

‘Fragmentary evidence’: the struggle to narrate Partition

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In the gaping absence of public memorials or museums dedicated to the Partition of India the narration of this traumatic story is vital to its commemoration. Yet the tragedy of the violent events of 1947, which saw mass displacement, death, abduction and rape, is punctuated by silence. Such silence is comparable to that surrounding the Holocaust, which is the focus of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s invaluable work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. This book presents silence as the ‘fated exile’ of many victims or survivors of trauma and suggests that, though it can be regarded as a place of defeat, silence is also a sanctuary where certain words do not have to be spoken (Felman and Laub 58). In this way, silence is portrayed as a black hole, echoing the black hole of genocide. However Laub, as a psychoanalyst, works with those survivors who attempt to *learn* how to tell the story of their trauma; for he states trauma is “an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after’ and is therefore ‘outside the range of comprehension” (ibid 69). Such a description is certainly relevant to testimonies about Partition, the consequences of which were incomprehensible. The survivors of the horrific violence of this time have struggled to put into words such an incoherent tragedy, as is evidenced in Urvashi Butalia’s seminal work, *The Other Side of Silence*. With regard to her interviews with Partition survivors, Butalia discovered that a fluid account of Partition was impossible, she states:

Tellings . . . would be left incomplete: I learnt to recognize this, the mixing of time past and time present, the incompleteness, often even contradictoriness, in the stories as part of the process of remembering, to oneself and to others.

(18)

Learning how to tell the story of trauma is connected to the difficulty of learning how to remember, since selective memory plays an important role in the suppression of events over many years. However, it is also true that our selves are essentially storied (Bell and Gardiner 37) and, despite the obstacles, the articulation of traumatic memory eventually prevails over the force of time and the inclination to forget. In the context of the Holocaust, survivors “are usually depicted as overwhelmed by memories and unwilling to recount their tale for fear of the pain it will re-evoke. Their problem is not the limits of memory but of language” (Kirmayer 174). This comment cements the centrality but also the restrictions of language in narrating trauma and leads to the question of how exactly, and with what kind of language, the trauma of Partition in India can be narrated.

Pierre Nora, speaking about national history and memory in the context of France, exposes a critical truth about people’s connection to past events when he declares that:

The whole dynamic of our relation to the past is shaped by the subtle interplay between the inaccessible and the nonexistent. If the old ideal was to resurrect the past, the new ideal is to create a representation of it . . . we find ourselves in a fragmented universe. (12)

Thus, we ought to consider whether representing Partition in India gives rise to such a fragmented universe. Some of the major responses to Partition clearly offer interrupted and incomplete stories, such as the successful novel *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa (1989), which omits a direct description of the events following Ayah’s abduction. Similarly, in Jyotirmoyee Devi’s eminent novel, *The River Churning* (1968), the sexual assault of the young protagonist Sutara is insinuated but never clarified. These incomplete stories of abduction and sexual violence draw attention to the limits of language or the gaps in-between words or indeed in-between silences. Language can be chosen and utilized to give voice to memories and ideas, but we must also think about how these memories and ideas are

themselves shaped by the availability of language; for in some instances words are an inadequate form of expression and the artist must employ other means to portray his or her vision. Frequently, in response to traumatic events, the inadequacy of language leads to a complete absence of vocabulary, meaning that silences, pauses, and gaps prevail. Yet these silences are as important as words are in the expression of or coming to terms with an event, since more can possibly be read from silence than from speech. Furthermore the fragments of a story often come to light in the obscured spaces between words and between silences and offer an insight into the real essence of a narrative. The effectiveness of this kind of fragmentation is embodied by Saleem Sinai in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) who was doomed to view his life, and therefore India's, in fragments through a "perforated sheet". "Buffeted too much by history," Saleem is riddled with cracks, and yet he manages to competently remember and convey sixty-three years of existence in South Asia more effectively than most history books.

At this juncture let us turn to specific examples of responses to Partition in order to address the complex issue of narration and the potential role that the fragmented narrative technique plays in it. Ritwik Ghatak's films *Komal Gandhar* (1961) and *Subarnarekha* (1965) will be examined alongside Tabish Khair's novel, *Filming: a love story* (2007), and Ken McMullen's cinematic adaptation, *Partition* (1987), of Saadat Hasan Manto's short story about the Punjab borderland, "Toba Tek Singh" (1955). This selection of creative responses address the Partition of India without any geographical bias, insofar as attention is given to the Western side focussing on the region of Punjab and the nations of Pakistan and India, as well as to the Eastern side, which includes the state of Bengal and the nations of India and East Pakistan.

The films of Bengali director Ritwik Ghatak were underappreciated in his own lifetime and even since his death in 1976 his work is often overshadowed by his more famous

contemporary from Bengal, Satyajit Ray. However, Ray surprisingly did not address Partition in any of his films but rather chose to omit this difficult and traumatic topic from his artistic work. But Ritwik Ghatak could not help but face the consequences of 1947 in his films since his world was irrevocably changed by the Partition. He made three films which are together referred to as his Partition trilogy, *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Komal Gandhar* and *Subarnarekha*, but at no point in these films can Partition be said to be dealt with directly. Instead this event provides the backdrop to his stories as his characters are forced to live with the death and displacement that occurred in 1947. The predominant reason for the underlying presence of Partition in these films can be attributed to the constant personal loss that Ghatak felt as a result of the Partition of Bengal which then in turn haunted his work. Of his migration from Dhaka to Calcutta in the early 1940s, Ghatak laments;

I could never forget East Bengal. I am still under the spell of the open fields, the paddy fields, the blue sky and above all the river *Padma*. East Bengal lies at the root of my ability to love the whole of Bengal. Many like me were uprooted when (they) partitioned Bengal for their (own) benefits. This is an unforgettable sorrow. I have based my art on this. (Ghatak, Dasgupta et al. 33)

The resultant art engages with Partition to varying degrees of indirectness, since the three films view Partition from a distance and are more concerned about its far-reaching consequences than the actual events of 1947. One of the major consequences of Partition was the creation of millions of refugees who migrated between West Bengal and East Pakistan over an extended period following August 1947. For example, although not a main focus in this paper, the film *Meghe Dhaka Tara* tells the tragic story of the young woman Nita who symbolises the difficulties of refugee life in Calcutta, its daily struggles and injustices, and ultimately the sacrifices she makes for those around her. *Komal Gandhar*, conversely, sees an acting troupe playing the roles of landless refugees who have been forced to leave East

Bengal, thereby portraying a play within a film where the subject matter is twice removed from the viewer. The female protagonist, Anasuya, is told to use the emotion of 1947 and her memories of forced migration for her performance in the play, much like what Ghatak is doing in making his film. This distance is maintained throughout the film because any references to 1947 are kept to the sphere of broken memories or flashes of mourning and nostalgia for the past. Bhaskar Sarkar's accomplished work, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*, offers an important insight into the vitality of cinema to the specific task of mourning Partition. Anchoring itself in three elements, the Indian nation, trauma, and cinema, Sarkar's book states:

Cinema, in particular, provides a powerful and captivating means of cultural memorialisation; it pulls together the fragments and reassembles the past via considerable acts of reimagining. This form of cultural recall entails, beyond a simple recovery of the past, the creative revivification of an archive of inert data and fragmentary evidence. (301)

Partition is reimagined in *Subarnarekha* as the film opens in New Life Colony in West Bengal, where refugees from Partition try years later to create homes and survive while wealthy landowners drive them off the land. The audience witnesses the terrible forced separation of the young Aviram from his mother as she is taken away by the landowner's men. Although no more detail is given of this, such destruction of families and their homes is unfortunately an archetypal image of Partition aftermath. Another implicit allusion to 1947 is the novel which an older Aviram is trying to write. We are not told exactly what the novel is about but can imagine its content when Ishvar, Aviram's adopted father/guardian, reproaches him for writing "sadness, suffering, tears", to which Aviram replies, "but this is what we see around us". Later the publisher he approaches laughs at him and tells him there is "suffering all round but no one wants to read about it". Once again Ghatak depicts an act of creativity

within his own creative act, in this case a novel, and in *Komal Gandhar*, a play. Both seem to deal more directly with the violence and suffering of Partition than his films do but employing these tropes allows Ghatak to maintain a distance from the traumatic memory while at the same time voicing it in his work.

However, Ghatak's reticence is not the only obstacle to addressing the subject of Partition, since his audience in the 1960s would undoubtedly have found it very challenging to remember the harsh realities of 1947 in a form of entertainment such as cinema. The aforementioned comment by Aviram's publisher could be emblematic of the mass audience's feelings at the time about Ghatak's films when very few people were publicly writing about or portraying the recent Partition – the focus of popular cinema and literature was on that which would distract from the bad memories, not dwell on them. Thus Ghatak frames his references to Partition within the cinematic form, at once showing the marginality of and the silence surrounding the topic, and at the same time revealing how certain people did recognise the great significance of speaking about or depicting it. Aviram in *Subarnarekha* and the acting troupe lead by Bhriku in *Komal Gandhar* strive to build and put forward their work despite the difficulties facing them. Their passion drives them to pursue their art, as does a need to address the subject of Partition, something that can unquestionably be said of their creator, Ritwik Ghatak.

Yet it becomes steadily apparent that Ghatak's cinema can only tackle Partition from an oblique stance. He particularly uses images of the physical landscape in this regard to evoke the memory of a united Bengal and that of its forgotten or suppressed past from an off-center position. Through the shots of the beautiful scenery of rural Bengal, the director allows his characters to remember the past in brief snapshots and depicts only moments of their mourning, often with no words. For instance, in *Subarnarekha*, while he and Sita are in a silent forest, Aviram outlines the story of his new novel which is clearly autobiographical. He

talks about his village, which is now in East Pakistan, and speaking in the third person of his novel's hero states, "Since childhood he used to wonder where he had come from". While remembering his mother whom he lost during the migration that followed Partition, Aviram tells Sita "I was never able to write it down" but manages in these surroundings to whisper, which is of course key, his innermost thoughts. This exchange also reveals their feelings for each other as Aviram suddenly whispers to Sita "Since when have you let all this remain hidden in your heart?" A panoramic view of the landscape and the flowing water of the river Subarnarekha follows this forest scene and is accompanied only by Sita's song. These sacred and undisturbed moments between the film's protagonists and the physical land permit memories to surface and emotions to stir.

Aviram's and Sita's effort to remember traumatic events is portrayed as an acutely complex act which calls into question the usefulness of language and the inevitability of the presence of gaps and silences. In the case of Aviram's fragmented memory, his story comes to light in the obscured spaces between his words and silence, when the audience members put the pieces together in their own minds. The complementary relationship between this kind of fragmented memory and the cinematic image is essential because films allow ruptured memories of loss and violence to flash across the screen, to appear and disappear, as they would in the mind. In this way, the genre of film also facilitates a mobility of narrative that is understandably useful in addressing the disorganized store of traumatic memories about Partition, that is, film embraces what have been called, "narrative journeys of psychic splitting and reintegration" (Curtis and Pajaczkowska 212).

Another instance of such ruptured narrative journeys is portrayed in *Komal Gandhar* when the acting troupe visits the river Padma and, staring across to East Bengal, or what is now East Pakistan, Anasuya reveals that she "didn't realize (her) birthplace was so near". This rouses Bhrigu to speak about his home, which is also on the other side of the river, and

he proceeds to tell Anasuya how he would meet his mother via the railway line, which is now broken and ends abruptly where the land of Bengal is divided. Anasuya is unable to speak of her own pain on hearing Bhrigu's memories and, before she breaks down in tears at their shared traumatic experience, there are rapid shots of the broken train tracks and of the two figures. As the camera races along the tracks to the dead-end at the water's edge, a threatening soundtrack can be heard in the background, and the scene suddenly blacks out with a "searing scream in Anasuya's heart" (Ghatak 51). Evidently the protagonists as well as the director are only permitted to remember a certain amount about past events; the resurfaced memories of the forced migration which followed Partition is responsible for bringing the scene to an abrupt end. Furthermore, as Bhaskar Sarkar crucially points out, when Bhrigu and Anasuya begin to bond over their similar pasts the screen explodes into darkness and their union is halted; their bond now "has to transcend the confusing and dislocating traces of an immense social cataclysm" (222). In many ways this too is precisely what Ghatak must do in order to make sense of his and of Bengal's past. But by drawing on the enduring landscape of Bengal, he refuses to forget the 'immense social cataclysm' of Partition and firmly places it, albeit in fragments, in the present.

Furthermore, the innate inner fragmentation of the director Ritwik Ghatak has been recognised by Sarkar when he comments that, "the very base of his Bengali identity . . . is fragmented, . . . His films, specially those constituting the Partition trilogy, may be understood as attempts to work through the loss of a unitary Bengali self, to accept the fact of the bifurcation" (Sarkar 228). This Freudian reading of Ghatak's splintered self provides a useful framework through which to consider his films' oblique yet unmistakable representation of Partition. The films provide a vital perspective of 1947 from the Eastern side even though they arise from a troubled and fractured space, one which is comparable to that inhabited by Saadat Hasan Manto on the Western side.

Partition's most famous short story writer, Saadat Hasan Manto, was also deeply scarred by the events of 1947. Some of Manto's finest stories, such as "Open it" or the sketches in "Black Margins", provide a realist image of the horrific acts of violence and revenge committed during the mass migration across the state of Punjab. One of this writer's most well-known stories, "Toba Tek Singh", skilfully depicts the insanity of Partition and the ensuing violent aftermath by using a lunatic asylum as a mirror to reflect the true madness of the external, supposedly civilised, society. The absurdity of the inmates' actions, their identification with the political leaders of the time, with God, and their utter confusion at the seemingly rational decisions made outside their world are elements which expose the wider reality of Partition. A tribute to the strength and lasting poignancy of this story is the quantity of critical commentary about it, but in addition to scholarly attention, "Toba Tek Singh" has been adapted from text to screen in *Partition* by British film director Ken McMullen. With the help of the prominent political and cultural figure Tariq Ali and a host of famous actors, this film, which is also part documentary, is a fascinating interpretation of this well-known story. *Partition* stays true to Manto's storyline which deals head-on with the impact of the new border and the creation of Pakistan as it affected marginal members of society. In this regard the film places Partition at the forefront of the narrative and deals with this event openly, however the success of McMullen's film lies in its nuanced technique and implicit evocations.

Partition is instantly recognizable as a version of "Toba Tek Singh" but at the same time exercises a poetic licence in its development of the short story plot into a seventy-eight minute film. The foremost variation to the original plot is the inclusion of a parallel storyline that shows the point of view of the British imperial government and Indian politicians who are soon to be in power. This approach both broadens the subject matter and provides a lesson in the historical background to Partition in a way that contextualises the event, for

example with respect to the Bengal Naval Mutiny in February 1946. The film systematically switches from the lunatic asylum in Lahore to a house, meeting room, and Gymkhana Club in Delhi in a series of scenes spanning from August 14 to August 30, 1947. The cinematic interweaving of the two worlds proficiently depicts the different effects of Partition on high (British, political, central) society and low (poor, mad, peripheral) society, while the fragmentary, even schizophrenic, trait of Partition is also exposed, showing that people can be two things at once, for instance, victim and perpetrator.

Ken McMullen's film clearly approaches the narrative of Partition, as Ghatak's films do, in fragments and avoids attempting to tell the whole story. This trait of fragmentation is further developed by McMullen in his expansion of the split storyline between Lahore and Delhi to reveal the split personalities of his characters. Each of the lead actors who are inmates in the asylum also plays a character in the Delhi scenes. In Delhi these actors are important politicians who have an input into the fate of country, so that even when the landscape changes from one locale to the other the same faces are on-screen, although in different garb and portraying the other side of the story. This schizophrenic representation raises many issues, for example, about the two-faced nature of people, the direct impact of one world on another, and of course the implication that politicians can be mad and lunatics can be politicians. In this regard, *Partition* demonstrates the ability of the cinematic form to simultaneously portray more than one perspective and supports the argument that "film language creates an augmented parallax vision – a narrativized embodiment of the cubist incorporation of multiple points of view and multiple subjectivities" (Curtis and Pajaczkowska 212). *Partition* thus is suited to rendering various perspectives of Partition, from politicians to lunatics, as well as the complex and strange behaviour that the events of Partition bred, namely the violence committed by ordinary people. At this time people who had never harmed anyone were turned into revenge-seeking tyrants, which gave them another

identity or multiple identities. Hence, the split personality or even a multiplicity of self is an appropriate trait in view of the Partition atrocities.

The complexities of double or split identities are evident when the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh politicians are shown, on August 18, at a meeting in Delhi to determine “assets and liabilities”, in other words, the fate of the lunatics. Their discussion of these madmen, their alter-egos, is ironic but insightful:

Sikh: “They are incapable of choosing which bin to be in. If they find you watching them, they really begin to act the part...”

Hindu: “So one must see but not be seen?”

Sikh: “Exactly, or the loonys would go mad!”

Hindu: “That’s how the British saw us. They built their homes and their civil lines, India was somewhere else outside. That was their power. Not omnipotent, calculating, rather operating through a hierarchical observation.”

This exchange exposes the duality of the politicians who exert power over the lunatics by “hierarchical observation” and exclude the lunatics from *their* civilised society while in fact the politicians are these lunatics in the next scene. Such a nuanced version of the architects of Partition not only is an original approach to the issue but also highlights the complexities of identifying victims and perpetrators. When the lines are as blurred as shown to be in the madness of Partition, it is very difficult to tell the story.

The mirror on the wall in the Delhi scenes adds a further dimension to the construct of split identities. A third view of the characters is rendered through their reflections, but only in Delhi, which implies that the politicians cannot speak directly, that is, they cannot be trusted. In addition to this the audience members do not know when exactly they are viewing the politicians through their reflections until the end of the scene when the camera pulls out to

reveal the whole room. With the momentum of political events, however the divisions between the identities of the lunatics, the politicians, or mirror versions of the politicians are eradicated. Sir John's statement that imperialism was order and that "underneath the facade was chaos, unbelievable chaos", gives way to the Hindu politician's announcement; "now everything is stripped bare". This declaration heralds the pivotal scene of the film: a close-up of the actor Roshan Seth pans out to show him moving past the mirror in the meeting room (to the sound of a train moving on its tracks), and walking 'behind the scenes'. He slowly walks past iron bars suggestive of the asylum and into the sunlight of the asylum courtyard (to the sound of birds) where he lies down on the ground. Seth as the Hindu politician dressed in a suit in Delhi slowly but purposely walks into his other life as an inmate in the asylum dressed in rags. This transgression of all boundaries and indeed of identities can be interpreted as an ironic walk to freedom, which the movement towards chirping birds and away from the violent connotations of the railway sounds implies. Seth's walk away from Delhi is also indicative of the now redundant Raj administration as the British vacate India; the split character that Seth plays merges into one personality, that is, a lunatic left behind to meet his fate. This sad conclusion serves to highlight the stark reality of the Radcliffe Line and the tragic circumstances that many ordinary people faced at this time in spite of gaining Independence. Furthermore, Seth's walk to Lahore pre-empts the next scene, the transfer of lunatics from Pakistan to India, because Seth accomplishes an opposing or perhaps mirrored transfer when he moves from the scene in Delhi to that in Lahore and, in imitation of Bishan Singh later, prostrates himself on the ground. The politician and the lunatic have become one; the fractured identity has become whole, though the future seems decidedly bleak.

In an effort to fuse the various shards of the characters, each in their own way driven mad by Partition, McMullen utilizes an omniscient narrator in the form of an old Indian woman. This character is one of the most regular interruptions to the story and acts

simultaneously as the elderly but informed storyteller and the silent cleaner in both settings of Lahore and Delhi. In this capacity, she is the only character who does not have two identities, yet her narration of the story is entirely fragmentary. She offers snippets of background information on a character or a brief elaboration on scenes and does not attempt to coherently narrate the events of Partition but rather contextualises the characters around her who are affected by these events. When the violence of Partition has reached its peak outside the asylum, the narrator's shadow is shown removing the asylum gate, thus silently implying that the outside world will now enter the interior one as the lunatics are forcibly transferred.

The presence of an omniscient narrator such as this, who is visible but also acts as the off-center observer of all events, is an important feature of the narration of *Partition* because it suggests an impartiality or a fly-on-the-wall element to the story. For instance, Tabish Khair's novel, *Filming: A Love Story*, accommodates the multitude of perspectives on Partition by employing not one but four recurring narrative voices which disappear and reappear, constantly interrupting each other and providing his or her own version of events by suddenly taking the reader down different narrative routes. *Filming* is not set directly amidst Partition but is set against its backdrop and is primarily concerned with the film industry in Bombay. Unlike Ritwik Ghatak, who also uses Partition as a backdrop to some of his films, by looking at the consequences of Partition, Khair writes about the build-up to 1947 and eventually its impact on the film industry and those who work in it. The novel's focus on films, actors, producers, and directors in its plotline means that the narrative itself is structured like a film. *Filming* contains multiple actors, plots and themes woven together in a fractured and at times elusive manner, leading to a climax and denouement. Indeed, Khair consciously uses this technique in order to emulate the early Bombay films, which one of his narrators, Batin, describes when he says: "almost all the flashbacks and dream sequences had a smoky quality, making vision uncertain but not impossible, making the world a play of

shadow and solidity” (Khair 355). Furthermore, the novel not only focuses on the film industry as a major part of its theme but is prefaced by a helpful cast list “starring” and “featuring” various unknown and well-known figures, uses ‘reels’ instead of chapters, and includes an “intermission” during which the writer Saadat Hasan Manto speaks.

Filming is structurally complex (the reader is often grateful for the inclusion of different fonts in order to distinguish which narrative voice is speaking), but this novel is also an exemplary Bakhtinian approach to an intricate and thorny event such as Partition. *Filming* recognises the complexity of Indian history in that it does not attempt to rationally narrate the communal violence of Partition or the assassination of Gandhi or even the birth of the film industry, instead it turns to polyphony in order to somewhat democratically give a multi-voiced perspective. Although the self-conscious, omniscient narrator occupies a larger portion of the text than the other voices do, these other voices nonetheless emerge as autonomous and are given a freedom of expression. In this way, *Filming* adheres to Bakhtin’s notion of a polyphonic novel, in which “characters are represented not as objects, who are manipulated and commented upon by an omniscient narrator, but as subjects, on an equal footing with the narrator” (Vice 114). This description of polyphony is particularly pertinent in Khair’s novel because alongside the omniscient narrator, the Hindu fundamentalist narrator, and the PhD student narrator, the voice of Batin is heard, a writer who once worked in Bombay before migrating to Pakistan and then to Denmark. Batin’s reported conversations with the young PhD student in Copenhagen and his own interjections are the most crucial interruptions to the main narrative because Batin’s voice also runs parallel to the frame story and fills in its many gaps as well as providing clues to the ending. The “clash of discourses” or multitude of narrators akin to Bakhtin’s “dialogized heteroglossia” (ibid 49) that is evident in *Filming* results in the various voices jostling for position, creating an instability and unevenness which well suits the subject matter and the depiction of non-linear events. The

inclusion of many perspectives also raises the point that there are many stories to be told, many angles to be considered, and still gaps remain.

Moving from the 1920s to the present, when the young PhD student is interviewing Batin, *Filming* weaves together past and present through the voicing of memories. In this way, when Batin's wife speaks, "her voice is like a thread knitting together the fabric of the past and the present, darting like a needle from one tense to another" (Khair 77) showing how vital memories of the past are to a comprehension of the present. What is increasingly questionable, however, is the truth of the various accounts, since with so many voices jostling to be heard fabrication is a likely occurrence; in fact Batin even tells the student, "But, of course, young man, there are ways of making the past again. You can lie about the past to destroy the present and you can lie about it to make the present possible" (ibid 146). The assorted versions of the past also stop and start in such a way that there are frequently large gaps between them. For the PhD student, this is troubling; he feels confused and dissatisfied with the 'lack' produced by the many unfinished or interrupted stories he has heard from Batin, but comes to the conclusion that perhaps the noble aim of 'art' will uncover their purpose. He asks, "What is art but the science of retrieval, of survival, of making sense, of making whole by telling a part of the story?" (ibid 97). This question, though exposing the likelihood that the student has himself filled in the gaps and that the reader is often hearing only his version of Batin's story, is significant in terms of the narrative of Partition. *Filming* undeniably approaches the story of Partition only in fragments and often at a tilted angle. Omissions are necessarily left in the storytelling and the effects of 1947 are felt as they impact the protagonists.

The fragmented narrative emerges as a repeated technique in describing the traumatic events of Partition where writers and film directors strive to convey the immense difficulty of dealing with memories in the "fragmented universe" (Nora 12) which emerged from the

division of India. There is not a formula for fragmented expression but there is evidence that fractured characters, narrators, themes, and language permeate certain important responses to Partition. The work of Ghatak, McMullen, and Khair suggests that narrating the complex past of Partition demands a partial telling of the event, that is, stories are unfinished and have to be pieced together outside of the narrative since a sweeping or complete retelling of Partition is impossible. Yet these narratives are vital to the memory of Partition no matter how peripheral the characters or storylines are. Manto's lunatics, Ghatak's refugees, and Khair's film producers all contribute to the commemoration of 1947 and to the canon of responses to Partition that redress the official silence surrounding it. Again in the absence of public memorials and despite the drive of official history to move forward after independence and away from the dark moments of the nation's past, "*lieux de mémoire*" still exist in South Asia.

"*Lieux de mémoire*" literally means "places of memory" as coined by Pierre Nora to explain the relationship between history and memory. He states:

Lieux de mémoire are fundamentally vestiges, the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it . . . It is a notion produced, defined, established, constructed, decreed, and maintained by the artifice and desire of a society fundamentally absorbed by its own transformation and renewal. (6)

For Nora then, "*lieux de mémoire*" are complex locales which can be tangible entities as well as imagined or symbolic places. Thus, for instance, a commemorative minute of silence is as much a *lieu de mémoire* as a war veteran's group, a photograph, or a newspaper report. Furthermore, one can also consider personal vestiges such as creative works of literature and film to be in their own way "places of memory."

These “places of memory,” moreover, narrate Partition with a mobility of description that takes into account disparate regions of South Asia, such as the borderland of Bengal and the rarely mentioned impact of Partition on Bombay. Khair’s novel *Filming*, for instance, employs mobility as a pivotal concept of the storyline. Some of Tabish Khair’s characters change their names, even their identities, calling to mind the radical change and mass movement which Partition brought to ordinary people. Equally, within the larger frame of Khair’s novel, the author creates a story which moves across nations and, gaps notwithstanding, expertly weaves the effects of Partition into individual lives. This kind of non-linear and polyphonic narrative is perhaps the best approach to the narration of Partition, which Bruce King says “is a history, as we keep being reminded, that can only be known in fragments which the writer or reader will bring together through imagination, a similar process to film making” (208-9).

Ultimately, however, the silence which intersperses all of these cinematic fragments must be remembered. In response to the reticence surrounding Partition, Ashis Nandy has observed that “It is not the silence of unconscious memories; it is the silence of a secret self” (308). The films of Ritwik Ghatak for instance demonstrate the secret self that finds it difficult to exist with the memory of Partition, while the writing of Saadat Hasan Manto portrays the secret self that is driven mad by Partition, but the two cases are allied in their reticence. The struggle to find the right words or to find a space from which to speak is profound and can be held responsible for the partial or fragmentary silence of both situations. In the novel *Austerlitz* by W.G. Sebald, the complicated narrative deals with, amongst other things, reconstructed memory and the Third Reich as it depicts the power and also the shortfalls of language in narrating memory, the narrator declares:

If language may be regarded as an old city full of streets and squares,
nooks and crannies, with some quarters dating from far back in time

while others have been torn down, cleaned up and rebuilt, and with suburbs reaching further and further into the surrounding country, then I was like a man who has been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this urban sprawl any more . . . The entire structure of language, the syntactical arrangement of parts of speech, punctuation, conjunctions, and finally even the nouns denoting ordinary objects were all enveloped in impenetrable fog. (174-5)

This quotation richly describes the depth and complexity of language which is deplored by Austerlitz for being inaccessible and insufficient in the rendering of personal traumatic memory. Yet somehow *Austerlitz* achieves just this and is a testament to the value of literature in speaking about something such as the Holocaust.

In response to Partition, writers and film directors have overcome the limitations of language, the impenetrability of the past, and the trauma of articulation. In the novel *Filming*, and the films *Partition*, *Subarnarekha* and *Komal Gandhar* discussed here, moments of clarity emerge, as for instance with the old woman in Ken McMullen's film *Partition* who reveals the truths of Partition trauma and violence in her off-center, present but detached, manner. With and without words, the creative responses endeavour to narrate incomprehensible events by elucidating some aspects and leaving others to the imagination. Even when words are not spoken, the responses nonetheless open a space for language to exist. In this respect, cinema and cinematic techniques, such as the inclusion of multiple perspectives or flashback, have been shown to be most constructive to the narration of trauma and of Partition where non-linear accounts are inevitable. The fractured or incomplete style of the responses dealt with here cannot be judged as a deficiency but rather as a truer representation of the realities of Partition that do not come from the mainstream but the periphery. Instead of neglecting these disruptive stories that stand against the forward-

looking task of nation-building, the most successful responses to 1947 reveal that a cohesive fluidity has no place in the inherently fragmented story of Partition.

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