and recently in May 2014). The last BJP-led coalition government “administered” a violent pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. While many judicial cases are ongoing, and many fact-finding commissions, central and state

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<sup>224</sup> In his article “Symbolisation Compulsions: Freud, African Literature and South Africa’s Process of Truth and Reconciliation ” (2001), Ato Quayson asks “How is the narrative of the nation to be elaborated from the perspective of the ex-centric? “ (192-3). He wants a greater engagement with the off-center view that falls outside “the perspectives of sanctioned historical tellings of the nation” (192) to find a referential locus for narrativizing South African traumas.

bodies have conducted investigations, “the regime of impunity<sup>225</sup>” that Haley Duschinski refers to in the Kashmiri context, finds its murderous double in the “culture of impunity”(Upendra Baxi<sup>226</sup>) prevalent in Gujarat and by extension in the nation.

The current times, then, constitute a particularly critical crucible for the testing of palimpsestic identities and inclusive citizenships. Wayward trajectories of remembering which contest the “homogeneous nationalist” structures of memory are urgent. Githa Hariharan, a non-diasporic Indian writer in English engenders “a deep memorialization” through her novels *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009) while exploring what it means to be a witness to the multiple wounds of post-partition India. Hariharan’s novels, in the author’s words are “resistances” or offences” against the violent, homogenizing religious and cultural nationalisms of Hindutva. In her keynote address titled “Poetics, Politics, Praxis” delivered at Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2003, which forms the epigraph to this chapter, Hariharan speaks of writing under siege: “ Andre Brink [South African novelist writing under apartheid] puts it eloquently: all significant art, [...], is offensive; offensive in the sense of striking against; opposing; revealing; resisting.” In a conversation with Mohan Ramamoorthy printed in his review of *Fugitive Histories* for *The Indian Express* in 2009<sup>227</sup>, Hariharan avers that both *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009) were “written out of grief” at the loss of textured non-Brahmanical histories and the insidious flattening of public and private spaces of dissent. Hariharan’s focus is primarily the minority subject, caught in the siege of the majoritarian mandate.

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<sup>225</sup> Duschinski, Haley. "Reproducing Regimes of Impunity: Fake Encounters and the Informalization of Violence in Kashmir Valley." *Cultural Studies*. 24.1 (2010): 110-132.

<sup>226</sup> In “Notes on Holocaustian Politics – Seminar (2002), Upendra Baxi discussed “the political production of communal violence.” As has been vindicated in the intervening decade, “[m]anagement of organized political violence requires multifarious use of the ‘law’ as a sustained device of cover-up strategies and operations. What actually happened ought never to be allowed to achieve juridical verification.”

<sup>227</sup> Ramamoorthy, Mohan. “A Novel Discord.” *The New Indian Express*. 2 August. 2009. Web.

Hariharan's situatedness as a (non-diasporic) Indian writing in English needs some attention. Writing about the postcolonial Indian novel in English, Josna Rege (1997) notes that post-Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), the landscape of the novel changed to incorporate a fluid, labile interrelationship between the nation (public) and the individual (private)<sup>228</sup>. Instead of the dichotomous investments charted by earlier novels of the 40s and 60s, the new topoi mapped the mediations, exchanges and mutabilities of the binary. They did so to map uncharted traumas and affective histories. In her particular interplay between the "private" and the public", triangulated with sensuous modalities of remembering, Hariharan's fiction creates a unique framework for reading trauma in postcolonial India, undiluted by universalizing templates.

### Postcolonial Trauma

Part of my chapter will also analyze the ways in which Hariharan's works add to a textured interdisciplinary field that seek to situate trauma off center from European/Holocaustian paradigms. Trauma Studies has been brought to book for the little attention that non-European contexts have received until recently. Michael Rothberg in his Preface to *The Future of Trauma Theory*<sup>229</sup> (2014) argues that Cathy Caruth's groundbreaking edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) borrows from Freudian frameworks to provide "a powerful hermeneutic for linking events of extreme violence, structures of subjective and collective experience, and discursive and aesthetic forms" (Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone xiii). However, behind the "apparently neutral and universal" lies "specifics" rooted in a particular time and space (ibid).

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<sup>228</sup> See "Victim Into Protagonist? "Midnight's Children" And The Post-Rushdie National Narratives Of The Eighties."

<sup>229</sup> The Preface is titled "Beyond Tancred and Clorinda –Trauma Studies for Implicated Subjects"

Stef Craps, one of the most trenchant critics of the Eurocentric model argues in *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013) that PTSD is a European and monocultural construct. Not only are clinical practices of therapy developed within specific cultural structures unhelpful in many postcolonial contexts, but the hierarchy of knowledge systems often ensures that local modes of making sense of pain and loss are evacuated. Rothberg (2014), however, cautions us that pluralizing and vernacularizing trauma is not enough; ultimately, counterforms and theories to replace or add to older ones a need to be developed (xii). While new directions in trauma studies offer many frameworks for situating loss in cultural and historical specificity, Rothberg argues that the dislocations of history, culture and subjects brought on by trauma make such grounding open to limitations (xii). Ignoring the *effects* of dislocations on history, culture and psyches would be grossly counterintuitive. This is why I argue that the partition of 1947 and its ongoing tearing of the social and individual fabric is a productive site to study how bodies, memories, culture, and selves are alienated by the ruptures. To capture these alienations, I propose a reading of the “deepening” of histories, cultures and subjectivities to examine encrusted effects of trauma.

The disruption of affect-worlds, the new clusters of meaning added on to existing tropes (such as betrayal, *viraha*, *ishq*) and the rituals and gestures (mourning Muharram in Kashmir or heightened “listening” in Ali’s poetry) deployed to mime and mine the effects of dispossession have been discussed in previous chapters. As Ananya Kabir (2014) reminds us in “Affect, Body Place,” Freud driven analysis of the unconscious – its structures and foundations- cannot be jettisoned. “Modernity’s handmaiden has been the development of a theory of the unconscious, and modernity being a global phenomenon, the unconscious can hardly be done away with” while reframing trauma (Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone 72-3). This addresses the simplified

West/non-West binary that criticisms of trauma studies often find hard to texturize. At the same time, she notes that the language and social matrix through which the unconscious is expressed, the systems, rituals and gestures deployed to relate it to lived experience vary greatly. Veena Das (1997) has similarly argued that reading narratives of pain and trauma is contingent on the relationship between pain and language specific to a culture. Rothberg suggests that one way to create a paradigm for trauma studies minus the universalizing impulse is to attend to how traumas connect and overlap across contexts Buelens, Durrant and Eaglestone (xv) and, even, to recognize that there may be many forms of suffering in the same social space (xvii).

Githa Hariharan's address (via the historical vicissitudes of writing in English in India) to the Indian middle class <sup>230</sup> – a widely heterogeneous constituency invested in multiple mediations of modernity and the pre-modern - provides a rich field to track the various counterforms and frameworks of addressing pain, loss, and grief found in post-colonial works. For example, in *In Times of Siege*, I will show how Hariharan's deployment of Abraham and Torok's figure of the "phantom" to situate trans-historical haunting is complicated by mooring trauma in culture, body, and the public. More importantly, I will follow how hauntingly complex affective sensoria of familiar seasonal states allows a healing of trauma. In my discussion of *Fugitive Histories*, I will explore "the terrorized and terrifying figures of minority" (Mufti 2) that inhabit the post-Gujarat topos and the text's location of the body, injury and trauma within material and affective reparative contexts. To reiterate then, Hariharan's fiction, creates a unique framework for reading trauma in postcolonial India, undiluted by *universalizing* templates.

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<sup>230</sup> In her interviews, Githa Hariharan has often referred to the middle class as her audience.  
[http://www.githahariharan.com/downloads/selected\\_interviews.pdf](http://www.githahariharan.com/downloads/selected_interviews.pdf)

Hariharan in more than one interview has said that the everyday worlds she crafted in these two novels address and engender the middle class citizen / reader<sup>231</sup>. Acutely aware of the “smallness” of her audience as a writer in English in India, she addresses the middle class citizen – according to her, an important participant in the multiple publics called into being in response to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, or the carnage in Gujarat. English and English literate publics are a major battleground for the nation-state’s identity as the recent ordinances on removing English from Civil Service Exams reveal. However, it is important to remember that there are many contesting markers of modernity in contemporary India (and *Hindutva* ideologies while reinforcing tradition, also align themselves with some of them globalization, capitalism) strategically. While the middle class is one constituency among others pushed and pulled by conflicting passions and ideologies, its significance in Indian “civil society” cannot be overestimated. Partha Chatterjee<sup>232</sup> (2011) in “Two Poets and a Death” uses the term civil society to refer to “those characteristic institutions of modern associational life originating in Western societies that are based on equality, autonomy, freedom of entry and exit [...] and other such principles”(83). He adds that there may be civil societies in these countries that do not conform to those principles. This domain is limited to a small number of citizens – i.e. the elite. Hariharan’s English-literate, novel reading middle-class elite is firmly located within this domain. Her work should be read as part of a pedagogic and creative address summoning imaginaries and imaginations that attest to pluralist ways of being.

My introduction noted that the cross-national expressive routes and the affect-clusters around partition’s separations are the grounds for mnemonic battles in contemporary South Asia. This brings me to a brief analysis of the relationship between trauma and memory. In “Trauma

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<sup>231</sup> Githa Hariharan refers more than once to the number of people jolted out of their safe, cushioned existence by the excesses of fundamentalism and compelled to speak up

<sup>232</sup> *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy*, Partha Chatterjee, 2011.

and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality” Andreas Huyssen (2003)<sup>233</sup> explores the (supposedly axiomatic) relationship between memory and trauma. “Can we think of trauma as the hidden core of all memory?” Huyssen asks, “[a]fter all, both memory and trauma are predicated on [...]absence” (17). Both are also marked by “instability, transitoriness and structures of repetition” (Bennet and Kennedy 17). However, he recognizes that viewing memory solely through the framework of pain, loss and suffering would be limiting it considerably. In the context of the sub-continent’s ongoing partitions, for example, the field of memory comprises also of unassimilable pasts, unmetabolized “Others” against which the fetish-State shores itself (See Chapter Three for instance). Hariharan’s novels problematize acts of memorializing these difficult pasts. Huyssen formulates a framework to understand memory mediated by the material and the affective: he suggests that the archive may not be the appropriate metaphor in our times to think through memory. Since modern understandings of memory recognize it as “dynamic and subject to mutation and change, as always bound up with forgetting, [...] the archive with its rather static feature of storage and retrieval” cannot do it full justice. (26). Rather, he argues, memory is “active, alive, embodied in the social – that is in individuals, groups, and nations” (28). Huyssen, Ananya Kabir, Veena Das and others thus narrativize the relationship between memory and trauma via the embodied and the affective, placing both trauma and memory in the collective.

One of the underlying themes connecting both Hariharan’s novels is that of memory and its lived relationship to the present. Her writing helps us draw connections between memory, the narratives we use to remember, and a specific set of embodied gestures/affects/beliefs she recognizes as “culture”; these serve to house and translate memories. The unpacking of culture as embodied has significant implications for studying trauma interdisciplinarily in the

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<sup>233</sup> *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, Jill Bennet and Rosanne Kennedy, 2003.

subcontinental context. As she urges in “In Search of our Other Selves: Literature as Resistance” (2007)<sup>234</sup>, under the Hindutva regime where contested physical sites (she gives the examples of Babri Masjid and a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Sufi tomb in Ahmedabad) have been effaced visibly and “history has become a contested site where memories are erased or retold or new memories invented, the ongoing, real target of the disputing exercise is that large and amorphous thing called culture.” (127) Thus culture, identity, belonging are palimpsestic. It thus becomes imperative to learn to read pasts whose relief has morphed or disappeared - in other words to remember deeply. In an interview with Arnab Chakladar on *Another Subcontinent*<sup>235</sup>, Hariharan elaborates: “How do you remember? How do you use what you remember? There is also the specific way all of us -- and I am sure this is not exclusively Indian -- carry cultural baggage that is not compatible, *on the surface*, [my italics] with what we believe or have become. For example, Carnatic music is very much a part of my life -- I grew up listening to it, learnt it for years. Carnatic music is tied to its *kritis*, and as an adult you may not necessarily agree with what those words are saying, the world of [religious] belief and design they point to. But all the same, the music says a great deal to you and the words, too, move you on some fundamental level.” In another interview with Joel Kuorrti<sup>236</sup>, she says, if she hears the *Kalyani Raag* or *Mohanam Raag* played or sung beautifully, of she will immediately have “a gut-level reaction.” The cultural stakeholder, then seeks to make these visceral, moving, signals “live in a way that is meaningful to [her] and to [her] society at large.” Hariharan clarifies that the amorphous things called culture “is not some animal who lives independently of us, outside our bodies [...]”. Hariharan’s works thus address affective repositories of cultural memory. Her postulate offers us a way to read

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<sup>234</sup> Githa Hariharan, “In Search of our Other Selves: Literature as Resistance” (2007) in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 43:2, 125-132, DOI: 10.1080/17449850701430432.

<sup>235</sup> “A Conversation with Githa Hariharan” *Another Subcontinent: South Asian Society and Culture*,

<sup>236</sup> Interview with Githa Hariharan “The Double Burden: The Continual Contesting of Tradition and Modernity”: by Joel Kuorrti in New Delhi on 3 February 2000.

South Asian topographies of individual and collective memory; this braiding of body, affect and memory opens up a rich and nuanced framework to study contemporary sectarian violence in India.

### Memory and Affect in *In Times of Siege*

This text explores how complex pasts – individual and collective, can be made meaningful in the present. The novel opens into “the small space”<sup>237</sup> of Shiv Murthy a middle-aged professor of history in an Open University in New Delhi who is caught up in a large political/ideological storm when the *Itihas Suraksha Manch* (History Protection Brigade) of the right-wing Hindutva block demands that a lesson he has written on the medieval social reformer and mystic Basava be revised or recanted. He is accused of distorting history to malign Hinduism, Hindu saints and the glorious medieval Hindu kingdom centered in the city of Kalyana. Professor Murthy’s lesson – culled from various sources – proposed that Basava, rather than a divine saint was a radical social reformer. Through the *Veerashaiva* (Warriors of Shiva) movement, Basava galvanized the oppressed castes and social groups in Kalyana into a “democratic” movement that imagined an equal and inclusive community. Shiv had also noted the influence of a number of reform philosophies including that of Persian Sufi mystics on Basava. In cooptations by the very casteist regime that he opposed, Basava’s revolutionary charge has been sanitized and sanctified to fit the requirements of Hindu divinity. In the novel, Shiv not only highlights Basava’s socially radical ideas, but also his burdened response to the resultant violence that destroys Kalyana’s fabric. Worshipped as a reincarnation of Shiva’s Bull Nandi, Basava’s passage from this world has been rendered in hagiographic accounts as

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<sup>237</sup> Part of her craft and philosophy involves taking a small space, “the little” “personal world” and “making it spacious” - examining “what happens when the dangers of the outside world land on your own doorstep? How do you react? How do you change?”

“shedding his mortal coils” and returning to celestial realms. Shiv, however, weaves a narrative of isolation and shame during Basava’s last days in exile. This “humanization” “radicalization” and “pollution” of a Hindu saint is construed by the right-wing ideologues as a treasonous act against the Hindu nation-state.

The diegetic space of the novel interweaves fragments from Basava’s life. Much of that story, especially the parts near the end of Basava’s life remains outside the diegetic. One of Hariharan’s sources is a translation of Basava’s oral devotional poems (called *vachanas*) titled *The Lord of the Meeting Rivers* (1984), by K.V. Zvelebil. Zvelebil in a postscript on the life of Basava mentions how his biography has many sources: *vachanas* he composed, inscriptions, edicts, folk traditions, hagiographies etc. Basava is thus a composite historical figure, many things at once: “a saint, a poet, a political activist, a social reformer, a minister” (139). Born into a wealthy orthodox Brahmin family in Karnataka, “judging from several allusions his poetry,” Basava appears to have gone through some “shattering experiences;” this brought him to the realization that there was a gaping abyss between him and the children of the lower castes (140). The creative potential of trauma is, thus, alluded to here. As a young boy ritually entering Brahmanical manhood, he revolted against the practice of wearing the sacred thread. In his adulthood, he began to preach a social reform movement rejecting social inequality of caste, class and sex. He spurred a social and political crisis as large numbers of men and women from the lower rungs of society – farmers, weavers, fishermen and even some Brahmins - joined his movement in droves. At least two cases of unrest are in historical records: a washerman and an untouchable invoked fear and social turmoil as they publically refused to observe lower caste behavior. A marriage between a Brahmin woman and a low caste cobbler was the final crisis which led to brutally repressive measures by the regime and an equally violent uprising by

Basava's militant followers. This ended in the King's assassination as Kalyana burned down to ruins in the midst of terrible chaos. The *Veershaivas* scattered in several directions and Basava's end as enshrined in diverse narratives remained shrouded in mystery (Zvelebil 139-148).

The diegetic and non-diegetic details of the life and affect-worlds of Basava raise crucial questions of who remembers and how. They point, also, to how "the rememberer" and "the remembered" (Hariharan 194) are constituted in the very act of memory. One strand of the novel traces Shiv's growing involvement, against the judgment of his cautious, careful self, in the multiple publics that accrue around the contentious site of making public memory. Some of these violate the nation-statist address to imagine more radical spaces. The public discursivity and open-ended forms of address of some of these spaces bear much in common with the oral, discursive, inclusive community invoked by Basava's *vachanas* (literally "spoken words".) The novel is then invested in producing Shiv as an insurrectionary political subject via the address of what Rothberg<sup>238</sup> (2009) has termed "multi-directional memory" i.e. "the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the acts of remembrance" (Rothberg 11).

It is understood through a parallel narrative strand that Shiv will neither recant nor resign, but will take a stand (in alliance with various publics) to contest the siege on the multiplicity and cross-fertilization of memory. Eviatar Zerubavel theorizes in *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (2003), that "*the past and the present are not entirely separate entities*" (37; italics in original). The present is "a cumulative, multi-layered collage of past residues continually deposited through the cultural equivalent of the geological process of sedimentation (37). Thus the process of organizing memory is haunted by the cultural regime. "Periodization," Zerubavel further suggests, "is a form of classification that helps articulate

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<sup>238</sup> *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg 2009.

distinct identities [...] and the way we cut up the past is [...] the manifestation of the way we cut up mental space (85). The organization of “medieval” India as a pure Hindu nation assailed by “foreign” Muslim invaders is an acutely critical part of Hindutva’s partition of mental and affective spaces. Thus, the contests over “adulterations” of the so-called homogenous worlds of “the past” take on haunting significance in the light of the region’s contemporary severances.

Hariharan has often remarked that her craft lies in etching out political questions via private affective worlds. While writers like Ananya Kabir closely ground memory in place, Hariharan in *In Times of Siege* offers grounding through the erotic. Wayward desire is mapped on to “offences” against the State, in the same vein as wayward memories. This allows us to see how Statist/biopolitical structures address and haunt affective spaces. I’ve mentioned that Hariharan, and other Indo-Anglian writers of the “second” generation, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapoor and others, occupy a unique non-diasporic feminist vantage through which they read (and write) the erotic faces of the political. Shiv’s closeness with Meena (a committed activist and scholar recovering in his home from a broken leg while Shiv’s wife is away visiting their daughter in Seattle), is depicted as challenging heteronormative channels. As Arnab Chakladar points out (*Another Subcontinent*), Shiv moves towards a more nurturing, feminized role as the narrative progresses towards his growing political involvement (helping Meena wash and brush her hair, preparing food, doing household chores he had never attempted before). Their roles - his nurturing and hesitant, hers abrasive and outspoken - invert many of the conventional gendered norms associated with the domestic and the political.

The erotic fascination Shiv feels for Meena and their growing intimacy is what ultimately propels him towards active political participation. In her Introduction to *Intimacy* (2000), Lauren Berlant cautions us that while the affective energies associated with intimacy “usually end

occupying the space of convention, it is a kind of wild thing that is not organized in any way [...] it is a drive that creates spaces around it through practices (4).” What might these spaces look like? Berlant elaborates that since there are (usually) no stable pathways in culture to cultivate its wayward plots (5), unconventional intimacy drives us to reevaluate the hegemonic conditions that inscribe affect on minds and bodies, and indeed to the redirection of established pathways (emotional, historical, social, etc.) (6). Berlant’s mapping allows us to plot the erotic onto the social and political. Laura Kipnis in her essay in the same volume title “Adultery” adds, that in adultery, “the most conventional people suddenly experience emotional free fall:” intimacy beyond “contract, law and property relations” (42). The affective energies released inspire the conviction that “the world might transform itself [...] to allow space for new forms to come into being” (42). Falling into adultery, thus, often propels subjects into “utopian” (46) spaces and temporalities. We may use these analyses of wayward intimacies to read Hariharan. Rather than consolidating on the public vs. private divide central to homogenous nationalist imaginaries she pushes us to explore via Shiv’s affective entanglements how political spaces are created by the erotic. This culminates in the moment when “his ache for [Meena], forever coupled in his mind with the fear of living with danger, choice, commitment. Fear of his new life, a small room crowded with strangers. With thugs, bare knives glinting in the dark. He must take hold of it all, claim his life as his own (177).

The narrative does not overdeterminedly situate “adultery” as a transformative site. After all, Shiv has been in an on-again off-again sexual relationship with a colleague for many years. The locus for generating transformative utopian sites lies in Meena’s singularities - her feminism and strong political impulses. Their erotic encounter which comes towards the end of the novel offers itself to rich analysis. Instead of the inviting, pliable sexual object of male fantasy, Meena

marks her presence through detachment, distance, unreadable silences and hisses. My reading of their brief erotic encounter will elaborate on how the narrative interrupts the penetrative male gaze repeatedly. The narrative stages several comic interruptions of Shiv's sexualized reading - and touching - of Meena's body. When Shiv looks in her eyes for invitation, there is none; when he makes a move, she redirects his hand; when he waits for a "moan" there is only the buzzing of mosquitoes in the sultry room. This representation is important for a feminist reading that places the encounter outside heteronormative formulae. In the scene not only does Meena *refuse to* passively reflect back male desires of conquest and control, she also negotiates from Shiv a (political) promise to "decide" (180). This refers to Shiv's choice, after much self-doubt and fear, to take a firm stand against Hindutva's homogenization and siege of minds. The wayward erotic encounter (and the promise extracted) is linked conclusively in Shiv's own mind with an act of political recalcitrance. The promise, he muses, "leaves untouched the bit of land they own together. There is *no law, no government*, no ghost that can tell them how they should cultivate it, when they should let it remain fallow" (180; my italics). This mapping of their desire and its energies as land outside the reach of [particular] laws, governments is a fantasy (the state has far-reaching capillaries as we have seen in other chapters and can shape also by its absence); it is one, however, that allows Shiv to secede from socially, politically and imaginatively limited imaginaries. The "emotional free fall" (Kipnis) of his intimacy with Meena propels Shiv forward to "re-member" contested pasts in the interest of *living* collectivities. The novel then traces how desire forms the matrix through which "a deep memory" is animated in Shiv.

Most fascinatingly, Hariharan's routing of memory and the political via the erotic offers a map to read cross-fertilizing histories. The affective energies ignited in Shiv by his desire for Meena and her political "world," become laminated with memories of his father and the

inclusive political community he had once dared to imagine. Only when Shiv has been able to “re-member deeply” (and has renewed his political participation as an insurrectionary citizen, will he become a “living, contesting historian” ( Hariharan 194). “Remembering” as a gesture and practice, then lies at the core of the novel. *In Times of Siege* offers several models of what it is to remember and what resources we use to remember. The Hindu nationalists, for instance wish to memorialize “a past *past-er* than anybody else’s [...] so how can it not be the cradle of all civilization?” (97). They mandate there is “only one way to remember [it]” (113). Shiv, on the other hand, like his father struggles with *hypermnesia* – a case of “too much memory” (85). Shiv’s career in history was in part a result of his father having been happy that Shiv had inherited his “good memory” (85). As part of his inherited hypermnesia, Shiv is haunted by unassimilable memories of his father who disappeared on June 7 1962. His father had been a member of the anticolonial struggle; in 1962, the failures and burdens of the nation “sat heavy on his shoulders” (36).

Shiv’s father’s disappearance, thus, was also linked to hypermnesia – he suffered from harboring memories of political futures stubbornly incommensurate with the routine erasures of the State’s amnesiac present. In *Mourning the Nation*, Bhaskar Sarkar terms this “proleptic melancholia.” The postcolonial nation is born in loss, he argues. The nation represents “the death of a collective dream at the moment of birth” (42). Thus, Shiv’s father, like many in his generation, mourns not just the loss of shared life-worlds, but also of the future. Sarkar contends that this proleptic melancholia “arises from a loss of futures and possibilities”(42).

In the novel as mentioned, the erotic and political energies roused, offer a transhistorical /cross-fertilized view into “the loss of futures and possibilities.” In a strange transhistorical haunting, all four figures: Basava, Shiv’s father, Shiv and Meena fold into one another. As

Shiv's political and erotic narratives develop, his peculiar mnemonic landscape is metaphorized as "a dictionary that speaks the language of several [haunted]pasts" (108); this ghostly transhistorical glossary allows him to extract and read multiple spectral scripts. I term this layered imaging range "deep memory." In Shiv's deeply palimpsestic memory, the date of Basava's disappearance from records is brought forward to coincide with the day his father disappeared: thus June 7, 1168 becomes the medieval counterpart to June 7, 1962 (108). He becomes obsessed with filling the gaps in narratives of Basava's disappearance, hoping that will offer him "a resonance" (108), of other phantom narratives i.e. of his lost father.

This "deep imaging/memory" is personified in the palimpsestic ghosts that haunt the novel: as Shiv grapples to etch a speculative, fragmentary narrative of Basava's disappearance, "the ghost of Basava - or his father standing behind him – egg[s] him on" (109) Later, as he is drawn closer to Meena and the political imperative she holds out, Shiv recognizes that Meena become "an unlikely reincarnation of his father" (170) in her political vision for the future. In yet another instance, after Shiv has made "the decision" (180), he looks in the mirror as he shaves off his graying moustache "on impulse", and is astonished that the "bare face that emerges looks [...] like his father's last photographs" (188). Reading the barely legible traces he extracts with his deep imaging, Shiv scripts unstable narrative trajectories for his lost father; perhaps he had a terminal or degenerative disease and "arranged" to disappear, he rationalizes. It is of course symptomatic of the novel's fixation with memory and forgetfulness that in this script, his father has amnesia (188). In another, more poignant script, as we have seen, his father suffers not from amnesia but hypermnnesia(189) – from an excessive memory that confronts even proleptic losses. In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Jaques Derrida has written of the ethical imperative of "speak[ing] of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it" and the political implications of ethically engaging

with “absences”. What do these “ghosts” speak of? What losses do they bear witness to? Basava and Shiv’s father address the proleptic losses of [im]possible collectivities. Yet, these collectivities are once again invoked through remembrance. October 2000, June 1962 and June 1168 collapse into each other that Making memory “deep” and sensitive to imaging multiple specters, then, becomes imperative to a transhistorical memorialization and collectivization of South Asia.

In this section, I will examine how Hariharan’s deployment of Abraham and Torok’s figure of the “phantom” to situate trans-historical haunting is complicated by mooring trauma in culture, body, and the public. In the novel, Shiv’s grief over the loss of his father has haunted him since his adolescence like a “secretive past that grows heavier every day” (107); he has returned again and again to that day painfully trying to piece the fragments into “a narrative.” In these words we may recognize Torok and Abraham’s “phantom” that haunts transgenerational cryptic enclaves “ventriloquizing” the losses of others.

Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), contains the well-known and by now well-disputed stance that mourning and melancholia are two distinctive psychic states. Mourning according to Freud’s study, is marked by a gradual detachment of the ego from the lost object until the loss is metabolized and the ego can then move on to newer investments. Melancholia, on the other hand, is distinguished by the psyche’s inability to process the loss and is thus a form of protracted mourning. Recent theorists have contested such neat separations: Caryl Flinn (2004)<sup>239</sup>, while analyzing mourning in New German Cinema asks, “How can mourning be untainted by ambivalence or the unconscious? How can it leave ego-boundaries undisturbed, given how they are imbricated in all sorts of desires, attachments, contradictions, and

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<sup>239</sup> *The New German Cinema: Music, History and the Matter of Style*, Caryl Flinn, 2004.

proscriptions? Is melancholia such a tidy pathological other to mourning's "normal" means of coming to grips?" (56). He cautions that even Freud had misgivings, having [opened] his essay with qualifying remarks that mourning and melancholia are but two ways of dealing with loss: they simply paint a "general picture" of grief (243; *ibid*).

Abraham and Torok further "reelaborated" Ferenczi's (1909) and Freud's (1917) psychoanalytical theory of introjection: they argue that in cases of melancholia, in place of introjection (expansion of the self to assimilate the lost object) there is an incorporation of the loss. Incorporation involves sealing the lost object *inside* the self by secreting it in a tomb/crypt such that the cryptic enclave remains extraneous to the self. In his "Foreword" to Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (trans. 1986), Derrida writes that the more the self keeps the foreign element as a foreigner inside itself, the more it excludes it (Rand/Derrida). The entombed return, inevitably as the uncanny; as psychic and somatic symptoms. Abraham and Torok name this foreign element a "phantom." Thus, it is the opposite of the process of introjection. Derrida sums it up thus: "I pretend to keep the dead alive, intact, *safe* [...] *inside me* [...] but it is only in order to refuse [...] to love the dead as a living part of me[...]" (Rand/Abraham and Torok xvi).

Abraham and Torok's concept of the phantom allows us to examine trauma not only as effects on individual psyches, but also as effects on the fabric of collectivities. Torok and Abraham argue that the "psychic phantom" can be transmitted via a transgenerational haunting. The unmetabolized trauma of the parent is transmitted to the child's unconscious. "The phantom's periodic and compulsive return ... works like a ventriloquist," ventriloquizing "unspeakably shameful secret[s] belonging to another". In *In Times of Siege*, Shiv's memory with its unspeakable gaps carries the psychosomatic trace of his father's encrypted affective

material. However, the phantoms ventriloquize unmetabolized traumas, not just of Shiv's father but of multiple other subjects.

Crucially in Hariharan, transhistorical grief originates in a sense of alienation from hegemonic Statist (postcolonial India or medieval Kalyana) investments. It follows, then, that the routes of transmission are not limited to bloodlines, but are channeled via investments in the larger collective. As Shiv becomes increasingly aware of the expressive, affective and political charges of his trauma, he begins to find ways of publically making it his own and truly walking in the present (Hariharan 195). In her article "The Dead That Haunt Anil's Ghost: Subaltern Difference and Postcolonial Melancholia" Mrinalini Chakravorty (2013) elaborates how Abraham places the effects of the phantom in a collective, social realm. When "Abraham writes, "What comes back to haunt are the tombs of others" (172), the phantasmatic transmission of trauma allows that loss enclosed in singular crypts [to become] transferable and [have] a ripple effect. By this analysis, individual melancholia, motivated by a particular wound, can produce a collective cultural sense of being melancholic" (547).

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Hariharan harnesses the foundational tenets of trauma studies while also creating frameworks to understand grief embedded in South Asian modalities. Shiv's grief over his father's disappearance is not "cured" via the pathologization or medicalization of loss. The text, instead, embeds him within rich affect-worlds from which he draws sustenance to "mak[e] the past [his] own"(85). In a final return to the site of trauma (i.e. the day of his father's disappearance,) Shiv reclaims his past in an unexpected way. His last *whole* memory of June 7 1962 was the sky growing abruptly dark in the middle of the day. Most readers with experience of pre-monsoon thunderstorms in South Asia would immediately recognize the preternatural symptoms of their arrival: the sky's sudden

darkening in April followed by a strange dust-filmed glow; the ferocity of the showers; and the suddenness of their departures. Quite unlike the steadiness of monsoon rains, pre-monsoon storms evoke fear because of how violently they transform the familiar. Complex affect-worlds cluster around them because of the way in which they heighten and change the local sensoria (smell, light, sounds, depth, perception etc.). Thus they have strong enough claims on cultural memory, belonging and affect to merit region-specific names entangled with local life-worlds. In West Bengal, for example, they are called *kaal-baishakhi* i.e. the bane of the month of Baisakh. In some other regions they are called mango-showers because they augur the ripening of mangoes.

The haunting, emotively complex sensorium of the pre-monsoon storm provides Shiv with the reserves to confront his memories. With the sudden darkening of an October afternoon, Shiv is drawn into the shattering sensoria of an “unseasonable storm”, all the more uncanny because of its out-of-timeness. The storm provides him with a transformative space: the storm itself transforms space, time, ways of seeing and sensing; it creates a sensorium “in which dreams grow, thrive and turn into nightmares” (190). The intensity of this sensorial experience draws out memories of a similar affective event: Shiv is able to retrieve from that day in his childhood “not [...] the words his uncle used to break the news, or his mother’s wails, or his own reaction. His childish grief. What he remembers instead, is what he sees again now ”( 190). As a child, Shiv had (belatedly) projected the shock to and shattering of his self onto the rhythms of the familial seasonal world. This time, with the deep memory he has learned, Shiv surrenders himself with wild abandonment to a sensuous enjoyment (in Meena’s company) of the chaos around him. In this chaos, are evocations of a deep ecological memory of the sub-continent embodied in its biota. Though Shiv is at first resistant, he learns to read in the patterns of this

ecological memory, various forms of liberating surrender. The papaya tree “wheeze[s] in relief” as it splits; the fragrant Night Queen “bends low, sweeping the ground” (191). Most astoundingly, the screeching peacocks change the pitch of their cries from wails to “a triumphant chorus of exultation” as they “[cling] clownishly to [...] swaying branches”. In this terrifying yet liberating plunge into the storm’s sights, sounds, smells and fury, Shiv finds the resources to perform “funeral rites for a father” (192). Thus, it is not in language but in the semi-discursive rhythms of the sensual world and its repetitive patterns of surrender and liberation, that he finds peace. In psychoanalytical terms, we may say that Shiv’s encrypted memories of his father’s disappearance cut off from the Symbolic, are reclaimed through the cryptonymy of the storm. Significantly though, Shiv has still not filled the discursive gaps in his memory of his father; they remain “frayed bits and pieces, blank spaces, stitches coming loose, knots unraveling” (192), but he is “finally ready to let go” (192). Thus, contrary to the imperative for semiotic excavation and narrative closure and in Euro-American trajectories of healing, Hariharan chooses to gesture towards unraveling and surrender. The lyrical, fragmented voice narrating this brief section interrupts the discursive continuities of the novel. Ananya Kabir has urged an understanding of subcontinental traumas through the lyrical and diffuse reservoirs of song, dance, ritual and place<sup>240</sup>. Hariharan provides a textured framework that helps us situate memory and trauma within dislocated spaces, histories and selves.

Exploring the socially and politically creative energies of mourning and melancholia i.e. of “keeping the past steadfastly alive in the present” (Eng and Kazanjian 4) has been central to my project. As “[Shiv’s] father’s voice becomes part of his own voice” we find evidence of

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<sup>240</sup> Kabir, Anaya Jahanara. “Beyond Narrative: Song and Story in South Asia. *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings*. 5.2 (2005): 28-42. Print.

Freudian introjection i.e. integration of the lost object into the psychic substance. However, the novel moves beyond Freudian schemes of forgetting attachments through metabolizing losses. Having found peace, Shiv recognizes himself, as I observed earlier, as “a living contesting historian” (194). This refers, of course, to the sedimented insight into the contested memories of the subcontinent Shiv inherits; it refers equally to the *immersive, embodied* “hosting” of the past within one’s self - what the author calls “the unbreakable bond between “the remembered and the rememberer” (194). Most critically, the novel opens up affective frameworks for how memory and memorialization can function as an inclusive binds for a collective fabric.

Both these frameworks of knowing and seeing the past *deeply* provide a unique perspective on affect-mediated memory and trauma in post-colonial Indian life-worlds. Hariharan makes a crucial intervention in trauma studies by proposing a model for transhistorical memory via a triangulation of the political, mnemonic and the sensual/erotic. Finally, by allowing individual grief to be connected via those triangulations to multi-directional publics, she continues the work of addressing and engendering composite South Asian collectivities. By way of concluding the section of the chapter on *In Times of Siege*, we need to return to Hariharan’s professed project of addressing the Indian middle class in the stunned aftermath of routine and insidious sectarian violence. Texts such as *In Times of Siege*, or *Fugitive Histories* which I will analyze next, seek to address the loss of “others” to inaugurate the processes of collective mourning and melancholia. In *Fugitive Histories*, as my argument will show, Hariharan goes much further in developing a sensorium of trauma that collectivizes and embodies South Asian wounds.

Affect and Witnessing in *Fugitive Histories*

I write a monthly column for the Telegraph and while filing some clippings recently I was struck by just how many of the pieces, quite unconsciously, are about this question of how one remembers the past -- be it the Berlin Wall or Ayodhya. How do you remember? How do you use what you remember?

Githa Hariharan, Interview<sup>241</sup>.

The imagination, [Sara] finds has its limits. She can feed it general knowledge, what she has read in the papers and seen on the TV, Nina's and others' film footage, and what she herself has heard so recently from those whom they interviewed in Ahmedabad. But her imagination fails to harness all this information so she can share the final critical moment, see that the woman who is no longer the girl she once knew but a screaming red mouth, mere meat for the red mouth of fire.

Githa Hariharan<sup>242</sup>.

*In Times of Siege* may be also read as an oblique way of narrating Gujarat 2002 through other conflicts arising from "minoritization" (Mufti). *Fugitive Histories* confronts Gujarat face to face. Written as an anguished response to the violence in Gujarat in 2002, it is, like, *In Times of Siege*, invested in questions about "how one remembers the past". Here the focus is *also* on what narratives, representations and embodiments of memory, in particular traumatic memory, *do*<sup>243</sup>.

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<sup>241</sup> "A Conversation with Githa Hariharan." Interview by Arnab Chakladar. *Another Subcontinent: South Asian Society and Culture*. n.p, n.d. Web. 22 July 2014.

<sup>242</sup> *Fugitive Histories* p.192

<sup>243</sup> In *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (2005), Jill Bennett posits art as a kind of visual language of trauma and the experiences of conflict and loss and explores what art *does* (2)

“How do other people’s stories become our own” asks the narrative over and over again, while opening up an exploration of the ethics and politics of transacting<sup>244</sup> with the trauma of others that might offer possible answers. This “transaction” that Hariharan interprets as affective, sensorial and haptic is of vital importance, given “the regimes of impunity<sup>245</sup>” and “democidal rape culture<sup>246</sup>”) that evacuated “pain” in Gujarat 2002, much like in the context of Kashmir. Drawing on Rummel (1994)’s terminology for a mode of government by death, Upendra Baxi (2005) writes about how “the cries of the violated” did not “penetrate the sound-proofed air-conditioned chambers” of the Parliament (Baxi 339). The Parliament debated “government failure for sixteen hours,” but by focusing on the abstract (whether to oust Narendra Modi from the Gujarat state government) rather than “gruesome details “–i.e. the corporeal and visceral aspects of the violence - they ensured that “the guilty would never be punished and the violated deprived of rehabilitation, redress and relief” (Baxi 339). Baxi thus offer us, if through the routes of law and rights discourse, a model to link the absence of socio-political and legal redress to “a culture” of evacuating the visceral and the affective, with respect to the terrified and terrifying figure of minority (Mufti) we have encountered in previous chapters in relational contexts. While human rights and social action groups struggled to preserve the testimonies of the violated (Baxi 333), and there was extraordinary mobilization of citizen action in the weeks following, to deploy solidarity, relief and rehabilitation, mental health etc., (Baxi 333) the state sponsorship of the violence meant that the losses were never fully addressed. Hariharan takes “the citizen” she

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<sup>244</sup> Bennett her claims that affective responses to much of contemporary art are not born of emotional identification or sympathy, “rather they emerge from a direct engagement with sensation as it is registered in the artwork (7). In this sense, trauma art is “best understood as transactive rather than communicative ( Bennett 7).It often touches us, but does not necessarily communicate “the secret” of personal experience (7).

<sup>245</sup> Upendra Baxi In “Notes on Holocaustian Politics – Seminar (2002), Upendra Baxi discussed “the political production of communal violence.”

<sup>246</sup> Drawing on Rummel (1994)’s terminology for a mode of government by death, legal scholar Upendra Baxi yokes it with the pervasive acceptance of rape as misfortune rather than injustice in ‘The Gujarat Catastrophe:Notes on Reading Politics as Democidal Rape’ in Kannabiran edited *The Violence of Normal Times* (2005).

addresses to supplementary intimate, personal and dangerous spaces where “trauma” is no longer an interior state of the traumatized subject, but a political force that haunts *the collective*. She explores the ethical aspects of transactive relationships with trauma in “a more personal, private way. [FH] presents a mosaic of lives that collide in unhappy ways, but also in ways that produce love, passion and tenderness. After all, shrinking of public spaces also shrinks private spaces” (Hariharan, *Telling Others Stories*<sup>247</sup>). Creative works, Hariharan posits, can directly intervene into these shrunken private spaces in ways that testimonial narratives, juridical and rights discourse and positivist accounts of history cannot.

On 27 February 2002, the Sabarmati Express carrying returning *kar sevaks* (activists of the Viswa Hindu parishad VHP) from a political ceremony in Ayodhya to consecrate a Ram Temple at the “disputed” site of the demolished Babri Masjid, was stoned and fifty-eight passengers burned to death in a coach the mob set on fire. The regime in Gujarat declared retaliation on all Muslims and a bloodthirsty cycle of events began. Narendra Modi, then the Chief Minister of Gujarat blamed “the jihadi mentality; the central BJP led government promptly blamed Pakistan’s intelligence agency ISI (5) and investigations into the acts remain befuddled. As Siddharth Varadarajan notes in his introduction “Chronicle of a Tragedy Foretold” to the collection of articles and reports collected in *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy* (2002), this stance of holding all Muslims of India as disloyal citizens and willing agents of Pakistan (7) was a well-proven BJP stance. Provocative statements were made in the Parliament, in the media, and in various rallies next day<sup>248</sup> by various figures including Modi and in the next seventy two hours, a pogrom of previously unprecedented violence was unleashed with the involvement and

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<sup>247</sup> Telling Others’ Stories, Interview in *The Hindu*, August 4, 2009.

<sup>248</sup> Varadarajan quotes: I want to assure the people that Gujarat shall not tolerate any such incident. the culprits will get full punishment for their sins. not only this, we will set an example that nobody, not even in his dreams, thinks of committing a heinous crime like this (8). Broadcast (in Gujarati) on Ahmedabad Doordarshan, 28 February 2002. Reproduced as Annexure 4AA in Editor’s Guild Report (Note 37).

support of party workers, hired goons, policemen, emergency services etc. Voters' lists categorizing Muslims by address and religion, gas cylinders and other weapons, and transportation became "mysteriously available" (9). The government delayed requesting the Army and when troops arrived on March 1st, the absence of local cooperation meant that they couldn't be effectively deployed until March 3<sup>249</sup> (9). While communal "riots" have been a recurring feature in the landscape of post-Partition India, it is unilaterally agreed that the events in Gujarat were far more violent than any precedent. Although we may never know the full extent of the damage, official estimates (conservative by many margins) recognize that hundreds of Muslims had been killed, hundreds of thousands displaced and there was large-scale raping, mutilating, and burning of women<sup>250</sup>. Evidence of police collusion abounds; having placed Muslims under curfew, they gave free run of the roads to the VHP and Bajrang Dal mobs<sup>251</sup> (Sundar/Vardarajan 99). In several cases including Naroda Patiya, scene of the most gruesome violence, survivor accounts narrate how they were caught between police who threatened to open fire on them, and a violent murderous mob<sup>252</sup> (99). In 'when Guardians Betray: The Role of the Police in Gujarat' civil rights activist and journalist Teesta Setalvad<sup>253</sup> 177-213) writes of taunts such as "Yeh andar ki baat hain, Police hamare saath hain" (It's an open secret/ The Police is on our side) (177) and multiple instances of police firing on Muslims.

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<sup>249</sup> See Sujan Dutta, Where had all the Soldiers Gone? Telegraph, 2 March, 2002.

<sup>250</sup> Official estimates of Muslim deaths in 2002 were 500, unofficial exceed 2000. (Engineer 210, Varadarajan 9)

<sup>251</sup> A License to Kill: Patterns of Violence in Gujarat, Nandini Sundar (75-134). See also Vinay Menon, Curfew ties victims, frees killers, Hindustan Times, March 2, 2002 where he draws attention to logistical delays such as in transportation that rendered troops ineffective for a long period when the violence was at its most intense.

<sup>252</sup> See also Human Rights Watch p. 26.

<sup>253</sup> Setalvad has filed many lawsuits against agents of the Gujarat state government, including PM Narendra Modi. The Gujarat state police has filed a case against Setalvad and her husband for embezzlement of funds through their NGO Sabrang Trust and the Gujarat government has ordered a probe in April 2015 into misuse of foreign funds "to create communal disharmony". (See for instance <http://www.firstpost.com/india/guj-govt-seeks-probe-into-teesta-setalvads-ngo-for-alleged-misuse-of-ford-foundation-funds-2196594.html>).

Compilations of articles, interviews, investigative reports and other important material such as Varadarajan (2002) and Asghar Ali Engineer's *The Gujarat Carnage* (2002) reveal that while sections of the English speaking and vernacular media and civil rights activists paid a significant role in response to Gujarat<sup>254</sup>, in statist and official discourse, and consequently in their material rehabilitative drive, there were enormous elisions, if not direct support of the violence. We have seen in earlier chapters that many Partition historians in the 1980s and 90s were driven to return to the events of 1947 by this culture of impunity evidenced during the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984, the Mumbai riots of 1992 and other acts of minoritization and violence. In my Introduction I have outlined why I have chosen to include Gujarat within my scope of an ongoing Partition<sup>255</sup>.

Githa Hariharan first responded to Gujarat 2002 through *In Times of Siege* (2003) and then more directly, *Fugitive Histories* (2009), but while drawing on proliferating legal-rights-testimonial discourses, she mobilized the creative space of fiction to make penetrating insights into the field of trauma and its un(representability). While Holocaust-derived ethical models such

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<sup>254</sup> The central and Gujarat government accused the national media, in particular English-speaking media of bias, *The Truth Hurts: Gujarat and the Role of the Media* (Varadarjan 271-304) rather than the clash of two communities they purported the violence to be, focus was on pogrom, carnage (272). However, evidence (eye-witness accounts, journalism) analyzed shows that the violence was mostly due to the regime of impunity granted to right wing Hindu activists (see also Engineer 206-7). The Central government however held that the media inflamed the violence (by showing visuals of the carnage) and insisted instead of evacuating violence and communal particularities from official discourse, thus leading to the abstraction Baxi criticized earlier. A long-standing tradition is that during riots, the government does not name the communities using "group clashes" or "minority community" and majority community" instead. A charge sheet was filed against various media organizations for inciting g hatred by *particularizing*. See Rajdeep Sardesai article in *The Indian Express* 7 March 2002 compiled in Vardaan (275-279).

<sup>255</sup> See especially section in Introduction on Defence Minister Geogre Fernandes' speech in Parliament during the debate on Gujarat April 30, 2002. where he draws a parallel between "the sob stories being told to us [of ethnocidal rape, mutilation and murder]" with events of the anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984 under the Indian National Congress government. It is interesting that artist Nilima Sheikh, living in Ahmedabad during the 2002 violence, had to stall her work on miniaturizing Agha Shahid Ali's poetry on Kashmiri traumas and returned to it with a weighted urgency after 2002, thus linking Gujarat and Kashmir in the same radius.

as those of Levinasian “Other” or Charlotte Delbo’s “sense memory”<sup>256</sup> (recast by Bennett) are theoretically productive when read alongside Hariharan, she also provides ways to further *postcolonial* explorations of trauma, where the exigencies of South Asia shape the relationship between individual and collective traumas, and their socio-political cognates. My chapter will analyze how these different ways of interpreting trauma are configured in *Fugitive Histories*.

At its heart, the novel grapples with the crisis of witnessing and “unrepresentability” that has been at the crux of Trauma and Literary Studies until recently. However, like many of the other writers/artists my dissertation has been exploring, Hariharan by representing “a haptic/somatic” text, by not psychologizing the violence, but also locating it in the material and collective realms, opens it up to a postcolonial analysis. My chapter will examine sections of the text closely to draw out its haptic and somatic aspects. The preoccupation with “nakedness”, “skin” and “vulnerability” that are recurring motifs, will allow me to draw conclusions on the text’s development of a sensorium of vulnerability, albeit in different ways than in Agha Shahid Ali. One of the key themes in this novel is the crisis in witnessing and representation of trauma, and Hariharan focuses mainly on visual representation, spectatorship and “shame”<sup>257</sup> through the character of Asad, a painter. Through Asad, an atheist leftist intellectual drawing his ideological lineages from Nehruvian Socialism and Marxism, we find also a nuanced exploration of the “minoritization” of the “Muslim” in India under Hindutva regime. The sections on Yasmin, a seventeen year old schoolgirl in Ahmedabad, locate a very important argument. While positing the collectivity and materiality of trauma, this section also emphasizes the importance of

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<sup>256</sup> French poet and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo terms “sense memory” or “deep memory” rather than “common memory” sense memory is not narrative, it registers the physical imprint of the memory” writes Jill Bennett(25) in *Empathic Vision* 2005.

<sup>257</sup> On the affect of shame within her model of empathic vision, Bennett writes that shame cannot itself be an objective, except insofar as it promotes a *form of seeing oneself seeing* (90). Mobilizing Edouard Claparede, she posits that visual and performance art evokes the possibility – of both artist and viewer – of being a spectator of one’s own feelings (Bennett 23).

psychologizing and medicalizing trauma for healing. From Hariharan's representation of Yasmin and the group of women in her refugee colony, we find ways to reconcile this need for psychologization with the failure of narrative models of healing in conditions of state-sponsored violence, where the *socio-political* extensions of loss remain unaddressed. Finally, in Mala's "acceptance" of her husband Asad's death and her confrontation of "others" stories through his sketches, the text gestures to a spectatorship or witnessing inflected with sensorial and embodied transactions. Finally, then I will examine Hariharan's representation of history and memory as entanglements with the Other, how stories/address of the Other constitute the subject – in other words, with ethics. It is the ethical aspects of historicizing and memorializing that make *Fugitive Histories* such a crucial intervention into the violence scarred post-Partition South Asian terrain.

*Fugitive Histories* is marked by a preeminence of visuality. The verb "to see" or its alternative "to look" occurs multiple times, very often related to ways of sensing that exceed the dominant organization of senses. For instance, Asad, an artist and non-believing Muslim, is characterized most vividly in his daughter's Sara's memory as a figure who taught her how to "look" and how to interpret what she saw (194). Asad's non-believing Hindu wife Mala eventually learns to "see" his anguished sketches on Gujarat 2002. Yasmin wants Sara to "see" the traumas of the survivors in Ahmedabad that official discourse evacuates (143). More often than not, then, the "sight" privileged by the text is one that is trans-sensorial – in that it is also grounded in the somatic, in tactility (haptic), in other words, in an affective relationship to, and an immersion in, the exterior landscape. In her dissertation, "Syn/Aesthetics: Touch, Sound and Vision in the works of Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Muriel Rukeyser" (2005), Rebecca Scherr writes that Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Malek Alloula and other critics of a dominant visual culture stress that a politics of seeing is a reflection of the larger socio-political-economic

landscape of a given culture which teaches us to interpret the visual world” (9). Scherr quoting Jennifer Rodaway *Relational Sense* (1997) cautions us that sight is concerned with appearances. On its own, it gives us access only to surfaces; thus, vision (even outside states of permanent war) depends on the information provided by other senses and the memory to assist in the interpretation of visual images or surfaces (12). While theorists of cinema like Laura Marks, Hamid Naficy, and others discuss a haptic visuality embraced by certain forms of exilic, feminist or trauma cinema, Jill Bennett develops a framework to cast art as a kind of visual language of trauma and the experiences of conflict and loss (2). Art is cast as a mode of embodied perception (Bennett 10), and responses to trauma art are cast as a transactive experience rather than communicative (Bennett 7), where we are touched by and come to embody the art object’s sensations but it does not necessarily communicate “the secret” of personal experience<sup>258</sup> (7). Rather than mimic the trauma, the viewer “feels into it” (Bennett 14). She terms this “empathic vision.” Bennett’s elaboration of this empathic vision is a productive site through which to enter into the visual realm of trauma that Hariharan renders through Asad’s sketches. Like Bennett’s concern with the ethics of witnessing without appropriating another’s story, Hariharan has often spoken of a similar dilemma: “How do we speak for others? It is both a philosophical and a craft question”. (Githa Hariharan *The Indian Express*, 2009<sup>259</sup>). *Fugitive Histories*’ central question, then, is how others’ stories influence us, in other words with ethics. Apart from its visual tropes, the text also appears to privilege what Dipesh Chakrabarty in “Subject of Law and Subject of Narratives” in *Habitations of Modernity* (2002) terms a social intervention through narrative (supplementing social intervention through law or abstract theory) (110), where the reforming

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<sup>258</sup> Bennett (like Hariharan) struggles with the ethics of witnessing and the appropriation of another’s story. The “Caruthian” witness Bennett claims, in spite of her self-reflexivity, often claims and appropriates trauma of another. By rendering the witnessing relationship empathic and transactive, the Other remains irreducible while also transforming the witness and the collective.

<sup>259</sup> “A novel discord” Interview by Mohan Ramamoorthy.

subject of nineteenth century Bengali reformist narratives was placed “face to face” with the cruelty of sati or widows’ oppression. “Instead of history of the public sphere” and moves towards legislation, Chakrabarty privileges “histories embodied in the feelings of compassion that Rammohun [Roy] or [Ishwarchandra] Vidyasagar felt when personally confronted by the horrors of Bengali widowhood” (103-104). Levinasian ethics<sup>260</sup> proves the link between Bennett, Chakrabarty (and indeed Hariharan) by the act of confronting, of *facing the particular* (Chakrabarty 105), a confrontation we can mobilize to supplement the universalist fixed gaze of the law (105). While Chakrabarty focuses on the discursive (narrative) aspects of this face-to-face- encounter and Bennett privileges the non-discursive, Hariharan’s *Fugitive Histories* allows an engagement with both, thus inviting a challenging of boundaries of discursive vs. material or cognitive vs. embodied.

*Fugitive Histories* has multiple threads and my reading will draw mainly from three of these. A central strand involves Mala’s coming to terms with her husband Asad’s untimely death in his sleep from a heart attack. Asad’s disillusionment and vulnerability as a “minority” subject within India, his helpless response from the nation’s capital New Delhi to the events in Ahmedabad, his “empathy” that turns dangerous, and his psychosomatic symptoms of depression manifest themselves in an artistic crisis, and later, in a diagnosis of arrhythmia. Mala watches him helplessly. A crucial part of this narrative involves Mala coming face to face with the paintings Asad had been working on in response to the Gujarat pogrom. Filled at first with fear, even revulsion, she gradually gets to the point where she recognizes that the artistic works, including

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<sup>260</sup>For an extended analysis of Levinasian ethics, the face and vulnerability, see Judith Butler *Precarious Life* (2004). Butler addresses her theory of grief as formative of political community through levinasian ethics: “how others make moral claims upon us, [...] ones that we are not free to refuse (Butler 131). To respond to the face[...] means to be awake to what is precarious in another life (Butler 134).

one unfinished/unbegun one, needs her (an empathetic audience) to *feel* it (220) although it remains inscrutable and irreducible.

A second strand follows their daughter Sara's encounters with the survivors and refugees of Gujarat violence in Ahmedabad as part of a two member team from an NGO making a documentary film. Much of her work involves documenting/recording testimonies. She grows closer to Yasmin, finds herself confronting a crisis of the ethical witness (192) and in the end, does not know if she will continue with the film, with the asking of questions, with "making them remember" (232). Haunted by memories of a childhood friend, Laila, who was burned to death in the 1992 Mumbai riots, and by "the awful [...] demand that you make friends of strangers (191) Sara decides "she doesn't know what to do" (234), she can only "feel" (234). The narrative leaves her on the brink of an epiphany: Asad had always been the one teaching her to "see"... she now "sees" him silhouetted against the Arabian Sea (from her boyfriend's apartment) and learns at last to "see" like him. The difference in perception/interpretation is registered through the new embodied relationship Sara discovers with the expanse of water she has been looking at since childhood. In this "seeing" we have echoes of Charlotte Delbo's sense memory or deep memory which works through sensorial imprinting<sup>261</sup>. Sara senses the sea by immersing herself, "giving herself up to it" (215). The narrative defines this as a seeing (anything) *up close* or *being a part of it*. (215). It is thus a haptic, affective, immersive experience. In this move towards "seeing close up" we are invited into political community and responsibility founded on affective histories of citizenship as gestured to by Chakrabarty (2002) (103). These histories, far from positivist and empirical, are fugitive and relational.

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<sup>261</sup> French poet and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo terms "sense memory" or "deep memory" rather than "common memory" sense memory is not narrative, it registers the physical imprint of the memory writes Bennett (25).

The third important strand, follows Yasmin and her parents, as they struggle with their diminished lives in post-riot Gujarat in a “relief” colony. Yasmin is haunted by recurring flashbacks and nightmares of a violent assault that stopped just short of rape; she is also beleaguered by the memory of Akbar, her missing elder brother and an aspiring medical student. Yasmin’s trauma is represented through her anxiety and hypervigilance as she charts the road from home to school and back every day. Through her perceptions and immersion in the space of the city, an affective map of the city is created. Her trauma is registered through ruptures of memory, proprioception, sense of space, navigation and other forms of embodied perception. This is mirrored in her failure in the State exams in the subjects of history and geography – significantly. At the close of the narrative, Yasmin passes her exam finally, and receives an offer from Sara to stay with her and go to college in Mumbai.

One of the key moments in the text occurs when Yasmin recognizes that her parents and she have each found “some little thing” (150) to help them bear what she calls their “pretend house” and “pretend life” in the relief colony. Her Ammi tries to stitch together hours, days and nights through the continuous motion and routine of her sewing. Her Abba keeps staring at the lines on his palms, he has withdrawn himself so much that his world has shrunk to the size of his hands and or that is the extent he can know (151). Yasmin, herself, turns to Akbar’s old biology notebook, smoke-stained, battered, and full of painstakingly drawn diagrams. She had salvaged it from their burning house. This book is her secret and through it she has a bit of Akbar all to herself. The neat penciled drawings and labels fill her with a sense of wonder, as “if she stands at the edge of a new continent” (151-2). “How can a body, a messy body that sweats and pains and bleeds, have such neatly designed insides,” she wonders.

“Yasmin traces the penciled outline on the page with her finger, whispering the soothing, long names on the diagrams. *Parietal lobe of the cerebrum*<sup>262</sup>. *Corpus callosum. medulla oblongata*. She finds that chanting these names fills her with mysterious comfort, maybe because they name parts of the body she has never actually seen”(152). The parietal lobe of the cerebrum integrates sensory information including spatial sense and navigation, sense of touch and the visual system: three sensory complexes that in Yasmin’s case, have been splintered by her trauma. Fascinated by order (like the ordering of time and the paring/diminishing of space) then, for her it is the sense of design and neatness of the body where the violent breaching of boundaries, leaking and seepage is confounded by this heterotopic space of orderliness. (Foucault). Heterotopia” is a Latin word that translates literally as a place of otherness. In “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias” Foucault writes that “while utopias are sites with no real place, heterotopias are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (3) Foucault gives the example of mirrors and prisons as heterotopias.<sup>263</sup>

Parts of the body Yasmin has never actually seen evoke the other the parts she *has* seen in the orgy of mutilating violence, in the severance of reproductive organs, fetuses, limbs and torsos. The heterotopic space of Akbar’s anatomical diagrams exists outside of and counter to the death-making, anatomizing State apparatuses. As we have seen in Chapter Three, the body’s recesses, surfaces and senses are reorganized into political zones by torturing /disciplinary

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<sup>262</sup> Responsible, among various modalities, for spatial sense and navigation (See proprioception), the main sensory receptive area for the sense of touch (See somatosensation) in the somatosensory cortex which is just posterior to the central sulcus in the postcentral gyrus,[1] and the dorsal stream of the visual system. The major sensory inputs from the skin (touch, temperature, and pain receptors) relay through the thalamus to parietal lobe.

<sup>263</sup> From: *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* October, 1984; (“Des Espace Autres,” March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec

regimes. Aretxaga (1997) illuminates how the body recodes its cavities into “a zone of trickery” via the example of the blanket men during the Dirty Protests in Northern Ireland, who used their bodies’ cavities to secret messages and items in and out of the prison (Aretxaga 199). In Hariharan, Yasmin’s heterotopic imagining grants the inner cavity and the organs a similar secret edge: they point to “other” regimes of sensorial mattering, place-making, tactility and vision. The soothing sounds on her tongue, the sounds in her ears, and this ordering of the insides of a body in contradiction to the state-sponsored anatomization re- affixes her in relation to her senses and her affect-world<sup>264</sup>.

I will argue that this sense of “placeness” Akbar’s book gives Yasmin is significant. The metaphor of standing on the edge of new continent emphasizes this place-making gesture. Until Foucault published his meditations on heterotopia, the word was a medical term attached to the study of anatomy. In medical science, “heterotopia” refers to the *displacement* of a bodily organ from its normal position: it denotes “parts of the body that are either out of place, missing, extra” or “other” (Hetherington 42) in terms of corporeal matter, such as the growth of a tumor(quoted in Burrows<sup>265</sup> 168). This acquires an ethnocidal accent in Hariharan’s depiction of the morgue dead: bodies “cut, missing an arm, a leg, even a head. New body parts growing, an iron rod, a hammer, a wooden stump or screw driver, bodies burnt like coal, crumble into gritty black powder” (137). I would also suggest reading Yasmin’s constant sense of an organ missing within this episteme of displacements. Sometimes, Yasmin uses her hand like a mirror, runs it over herself to check that she is really there, all of her. But she still feels an emptiness where her hand can’t reach, somewhere in the pit of her stomach<sup>266</sup>. Something is missing” (144). “It’s terrifying,” she thinks, “this sitting inside yourself and still losing yourself” (145). Once again, we have this

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<sup>264</sup> For more on trauma, place, and affect-worlds see Kabir’s essay (“Affect, Body, Place” (2014 p63-75).

<sup>265</sup> The Heterotopic Spaces Of Postcolonial Trauma In Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*

<sup>266</sup> The stomach manifests many symptoms of stress.

sense of an “inside/outside mattering that has been breached. You could physically be intact, and yet have parts missing (trauma). But Yasmin’s gestures also embody a *haptic seeing*: her “hand run[s] over her body like a mirror); the text mobilizes this haptic seeing or “feeling seeing” (Bennett 10) multiple times to place trauma in a responsive, transactive context.

Later, when Yasmin shows Sara her school textbooks, Sara is distracted by Akbar’s photograph and his battered notebooks inside a transparent plastic bag. In the photograph, Akbar’s blue cap, yellow t-shirt and red-motorbike announce his physical materiality and vitality. Yasmin recollects her memories of him. But she later realizes that she’s forgetting the “real” Akbar. She prefers the biology notebook which lets her imagine Akbar in more embodied, sensorial ways than the instant captured in the photograph. She can sense by tracing his diagrams and interacting with the surfaces his skin had touched, “ how he must have looked, how he must have been dreaming as he drew those diagrams, wrote those long words in neat black-inked print” (168). Memory is thus trans-sensorial, imprinted with sensation and this re-membering through touching, feeling and seeing, destabilizes the regimes of violence that render Akbar “a missing” member/person.

Moreover, in the “seeing” Yasmin urges on Sara, with regard to Gujarat’s survivors, we find the imprint of this trans-sensoriality. Yasmin wonders in the same scene described above, “Has Didi (elder sister) understood what she’s been saying? Can she really see what it was like, what it *is* like? There were the dead to be seen, there are still the wounded to be seen. And the missing – they too must be seen, because there’s more than one way in which a person can go missing” (143). Through this preoccupation with Yasmin’s traumatic memories, flashbacks and her ruptured relationship with place<sup>267</sup>, Hariharan wants to open a space for psychologization of

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<sup>267</sup> I will not have the time to develop these at length. The novel describes her walking through the ghettoized Muslim neighborhoods and relief tenements in Ahmedabad warily because “the city has put up maps and borders: she has to

her trauma. A report collected from “Carnage in Gujarat: A Public Health Crisis, Report of the Investigation by Medico Friends Circle, New Delhi, May 2002” (Vardarajan 347) details the extremely hostile and insecure atmosphere at relief camps: Medical Officers at these camps consistently undermined the importance of dealing with psychological trauma. Any sign that people were returning to their routine was taken as proof that they were not traumatized. When a member of the medico team pointed out that disturbed appetite could be a sign of PTSD, an officer immediately retorted “Oh, they eat very well...” (347). Another senior government health administrator opined “the camp inmates do not have the brains to understand that they are suffering from stress and mental trauma” (347). Camp volunteers on the other hand took pains to listen and attend to the inmates’ emotional states. This is not a matter of ticking off western checklists of symptoms that Summerfield critiqued while arguing that very often trauma experts follow paradigms that may not be applicable ((Summerfield 1455). Suffering arises from, and is resolved in, a social context, shaped by the meanings and understandings applied to events (1454). In this case, though, in a social context that denied suffering, denied meaning and denied the “*subject*” of experience, resolution was indeed difficult. Biomedical approaches are certainly imposed knowledge systems. However, in denying the pain, cognitive and affective responses of the survivors, the attitude documented shows how biomedical paradigms might sometimes, in postcolonial societies, allow an emergence of voice and subjectivity<sup>268</sup> that the paternalistic, (here democidal) State cannot permit. Perhaps then, the medicalized heterotopic space Yasmin mobilizes earlier can be linked to this complex. Hariharan certainly does not suggest an

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divide the map into places she can be in and can’t be in; she has to identify the borders in between, borders that wall in some places, wall out some people. (147) It is through her perceptions of a makeshift camp - pretending filthy cloth and plastic will make a roof - naming itself Rahim (merciful) Park Housing Society, when what it offers is none of the above, among other depictions of belonging and emplacement that Hariharan renders Yasmin’s trauma.

<sup>268</sup> For a thorough exploration of this see Veena Das, “Disability and Domestic Citizenship: Voice, Gender, and the Making of the Subject”

evacuation of the violence and exclusion in those knowledge systems, as the next section will illustrate.

My argument is that *Fugitive Histories* offers us a model to view postcolonial trauma in more nuanced ways locating trauma as a transactive relationship more affective and sensorial than discursive. Here, I would like to point out that while arguing for the need for biomedical, psychologized spaces to recuperate and relieve survivors of violence, it also angles itself from what postcolonial critics of trauma like Stef Craps, Rebecca Saunders, and others consider a too narrow focus on individualization and psychologization of trauma. In the absence of rehabilitatory material programs and a socio-political context of addressing trauma, these remain incomplete. The privileging of narrative healing in Freud-inspired psychoanalysis is not unquestionably assumed here. Hariharan's novel has been written after involvement with the survivors, testimonies, narratives etc. It is a well-researched response to the event. In parts, it directly borrows from the language of these testimonies. I will analyze at some length, a section where the women and children living in Yasmin's building and the surrounding tenements gather together with Yasmin's Ammi (Mother) sewing skirts and recording their experiences with Sara and her colleague Nina.

Yasmin hears a wail as she climbs up the dinghy stairs, "it's as if Muharram has come at the wrong time" (152) the narrative describes it in visceral terms as "the congealed lump inside each [woman] begins to loosen and melt" (154). They repeat to each other what happened to them and their families and neighbors again and again. However, instead of relief, the narrative makes it clear there is only a sense of dissociation and disjunction that is emphatically linked to the absence of material conditions of relief and reparation. The narrative highlights this with the repeated use of "may" to denote uncertainty or at best an unrealized possibility ("they *may*

believe the events if they keep repeating them”). The recoding machine gives their testimonies an added context of movement and outreach, but that possibility is also quietly destabilized: “the recording machine *may trick them* into believing that their words will be taken out of here to someplace else, a place where people, believe in righting wrongs [my italics]” (154). In this section of the narrative, there are allusions to actual testimonies and reports collected. For instance, mothers talk about pulling their children out of English-medium schools as the school authorities and teachers were doing “*partition work*” singling Muslims out with accusations of being Pakistani or terrorists or not good enough <sup>269</sup>(156). Their accounts repeat eyewitness records that crowds armed with weapons - swords, pipes, hockey sticks, soda-lemon bottles, sharp weapons, petrol bombs, gas cylinders - chanting “Kill them, cut them, burn them” attacked them in a frenzy of killing, raping, maiming, burning. They recount the violence against women, the raping, severing, maiming (159). They recount police complicity during and after the violence. They narrate how their cityscape turned into a necropolis, a proliferation of crypts “we could do nothing but hide” (in graves, underground in the water tank, in the well) (163); their sense of abandonment (“We are orphans. We have no police, no government, no country” (164) and incarceration (“Now we are prisoners in our own city”(164). They also affirm resilience and post-traumatic growth (“People don’t want revenge; they want to *live* again” announces one woman (165), and this is taken up as a refrain by many around the room (166).

However, Hariharan makes it very clear that verbalizing and recounting does not always bring healing – in the absence of systemic support. Hence, very soon, the stories “rise like a wall trying to jail Yasmin” they become “a locked jail that wants her to live *in* it for the rest of her life” (155). In yet another indictment of individualization and psychologization in the absence of

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<sup>269</sup> See 'Sisters under the Skin': Events of 2002 and Girls' Education in Ahmedabad Author(s): Suchitra Sheth and Nina Haeems Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 41, No. 17 (Apr. 29 - May 5, 2006), pp. 1708-1712 for the impact of the violence on young Muslim women's lives and mobility.

material restitution, the women feel like “disembodied voices” to Yasmin. Yasmin “can no longer see which voice in the room belongs to which body or whether the voices have bodies at all. They are just voices, nothing else, because if they were really bodies, really *people*, wouldn’t someone have heard them by now, given them some justice in five long years” (162)?

This indictment of narrative is emphasized by the visceral, corporeal imagery Hariharan adopts to describe the transformation Sara undergoes as she listens and records: “The embryonic [film] script leak[s] out of her”(161), Yasmin’s scar from her assault “throbs”(160), Sara’s hand is “damp” (160). Finally in an embodied transactive encounter, Yasmin wonders how “Other people’s stories [got] into her (162). Yasmin’s perception of this encounter - inflected by her observations of the oily stain on the cement floor, the dust trapped in a crevice that an ant is slowly *measuring* – evoke other ways of sensing/interpreting (viscosity, texture, depth, etc.) that destabilize or at least accent the discursive.

In fact, Sara too recognizes that in the chants [thy] cut and burnt, cut and burnt, “there’s an empty space [...] *between* the cutting and burning [...] when a living person felt the breaking blow. Or the piercing stab. Or the burning lick of a tongue of fire” (163). Hence, language or discursivity alone cannot make this “transaction”. Something more is needed. Sara does not know yet what that is. But in Yasmin, we can already see an embodied haptic seeing and listening. Sara will as my summary detailed, learn to “see” in the ways Asad and Yasmin can, both through her encounter with Yasmin and her confrontation of the entombed memories of her childhood friend Laila, burnt to death in the 1992 Mumbai riots. Sara’s father Asad’s response offers yet another mode of witnessing trauma that privileges the sensory and haptic. In fact, it is the text’s most unique offering: Asad has died, and his latest sketchbooks contain a traumatic secret that Mala, his wife, postpones confronting. However, it the interaction between Asad’s

artistic “sight” into Gujarat and Mala’s internalization and acceptance of it, that the novel makes its most significant intervention. In the next section, I briefly examine some of Asad’s sketches which the text describes in detail.

When Mala first opens Asad’s trunk she sees the neat rows of sketchbooks, stacked up against each other, and as she reaches out, “her skin thrills with static”. The books are dog-eared, dusty; they thus carry the imprint of Asad’s touch, the dust particles containing skin shedding and dermal traces. The preoccupation with nakedness, and the epidermal, is reemphasized, when Mala *feels* the cover of Asad’s sketchbook and is surprised by its “ raw pink naked color usually hidden by skin “ (197). The first sketch Mala encounters, *Broken Home, February 2002*, renders a home with its walls broken in, and jagged, exposed brickwork. A man with a knife sticking out of his back occupies the space, as do “two very live bodies” (198) on the floor. This man is gripping the woman’s hair and her wrist in “his punishing grip” (199); her torn off clothes uncover her buttocks and raised legs, “shockingly bare of shading” “more naked than bare skin” (199). A second sketchbook sardonically titled *Indian Freedom 1992-2002* is “full of faces” the faces reveal what may lurk just under the skin, twist human faces into masks, mock the normalcy of real faces. Another sketchbook contains a naked man kneeling on the floor whose face looks up the Mala imploring her to “help”. She recognizes with a jolt of shock Asad’s look, replacing his vitality, argumentativeness, his dazzling love of life (209).

Asad in the days preceding his premature death, could no longer distinguish between his story, [Mala and his love] story, and “other people’s stories” (209). Then he begins to paint again, but just as suddenly, the crisis restarts. He becomes secretive, almost *ashamed* of the painting (my word): he covers it, turns the easel to the wall, sneaks in to look at the painting (213-4). This shame as I have outlined above is to quote Bennett, the shame of a spectator *seeing himself*

*seeing*, and plays a significant role in her model of empathic vision. This self-reflexive transaction between Asad and his subject is further explored through Mala's viewing of this last charcoal sketch: It depicts five men in a circle on the right holding various weapons (empty bottle, screw driver, iron rod, butcher's knife, petrol soaked rag on a stick.) There is a sixth empty-handed man crouching in fear, his head hanging (214). But there's yet another man, a man of "indescribable" look who remains "mute, cannot raise his hand or open his mouth to protest" (214) i.e. the artist as witness.

Yet, it is Asad's final unfinished painting that moves Mala to "see" with the depth and hapticity the narrative has been privileging. The words used evoke the touching together of surfaces: the painting is only a "*layered* surface, [the only] *relief* is from the tonal variation created by the *rubbed* and *blotted* pigment. The burnt sienna and madder [shades of red] spread like a *stain*. No figures in the painting, no identifiable object. It's only a *texture*, a *scratchy surface*. It only *feels*, it says nothing (220) (my italics).

Yet, it is this absence of a discernible meaning or narrative that transmits a transactive charge: it "makes Mala feel, just for an instant something like the warm rushing blood of life, when she touches it. If she rubs harder, she may find people hidden underneath [...] *some* evidence of life.(220). The painting "[its] skin," "or body that used to be Asad's" (220) remains uncompromisingly silent. At the close of the novel, Mala is content to let the secret remain inaccessible; instead, she takes the palette knife and paintbrush to a pond in her compound. While the knife sinks, the brush rests against the underwater roots of the *amaltas* trees getting ready to burst into yellow bloom. Thus, rather than an appropriation and claiming of others' traumas, *Fugitive Histories* privileges an *entanglement* with others' stories and memories, a relationality that is affective.

## Conclusion

How do we reconcile this preeminence of non-discursive visuality in a discursive *novel*, lyrical and diffuse though it is? I would want to term *Fugitive Histories* a somatic and epidermal text. As it enacts its own epidermalization and fragmentation, there are a number of ways Hariharan draws attention to an overwhelming embedding of trauma - not in the interiority of the subject alone - but in the socio-political world. The epidermalization of trauma is linked with a haptic visualization; a mattering of sight as touch and feeling, is, as we have seen, a leitmotif in *Fugitive Histories*. This form of seeing, and the empathic, embodied “transaction” it mobilizes, is especially important in the context of the “culture of impunity” and “percepticide” enacted by the *Hindutvavaadi* State upon the Indian Muslim. Facing or confronting is additionally linked to the ethical demands made on us by the other, the implications of which, are once again, grounded in the political world. *Fugitive Histories* then can be read productively alongside many Holocaust-derived epistemes (Levinas or Bennett). However, it locates a postcolonial episteme of trauma simultaneously.

One way of making sense of this is to examine *Fugitive Histories*’ cover illustration<sup>270</sup>. It evokes the same texture and hapticity of skin in its rendering of a map of India. The conflation of place, sight and skin is a trope we have followed. The membranous surface is yellow, stained with blood that has thickened and pooled near the India-Pakistan border. The border looks like surgical sutures on a still oozing wound. Two disembodied hands/arms emerge from the surface of the map, with one clasping the other’s wrist. Although they appear disembodied, the arms are fleshly; you can see the shape of the bones and the sinews under the skin. The grip of the first is

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<sup>270</sup> The cover is done by Rosana Claudia Marchini(photograph), Gunjan Ahlawat(design) and Urmimala(illustration).

strong and muscular, whereas the second appears almost life-less – its bones more jagged, its fingers almost skeletal. However, a *crooked* thumb registers a faint gesture of response. On the map, place-names are printed. Delhi, Ahmedabad and Mumbai are in bold- as these are the cities linked in the novel through Mala, Yasmin and Sara. We may read into this faint gesture of the crooked thumb, something like the vulnerability or precarity of the Other that Levinas (albeit in a specific theosophical gnosis) finds in Vassili Grossman's *Life and Fate*. Levinas describes families of political detainees traveling to Lubyanka in Moscow to hear news of their loved ones. Since a line forms at the counter, one can only see the *backs* of these relatives. Yet, “from the particular way they craned their neck and their back, their raised shoulder blades like springs, which seemed to cry, sob, and scream (PP 167), he reads in them the ethical address of the other<sup>271</sup>. Thus the experience of *Fugitive Histories*, both in terms of its discursive narrative as well as its visual aspects, allows a unique vantage point to, in the novel's words, “see” and “feel” postcolonial traumas as entanglements with the Other.

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<sup>271</sup> Butler uses this excerpt to illustrate that the “face” need not be an actual human face (Butler 135).

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