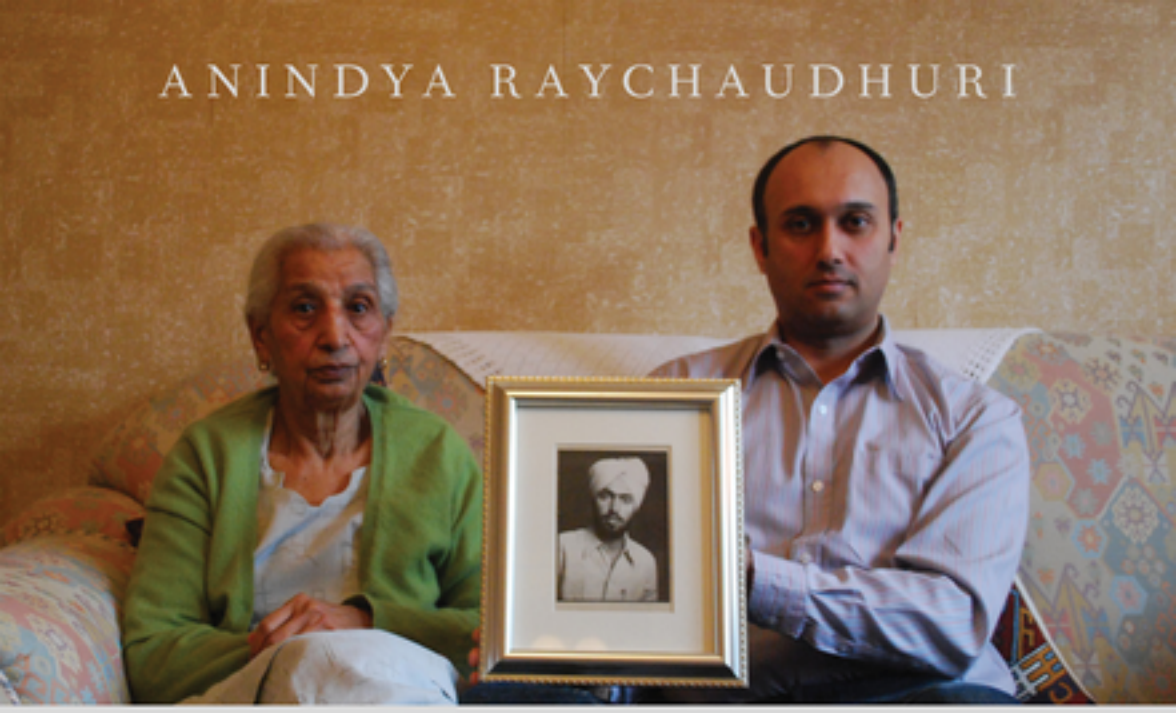
ANINDYA RAYCHAUDHURI



Narrating South Asian PARTITION

Oral History, Literature, Cinema

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To all those whose voices were never heard, in particular to my two grandmothers—Thamma and Dimma, and a lifetime of if-onlys.

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Introduction

At some point in the late 1980s, in a small suburban town about thirty miles north of Kolkata, in what is today West Bengal, India, a woman was walking home with her young child. On the way home, their conversation turned to their family's origins. The memory of this conversation is still surprisingly vivid for this woman, Sipra,[1] almost twenty-five years later:

> When my son was about six or seven years old, one day, the two of us were walking back along the road. Then the conversation turned to where I lived as a child, our—where my parents used to live. While talking about this, I said that Bangladesh was our real home, but when the country was divided, it is no longer possible to go there. He asked how it happened. Since he was really little, I told him that there was a time when it was decided, the leaders decided to divide up the country and make the two countries separate. After that, the two countries, in the two countries, Hindus and Muslims would go their separate ways—Muslims would stay in Pakistan, most of the Muslims would stay in Pakistan, and most of the Hindus would stay in India. And like this, it divided in two. Then he asked, "After they were divided, you can't go from one country to another? You can't go and live there?" I said, "No, you can't." He came to a stop in the middle of the road, I can still see it clearly—standing in the middle of the road, he said, "That means, one day someone can tell me, in Chandannagar [their home town] that you can't come here anymore, can't live here in anymore. How can that be?" I felt so bad hearing that. And I don't know—afterwards, my son worked on partition, perhaps the seeds of that work were sown in his mind all those years ago.[2]

Now, there is nothing especially remarkable about this account. True, Sipra reveals in her testimony images or themes that are common across a number of different partition narratives but, apart from the fact that I have interviewed

a number of different members of this family as part of my research, there would normally be little reason to open my book with this narrative. The reason I start with Sipra's story is primarily a selfish one—she is my mother and the little boy of the story is me. As detailed and vivid as Sipra's memory of this conversation is, however, I have no memory of it myself. If there is a link, therefore, between that conversation then, and my decision to work on the partition now, it is certainly not a conscious or deliberate one.

But it is not as if the two are completely unrelated either.[3] And my decision to start with this story is not merely self-indulgent because Sipra's testimony highlights the complexity of the ways in which partition is remembered, talked about, narrated, or, indeed, not talked about or forgotten. The memorial legacy of partition is one of trauma, pain, and shared suffering, but it is also always *productive*, not in the sense of it being a positive event for the people who lived through it and its legacy but productive in the sense that it helps to produce narratives. These take the form of literature and cinema and visual art—stories which together create both memories and ways of dealing with memories. Partition also produces identities—religious, national, political, professional—partition changes how people think about themselves. Sipra's voice breaks down as she remembers her son's pain, and the pain that it caused her in turn. As I return to this testimony in the pages that follow, I show how Sipra charts a familial inheritance of loss and grief—from her grandmother's laments at the loss of a home to her desire to see her father settled under his own roof to her young son's discovery of the uncertainty of the migrant. Within her own narrative, she explicitly constructs a direct, causal relationship between her son's feelings of confusion and uncertainty then and his decision to work on partition narratives now. Memories, no matter how painful or traumatic, become part of the life narrative that we construct for ourselves, and which becomes our identity. This book is concerned with both this memory of pain and trauma on the one hand and the productivity of partition on the other.

As for myself, while it is true that I have no memory of this incident, in many ways it is still where my partition story begins. Growing up in a refugee family, I would sometimes get bored with the way grandparents and great-uncles and aunts would repeatedly visit our ancestral home in their stories. As I grew older, and became a migrant in turn, choosing to leave India for the United Kingdom, my own attachment to and interest in my familial roots deepened, on both an emotional and an intellectual level. Like many scholars who have come before me, my interest in partition ultimately stems from my memories of these stories, some of which are represented in this book. Following pioneering partition scholar Urvashi Butalia, I, too, can say: "This story begins, as all stories inevitably do, with myself."[4] The original shock of discovery—the moment that I learned about the ultimate instability of home, the moment that caused me to stop in my tracks, according to my mother's

narrative, may not have remained in my consciousness, but it has undeniably persisted in terms of its effects on my identity as doubly displaced and has made its presence felt in numerous ways, not least in my intellectual engagement with partition and what it has meant for so many families.

Historical Context

In 1947, as British rule over the Indian subcontinent came to an end, the land and its people were divided into two new states, broadly along religious lines. Kashmir and Punjab in the west and Bengal in the east were divided in two. West Punjab, along with Azaad Kashmir, Sindh, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, and east Bengal, formed the new Muslim-majority state of Pakistan. This was a state of two halves, separated by hundreds of miles of India, which had a Hindu majority. In 1971, East and West Pakistan divided again, leading to the independence of Bangladesh.

The precise causes of this division are many and various. At various points, various academic and non-academic authorities have blamed, in turn, Britain's "Divide-and-Rule" policy, the intransigence of Hindu nationalist leaders, the personal and communal ambitions of the leaders of the Muslim League, the militancy of the Sikh leadership, and treason and betrayal on the part of all of the above. What is certain is that, in time, partition came to be a seismic event that completely transformed public and private life all over the subcontinent. After partition, nothing would ever be the same again.

In part this significance comes from the unprecedented levels of violence, certainly in recent south Asian history, which accompanied the act of partition. Inevitably, perhaps, estimates of actual numbers of casualties remain controversial. The most conservative figure of the number of deaths was that suggested by the eyewitness account of British administrator Penderel Moon who, in 1961, wrote that he believed only about 200,000 people were killed in the Punjab.[5] At the other end of the scale, Kavita Daiya is one of a number of south Asian scholars who has put the figure at "at least two million."[6] Most scholars, like Ian Talbot, believe that the number to be about 1,000,000—in short the exact number will probably be never known.[7] What is generally accepted is that along with the death toll, the partition led to the largest forced migration in human history, with an estimated 18 million people forced to leave their homes forever.[8] In addition between 100,000[9] and 150,000[10] women were abducted, raped, and often forced to convert religion.[11] The emotional losses were also huge, as people had to leave ancestral homes—communities where they had been living since time immemorial. Most were unable to take any of their property with them; some deliberately chose to leave everything behind because they were convinced they could come back at a future date. Millions of people became destitute overnight. Returning home

proved impossible, as conflict between the two states intensified, leading to multiple wars since independence.

The legacy of partition has been similarly contested, controversial, and, at times, violent. The shockwaves have radiated outward through space and time—affecting both those who lived through the trauma, and those (like myself) who did not witness the events but carry with them stories of the horrors that ensued. Every aspect of life in the subcontinent—religious, regional, and political identities; community relationships; cinema, art, and literature—has been indelibly marked by the events of 1947. Partition is at once the least talked about and most cited event in south Asian history. From cricket matches to religious riots to nationalist speeches to phony and real wars—partition continues to be used to justify the actions and the self-construction of all the post-partition nation states.

Methodological Background

An overwhelmingly large majority of books on partition limit themselves to studying the way partition was experienced along the western border (east and west Punjab and Delhi). There are a smaller number of books that examine the legacies of the Bengal partition[12] and the effects on "other" communities such as the Sindhis are even less well studied.[13] There are, however, no book-length studies, especially in oral history, that attempt to include voices from all the communities affected by partition. This segregation may well arise from a laudable attempt at precise contextualized specificity, but the effect it has had is to create an artificial and anachronistic divide between the two halves of partition. As one of the first oral history and cultural studies accounts to include both Punjab and Bengal, this book will begin to correct this gap. This trend of small-scale studies has led to a perhaps unintended and artificial understanding of partition as being single-sited, involving two separate continuous borders that do not need to be studied in the same scholarly space. By examining the two partitions as being two components of one larger process, I hope to enhance the way we understand partition.

Second, for all the excellence of the scholarship, there is, to date, no full-length study of partition that examines oral history and cultural representation together. In the scholarship of partition, these domains remain segregated, and they are usually populated by academics of very different professional and disciplinary backgrounds. Far from being mutually exclusive, however, these domains are always already in direct conversation with each other. To understand how private memories and public representation work together, they must be studied together. Partition and its memories are both deeply intimate and glaringly public. What is the relationship between the private form of testimony, the oral history narrative, and the public form of cultural representation, literature, cinema, and visual art? How does one genre

influence another? What might be gained from studying these different types of memorial narratives together? From the very beginning, then, this book was conceived of as a way in which oral history testimonies could be compared with cultural representation.[14]

The idea that private, personal memories of war and conflict are shaped by "templates of war remembrance . . . [the] cultural narratives, myths and tropes . . . through which later conflicts are understood"[15] is now well established, though the consequences of this argument have perhaps not been fully applied to partition scholarship. There is a complex dialectical relationship between the public representation and private memories of partition—how people's memories are influenced by public discourse and how the creative and critical practice of academics, artists, and activists is influenced by their own direct and inherited memories. These lines of influence are not often direct or explicitly chartable, though they sometimes are, but more often they are nevertheless present in more diffuse forms. As Jill Ker Conway has put it, "our culture gives us an inner script by which we live our lives."[16]

Studying oral history and cultural representation helps to emphasize the ways in which both of these types of narrative inhabit the present just as much as they describe the past. In other words, my interest is emphatically not to uncover any kind of objective truth about the history of partition, even assuming such a thing were to exist. I am not interested in whether or not the narratives under discussion here are historically accurate but in how they are put to work in various ways in the present. Mistakes, misrememberings, and inaccuracies can be just as interesting and just as valuable to understanding the legacies of partition.

The oral history material for this book is derived from 165 interviews, collected over three and a half years in India, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom, though I wasn't able to include all the interviews here for reasons of space. I had to cancel two planned trips to Bangladesh at the last moment due to political violence, so unfortunately there are very few voices here from those who identify as Bangladeshi, although there are many who identify as east Bengali. This cohort represents a diverse group in terms of religion, age, gender, national, and class backgrounds, though, and following a long tradition of oral history, the cohort was never intended to be representative.[17] The recruitment process for participants was extremely organic—a mixture of word-of-mouth and personal contacts, official and semi-official approaches to religious and community groups, as well as more formal contact with various academic and non-academic organizations. I have, wherever possible, attempted to make the cohort as diverse as possible but I have not set any selection criteria beyond a genuine desire on the part of the participant to be interviewed. As such, I would be very suspicious of drawing any conclusions about collective patterns of remembering based on these individual testimonies. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has written, "There is no more dangerous pastime than

transposing proper names into common nouns, translating them, and using them as sociological evidence."[18]

Most of the interviews were conducted on an individual basis, but occasionally it became necessary to conduct group interviews with multiple family members at the same time. Although such group interviews often do raise potentially troubling issues of power between the interviewees, it is also the case that the group dynamic allows for different themes or topics to emerge that might not in a more conventional one-to-one interview.[19] This is especially the case in the south Asian context, where collective conversations are perhaps more naturalized a part of everyday life than in Europe or America. When I have had to conduct collective interviews, I have tried to recreate the atmosphere of an *adda*—"the practice of friends getting together for long, informal, and unrigorous conversations,"[20] in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty. There is something peculiarly non-hierarchical in the institution of the *adda* which, when applied to the oral history interview, allows people to hold diametrically opposite views without necessarily challenging social hierarchies of gender, age, and class. At numerous times during many of my group interviews, my participants have loudly disagreed with each other, demonstrating the contested nature of memories in a direct way that would not necessarily have been possible in a one-to-one interview. This does not mean that my interviews are immune to such social hierarchies, but that these issues affect one-on-one interviews just as much; in any event, in most cases where I conducted group interviews, an individual, one-on-one interview was simply not an option.

Of course, oral history interviews never exist outside the practical contingencies of time and place. No interview is ever an ideal transmission of information between the interviewer and interviewee, and the location and physical context of an interview always has an effect on the nature of the testimony.[21] At numerous points during my fieldwork, my interviews were adversely affected by issues such as equipment failure, sudden illnesses of an often elderly cohort of participants, excessive extraneous noise, and the presence of overly interfering family members, to name but a few. Listening to the recordings of the interviews, it is fascinating how often "real life" ends up intruding, reminding me that the interview is hardly a pristine space. Captured on my machine, along with the questions and answers that constitute the interview, are also other voices, other conversations, repeated exhortations to eat,[22] traffic noises, and the ubiquitous fan. Some of these external influences inevitably hampered the interview, but, whenever faced with less than ideal circumstances, I always worked on the principle that an imperfect interview was better than no interview at all and always tried to work around whatever difficult scenario I was faced with.

During my interviews, I always tried to replicate, as much as possible, an environment that would be familiar for my participant. Thus I almost always

interviewed in the participant's home or another place where they would feel comfortable. As most of my participants were much older, I would often attempt to sit by their feet, in an effort to replicate a cross-generational storytelling dynamic, between grandparent and grandchild, for example.

My ethnographic work took the form of loose, semistructured interviews. Where applicable, I tried to cover themes such as experience of violence, loss of home, migration, rebuilding life, and divided loyalties, but these themes were designed to be as broad as possible, and the narrative of the interview was always directly led by the participant's own story. Transcripts from the interviews have been reproduced here as close to the original as possible. Interviews that were conducted in English have been reproduced verbatim, including grammatical "errors." Interviews in other languages are my translation, unless stated otherwise, and I have tried to keep as close as possible to the sense of the original. Translations from non-Anglophone cultural sources are also my own, unless otherwise stated.

Nevertheless, this work is certainly affected by the same problem of power dynamic that most if not all ethnographic work has to face up to. At numerous points during my research—interviewing in what used to be refugee camps,[23] crossing border checkposts easily by virtue of a British passport,[24] being able to make numerous fieldwork trips by virtue of a generous research fellowship, hiring a car to interview in Karachi when the city was paralyzed by a general strike[25]—I have been continually reminded of my own often privileged position, relative to many of my interviewees.

These lines of power were noticeable in many of my own interviews, and doubtless, can be felt in this book.[26] It is notable, for example, that generally speaking, my interviewees in India were much more forthright about their dislike of Pakistan than vice versa, a phenomenon that is probably linked to me being perceived as Indian. In other words, my Pakistani participants might have felt that if they were honest about how they felt about India, they might offend me as a guest. Indian interviewees did not consider me to be a foreign visitor to the country, so did not feel the need to be polite.

Inevitably, not least because of my own family's stories that appear in these pages, the reader should always be aware of my own presence in the ethnographic material that I present here. There is always a gap between ethnographic fieldwork and the "finished product" in the form of this book. In other words, in the selecting, editing, retelling, and interpreting, the voice that remains the most privileged is my own. I have tried to be as faithful as possible to the stories that I have been given, but the interpretation of those stories remains mine and mine alone. I am deeply aware of my duty to be fair to all of my participants but I am also keen to ensure that I am not "relinquishing our responsibility to provide our own interpretation."[27]

Consequently, when referring to the people whom I interviewed, I use the words "participant" and "interviewee" interchangeably, mostly in order to

highlight the fact that I am acutely conscious of the problematic nature of all of these descriptive labels but that I am also aware that the power dynamic runs deeper than simply finding the right word to describe them. In referring to my interviewees in the pages of this book, I have typically provided a first name, the year and place of birth, and a religious and regional identity.[28] There are, however, some notable exceptions. Some of my participants wanted to rename anonymous, so in their cases I have used initials. One participant agreed to take part on condition that I did not ask for her name. In that particular instance, I refer to her as X. I chose to do this rather than use pseudonyms to give their desire for anonymity more direct, typographic emphasis. In other cases, other participants have actively refused anonymity, urging me to identify them as authors of their stories. In those cases, and to respect their wishes, I have used their full names. The differing attitudes of my participants toward my project and their role in it reflects their immense diversity within my cohort, though I do not claim my cohort of interviewees to be representative of all survivors of partition

If the oral histories are not to be read as representative, then neither is the body of literature and cinema analyzed in these pages. Partition has spawned a body of cultural representation in the form of literature, cinema, and performative and visual art that is far too large to be tackled in any one book, let alone one that attempts to compare it with oral history. While I appreciate Ananya Jahanara Kabir's call "to move beyond the scholarly preoccupation with narrative modes of remembering Partition,"[29] I think there remains a need to study multiple forms of narrative together and to see how one genre may illuminate another. The primary mode of memory remains narrative and it is essential to see how these various narratives can both reinforce and undermine a notion of a centralized nationalist narrative that, in Kabir's words, "a scholarly field would consider itself politically at odds with."[30] Thus I compare literary, cinematic, and artistic representations of partition with this body of oral history testimonies in order to look at the ways in which the events of partition are remembered, reinterpreted, and reconstructed, the themes that are recycled in the narration, and the voices that remain elided. Of course, the task of comparing memory narratives from so many different genres, periods, and geographical backgrounds poses many challenges of its own. However, I strongly feel that these challenges need to be faced. While it is important to allow for the specificity of the way texts of each genre (literature, cinema, oral history testimonies, etc.) are produced and received, it is equally important to examine the multifaceted ways in which memory works in society—from the private sphere of the family and home to establishing transnational, emotional relationships across space and time. Through my study of the various narratives, then, I identify common themes that appear in various different forms of representation and I examine how, through the ways in which these texts negotiate these themes, they often help to undermine various

state-endorsed myths of partition—for example, the idea that partition led to two oppositional, mutually exclusive nation states, and that people's affective relationship with people and land, their religious identity, and the sociopolitical space of these new nation states could all be aligned in a simple, unproblematic manner. In turn, then, the book presents a different view on the nature of the historiography of partition—which allows for the articulation of marginalized voices, not just as victims but also as active agents who, through the narration of their stories, embody the desire to be seen as being in control of their own histories.

Finally, a point about nomenclature. While I use the word "partition" throughout this book for reasons of convenience, this name for the event is, of course, not unproblematic. Hindi and Punjabi speaking people who either stayed in India or traveled from Pakistan to India typically use the word *batwara* ("sharing out" or "division"). People who made the reverse journey, tend to use the Urdu word *taqseem* (perhaps the English word "distribution" comes closest). As an expatriate Bengali, the word that speaks to me the most is the word that is used almost universally by Bengalis—*deshbhag*. An English translation would have to be "division of the country," though that would not do justice to the complexity of the original. Bengalis use the word *desh* to mean country (as in India), state (as in West Bengal), and, especially significant for migrant populations, the original home, village, or town where the family had to move from for economic or political reasons. So the word "partition" should be read as attempting to represent all these meanings. Perhaps as a result, I refrain from capitalizing the "P," preferring the non-deified lower case instead. When I refer to places whose names have changed (Calcutta and Kolkata, for example) I aim to use the name that was current at the time of the events being discussed. The only exceptions are when I am quoting from interviews or cultural texts, in which case I quote the name that was used in the original.

Narrator as Agent

Given the power dynamic of ethnographic work, and given the undeniable national and individual trauma, it is perhaps surprising that I am choosing to focus on agency as the lens through which to analyze the textual material. Whatever else it may have been, partition was, undeniably, a great human tragedy and, moreover, one that is so immense that it seems to transcend the powers of language. However, the overwhelming focus on the pain, trauma, and loss does suggest that the only way in which marginalized voices can enter the discourse of partition is as victims—an implication that I find deeply problematic.[31]

We need a more complex and nuanced conception of agency in order to complicate the narrative of victimhood that so much oral history of partition

has become. Agency is, paradoxically, both a widely used and underdefined concept. Sumi Madhok, Anne Phillips, and Kalpana Wilson have written that agency is "in its dictionary definition . . . not much more than the capacity to act"[32]—a definition that is deceptive in its simplicity. The problem with this definition, as Madhok et al point out, is that, first, agency and coercion are assumed to exist "in a binary relationship of presence/absence"[33]—if one is a victim then one cannot have agency and vice versa; and, second, agency is almost always defined through action, or, as Madhok, herself has put it:

> I am against limiting understandings of agency to the ability to act (freely or unfreely) and according to one's freely chosen desires. . . . Instead, I argue that we must shift our theoretical gaze away from these overt actions to an analysis of cognitive processes, motivations, desires and aspects of our ethical activity.[34]

I am conceptualizing agency as always also narrative and thus broader than practically or symbolically emancipatory activism—the potential for change, as it is often defined. Like Saba Mehmood, I am not interested in "distinguish[ing] a subversive act from a nonsubversive one."[35] Rather, my use of agency is much closer to Helen M. Buss's definition as "the ability of individuals to negotiate societal systems to make meanings for themselves"[36] or, as Susan Hekman has put it, agency lies in the "piecing together" of subjectivities "out of the hegemonic and nonhegemonic discourses around them."[37] For my work specifically, a working definition of agency could be: *the ways in which people exert narrative control over their memories and refuse to be defined by them*. My interviewees exercise agency in the ways they construct narratives out of particular spaces and particular objects, and then are able to define themselves in relation to these narratives. Narrative agency does not have to be a conscious effort on behalf of the narrator; it may also be interpreted onto the narrative after the fact.

Applying this notion of narrative agency to testimonies of partition implies, as Deborah Youdell has pointed out, "a politics that insists nobody is necessarily anything."[38] While the author of a partition narrative may indeed be a victim, he or she most certainly does not have to be one. I read narrative agency, then, in the ways in which people establish connections with people, places, spaces, and objects, in order to exert linguistic control of their memories. Sometimes these narratives of connection may run counter to hegemony, sometimes they may not, but in either case they point to a more complicated subject position than mere victimhood.

Through my study of the oral history and cultural narratives, then, I identify particular strategies of narration which provide evidence of agency on the part of the narrators. These include agency through ownership of memory ("This is my story"), agency through forming alternative and counter-hegemonic

emotional relationships (beyond the privacy of the family or the community, for example, or across national borders), agency through mourning ("This was mine and I have the right to mourn its loss"), agency through complexity (the ability to maintain contradictory ideological positions without being defined by either), and agency through putting one's direct and inherited memory to work in the form of employment practices, social and political activism, academic research, and literary and artistic practices. These strategies are not necessarily intended to be read as explicit articulations of agency, but nevertheless, it is my contention that evidence of agency is visible in the ways in which the memories are being narrated. My identification of narrative agency does not challenge any of the pain or grief or loss that is present, nor does it preclude my narrators from actively taking on the mantle of the victim. Rather, it allows for a more complex, nuanced view of agency that can and does coexist with narratives of oppression and violence.

If one is prepared to read these testimonies against the grain, as it were, one can find evidence that subverts the victim/survivor dichotomy, instead recasting the narrators as active agents who are able to exercise a degree of control over their memories and the ways in which they narrate them.

Narrative agency, as I am conceiving it, can be used productively to study "private" oral history testimonies and forms of cultural representation together. In fact, it is in this complex relationship that exists between public and private memory, in the ways in which people are able to fuse their most personal stories with those that exist in the public domain that I read narrative agency. Narrative agency, then, is employed by oral history interviewees, authors and filmmakers, and characters within texts in order to exert control over painful memories, and, through this control, construct oneself and one's community as differently victim, survivor, perpetrator, savior, and so on.

Studying individual oral history testimonies along with cultural representation raises a really important issue—how to theorize the dynamic between individual and collective memory—that has been occupying scholars of memory studies for some time now.[39] This book follows Rebecca Clifford's position, in that narrative agency is exerted in and through the "dance between the lived memories of groups of individuals and the cultural visions of the past that have come to be called collective memory."[40]

Within the form and structure of the narratives I am focusing on, there are many examples of contested agency between, for example, character and author in the case of cultural texts, or between the child who has experienced the event and the adult who is remembering it (in the case of the oral history interviews). Narratives thus become not just sites on which agency is inscribed but a contested domain over which competing structures of agency battle for primacy. Oral history testimonies and cultural representations alike are, then, complex spaces encompassing multiple voices, struggling to find expression, reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of the novel.[41] These complex,

multilayered, multivocal texts contain within them the possibility of multiple layers of meaning, lend themselves to multiple modes of interpretation, and, therefore, help to exert narrative agency.

While upholding both the distinctiveness and the significance of narrative agency, we need to also be wary of its limits. In identifying my narrators as agents, it is important not to romanticize them as necessarily counter-hegemonic and radical. There are often significant overlaps, for example, between individual and statist narratives of partition, but even in these cases, the testimony reveals a layer of complexity that does not simplistically allow for a pro- or counter-hegemonic reading. The complexities of the event that was partition and its equally complex afterlives demands a multidisciplinary exploration of its memorial legacies. Narratives are always messy, and it is this complex, chaotic messiness which allows contradictory stories and opposing extremes to be placed next to each other, thus demonstrating a narrator's ability to exert agency over her narrative, and, therefore, by extension, over herself.

Memories of partition are marked by many forms of loss—the loss of home, the loss of family, the loss of childhood innocence, to name but a few. In the ways in which many of my narrators remember these losses, however, they often reject an externally imposed victimhood status by setting up alternative, interesting, counter-hegemonic narratives. I am troubled by the way in which individual grief at loss and separation gets appropriated through public discourse to represent a wider national trauma. Instead, the ways in which someone talks about one's position relative to one's lost family can be evidence of taking back control at a time when the narrator is more than usually disempowered.

This creative control can also be seen in the ways in which people remember and describe specific acts of violence—from where they locate it physically to the way they choose to negotiate its legacies. Violence took place in and around people's homes, on trains and boats, on land and on rivers. The way people describe this violence, however, is marked by the narrator's attempts to keep control over meaning, even when this control is contested both by wider hegemonic forces and by the ethnographer himself. People mourn in different ways, and specific acts of mourning do not necessarily imply passive victimhood. Articulating the right to mourn, in this context, needs to be read as a corrective to the imperialist act of partition, as well as official, hegemonic appropriation of individual, intimate, and often deeply private moments of loss.

These memories of loss are often put to work in a variety of different ways, from illegitimate or illegal economic activities on the part of refugees attempting to rebuild their lives in the years immediately after partition to literary and artistic practices, academic work, and community activism in the decades since. A closer look at how these people mobilize their memories and

family stories will show that partition needs to also be seen as a productive event, both in the sense that it not only helped to produce national, personal, and political identities but also helped to produce "work" in the form of academic research, artistic production, and social and political activism—all of which provide examples of the articulation of agency on the part of the narrating subjects.

Partition is remembered today in many complex ways; it affects people's lives today in equally complex ways. Studying oral history and cultural representation together helps to remind us of the power that words may have in the ways in which stories of partition get told and retold. Thinking of this power that language has helps me to reflect on the personal dimension this work has had for me, and how my own life story has inflected the work in various ways, even as the work itself has come to rewrite my life story in various ways.

I hope my work helps to reflect the ways in which marginalized voices narrate the stories of partition, not just as victims but also as active agents. Through their narration, people enact the desire to be seen as being in control of their own histories. Again and again, in various ways, my narrators refuse the role of the victimized corpus on which history is seen to act. Instead, through various creative and productive ways, they take control of their memories of the past, and their identity narratives in the present, in order to not be defined by the pain of their memories. It is this creativity that I try to recognize in this book. Partition was and remains an individual, collective, and national trauma—the least those of us who are studying it and its legacies can do is not add to it by leaving out huge swathes of people, their voices, stories, and aspirations unrepresented, when we try to write the many histories of partition.

1

"Wasn't it golden?"

Remembering the Lost Home

In 1961, Ritwik Ghatak, one of Bengal's preeminent cinematic auteurs, released *Komal Gandhar* or *E-Flat*, which tells the story of Bhrigu and Anasuya, members of two theatrical troupes who tour the villages in post-partition West Bengal, bringing art to the people. Bhrigu and Anasuya slowly come together, partly over their shared refugee experience. As they stand next to the riverine border between what was at the time India and East Pakistan, their talk turns to the memories of the homes they have left behind. Looking across the river, Bhrigu points his old home out and speaks of the terrible loss of forced homelessness:

> My own home is just on the other side [of the river]. Those huts which you see there. So near but I will never be able to return. It is a foreign land. When you told me your home was somewhere there, do you know what I was doing? I was looking for my own home. Because my home too was exactly there.

Almost two decades later, when the Pakistani author Intizar Husain published *Basti* (1979) his semi-autobiographical account of the refugee experience, he, too, used the memory of the lost home in a similar way—in his case, using the protagonist Zakir:

> Zakir ate his dinner, and went and lay down in the room where he was to sleep. He examined the room. What a clean, neat, and open room it was, and how filled with light! There was a light fixture in each of its four corners. It occurred to him to wonder who might have lived here before. That thought reminded him of his own room, a small room with discoloured walls, a cot, a table full of books, and among the books a lamp that shed a dim light by which he studied far into the night. My room must be empty tonight. As he lay in the large, well-lit room, he

poignantly remembered the shabby room he had left behind. The sleep that had come into his eyes vanished.[1]

Both Ghatak and Husain depict the trauma of the loss of this home—and in the process, the loss of home comes to signify so much more. In *Komal Gandhar,* Anasuya talks about it as a loss of peace and certainty:

The word is perhaps "tranquil." My grandma used to use it. I don't think we will ever get that tranquility again. It feels like we have somehow become outsiders. Don't you think? Whenever I think of my old home, I remember the waters around my home. My mother used to bathe us in the morning and then take us to worship the Sun. We used to walk so much.

Husain portrays this loss of tranquility in part through the "white-haired man" whom Zakir and his friend Irfan describe as "that crackpot":

When I set out from my home, my hair was all black. And I wasn't any age at all, I was only twenty or twenty-one. When I reached Pakistan and washed myself and looked in the mirror, my hair had turned entirely white. That was my first day in Pakistan. I left my home with black hair and my family, when I reached Pakistan my hair was white and I was alone.[2]

In an interview, Intizar Husain sheds more light about his own memories of his lost home:

I imagine the basti, but how should I articulate it? It's like reading a beautiful poem, and then you start verbalizing it in prose. So in actuality, it was an ordinary basti, like any other basti in the Subcontinent. Yet now that I look back, I realize that in all this time, since my childhood and adolescence there until now, I have been longing for it constantly.[3]

This pain of the loss of one's home and the unquenchable longing for a return marks most if not all partition narratives and, perhaps not surprisingly, comes to represent the victimhood of those who witnessed partition and lived through its trauma.

Thirty years after *Basti*, another Pakistani novelist, Kamila Shamsie, invokes a similarly intimate relationship with the home that was left behind, in her novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Sajjad, born and brought up in Delhi, expresses an intimate, almost physical relationship with the city:

But that was September. Now the violence had ended, and though Sajjad said he knew it would be a different Delhi he'd be returning to, nothing

> could change the essential Dilliness of the place. He said it emphasizing the "dil" (it was in their first lesson that he'd told her "dil" meant heart.[4]

Events transpire against him, however, and Sajjad is unable to return home, a loss that, similar to *Basti*, is depicted in visceral terms:

> Hiroko could only watch as her husband drew up his legs and curled over the mattress. She said his name, repeated endearments in English, Urdu, Japanese—but he couldn't hear her above the fluttering of pigeons and the call of the muezzin of Jama Masjid and the cacophony of his brother's arguments and the hubbub of merchants and buyers in Chandni Chowk and the rustling of palm leaves in the monsoons and the laughter of his nephews and nieces and the shouts of the kite-fliers and the burble of fountains in courtyards and the husky voice of the never-seen neighbour singing ghazals before sunrise and his heartbeat, his frantic heartbeat.[5]

Sajjad's grief at being separated from the landscape of Delhi is mirrored by Salim Mirza from M. S. Sathyu's 1974 film *Garm Hava* [*Scorching Winds*]. When Salim decides that he has to leave his native Agra and move to Pakistan, there is a haunting sequence as Salim, on his own, stands and weeps in front of the Taj Mahal. Interestingly, both Sajjad and Salim are not only mourning the loss of their homes, and the familiar spaces they are being forced to leave, but they are also mourning the loss of a distinctively Islamic India. At a moment when national and religious borders were being forcibly realigned, this poignant depiction of a specifically Indian tradition of Islam—the Taj Mahal and the Jamma Masjid—cannot but be enormously radical.

A similar moment is noticeable in one of my oral history testimonies. H.[6] is a Bengali Muslim whose family originated from and remained in west Bengal. At one point during the violence of partition, however, H. and his family were forced to relocate to Dhaka. They could not settle and, instead, chose to return to their home, where they have carried on living since. The only member of H.'s family who did not leave was his grandfather. When asked why his grandfather chose to remain, H. says:

> He said, "My mosque is here, I am not going to leave my mosque." A very old mosque, you can still see it. It had lain abandoned, but grandfather renovated it. . . . It was overgrown with plants and weeds, but the three domes are still there, unharmed. He has left a lot for the mosque as well.[7]

H. and his family still live in the house that his grandfather refused to leave, two doors from the mosque that proved too strong a bond for him. His grandfather is buried in the courtyard of the mosque, which is still regularly

used for prayers. In all of these narratives, there is a gesture of rejection of the logic of partition, even while at times accepting the necessity of it. When the hegemonic logic of partition was realigning national and religious borders, rendering Pakistan as Muslim and India as Hindu, Sajjad, Salim, and H.'s grandfather all use their narrative agency to reinforce an identity that is both Indian and Muslim. In refusing to give up their right to their homes, they are marking the space of the home, and, by extension, India itself as also Islamic.

Komal Gandhar, Basti, and *Burnt Shadows* cumulatively chart six decades of literature and cinema, in which some of the most beautifully lyrical description is reserved for the most symbolic of all partition related loss—the loss of the familiar space of the home, be it the domesticity of one's own room or the expansiveness of one's city. Bhrigu, Zakir, and Sajjad can never return to their homes, but their homes keep returning to their thoughts and dreams. Similarly, Uzair,[8] who was born in India, then moved to Karachi, and now lives in south Wales, is a perfect example:

> And I was looking in my house—it was a huge house with a big garden, you know, sand in the garden, and I used to ride my little bike in it, a three wheeler, and my room. And I had painted something in the school, it was on the wall. My parents: "Ah, my son, look what he's made." And absolute quiet and silence and I'm saying, "My God, I'll never see this place again." It was such a sad feeling. This is my house, this is my room, this is my painting, this is my garden and the tree and this and that—I'll never see it again.[9]

What is perhaps most remarkable in this testimony, apart from Uzair's powerful memories of his home, is the repeated emphasis on the first-person possessive "my." In this relatively short extract, Uzair uses the first-person pronoun fifteen times. Through his testimony, Uzair is then laying claim to a space that, as a Pakistani-British, he is not legally entitled to. This claim of ownership through vivid and detailed memory is mirrored by many of my other participants as well. Kamal G.,[10] who moved from Lahore to Delhi, similarly describes his lost home:

> First I remember our house in Krishna Nagar [in Lahore]. The house was on the corner of the street. On the corner, on both sides, there were two houses, exactly the same. The second was owned by my father's friend, whom we called Uncle. Two friends had identical houses built. Similar shape, similar building, similar area—the two houses were built on the corner in Krishna Nagar. We used to live there. In those days, in the houses that were built, the floors were red, green, black color—there were no mosaics or anything, and marble wasn't used either. It was that type.[11]

Often, as in the case of Samar,[12] the access to one's ancestral home was not a direct one, even before partition. Samar, who is my uncle, was born and, for most of the first fourteen years of his life, lived in the city of Khulna in what is now Bangladesh. His, and my, ancestral home was in the village of Siddhakathi in Barisal—some hundred kilometers away from this city. Asked about his attachment to the ancestral home, Samar says:

> [My attachment is more] for the city of Khulna. Because I have only seen a little of Siddhakathi. In Siddhakthi, I, perhaps, I mean, I don't think I stayed there for more than a few months in one go since I was five or six. After that I went, maybe for school holidays, and stayed for a few days. But not for more than two or three months at a time. So my attachment is for Khulna, and my memories are all from Khulna.[13]

Interestingly, however, as part of Samar's exhaustive research into our family's genealogy, he has drawn a map of this ancestral home as he remembers it. When Samar published his research as part of a book[14] telling the story of our family, this map featured prominently, as a textual device to represent the space that is forever lost. Perhaps the most immediately noticeable feature was its precision, the specificity with which he remembers the contours of the house that no longer exists. The hand-drawn map, with its multiple corrections and emendations, speaks to me of the importance of getting it right, and therefore of the importance the space still has for him, and for his family. He does explicitly attach himself more firmly to Khulna, but the aura of the space of the ancestral home affects him and his brothers as well:

> The homes [of the Hindus who have left] remain abandoned. Our ancestral village, in a village in Barisal district, there as well, I have seen, many new houses have been built, it is a village, new houses have been built, but our ancestral house has not been taken over by anyone. It is just lying there. . . . When we returned to our ancestral home, my two younger brothers brought back some soil from there.[15]

One of the "two younger brothers" whom Samar mentions is Alok,[16] my father. He was born after partition and, therefore, has no direct connection to the ancestral home, as he makes clear in his own testimony:

> I used to hear stories of the lost home. I remember an image. How much of that is what I actually remember, how much of it is painted onto what I have heard, I don't know. I think, as a child, with my mother, after partition, after moving to this country, as a child, I went with my mother to east Bengal. I think passports hadn't come in then. I remember an image

> of what I saw then—but whether that is true, or an imagined, painted picture based on what I was told, I can't tell.[17]

The significance of the home to him is clear from his narration of their return visit to Bangladesh in 2004:

> Where our house used to be, that place has changed a lot. The pond is still there, my older brother saw it, recognized it . . . but almost nothing of the structure of the house remains. . . . When we saw what we did on our visit, I did think that this was our home but the pull that you feel to your ancestral home, I didn't really have that pull in me. . . . Even though I am saying there was no pull, there is still perhaps an invisible bond. You don't feel it consciously, perhaps, but you still think "Yes, this is my ancestral home. My ancestors—my father, my grandfather, some generations before them, they all were here and I should have roots here as well." Perhaps not consciously, but unconsciously it is there.[18]

I remember that on his return from Bangladesh, my father replaced the wallpaper on his computer with a photograph of the remains of our ancestral home. The soil he brought back was mixed in with the soil of the garden of the home I grew up in, in what is now West Bengal. The emotional links with an imagined, reconstructed version of the lost home are often reinforced in such material ways. My father has digitized the family copy of the deed of our ancestral home as well, kept safely along with the sketch that my uncle drew. The deed itself served as inspiration for the cover of Samar's book, taking center stage in what is an intellectual project to recover and preserve a lost memory. Far removed from any sense of materially recouping the loss, the deed ceases to be a symbol of ownership and comes to represent the home itself. Of course, in the immediate aftermath of partition, such documents were held onto for simple material reasons. In Ritwik Ghatak's short story "A Crystal Goblet," the civil-servant protagonist comes across a refugee farmer who has left west Punjab and moved to India:

> Do you know the address of the government? I mean the government of this country, the government of India. I have to see him rather urgently . . . I have a petition. This is the list of my belongings. . . . To show it to Government so that *he* gives me back my things.[19]

Even when the house no longer survives, however, or is beyond access across a practically impermeable border, these documents and the material with which the house was built carry on bearing the weight of symbolic importance. Samar mentions the bricks which formed part of his ancestral home:

> The bricks in our house, probably with the permission of an uncle or grandfather, they took the bricks off from the house and used them for the new building of a school that my grandfather built, the only high school in the area. But they haven't changed the name of the school, it is still in my grandfather's name.[20]

The school becomes extremely significant in both Samar and Alok's narration of the visit. They had their photograph taken under the plaque that identified the school as being named after their grandfather. In particular, the bricks that formed a material link between the home that has now mostly disappeared and the school that is still functioning seem to become symbolic of the continuing link between our family in India and a village which is now part of a foreign state.

Even more remarkably, Santi[21] highlights the importance of the building material of his ancestral home in what became East Pakistan:

> Our house was built of tin. The walls were made of tin, the roof was made of tin, the floor was concrete. Because my father was a central government employee, he was given a permit: "You can take all your belongings, whatever you want, with you." You will be surprised to hear, we took the house down and sent all the materials by boat to Srerampore [in West Bengal, India]. The man who constructed the house, in the village, we even brought that builder with us. He said, "We want to go to Hindustan" so we said, "Come with us then." We brought him as well. In Srerampore, he constructed [the house]. Even today, in my house, there is a little bit of that tin house.[22]

The building materials, and the builder who reassembled them, are both here used to represent a sense of continuity in the face of seismic changes. That continuity does not just exist across the divide of 1947 but lasts into today, manifested in the remnants of the original tin house.

For many of my interviewees, the gap between the home as it is remembered and the home as it exists in the present is a source of significant trauma. A representative case is that of Zahid,[23] who left what is now Indian Punjab and moved to Karachi. In his oral history interview, he recounts both the pain of being made homeless and the trauma of a return visit:

> We had lived there for seven hundred and fifty years, and then to be uprooted in six hours—leaves very bitter memories, you see. It is very painful to think of it. Because my childhood memory keeps on going back to my days in my birthplace, you see. And that is no longer now there. I visited it, I happened to go to Chandigarh on an official visit and then I managed to go to Mannu and walked into my old house. And

> after that, I was so shocked, that I lay down in the bus, in the rear seat and slept all the way to Delhi. And I ran high fever. So I was in bed for two days.[24]

Zahid's bodily reaction to the renewed encounter with the lost home is replicated in Ved Mehta's published account of his visit to Lahore, and to the home his family left behind:

> The rooms to one side of the courtyard, in which my older brother and I had lived, were also disorientating. . . . Everywhere the plaster on the walls and the ceilings was cracked, and the whole house had an unkempt, lonely air. . . . "Oh," the older Miss Hasan[25] said, "before we moved in, the house was partitioned between two families." Her use of the word *partitioned* in reference to our house, and in English, was so unexpected that I caught my breath.[26]

Ved Mehta's emphasis on the divided nature of the house is replicated in Madhu's[27] testimony as well:

> I went back to Pakistan sixty years later. . . . I went back to the house where I was born and it was exactly like that only it had been divided into two. It was one of these big railway houses. It had been divided into two with a wall just being built through it. Nothing was changed in the structure of the house. It was just that this wall went right the way through. It was an incredible experience; we were greeted very warmly by the person who was staying in one half of the house. . . . He showed me the rooms: "This is from your time, when you were born. This fan is original, this ceiling is like that."[28]

Madhu does not display the kind of trauma that Ved Mehta writes about, though elsewhere in her interview she does link her return to Pakistan to the loss of partition: "For me that visit to Rawalpindi, it's been the most amazing experience of my life. And I think that is when one really felt how much one had lost in a sense."[29] It is interesting however, that she chooses to describe the alterations to the house in terms of partition, and, like Ved Mehta's account, it is difficult not to read the changes to the house as a metaphor for partition as a whole.

In the postscript to her story of Ranamama with which she began *The Other Side of Silence*, Urvashi Butalia reveals the destruction of the family home in Lahore, and what it means for her in the present:

> I have not been back to Lahore since I heard of Rana's death. I'm not sure the city will mean as much to me now. Without the house in Model Town

> on my map, there will be a strange kind of blank, an absence that I am not sure I know how to deal with. I haven't told my mother about the house being sold and destroyed—I'm not sure she can take it. Sometimes I think, it's only a house; how does it matter? Then I tell myself that it is much more than a house; it's a history. With its most obvious symbol gone, will that history remain only a memory? I'm not sure.[30]

I heard another story of the trauma of a house altered while on fieldwork in the village of Kot Shera in Gujranwalla, Pakistan. In 1947, the local feudal landlord in Kot Shera was a Sikh man called Mangal Singh. His house was easily the largest, most substantial house in the local area. Today, it is largely falling apart, and has been extensively built around, but is still discernibly a building of significance. The old landlord's monogram M.S. is still visible in concrete on the building, however, and one of the aspects of the house as it used to be that is particularly spoken about by the local villagers is that it used to have two separate staircases—one for men and one for women. In many visible and invisible ways, then, the building is still perceived as one that provides a physical link to the days before partition.

Mangal Singh is remembered in the village as a benevolent arbiter of justice. In addition to his position as a landlord, he was a magistrate who is remembered particularly for his unbiased treatment of people from all communities and backgrounds. When the region started experiencing communal violence in 1947, Mangal Singh's house was attacked by some Muslim villagers and partially burned down, but the family escaped and apparently made it safely across the border. There is a story that exists in the village memory that one of Mangal Singh's daughters visited the village in the 1980s and wanted to see the inside of the house she had once lived in. When she was told, however, that the women's staircase had burned down in 1947, she apparently refused to step inside and went back to India without seeing the inside of the house.

Stories like this are, of course, almost impossible to corroborate, and, in any case, my interest is not to establish the historic accuracy or otherwise of the stories that I have collected. I am interested rather in how different narratives of partition are constructed through memory. This story highlights the importance of space to the ways in which memories are constructed, and that a radical disjunction between the imagined version of a house remembered and the actual house as it is in the present can often be a source of grief and trauma. Even if the story of Kot Shera is "true," I cannot be certain what prompted the unnamed daughter of Mangal Singh to turn around and go back, after going to all the trouble of coming across the border from India to Pakistan. But it is difficult not to link this refusal to enter the house that does not match the image held in one's memory to Butalia's reluctance to visit a Lahore that no longer includes the house. In the minds of the many villagers who shared

Mangal Singh's story with me, partition remains a fundamentally personal event, and the effects of partition are felt on both sides at a personal level. These villagers would agree with Ved Mehta when he says that, "on a personal level, I think of partition . . . mostly in terms of losing our family home in Lahore."[31] Similarly, through their testimonies, many of my interviewees bring the macro-narrative of partition in terms of public, political history, to the more domestic, the more intimate sphere of the home and the objects that were contained within it.

The importance of private space in memories of partition features in the art installation *HOME* (2012) by Sophie Ernst.[32] Ernst uses a mixture of oral history narratives and hand-drawn maps as source material to create white architectural models of the house being described. Projected onto the models are videos of the hands as they are are sketching the map, and overlaid is the soundtrack of the interview. In Ernst's own words:

> *HOME* is an attempt to map space through memories. In this exercise I often find myself grappling with imaginary spatial worlds that are incoherent, inchoate and inconsistent, which is reflected in my installations. I construct the installations by juxtaposing imaginary spatial worlds with aural, visual and material elements. The narrations I collect are used as raw material to sculpt, where stories are layered with drawings, drawings with projections, projections with objects and objects with space. The sculpture is a screen for stories, a screen that at the same time contradicts and amplifies, and makes narratives visible in their layers. The sculpture has the function of bringing the stories "back" into space and, as I walk past the projections listening to a story, it becomes like a physical experience—as if I've been there.[33]

One of the reasons this memory of home is so powerful is precisely because it is now inaccessible.[34] Limited by the power of recall, the white models of the lost home remain forever incomplete, speaking powerfully to the pain of loss and of partial recovery through memory.

The sketches that Ernst's models are based on are reminiscent of Samar's map of our ancestral home. The starkness of the line drawings are realized powerfully in Ernst's work, as superimposed videos of the disembodied hands allow us to rapidly visualize the plan of the house as it is being described. Part of the power comes from the way in which the act of drawing a line has come to be a metaphor for partition as a whole. Howard Brenton's 2013 play on partition was thus called *Drawing the Line*. In his poem about partition, Pakistani poet M. Athar Tahir also deploys the metaphor of the drawing of the line: "A simple line, so easy once one gets/the hang of it, began it all."[35] In her account of visiting Pakistan, Kavita Panjabi includes the maps that her father and uncle drew for her before her visit:

> Much to my relief he [her father] responded with excitement and immediately sat down to compare the two. I knew by now that the half century of struggle that had intervened between their carefree lives on those streets and their weakening faculties today had no chance of competing with the impact of images planted in their brains in childhood and youth. The two maps covered different parts of Shikarpur for sure, but shared major areas in common too—and in these areas of overlap they were identical.[36]

Like my use of Samar's sketch and Sophie Ernst's use of her sketches, Panjabi has included the two maps in her books. All of these line drawings show the pain felt at the country divided and the home lost, but also an emotional articulation of the importance of the memory in the present. The visualization of the home that only exists in one's memory, like the border that is visualized as a line on a map, is just as important as a marker of identity in the present as a symbol of the materiality of the loss of the home in 1947.

It is for this reason that even six decades later, the memory of the violence that resulted in the destruction of the home remains so potent. The moment that Manik[37] witnessed the destruction of his house remains a vivid memory:

> A Muslim carried me on his shoulders and took me along. You won't believe me, perhaps many will say, "No, you were so young then." I can see our house is burning. My uncle's house next door is burning. The flames of that fire, the horror of it—perhaps a part of that horror entered me and has remained, do you understand?[38]

For, Kamal D.,[39] who was not himself forced into the life of a refugee, refugee stories are still important as he narrates the story of a cousin who remains today affected by the trauma of a lost home:

> And he still will, some days, in the mornings, say "You know, I again dreamt of Dhaka, I again dreamt of Dhaka and that terrible, terrible dream I have of crossing that bridge in front of our house and looking back and seeing that the house isn't there. Oh my goodness, I had that dream again—it's awful!"[40]

It is interesting that in both of these examples, the narration of the loss of the home is made in visual and, hence, spatial terms. For Manik, the horror assumes a physical existence, in that he describes the horror as having entered his body. For Kamal's cousin, the pain of having to leave his house is represented in the dream by the alteration of the physical space—the house disappears. Articulating the loss of the home in terms of the loss of the physical space paradoxically both contains the memory of the home and allows it

to travel across the border when the home is lost—a loss which becomes an integral aspect of the way people self-identify as refugees. Sipra, who was born in West Bengal a few months after her family was forced to move from their home in what had become East Pakistan, remembers this "homelessness" as a huge part of her childhood—both economically and emotionally:

> That I heard a lot from my grandmother. Her pain was immense. She always used to say, "You never even knew what kind of a family you are from, your ancestry. You are growing up here with other people in the dirt and smoke of the city, in poverty. Poor you—you never even got to see your country, your home."[41]

It is perhaps partly because of the need to emphasize the impact of this loss, that the lost home is almost always remembered as a site of blissful perfection and material affluence. Suhas[42] when talking about Mulghar, his ancestral village in Bangladesh, cites the authority of the colonial as evidence of his village's superiority:

> I remember in 1935, our Governor, Casey,[43] Governor General, he was an Australian gentleman. He went to Mulghar. He said that it was the best village in all of India. "That is what I have to say." He had written it down for us.[44]

The affluence of the lost home comes to be an important marker of refugee identity. Ananta,[45] who traveled from east Bengal to west Bengal, describes their land:

> It was a good place, Bangladesh, ours—how could it be bad? Bangladesh, our golden Bangla. Our house was on almost two, two and a half *kathi* of land. A betel nut garden. Have you seen betel-nut? The betel-nut garden was so big that if you entered it through one way, you would have to leave through another area, you wouldn't be able to leave through the same way. We had a betel nut garden like that over there, then wasn't it golden? We wanted for nothing, back then.[46]

Purnima,[47] who made a very similar journey, also uses a metaphor of plenty to highlight the idyllic nature of her lost home.

> The rice was in there, in rows, rice. We never used to eat the rice from this year's crop, only from the previous year, the old rice. Even today, when I buy rice, I buy old rice. I can't digest new rice.[48]

Chanderprakash,[49] who moved from West Pakistan to Delhi, also describes the size of his home and, similar to Ananta and Purnima, uses the size of their fortune not just to measure the extent of their loss but, and more important, as a way to construct their identities as refugees:

> God has great mercy, we were *lakhpatis* [we had 1 *lakh* rupees] there. In that time 1 *lakh* rupees was a big deal. Huge. One *Crore* today is like a *lakh* back then. We had twenty-one shops and two houses, twenty-one shops. Our house wasn't even half a kilometer from the railway station. It was one furlong, two hundred and twenty yards. It was on the main road—six shops downstairs. We lived in the back and there were two uncles, one on each side. Son, God was very kind to us.[50]

Janak[51] makes similar claims about material affluence:

> We had a big jewelry shop, over four floors. . . . They were goldsmiths. A four-story shop. The goldsmiths, the ones who did the work, would sit up top. They had bricks of gold which they would break up and make into jewelry, whatever weight people wanted. . . . We had a three-story house, one downstairs, and upstairs, there were two rooms, to sleep in when it was hot. It used to be very hot there, near Lahore. We had a lot of money, a lot of land, gardens and everything. A grandfather who had died, they named a Gurdwara after him. We had so much, I don't even know what we had. I have only seen a little bit, when my father used to take me around. The rest I don't know.[52]

This clinging to the memory of lost riches is so fundamental to the identity construction of the refugees that they continue to emphasize the plenitude of the home, even when it leads to prejudice against refugees in independent India. Thus, Mira[53] reveals her antipathy toward refugees from east Bengal through her belief that their narration of lost riches is fictitious:

> Everyone who came from there says "We had so much." But it is totally false, no doubt. I don't believe it. . . . Rather, you can say they became prosperous when they came to this country.[54]

In his short story "Janmabhumi" ["Home, Sweet Home"], author Samaresh Dasgupta reveals both a similar prejudice on the part of the indigenous west Bengali, and the importance of lost riches in the ways in which the east Bengali refugees construct their own identity:

> Someone asked me the other day, "Were you all landlords in Pakistan? Whoever I meet seems to have regrets about leaving behind orchards

> of coconut, betel palm, ponds with fishes, mansions, etc." He sounded sarcastic. But we all know what we actually had, and what we lost! How would you understand the pangs of leaving one's motherland?[55]

Also referring to the Bengal partition, Jhumpa Lahiri's character Boori Ma in "A Real Durwan" repeatedly invokes her memory of "easier times" in order to construct her identity as a refugee:

> Have I mentioned that I crossed the border with just two bracelets on my wrist? Yet there was a day when my feet touched nothing but marble. Believe me, don't believe me, such comforts you cannot even dream them.[56]

My interviewees use the same narrative device as Dasgupta's narrator and Lahiri's Boori Ma. As Lahiri herself writes about her protagonist:

> she garbled facts. She contradicted herself. She embellished almost everything. But her rants were so persuasive, her fretting so vivid, that it was not easy to dismiss her . . . she probably constructs tales as a way of mourning the loss of her family, was the collective surmise of most of the wives.[57]

In his interview, Suhas, too, depicts a similar trajectory of loss that is caused by partition. Like Purnima, he charts the change of economic circumstance through the metaphor of rice: "Before coming here, we never knew that rice could come in bags. We always thought that rice used to come in sacks."[58] Suhas's journey from consuming rice in sacks to consuming rice in bags is of course reminiscent of Purnima's journey from having to eat old rice to eat new rice.

Jharna M.[59] narrates the experience of having to live in smaller, substandard accommodation:

> We came to Kolkata then. What a condition we were in . . . there were only two rooms, one for my grandparents, and in the other—all of us brothers and sisters, so many of us. Then my older brother came, he was a mill owner in Narayanganj [east Bengal], his wife, children, they also came. . . . We had to do geometry to sleep, heads on this side, feet on this.[60]

One of the ways in which this transition from material affluence to economic poverty is manifested is through the move from owning a home to renting one. Indeed, as Sipra says, the sense of homeliness is often located in its ownership, and the security that it brings with it.

> I remember when I was little. No one used the word *bari* [home] to mean the rented home where we used to live. *Bari* was our home in the country, that is in east Bengal. We used to live in rented accommodation. This was a source of shame for us, especially if any part of the house, the yard, the balcony, or the toilets had to be shared with someone else—that used to affect them [her family] a lot. What I always think is, because we never had our own house, we had to leave our home behind—and then had to live in various places at various times, I always used to think that none of this is my own place. I am saying that India is my country, yes, but which part of it is my own home, which bit of it is my country, to think of it in little terms, there was nowhere I could think of as my own.[61]

The rented home is continually compared to the imaginary one that is now lost and is found wanting, as is visible from Jharna D.'s[62] testimony:

> We rented a house—one room, and a balcony. The balcony was used for cooking. My mother was the oldest daughter of a landlord family. Everybody used to call her *Phooldi*. My father had a status in Dhaka. But Ma never looked sad [cannot hold back her tears].[63]

Along with the humiliation of having to live in rented accommodation is, of course, the deterioration of the quality of housing. Jogesh[64] outlines his and his mother's memories of this painful change in housing:

> Our house was in the new town of Madaripur [east Bengal]. It was quite a big house, with a lot of land, fruit trees around. From there, we had to come and live in a one room, mud house. I didn't quite understand it all myself, but I heard from my mother that she burst into tears on entering the room. And within three days, my father moved us into a neighboring brick house.[65]

Feeling pain on behalf of one's mother is a common theme when narrating the change in housing and other material conditions. Samar invokes his mother in a manner very similar to Jogesh's:

> The change of having to leave our own home and move into a rented house, that made me feel bad, not so much for myself as for my mother. Her attachment was much more, she needed to keep in touch with the soil. Like, at home, she used to plant plants in big pots, look after them. But for me there is not much difference between that and putting flowers in a vase.[66]

Samar's mother's (my grandmother's) desire to remain in touch with the soil is also seen in the words of Alok, her youngest son:

> A long time ago, I can't remember when, my mother once asked me: "Can you let me live in between the earth and the sky?" So, not in a part of a multi-story flat, she wanted a small one-story, or two-story house. This is probably because of her memories of the kind of house she would have lived in as a child. The houses of feudal landlords in those times would increase in breath and length, but not so much in height . . . that's what Mother wanted. It feels good to think or say that I was able to do that for her . . . though I never felt that it made up for loss of the ancestral home. It never did, perhaps that would not have been possible.[67]

In colloquial Bengali, the words *basha* and *bari* have very different connotations, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out:

> The Bengali language has preserved this sense of distinction between a temporary place of residence and one's foundational home, as it were, by using two different words for a house, *basha* and *bari*. *Basha* is always a temporary place of residence, no matter how long one stays there; one's sense of belonging there is transient. *Bari*, on the other hand, is where one's ancestors have lived for generations. When it comes to rituals marking life-cycle changes (such as marriage), middle-class Bengali Hindus of Calcutta often refer to the ancestral village in explaining where their *bari* is even if their *basha* bears a Calcutta address.[68]

Even though the replaced home or *basha* will never be an adequate substitute for the *bari* that has been left behind, that does not mean that it too does not become a site for roots to develop. Part of the reason Sipra and Alok feel good about being able to give their parents the chance to once again live under their own roof is the sense that ownership of property can continue to serve as a bulwark against further forced displacement. Mohindra's[69] father's reaction to being made homeless is a case in point:

> One of the tragedies of my father's life is that actually he never forgot that he had to leave his home place. When I became a banker in my profession and I came abroad, I was very, very keen to ask him to come and stay with me for a holiday. For just, even if not that long, just for two, three, four weeks, whatever he liked. I was happy to give him the ticket, both for my mother and father, but my father just refused to budge. And he said, "I have lost my mother place once, I don't want to lose it second time. So, if I die in London, I don't want to do that."[70]

Human connections to people, places, and objects are complex, and as Mohindra's father shows, one can feel rooted to a particular place (their post-partition home in Delhi) while also feeling the loss of the original home in Lahore.

Of course, this pain of having to move from a home that one's family has owned for generations to a rented, transitory house is partly an economic one but also much, much more. It signifies a rupture in tradition, and a dismantling of a deeply rooted identity that is embedded in the space of the home. The rootedness is almost literal, as both Samar and Alok's recollection of their mother shows. Sudha Rani's (for that was her name) habit of cultivating potted plants while living in a multi-storied, garden-less flat can be read, in this narrative, as a small act of resistance, whether intentional or not, against the overwhelming forces that compelled her to leave her own home. Jogesh describes the powerful connection that his grandfather felt to his home—a connection that led to him choosing to remain in what had become East Pakistan when his entire family left for India:

> Because we had quite a big house, and a lot of struggle went into building and preserving it and my grandfather had, somehow, in his mind, that his ancestors—his father, or mother were probably cremated on our lands. And there was quite a big madar tree. He would point it out and say they were cremated there. Obviously, he had a pull of a different kind [for the house].[71]

This link between the house and the memories of dead family members it contains is a theme that is noticeable in other narratives as well. Bandana[72] provides an example by talking about her illustrious Aunt Rani, or Pritilata Waddedar who took part in and was killed in the aftermath of the Chattogram (Chittagong) Armoury Raid of 1930. Nearly two decades later, when partition forced Bandana's family to leave their ancestral home, she remembers her grandfather articulating his loss of home in terms of his memories of his dead daughter:

> Grandfather had a tremendous emotional connection. And that's what he always said, "We have left Rani there." Not left Chattogram, but that they had left Rani. He went through a very difficult period.[73]

For both Jogesh's and Bandana's grandfathers, then, part of the reason the ancestral home assumes such psychological significance is that it is also the site where family members have died and had their last rites performed. The memories of their death, as painful as they are, also represent a multigenerational link to the space of the home, which serves to exacerbate the trauma of losing the home because of partition.

A similar loss is poignantly dramatized in M. S. Sathyu's *Garm Hava*. The grandmother of the family has such a strong connection to her ancestral home that she has to be physically carried out against her will when the family are forced to move out due to dwindling economic fortunes as a consequence of partition. On the one hand, her attachment to the home is constructed through a profoundly patriarchal family structure—she doesn't want to leave because, as she puts it, "How will I face him [my husband] on Judgment Day?" On the other, her intense relationship with her home allows her not only to choose to be separated from her family ("Let me die here.") but empowers her to challenge her sons in shockingly powerful terms: "All of you go to hell!"

Forced to live in a much smaller rented house, she chooses the topmost floor as she can see her *haveli* from the window. The loss of the home results in a decline of health, however, and her family is forced to ask the new owner of their ancestral home if they can bring her back in an effort to improve her health. Her re-entry into the building in a palanquin is carefully constructed to mirror what would have been the first time she entered the home as a bride, and the accompanying soundtrack is the *shehnai*, a musical instrument associated particularly with weddings. In the voice-over, we hear her in happier times as she describes her own wedding and her various familial memories that the space of the house has evoked within her. The soundtrack is thus used to represent her nostalgic memories of the happy times she has spent within the walls of the house.

Almost as soon as she is brought in, however, she dies—the ultimate gesture of rebellion against both the nation state's role in enforcing partition and patriarchy's role in insisting that her place should be with her family rather than the actual space of the home. In dying within the walls of the home, she reaffirms her rooted relationship with the building, a relationship which trumps her relationship to her sons and their rational, practical and economic considerations.

The grandmother's nostalgia in *Garm Hava* is very similar to the nostalgia evident in the way my interviewees construct idyllic versions of the past they left behind—a world of material affluence and an easy, uncomplicated life. Almost all my interviewees who are old enough to remember the home they left behind remember it as an Edenic space of perfection, against which the precariousness of their post-partition life can be contrasted.

However, to simply dismiss these sentimental accounts of one's lost home as inaccurate would be to miss the point. Rather than discarding the testimonies as factually inaccurate, we need to examine how and why people cling onto these accounts of home are with such force.

Ritwik Ghatak's 1965 film *Subarnarekha* mobilizes refugee nostalgia for the lost home in order to bitterly satirize the new nation state and how, in the filmmaker's view, it has failed the refugee population. The film opens in a refugee camp, ironically called New Life Colony, as Iswar and his young sister

Sita try to begin a new life. Sita asks, "When we left our village, you said we were going to our new home. Is this that new home? Then, why is there so much fighting in our new home?" At the end of the film, with Sita dead, and Iswar and Sita's son Binu the only ones left behind, the question is still to be answered:

> Uncle, is this the river Subarnarekha? . . . Over there in the distance, there are the blue hills. There are such nice large houses there, and butterflies flitting in the garden, and there are songs, yes. Uncle, Sita-mother said our new home will be there. Tell me, honestly, are we going to our new home?

As uncle and nephew walk along the banks of the river, and the camera pans across the broad expanse of the landscape, the film ends, reflecting the audience's awareness of the fictionality of this new home. The nation state and its narrative of history may well promise an idyllic new home for the refugees but Iswar, and Sita, and many of my interviewees who were refugees know better.

Such a nostalgic recreation of one's home and the consequent emotional relationship one establishes with one's memory can represent a significant counter-hegemonic force. In the context of the post-partition subcontinent, when a large part of one's national identity is constructed in oppositional terms—one is Indian because one is not Pakistani, and vice versa, such strong, positive emotional connection with a space that is now in the "other" country seriously undermines the national narratives of partition in both India and Pakistan. When Ananta refers to "golden Bengal" in his interview, for example, he is alluding to the national anthem of an "other" country—in this case, Bangladesh. "Amar Shonar Bangla" or "My Golden Bengal" is a song written by Rabindranath Tagore which is equally popular on both sides of the border. In referring to this song, Ananta reinforces a transnational, pan-Bengali identity that transcends the national borders and therefore undermines the project of postcolonial nation-building. Again and again, my interviewees express a strong feeling of connection with the "other" country that sometimes trump one's connections to the state of which one is a citizen. This connection should thus be seen as challenging the hegemony of borders that characterize the nation-state. Thus, Asia,[74] a proud Pakistani, talks about her family's attachment to Ludhiana, in India:

> Those who were born there, they are still—like my older sister says, "I want to go to Ludhiana before I die, once." I say, "Why don't you go and do *hajj*?." She says, "Just that, before I die I want to go to Ludhiana once." She misses it so much till now. Our mother kept saying "Ludhiana, Ludhiana" till she died. And then this sister still talks about it. She

> had the photos and keeps looking at them. That's all we ever heard, "Ludhiana, Ludhiana, India, India"—that's all. There was no other talk at home.[75]

In a gesture that says as much about connections across borders as it says about a distinctively south Asian form of Islamic identity, Asia's sister is able to compare the ultimate act of pilgrimage to Mecca to visiting one's ancestral home in India. The resultant declaration is almost blasphemous in its rebelliousness. Asia's testimony here reminds me of H.'s grandfather cited above, who refused to go to Pakistan, the new home for Muslims in south Asia, because he did not want to leave his mosque in India.

Sultana,[76] who was born and grew up in what was East Pakistan, before moving to Lahore to finish her medical education, relates a story of bonding with an Indian gentleman over a shared connection with Lahore:

> In one evening we were having dinner with Mrs Singh and her family and her brother came who was quite old—more than eighty, ninety, something like that and we were talking about how much I knew Punjabi and how much I knew Punjab. I spoke few Punjabi words with him and he was very impressed and he: "Oh, where did you learn your Punjabi?" I said, "Well, I studied in Punjab." "Where in Punjab?" "I studied in Lahore, in King Edward Medical College" Oh, and this gentleman suddenly jumped and hold me tight and hugged me and I was just flabbergasted. I didn't know what to do and then Mrs Singh was very upset and she said "What are you doing?" and he just, then he sort of released me and then he said "You see, after so many years, I'm so pleased, I was so happy to see someone who came from my institution, where I studied Medicine!" And that really brought tears to his eyes, and to me as well.[77]

This anecdote speaks of a connection made between two citizens of two different south Asian nation states, over a complex attachment to a space that is now part of a third nation state. The strength of connection made is emphasized through the narrative—the brother's excitement at finding a fellow alumna makes him forget the gendered norms of behavior as he hugs a woman whom he does not know. These moments of connectivity in these narratives of loss and reconciliation are crucial—not least because they expose the falsehoods in nationalist myths and point toward a pan-national identity narrative.

Such connections often extend to the second generation as well—those who have no direct memories of the home that was left behind but who still feel drawn to the spaces that they have heard about and which they have grown up imagining. When asked to elaborate on the home that she left in

1947, and visited sixty years later, Madhu articulates a deeply felt connection to the homely space that she had heard about all her life:

> But when I went to Rawalpindi and you know, then, I had a very strange kind of thing. My, my first photograph as a baby in a pram is next to a fountain. I'd seen the photograph all my life but I saw the fountain when I was sixty. And I recognised it immediately, I recognised the verandah of that house because there are so many photographs of you [her mother] wearing that coat—it was November and cold, in Rawalpindi and Mummy holding me and these archways of the verandah and, I mean, it was like, what I had seen in photographs all my life was suddenly coming alive before me. I recognised the house completely from the photographs. I mean, you know, I hadn't even thought that was possible but it was like, it was just there, those photographs were coming to life for me. It was very strange, very weird experience. I mean, I ran in to, the moment I opened the gate, the drive was quite long. I ran up to the house because I just began to, it was like, you know—Oh, I know this, I know this, I know this. It was like that, it was very weird. And I just thought—it's down this drive that sixty years ago my parents would have taken me away. And that's the first time that I really felt partition.[78]

The verandah in Madhu's narrative, or Samar's bricks, or Santi's tin, together constitute fragments that help to configure the imagined home. It is important to note here that these fragments that evoke home have nothing to do with the nation state at all. Once the home has been divorced from any notions of the nation state, the concept of home ceases to represent the hegemonic national narrative and instead becomes a collection of objects which can be used to symbolize the home that has been left behind. Often "useless" in any practical sense, sometimes materially "valueless," these objects are invested in meaning through the telling of stories. In narrating the memory of their lost home, my interviewees are projecting meaning onto apparently unimportant objects which, as a result, become supremely important for the ways in which the narrators create identity narratives for themselves.

Sophiya[79] provides a good example as she narrates the loss of property that leaving India for Pakistan in 1947 entailed:

> It was like this, the way I am sitting. My father was doing his *wazu* [ablutions] at the time of *asr* [evening prayer]. He took off his ring, I always remember, he took off his ring. This ring belonged to my, they say, great-grandfather. I don't know—my grandfather or his father. Whatever stones that were on the ring, he used to wear it all the time. He took off and placed it there. And then the people came, "Take them away, take them away." He did his *Namaaz*, and left the ring there. And we got on,

sat down in two cars—one driven by the driver, one by my father, and we left for the Viceregal Lodge.[80]

Jaswant,[81] who made the opposite journey from Lahore to India, speaks of a radio that was his father's favorite:

So we moved and my mother packed a radio, which was about this big, this high, in a sheet to take us with it. And this bloke came down to see my mother. "Are you all packed?" She said, "Yes." And he saw on the table this radio packed up. He said, "What's that?" She said, "Oh, it's my husband's best thing. He loved the radio and I'm taking it with me." "Oh no" he said, "you can't take that. If that drops it'll go off like a bomb." He scared us so much we left it on the table and came away.[82]

Very often, utensils and cooking pots come to stand for domesticity and homeliness. Asia speaks of the meat that her family had to leave half-cooked when they left their home in Ludhiana, India:

Lots of families came to our house. I don't know how long they stayed but I heard a month—six, seven weeks. At that time, my father had collected food for six, seven weeks. Rice, flour, dal, chillies, everything. We were all there and there was nothing to do so we all kept eating. My brother sacrificed a sheep or goat and they said "You have so many people, you should take some as well." They cooked meat for the first time in so many weeks. She [her mother] cooked it all day long, but it hadn't yet finished cooking. It was on the fire and it was cooking. But then the military came, and said "You got only five minutes. Five minutes, if you want to stay alive, come with us."[83]

When Jharna D. recalls her mother speaking of the home they left behind in what was then East Pakistan, she, too, emphasizes the cooking pots:

My mother used to say a funny thing sometimes, when talking about pots and pans. She used to say "I left twelve pots of different sizes on the shelf back home" She used to talk about these twelve pots when cooking. Pots and pans, she did bring some brass pots. When using them, sometimes, she would say, "This. . . ." I could tell she was thinking of the old times, how many pots and pans she had left behind. Just one brass *kolshi* [pot specially designed to store water]. We normally used to use buckets for water. The day my older brother bought a brass *kolshi*, Ma was so happy.[84]

This symbolic use of cooking and pots to represent the domesticity that has been compromised by partition can also be seen in *Garm Hava*. As the family leaves the ancestral home, the camera focuses in on the clay oven as one of the women of the family destroys it, in an act that is as symbolic as it is poignant. Jhumpa Lahiri's Boori Ma also maintains a list of objects in memory—"a two-storey brick house, a rosewood *almari*, and a number of coffer boxes whose skeleton keys she still wore, along with her life savings, tied to the free end of her sari."[85] The skeleton keys are now as materially useless as the life savings are essential, but when Boori Ma loses both to a pickpocket, the magnitude of the loss is the same.

From gramophone players to portraits, from jewelry to trinket boxes, my interviews are littered with these objects. They are sometimes carefully held onto on the journey across the border, and at other times they are lost or misplaced and mourned as representative of all the other objects, places, and people that have been lost and which, cumulatively, stand in for the powerful but nebulous concept of home. As Devika Chawla has written of a box that is a family heirloom, "it travelled with her [her grandmother] from Pakistan . . . [and] is a material symbol of my family's politically impelled migrations."[86]

What is immediately noticeable in all these narratives is that the significance these objects have for these narrators has nothing to with their usefulness, or their monetary value. The objects my narrators describe have acquired their significance from being lost. In other cases, they survived the journey across the border but have been discarded since. In a comparatively smaller number of cases, they have been held onto throughout all the trials and tribulations of refugee life. Often, these objects have had post-partition journeys of themselves, as they have traveled around south Asia and sometimes beyond, as successive generations have moved around, and given them further layers of meaning. Their value, however, lies not just in their actual material preservation, but in the preservation of their memory, and the ways in which my interviewees can construct their sense of selves in connection to these memories. This, then, is one important way in which agency can be read into these narratives of loss and pain.

In no longer being useful, these objects become so much more. Through the power of narration, these testimonies are able to project onto these tiny and insignificant objects both personal memories and powerful accusations. Like the imagined new home of *Subarnarekha*, these objects serve as a vivid reminder that the original home remains lost, and, for all the triumphalist nationalist narrative of the new nation state, that life-shattering loss from six decades ago remains uncompensated.

2

"My other mother"

Separated and Reconstructed Families

Perhaps the strongest and most poignant marker of trauma in the memories of those who survived partition, and in partition texts more generally, is that of separated families. So many families have stories of family members who were killed, or lost, or left behind, and, in many ways, partition texts can be interpreted as elegies for these lost relatives. Some of the families are reunited, but others stay separated across the border until the older members of the family pass on, sometimes never having seen their lost relatives after 1947. The source of separation is varied—individual family members often get lost on the journey, succumbing to violence or disease, or different family members may make different decisions regarding whether to stay where they are or move to the other country. In other cases, certain members of the family are sent across the border earlier because they are perceived to be more vulnerable. Of course, in some cases partition cuts across earlier migrations so it often finds members of the same family separated by distance, a distance that is then complicated by the events of partition and the problems in communication it leads to. In either case, however, the separation is a source of pain and suffering that sometimes lasts for generations.

Growing up in post-partition Pakistan, K.R.[1] was all too aware of the missing family members who she never knew, but whose absence was a defining factor in her upbringing:

> And my children, they all very interested. I said, "Look, this Pakistan. How much sacrifices been . . . my, my own family gone through with this." I said, "It's not the story, it is a reality of my family. I never saw my *Nani*, *Nana*, *Khalas*, my aunties, nobody. . . . And I said, 'Perhaps life will be the different if I have my whole family around and we be loved from our *Nana, Nani* and all that." People talk about going to *Nani*'s house, *Nana*'s house. I will never . . . we didn't have anything like that. They said, "Oh, when the holidays come they go to *Nana*'s house, *Nani*'s

> house" and I always wish we be had a family like that. We've not been accepted from my father's family so we never have that much love from our family like uncle, aunties. And the uncles and whoever they fight they've gone so hard from inside, like they got nothing left, they got no emotions left; the circumstances make them so hard. So we didn't have . . . I always think that oh, how the life will be different if they will all alive and we go visit them like the other people. And my mother used to say that, "If your *Nana-Nani* alive your life would be a different life. You'd be so much loved, you'd be so much. . . " So we miss all that.[2]

Most of K.R.'s extended family was killed during the violence of partition, but she still reserves a special mention for one particular member—a half-sister she had not known about for more than half a century:

> But now, I recently heard that which my mother never talk. She was already married there as well and she had the one little baby girl as well. She was newly married, her husband been killed. She never talked but my cousin now, two years ago he told me that she was married, which part she always hide from us. I don't know why—she never talked. He [K.R.'s cousin] said "Yes, *Khala* was married and I was carrying *Khala*'s little baby." And he was ten year old and he went . . . the Sikh family they keep the baby. They said, "How . . . you are boy yourself. You can't keep the baby so give us the baby. . . ." But that baby, he said, died after a couple of weeks over there because he was a so young baby she didn't have milk or whatever it is. Perhaps my mother don't want to know and talk, it hurting part of. . . . But my mother's husband been killed and she survived. . . . No, I never asked that, I never can. It was shock of my life to knewing that, we had the one sister, like half sister, whatever. But it was shock to know that as well that she died, she never survived. . . . And I was thinking, Mum, she knew that would happen to the girl but how much that hurt had to be knowing that for the child to be died like that. But she never talked . . . I don't think so. What happened I don't know but I don't know the name, no. Even I don't know my mother's husband's name and I don't know who was the family, her husband's family.[3]

Growing up around the same time in the other side of the country in West Bengal, Jogesh and his family carried with them the memory of a lost aunt, along with feelings of guilt at the failure to have provided adequate protection:

> When I was born, three months before that my youngest Aunt was born. After my birth, my mother didn't have any breast milk so I grew up on my grandmother's breast milk. A few days after we moved to this country my grandparents and uncles and aunties came to this side. They were

> living in Sealdah station and while there, my aunt developed cholera. So they admitted her in Campbell Hospital. They used to go and visit her twice a day. One day, when they went, they saw she wasn't in her bed. They all started crying and left. At the time, they weren't in the right mental state to be able to make enquiries and so forth. They just assumed she had died. Later we all made many enquiries but couldn't get an answer. She would have been seven or eight at the time. I remember my grandmother and mother mourning her loss the most. . . . In such circumstances, to come and live on a station, it was unbearable. They weren't right in the head either. What to eat, what to do—that was always an issue. . . . My grandmother and mother used to say if we had been a bit more normal we could have tried to find out what happened. Somehow I think maybe because she was a female child, at least now there was one less mouth to feed.[4]

Even when nobody in the family had actually died, partition represented for many people a loss of connection that was more often than not expressed in familial terms. Born in Glasgow in 1953, Trishna[5] experienced a disconnect from her familial roots that she attributes to partition:

> So there was no kind of connection to sending money back home all the time for land or property cos everything was lost in Pakistan so they didn't have anything, you know. So for us in that way, in our family there wasn't that connection.[6]

A.K.'s[7] family split up as his father's side of the family moved to Pakistan, while his mother's side remained in India. When asked to describe the effect of this separation, he chokes up with emotion:

> My mother suffered a lot all her life. [long pause] It's tough when you break a family, no matter what reason it is. So that's the story of partition.[8]

The long pause is significant. A.K. was visibly struggling to control his emotions. Immediately after he said this, food arrived, and he interrupted his story to exhort me to eat. The break helped him regain his composure, however, and despite my gentle questioning, he chose not to revisit his mother's experiences of having her family split across the border.

There are many and different reasons for deciding to move to India or Pakistan, or indeed, deciding not to. Muqtada[9] was born in United Provinces, undivided India and came from a family that was active in the Muslim League. Even though his father campaigned for Pakistan, after partition happened, all of his family chose the stability of remaining in India rather than risk losing

everything and moving to Pakistan. Muqtada, however, chose differently and, as a result, his family became divided across the border:

> I came to Pakistan by myself. My whole family remained there. My mother, father, sisters, brother, all of them. I came to Pakistan in December '54. . . . But my parents died in India.[10]

The loss of his family and the pain he feels as a result is most apparent when he discusses visiting India:

> It was easy in the beginning. Passports were easy to get, and there was no need for certificates or sponsorship. You had to go and queue in the Indian High Commission, submit your passport at noon, and you would get your visa by 2 pm. No questions, you just had a to fill a form with your address etc. and you would get a visa straight away—a visa for four places, five places, I have even got a visa for eight places.[11] . . . Now it is very hard and my mother is no longer there, my father is not there. Just one sister, two sisters and one brother. Everyone else has died.[12]

In fact, sometimes the break-up of the family becomes the choice that people make, for other practical or psychological reasons. Writing about her own family, Urvashi Butalia has noted how different family narratives have sprung up to explain her uncle's decision to stay in Pakistan when most of the family had left for India:

> My mother, who was still single at the time, found herself on the Indian side of the border. Ranamama, her brother, chose to stay behind. According to my mother and her other siblings, his choice was a motivated one. He wanted access to the property. . . .[13]

Ranamama's explanation is, perhaps unsurprisingly, rather different: "Many of us thought, yes, there'll be change, but why should we have to move?"[14] Whatever the reason for the decisions that were made, Butalia's narrative shows that the disintegration of the family was felt as a loss by everyone concerned. Home and family are, in Butalia's words, "defined in many different ways"[15] and the loss is felt in just as many different ways.

Kamal G. got separated from his parents when the younger members of their family were sent ahead from Lahore to Jullundhur when the troubles started. Age five at the time, he vividly remembers the sense of uncertainty he experienced at this separation:

> Sometimes on the radio you heard the news, you felt that there had been another attack there. We were scared because our parents were there.

> What would happen to them? We got no news at all, because we had no telephone link or anything then. All we could do was pray to God by going to the temple, to keep our parents safe. We couldn't find out anything. It was only when they arrived that we knew. Otherwise even they didn't know if we were safe, and we didn't know where our parents were or if they were safe.[16]

Kailash,[17] who had made the journey to Britain before partition, was left with no news whatsoever of her family. Like Kamal G., she uses the image of people huddled over a radio trying to find out what was happening:

> It was dreadful because there was no other communication except letters and newspapers. My husband and his colleagues, there were two, three other young Indian researchers—they used to sit near the radio to get the news. Because partition took place, no one knew where the family was, what was happening and there was a Gurdwara in Shepherd's Bush, the Gurdwara used to get some information so we used to, but it was a very frightening and very scary when you don't know who is alive and who is dead and what of it has gone. So it was terrible time.[18]

Sakina[19] found herself in Calcutta in 1947, but her children were all in boarding school in the hill station of Mussorie:

> We had a letter from the principal saying that a number of Sikhs had come to Mussorie and there was a lot of rebellion and killing and all going on. So they said, "We can't take the responsibility for your children because they are Muslims. So you must make arrangement to take them out." So then I went. I didn't allow my husband to go—he was a Pathan and he looked very Muslim. I could pass off for anything.[20]

The patterns of people's journeys are more varied than a conventional account of partition-induced migration might make it appear. These journeys encompass multiple points in south Asia, across the borders in different directions but also within countries, as well as expanding out to points overseas, not least the United Kingdom. As Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar has argued, the word "displacement" better signifies "the contingency in which people left their homes"—a contingency which anachronistically gets discursively fixed into migration "with the intention of permanent relocation."[21] This fixing is an attempt to bring the individual subject more securely under state control by forcing a normative relationship between individual, family, and state. The aim is, in Zamindar's words, "to produce, with some force, bounded citizens of two nation-states."[22]

The reality of the displacement of people, of course, shows a much more complex, nuanced relationship between the individual and the family in relation to national borders. Jaswant's[23] father, for example, had moved the family to the UK in the 1930s, and subsequently sent them back to India to protect them from World War II. When partition intervened, the family was split again, only to be finally reunited after 1947:

> And we came here to London. . . . And then the war started in 1939 and we used to go down to the shelters every time the siren went. . . . So via the overland route my father sent us back with a couple of his relatives to look after us on the way. And we went from here to France and then Italy and then Middle East, Istanbul, and from there caught a little ship and went to Karachi. From Karachi we caught a train and went to Lahore, and eventually got into our house which was already there, which my father had built along with six of his other friends. . . . In '47 people started talking about Pakistan, that there is going to be a partition here. And because we were living in Lahore it could be either way, it could go this way or that way, but wherever it is we might have bloodshed here. So we moved . . . my mother was told to move for at least six weeks. In our area twelve families got together and there weren't many mens there; there was only three mens there—all other were children and womens and girls and so on. . . . Anyway, my father, when he came back, he came back to collect us.[24]

In Jaswant's account, he traces the genealogy of his caste backward to Sri Lanka, while tracing his own individual narrative forward to the self-confessed identity category of a "Welsh Sikh." The rupture in his family caused by partition is, one sense, partly responsible for this hybrid identity category that is not easily bound by national borders.

It is interesting that Jaswant's testimony elides over the details of the actual reunion of the family. In this he is certainly not alone. Kailash, too, spends much more time vividly describing the pain felt at the uncertainty of the family's separation, but chooses to gloss over the reunion:

> How did we know they moved to Ludhiana? I don't remember, don't remember. When we went to Bombay. . . . From Bombay, I think, probably. . . . We went to Bombay on our way back, and from there we come to know that our parents were in Ludhiana.[25]

It is not easy to explain this reluctance to talk about this reunion. There is perhaps a sense that the enormity of the trauma of separation is never quite compensated for by the joy of reunion. Of course, this reluctance is certainly

not universal. Kamal G., for example, describes in great detail the moment when he was reunited with his parents in the refugee camp in Jullundhur:

> We were all crying when we met up with our parents. We were so happy. They were also hugged and kissed us again and again. That our children are okay, everything is okay. Parents are safe as well.[26]

Especially on the Bengal border, the migration was not a single act—rather, people kept moving back, across, and back again as their own circumstances changed. Jharna D.'s family had to cope not just with partition and consequent decline in family fortunes but her father's untimely death as well. This meant numerous crossings and re-crossings over the border as various siblings had to be left with members of the extended family. This break-up of the family was never really properly healed and the pain of it is still palpable in her voice as she recounts her family's story:

> We were eight brothers and sisters, seven, one sister had already died earlier. So, my father, mother, myself and the two brothers who were older than me, all of us stayed in Calcutta. And the rest, my two sisters and two brothers, we were four brothers and three sisters in all—the rest went back [to east Bengal]. . . . They went and lived in my uncle's house in Chatalpar in Comilla district. . . . Because I was so young, I don't have too many bad memories but our family was just torn apart.[27]

Not surprisingly, this motif of representing partition through the disintegration of the family appears in the literary and cinematic legacy of partition as well. Perhaps the most iconic short story of partition, "Toba Tek Singh" (1955) by Saadat Hasan Manto, features Bishen Singh, an inmate of a mental asylum whose descent further and further into insanity is accelerated by the separation from his family:

> He missed his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him. . . . A few days before the exchange was to take place, one of Bishen Singh's Muslim friends from Toba Tek Singh came to see him—the first time in fifteen years. Bishen Singh looked at him once and turned away, until a guard said to him, "This is your old friend Fazal Din. He has come all the way to meet you."
>
> Bishen Singh looked at Fazal Din and began to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on his friend's shoulder and said, "I have been meaning to come for some time to bring you news. All your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. Your daughter Roop Kaur . . ."—he hesitated—"She is safe too . . . in India."
>
> Bishen Singh kept quiet.[28]

The pain of being separated from one's family is such that it cannot be put into words. Faced with challenge of articulating his pain, Bishen Singh has no choice but to keep quiet. Bishen's death "behind barbed wire" marks not just the limit point of the nation states but also the irredeemable destruction of the family.

Similarly, *Garm Hava* (1974) shows the gradual but inevitable disintegration of a large, aristocratic Muslim family from Agra, India. At multiple points throughout the film, Salim Mirza, the protagonist, has to go to the railway station to say goodbye to more and more of his family as they decide to abandon their homes and move to Pakistan. Every time he has to go to the station, his driver asks him: "Who are you seeing off this time?"—a question that becomes a refrain that accompanies the narrative of the film and the gradual emptying of the ancestral family home. In the opening scenes, Salim is seeing his elder sister off, and says: "Her husband is already in Karachi. Now they've joined him as well. So many blossoming trees are being felled in this wind." The driver agrees with Salim: "Scorching winds these are, Sir, very scorching. If they are not uprooted, they will wither away." Like Muqtada, most of the members of the family leave for Pakistan for pragmatic, economic reasons, though this does not reduce the pain of separation. The family's decline caused by partition is thus built in from the very beginning of the story, and will prove to be the biggest trauma to be endured by the protagonists. Near the start of the film, the family is shown at dinner. Enough members of the family remain in India at this point for the family to seem, visually at least, viable. This image of an apparently harmonious kinship group is brutally contrasted with the image near the end, where Salim and his wife sit weeping together, mourning the loss of their family and the impending loss of their home, as they come to terms with the necessity of following in their family's footsteps.

Jhumpa Lahiri's Boori Ma is another example of the way in which familial loss and national loss can be conflated in cultural representation and collective memory:

> It was with this voice that she enumerated, twice a day as she swept the stairwell, the details of her plight and losses suffered since her deportation to Calcutta after Partition. At that time, she maintained, the turmoil had separated her from a husband, four daughters.[29]

Like the Mirza family in *Garm Hava*, Boori Ma's transformation from a matriarch who "married her [daughter] to a school principal"[30] to a solitary figure who "looked almost as narrow from the front as she did from the side"[31] comes to symbolize the painful reality of the post-partition nation state.

N.K.,[32] while telling me of the split in her family, makes overt reference to *Garm Hava*. Her father was a prominent newspaper editor and supporter of the anti-partition Congress party, even though he was Muslim. As such, he

refused to leave India for Pakistan and, in the years after independence stood by as one after another, all his daughters married Pakistani men:

> He never wanted to come to Pakistan because his children came to Pakistan, you know, all of them and he said "No, I don't want to go to Pakistan. This is my place, I want to stay here. And I never want to go to Pakistan." So never, ever came. My mother used to come.[33]

N.K. goes on to narrate how, after refusing for years, her father finally agreed to visit Pakistan to see his first grandchild. He had planned to come for only a week but slipped, fell, and broke his hip at the airport on the way:

> So he died the day he was supposed to leave. And which he was always sad that "When I die my son is not going to bury me." And that was inside his wish. So when he was here his son only did everything. So he is here. And he never wanted come here. His life is strange like if you see that movie, which movie did we see? Just now? A movie about the partition of India and Pakistan? It was really good movie we just saw . . . Balraj Sahni, *Garm Hava*. Just it's the story of my father life. Yeah. I have it, I gave to N. [her daughter]. So that's my father's story that. Whenever I watch that movie, I just cry. Because I know my father love India, he never wanted to come here. And he said always—this is kabaristan, not Pakistan. And it is *kabaristan* for him. So my father was Indian.[34]

On one level, N.K.'s invocation of *Garm Hava* is a particularly poignant example of how emotionally invested people can be in cultural representation of the trauma that they or their families have lived through. For N.K., as for so many others, partition literature and cinema is not merely of intellectual interest, nor is it simply entertainment. It is rather an example of Michael Roper's argument that "personal accounts of the past are never produced in isolation from these public narratives, but must operate within their terms. Remembering always entails the working of past experience into available cultural scripts."[35] On the other, it shows how individual and familial losses can so easily be translated into and appropriated by national narratives of loss and trauma. In the act of invoking *Garm Hava*, N.K. identifies her father with Salim Mirza of the film, and therefore, by extension, with the many thousands of others who suffered similar losses, and whose stories inspired the film in the first place. As Mr. Chatterji says of Boori Ma in "A Real Durwan," "Boori Ma's mouth is full of ashes, but she is the victim of changing times."[36] Boori Ma's repeated refrain: "Believe me, don't believe me, it was a luxury you cannot dream"[37] is matched with Mr. Chatterji's catchphrase of "changing times," in the process serving to nationalize Boori Ma's loss.

This conflation of individual loss and national loss is also reflected in public discourse on the partition (both academic and popular) through the use of the family as a metaphor to depict the trauma of the partition. Meenakshi Mukherjee demonstrates this in her description of India and Pakistan being "dissimilar . . . [but] conjoined twins, unable to move away or move ahead."[38] Gyanendra Pandey has identified the "considerable sense of nostalgia [which is] frequently articulated in the view that this was a partition of siblings that should never have occurred."[39] Article after article in the popular press on both sides of the border[40] use the metaphor of the separated family—parents from children, sibling from sibling, in order to symbolize the loss suffered by both nation states.

There are many problems with this conflation, one of which is that it is in many ways an Indocentric view, as it implicitly undermines the two-nation theory that was one of the main reasons for the demand for Pakistan. Perhaps more relevant for the present argument, it is through this conflation that the patriarchy of the family and the patriarchy of the state are being allowed to unproblematically collude in the oppression of women both within and outside the family. This is of particular relevance to partition memories because of the thousands of women who were abducted, raped, and forced to convert during the violence that accompanied the partition. It is no coincidence that, in my body of oral history testimony, many of the memories of individual family members who were missing or lost in 1947 pertain to female relatives. Like civil conflicts in most places, women were disproportionately affected by the violence of partition. K.R.'s unnamed half-sister and Jogesh's aunt are just two examples of young girls being separated from their families and then losing their lives. K.R.'s cousin presents another similar example, albeit of someone who survived:

> And one of the girl been left behind, which is we found now after sixty-five years; she's still living in India. And they went to look for her. The first time she wasn't interested at all. She said, "You left it so late I don't want to leave my family, my children" because she's from one of the Sikhs, religious family. And second time when they went to visit her she was happy then and she was asking for everybody, how they . . . where they are, where they gone, where they gone, who is alive, who is died. And she was asking, "Why didn't you come and find out where I was when I was left behind?" So I don't know what happened between two sisters but my cousin's son, he told me that. He said they bring some photos which show us some photos as well. But she's not Muslim anymore—no she's living with that family with the three girls and two boys. We asked her if she want to come over and she want to and she said, "No, I don't want to leave my children. It's very hard for me to be come and if my family, my boys know that I'm from a Muslim family and all that." The only help

> is one of the daughter and son-in-law they help to be . . . with the older sister, how they know each other, somebody, I don't know, help from here. I don't know—it's an organization and somebody around here, they help them with the different societies. I don't know how they gone there but I only heard that all of a sudden, "Oh, we find Mehmooda" so then we knew that oh, she's still alive.[41]

Perhaps the most iconic symbol of partition-induced suffering is this figure of the lone woman, separated from her family and forced to convert to the "other" religion. There are numerous stories of men forcing women from their own communities to commit suicide rather than face the "dishonor" of being attacked and violated by men from the "other" side. Traces of this is visible in K.R.'s recollection of the way her mother talked about this cousin who was left behind:

> My mother always say that I wish my little niece never alive she be dead and instead she come here or she'd be dead like the rest of the family. I don't know why she got that feeling. She never want to talk. She said, "No, it's not a very nice thing to be tell the people we left one of our little girl behind." So they feel like shame or something they want to hide . . . Sikh family, so whenever we asked, and she said, "No, don't talk. We wish she be dead, she never alive, she be dead like the other people, the rest of the family." But she didn't know that. She passed away after that we find her, like my cousin, we didn't know that she was trying to find her sister for so long.[42]

A mirror image of K.R.'s cousin's story (a Muslim girl converted to Sikhism and having to make a life within a Sikh family) is provided in Pakistani director Sabiha Sumar's 2003 film *Khamosh Pani* [*Silent Waters*] which features Veroo, a Sikh woman who is left behind in Pakistan, forced to convert to Islam, and has to make a new life for herself as Ayesha. The denouement of the film occurs when a group of Sikh pilgrims visits the village, among which group is Ayesha/Veroo's brother Jaswant, who has come to look for his long-lost sister. K.R.'s mother's reaction to the missing girl is mirrored closely by the conversation between the Sikh men about the possibility of "their" women being left behind:

Jaswant: I heard a rumor that some of our women were left behind.

His companion: Who said that? What's his name? What bastard said this rubbish?

Jaswant: How would I know his name?

COMPANION: Rubbish. Not one woman survived. The women went to my uncle and said "Shoot us." He kept firing, firing, firing. All twenty-two women. Our honor was saved. We killed them. The Muslims didn't touch them.

This linking of women to family and religious honor leads to what must rank as one of the most callous pieces of legislation since independence, the Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Act of 1949, under which, in the words of Urvashi Butalia:

> any woman who was seen to be living with, in the company of, or in a relationship with a man of the other religion would be presumed to have been abducted, taken by force. After this date, all marriages or conversions that had taken place would be seen as forced, and would not be recognized by either of the two governments. No matter what the woman said, how much she protested, no matter that there was the odd "real" relationship, the women had no choice in the matter.[43]

Butalia outlines how both state and non-governmental authorities in India used the myth of Sita and her abduction by Ravana in the *Ramayana* to convince people that a woman "remained pure despite her time away from her husband."[44] As Furrukh A. Khan has argued, "The violence of Partition, especially that directed at women, is replicated by the state's perspective that aims to exercise control through a hierarchy of selection of events and personalities that are represented in such a discourse."[45] Or in the words of Alok Bhalla, both during the violence of partition and in the process of rehabilitation, "the bodies of women have become the contested sites for men of the warring communities to prove that they have the proper claim to be called God's own people and, hence, the right to possess or kill the women whom they find in their Kingdom."[46]

This violence (both material and discursive) that is committed on women's bodies, first during partition, and then through the ways in which these women are "rehabilitated" is depicted in Rajinder Bedi's famous short story "Lajwanti" (1956). This tells the story of Sundarlal and his wife, Lajwanti, who is abducted across the border into Pakistan. In an effort to overcome his grief, Sundarlal got involved in the rehabilitation movement, which usually involved the forceful return of the woman, only to be rejected by her family as "tainted" by her stay with the "other" community. Bedi depicts the pain of this rejection, as the women are forced to live with their trauma with little or no family support:

> There were some amongst these abducted women whose husbands, parents, brothers and sisters refused to recognize them. "Why didn't they die? Why didn't they jump into a well? Cowards, clinging to

> life!" Thousands of women in the past killed themselves to save their chastity![47]

Bedi lays open the hypocrisy that lies behind the state's desire to honor and rehabilitate these women by turning the exchange program into a grotesque competition:

> Our volunteers objected that most of the women the Pakistanis had sent back were old, middle-aged and utterly useless. A large crowd gathered and heated words were exchanged. Then one of their volunteers pointed at Lajo Bhabhi and said, "Is this one old? Look at her. . . . Look. . . .Have you returned any women who is as beautiful as she is?"[48]

Far from legislation to recover abducted women being a corrective to the violence of partition, it actually becomes part of the same project, as nationalism and patriarchy unite to reinforce the violent oppression of women.

Partition is, among many other things, a radical restructuring of the private-public divide, and it results in the violent expulsion of the woman from the apparent safety of her family into the dangerous public space of the nation state. Appropriating the suffering of these women to represent the suffering of the nation then elides the latent patriarchal violence common to both the privacy of the family and the public space of the state. By using legislation to position women securely under the patriarchal authority of the state, not least through deciding who she is and is not allowed to form relationships with, the woman and her body is being brought into the practical and discursive control of the state.

This legislation and the concomitant drive from either side to bring back "our" women directly affected the lives of two of my interviewees—Liaquat[49] and X.[50] They are both Muslim, and were born and brought up in Mirpur, which is in what is officially known as Pakistan Administered Kashmir but what both Liaquat and X. refer to as Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir). They were both born just after partition and, are, in fact, distantly related. Today they live not far from each other in northern England. When they were about ten or eleven, they independently found out that the women they knew as their mothers were not their birth mothers, but that their birth mothers were from "other" families—Hindu in the case of Liaquat, and Sikh in the case of X.

In spite of the similarities of their background, their reactions to this news were very different. In his narration of the event, Liaquat puts the onus of attempting to reconnect on his birth mother, not least because he believes she was given the choice to stay in Mirpur or join her other family in India:

> Actually my grandfather from India side—they went to India then, that was India, then they went to India after that and they wrote a letter

> to my grandfather here and he told my grandfather that his daughter has been separated from them and find out if you know about my daughter, whereabout. So then my father, my grandfather said "I mean his daughter is in my house so how I can say I don't know about her." So then they gave choice to my mother that "you want to go to your parents or you want to stay here it's up to you." She wanted to go then they took her to Wagah border side and hand over to my other grandfather. After that I don't know where they are they never got in touch with us because we didn't knew their address and my mother knew because she lived here for a couple of years. They never got in touch with us so we didn't knew so whereabout my mother is. She knew. They was from Mirpur city and she lived in this place where I was born for two years, three years. They never got in touch with us so how we know India is a big country, how we can find out?[51]

X, on the other hand, claims that her birth mother was never really given a choice not least because in this case, she was part of a group of eighty women who were sent across the border to India. According to the family stories, soldiers from the Pakistani army had been issued with lists of women who were officially deemed "Indian" and thus had to be "recovered." Unlike Liaquat, X. says that ever since she heard about her birth mother, she had wanted to find her and establish a relationship. At the time of my interview, she had just located her mother who lives in Punjab in India and is now a widow with a large and very religious Sikh family. She had numerous telephone conversations with her mother, though they had yet to meet. Through these conversations, X. has been able to get a fuller picture of the circumstances surrounding her mother's marriage to her father, and her subsequent departure for India. While she knows how her mother and father met, she found the story too painful to talk about in her interview with me. When she asked her birth mother why she decided to leave her, X.'s mother replied that she felt that X. would be safer in Pakistan with her father's family than having to face the uncertainty of traveling across the border. Even before X. made contact with her mother, she has always had a powerful affective relationship with her vision of her birth-mother—she frequently dreams about her, and this relationship seems to have been strengthened through their contact. She is, however, hesitant to go and visit because she perceives India to be a hostile and dangerous place and she is scared of the unknown.

In all three of the stories featuring family members who were abducted and left behind—K.R., Liaquat, and X. all demonstrate a very powerful awareness of the possibility of conflict if contact is made. As such, they are all highly ambivalent at initiating contact even if the individual family member has been located, as is evident from this analysis by K.R.:

> So I talk to my children, and recently, when we find out one of our cousins I was very interested, and I was always think when, how she grew up what she's gone through that girl, young girl, how she gone through, how she survived. How she thinking about her parents, how hard her life was to be growing up. And I was thinking a lot and I want to see her. But my cousin is more close; she's her sister. I am cousin so I really, really want to see her. And my children, they said, "Mum, can we see?" I said, "It's not that easy to go and see them and India is not. . . " And we don't want to destroy her family life now. Even we want to see her but we don't go and see her because we don't want to destroy her life now which she . . . after so much . . . I don't know how long it take her to be get, to put herself together and grow up. Now she's settled, she got the family, she got the children, she got the grandchildren and we don't want to go and . . . She said that . . . they said the first visit she just crying and crying—she wasn't saying anything. She just said one thing: "Don't come and chase me now—it's too late."[52]

The moment in *Khamosh Pani* when Ayesha/Veroo's brother makes contact with her is a case in point. It is immediately obvious that she has become the site on which the struggle between her Sikh brother and Muslim son will play out. Her worth as a woman seems to be completely defined by her ability to symbolize the family honor of both her Muslim and Sikh families. This is obvious not least from her son's reaction when he hears of her origins: "So that's it. My mother is the sister of an infidel. Why did you hide this all these years? What shall I do?" Similarly, when her brother finally reunites with her, he tries to persuade her to come away with him by telling her of their father's illness. For both Ayesha/Veroo's brother Jaswant and her son Salim—her existence is defined through her relation with them and the other male members of their family.

Pinjar (2003) tells a similar story as Pooro, a woman born into a Hindu family gets abducted by and then married to a Muslim man. Renamed Hamida, she is forced to find ways of adapting to her new life while trying to help other women like her sister-in-law who are facing a similar situation. Around her, there is a similar tussle between her abductor-husband, and her brother and fiancé about whether she is going to live as Pooro in India or in Pakistan as Hamida.

As Rabea Murtaza has argued, in relation to films such as *Khasmosh Pani*:

> These are films about intergenerational transmission, not only of trauma, but of ruptured memory. And in them there is always somewhere, somehow, a mother separated from her son. Like much of Holocaust cinema, these films rely on the dramatic device of maternal separation . . . to tell stories of trauma, memory and cultural loss. In

> both of these films, the idealized mother's caring labor is a highly nostalgic visual and linguistic archive of place-based regional practices. The loss of Partition is somehow regional, and the idiom of its remembrance is through gender.[53]

In Rajinder Bedi's story "Lajwanti," the reunion of Lajo and Sundarlal results in a complete transformation of Sundarlal's attitude toward his wife. Unable to act normally, Sundarlal deifies Lajo into a goddess, symbolizing the benevolence of the patriarchal state. In this deification, however, there is no agency, as Lajo has no choice but to accede to Sundarlal's "unexpected kindness and generosity"[54]:

> And so, Lajwanti's story had remained locked up in her breast. Helplessly, she had gazed at her body and realized that, since the Partition, it was no longer her own body, but the body of a goddess.[55]

Through her original trauma, and then Sundarlal's treatment of her, Lajwanti has become reduced to a symbol, where her meaning is completely constructed by her husband and the state on whose behalf he is "honoring" her.

One cannot overestimate the unimaginable levels of trauma that these women and their families went through, but there is a problem with the way in which the women's trauma gets appropriated to reflect the wider trauma of the nation. In *Khamosh Pani*, for example, Ayesha/Veroo's suffering is used to represent the trauma not just of partition but that of a Pakistan that is represented as struggling in the grip of Islamic fundamentalism. Similarly, Pooro/Hamida's trauma, and that of the other women in the film may be seen as representing the national trauma that both India and Pakistan are going through.

A tradition of literary and cinematic representation that not only sets up women as victims but then appropriates their victimhood to represent that of an entire nation helps to recycle particular gendered and deeply conservative tropes of victimhood. Moreover, in reducing women to the role of symbolic victims, these women are apparently robbed of all agency in their relationships with their families, their religion, their nation, and, indeed, their memories.

Applying the notion of narrative agency to these texts, however, shows that in both oral history and cultural testimonies, these women can and should be seen to be exerting a narrative agency that can often run counter to the interests of the state that are deeply implicated in the patriarchal violence against them. Returning to the texts, then, even the most iconic form of trauma, being separated from one's family, can manifest as a form of agency—either active resistance against the violent patriarchy that is trying to "recover" women and their bodies in the name of religion and nationalism or articulating a more powerful attachment that trumps one's relationship to one's family. Yasmin[56]

tells the story of a great grandmother who was the mother of a prominent politician who campaigned for Pakistan but refused to leave her ancestral home in India even though all of her family went over to build the new nation:

> Because his, I think his grandmother stayed there, in West UP [Uttar Pradesh, a state in Northern India] near Bareilly. He told a story about her—a tiny little women smoking *bidis* [traditionally made cigarettes]. I think that was my great-grandmother, my grandfather's mother. Now I'm talking about it a memory comes back to me that she'd refused to go. Somebody said that she'd actually just said "I'm not going." You know, that's it—"this is my home, I'm not going anywhere."[57]

The figure of the old woman from an aristocratic family who smokes *bidis* (traditionally made cigarettes, usually associated with working-class men), and who, when faced with the choice of leaving her home and leaving her family, elects to stay should make us re-examine the seemingly automatic link between separation from families and passive victimhood. Yasmin's great-grandmother's story is replicated in *Garm Hava* when the grandmother of the Mirza family tries to make a similar choice. The grandmother in *Garm Hava* experiences and expresses a strong affective link to the space of the ancestral home. As the family leaves their ancestral home, having been forced into smaller, rented accommodation for economic reasons, the grandmother disappears. The camera tracks and pans across the entire building, visually signifying the depth of their loss, as the whole family runs around looking for the grandmother. When they find her hiding behind firewood, her reaction is similar to that of the great-grandmother of Yasmin's memory:

> I won't go, you lot go to hell. I won't go, you lot go. I won't go, I won't leave my house. . . . This house is ours. Why are you disturbing me? Leave me alone. Leave me alone here, let me die here. Leave me here, how will I face my husband on Judgment Day?

Interestingly, as if to represent the ways in which nationalist discourse often robs these characters of their agency, the grandmother's forceful, shocking "go to hell" is rendered in the English subtitles[58] as a much more respectable and therefore less powerful "go away." In the process, much of the power of the grandmother's rejection of the family in favor of her attachment to the space of the home gets lost, and it is easier to recast her as a victim who is losing her house due to the ravages of partition. Similarly, in *Khamosh Pani*, when Ayesha/Veroo is finally forced to have to choose between her parents and siblings on the one hand, and the life she has made for herself on the other, her response is hardly that of a passive, helpless victim:

AYESHA/VEROO: What do you want after all these years? What do you want?
JASWANT: Father's dying. He wants to see you.
AYESHA/VEROO: So he can finish the job? Wasn't killing mother and Jeeto enough?
JASWANT: He just wants to die in peace.
AYESHA/VEROO: He wanted to kill me for his peace. What will he do if he sees me alive and a Muslim? How will he go to his Sikh heaven? And what heaven is there for me? A Sikh heaven or a Muslim heaven? You were happy to think I was dead. But I'm alive, I made my own life, without you. Now this is my life and my home. Go away. Leave me the way I am. Go. Go back.

Again, Pooro/Hamida, in *Pinjar* is able to withstand the forces of patriarchy that deem her to be "Indian" and "Hindu" and therefore needing to be forcefully rehabilitated back into the state control of India. In the climactic moment of the film, Pooro/Hamida, like Ayesha/Veroo, exerts her agency by making the counter-hegemonic choice. As Rashid, her Muslim abductor-husband, and Ramchandra, her Hindu fiancé, come together over their shared attraction for her, and as the state mechanism of both India and Pakistan work to send her back with her Hindu family to where she "belongs," Pooro choses to remain Hamida and remain in Pakistan. As she tells Rashid, "You are my truth now, Rashid. This is my home now." She rejects the family that had abandoned her when she had been abducted and chooses the life that she has made in Pakistan. The narrative of *Khamosh Pani* suggests that such a choice is not a viable one in the end, as Ayesha/Veroo is forced to kill herself by drowning herself in the same well that her father had tried to persuade her to jump into, but at the end of *Pinjar*, the audience is left with the possibility at least that Hamida will be able to forge a life for herself with a family of her choice.

Perhaps the most remarkable example of female agency of this type is *Agunpakhi* (2006), by the Bangladeshi novelist Hasan Ajijul Huq. Huq's novel is written in the first person, the unnamed narrator being a poor, uneducated village woman in a Muslim family in west Bengal, on what becomes the Indian side of the new border. Her family are actively campaigning and fighting for Pakistan, though she does not understand their logic. One by one, her entire family leaves for Pakistan, but she refuses to join them. When pressed her response reveals the same narrative agency that I am discussing here:

> I was thunderstruck. I had never thought to hear anything like this. It's as if my entire world had turned upside down, I leaned against the floor for support. Where will I go? Where will I go? I know where I will end up when I am dead, in my grave. You can see the cemetery on either side of the lake from our new house. I will end up there when I am dead, but I can't imagine where I would go if I left this country. All I was thinking is, someone needs to explain to me why I should go. If they

> could explain, then I would go wherever they told me. But to say that that country is for the Muslims and this for the Hindus is not enough. That won't work with me anymore.[59]

A large part of the force of Huq's writing is lost in translation—Huq writes entirely in dialect. His narrator's Bengali is not the standard Bengali of the middle-class intellectual; rather it is the colloquial dialect of the uneducated village woman, which is impossible to translate into English.

What is not lost, however, is the way in which Huq's narrator's refusal to join her family after partition is empowering for her. "I have never argued like this with my husband"[60] she admits, while explicitly standing up to him when she disagrees with his demand that she join her family across the border:

> I was angry as well, [and I] said, "All this time I learnt whatever you taught me, said whatever you made me say. But now perhaps I have taught myself a couple of things."[61]

Her decision to stay back is momentous, and while it is not without consequence, it is also the most power she has ever exercised in her life:

> In that place, in that half-light, I looked at him and said, I don't know how, but I said, I am going to stay in this house.
>
> It was like someone had slapped his mouth shut. The first time in my life, I had hit him like that, his face had darkened in that half-light. So much pain there. But for how long? Then in manly anger, he screamed out, Go wherever you want, stay wherever you want, I have swapped this house for another.
>
> Hearing that, I didn't move from there either. I will stay in this house. I will only leave if someone forces me out by my hand.[62]

Her decision to leave her family means she remains alone on the "wrong" side of the border, but she is emphatically not a victim. It may in fact be the most empowering thing that has ever happened to her, as the ending of the novel makes clear:

> No one could explain to me why that country is mine only because I am a Muslim, and this country is not mine. No one could explain to me why I have to go there just because my children have gone there. What will I do if my husband goes there? He is not the same as me, but different. Close to me, part of my soul, but a different person.
>
> When dawn breaks, when it's light, I will sit facing the East. Looking at the Sun, I will stand up again.
>
> I am alone. However, I can pull everyone towards me.

Alone.[63]

Being forced to decide between her house and her family, this woman, like the grandmother in *Garm Hava*, or Yasmin's great-grandmother, chooses her house. None of these women are simply victims who are forced to be apart from their families; rather, they are active, assertive agents who are resisting the patriarchal notion that family is the most important thing in a woman's life. In choosing not to be part of the family, these women are resisting both the nationalist and patriarchal forces that decree which side of the border they belong on.

To say this is not to question the suffering of someone having to make that choice. After all, as X. put it to me during her interview, it is not really fair to describe individuals as exercising their choice when they can only choose between two options. But the huge trauma notwithstanding, we need to view these women not just as victims but as active, assertive agents who often find ways of exerting control even when they were more than usually alienated.

Part of the reason that the solitary woman stranded on the "wrong" side of the border, away from her family, comes to be seen as the most prominent icon of suffering is because of the unspoken, unquestioned assumption that a woman's primary, strongest relationship will always be with her family. The unnamed grandmother in *Garm Hava*, Yasmin's great-grandmother, and many other women would seem to demonstrate otherwise. For all of these women, their connections with the space of the home, or with people outside the family unit prove to be more meaningful and stronger than their family ties.

Most radically, these connections are often made with people from the "other" communities. Thus, when I asked X. whether she thought of her Sikh birth mother or her Muslim stepmother as her mother, she replied that they were two fingers on the same hand—you couldn't separate them. She describes the half brothers and sisters she has on either side of the border as her own personal Indian and Pakistani army. It is perhaps an ironic statement on the bilateral relations between the two countries that even this statement of unity is made using a military metaphor. Even Liaquat, who is much less sympathetic to his birth mother than X. is, displays a very sophisticated, nuanced and conflicted set of allegiances to his mothers:

> She brought me up, I stay with her all the life and the lady gave her I mean everything for me so I can forget her . . . how I can remember my wife, no my mother gave me birth and she don't know where I am. Listen, maybe she not told when she went back to India, not back to India but when she went to India that she was married she left one child there. It might have been difficult to adjust in the society. She might have difficulty getting married, marrying again to somebody might have made her life more difficult. That's why they might have decided to keep quiet. Don't touch

> the past and move her forward, go in the future. That's the reason I think there is. Otherwise mother is mother, child is child. If she has not told to anybody, but she still remembers. Mother can't forget child. She will be remembering but maybe difficult to disclose. Might be she has passed away now—partition is more than sixty years so she . . . above eighty now, might have passed away.[64]

Importantly, Liaquat uses the phrase "my other mother" multiple times through his interview, but it is not always possible to say which of his mothers he is describing in such othered terms.

A similar moment of connection is visible in H.'s interview. H. remembers his grandfather, who chose to stay back in the family home, even though the rest of the family were leaving, because he did not want to leave his mosque. When H. elaborates on what he knows about this grandfather, he, too, constructs a narrative of cross-community links that, at least in this case of the grandfather, seem to be just as if not more personal and powerful as his familial connections:

> See the house adjoining ours? That is a Hindu house. Just attached to our house. They would cook for him, his food. The cooking would be done here, their children would come and cook. Chickens, cows, goats, we had many of these. They would help look after all that. That's what it was like. . . . They are still in that house.[65]

What H. is articulating is a redrawing of the family boundaries. Who is allowed in, who is left out, where the dividing line between the private family and the public community should be—all this was being realigned as a result of partition. The familial connections between members of opposing communities thus represent a radical challenge to hegemonic notions of belonging.

In the process, the affective links between communities and across borders help to undermine the logic of partition—the idea that partition led to two new, united, mutually exclusive nation states that could construct their identities as mirror images of each other. Thousands of people like K.R., Liaquat, and X., help to undermine the nation-building project by establishing personal, emotional connections with people and places that belong to a foreign, even enemy, country.

This is not to romanticize these people as a radical, transnational population. These affective links can and do coexist with ideas that would, according to conventional politics, be considered conservative, even reactionary. Thus when asked if she had ever contemplated what life would have been like if her birth mother had taken her across the border and brought her up in India as a Sikh, X. replies that she always gives thanks to the Almighty for letting her grow

up as a Muslim. Her attitudes toward India are not particularly enlightened, even if they are understandable given her generation, education, and class background. While this response suggests that we cannot define her entirely by the connection she has made with a particular Indian (her birth mother), it should also make us question our definitions of agency. The prejudice against the "other" communities that she (and many of my other interviewees) admits to might be extremely reactionary, but in this particular case, in the context of being interviewed by a secular, non-believing academic from a Hindu, Indian background, her articulation of a proud and exclusive Muslim and Kashmiri identity has to be read as evidence of agency as well. At the risk of sounding obvious, the affective connections that people establish are many and various, and any conception of agency needs to reflect this complexity, even if, perhaps especially when, we as ethnographer do not agree with the meanings being established. This complexity of connections in partition narratives allows for a different reading—not one that relegates the narrators to the role of victims or even of mere survivors, but a reading that allows for creative and constructive responses to the undoubted trauma of partition.

3

"This eight-year-old, he's too little"

Children Taking Back Control

In Bapsi Sidhwa's 1988 novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, the events of 1947 are shown through the eyes of the eight-year-old protagonist, Lenny. When Lenny first hears of the forthcoming partition, her reaction is one of pure confusion:

> There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road. How will I ever get to Godmother's then?[1]

Lenny's confusion and bewilderment, her inability to understand why partition should be happening and what it might mean marks her as an outsider. Lenny is an outsider on a number of different fronts—she is a young girl from a Parsi family (the Parsis were not directly implicated in the religious violence), and she suffers from polio and does not go to school. In fact, Bapsi Sidhwa has spoken of the ways in which Lenny's outsider status was an important device in the writing of the novel:

> In *Ice-Candy-Man*, it was very useful to use the voice of a Parsi child narrator, because it does bring about an objectivity there. Your own emotions are not so . . . or at least your participation in events is not so involved. You are more free to record them, not being an actor immediately involved. . . . When you put yourself into the persona of a child, in a way you remove all those blurred images—other people's opinions, expectations about what life is teaching you and the stereotypes which come in. Everything is a little fresher and refreshing, I think, from a child's point of view—more direct. . . . Well, I'm doing two things here. I'm establishing a sort of truthful witness, whom the reader can believe. At the same time, Lenny is growing up—learning, experiencing, and

> coming to her own conclusions—one of them, that truth, truth, nothing but the truth can lead to a lot of harm, too. And in understanding the nature of truth, it's [sic] many guises, she gradually sheds her innocence and understands the nature of men.[2]

In constructing Lenny as an innocent child who does not understand the "adult" world of politics, Sidhwa presents childhood as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*, against which the strangeness of partition can be thrown into sharp relief. If childhood is a site of natural innocence, the child's bewilderment can be used to construct partition as unnatural. The symbolic burden that Lenny is made to bear is made even more apparent in the way Sidhwa narrates her dreams:

> I recall another childhood nightmare from the past. Children lie in a warehouse. Mother and Ayah move about solicitously. The atmosphere is businesslike and relaxed. Godmother sits by my bed smiling indulgently as men in uniforms quietly slice off a child's arm here, a leg there. She strokes my head as they dismember me. I feel no pain. Only an abysmal sense of loss—and a chilling horror that no one is concerned by what's happening.[3]

Sudha Bhuchar uses a similar device in her play *Child of the Divide* (2006), when her child protagonist Pali asks why he and his family have to leave their home. Pali's father Manohar Lal has no answer:

> How to say to my boy
> The soil he stands on
> No longer welcomes him as a son?[4]

When Pali persists in asking who turned India into Pakistan, Manohar responds: "People . . . the white rulers . . . and us who don't trust ourselves to live together." Manohar is doing his best, but it is not good enough for Pali. Pali's response referring to Pakistan: "I didn't see you make it" is used in an unwritten pact between author and reader, both of whom are completely aware of the counterintuitive nature of partition, but from which "knowledge" the child has to be diegetically excluded. The child's natural ignorance is what, in fact, can be exploited to make this specifically adult political point. *Life* magazine photographer Margaret Bourke-White uses the same strategy in her account of partition, *Halfway to Freedom* (1949):

> Sometimes I saw children pulling at the arms and hands of a parent or grandparents, unable to comprehend that those arms would never be able to carry them again. The name "Pakistan" means Land of the

> Pure: many of the pure never got there. The way to the Promised Land was lined with graves.[5]

Bourke-White appropriates both the children's grief and their inability to comprehend the enormity of their loss to represent the wider national trauma. In this sense at least, Lenny, Pali, and Bourke-White's anonymous children all exist to play the same role of confused and traumatized victim.

There is ample evidence of this grief and confusion on the part of children in oral history testimonies as well. K.S.,[6] for example, remembers a particularly traumatic moment when, as a child, he had to say goodbye to his Muslim friend:

> In fact our next door neighbors are Muslims and . . . we were great friends. I have very vivid memories when they were . . . when the partition came and they were taken away by the Indian trucks, you see, to the nearby camp. I remember my mother pulling me away from my friend who was two years younger than me, a boy—we were both crying and we remember saying, because, you see, because not *Azaadi* [freedom], this is *Barbaadi*, you see, destruction. Why are they separating? Why should they do this? We couldn't understand.[7]

This inability to understand leads to a sense of helplessness, as children become pawns to be controlled by adults. In Gurbakhsh's[8] words:

> It just leaves very deep impressions on you as a child, because that age, things of that age, you never forget, you always remember them. But you're totally helpless to do anything at the time. Bad, real bad episode to have lived through. Don't wish that on anyone.[9]

The point here is not to deny that children occupied particularly vulnerable positions during partition but rather to show how adult narrative agency often reconstructs childhood as a symbolically important site of victimhood. In other words, children are used as symbols to represent a loss that is wider, and, by definition, adult and more important.

The opening scene of Ritwik Ghatak's film *Subarnarekha* (1965), for example, provides a perfect example of children being used to personify the national trauma of partition. Abhiram and his mother arrive at the ironically named Nabojibon Colony [New Life Colony], only to be refused shelter and then become separated by the thugs of the local landlord. The landlord is having the entire refugee colony cleared, but the camera focuses in on Abhiram and his mother. This is not just an example of a story of suffering told through individual characters whom the audience knows and can identify with—after all, the film has only just started and the audience does not yet know any of these

characters. It is, rather, an example of the way in which the child's separation from his mother can be constructed as the ultimate symbol of pain and suffering.

This same discursive strategy is seen in Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's 2013 film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. As the protagonist Milkha Singh returns to his village in present-day Pakistan, he remembers discovering, as a child, the gruesome remains of the Muslim attack on his village. As the child Milkha runs into the village he slips in the flowing blood and falls down. He is horrified and in his attempt to escape he ends up scrabbling over a large pile of dead bodies. The camera focuses closely on him as he desperately tries to find something to hold onto, but the bloody bodies are too slippery and he repeatedly slips and falls. In this viscerally horrific moment, Milkha discovers his own mother's body. This sequence which lasts almost two minutes and consists almost entirely of the young boy slipping and falling and screaming in horror provides a gruesome physical representation of the child's bewilderment.

This image of a child having to deal with the materiality of the bodies of his dead relatives is repeated in Hasina's[10] testimony, where she discusses her brother's experiences of partition:

> My mother and younger brother went, but I was left behind. I didn't know, they didn't know either. When my mother went ahead, after, we learned, that the Sikhs hit my brother and struck him down. And Mother fell on top of him. . . . After that, my brother said, even now we can't really talk about it openly, I heard, he said: "When I regained consciousness, I saw, I pushed Mother's body off me, and then I saw some people hiding in a room so I went and hid with them."[11]

Milkha's or Hasina's brother's inability to understand or deal with the horror they have witnessed is reminiscent of Manto's vignette, "Jelly," which again sets up this dichotomy between innocent, naïve child and the horrific, adult world of partition:

> At six in the morning, the man selling frozen ice sticks from a pushcart next to the petrol pump is stabbed to death. His body lay on the road until seven, while water from the melting ice keeps falling on the dead body in steady driblets. At quarter past seven, the police take away the dead body, leaving the crushed ice pieces and blood on the road. A tonga rides past. The child noticing the coagulated blood on the road, pulls at his mother's sleeve and says, "Look, Ma, Jelly!"[12]

Manto contrasts the blood and the dead body—the physical legacy of violence, with the "frozen ice sticks" which, of course, belong to the world of children. Decades later, Bapsi Sidhwa would repeat this same contrast through

the figure of the eponymous Ice-Candy-Man and his journey from a seller of iced sweets to violent rioter and Ayah's pimp.

Sidhwa uses Lenny's grief and loss of innocence to symbolize the grief of a nation partitioned. A similar motif is noticeable in Mehreen Jabbar's 2008 film *Ramchand Pakistani*, where the eight-year-old protagonist and his inadvertent crossing of the Indo-Pakistan border represent the shared trauma of partition and its long afterlife. Ramchand is a young boy from a low-caste, Hindu Pakistani family. Angry at being told off by his mother, he runs away and, ignorant of the significance of this act, ends up crossing the border into India. There he, and his father who is following him, are arrested and imprisoned by the Indian authorities. As Ramchand crosses the border, there is a sequence of repeated inter-cut shots alternately close-ups of his feet, and long shots of him walking through the desert landscape. In both cases, Ramchand's diminutive stature and his small feet are used to visually represent his vulnerable position. When the armed, physically imposing Indian soldiers find him, their adult, military might is contrasted with Ramchand's world of the child: they search him, discover his toy slingshot, and confiscate it: "Brought a weapon to free Kashmir!" Manto, Sidhwa, and Jabbar all use dramatic irony and the audience's knowledge of the gap between the objects of childhood (ice, candy, slingshots) and their transformation in the adult world (blood, violence, weaponry) to make a particular adult political point. Of course, the child does not share the audience's knowledge of this gap and, therefore, cannot be aware of the process through which he or she is appropriated by the adult world as a symbol for a national loss.

Many of these texts appropriate the child's disempowerment in a problematic fashion to reinforce a particular political position—that partitioning a country is a violent and counterintuitive act. The point here is not to quibble with the specific political argument but rather to recognize that the figure of the child is being constructed by adults for adult purposes. This is not to say that individual children cannot or do not share these political positions. What is problematic is not so much that specific adult political positions are being projected onto the child who may or may not hold them but that these political positions are being reinforced by particular constructions of childhood as sites of natural innocence against which the violent exterior can be thrown into sharp relief. In the context of what might be called an obsession with the cult of the pre-lapsarian innocent child, this is even more troubling.

Marina Warner has shown how much there is invested in the cultural myth of the child "in whom ignorance and innocence perfectly coincide"[13] and how "contemporary child mythology enshrines children to meet adult desires and dreams."[14] By constructing the child "as an unexamined emblem of vulnerability and innocence"[15] the directors and authors are in danger of rendering the child protagonists impotent not just in the face of the violence they are

experiencing but by the very fact of their representation itself. As Marianne Hirsch has argued:

> Culturally, at the end of the twentieth century, the figure of the child is an adult construction, the site of adult fantasy, fear and desire. As recent controversies suggest, our culture has a great deal invested in the child's innocence and vulnerability and at the same time, in their eroticism and knowledge.[16]

In oral history testimonies, a similar discursive strategy can often be noticed when adult narrators use examples of violence being committed against children as qualitatively different from other kinds of violence. Understandably, stories of violence against younger members of one's family assume totemic significance in the way in which one constructs one's partition testimony. Zafar,[17] for example, recounts his infant brother's death:

> I had a young brother. About two years old. They hit him with a spear in his stomach. He was injured in the bit that covers your innards. The intestines came out. They came out. I took him [to the first-aid people], "Do something for him!" They said, "There is nothing we can do, his intestines have come out. He won't live." I said, "What then?" "Don't give him water." I asked why. "It is like this—if he doesn't drink he will live longer. If he drinks anything, it will go into his stomach and come out through his intestines. The more exposed it is, the sooner he will die." I said, "That's good!" But he kept asking for water. If he has to die, why should he die thirsty [voice breaks down in tears]. If he has to die, why should I let him die thirsty. It will only mean he will die an hour sooner rather than an hour later. At least he won't be thirsty. But there was no water. The taps they had made were not working. The only water I could find was full of cigarette ends. I brought that water and gave it to him, and he continued to drink it [voice breaks down in tears]. The consequence was around midnight, he became beloved of Allah [i.e., he died].[18]

K.R., who has no memories of partition herself, still singles out for special mention the death of a half-sister she never knew she had until recently:

> But now, I recently heard that which my mother never talk. She was already married there as well and she had the one little baby girl as well. She was newly married, her husband been killed. She never talked but my cousin now, two years ago he told me that she was married, which part she always hide from us. I don't know why—she never talked. He said "Yes, *Khala* [Aunty] was married and I was carrying *Khala*'s little baby.

> And I went to. . . ." He was ten year old and he went . . . the Sikh family they keep the baby. They said, "How . . . you are boy yourself. You can't keep the baby so give us the baby. . . ." But that baby, he said, died after a couple of weeks over there because he was a so young baby she didn't have milk or whatever it is. Perhaps my mother don't want to know and talk, it hurting part of. . . . But it was shock to know that as well that she died, she never survived. . . . And I was thinking, Mum, she knew that would happen to the girl but how much that hurt had to be knowing that for the child to be died like that. But she never talked . . . I don't think so. What happened I don't know but I don't know the name, no. Even I don't know my mother's husband's name and I don't know who was the family, her husband's family.[19]
>
> In Chapter 2 I examine this story as an example of separated families, here I am more interested in the figure of the vulnerable child—the older cousin, the younger half-sibling, and how they are used to reinforce the sense of pain and suffering.

Kamal D. recounts an incident of violence that took place in his native Delhi. Even though he cannot be sure that it did lead to the death of Hassan, his young friend, he still relates to his memory of the incident using his memory of the loss of his friend:

> The fleet of tongas that they were going in were intercepted by Hindus or Sikhs, I don't know which, at the Minto Bridge and that the tongas which carried the women were let through and the men, in presence, within eyesight of the women of the family, were beaten to death with sticks and rods. . . . And I suspect that the boy, Hassan, that I used to play with also met the same fate, I do not know.[20]

While victimhood is by far the most common way in which childhood can be rendered symbolic, it is by no means the only one. Of equal importance is the story of the child who miraculously survives. Parkash[21] provides a pertinent example:

> My mother was very ill from all this worry and my youngest sister was just wrapped in a cloth and pushed under the seat for four days. She couldn't look after her and she remained there without food or drink for four days. . . . She was only about six months or so. . . When they took out my sister from under the seat, she was alive, God protected her, and she survived, and lives in Ilford.[22]

Parkash's story is replicated to a remarkable degree by Sukhwant Kaur Pall[23]:

> Actually, my sister-in-law's Mum, she was carrying a baby, a little son, and she tripped and fell, and the baby fell into a ditch. But they wouldn't let her go back, so, fear of her life, so they dragged her and they went back and they were in a refugee camp overnight, and in the morning, the woman couldn't sleep all night, you know, worrying for her baby, thinking it got murdered or somebody stolen it. And in the morning a few of the men got together and just to give her peace of mind, they went looking, but they found the baby, he was there in a ditch. And I mean, he lives in Newcastle now. So, stories like that.[24]

It is interesting that both these women structure their anecdotes in the same way. Both these stories involve a child which is abandoned, or left unsupervised in a condition of great danger. Both children miraculously survived partition, and both Parkash and Sukhwant depict this survival through their continuing presence in the United Kingdom. Parkash and Sukhwant are both members of the diaspora in the UK and, perhaps it is not surprising that successful migration to the UK denotes for them the ultimate miracle. In the process, they also depict present-day Ilford and Newcastle, respectively, as safe spaces of stability, in contrast with the turmoil of Punjab in 1947.

In her testimony, S.K.[25] makes explicit reference to this use of the child as a totem of miraculous survival:

> People started to say we should throw the young babies into the lake. We saw many people throw their babies into the water. My mother also suggested we throw the baby into the water, but my dad said no. "Who knows, because of this baby, we might get good luck. If we die, the baby will also die, and if we are alive, then the baby will also stay alive. We will not throw her." We didn't throw the baby, and she's alive and well now.[26]

While at first glance Zafar, K.R., and Kamal D.'s stories are the exact opposite of Parkash, Sukhwant, and S.K.'s, they are actually more similar than they appear at first. Both of these groups of stories are examples of adult narrators using their agency to construct childhood as a symbolic site, representing adult issues and adult concerns. According to these narratives, childhood can come to represent both innocent victimhood and survival and hope for the future. Or, as Marina Warner has put it in another context, "children cannot begin to meet the hopes and expectations of our torn dreams about what a child and childhood should be."[27]

This form of appropriation—using adult agency to construct particular narratives of childhood—has an effect on the way partition as a whole is spoken of. Gyanendra Pandey has pointed out how partition and the way it has been spoken about in public discourse has reinforced "the construction of women and children as communal and national property,"[28] represented not

least through the legal process used to "recover" abducted women,. Purnima provides an example of how children were dealt with during the movement of people across the Bengal border:

> We were coming from our country, I am traveling with my mother, and after that, we started from Khulna station, and when we reach Benapole station, where they do the enquiry, they didn't write "One child." My mother was so naïve, a village woman, she didn't understand. They didn't write it. Anyway, after all the checking in Benapole, and they came to Bongaon, the security and all that, they stopped her. "You are bringing your daughter, but you haven't had her registered." Then all the people in the compartment, and the security people as well, seeing that my mother is elderly and bringing me alone from there, they all said, "It's ok, you are only going to your own son—Leave her there, and after this, return by yourself, you won't have any trouble." Saying this, they didn't write the "one child," and after that my mother left me with my older brother—the few days she stayed there, then she went back to our country. After that, I think she traveled by herself a couple of times.[29]

The notion that a child needs only to be added as an entry to the mother's documentation underlines the fact that the child has no independent existence in the eyes of the law. The further fact that this entry was never made, by either the Pakistani or the Indian security, literally erases the traces of her legal presence in newly independent India, and removes from her the possibility of future border crossings. Her mother made the same journey again, but Purnima did not. Lacking in power anyway, the refusal of the security officers makes Purnima even more helpless by forcing her to remain on one side of the border.

There is a symmetry between the way the authorities treated children on Purnima's train, for example, as property belonging to the adult world, and the way in which adult narrators use their own narrative agency in order to appropriate the figure of the child to represent an adult political position. To use Pandey's formulation, this adult narrative agency is able to construct the child as a confused, suffering, but non-complicit outsider, who watches the violence but is not implicated in it, in order to reinforce the hegemonic view of partition as "unhistorical and inexplicable."[30] In other words, by constructing the world of the child and the world of partition as mutually exclusive, these adult narrators are making particular assumptions about the unnatural, ahistorical, and inhuman nature of partition, as well as relying on an essential humanist morality of children. As Gurbakhsh put it:

> For young people growing up at that age, it was really very sad experience—you shouldn't have to see that as a growing up person at

> that young age, but there was nothing you could do about it. It was sort of man's inhumanity to man was so glaringly obvious to us at the time.[31]

One of the ways in which children become adult property is through this discursive strategy that enables children to constitute a set of transcendental human values, which can then be used to contrast the brutality of partition. For this nexus of vulnerability and innocence to be maintained, it is imperative that the child whose gaze allows access to the violence of partition can never be implicated in it. In short, for the child's gaze to be able to withstand the burden of symbolism that is being thrust on it, it has to be denied any sense of agency in the traumatic events being narrated. This is particularly problematic, not least because it does not match the reality of childhood experience of partition, or the complexity of the ways in which these experiences are remembered. In other words, and perhaps not surprisingly, a closer look at the narratives of childhood during partition show a much more complex picture where agency is constantly contested between adult author or filmmaker and child protagonist, and between the adult interviewee and his or her own childhood self.

A useful case in point is that of Gaffar.[32] I spoke to Gaffar for two or three days before actually interviewing him, and throughout, he said there was not much point in me interviewing him as he was only five and did not remember anything. As soon as we started the interview, however, he narrated the following story:

> Well, the one I saw, while we were walking. It was almost full, on the road, the procession, like procession, we were moving. And we were guarded by Gurkha, that I remember, Gurkha policemen, police or army. So they were. . . . And if somebody, I remember still, if somebody will move out of this procession to get something, they will shoot him.[33]

What is interesting here is not just the particular story being narrated but the emphasis placed on what he remembers. Contrary to his earlier statements of not being able to remember anything, once the microphone was turned on, he declared with equal certainty his ability to remember. Now there are many ways to read this contradiction, but I think it is at least partly due to a conflict between adult and childhood agency. The adult narrator is deciding what the child protagonist remembers, based on his assumptions about the nature of childhood as innocent and ignorant, unable to negotiate traumatic experiences. Once the interview starts, and the child protagonist is allowed a more direct voice, the emphasis is placed on what the child can remember, rather than what he has forgotten. Often, as in the case of Kamal D., my participants explicitly allude to this contested nature of testimony as the child

who experienced the event and the adult who remembers it struggles over its meaning:

> I must say one thing that, which, strikes me, a thought that strikes me now that I am talking to you is that, you know, I was a young boy then—eight or nine. These feelings of pain, these may be retrospective feelings. That is, at the time there was a feeling not—a boy of eight or nine, the only pain he associates is with his mother rejecting him or his mother scolding him, or having done something so terrible that your mother says "I won't speak to you for a day!" but otherwise these may have been matters, a little bit of excitement rather than great pain. And the pain that I talk of has come from adult reflection on images of childhood. So I may be projecting things onto childhood which weren't really there at that time.[34]

This contest between adult and child agency is present in these texts through the way the child's gaze is wielded. Writing in another context, Rob Stone has argued that children provide "an alternative viewpoint . . . often ignored and frequently frightened, but always observing, always questioning and aware."[35] Tracking the ways in which the child's gaze is presented and policed in and through these narratives will shed light on the contested space of childhood itself.

In Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1998), for example, Lenny, along with Ayah, witnesses a moment of brutal violence while standing on the rooftop. As they look on, the Hindu mob accost a Muslim man, beat him up, and then tie him to two jeeps, which are used to stretch his body until it breaks. The moment the body breaks, however, the camera switches on to Lenny as she is transformed from spectator to subject. Ayah shields Lenny's gaze, in the process underlining the inexplicability, the inhumanness of the violence. The innocence of the gaze is contrasted with the brutal violence as the child attempts to process what she is watching. The act of covering Lenny's eyes, then, underlines both the nature of violence (unnatural, inexplicable, inhuman) and the nature of childhood (innocent, vulnerable, fragile). The violent adult world and the peaceful world of the child are thus being set up by the adult filmmaker as opposite and mutually exclusive. The movement of the camera from its focus on the violence to its focus on Lenny is crucial. As Vicky Lebeau has argued:

> Child as spectacle, child as subject: cinema can appear to offer unprecedented access to both, its impression of reality combined with its capacity to deliver the points of view that help to put the (adult) audience back *in the place of the child*.[36]

The child's gaze becomes a contested site in oral history narratives as well. Many of my interviewees speak of their gaze being policed in much the same way that Ayah covers Lenny's gaze, and from a similar adult pre-conception about what is and is not suitable for a child, and what a child can and cannot handle. Gargi[37] remembers a moment that is particularly relevant here:

> Still those riots and things were happening and we were sort of locked in the house. My father's sister was with us and she would collect us and if my mother was looking after my younger brother or so and she would tell us not to talk, not to talk "Don't talk, don't shout" like all the children would do. One day we noticed that there were some riots outside, people were running and shooting and things and we were all very curious and we piled up the tables and chairs and we stood and looked outside and then my turn came and I was standing there and looking outside and there was one Sardarji [Sikh] fellow with his kurban—what do they say? Kirpan, sword and he was running after a girl and I think she was a Muslim girl, I think and in front of my eyes, I saw the scene, I think must be about hundred yards or so that he killed her with that sword . . . that was a very sad thing for us to see, that somebody could do that because such a young child only remembers the things which are not important or which are shocking, so that's the story I remember of my childhood about partition.[38]

Satya[39] narrates a similar incident:

> We used to see from the windows of the room, peeking through the curtains, because there was this curiosity. We used to see the chaos that was happening outside, on the street. It was mostly Sardars [Sikhs]. So outside, there was the chaos of these Sardars. They had swords, and on their heads, I don't know, what the round-round metal things they tied on the blue turbans, and shouted loudly, they, I don't know what, in their language, and the street was so full. Those people, in their hands, they all had swords. Seeing it scared us and we drew the curtains. That's when my father, a little bit, when we used to watch through the windows—he made the glass black, "Even if you move the curtain, you still won't be able to see anything outside." Because even at night, the way we used to see that the condition was very, you know. There was violence—these drains, rainwater drains, sometimes there were dead bodies in them as well. We used to see it, through the windows, outside, but we used to get scared at night. Sometimes I used to start crying, and I used to remember my father saying, from the curtains "Don't see, don't see!" Even if I didn't see, my sister would say "There is so much noise, let's see what

it is," so we wanted to see, and then we used to get scared. So he took a brush and painted the glass black.[40]

K.S. remembers coming across a body while out playing, and the way he narrates the story provides a good example of the fault lines of this contest between adults and children:

> The thing which we looked after were our buffalos. Though we were school students, and my mother wouldn't allow, we used to go with the servant. I remember once he had taken the buffalos for grazing, and were playing—this must have been in the early afternoon—and we were chasing each other, my other brothers and friends were with us. That was the time when the sugarcane crop is five to six feet high . . . we were hiding in this sugarcane crop and then I suddenly came across . . . there was a skull lying there. I stopped in my tracks and looked at it with all my friends, we couldn't believe it. You must remember all the massacring started April, May, maybe even earlier than that. So somebody must have killed this particular Muslim—and then we had to report to village headman, and then he had to tell the police. At that time, the headman came and told us to shoo away from there because he has called the police. And we didn't know what happened later on. So obviously, this person must have died months before, and in that area the common wild animals, jackals and things like that must have eaten it, probably there were some other bones, because we were shooed away soon after that so we don't know what other bones were found.[41]

One of the most interesting aspects of K.S.'s account is the way in which he sets up the power dynamic between adult and children. His mother would not allow them to go and play with the servants, but he did anyway. When the children discover the skull, adult authority descends upon them in the form of the headman who shoos them away from the site. Like Gurbakhsh above, both K.S.'s mother and the unnamed headman are able to exert their authority over children—an authority which is justified through superior adult knowledge of what is and is not suitable for children. Gargi, Satya, and K.S., in their determination to gaze across the boundaries that adults are imposing around them, represent a powerful but surprisingly understudied childhood agency acting in and through these texts. This power dynamic is, of course, hugely unequal and the child's gaze is almost always policed into hegemony (K.S. does not know what happened to the bones because of adult policing), but these texts retain evidence of attempts on behalf of the child to wrest some form of control from the adult world.

Kamal D.'s account of Hassan provides a particular example of children articulating their agency in the face of adult policing. He prefaces his story

of Hassan's presumed murder on a tonga on Minto bridge with the following anecdote:

> He was a very impish and a very lively boy and we used to play tennis ball cricket together. And I remember him particularly for an astounding incident. He, we were playing this tennis cricket ball, and the ball, tennis ball had rolled onto the road when one of the buses, public buses, at that time the buses were run by an institution called GNIT, Gwalior and North Indian Transport Company—those were only the public buses. So there was some public bus route that went along that road and the driver of that bus when the boy ran out into the road to collect the ball shouted to him and scolded him and said, "Why don't you play in a way that the ball does not run onto the road, you'll kill yourself!" So this boy had noted the number of the bus and when the bus was on its return trip several hours later, he stood in the middle of the road and said "*Jan le le*," stopped the bus and said "*Jan le le, baap ka ek beta hun!*" [Take my life, take my life, I am the only son of my father!] And so ultimately the driver had to get off the bus and pat him on the head and pacify him to get him off the road. And we were astounded that the boy, our friend, had this kind of guts.[42]

Although this story has apparently nothing to do with partition, it is particularly significant that Kamal D. chooses to place it where he does. This story represents a victory, albeit a minor one, of childhood over adulthood and, as such, should be read as a demand not to remember Hassan as simply a victim. What is most important for Kamal D., is to memorialize Hassan's "guts", thereby not allowing the only image of Hassan to be the one of a boy who is passively killed on Minto Bridge. Both Hassan's original defiant action and Kamal D.'s discursive strategy of pairing this story with the description of Hassan's probable death on the bridge can be read as part of the same project—asserting the presence, relevance, and power of childhood agency both in terms of the political situation of 1947, and in terms of the adult environment of the oral history interview in 2014.

This form of childhood agency can also be seen in the cultural texts of partition. Lenny, in a scene which appears in almost identical form in *Ice-Candy-Man* and in *Earth*, attempts to recreate the horrific scene she has just witnessed from the rooftop. After witnessing the mob rip apart the anonymous Muslim man using the two jeeps, Lenny grabs hold of her brother Adi and tries to process what she has scene in by transferring it to her own world:

> "Pull, damn it!" I scream, so close to hysteria that Adi blanches and hastily grabs the proffered leg . . . Adi and I pull the doll's legs, stretching it in a fierce tug-of-war, until making a wrenching sound it suddenly

> splits. We stagger off balance. The cloth skin is ripped right up to its armpits spilling chunks of grayish cotton and coiled brown coir and the innards that make its eyes blink and make it squawk "Ma-ma." I examine the doll's spilled insides and, holding them in my hands, collapse on the bed sobbing.[43]

The gap between the split doll and the broken body of the man is, on one level, similar to the gap between Ramchand's slingshot and a real terrorist weapon. In other words, the audience, fully aware of the difference between the adult world and that of the child, is able to make the obvious conclusions about the violence of adult politics and the innocent vulnerability of the child. Read another way, however, Lenny's action in splitting the doll can also be seen as the attempt on the part of a child to use her own agency in order to process and understand the events she has just witnessed. Like Gargi, Satya, and K.S., this is Lenny daring to look through adult prohibition. And just like them, in Lenny's case as well, adult agency in the form of the authorial voice is allowed to cut in and undermine her attempts. Adi is horrified by Lenny's actions: ' "Why were you so cruel if you couldn't stand it?' he asks at last, infuriated by the pointless brutality." As I discuss above, the narrative requires Lenny to remain an alienated, disempowered outsider and any attempt on her part to regain control has to be diegetically neutralized in order to maintain the symbolism of this outsider position.

In reality, childhood agency can take many and various forms in these texts. Childhood agency exists in the refusal to avert one's gaze, in the way in which partition-induced losses are mourned and even, sometimes, in the ways in which children are presented as complicit in the violence of partition.

Childhood agency can also be seen in the way Uzair, for example, discusses his affective attachment to the home he left behind. Uzair's testimony shows how both highlights his attachment to the home he left behind, and reinforces this idea of childhood agency:

> My memory of that period is when we were coming to . . . when we were moving that day, we were leaving Mainpuri. Obviously you know our culture. Everyone thinks oh, this eight-year-old, he's too little. No one thinks he'll have any understanding or any emotions what they are going through and I will never, ever forget that in my life. They were talking and I knew that we are leaving this place. And I was looking in my house—it was a huge house with a big garden, you know, sand in the garden, and I used to ride my little bike in it, a three wheeler, and my room. And I had painted something in the school, it was on the wall. My parents: "Ah, my son, look what he's made." And absolute quiet and silence and I'm saying, "My God, I'll never see this place again." It was such a sad feeling. This is my house, this is my room, this is my painting,

> this is my garden and the tree and this and that—I'll never see it again. And the worst part was I couldn't share it with anyone.[44]

Uzair's testimony represents a vindication, on behalf of his eight-year-old self, of his right to mourn the loss of his home. In turn, this is an eloquent demand to be recognized as part of events, not separated or irrelevant as the adults who believed he was "too little" presumably thought. Mourning in these conditions can and should be seen as a way to claim back some control in an environment where children are more than usually alienated. It is interesting to note, for example, how Uzair repeatedly emphasizes the first person pronoun—in this short extract he uses versions of "me" or "my" nineteen times. Through his narrative, Uzair is questioning the whole basis of the child-as-outsider symbol by claiming a much higher level of awareness on behalf of his eight-year-old self. In Chapter 1, I discuss this extract as an example of the mourning of the lost home—here I am interested in how he chooses to mention objects that are of specific importance to him as a child—his tricycle, his drawings, and his room. The importance of these objects do not lie in their difference from adult equivalents—unlike the slingshot or the split doll, but in the importance they have for the child. Uzair's account reads to me like an attempt to argue for the equivalence in importance of more adult losses such as property with his own specific loss of the accoutrements of childhood.

Sabiha[45] provides another example of what was for her, an especially traumatic loss:

> Then he said to my father, Azimullah Saab, why don't you take your luggage and put it in my warehouse, why leave it in the station? So we said fine, so that was done. Sooner or later, the whole warehouse was burned down. So our luggage and my blanket that I couldn't sleep without, I adored my blanket, which was stuffed into our new, black, new car. That got also burned which I really was so sad about.[46]

The "value" of the blanket is of course negligible in comparison with all the other things that were lost. For the child Sabiha, however, it is the object that most acutely represents her lost home, which is why she singled it out for special mention in her interview. Kamal G. uses the same strategy when describing his home in Lahore:

> And in the houses, there were rooms on all sides, in the middle there was a courtyard, where the children used to play and functions would happen. Our house was over two stories. Inside the main gate, there was a swing as well. It was used by us children, everybody.[47]

Objects are not the only loss that marked the lives of children during partition. Gurbakhsh remembers only too well the loss of a teacher:

> But in between Muslims traveling outside the villages, they were caught by these marauding groups of Sikhs and they were massacred. One of my Muslim teachers was caught like that just in between the two villages, and he was slaughtered. His son was my class fellow. He was walking to our village to see our Zaildar—the man who was offering protection to people, with his two grown-up sons and all three were killed on the way to the village. This was really the most awful thing I watched because we saw their bodies afterwards. It was, it was very frightening thing and his son was my class fellow. He came to school afterwards and he was so distraught it was difficult to really watch him. He cried all the time, and we tried to be sympathetic to him to show that we were still friends but it was very hard. The family moved to Pakistan later on but this was something very hurtful at that age to see your friend in that state, but this was happening in such a large scale.[48]

Satya, who grew up in Delhi, remembers a similar incident:

> My teacher, she was murdered as well. I don't know who did it, or how it happened but everyone was sent home from school, everyone went inside, and there was curfew. My teacher was called Badarjahan, I still remember. She was such a good teacher, she loved me a lot. In the same room our class was seated. It wasn't in front of us, because they sent us away. Yes, they came from outside the school, our class was seated. When we, everything calmed down after 15 August, we went back to school, and there was blood on the walls, next to the blackboard. When we asked, they said that teacher was murdered.[49]

One reason, I think, for this singling out of the murder of one's teacher is that, similar to the swing and the safety blanket, the loss of one's teacher is a particularly traumatic experience for both Gurbakhsh and Satya, who both felt and remembered in the years after partition.

Similarly, K.R. remembers what it felt like to grow up as a child in Pakistan without an extended family:

> I never saw my *nani*, *khalas*, my aunties, nobody. . . . And I said, "Perhaps life will be different if I have my whole family around and we be loved from our *nana*, *nani* and all that." People talk about going to Nani's house, Nana's house. I will never . . . we didn't have anything like that. They said, "Oh, when the holidays come they go to Nana's house, Nani's house" and I always wish we had a family like that. We've not been

> accepted from my father's family so we never had that much love from our family like uncles, aunties. And the uncles and whoever they fight they've gone so hard from inside, they've got nothing left, they've got no emotions left; the circumstances make them so hard. So we didn't have . . . I always think that oh, how the life will be different if they all alive and we go visit them like other people. And my mother used to say that, "If your nana and *nani* alive your life would be a different life. You'd be so much loved, you'd be so much. . . ." So we miss all that.[50]

Sipra tells the story of an aunt whose education was disrupted as a result of partition:

> I had two aunties and, according to the norms of our home, they had both started wearing saris from quite a young age. So when it came to getting them admitted in school, because they were wearing saris, they were taken to be much older. And perhaps they were really a little bit older than some of the other children. Because of that, one of these aunties, the younger of the two, she was perhaps dressed in a frock and sent to school, but the older one could not go to school, she didn't want to go to school without wearing her sari, but the school wouldn't accept her in the lower classes in her sari, so she couldn't go. And she had such a sad end. She developed an inferiority complex because she didn't go to school. And people used to say "These *bangal* girls, so little, they don't study, they don't go to school." And probably as a consequence, she never got married, later she had mental health problems, and she died quite young as well. This too was totally because of partition. If they had stayed in their previous house, their own home, then she could have gone to school normally, along with all the other children. What happened, the day they left home, they couldn't start school straightaway the following day. Where to stay, what to do—trying to sort these out took so much time. This gap may not have caused huge problems for a boy of five or six, he might have started school a little bit late, but for a girl of eight or nine, the passing of two or three years, they couldn't ever get that time back. Which is why my auntie never got anything from life.[51]

These are stories of children as victims, but they do not appropriate the victimhood of the child to represent a more important loss that is adult, communal, collective or national. The drive of the narrative remains the child and what happens to him or her.

Raj[52] provides a good example of a narrator resisting the urge to reduce their child victimhood to a symbolic status. He is a Sindhi Hindu and narrates the following story when talking about leaving Karachi in 1947:

> During Karachi, when I was school going, there was a girl called Yasmin, she was a Muslim girl. I had appreciation for her and she had liking for me, we were in neighborhood, we used to go on the terrace, just sit over there, light a candle, have a hand in hand, and look at each other. Right? Now when I left, she must have cried a lot. From my house to the docks, the ship, I sobbed, I cried and slowly, slowly, slowly, due to all this struggling life—in Bombay, in Calicut, in Mysore again in Bombay, Ullasnagar studying, this thing, that thing slowly, it went off, new life started, right?[53]

Raj follows this story with an anecdote of his return visit to Karachi in the 1990s, when he attempted to trace Yasmin:

> Then I asked somebody, that one old fellow was there, underneath the shop. I didn't recognize him. He didn't recognize me. I asked him that there used to be a family, the daughter's name was Yasmin. I don't know her father's name or his surname. He say, "Oh, Bibi Yasmin!" Immediately, he recognized. I say, "What do you mean Bibi?" He said that she has become Bibi. Not married. Like we have in our Hindus, saintly ladies or who renounce the world and everything. And then again I shed tears and came back. I didn't have courage to go before her. That was in '92.[54]

What is particularly interesting is that Raj refuses to see his relationship with Yasmin as oppositional or radical in conventional terms. He admits his parents would not have approved had he married Yasmin, but insists that he realizes this now and at the time had not considered his actions as forbidden:

> Marriage at that time, I didn't have sense, neither she had that sense of getting married or this thing. What would have happened we can't say. Perhaps no, because of the religion. Our parents wouldn't have allowed. Even her parent's wouldn't have allowed. Because of the, which I can think now, or later on.[55]

When asked specifically about the forbidden nature of his relationship with Yasmin, he repeatedly and strenuously denies that either of them were aware that what they were doing was anything outside the ordinary. When asked why he hid his relationship from his family, he just says, "Because we didn't feel like telling anybody, just like natural process we used to meet and sit together and talk to each other."

Now, as an ethnographer, I find it difficult to believe that for someone who at the time was a member of the Hindu fundamentalist, arguably neo-Fascist RSS, a relationship, however innocent, with a Muslim girl was not seen at

the time as proscribed. But the fact remains that Raj insists any perception of transgression is the result of adult interpretation after the fact.

Through his testimony, Raj takes great care to separate the motives and intentions of his actions as a schoolboy from meanings being projected on to it by his adult self or, indeed, the adult ethnographer. For Raj, it seems, what is important is not whether his actions can be appropriated to symbolize a wider political position (a position that his adult self would not agree with anyway) but the action in itself—the significance lies in the individual relationship and in the memories he carries around of that little Muslim girl. It follows that the symbolic potential of the act lies not in adult political positions regarding intercommunity relations, but in the fact that it provides an example of childhood (as opposed to adult) agency. It is his position as a child that allows him to cross the communal line and form a relationship with a Muslim child and, in his insistence that he did not consider his actions to be taboo in any way, I read evidence of agency on the part of his childhood self.

Samar provides another similar example:

> How old would I be then? Thirteen or fourteen. Old enough to be out by myself. A Muslim classmate from my school—his name was probably Lutfer. One day he, they rarely entered our home. Perhaps we met on the street in front of the house, but they rarely came inside. One day he came, and we went out together. We went to Khulna railway station first. Lutfer asked me "Do you want some tea?" I said yes. There were two tea-stalls in the station—one Hindu tea-stall, one Muslim tea-stall. I saw him looking from one to the other. He asked me, "Which one do you want to go to?" I said, "Whichever one you want." He said, "If I go to the Hindu tea-stall, they will definitely realize and beat me up. Will you go to the Muslim tea-stall?" So I said yes.[56]

It is interesting and not coincidental that Samar specifies his age so carefully at the start of this anecdote. Age thirteen, he is old enough to escape from parental and domestic control, but not quite old enough to have been completely socialized into the normative forces of hegemony. Samar's friendship takes place in a space of childhood—not the domestic space of the home, which Lutfer rarely entered, nor the adult space of the railway platform where life was segregated between the two tea-stalls, but in a different space where both children are able to perform an "adult" act like drinking tea on their own terms. Like Raj, Samar is able to use his narrative to exert control on behalf of his childhood self who is able to transcend adult norms and establish connections with other children, the meanings of which are to be defined by children.

This childhood agency is not always progressive and can often be complicit in more adult forms of violence. Sujit[57] describes how the violence that

was pervading the adult world found its way into childhood interactions such as play:

> We children, when we played, many times, when we used to fight, we used to divide up into two groups—one group became the Hindus, the other—one group were the Bengalis, sorry, the other Muslims. Bengali implied Hindu, Muslim implied non-Bengali.[58]

Gurbakhsh provides a more horrific example when he elaborates on the murder of his teacher that I discuss above:

> This teacher who was murdered in between the two villages his skull was lying there for quite a long while and the boys used to kick it, schoolboys, some of them would kick it because, he had this sentence he used with children when he punished them. He used to try to slap them and the boys used to put their hands up. And he used to say "Hands down, what am I telling you? Hands down!" and the boys used to kick his skull and say "Hands down—what did I tell you?" and they used to say this while doing it. I still remember this rather gruesome game. Some boys played that, all those memories just stay with you. Sort of nightmares, really. Slowly you learn to live with them.[59]

Sophiya narrates another, albeit less shocking account of childhood cruelty when she discusses the other refugees who were, with Sophiya's family, taking refuge in the Viceregal Lodge in Delhi:

> There were lots of other people who had come from elsewhere, you know. Like there was a little girl who came in a train from Simla. She didn't speak and, you know, I was so bad and naughty, I used to tell her, again and again, "Do you have a tongue? Show me your tongue!" Then someone came and told me "Don't behave like this with her." All of her mother, father, sister, brother, all—she was in a train full of dead bodies, under them. Everyone was killed.[60]

Sujit, Gurbakhsh, and Sophiya's stories, in their different ways present the narrative as contested between multiple forms of childhood agency. Between the various factions of children who were play-fighting along with Sujit, between the children who acted in such different ways when their teacher was murdered, and between Sophiya and the nameless, voiceless little girl. Childhood agency is never one thing, as these narratives show.

Charlotte Linde has called for "a distinction between the narrator (the person doing the telling) and the protagonist (the person at the centre of the story) of the narrative"[61]—a distinction which is most relevant here. The

textual spaces remain contested between the adult narrator and the child protagonist and their own distinctive narrative agencies. It is a difficult job, but all the more crucial for it, that in reading oral history testimonies, the always already entangled lines of control between the agency of the narrator and the agency of the protagonist are identified and analyzed. When, as in these cases, the narrator is always an adult and the protagonist almost always a child, the lines of control and the power dynamic they represent become all the more unequal. Unless we differentiate between the voice of the adult and the voice of the child, the latter is likely to be silenced. The voice of the child, telling stories of children, dealing with issues that matter to children, can almost always be heard in these texts, as long as we are prepared to listen.

4

"The most awful thing I watched"

Partition and the Many Meanings of Violence

Violence is the most fundamental feature of partition—indeed, the words often seem to be used interchangeably in popular discourse. Hiding behind this apparent slippage from the act of dividing the land and its peoples to the attacks on people and property that happened around it, is a paradoxical reluctance to define partition-violence in too precise a manner, let alone to attempt to analyze it in rational terms. Echoing Gyanendra Pandey, Ian Talbot has made the case that the reluctance on the part of conventional historiography and popular discourse alike to address the violence surrounding partition transforms it "into a phenomenon that cannot be rationally explained . . . [and] a unique occurrence that does not repay comparative analysis."[1] Some scholars have suggested that the unprecedented levels of violence represent a limit case in terms of the ability of discourse to adequately represent the horrors that ensured. Purnima Mankekar, for example, has claimed that "the modernist language of social science and its myth of detached objectivity render the horrors of Partition difficult to analyze"[2] while Urvashi Butalia has questioned whether this gap in scholarship represented "a fear, on the part of some historians, of reopening a trauma so profound, so riven with pain and guilt."[3]

In recent years, many scholars[4] have reappraised the role of violence in 1947 and its aftermath. Violence, and the way it is constitutive of individual, collective, and national identity narratives in public and private life, has now been theorized in various ways. Scholars have variously claimed that far from being of marginal or aberrant interest, it was actually "violence [that] made the Partition of British India what it was."[5] While this change is entirely welcome,

there arguably remains a lot of work to be done in uncovering the complex ways in which memories of violence are used in partition narratives.

In this chapter, I will look at the ways in which violence is given meaning in my interviews and in the literary and cinematic representation of partition. In order to achieve a fuller understanding of the ways in which violence was carried out, experienced, and remembered, we need to examine the different meanings it has for the narratives themselves. A closer look at the ways in which violence is talked about in these texts will, I believe, demonstrate that it remains a complex, polysemic concept and, moreover, one that is deployed in different ways in narration and to achieve different ends. In turn then, I will examine the ways in which violence is spatialized through narrative, the ways in which people suggest specific and different causes for it, and the ways in which people are able to account for it in their post-partition lives and relationships with members of their own and the "other" communities. This will show that Ian Talbot's claim that historically, the use of violence by community histories has been "primarily as a resource for identity politics and to displace blame on the demonized other"[6] is sometimes but not always true. In fact, violence is experienced, remembered, and narrated in complex ways, and a study of this complexity will demonstrate the narrative agency that is evident in these layers of complexity.

One of the ways in which this complexity of meanings is most interestingly noticeable is the way in which violence is differently spatialized through narrative. For example, my interviewees present the actual space of the pre-partition home, the urban or rural space around the home, and, by extension, pre-partition life as a whole as a period of harmony, against which the events of 1947 are aberrant. The consequent narrative of pre-1947 India is, in the words of Yasmin Khan, one of "good social relationships . . . [being] ruptured by a settlement forcefully imposed from on high."[7] This narrative of partition as a break in an otherwise continuity of harmonious relationships is one that has been both identified and reinforced by scholarship. Gyanendra Pandey has written about the "considerable sense of nostalgia [which is] frequently articulated in the view that this was a partition of siblings that should never have occurred"[8] while S. Settar and Indira B. Gupta have described "the intense nostalgia of the displaced for the undivided past."[9] In her introduction to the anthology of short stories that she edited, Bashabi Fraser refers to "the historical reality of an interaction that existed in Bengal in spite of social taboos"[10] while Alok Bhalla claims that, pre-1947, "there are hardly any accounts of conflagrations between the two communities."[11] It is this insistence on a long tradition of harmony, and consequently, of narrating partition as a monstrous exception that has, according to Pandey, led to a historiographic, nationalist, and collective elision of the violence that lies at the heart partition: "It is as though 'real' violence, of which the 'riot' might be described as the quintessential form, lies outside the domain of the state, outside progress and history."[12]

Partition related violence occupies a strange, deeply ambivalent position in the nations' histories. This process through which violence is sometimes marginalized and minimized, sometimes given prominence, and often given multiple contradictory meanings and significances is deeply complex. Far from being merely a top-down appropriation at the service of nationalist narratives, it exists in multiple forms and with multiple meanings in most forms of partition narratives.

Many of the oral history testimonies that I have collected exhibit what Alok Bhalla has termed "the moral experience of ordinary life in pre-partition India."[13] The warmth with which the domesticity of the home and family is spoken about in the years before 1947 is replicated by most of my interviewees when asked to describe their town or village. All of my participants who are old enough to remember a time before partition present their community as happily multicultural, or perhaps, more properly, multi-religious. Sher Singh[14] provides a typical example of a peaceful, pastoral idyll in Sohiyaan, east Punjab:

> Well, it was a village, you know, a remote village, and it was just an open place and no obstructions. There was what they called . . . big trees and we used to climb up and jump down. It was just absolutely village life. And at the center of the village . . . well, all the people, the old ladies, used to draw water from the well. In those days there was no water supply. . . . In the center of the village there was a well and that well was used with this thing . . . and small vessel that you had to draw the water out of the well. As a child we used to play there together [with Muslim children]. There was no problem about it. There was a mosque there and the mullah in the morning used to *Azaan*, used to get up. There was no problem at that time [between] Muslims and Hindus in those days. In those days Hindus were the trade people; they had some shops in the villages. But the Sikhs were all farmers and Muslims were also in the trades. They were mixed. There was no difference between these. But at that time also because of this . . . you know the Hindu and Muslim religious difference but they used to live amicably.[15]

Rajinder[16] makes a similar point about growing up in what is now Faisalabad, Pakistan:

> I was born in town called Lahore, in west Punjab. And the name of this town has now been changed to Faisalabad, it was called Lyallpur before, now been changed to Faisalabad. I think Lyallpur was after Mr. Lyall, he was the deputy commissioner of Lyallpur for many years so they had . . . the name was after his name. A beautiful place, everybody lived in harmony—Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians they all lived

> there. In the road I lived in, on one end of the road was a mosque and the other end of the road, there was a Sikh temple so we were so close to each other. We used to go to the mosque to get some cold water, actually, that time in summer. Nobody ever stopped us, why you are coming here. We have very happy memories. It was an urban town—it was newly built town. I don't think it was more than fifty, sixty maybe hundred years old and it was newly built. What I say is the center of the town, there was a clock tower. There were all those streets, roads, they diverged from the clock tower—all those roads were called bazaars—Montgomery Bazaar, Kacheri Bazaar, Karkhana Bazaar, some other bazaars, and then there was another road which cuts across all these bazaars in the middle, and it was called God bazaar, and as I said, beautiful town, new town, very nice.[17]

Even in the big cities, it appears that the peaceful conditions prevailed. Gargi remembers the various communities living peacefully together in pre-partition Lahore:

> I remember once my older brother had pneumonia, he was about ten, eleven. One of my mother's Muslim friends, she used to come and take me to her house and she would take all my clothes and powder and the comb and everything and she would give me bath and change me because we were five children and, four brothers and myself, one daughter—and she would take me and give me bath and my breakfast and she used to teach me *namaaz—namaaz* is how they [the Muslims] pray, and she would make me sit in that position and fold my hands and say to Allah that please make my brother better, and I would come home. That was the routine for about a month or so. I remember that so much, like a little toddler would, I would come near my brother and I would pray a Muslim prayer—[my parents] would laugh like any other parent—see what she has learned. Naturally, they say thank you to her friend, she was looking after me for a few hours and helping her out.[18]

These readings are apparently bolstered by a repetitive insistence on the part of many of my interviewees on the courage and humanity shown by members of their family or their community. Thus, Gurbakhsh describes how the harmonious coexistence of his village was maintained through the wider violence of 1947:

> I saw this in our own village—my grandfather—I was there watching him. He was supervising two of our farmworkers, they were Muslim, brothers, very close to our family. And they used to carry me round and take me to the fields, pull sugarcane out of the ground and peel it with

> their mouths and give it to me and we used to chew it. And they were working on a Persian wheel trying to water some fields. And there were a group of Sikh fanatics in their blue uniforms and swords and spears, they came and they saw these two young people. They said to my grandfather "Are these bastards Muslims?" So my grandfather said, "Who are you to ask me that question? What right have you got to ask me that? What right have you got to abuse my workers like that? Who are you?" They said, "You are a traitor, you are keeping these people. We want to kill them." So my grandfather said, "You will kill me first. You touch them, I'll have the whole village out here. You won't leave here in one piece if you want to do that."[19]

This form of nostalgia can be and most often is read as what Svetlana Boym has called "an abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic failure,"[20] or in Raphael Samuel's words, "a contemporary equivalent of what Marxists used to call 'false consciousness.' "[21] In other words, they are usually seen as evidence of attempting to evade guilt—people did bad things, but *I* didn't, and *my family* didn't. These happy memories, and the apparently simplistic manner in which they help to construct a prelapsarian Paradise, could be an example of Terry Eagleton's definition of happiness as "a feeble, holiday-camp kind of word, resonant of manic grins and multicoloured jackets"[22]—another example of what Carrie Hamilton identifies as "an enduring association on the left of happiness with a naively cheerful view of history."[23]

The problem with simplistically relegating nostalgia as conservative and reactionary, however, is that it makes no room for any radical, critical potential it may have.[24] In other words, dismissing a sentimental reconstruction of one's home as false, or misleading, or backward-looking removes narrative agency from the testimony. What is actually happening in these testimonies is not a simple example of violence being elided as something that should not be talked about. Rather, by separating out violence in distinctively spatial terms, these narrators are engaging with contradictory memories in an impressively sophisticated manner. These differences can often be spotted in disagreements that take place when two people are interviewed at once. In January 2015, in the suburban town of Chandannagar in contemporary West Bengal, I interviewed Lalita and Sankar, neighbors and old friends. Lalita[25] moved to Chandannagar after partition—her family originally comes from Chittagong in east Bengal. Sankar,[26] on the other hand, is originally from Chandananagar. When asked whether riots took place in Chandannagar or not, the difference in their answer is illuminating:

> Lalita: Yes, it happened, in Urdibazar. We were in that house at the time. Mobs of Ram Chatterjee's people—he pretended to be saintly from the

outside, but he was a real bad man . . . I have seen this with my own eyes. Muslims did not do anything bad to us, but they killed so many of them. We saw it the next day, Hindus did it more. They then robbed animals like goats and chickens . . . they cut them all up in pieces, such nice honest people. Hindus tortured them, but Muslims didn't. They cut so many people up.

Sankar: The riots after partition, in 1949, we read about it in the papers, in retaliation, plus there were some people who came from outside, they did it. The old inhabitants of Chandannagar normally did not attack anyone.[27]

Lalita has much less of an affective connection to Chandannagar, and therefore she does not feel the need to preserve an untainted memory of the town as a harmonious place. The violence in the town actually becomes part of the socio-economic hardship that Lalita had to struggle through, and in the face of which her resilience, survival, education, and employment becomes an integral part of her self-image. In contrast, Sankar clearly feels the need to nostalgically preserve the sanctity of the town, blaming any violence that may have happened on the anonymous outsider. Neither version of history is necessarily completely factually accurate, but to merely state that would be to miss the point. Rather, they are both using their narrative agency in order to bring different meanings to the memories that they have, and which they are putting to use in their lives in the present.

In partition narratives, the center that is occupied by the nostalgically reconstructed harmonious, idyllic village is always threatened by memories of traumatic violence and, moreover, the violence is almost always presented as happening on the margins. Returning to Gurbakhsh's description of how his teacher and his sons were murdered that I discussed in Chapter 3, it is noticeable how careful he is to locate the murder as taking place between two villages:

But in between Muslims traveling outside the villages, they were caught by these marauding groups of Sikhs and they were massacred. One of my Muslim teachers was caught like that just in between the two villages, and he was slaughtered. His son was my class fellow. He was walking to our village to see our Zaildar—the man who was offering protection to people, with his two grown sons and all three were killed on the way to the village. This was really the most awful thing I watched because we saw their bodies afterwards. It was, it was very frightening thing and his son was my class fellow. He came to school afterwards and he was so distraught it was difficult to really watch him. He cried all the time, and we tried to be sympathetic to him to show that we were still friends but it was very hard. The family moved to Pakistan later on but this was

> something very hurtful at that age to see your friend in that state, but this was happening in such a large scale. . . . Don't wish that on anyone.[28]

Bashir[29], who was volunteering to aid those refugees who were streaming into the new state of Pakistan, repeats an anecdote that he was told by an incoming refugee. In this story, too, the violence is positioned in a liminal space:

> From there, we didn't wait for the military, we were in big khafila, we can go. We were going but when we came on the bridge, big canal, the Sikhs attacked us. They started killing us. And we ran—some ran, the women, the young girls especially, they jumped in the canal and they drowned. And the people who were left were scattered and went to the neighboring villages.[30]

Bashir's story is interesting for a number of reasons. Even though it is a story that he is retelling, of an anecdote that he heard about, he tells the whole story in the first person. In other words, it is not just that he recycles common tropes of violence in partition narratives—situating it in marginal spaces, for example, but that, through his narrative he takes direct ownership of his friend's memories. The story that Bashir signposts as something he has heard about becomes just as constitutive of his identity in the present as memories of things he has directly experienced.

This liminality of violence is seen in other testimonies as well. In the middle of the violence that engulfed Calcutta, Sujit, for example, found himself at Howrah Station, having just gotten off a suburban train. In testimony that is interestingly similar to that of Bashir, he too describes the violence as situated on a bridge, necessarily a liminal space:

> I came out of the station, and as soon as I got out I saw, in every direction, not a single person but lots of police, especially toward the jetty by the river Ganges. And one man, coming from the direction of the bridge, carrying a suitcase and some bedding, was shouting: "O Dada, Dada, has the train to Tatanagar already gone? Has the train to Tatanagar already gone?" When he came close, he got hold of him: "What's happened? Why do you want the train to Tatanagar? Why are you running?" "I was coming in a rickshaw, when we were about halfway along the bridge, I saw from the distance, they stabbed a man with a knife and threw him over the bridge. When I saw that, the rickshaw puller left his rickshaw and ran, and I did the same. What can I do, I want to return to Tatanagar."[31]

Bashir and Sujit's testimony is similar to the story of the railway bridge (See Chapter 5) at Doraha, that both K.S. and Mal talk about, and together help to

reinforce this running theme of the importance of spatially marginalizing the violence being narrated.

Whether the violence is presented as happening in remote, rural areas or in one of the largest metropolitan centers, it is almost always situated in anonymous, interstitial spaces, and almost never in anyone's house. Samaresh Basu's groundbreaking story "Adaab" (1946), written just before partition itself, is a good example. The story features two men—one Hindu and the other Muslim, who share an encounter and experience a moment of commonality as the communities around them are tearing each other to pieces. The location of the violence, however, is an unidentifiable city alleyway:

> Two alleys coming from two different directions meet here. The bin has fallen over and landed, half-broken, in the middle of the alleys. Guarding himself behind the bin, the man comes out along the alley, on his hands and knees.[32]

In films from *Garm Hava* (1974) to *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001) to *Pinjar* (2003), the violence is shown to engulf the entire community, though the conflagration is very rarely shown to actually enter the privacy of the home. In Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1998), the mob is allowed entry into the home as Ayah, so they can find and drag Ayah out, but the camera stays resolutely outside, not allowing the audience (or, indeed, Lenny, through whose eyes we see the narrative) to witness the desecration. The camera pans away from the house at the very moment that the mob enters it. Instead it focuses on the figure of the Ice-Candy-Man, as he sits waiting for the mob to bring Ayah out. In the novel on which *Earth* is based, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), the entry is described, but almost as an aside, and certainly in much less detail than the violence that takes place on the streets, that Lenny witnesses from the rooftop:

> They move forward from all points. They swarm into our bedrooms, search the servants' quarters, climb to the roofs, break locks and enter our godowns and the small store-rooms near the bathrooms. They drag Ayah out.[33]

By keeping the domestic interior of the house free from the effect of violence, these texts also spatially separate out the horrific, material results of said violence. The bodies that populate partition narratives are usually located in public, anonymous spaces, in order to protect the pristine character of the home. Gurbakhsh relates a story of finding anonymous bodies, away from the sanctity of the home:

> I used to cycle to my aunt's place and on the way there were some sandy dunes on both sides of this road, and some of those dunes had been used

> by people to bury bodies at that time and every now and then very heavy rain just expose and the bodies would swell up to a big size and the smell used to be absolutely really awful. To cycle by and see this happening around you—it was so gruesome, the whole thing was so gruesome.[34]

Bodies are, of course, the most obvious material legacy of the violence of partition and, as such, feature hugely in the imagination of my participants. Even though K.R. was born after partition, she has grown up with inherited images of piled up bodies of dead family members, who, like Gurbakhsh's teacher, were attacked while in transit:

> Then I just make imagine and thinking, oh my grandmother was like that, lying on one side, my auntie, my grandfather was lying there. People were passing through; perhaps then the bodies start smelling—what happened and they put it somewhere. Where they gone? These questions come in your head. . . . They didn't have a place or memorable grave or something we can go, and like my parents' graves there, when I go to visit Pakistan I go there and I pray and pray for them there as well. I pray from here as well but I go there and I make sure I always visit. I take my children to my mother and father's grave. Something, will go there every time and I go and sit and talk and cry on my mother's grave. But it's nothing for them no, nothing at all.[35]

Partition narratives are haunted by these bodies—they flow down canals and rivers, lie rotting in fields and by the roadside, but always on the margins. It is noticeable that K.S. had to leave the confines of the village before he saw the remains of this anonymous man. Similarly, Gurbakhsh saw the bloated bodies "on the way" to his aunt's house.

Perhaps the most horrific story of these bodies that Gurbakhsh has to narrate also takes place in a space that is carefully delineated and limited:

> There were caravans of people several thousand people moving along the Grand Trunk road, parallel to the railway line, very close to us . . . One of our fields was about half a mile from our village, this caravan had spent the night in these fields, including our field. After that when my grandfather had sown groundnut crop—it was sandy soil, good for groundnut. As the plants came up, all green field, you could see more luxurious growth in the shape of human bodies because the people who had stayed the night, and those people who died were buried there in shallow graves and we only found out when we saw this luxurious growth on the graves—they acted as fertilizer. My grandfather stood there and just cried to see what had happened in his field—human beings buried. This was several months after the event.[36]

These bodies mark the outskirts of the village (near the railway line, near the highway) and the anonymity of their death and discovery—in fact they are never seen, but their macabre effects are felt in the growth spurt of the crop, and mark the nature of much of the violence associated with partition.

Harbakhsh Grewal[37] remembers his father telling him a similar story of murder carried out in the fields, outside the limits of the village:

> We were walking around our village once, maybe ten years ago. There is still an ancient wall on the outskirts of our village, which is facing west—part of an old mosque, just kind of like a wall. One whole part of our village—Grewal, same as us, but they were Muslim. . . . Some people in our village went to some of the Muslims in our village, and with the swords, "Come with us—we'll take you, we'll help you escape. Actually what they did was take them into the fields, slaughter them all and take their houses. . . . That happened.[38]

The bodies that populate literary and cinematic texts are similarly to be found in the margins, on the outside. The anonymous boatman who is killed in "Adaab" is fated to have a similar end to Masseur in *Ice-Candy-Man*. As the boatman dies, his death is poignant precisely because of its separation in space from the safety of his home:

> In front of his anguished eyes, the factory worker saw that the clothes intended for the boatman's wife and children were being stained with the red of the boatman's blood. The boatman said "I couldn't make it, brother. My kids and wife will welcome the holy day with their tears. Those villains stopped me from going to them."[39]

In the case of *Ice-Candy-Man*, the safety of the home protects Lenny and the reader from the moment of Masseur's death, but it cannot do so from encountering the horrific legacy of the violent death:

> The swollen gunnysack lies directly in our path. Hari pushes it with his foot. The sack slowly topples over and Masseur spills out—half on the dusty sidewalk, half on the tarmac—dispelling the stiletto reek of violence with the smell of fresh roses.[40]

In death, Masseur is literally spilling out. His body is found half on the pavement, and half on the road—a location, like that of Basu's boatman, is marked by its distance from the comfort of the familiar.

These deaths might take place in anonymous locations but that does not mean that the dead are themselves anonymous. Similar to K.R.'s testimony quoted several pages earlier, the dead who haunt these narratives are often

defined precisely in familial, relational terms, which contrasts sharply with the anonymous location of the death. A.S.[41] provides a pertinent example when he describes his father's death:

> Father died on the journey itself. One month and three days we walked, and from Sargodha we arrived at Amritsar. Thirty-three days it took. Two *lakh* people were in the *khafila*, fifty thousand arrived, one and a half *lakh* died on the road itself. Actually, when we were coming, the Muslims put poison or something else in the drinking water. When we drank, those of us who drank it, died from that illness. When his [father's] death happened, there were bullock carts of the *khafila* on all sides, we were refugees. We couldn't go past the bullock carts, out of the *khafila* it was dangerous. My father's body is lying there, and I am alone. My mother was there and, and a sister—so I did what had to be done. The others we were traveling with were there as well. There were fields next to the bullock carts. We dug the fields, in the field, a hole big enough for the body. Just that much. Then we put the body in there. That's how I did the last rites. This is the torture we had to go through.[42]

Reminiscent of K.R.'s lamentations at the lack of normal funerary rituals of her ancestors, it is the makeshift nature of A.S.'s father's burial[43] that speaks most powerfully to the anonymous nature of his death, "on the journey." The emotional poignancy of A.S.'s father's death is emphasized by the way in which, through his narration, A.S. situates it as separate and distanced from both the physical space of the home and the normality that that represents. In the process, of course, this spatialization also serves to preserve the sanctity of the home as the site of normality.

One of the most influential cultural texts that reinforce this trope of liminal violence is Margaret Bourke-White's photography for *Life*. Again and again, her photographs document anonymous death, taking place outside the domestic and private sphere of the home. In her account of her experiences, Bourke-White takes painstaking care to locate the death of her subjects as taking place in transition, like that of A.S.'s father:

> Babies were born along the way. People died along the way. Some died of cholera, some from the attacks of hostile religious communities. But many of them simply dropped out of line from sheer weariness and sat by the roadside to wait patiently for death. . . . The way to their Promised Land was lined with graves.[44]

Why is the placing of violent death in marginal spaces such a common thing? Where does this trope originate from? First, on an absolutely practical level, these are much more likely to be sites of violence. Because anything

can happen in the margins, they often do. One reason why K.S. and Sujit remember watching people being killed on bridges is that bridges are actually convenient places both to kill someone and to dispose of his or her body. While the rigid distinction between the stable center and the violent margin is almost certainly exaggerated, it is also the case that large amounts of partition related violence probably did take place in such margins. Second, it is quite likely that the moment the privacy of the home is penetrated is just too traumatic to dwell upon. The destruction of the home is so shocking because it reflects the complete rupture between the public and the private. Spatializing this memory comes to be so important precisely in order to protect the narrator from this primal trauma.

But it is also true that such a rigid distinction between happy domesticity (signified by the home or the village) and the violent exterior (signified by interstitial spaces—bridges, canals, journeys, pavements) is almost certainly not always historically accurate. Indeed, this is borne out by inconsistencies in the interviews themselves. After all, while Gurbakhsh stresses the harmonious, idyllic nature of his village, he also recollects "a group of Sikh fanatics in their blue uniforms and swords and spears" threatening his grandfather. While K.S. insists that the violence was outside the village—on the railway lines and trains, he also remembers watching a man being threatened and then presumably murdered by a Sikh gang:

> It was half-moon light and you could see in the distance a man begging for his life saying "Spare me, spare me, I belong to this village." He was trying to escape "I belong to this village" and these people, four or five young men were trying to kill him. And he was citing their parents' name, "I know so and so and so why you killing me?" . . . My mother actually saw this because in those days it was very hot and you had flat-roofed houses where you were asleep on *charpoys* on the top. My mother saw this and she dragged us away. We saw it and were getting very upset about it and she actually then told us just lie down. She kept awake until we went to sleep. I saw this particular man, we don't really know what happened to him. Next day we heard that he was actually killed. That's the only thing, from the distance I could see him, perhaps he was one hundred or two hundred meters from the rooftop. It was open ground and he was in the open ground.[45]

If this event occurred only 200 meters from his house, then presumably it cannot have taken place outside the boundaries of the village. Similarly, K.S. remembers seeing people "practicing . . . with village weapons, axes and spears" before going on a murdering rampage. Presumably, the practicing with the village weapons took place within the village itself. However, to simply dismiss these testimonies as inaccurate would be to miss the point. What is

both more significant and more interesting is the question of why such a separation is important. What is the work being done by this narrative separation between the happiness of the home, and the violence of the world? In other words, if the spatial marginalization of violence is a discursive act that is designed to protect something, what is it that is being thus protected? What is the violence being separated from and why?

Partition scholars often describe how, in the narration of memory, the lost home is rendered alien and dangerous. As Devika Chawla has put it, "homes of the old country are agonizingly rejected and positioned as material and emotional spaces of terror and restrictions rather than those of repose and equality."[46] My work, however, shows that the idyllic home lingers in memory for much longer than is generally assumed and one of the ways in which this memory is preserved is by not allowing the violence to touch the sanctity of the home.

Even though the violence of partition is always spoken of as all-encompassing and transcendental, the precise moment of that violence breaking through the privacy of a closed door and invading the domestic sphere remains such a taboo that it is hardly ever depicted in cultural representation, or spoken of in oral history testimonies. The locked and bolted door seems, in these narratives, to acquire an almost talismanic force against the rampaging mob. Again and again, there seems to be a desire on the part of my narrators to preserve the one last boundary, that between the violent exterior and the harmonious home.

In other words, this spatial separation of "happy" and "violent" memories allows a particularly interesting view into the affective dynamic of these types of memories. Far from nostalgic, happy memories being used to silence or simplify or negate the importance of trauma, my participants are engaging in a much more sophisticated, nuanced and active role in the construction of their own histories. In the words of Carrie Hamilton:

> if we understand subjects as remembering their lives retrospectively with mixed emotions, happy as well as sad, we can position them as agents in the construction of their own histories. The recounting of happy memories in life stories suggests that the subjects have some choice in their feelings about the past, and that this past need not be defined exclusively by pain and suffering. In the case of past catastrophe and violence, this does not make the events themselves less devastating, or the perpetrators less guilty. But it does propose an alternative to the emphasis on suffering and victimhood predominant in trauma and testimony criticism.[47]

By insisting on this spatial separation, these narrators are constructing an affective geography which allows for the coexistence of both violent and happy

memories and, in the process, are implicitly acknowledging the complexities of an event remembered. Such contradictory memories can only be given equal legitimacy if these events are presented as separated in space.

Faced with public, political, and academic discourse on partition that rarely concentrates on anything other than the violence, the tendency for narrators to hold on to nostalgic happy memories represents a powerful demand to actively construct one's own history rather than agree to be its victim. Veena Das has observed that "the historical and ethnic record on forms of collective violence provides not only information about patterns of such violence but also the values that are encoded in the description."[48] The overwhelming focus on violence at the expense of happy memories in academic discourse is determined not necessarily by the importance that the individual narrator puts on her memories of violence but rather the values brought to the narrative by the researcher and their discipline. As Hamilton has put it, "the study of cultural memory . . . [has] been largely defined in negative terms—as 'bad memories' (trauma, mourning, melancholia)" and "the strong influence of the trauma/testimony model has led to an emphasis on the suffering of victims of past catastrophes, one that tends to obscure other forms of memory."[49] In this particular context, this emphasis on violence as being the only defining characteristic of partition has often served to disempower the actors who lived through it. Instead, if the spatial separation of violence is examined as an example of narrative agency, it is precisely this separation that helps to maintain the sanctity of the happy home remembered. Further, a closer examination of the ways in which the happy home is preserved in memory shows that, in Carrie Hamilton's words, the "active idea of remembering times of happiness . . . [can be] a form of survival that affirms the political agency of the autobiographical subject in the present."[50]

Partition violence, it soon becomes apparent, has many meanings in oral history and cultural representation, and an overly deterministic account of violence serves precisely to silence narrative agency. It does this partly because it does not allow room for the multiple meanings and significances that people project onto the violence that is associated with partition. Yasmin Khan, for example, has noted how the "exclusionary politics of Partition, the scale of the killings and the groupings along religious lines"[51] fundamentally reconfigured intercommunity relationships in south Asia. In other words, and perhaps to state the obvious, partition related violence is always firmly and unambiguously linked in public discourse to religion. Krishna Kumar, in his account of the way school textbooks narrativize partition, points out that they "refer to the riots as 'ugly' and 'communal' and leave it at that."[52] While it is certainly the case that many scholarly accounts are trying to perform, in Jill Didur's words, "a re-evaluation of communalist explanations of partition and partition violence,"[53] it is still overwhelmingly true that the hegemonic view of

partition related violence almost always traces it back to religion, and the religious divide.

This does not always reflect the ways in which actual violence is talked about and explained in cultural or oral history narratives, however. *Pinjar* provides a pertinent example. Pooro, who comes from a Punjabi Hindu family, is kidnapped just before her wedding by a Muslim man from a neighboring village. The kidnapping takes place in the context of rising communal tensions in the lead up to partition, and, at first, it seems to be just another example of intercommunal violence. As the narrative progresses, though, it emerges that the origins of the conflict are actually quite different. When Rasheed, the man who kidnaps and eventually marries Pooro, finally explains his actions, he says:

> Pooro, this is happening because of an ancient feud between our families. There has been trouble between our Sheikh family and your Shahu family, for generations. Your grandfather charged heavy interest on our house which was mortgaged for five hundred rupees. And he made our family homeless. Not just that, their servants molested our women. The oldest son of your grandfather took the oldest daughter of my grandfather and kept her by force for three nights. . . . My grandfather made my father and uncles swear by the Quran that they would take revenge one day.

Of course, the context of religious riots in Punjab in 1947 inevitably colors the conflict but it is important for the narrative of the film that the origins of the conflict do not lie in matters of faith or religion. Hiren,[54] in narrating the story of a particularly traumatic riot in Calcutta, similarly attributes the violence to economic rather than religious causes.

> Was it only because of the demand of Pakistan that lead to this mass murder? Because we noticed one thing which was that the rich were never killed. . . . One day the police arrested all of us who were trying to stop the riots. . . . Of course it was deliberate, they arrested us because you were keeping the peace, precisely so they could start the riots. . . . They let us go the following afternoon. . . . By then everything was on fire. The local landlord and councilor, was the head of the "Peace Committee" and he called us for a meeting to restore peace. But he didn't ask any of the Muslims who we were working with to keep the peace. . . . That night they attacked the Muslim slums, they set fire to it and razed it to the ground. . . . It is difficult to comprehend, when I returned there two years later, to the place where the slum used to be, the slum that was destroyed, all that land, it was all built on by new buildings. And the

> owner of all that land was the councillor. So how many *lakhs* and *lakhs* of rupees that land was sold for.[55]

Through careful use of his narrative, Hiren is able to create a very different picture of partition related violence, one that shows a materialist, economic motive behind the ways in which, as he sees it, "religious" violence was orchestrated. This testimony is matched by many others, where particular moments of violence are ascribed to causes other than the communal. Jogesh, for example, narrates the story of his grandfather:

> Grandfather had a sort of military mentality—that I don't have to depend on anyone, I will not leave this ancestral home, nor will I live on my sons' charity. In this way, he stayed there till the end. And we heard that he died a violent death. Someone set fire to him through the window. There was a big gold broach that he kept around his waist, and there was some money in the house as well.[56]

Perhaps influenced by an overly determined account of the role of religion in partition related violence, I pressed Jogesh on the suspected motive behind his grandfather's murder: "Was it mainly because of the property, or was it because of the Hindu-Muslim issue?" Jogesh, however, takes great care to not attribute the violence to any communal reasons:

> At the time those Muslims who were slightly better off were buying up the property of the Hindus. And it's not like the properties were going for nothing either. People from that part from the country, from our parts, no one really fled like that.[57]

This is not to say, of course, that religion did not play a part in any of these violent incidents. But it is important to note that narrators are able to construct different narratives of violence, and uphold their own interpretations even when this meaning is contested by hegemonic forces and, indeed, often the ethnographer himself. Similarly, Bashir attributes the murder of his Sikh friend to the fact that he owned a desirable horse:

> My friend, he, had a lovely mare. He had kind of looked after it for three, four years since it was very young. And now it was become mature and it was beautiful. He was very fond of that mare and he was riding that mare. There were few people who were I think following them from where they had started. And they came to him, and . . . they said "Give us your mare!" The mare was just, I mean, not mature, not yet. And they were also on the horses and they chased him. They chased him and the

> mare became tired, because she was not used to running yet. And they caught him. And they shot him. And took the mare away.[58]

Animals constitute desirable property in many of these narratives, and violence is more than once attributed to the economic value of the animal, rather than simple hatred for people of other faiths. Even though Gaffar was only five at the time, he has a vivid memory of the horse that they had as they made the journey from India to Pakistan, and which they were forced to give up on the way:

> So then rumor came, you have to go to, there is a camp that will move to Pakistan on foot. Well, my father, he just bought a horse, just to let us ride. My father, my mother was riding on the horse. Sometime I was sitting on the back, sometime my sister who is one and a half year older than me. She used to ride. . . . When we were crossing the border area, where India and Pakistan, I don't know, it is Ganda Singh now I remember but that time I didn't know. So when we were crossing, they asked my father to hand over the horse. So he gave it. We passed through Pakistan and then we walked little to reach certain point.[59]

Animals are of particular interest in this context because, depending on the species, animals possess both material value, and symbolic value for particular religions. Animals thus serve as a material index for the many meanings of violence that I am trying to disentangle. Saadat Hasan Manto deploys the metaphor of the animal and its meat to devastating effect, in the process highlighting the complex nature of the violence of partition:

> What sort of people are we! After all the trouble I took to slaughter fifty pigs in this mosque, what happens! Not a single customer! And there on the other side, people queuing up to buy beef? Here no one wants to buy swine flesh.[60]

Like the other narrators, Manto has acutely observed the ways in which religious identity and economic practices align themselves in order to promote violence. In another of his chilling vignettes, Manto writes:

> When the neighbourhood was set on fire, everything burnt down with the exception of one shop and its sign. It said, "All building and construction materials sold here."[61]

Like Hiren, Manto is able to make a clear connection with the forces that encourage the destruction of property, with the economic interests in rebuilding it, thereby, undermining the way in which partition related violence is so often

depicted through the trope of madness. Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint believe that when madness is used as an explanation for partition related violence, it provides "a comfortable way out" for the critic who can relegate the violence to the domain of the irrational, and "preserve the domain of the rational for himself/herself."[62] As Hiren and Manto both depict through their narration, they are all too aware that, if the economic aspect is factored in, the instigation and propagation of violence makes perfectly rational sense.

The causes of violence are both rational and irrational, and the point is not to try to quantify the relative importance of these various forces that encouraged violence but rather to recognize the complexity that exists in the way people narrate their memories and experience of violence, and then uncover the narrative agency that is manifested through this complexity. Again, as in the case of Lalita and Sankar cited earlier in this chapter, group interviews are a useful way to track the differences in meanings across individual and multiple interviewees.

In March 2012, I was doing fieldwork in the suburbs around Kolkata. On this particular day, I ended up doing a few group interviews. One involved a husband and wife—Sushanto[63] and Geeta M.[64] It was an extremely hot day and we sat in their front room. Various members of the extended family popped in and out, some enthusiastically taking part in the conversation, others just content to listen. As cups of tea and assorted snacks circulated, the discussion heated up to match the temperature of the room. As happened so often during fieldwork in south Asia, general conversation, whirring electric fans, and other ambient noise played havoc with my recording equipment. Sushanto and Geeta M. share similar backgrounds. They both come from Hindu families, originally from east Bengal, and both moved to west Bengal around partition. When asked to discuss the causes of partition and its violence, however, they very loudly disagreed with each other. I reproduce their conversation as it was recorded to emphasize the ways in which they both interrupted each other, spoke over each other, and made sure to have their voice heard. In the process, their interweaved comments may be seen to represent the lines of agentic control that mark this particular set of testimonies:

Geeta M.: We had to leave because of them . . . I am still angry, very angry at the Muslims.

Sushanto: She is angry, but I am not because . . .

Geeta M.: Not all people are the same. If I even see a blind beggar, I feel like giving it to the Hindu, not the Muslim—I am still so angry, very angry. Because we didn't get anything, we lost everything there, became paupers. My mother and her three children—we lost everything.

Sushanto: Those who were rich were always fine. The haves and have nots. The haves didn't lose anything, only the have-nots. Us and them, both lost, the have-nots here, and the have-nots, there—this I have understood.

GEETA M.: I have little sympathy toward the Muslims, more anger.[65]

In their vehement disagreement, Geeta M. and Sushanto, like Lalita and Sankar, demonstrate the creative ability that people have of investing similar memories and experiences with radically different meanings.

It is interesting, therefore, to see how these narrators variously apply their memories of the violence of partition the ways in which they position themselves in relation to members of the "other" communities in the present. In other words, if these narrators are able to attribute contradictory meanings to the violence in 1947, they are also able to hold contradictory positions in relation to their memories in the present of the interview.

Rajinder[66] and Gargi provide a useful example. Like the interview with Sushanto and Geeta M. just described this joint interview of a married couple was also interesting in the ways in which it revealed contradictions between them and, indeed, contradictions within each individual testimony. At one point in their interview, I asked them to talk about their attitudes to and any friendships they may have developed with Muslims in their community. In their answer, they paint a picture of a happy multicultural and multi-religious life:

RAJINDER: You see, not necessarily Pakistani Muslims, so there are Muslims from India. Dr Aziz and other people have, other people—the chap from Bangladesh, Hussain . . .
GARGI: Yeah.
RAJINDER: So we have Muslim friends from different parts.
GARGI: You have Bengali friends.
RAJINDER: Yes
GARGI: And Mr. Ali, he's Muslim. He is from Guyana.
RAJINDER: He is from Guyana.
GARGI: I'm telling you about Muslim. He is Muslim and he goes and looks after the temple. Every morning he goes and cleans it. Every evening he goes and shuts that. I think, remarkable, but . . .
RAJINDER: He's a caretaker.
GARGI: Yeah
RAJINDER: Of a Hindu temple. He's from Guyana. But I think most of the congregation of this temple are from West Indies—from Guyana, Trinidad, those places . . .
GARGI: They respect him so much.
RAJINDER: They call Uncle Zai. He goes to Mosque as well, not very often. He used to go regularly but not now.[67]

Through this interweaved testimony, a picture emerges of a heterogenous, multifaith, but harmonious environment of mutual respect. Partition related

violence, in this account is of little or no importance. Of course, the fact that Raj and Gargi claim not to have any Pakistani friends may be of significance but, generally, at this stage of the interview, the impression I had of their views of the community was largely a positive one.

Barely ten minutes later, however, this image was drastically altered as they continued discussing the nature of intercommunity relationships in the contemporary world:

GARGI: We talk about the history of Muslim people, how they have been in the past and in the history, that they are always lying to each other and killing their own family members. Recently we saw that in Pakistan Bhutto was jailed and murdered.

RAJ: What we feel is Hindus, say, we have more respect for life than the Muslims have. They don't have any respect for life, they just kill people. I don't think they have any feelings even that they killed.

GARGI: But the Hindu religion, they respect everybody. You can see the politicians in India. We have so many Presidents, and, Muslim. Every religion is in Indian politics.[68]

F. Scott Fitzgerald once defined a first-rate intelligence as "the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."[69] For my current purposes, it would do just as well to replace the word "intelligence" with the word "agency." If narrative agency refers to the ways in which narrators are able to exert control over their memory and its narration rather than be determined by it, then the ability to hold completely opposite subject positions relative to their own partition story is one important example of such narrative agency.

Raj and Gargi are certainly not alone in expressing such contradictory feelings about the "other" community—in fact, a deeper look at the nature of communal prejudice will often show that it co-exists with other examples of apparently peaceful and, indeed, friendly relationships. The ways in which people negotiate their painful memories of violence shows a deeply impressive ability to compromise their subject positions in a way that allows them to both articulate their prejudice based on memories of violence and to separate out and sideline these memories in order to preserve remembered and actual friendships with members of the other community.

M.H.[70] has grown up hearing stories of what Sikhs did to his family, the violence they suffered, and the sacrifices they had to make in order to reach Pakistan. In his narrative of the history of partition, he blames the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh for the escalation of the violence:

> Here it was Master Tara Singh—he was a bastard, a number one scoundrel. He used to train people. Pakistan hadn't been made yet, but he

> used to take people to the fields and train them. How to use spears, how to use arrows, how to kill. And the Muslims were so innocent they did not realise that this training was against us. They just thought they were doing their evening exercise.[71]

M.H. is certainly not alone in depicting Tara Singh as the person responsible for the violence in Punjab. Tara Singh's behavior has survived in a talismanic form in contemporary Pakistan. Again and again, in fieldwork in Pakistan, I would hear different versions of the following event, here described by Yasmin Khan:

> Master Tara Singh who had already warned that Sikhs must be prepared to die for their cause, called for the formation of an Akali Fauj, or Sikh army, and stood defiantly brandishing his unsheathed kirpan on 3 March 1947 on the steps of the Lahore legislative building, vowing, 'We may be cut to pieces but we will never concede Pakistan.[72]

What is interesting however, is that for M.H., as for Raj and Gargi described in this chapter, such memories of violence and consequent prejudice against the "other" community can coexist with individual examples of friendship and positive affective attachments. M.H. describes the time he worked in Kuwait and made friends with Indian Sikhs:

> There was no tension, I will tell you about that. So, 1947, and after that I went to Kuwait in 1975. A lot of time had elapsed. And there was this, those who worked there, the Sikhs, they used to speak our language, Punjabi. There in the laboratory, I, head of inspection department was there, in Kuwait shipyard. All these people came to me. I used to sit with them, talk to them in Punjabi, give them tea, we used to have nice chats, and we never broke this side. We never touched it [the memories of the violence].[73]

To paraphrase Fitzgerald, these testimonies are marked by the ability to hold completely contradictory positions at the same time. Jahangir,[74] for example, unhesitatingly blames Hindus and Sikhs for partition and the violence that it resulted in. He remains deeply angry at what he perceives to be the fault of Hindus and Sikhs in pre-partition Lahore, but he also speaks very fondly of Madan Lal, his Hindu friend who moved to Delhi in 1947. When asked how he could be friends with the Hindus when they were such violent people, he discursively separates out the violence by saying that "He had become my brother. . . . He used to do Salaam, he was almost like a Muslim, he used to do *Salaam Alaikum*."[75] The common greeting which often takes on a cultural as well as religious significance in south Asia becomes, in this narrative, proof of

Madan Lal's sympathetic and non-violent nature. Madan Lal's willingness to do Salaam allows Jahangir to separate out him and their friendship from his perception of Hindus and Sikhs being violent people in general, thus allowing him to preserve both the memory of a close brotherly friendship with Madan Lal on the one hand, and his anger at Hindus and Sikhs on the other.

This strategy of separating out the memories of violence as a marginal issue that is not allowed to affect the nostalgically constructed center of a cross-community relationship is surprisingly similar to the ways in which people spatially marginalize the actual act of violence in order to preserve the sanctity of the domestic center. In the same way in which Gurbakhsh, Sankar, or Bashir are spatially separating out the violence in order to be able to remember both the painful memories, and the peacefulness of the home, Gargi, Rajinder, M.H. and Jahangir are all metaphorically separating out the memories of the violence, in order to maintain both their anger at the "other" community and their desire to form friendships with individual members of the community.

What these testimonies demonstrate, then, is that survivors of partition are able to wield their positive and negative memories in very sophisticated ways that allow them to exert agency over these memories. Partition and the violence associated with it is not necessarily always something that determines the lives of the survivors in a simple, monovalent manner. On the contrary, the ways in which the violence is narrativized shows that people are able to put these memories to work in various contradictory ways that allows them to value positive and negative memory narratives equally.

5

"All trains stop there"

The Icon of the Death Train

On August 8, 1853, the same year that saw the first commercial passenger train service in undivided India, a London based journalist published an article in the *New York Daily Tribune*, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," which made reference to the introduction of railways to India:

> I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. . . . The railway-system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry. . . . Modern industry, resulting from the railway-system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power.[1]

It is perhaps not surprising that the journalist was interested in the effects of introducing railways to India's economic system because his name was Karl Marx.

Marian Aguiar has argued that in this passage, Marx maintains a binary between British secular modernity and Indian religious (Hindu, caste-based) tradition and as such reproduces "the rhetoric that placed Hinduism, understood as caste, in opposition to the railway."[2] This is correct, but Aguiar arguably does not place adequate emphasis on the sophisticated analysis through which Marx sets up the space of the railway as a site of conflict—pointing out that the fight over control of the nation state and its future will (as it did indeed come to) depend on control over the economic system of the railways. If, as Roger Luckhurst[3] (among others) have argued, the railways proved traumatic in Europe because it changed people's spatial and temporal experiences

by introducing them to speed, in the case of the Indian subcontinent this trauma was exacerbated by the deeply ambivalent position of the railways in relation to social hierarchy.

There is a saying that arose among conservative Hindus in late nineteenth-century Bengal: "*Jat bhengeche teen Sen e, Wilsen, Keshab Sen aar Istishen*"—the caste hierarchies are being broken by three Sens—Wilsen (or Wilson's Hotel, today Grand Hotel, Kolkata, which served people from all castes), Keshab Sen (a Bengali Hindu reformer who campaigned against the caste system), and Istishen (stations and railways, where Indians of all castes and religions had to sit next to each other).[4] From very early on, then, railways were seen as a microcosm of society and its hierarchies while also being intricately involved in challenging the same hierarchies.

It is little wonder that railways have so often been seen as a microcosm of society, symbolic of the wider national space. This is done particularly memorably in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901). As Kipling's young protagonist and his companion the Tibetan Lama wait at Umballa station trying to find a way onto the train, a Sikh character tries to reassure them: "Do not be afraid. I remember the time when I was afraid of the *te-rain*. Enter! This thing is the work of the Government."[5] Calling the "*te-rain*" the work of "the Government automatically puts all Indian subjects under the control of the apparently secular British government, highlighting their common colonized state. Marian Aguiar has identified how this rhetoric has continued past independence, with India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, describing the railways as "India's greatest asset"—in Aguiar's words, the "circulating system" of the railways was seen to "dynamically transform geographic space into a simultaneous community" as it "continually bonds national space through trade and travel."[6]

In other words, trains were considered by both governmental authorities and the general population to be a national resource, as belonging to and symbolizing the nation. When, during partition, it came to dividing up the nation, the railway system, like the river system, became a resource to be divided. As Cyril Radcliffe wrote in his report of the Bengal Boundary Commission Award:

> I have done what I can in drawing the line to eliminate any avoidable cutting of the railway communications and of the river systems, which are of importance to the life of the province: but it is quite impossible to draw a boundary under our terms of reference without causing some interruption of this sort, and I can only express the hope that arrangements can be made and maintained between the two States that will minimize the consequences of this interruption as far as possible.[7]

The problem, however, is that this governmental view of the trainspace[8] as a national resource, to be mediated by and through the nation state, and to

be divided up like any other national resource, cannot begin to encapsulate the ways in which people are able to imaginatively reconstruct the trainspace through their narrative.

In fact, and like rivers, trains retain within them the ability to simultaneously unite and divide people and spaces across the newly created borders. In the process, and as in the case of homes and families, trains become a space in which people invest multiple, contradictory meanings. In narrating the events of partition, then, the roles played by trains can be evidence of narrative agency, as the trainspace comes to represent many different things.

Thus, one of the reasons Marx's analysis is arguably more sophisticated and prescient than Aguiar gives him credit for is that he challenges this view of the space of the railway as a site of consensus which unifies and instead constructs it as a site of conflict between colonizer and colonized. Predicting that the British would not be able to limit the influence of railways in India implies that India's future will depend on control over the economic system of the railways, and that in the end the British and the Indians would fight for this control. This other, contested nature of the trainspace is also built into its very structures right from the beginning, not least in the racial segregation that separated Indians and Europeans before independence, and whose legacy can now be seen in the myriad different classes on trains in independent India and Pakistan. Marx could never have predicted how the events of partition would make this contested nature manifest in the most horrifically visceral fashion, but he was quite right when he pointed out that the trainspace would be a site on which the history of conflict between Britain and India would play out; he was also right when he said that the religious and caste differences in India would play a part in this conflict. As borders were drawn crossing the older railway lines, the concurrent unifying and dividing role that the trains had always played took on a horrific dimension. Refugees traveling along one axis (the railway line) in an attempt to cross another (the border) were forced to act out the consequences of the cartographic control that Imperial Britain had exerted on India for almost two centuries. According to the state narrative, trains represented the hope of saving the secular nation state from the horrific violence, while at the same time the increased attacks on trains meant they also became emblematic of that same violence. Testimonial narratives enact these various meanings, as the trainspace gets reconstructed to mean very different things.

As the two countries were born, governments on both sides of the new borders reinforced the notion of the trainspace as safe, secular spaces providing a cross-border link using which people caught on the "wrong" side of the border could make it to the other side. The passage of trains across the borders then came to represent the normal functioning of the newly created states, and, in Aguiar's words:

> Railway officials viewed the train as a safe vehicle for relocation, for the rhetoric of modernity that was the legacy of the colonial period promised that the state space of the railway would supersede what appeared as localized violence.[9]

Aguiar's point is reminiscent of Gyanendra Pandey's argument that the authorities in 1947 attempted to relegate the violence to "some unassimilated part of the society or the world"[10] which therefore would not threaten the stability of the newly formed nation states. Smooth passage of trains through and across the nation states, in this narrative, came to represent the normal functioning of the nation state, in spite of the localized violence.

My interviews show evidence of this conflation between the trainspace and the nation space. Saeed,[11] while migrating from Delhi to Lahore, remembers the relief people felt when entering a Pakistan-bound train at Amritsar, India:

> And they came and knocked on the door of our compartment. We opened the door and about twenty-four people came in. And as they came and sat down, they all raised their hands toward Allah, and said, "Thank you, Allah—Pakistan!"[12]

In the perception of these passengers, entering the trainspace becomes equivalent to entering the nation as they feel themselves under the protection of their national forces. Sometimes, this protection was in fact material, as this conflation between the trainspace and nation was shared by the military authorities on both sides as well. Zafar[13] narrates a story that illustrates how the trainspace was seen as belonging to the nation, irrespective of the exact location of the actual train:

> OK, at this time, their, I have heard, I have no proof, they had an agreement between the two, that within forty miles of the border, if any trains or refugees were attacked, then their army could come and give protection. From Amritsar it is a matter of some eighteen miles, to the border—it is a journey of eighteen to twenty miles. So they sent a wireless message there that a train is being attacked. So after that when I regained consciousness, I heard them saying—"Throw out the bodies, there are people who have fallen underneath and we have to kill them as well." They started acting on this instruction, and then from there we heard, our Jat regiment came—"Run, run, Pakistan military are here!"[14]

Rafique,[15] who worked as a volunteer at the Walton railway station and refugee camp in Lahore, remembers the relief of people arriving by train to Lahore:

> There is another important thing, I think it is important to mention, that those refugees who used to come—all looted and beaten up. When the train stopped at the station, they would get off the compartments and immediately, there was this uniform practice, they would fall to the ground to thank Allah and after I would often ask—we are thanking Allah, that we were beaten, whatever happened, we have been attacked, but we are in His place now and no one can attack us again. A sigh of relief.[16]

These testimonies suggest that Aguiar is at least partly correct when she argues that

> Many refugees believed strongly in the vision of the railway system as inviolable. . . . They saw the railway as a national, secular space that could transcend the religious difference that now manifested itself in violence.[17]

Saeed and Rafique's testimonies provide some evidence of this nationalization of the trainspace. Yasmin Khan has depicted how the trainspace was changed physically in the process of this nationalization:

> the trains taking them to their new destinations pulled out of Lahore station to the sound of brass bands playing the national anthem, while hired hands waved Pakistani flags along the platforms.[18]

It is of course this very nationalization that also turns trains into targets. As trains become desecularized they are turned into "Muslim" and "Pakistani" trains or "Hindu" and "Indian" trains and, thus, become targets. As Zafar's testimony explains, the armed forces that were there to protect the refugee trains would become complicit in the violence. Zafar elaborates on this point:

> Thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, these three dates of September—this train left Delhi daily. And these three trains, the, our, what do you call them, Jat regiment, it was under their supervision that they came to Pakistan from there. And all these three trains were attacked on the way—and no one survived . . . Ok so we started at nine in the morning of the fifteenth from here– we traveled all day, all night sometimes we stopped somewhere for water for the engine, and they [the military] used to turn off all the water taps on the platforms. We did not have permission to get off, so no one could go and bring anything to eat either. There is a place called Muzaffarnagar, at the station, some people filled cloth bundles and brought them—chickpeas and they were throwing it to us

> through the window—they used to beat them and turn them away—we had no water, we only ate chickpeas—and got thirstier.[19]

Yasmin Khan paints a similar picture of official complicity in the violence that engulfed around and within the trainspace:

> Although the timetables were supposed to be secret, it was common knowledge when the trains specially arranged for refugees would run because the information was leaked by official staff, enabling the organisation of attacks along the route long before the trains had reached their destinations. On one occasion the confidential departure time of a train carrying refugees into Pakistan was even broadcast on All India Radio.[20]

The violence that marks the trainspace during partition, then, horrifically transforms it, both in symbolic and in material forms. As Aguiar has argued, "The massacres, beatings, and rapes in and around the trains eroded the ideal of the secular nation, breaking down the civil dreams of modernity."[21] This erosion or transformation is depicted in many of my interviews through a repeated emphasis on the violence that engulfs the trainspace.

Zafar, for example, remembers only too well his experience of being on a train while it was attacked. In particular, he chooses to describe the precise moment when the violence enters the trainspace:

> First they started firing, then they had these long bamboos, and they used them as spears and then used swords, then they came inside. We were hungry and thirsty for two days—no one could resist, we had nothing with which to resist. The train compartments at the time, they were like this—with this compartment, there were straight benches like this, with partitions in the middle. With their back to it, one man would sit facing this side, and another facing that side—that was the type of compartment. I was standing in the middle row—and when they thrust a spear, I grabbed it and pulled it toward me, while he was pulling it toward him. As a result, ok, one of my feet was on this seat, and one on the back seat, like this. When he pulled it suddenly, it cut through my fingers and I was unbalanced. Someone else hit me with a spear from behind and I fell down unconscious, and dead bodies kept falling on me.[22]

Gaffar, originally from east Punjab, remembers the use of trains to enable transportation of migrants, in the process also regulating them into the very same role of the migrant:

> So then my elder brother, he has a diarrhea or cholera—he was affected by cholera so he was in bad shape. So they asked us to ride on the train, the goods train. Actually my father put us, all of us. So when he saw my elder brother's state is not well, he ask us to come down, so we came down. Oh, that was horrible, that was horrible. It was like you are putting the goods inside. Standing, it's open, people were I don't know how they went up to Lyallpur, it must be five-hour journey, five to six, and there's no, you cannot breathe. Standing, nobody was sitting. That's why when my father he pushed us, all of us were inside, then he felt that we will be suffocated.[23]

Interestingly, Gaffar emphasizes how "horrible" the train journey was, implicitly contrasting it with other, more normal train journeys that he might have taken before or since.

Abdul Rasheed,[24] from east Punjab, remembers the physical space of the train horribly transformed, as he attempted to make his way across the border to Pakistan:

> Then at three o'clock or four o'clock in the evening, a train came and we were asked to sit in that train. Make a queue, we were sent in the, toward the train. Train, whichever carriage, in whichever carriage we went we saw blood, flesh, on the seats. No seat was such where we can sit—there was blood, and fresh blood. We think that slaughter, Muslims were slaughtered in this train, and that train came to us now we don't know what will happen to us. Very fear, very—but what to do, in fear of our lives, we sat down on the bloody seats, bloody seats. Our clothes were in the blood, blood. When we came in Pakistan, our blood, our clothes were coloured with blood.[25]

Like Gaffar's use of the word "horrible," Abdul Rashid's repetition of the word "blood" demonstrates both the symbolic and material impact of this transformation.

In this, their testimonies mirror many of the cultural texts as well. Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1998) powerfully depicts the moment when the transformation is discovered. Dil Nawaz, the Ice-Candy-Man of the title of the novel that the film is based on, is waiting at a railway station for his family to arrive from India. As the train pulls in, Dil Nawaz (played by Aamir Khan) runs into one of the carriages, trying to find his family. The camera is focused on him as he slips on the doorstep. At that moment the audience hears the screams of the others who have made the gruesome discovery that Dil Nawaz is making, and the audience cannot yet see. Dil Nawaz has slipped on the blood that is flowing down the floor and out of the door. The screaming of the soundtrack is joined by a buzzing of flies, and as the camera changes focus from Dil Nawaz's

face to a single disembodied hand, the audience can hear the slow rhythm of dripping blood. Watching this scene, I am reminded of Abdul Rashid's testimony and his painful emphasis on the word "blood," a linguistic representation of the material transformation of the trainspace.

A similar example is Anil Sharma's film *Gadar: A Love Story* (2001), which includes two separate scenes of trains being massacred. The audience sees a Muslim mob invading the trainspace, overpowering and killing the Hindus and Sikhs on the train who are presented as helpless victims. As the massacre starts, the narrative of the film visually depicts the contested nature of the trainspace, as scenes of the invading Muslim mob are intercut with scenes of the driver trying desperately to build up steam in order to move the train and its passengers to safety. Eventually, as the train full of dead bodies arrives at the station, there is another close focus on the face of the principal male character. The extreme close focus on Tara Singh's (the protagonist, played by Sunny Deol) eyes as he discovers the horror of the transformation is reminiscent of the parallel scene in *Earth* where the audience watches Dil Nawaz discovering the death train. Tara Singh reads the message that is literally written on the train: "Indians, learn how to kill from us."

This scene mirrors remarkably closely a section of A.S.'s testimony as he discusses the ways in which the nationalized trainspace was attacked and violated in order to send a message to the "other" country and its people:

> From Lahore there was one train full of Hindu refugees. It was moving, but then the attack happened. They finished them, the whole train, killed all of them. On the engine, they wrote, on the train's engine, they wrote, "Learn from us how to kill." And then they sent the train off, empty train, full of bodies. It reached Attari, Attari is next to Amritsar border. It reached India, and here the Sikhs from here, were very passionate. In Amritsar. From here, from UP [United Provinces], there was a train, full of, all over the roof, full of people everywhere. Whole families. Chheharta is a place, near Amritsar, Chheharta. That's where they stopped the train. The Muslims. The women among them, young women, they kept them to one side. All of the rest, all of them, thousands of people, Muslims—children, elderly, the young, whatever you call that thing they use to harvest crops, whatever they could lay their hands on—kill, kill, blood everywhere. On the engine they wrote, that train was going to Pakistan, "Learn from us how to clean." They had written "Learn from us how to kill" and these people sent it back written "Learn from us how to clean." That was the revenge.[26]

It is impossible to know if there is one particular, specific incident that both A.S. and *Gadar* are narrating. It is equally possible that A.S.'s "memory" comes from watching the film itself. Like the narrative of the film, A.S. presents

violence on both sides, but separates it out temporally, allowing him to present "his" side with the excuse of revenge. He is also careful to associate the violence in Pakistan with the Muslims, and the violence in India with the Sikhs, in the process distancing his own Hindu community from any sense of culpability. Through the complexity of the way in which he narrates events, by taking images from cultural texts and editing them through his own narrative, A.S. is able to exert his own agency on the way in which he constructs the trainspace and invests it with meaning.

Gurbakhsh's narration is similarly reminiscent of the visual images that are presented in *Gadar*:

> We saw, I saw a train go slowly by our village, cause our village was just about fifty yards from the railway line. Some houses were very close. And I saw this train go very slowly, doors open, bodies hanging out of it, half-dead, slaughtered, blood everywhere.[27]

The image of the trainspace that Gurbakhsh recreates, with the violence spilling out from the trainspace in the form of bodies hanging out, is one that mirrors very closely the scene of the massacre on the train in *Gadar*. This image of a moving train, full of dead bodies is one that circulates widely through cultural texts of many different genres. For example, Krishan Chander's short story "The Peshawar Express" tells the story of a train journey during partition, through the voice of the train itself. As the narrative of the story progresses, the images witnessed by the train get more and more violent, as violence occurs inside the trainspace and beyond:

> When we reached near Lalamusa, the corpses started emitting such a terrible stench, that the Baluchi guards were forced to throw them out of the carriages. They would order a young man to get up and carry a dead body to the carriage door. Then would push the young man and the corpse out of the carriage. In no time at all the dead bodies, along with those who had carried them, had vanished leaving sufficient space in the carriages for the people to stretch their legs in comfort.[28]

As the train travels through the partitioned landscape, it sheds the physical legacy of the violence onto the landscape, thereby inscribing the violence directly onto the land:

> On reaching Attari, the Hindu refugees saw so many dead bodies strewn all over the place that they went delirious with joy. They knew they had crossed the boundary line between India and Pakistan, otherwise how could their eyes have been greeted by such an enchanting sight?[29]

The mobility of trains, along with their nationalization, meant, as both *Gadar* and A.S.'s testimony show, that the trains could be attacked in order to send a physical message to the "other" side. The violence inscribed onto the trainspace could be transported across the border and used to warn the "enemy" of one's violent intent. Harbakhsh Garcha[30] makes a similar point, in which the transfer of a death train from one side of the border to another becomes the polar opposite of the symbolic functioning of the state. It becomes, in short, the limit point of the nation's protective ability, the point beyond which the national forces are unable to protect the individual:

> But the partition itself, after we saw, I mean, the trains that came with people from Pakistan murdered, blood covered trains, they went through the village cause the railway line goes right in the middle of the village, really, more or less, you know, and this was only I found out from Mother that my mother's cousin was called in by Nehru at one point, so what should we do—he was just a friend. He said, look if you want something done, you have to keep out of it, you know—he says—this was after two trains of people, murdered people came across from Pakistan, and he said, you have to just keep out, not say anything to anybody. Whatever I do is not your responsibility, but you can't touch me after that, you know. And, he was quite seriously involved in that after that. Cause they sent two trains across after that, when the third one came, after two trains, they sent one train back full of people who were actually shot. They didn't do any horrific things that Pakistanis did but these people, they just went around and shot a train load of people and sent it across to Pakistan. Then the third train came and they sent another one after that, So these people that they say it was each everybody did the same thing on both side, it is not really true because we were there, they didn't do anything till after the second train came with dead people. Then they said to send a train, and after they sent a second train, the Pakistanis stopped after that cause they realized that they will get retaliation everytime they do it, you know. But it did stop the killing after that, train killing was stopped literally after that.[31]

Even when there is no actual violence, the trainspace has been transformed into a space of potential violence—one where the passengers always feel vulnerable. Sakina, who journeyed by herself from Calcutta to Mussorie in the hills in order to bring her children back from boarding school narrates her memory of this fear:

> And of course, it was a very—I mean, nothing happened but it was a very hair-raising ride because there was a Punjabi man and his son and all the way he was just talking about no Muslim women or children even

> should be spared. They used to do that, they used to pick up children and throw them out of moving trains. So you can imagine what was my state. And since the children were coming from school, everything had names on them. Everything had to be named, even the straps. And the name is Khan, so you can't do anything– all the time just hiding the names. And my son, the youngest one, was named Ali. Ali can't be anything but a Muslim, so my elder daughter kept calling him Alan and he was getting very angry.[32]

The association between trains and trauma is so pervasive that sometimes there is no need for any direct reference to trains in order to evoke a similar response. Sometimes an acoustic link on its own is more than enough. In *Khamosh Pani*, as we see Veroo of 1947 running away from the well into which she is expected to jump, the sequence of her desperate attempts to escape before being caught by a Muslim mob is accompanied by a completely non-diegetic soundtrack of a train. Similarly, *Garm Hava*, is punctuated with shots of trains leaving symbolizing at once a physical link and a metaphorical chasm between the two newly born countries. In one particular moment, the shot of a door being locked, as the family leave their ancestral home is accompanied by the shrill whistle of the train—an acoustic symbol of the pain of homelessness and the uncertain future of having to rebuild life in a different country.

It is perhaps this connection, and its pervasiveness through cultural representation, that has turned the abnormality of the trainspace in 1947 into such an icon of partition narratives. K.S. provides a typical example when he narrates the following anecdote:

> There is a very famous, in Punjab, there is a very famous canal, it would be called a big river here, it's very wide. And it's called Sirhind canal, it takes origin from river Sutlej. And there is a railway bridge which connects to a very famous station called Doraha—and all trains stop there, and when trains used to go to Pakistan, we were told that they used to stop the train on that bridge, because it's right over the canal. They used to kill people and throw their corpses into the canal. I remember people going, you see, groups of people, ten, twelve people, and going to this particular area to kill people like that. And these were grown-up people, you see, and their purpose was to take revenge and stop the train and massacre as many Muslims as they could.[33]

In Chapter 4, I discuss K.S.'s story and the image of trains being stopped on bridges in order to dispose of the bodies more easily. This is another of these iconic images that feature across partition narratives of many genres. Krishan Chander's story "The Peshawar Express" provides a good example:

> The rail tracks lay over a canal bridge. As I passed over the bridge, I was forced to stop quite often to enable the people to dump the dead bodies in the canal. When all the dead bodies had been disposed off, people took out bottles of country liquor and drank to celebrate. I proceeded on my journey stinking of liquor and the blood of the innocent.[34]

The bridge near Doraha station still stands, and various members of the local community still remember the macabre role the railway bridge and the canal it spans played in 1947. Situated on the main railway line between Delhi and Amritsar, and on toward the Wagah-Attari border, the bridge still assumes an important strategic role and, as such, is still guarded by armed soldiers on each end. Their guns seemed jarring against a landscape that, at least on the winter's day in 2013 when I visited, seemed completely peaceful. In the disjunction of their presence, however, lies another visual reminder that the events of partition were really not all that long ago, and the violence wreaked in the trainspace continues to affect the way in which people relate to trains and railway lines today. Listening to villagers such as Mal makes it clear that the bridge is still remembered as a site of communal violence in 1947, and the river that K.S describes as horribly altered through violence continues to carry with it the memories of the violence of partition. Partition, here, as in so many places in the subcontinent, is both ancient history and contemporary truth.

The strange temporal movement signaled by the soldiers' guns and the way they reminded me at once of how much and how little time had passed since partition is reminiscent of Krishan Chander's eponymous train which, at the end of its journey, cannot forget the horrors that it has witnessed:

> I have returned to Bombay after a long time. I have been given a thorough wash and stalled in a shed. My compartments are now neither stained with blood nor do they reek of liquor. I do not hear the echoes of wild laughter. But as I stand here in the stillness of the night ghostly figures seem to come to life and the shrieks of the wounded fill the air. I would never go on such a horrible journey again.[35]

Across individual memories and cultural representation, the association between the train and the national trauma of violence and loss is so great precisely because these testimonies are deliberately setting up the trainspace as different from the audience's expectations of what a normal train journey would look and feel like. This gap between the normal trainspace and the death train is used in most of my oral history interviews to represent the nature and extent of violence that engulfed large parts of the Indian subcontinent before, during and after partition. Yasmin Khan employs a similar device in her book *The Great Partition*, where she uses trains as an indicator for the measure of violence:

> The violence which preceded Partition was grave, widespread and lethal. After 15 August 1947, it took on a new ferocity, intensity, and callousness. Now militias trawled the countryside for poorly protected villages to raid and raze to the ground, gangs deliberately derailed trains, massacring their passengers one by one or setting the carriages ablaze with petrol. Women and children were carried away like looted chattels.[36]

The point here is not that Khan's description of the increased attacks on trains is not accurate but rather that she, like my interviewees, is using narrative agency in order to make a representative connection between the increased attacks on trains and the increase in violence more generally. The act of attacking a train thus comes to represent partition violence as a whole.

The force of cultural representation is so great that Saleem,[37] who himself worked in the railways all his life—in pre-partition India and then in independent Pakistan, and who crossed the border by train, still resorts to allusions to cultural texts when describing his own railway experience:

> The famous writer Khushwant Singh has written a drama—*The Last Train to Pakistan* [sic] in which he shows how train going, coming from Delhi to Lahore—when it arrived at Lahore it was full of dead bodies, being butchered by Muslims en-route [sic]. That's what Khushwant Singh says, the train rode coming full dead bodies, no survivors, and the train arrived at Lahore, *The Last Train to Pakistan*—it's a worthwhile . . . movie, not movie but TV play.[38]

Saleem's invocation of the cinematic adaptation of Singh's novel could be read as a simple example of displacement—a discursive technique used in order to not to have to talk about painful memories. It also points to the power of cultural narratives to create such iconic symbols which then get used, by people such as Saleem, to structure their own personal memory.

Even for people who were born many years after partition, and therefore have no direct memory of 1947, the violence that exists in the stories they have inherited seem to also occupy this trainspace. Nayur[39] provides a useful example:

> We would go to Mosque and our Mosque teacher who would teach us Urdu, the language—she was an elderly lady and she went through partition. And we would hear snippets, when sometimes she would refer to sitting on the trains and I remember her saying that we were told to get underneath the seats when the trains would come to stop and if you saw Sikh men in turbans hide under the seats because they were coming in and chopping off people's heads and attacking women. And she said, I remember as a child coming on the train, and I didn't know what she

> was referring to, where she was coming from, and sometimes we would think she was a little bit barmy, to be honest, because we thought, what kind of people do that on trains?[40]

Nayur's experience of the secular public ordered trainspace in Wales where she grew up does not match the version of the trainspace she hears about from her Urdu teacher. The disconnect between her and her teacher's experience sums up both the ways in which the trainspace has been transformed, and the way in which this transformation has assumed symbolic potential. Saadat Hasan Manto employs this same device when he contrasts the ordered space of the train with the disorder that partition has created. In "Tidiness," Manto describes the methodical way in which a mob invades the trainspace and proceeds to hunt down anyone who is hiding. After an anonymous passenger alerts the searchers to the fact that someone is hiding in the lavatory, two members of the mob have this conversation about their subsequent course of action:

> "Slash his throat," suggested one of the men holding the lances.
>
> "No, no, not here!" said his friend. "It'll mess up the carriage. Take him out."[41]

The obscene banality with which the tidiness of the trainspace is being maintained reminds me of the contrast that Nayur sets up between brutal disorder of partition, and the "normal" modes of behavior on a train. The transformation that partition has caused to the trainspace is being used to represent the general disorder of the nation state as a whole.

Manto uses the same strategy in "Hospitality Delayed" when normal channels of communication and the normal temporal schedule of train journeys are disrupted in a way that also becomes symbolic of the disorder of partition:

> Ladies and Gentlemen, my apologies. News of this train's arrival was delayed. That is why we have not been able to entertain you lavishly—the way we wanted to.[42]

Manto's prose which recalls the anodyne announcements of delay that are familiar to railway passengers everywhere, assumes such poignancy because of this same symbolic transformation which allows for disruption to railway services to represent the disruption of partition. Khushwant Singh in his novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956), perhaps the most famous train-related partition narrative, uses the same device as well. Mano Majra, the village in which Singh's novel is set, is presented at the start of the narrative as a place where the rhythms of daily life are determined by the trains:

> Before daybreak, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, and as it approaches the bridge, the driver invariably blows two long blasts of the whistle. In an instant, all Mano Majra comes awake. Crows begin to caw in the keekar trees. Bats fly back in long silent relays and begin to quarrel for their perches in the peepul. The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for prayer. . . . By the time the 10:30 morning passenger train from Delhi comes in, life in Mano Majra has settled down to its dull daily routine. . . . As the midday express goes by, Mano Majra stops to rest. . . . When the evening passenger train from Lahore comes in, everyone gets to work again. . . . When the goods train steams in, they say to each other, "There is the goods train." It is like saying Goodnight.[43]

As violence slowly begins to alter life in the village, one of the markers of this change is the change of the railway timetable:

> Some Mano Majruns made a habit of being there to watch the 10:30 slow passenger train from Delhi to Lahore come in. They liked to see the few passengers who might get on or off at Mano Majra, and they also enjoyed endless arguments about how late the train was on a given day and when it has last been on time. Since partition of the country there had been an additional interest. Now the trains were often four or five hours late and sometimes as many as twenty. When they came, they were crowded with Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan or with Muslims from India. People perched on the roofs with their legs dangling, or on bedsteads wedged in between the bogies. Some of them rode precariously on the buffers.[44]

As the narrative progresses, and the violence intensifies, once again, it is the trains that provide a measure of the chaos:

> Early in September the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. . . . Goods trains had stopped running altogether, so there was no lullaby to lull them to sleep. Instead, ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra.[45]

Madhu makes a similar direct connection between the disruption to the railway services and the more generalized social disorder caused by partition. Her father worked for the railways and, in her narration, it was this experience that finally convinced him of the need to move to India:

> And my father used to talk a lot about the trains. And running the trains. But he was a young railway officer at that time. And whenever there was difficulty in an area, then they had to go, and particularly I think, he had to go to one or two places where trouble had been reported. I remember about Kohat. I mean, I remember being told by him about Kohat, of course, I don't remember. But that there was enormous tension and he had to go and see what could be done. And I remember him saying that it was such a strange period that he said "I used to travel with seven Pathans for my safety." And yet he said, "Those were the only people I could trust." And they, he said, "They were totally committed to me. They said that they'd have to kill us first before they can touch you." And he said, "When we went to Kohat, then we found that the situation was very bad." And he had to close down the railway yard, he took that decision that it had to be closed down. And he said, "That is when I came back, and told your mother that we have three children under five years of age. At any rate you people go to Simla and so on." So it's then that he said that we took the decision.[46]

Madhu's account is interesting for many reasons. Both the violence between Hindus and Muslims and the isolated example of cross-community solidarity between her father and his Muslim, Pathan guards are equally evidence of the strangeness of the time. The effect of this strangeness is, like in Manto and Singh's writing, felt most directly on the trainspace and it is the effect on the trainspace that is, through the discursive act of narration, used to symbolize the general social disorder that prompted Madhu's family to move.

Equally interesting is that for all of Madhu's narrative of her father's railway experience, there is a distinct lack of actual trains. In other words, the trainspace can be said to include not just the physical space of the trains, but also railway yards, railway lines, and railway stations—all of which became equally transformed by the violence. Saeed, for example, specifically mentions the transformation of the railway stations:

> When we got to Amritsar, there was absolute hell broken loose at the railway station—women, men, children crying, noise—pandemonium. When we reached Lahore, there was pandemonium at Lahore railway station. Only it was the other way round. There were nine bodies of Sikhs lying on the platform full of blood.[47]

Jharna M., from the other side of the country in Calcutta, narrates a similar story of violent transformation:

> I remember when we got to Sealdah, nobody would let us go inside. Why? They said, just now a train has arrived from Savar, fully red with

> blood. All over the train, up to every door step even, you won't be able to put your foot on any of them, just red with blood. In the fear that we would faint, nobody would even let us go inside. They said no, women shouldn't go inside. . . . They said the train that was coming from Savar, they stopped it on the way and killed all the Hindus. Everything was stained red with blood.[48]

In Chapter 2, I discuss Jogesh's story of his aunt, who was admitted to hospital and then disappeared. Elaborating on that story, he mentions that his family, along with thousands of others, were living on Sealdah station at the time:

> A few days after we moved to this country my grandparents, their three sons and a daughter, my auntie, came to this side. They were living in Sealdah station. . . . In such circumstances, to come and live on a station, it was unbearable. They weren't right in the head either. What to eat, what to do—that was always an issue. I mean, we hadn't even heard about this at the time.[49]

From being the technology that provides a link across the border, the railway systems become markers of difference and sites of transient migration as people attempt to cross the border in both directions and often end up living on stations and on railway lines for extended periods of time. Yasmin Khan describes the unimaginable chaos that had transformed railway stations from transport hubs to spaces of private and public life, open to all sorts of violence and exploitation:

> The ordeal of the refugees on the trains did not end when they reached the inhumanly packed platforms of their new homelands in Delhi, Calcutta, Lahore, or Amritsar, and their experiences clashed with the language of national solidarity. Greeted by scenes of misery, they had to pick their way through the crowds camped on the railway station concourse, cramped with their ragged belongings, lying or sitting in every available space. Pimps and brothel owners, gang leaders and pedophiles were not easily distinguishable from legitimate refugee camp workers who came to collect the new arrivals, and women and children were bewildered by offers of adoption, marriage or positions as domestic servants.[50]

Anil Ranjan's[51] description of Sealdah station mirrors Yasmin Khan's description very closely:

> The unspeakable suffering, having arrived at Sealdah station. Who was getting lost where, who is struggling to find whom. Some were looking at young women with wolfish eyes, who might abduct whom. So many people through the suffering and poverty becoming involved in nefarious activities. This general social disorder—no one will believe it unless they saw it with their own eyes. . . . Partition was so painful.[52]

Like Khan, Anil Ranjan uses the chaotic scenes of the station to symbolize the social chaos resulting from partition. In all of these narratives, the change to the experience of the trainspace is being used to represent the partition induced change to the nation state as a whole.

Sujata Bhatt, in her poem "Partition," depicts this transformation of trains and railway stations from linking spaces, to barriers where people end up living, unable to cross the new borders: "she could hear the cries of the people/ stranded in the Ahmedabad railway station."[53]

Like the train in *Gadar*, during and after partition, the trainspace becomes a paradoxical site of both mobility and stasis, with passengers seemingly both on the move and going nowhere. The eponymous train in Krishan Chander's story exhibits the same tendency, as it is shown to be struggling to move in the face of the violence that has engulfed it:

> The railway platform had turned red with the blood of the victims and when I pulled out of the station my wheels seemed to be slipping from the rails. I feared I would derail, bringing disaster to those who were hiding in the carriages.[54]

It is this doubling of mobility and immobility that allows the train to carry within it both the possibility of travel, migration and salvation on the one hand and the violence that prevents escape across the border on the other. Like the trainspace of Marx and Kipling, the trainspace of partition can at once unite and divide, both transcending the border and delineating the boundaries of the nation. Ritwik Ghatak caught this paradoxical doubling of unity and separation in his film *Komal Gandhar* (1961), where the protagonist Bhrigu, a refugee from east Bengal sums up his changing attitudes toward the railway line:

> The place where we were standing by the railway line, when we used to come back from Kolkata, we used to get off there, the boat would be there to take us across the river, Mother would be waiting. I had a strange thought standing there. I thought the railway line used to be a plus sign, but now it has become a minus sign. That's where the country has been cut in two.

A few minutes later this pain is demonstrated on screen in a stunning piece of cinema. The camera is used to create a point-of-view shot of the track, as if the engine itself has become narrator, as in Krishan Chander's "The Peshawar Express." As the camera tracks along the railway line, the music becomes more and more frenetic, mimicking the noise of the train. The song is the same one that we have heard the boatmen on the river singing—providing an acoustic link with the river that can now no longer be crossed. The train becomes at once a symbol of unity and a symbol of division, both a method of transporting oneself across the border and a resource that needs to be divided out between the two new nation states. The music builds up to a crescendo and the camera hits the impermeable barrier as the screen blacks out to reflect the impossibility of further movement. The barrier marks the end of the railway line and the limit of the nation state, preventing the characters and the audience from crossing the river and going home.

In the very process, however, the persistent cartographic trace of the railway line also serves to remind my narrators of the link they experience with their lost home. In other words, and citing Ghatak, all the violence described in this chapter does not, in the end, strip the trainspace of its power to be both a plus sign and a minus sign at the same time. The icon of the death train, to use Aguiar's phrase, might well be the most popular symbol of partition, but it does not completely define the way people use trains in order to tell their stories of partition.

The trainspace can, through narrative agency, symbolize both salvation and destruction, both the promise of cross-border movement and its impossibility. It is noticeable, for example, how often, in these testimonies, the trainspace becomes liminal spaces of salvation which allow for my narrators and their family members to survive and successfully make the journey across.

Shameem,[55] for example, grew up with the following story as part of her familial inheritance:

> Oh, it was terrible, yeah. She [her mother] was saying when they were coming in the train, you know, they were stopping train in the middle of the, what they say, jungle or in the road and they were killing all the people. Luckily it was only *that* compartment was safe and they came, you know, other than that you know all, I mean, dead on her train though. So, sad story.[56]

Nihar,[57] making the train journey from east Bengal to west Bengal, experienced a very similar event:

> At this time, going on the train, I saw that in the compartment next to mine, they had set fire. And it was a horrific situation. In that condition, eventually we went to that Benapole. They searched us there, whatever

> they had to do. After that, India. On the same train, just the compartment behind. The train was moving. And so many people screaming, crying. The train stopped later at a station. Of course I was scared, a lot. There was no certainty whether we would live or die.[58]

Both Shameem and Nihar displace the violence within the train in a similar manner to the discursive strategy I explored when looking at violence in Chapter 4. In other words, by situating the violence in another compartment, they are able to both explain the miraculousness of their escape and to construct the trainspace as simultaneously a space of danger and liberation.

Rami,[59] on the other hand, situates his family in a liminal portion of the train, in a manner which actually replicates this discursive strategy:

> My mother . . . came to Gujranwalla station, there was a refugee train. There were people on top of people. There were no room for her to get into the train. She was desperate, you know, I was in her lap, and another seven siblings around her. The oldest brother was fourteen and you can imagine. So she came to the end and she just could not get on the train because were just hanging from whatever they could hold on and on top of the roof and everywhere. In desperation, she grabbed hold of the handle, you know, on the engine. She grabbed and she screamed as the engine tried to whistle. She grabbed the handle, you know, where they climb the engine. . . . The engine driver said, "If you don't mind, will you come sit on the coal, at the back the coal tender, where they keep the coal. Will you sit on the coal? That's the only place I can see." So my mother with eight children, she climbed on top of the coals and she became all black, we all became black with soot, and from there it was a horrible experience . . . when engine used to whistle, I used to go blue with terror, with the whistle. . . . The train stopped on the way, it was touch and go that will it be attacked, will it be attacked. With great deal of difficulties, people came to Ferozepur. And then my Mamaji couldn't recognize us . . . because we were all black, covered with soot.[60]

The trainspace becomes polysemic through Rami's narration—it becomes both a source of terror, exemplified through the infant child's fear of the whistle, and a source of liberation, in that it was through the generosity of the train driver that Rami and his family were saved. The mark of salvation is written on their bodies, through the blackness of the soot. Incidentally, Rami's description of the coal tender is reminiscent of the scene in *Gadar*, where the driver is shown frantically shoveling coal in order to build enough steam so that the train can escape the attacking mob. In the narrative of the film, then, the coal symbolizes the impossibility of escape, while in Rami's

narrative, it is the polar opposite. In Rami's narration, the coal tender becomes a space representing their miraculous escape.

Often this miraculousness is heightened through the way in which the journey is described. For example, often people will describe their journey as a lucky escape, most typically through missing a train that had been attacked, or by delaying their journey in a way that, as it turned out, ended up saving them. Here is Dilawar[61] describing his journey from India to Pakistan:

> So we were supposed to go on a day with some other friends by train. But we couldn't make that train, so we delayed it the next day. But just good luck that that train never arrived in Karachi safe. More or less ninety percent of the people were butchered on the way. We did not know that. We went the next day, but we knew that trains used to be stopped.[62]

Mohindra tells a similar story of his journey in the opposite direction:

> We reached there at about 10 or 10:30 in the morning, luckily a train was there. And everybody was trying to jump into the train. And my eldest brother who was fourteen years elder than me was at that time nineteen years, twenty-year lad helping my father to keep us. And then he managed to push us all inside the train but he could not get in himself. . . . My mother decided, no, we are not going without him. He is not coming by next train and we all got down. . . . Next day we found that whole train was completely butchered.[63]

Even when the actual train that my narrator was on was attacked, as in the case of Nihar or Shameem, there is often a miraculous attribution to the serendipity which allowed my narrator or their family to be saved. Ziyauddin[64] provides an example of his family's journey from India to Pakistan:

> So they came entering into Punjab and a certain number of Sikh community people, obviously they were against them—their sentiments were high. They attacked the train and my mother's two uncles they were slaughtered there because of their attack and then train moved. By the time it approached to Amritsar station, main station, there were a big boulder in front of the railway engine or by the platform so that train can't pass and it was there just to stop the train. But fortunately driver, because he knew, he came across previously what happened; he was attacked so many times during this journey and he just drive the train, keep going because both ways, he thought, we have to die. If I stop they'll kill me. If I don't stop obviously this boulder will derail the train and we'll die. So there was no choice for him so luckily that boulder

> came out of tracks and train moved very fast from that platform. And then the next stop for the train was Lahore.[65]

In contrast to *Gadar*, the train here is portrayed as adequately mobile. The family was saved, according to this narrative, because the train was able to move "very fast." Like Rami's testimony, and in contrast to some of the others cited previously that spoke of railway staff complicity in the violence, Ziyauddin is constructing the driver of the train as the hero who, through his actions, managed to save the train and at least some of its passengers.

Sometimes it is possible to see both the promise of movement and the full stop of stasis in the same moment in one's testimony. Suhas remembers a particular horrific moment on his arrival in Calcutta, having had to leave his home in east Bengal:

> When we were coming by train, it was a tremendous sight. At Ultadanga station, they stopped our train. Having stopped it, the fires were burning like anything. "Who on this train is a Muslim?" At the time, there were horrific riots, horrific. A crazed situation. Gandhiji was going to Noakhali then. I saw with my own eyes, they grabbed this man, and threw him into the burning fire. The hooligans of Calcutta. So-called Hindus killed a Muslim, I've seen it.[66]

In Suhas's testimony, the train plays this polyvalent role. It is on the one hand the way in which Suhas was able to make the journey from east Bengal to west Bengal. It is, also, for the anonymous Muslim man who was killed, the moment which signified the impossibility of travel. It is probable that the Muslim man had found himself on Ultadanga station (one of the smaller stations in Calcutta) trying to escape the violence of the city, perhaps by making his way to the relative safety of what had become East Pakistan. It is possible to read into Suhas's careful positioning of narrative, and the way he parallels his own successful train journey with the other man's unsuccessful one, evidence of narrative agency which allows him to both describe the violence of partition and to hold on to the trainspace as a symbol of the link that binds him to the home he left behind and whose loss he still mourns.

This, then, is perhaps the most remarkable evidence of narrative agency. Through their testimony, these narratives are able to help to construct the most powerful, prominent icon of partition, the death train, without letting it interfere with the ways in which the trainspace can continue to represent mobility, cross-border travel, and cross-border solidarity. As Parkash describes it:

> Basically, we came by train, probably two or three trains tied together. The grown-ups were sitting on top of the train, tied with ropes so they couldn't fall off. The women and children were inside and it took us

about four days because there was the wait because the train of Muslims from Amritsar should be allowed to come first before we would be allowed to go so there was four days of very much worry, what's gonna happen are we gonna be allowed or what, we went through. . . . The two trains, one from Amritsar with Muslims and from Pakistan side with the Sikhs, they came you know toward each other, and there was lot of fear at that time, that they're gonna attack but the message eventually got through you know, "We are all refugees, we don't know whether we will find any place or house . . . we shouldn't attack each other, sense prevailed and slowly the two trains passed peacefully. . . . They [the Muslims on the other train] were extremely fearful, both sides were very fearful, we don't know when we're gonna die, almost half-dead people, cause we were so fearful."[67]

Indu[68] creates this remarkable image as well:

There is a fear of, you know, being killed. So people took the shutters down and they sat for few minutes and they thought, nothing has happened. There was no noise or anything, that someone is going to, you know, harm us. So they took the shutter up and what we all sees, is on the next track, there is a train standing which has come from Delhi. But it is very quiet, nobody is talking, as if everybody is dead inside. So people went there, to see. The army people also went. And what they see is it was full of people who were poor. They didn't have any chappal in their feet. The children were just like, as if they must have cried for food or water or milk and now they were almost, you know, so weak that they couldn't cry. People were also not sitting position, just lying like that, almost half dead. So they thought that maybe they need food so everybody, my mother also, whatever she was carrying for us, she put it in a thali, and you know, the army people brought their baskets and they took food and fruit and juices and things, whatever they had, for them. And they also started eating, it means the train was coming at least four, five days. It had started from Delhi. So they came back, nobody uttered a word—nor they, nor us. Because we also felt, look at them, they are also running like us. They are in the same boat as us. So we felt very bad, you know. So the train started after fifteen minutes and we had this feeling—look, this kind of partition or anything of this kind, hurts both the countries.[69]

In their remarkable testimonies, Parkash and Indu are able to use the same symbol of the refugee train to interact with, remember, and then reproduce through their testimony, a narrative of commonality that can coexist with images of the death train. Parkash and Indu are, in fact, using the trainspace

to link the refugees across the borders in a very similar way the railway lines provide a material link between the new nation states. In their agentic holding onto of the memory of the moment when the passengers of the refugee train created a moment of commonality, they reflect the optimism of Krishan Chander's train who, having finished its hellish journey, is still able to create different symbolic meanings for the trainspace:

> I am a lifeless train—a structure of wood and steel, devoid of feelings. But even I hate to carry a cargo of blood and flesh dripping with hatred. I will haul food grain to famine-stricken areas. I will carry coal, oil, and iron ore to the mills, and ploughs and fertilizers to the farmers. I will carry groups of prosperous peasants and happy workers in my carriages. The pious and simple women, secure in the love of their husbands, would cast loving glances at them, and the children, their faces radiant like the lotus in bloom, will not cower before death but greet the life to come with mounting confidence. Then there will be no Hindus and no Muslims. There will only be workers and human beings.[70]

Like my analysis of homely objects in Chapter 3, a closer look at the roles played by the trainspace in partition narratives shows a powerful ability to invest the trainspace with complex and contradictory emotional significances. For a fuller picture of the ways in which the trainspace was used during partition, and the ways in which it is remembered today, there is a need to account for the entire spectrum of meanings given to it—from a national resource to violent and violated spaces to a unifying link between one's old and new homes.

6

"I still dream of the Padma"

Changing Riverscapes of Partition

Ritwik Ghatak's 1961 film *Komal Gandhar* begins with a question that is both a powerful accusation and a demand for recognition. Bhrigu, as part of his theater group, is performing in a play about partition. The film begins *in medias res* in two senses—first, it literally opens in the middle of the play, and second, it begins after the most important event—partition, has already taken place. As the opening voice-over puts it, "Now starts the second act of today's play." The film opens on Bhrigu's face, in character as he shouts, using an instantly recognizable *Bangal* accent: "Why should I go? Explain it to me! Why should I leave this lovely, tender country, my river Padma? Why should I go?" Later on in the film, as we see Bhrigu and Anasuya standing on the banks of the Padma, the river assumes multiple meanings. It becomes at once both the symbol of the home that has been left behind, and the barrier that prevents the characters from going back home. From the moment the characters arrive on the banks of the river, this double bind, and the mixture of happiness and sadness that it implies, is immediately noticeable. The arriving actors and musicians start playing and singing, the lyrics of the song painful in their symbolism: "I beg of you Ali, I beg of you Ali,/ Oh, boatman, are you going to the shore?"

The song is a staple of the boatmen plying the river, and provides an auditory link to the riverscape that east Bengal represents. The joy of the various members of the theater group as they wash in the waters of the river is, however, cruelly juxtaposed by Bhrigu and Anasuya's realization that returning home is an impossibility.

As I have discussed elsewhere,[1] rivers are of central importance in Ghatak's consciousness and his visual idiom. In *Subarnarekha*, the eponymous river might be located in West Bengal, but it becomes immediately appropriated by Sita and Abhiram, while they are still children, to represent the promise of a new home to replace the one they have lost. Like trains and railway lines,

rivers retain within them the ability to unite and divide at the same time, both marking the home that is lost and symbolizing its irrecoverability. It is thus not surprising that when Amitav Ghosh was looking for a symbol of home and homecoming for the grandmother in his novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988), he, too, chose the river:

> I can guess at the outlines of the image that lived in her mind, but I have no inkling at all of the sounds and smells she remembered. . . . Perhap s . . . they constituted of some unique alchemical mixture of the sounds of the dialect and the smell of vast, mile-wide rivers, which alone had the power to bring upon her that comfortable lassitude which we call a sense of homecoming.[2]

A similar association is evident in Achintya Kumar Sengupta's poem "Udvaastu" ("Refugee"), which narrates the westward journey made by a refugee family from east Bengal. The landscape and, more pertinently, the riverscape is anthropomorphized through the poem, as the village that the narrator is leaving behind is itself given a voice, then used to question the logic of partition and the homelessness to which it leads: "Further, the gurgling burbling river/Asking, where will you go without us?"[3]

This apparently intrinsic association between the river and one's sense of home is no doubt greatly aided by the fact that both of the regions that were most directly affected by partition, Bengal and Punjab, are largely topographically defined by rivers. Rivers are built into the very name of Punjab—the land of the five rivers: the Beas, Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum. Bengal is, if anything, even more riverine in its aspect. Nitish Sengupta, in his revealingly titled book, *Land of Two Rivers: A History of Bengal from the Mahabharata to Mujib*, explicitly defines the region in terms of its rivers:

> Bengal can literally be called the child of two river systems: the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The former flows majestically from the Himalayas through the north Indian plains collecting water from the Jamuna and other tributaries, and bifurcating itself after reaching Bengal into two major rivers and countless minor streams, all of them emptying into the Bay of Bengal.[4]

It is not surprising then, that rivers played a crucial role in the complex negotiations that led to partition. In fact, as Daniel Haines has argued, "As a direct result of the partitioning of the Indus river system between India and Pakistan, the water dispute showed how rivers, and human attempts to control them, complicate notions of territorial sovereignty."[5] This point is reflected in Cyril Radcliffe's desire, as is clear from the Report of the Punjab Boundary

Commission, to try to minimize disruption caused by division of resources between the two sovereign nations:

> I have not found it possible to preserve undivided the irrigation system of the Upper Bari Doab Canal . . . nor can I see any means of preserving under one territorial jurisdiction the Mandi Hydro-electric Scheme . . . I think it only right to express the hope that, where the drawing of a boundary line cannot avoid disrupting such unitary services as canal irrigation, railways, and electric power transmission, a solution may be found by agreement between the two States for some joint control of what has hitherto been a valuable common service.[6]

It is interesting how similar Radcliffe's language in the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Report actually is. As Radcliffe realized only too well, the river system, along with the railways had been conceived of, designed, and talked of as a state-held resource:

> The fixing of a boundary in this area was further complicated by the existence of canal systems, so vital to the life of the Punjab but developed only under the conception of a single administration, and of systems of road and rail communication, which have been planned in the same way.[7]

According to a memo from A.N. Khosla, the chairman of the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission, Radcliffe wanted to recommend joint control of the water systems: "It is gathered that at the luncheon at Simla, Sir Cyril Radcliffe suggested to the four Judges the desirability of recommending joint control of the canal system and electricity."[8]

Khosla himself strongly opposed Radcliffe's suggestion which was, in any case, seen to be beyond the remit of the Boundary Commission: "The joint control of irrigation canals must on no account be accepted, even as a recommendation of the Boundary Commission. . . . Any acceptance, even in a remote way, of joint control of the irrigation system will kill all hope of irrigation development in the Punjab."[9]

In other words, and as Daniel Haines has pointed out, from the very beginning of the process of partition, rivers, irrigation canals, and railways were seen as resources that would be controlled by and used to define the new, sovereign nations. In Haines's words, "a state's geographical boundary denoted not only the spatial limits of its authority, but also the completeness of its authority over everything within that boundary. Territorial sovereignty equalled resource sovereignty."[10]

While it is perfectly understandable why the boundary makers saw rivers and waterways primarily as resources to be controlled, preserved, and

consumed, this does not begin to describe the complex and deeply personal relationships that people develop with rivers. For the narrators in both oral history and cultural texts, rivers and waterscapes assume a significance beyond their importance as material resources. The complexity of the relationships with rivers and waterscapes that my narrators can establish, and the variety of meanings that they bring to them is evidence of narrative agency.

For many of my oral history narrators, rivers and waterscapes come to represent the lost home. Growing up in east Bengal, Bharati[11] describes a world where the interlinked nature of the waterways virtually represents the relationship between the interiority of the house and the rest of the world:

> There was a big lake, and you had to come in through the lake. We had steamers, since we didn't have trains. You had to get off the steamer and then come on a boat. On the boat, if there were women, then they would come all the way on the boat to our bathing ghat in the pond. Otherwise, they would drop them off by the lake, and then they would walk the last bit . . . I never saw anyone release fish into our ponds, the fish would just come in on the tides. . . . With the river, with the lake, with the pond—everything was connected with canals. The rivers were tidal, therefore the tides came to the lakes, and then came to the ponds.[12]

The privacy of the family ponds are affected by tides because the ponds, lakes, canals, rivers are all interlinked, ultimately to the sea. This is tidal country, as Amitav Ghosh puts it in his 2004 novel *The Hungry Tide*:

> There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea, The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometers inland and every day thousands of acres of forests disappear underwater only to reemerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily—some days the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbanks where there were none before.[13]

Growing up in west Bengal, far away from this tidal country, Kenneth[14] still remembers the effects of tides in the Hooghly River:

> And even at that stage although we were something like fifty miles from the sea, the actual Bay of Bengal, we were still within tidal influence because of the very flatness of the land there, the nature of the land, the geography of the land.[15]

Purnima also describes the river as almost entering the privacy of the home:

> Between the Rupsa and the Bhairab, Khulna district, Khulna city was in between these two rivers. . . . Our house was just beside the river, the Bhairab, on its banks. It was such a beautiful place. It was such a beautiful place—I mean, if there was rain, clouds, or storms, or when the full moon comes out, it was all such a beautiful sight . . . the river had come so close, it was just next to our courtyard.[16]

This close proximity between human habitation and the river is also often a source of anxiety, as in Khushwant Singh's 1956 novel *Train to Pakistan*:

> Although Mano Majra is said to be on the banks of the Sutlej River, it is actually half a mile away from it. In India villages cannot afford to be too close to the banks of rivers. Rivers change their moods with the seasons and alter their courses without warning. The Sutlej is the largest river in the Punjab. After the monsoon its waters rise and spread across its vast sandy bed, lapping high up the mud embankments on either side. It becomes an expanse of muddy turbulence more than a mile in breadth. When the flood subsides, the river breaks up into a thousand shallow streams that wind sluggishly between little marshy islands.[17]

Panchanan[18], too, describes the proximity of his house to the river as being threatening:

> The house was, one mile wide river, this was the east, where my uncle's house was. From this side it was breaking, and land forming from the other side . . . new land on the other side and breaking up on this side. My uncle and cousins, their house, because it would go into the river in a few days, that's why, they said we should move the house around to face the river, around the back. But some of the other partners objected . . . so my uncle kept on trying to build a house somewhere else. Eventually they got some land on the opposite side of the river, where new land was forming.[19]

Jogesh provides another example of the erosive appetite of the river:

> I had an aunt, we used to go to see her father's house, how it was slowly disappearing into the Arial Khan river. That the river has already reached quite close to the house. Then we went again and saw that half of the house had disappeared. Then we went again and saw, "That's where the house used to be."[20]

Ananta, while eulogizing the beauty of the river, is also only too aware of its destructive potential:

> Padma, Meghna—if you see the Meghna river, even big strong people will tremble. If there were clouds, even steamers would be scared to go along the Meghna. And the Padma is swift. Each river is different. Bangladesh does not lack for rivers. Rivers right, left and center.[21]

In the context of the violence of partition, the natural threat of the river assumes a more tangible manifestation, though the threatening nature of the river is never quite allowed to take over and neutralize the positive affective relationship people have with riverscapes either. Subimal, in Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Arjun* (1987), exhibits an entirely characteristic link between east Bengal and rivers, a marker which he is able to deploy to reinforce the superiority of the life and the country that he has left behind:

> What's there in West Bengal? Show me a river worth its name! In our east Bengal there were so many expansive rivers. Living next to such vastness, the human heart too grows generous. The thought of the Padma, Meghna still sends shivers in me, just look, I have goose bumps.[22]

Scholars usually view this form of nostalgia as suspicious. Debali Mookerjea-Leonard, for example, compares Subimal's nostalgia to Arjun's pragmatic realism, and dismisses the former as "middle-class romanticizing of pre-migration life."[23] Mookerjea-Leonard is right in attributing a class dynamic to the differences between Arjun and Subimal in Gangopadhyay's novel, though, as I show in this book, such a nostalgic connection to the country left behind cuts across class boundaries and is both more critical and more agentic than scholars have generally recognized.

The testimonies of migrants from east Bengal, in particular, are marked by repeated references to rivers and canals, in large part because the topography is extremely riverine. Panchanan,[24] for example, describes crossing rivers and canals on his walk to school every day:

> I used to walk three miles to school . . . the village road, no tarmac. There were many bridges, lots of bridges. At least, I mean, to go to school, I had to cross almost thirty bridges. These bridges were like, made out of bamboo.[25]

Jagadish[26] paints a picture where human life is inextricably connected to the seasons, in particular through the ways in which the monsoon season affected daily movement:

> Six months [in the year] we would walk around, and six months, even if we wanted to go from one house to the other, we had to use a boat. There, even the poorest of people, used to have a broken-down dinghy,

> otherwise they would not be able to move. . . . Not everyone would be able to use it, unless you had the habit, you would sink. And everyone could swim. There was no lack of fish, and what a taste of that fish.[27]

Priyotosh[28] explains that the life of his town was largely determined by the changing nature of the river and the consequent changing fortunes of the people:

> It was a small town. In the town, most of the people were outsiders. In the river, those who, from the erosion of the Meghna-Padma, those who had lost their homes, it was in particular these people who came and lived in this town.[29]

In spite of the dangers posed by the rivers, however, they also remained the only possible arteries of communication and, as such, towns and villages were almost always defined spatially in relation to the rivers around them. As Priyotosh puts it,

> There was a steamer, which used to connect us to Calcutta. We used to take the train from Calcutta to Goalondo, and from Goalondo we used to get on the steamer, and we used to get off at Chandpur. If we boarded at six in the morning, by seven in the evening we would reach Chandpur. It would take the whole day. The town is on the banks of the Meghna. And through the middle of the town there was a small river which was called Dakatiya.[30]

Ananta, also living in east Bengal around the same time describes the plenitude of fish in the rivers at the time:

> There was no shortage of fish. *Ilish* fish, they used to cast nets and get fishes this big. When the season came, the fishermen used to fill their boats with fish. They used to cut them in pieces, pack them in salt and export them everywhere. All from the Meghna-Padma.[31]

Growing up on the banks of the Hooghly in West Bengal, Kenneth also remembers a childhood centered around the river, for material resources such as fish, entertainment, and transport:

> I became a very keen fisherman, especially with our Doctor-Babu who was a magician at the piscatorial arts, if you like. And I used to sit with him for hours and hours on the tank, or at the side of the Hooghly sometimes, and we caught many fish together, so I learned a great deal from him. . . . I have very many pleasant memories of those days, especially

> perhaps of the dinghy crossing between Meghna jetty,[32] to, across the Hooghly, to Chandannagar *ghat* at the other side . . . there was always elephants or water buffalos being washed or swimming in the water, always very interesting to see and all the various dinghies and river-craft. . . . And the dinghywallah himself, or the majhi rowing us across with his one long oar at the rear of the, by twisting or pulling this, and sometimes even singing a Hindi love song possibly. And made life entrancing for us in fact.[33]

Kenneth's evocative description of the boatmen's songs is reminiscent of the huge auditory significance similar boatmen's songs have in *Komal Gandhar*. In the same way that Ghatak uses the song as a metaphor for the lost home, Kenneth uses it as a metaphor for the lost innocence of childhood spent fishing and swimming in the river.

Even apart from fishing, water in the villages was obviously a hugely significant resource—for drinking and washing and for irrigation. Sher Singh[34] specifically mentions the well when asked to describe his village in east Punjab:

> Well, it was a village, you know, a remote village, and it was just an open place and no obstructions. There was what they called . . . big trees and we used to climb up and jump down. It was just absolutely village life. And at the center of the village . . . well, all the people, the old ladies, used to draw water from the well. In those days there was no water supply. . . . In the center of the village there was a well and that well was used with this thing . . . and small vessel that you had to draw the water out of the well. As a child we used to play there together [with Muslim children]. There was no problem about it.[35]

Water, in this narrative, comes to represent many things—the fish it produces is used to represent the plenty of the lost home, in a manner similar to the use of rice as a metaphor. Water also represents the harmony of pre-partition communal life. As Sher Singh constructs it, the village well is the site where children of all the religions used to play together. Gurbakhsh, also growing up in east Punjab, makes a similar connection between the village water supply and harmonious coexistence:

> I saw this in our own village—my grandfather—I was there watching him. He was supervising two of our farmworkers, they were Muslim, brothers, very close to our family. And they used to carry me round and take me to the fields, pull sugarcane out of the ground and peel it with their mouths and give it to me and we used to chew it. And they were working on a Persian wheel trying to water some fields.[36]

Growing up in west Punjab, but in an urban environment, Rajinder is still able to make a link between water and cross-community harmony:

> I was born in town called Lahore, in west Punjab. The name of the town has now been changed to Faisalabad, it was called Lyallpur before, now it is Faisalabad. . . . It was a beautiful place, everybody lived in harmony—Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians they all lived there. The road I lived in, on one end of the road was a mosque and the other end of the road, there was a Sikh temple so we were so close to each other. We used to go to the mosque to get some cold water, actually, that time in summer. Nobody ever stopped us, why you are coming here. We have very happy memories.[37]

That water can so easily become a metaphor for communal harmony is doubly interesting because of upper-caste Hindu prejudices about drinking water touched by people from lower castes or, indeed, other religions. Suhas, for example, both refers to this prejudice and highlights his father's liberal attitude in his description of the family's drinking habits:

> There was someone called Gopal, everyone used to call him Gopal *Namashudra*. My father used to treat it as a challenge to drink water brought by someone who was a Namashudra. That's why no one else used to drink water in our house.[38]

Sometimes water was used as a physical manifestation of these communal borders and boundaries, as Mihir[39] narrates:

> The village limits used to be marked by narrow canals. Our country was one of rivers and canals. Sometimes we needed to use boats in canals even to go from one house to another. Or coming from the outside, there used to be a ghat, either in front of, or behind the house, where the boat used to dock. Like we use rickshaws or cars to move around here, there we had canals. In these canals, there were some canals that were used to demarcate the Hindu and Muslim areas of the village. Hindu villages on this side, Muslim villages on that. This is what we have seen as children.[40]

Chitta,[41] who, like Mihir, grew up in the Barisal district of east Bengal, paints a very similar picture of a landscape where the boundaries between land and water were always fluid, but where, paradoxically, it was still possible to use waterways to demarcate boundaries between religious communities:

> The villages had a distinctive characteristic, as far as I remember, most of these villages, as far as I have seen them—in the same village, with the same name, but between neighbors, if there was a boundary, in one area there were only Muslims, and with them, some, Namashudras, or so-called lower caste Hindus, some of them, would live in the Muslim areas. And my district, in particular, was defined by rivers. Full of rivers and streams. As a result, in Barisal district, I don't know what has happened now, but there was not even an inch of railway line. That's because we had to cross so many rivers and streams, that if they had to build a railway line there, for three miles of railway, they would have to build perhaps two or three bridges. That's why they used these rivers and streams to divide it up. River or canal, small streams, we used to call them canals. Though on this side, in Bangla many would call them rivers but we called them canals there, not rivers. Hindus lived on one side, Muslims on the other.[42]

Mihir and Chitta's evocative description of the canal as border is reminiscent of the role played by rivers in the eventual national borders. As the microcosm of Hindu or Muslim villages gets appropriated into the macrocosm of Hindu and Muslim nations, the canal which figured as the unofficial boundary between the two villages gets replicated by the river which is used to delineate the all-too-official boundary between the nations.

As if to represent the difficulties of overlapping a static national border on a fluid, ever-changing river, novelist Bapsi Sidhwa has her child-narrator Lenny refer to rivers in her constant questioning of both the logic and the practicality of partition:

> And the vision of a torn Punjab. Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered rivers? Won't their water drain into the jagged cracks? Not satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear the Punjab.[43]

Fluid or not, for many people, the river comes to represent the border, not least because crossing the border almost always involves crossing a river. For most people, the journey westward from east Bengal involved taking a boat or a ferry or a steamer at one point or another. Ananta, took the boat from his village in Barisal district to Khulna city, from where they managed to get a train:

> From Dharmaganj, we got on the boat, in one night, when dawn came, we were in front of Barisal, dawn came. Then they dropped us in Barisal. We sat by the [railway] lines for a month, trying to get on the train. . . . You can hire boats in our village. We hired a boat in a way so the Muslims couldn't find out. That's how we got up and left. . . . The boatman was Hindu.[44]

Suhas, who made the journey from Khulna, also describes having to cross the river in between two train journeys:

> From Mulghar village, there was a small train . . . . We got to Khulna, the river was called Rupsa, between two railway lines. We crossed the river by boat, it cost one *paisa*. There was a boat, they called it *tabure*, and we crossed the river on them.[45]

Aspects of crossing rivers and thus crossing the border have today become legendary, as Ananya Jahanara Kabir discusses, while comparing her own return to her ancestral home to the reverse journey so many people made in 1947: "I crossed the Padma River, albeit not at the mythical Goalondo (because the river had silted up by now at that point) of the equally mythical *murgir jhol* which used to be served as lunch on the steamboats."[46]

As the ever-changing, ever-moving line that demarcated the two new nation states, the rivers came to represent other, more traumatic things than the steamer chicken curry. Prafulla Roy's short story "Majhi" ("Boatman") depicts the way in which the crossing of the river can symbolize the crossing of the border to safety, whereas the failure to cross leads to death. "Boatman" tells the story of Fazal, a Muslim boatman who is desperately trying to save up enough money so he can pay the bride price that will allow him to marry Saleema, the love of his life. On the night the story opens, he is desperately trying to find passengers so as to achieve the sum of 140 rupees he needs to be able to get married. He finds Yasin, another Muslim man who asks him to take him and the woman he is with across the river. On the journey, however, Fazal discovers that Yasin has abducted the Hindu woman and is threatening her with rape and murder. Even though Fazal knows that this will delay his marriage, perhaps forever, he kills Yasin, throws his body into the river, and then takes the unnamed Hindu woman to safety, and gives her his savings. The moment of Yasin's death is linked closely to the geography of the river, in a device that is repeated again and again across testimonies from many different genres:

> Soon Yasin's body was sucked into the swift current of the Dhaleswari and lost into oblivion. The boat was much lighter now. In the meantime, Fazal had cleaned up the sharp points of the harpoon and placed it back to where it had been.[47]

The disruption to normal life on the river becomes an index to mark the extent of the horror of partition, and its effect on everyday life, in a very similar manner to the ways in which I discuss in Chapter 5 the changes to the trainspace. As with the trains, this change is depicted most obviously through the disruption to normal movement across the river. The boatman in

Samaresh Basu's 1946 short story "Adaab" provides a case in point. Caught up in the riots that will eventually claim his life, he laments the loss of communal harmony, and consequent earnings that depend on normal life:

> Who thinks of us? Now that these riots have started—how am I going to earn my food? Am I ever going to get my boat back? Who knows what depths they have sunk her to at Badamtoli Ghat? The agent of Landlord Rupbabu, once a month he used to take my boat to go to Noira island for business. Babu's generosity was like the Prophet's, he used to tip me five rupees, on top of five rupees to hire the boat—a total of ten rupees. That's how I could earn enough to eat and live. Will any Hindu Babu come to my boat now?[48]

In a manner very similar to the trains, these river boats change from being simply spaces of transit to identifiably communal in the sense of either Hindu or Muslim boats, and being attacked as such. As Ananta describes it: "There were these boats that used to go from our place here to Barisal. There used to be boatloads of Hindus, and they would take them, strip them, cut them up and float their bodies in the water."[49]

Even when violence did not actually take place, the space of the boat had become dangerous, almost by association, as the river and the boats on the river changed from familiar means of transport to sites of vulnerability. In Panchanan's words,

> We took a Muslim boatman and went. That is a long story. There was a huge lake, they call it Paikkar Bil. In that lake, the boat was just ours, I remember we could see various water plants in the lake. Every so often we could see, fishermen casting their nets, far in the distance. This was at night, but there was moonlight. In that light we were going along the lake. There are no other boats nearby. We were scared, what if they take everything we had, all our money, we wouldn't have been able to do anything. But fortunately enough, nothing like that happened.[50]

Rivers, canals, streams, and wells form examples of the interstitial spaces inhabited by bodies,. The image of anonymous bodies floating in the water becomes almost clichéd, present in narratives of both the Bengal and the Punjab partitions. Kenneth, for example, matches his description of the edenic perfection of the Hooghly with this horrific image:

> I've seen bodies—many, many of them. In fact at one stage, we had, we drew water in for the mill boilers through huge pumps down near the jetty, a pump house and these lead down into pipes which ran along under the jetty down into the Hooghly. And to prevent flotsam and

> jetsam being caught up, they had filter cages around them. . . . However, we were crossing to Chandannagar at low tide one day and there was a squad removing bodies, and arms and legs from these filter cages—the result of course of rioting and bodies being thrown into the Hooghly and the suction pumps of course had drawn this at high tide against the cages and this was, we were actually close to them while the bodies were being removed which was a shocking sight but obviously very much bloody well worse for the people who'd died there and their families and all the rest of it.[51]

Ananta describes bodies in the Meghna in east Bengal in very similar ways:

> The Meghna river is right in front of our house. Along that river, I see one with a leg missing, one with the throat cut, floating in the water. The bodies would float along the river. They would take boatful of Hindus, cut them and throw their bodies into the river.[52]

K.S. further develops his story of murder on Doraha bridge, as discussed in Chapter 5, by describing, in horrific detail, how the bodies ended up in the irrigation canals that the bridge spans:

> I never saw it myself and people used to say all the corpses used to flow in the canal. Further down, there was a very big junction, at that time there was a tiny little waterfall. They had to filter most of the water there, and all the corpses used to load up there and they had great problem getting rid of all the corpses.[53]

At university in Calcutta, Atul[54] has a similar memory of the River Hooghly:[55]

> The riot happened, near the dock, Metiaburj, a Muslim area, a Muslim area, mostly lower class. There in a factory, there were a few laborers from Orissa. They entered the factory and destroyed all of them, just cut up absolutely everyone, absolutely. These headless bodies, innumerable, in hundreds, they threw them in the Ganga. At that point there was a bend in the river. B.E. College, the Botanical Garden, a bit further upriver, there was a bend. At that point, the bodies got caught up in the currents of the Ganga, and came to this side of the river. From the Botanical Gardens for a mile, or a mile and a half, along the coast, just dead bodies, just dead bodies. Life in the hostel was intolerable because of the stench coming from the decomposing bodies.[56]

The cliché often takes the form of exactly the same words, the same language used to describe the primal horror of the violent transformation of the familiar river. Amiyabala[57] describes it thus:

> The riots were so bad that the water of the river turned red. A policeman apparently told them, "You stay here, in this godown, you don't need to be afraid." Then they took them out of the godown one by one, and cut them, they took them one by one and cut them.[58]

Arati[59] echoes Amiyabala's words with a startling similarity:

> "Riots are starting, If you want to live, come inside this godown." They announced and everyone abandoned cooking, eating, took their children and went there. They were there, all of them, we can't imagine how many. As night was ending . . . the cutting started. They would grab them by the hair, and cut them. The water of the river turned red. We heard the stories, but this is all true.[60]

Amiyabala and Arati were both born in east Bengal but come from different districts. It is impossible to determine whether they are describing the same incident—in all probability, however, multiple incidents become conflated into a single narrative which then gets recycled in such similar language.

As riots engulfed large parts of northern India, one did not have to be near the border for rivers to take on such visceral horror. In Shiv K. Kumar's 1998 novel of partition *A River with Three Banks*, Gautam finds himself accosted by Pannalal by the bank of the river in Allahabad. Situated at the confluence of two actual rivers, and a mythical third, Allahabad's identity is wrapped around its rivers, and the religious significance these rivers have for the local Hindus:

> Soon he felt that his mind was losing contact with the human world. Far away he saw the Triveni, the silken borderline between the two holy rivers. However, it was again the transcendent Saraswati that gripped his imagination. . . . As he sat their musing, a whiff of breeze wafted across the waters, ruffling his hair. It was bracing, tranquil and cool.[61]

Gautam is in central India, hundreds of miles away from the border, but he imagines the river as a borderline in the same way Ghatak or Ananta does. Just like the rivers of Bengal and Punjab, as well, this tranquility is about to be shattered with the fatal encounter, in which Gautam ends up killing Pannalal: "Slowly he dragged the corpse across the sand and then pushed it into the river. Only after it had been swept away on the crest of a wave that he broke into a sort of insane laughter."[62]

Gautam's reaction to his own murderous act recalls that of Lady Macbeth, as he tries to wash his hands in the water of the river:

> Gazing at the palm of his right hand, he said to himself: "Look, hand, what you've done! I thought you could only write, hold a book, a glass of wine, or pick up morsels of food."
>
> He dipped his hand into the river, but the blood lingered on the fingers. Rubbing it a couple of times with sand, he immersed it again in water to see all the stains gone.[63]

Similarly, in perhaps the most famous poem of partition, Amrita Pritam's "I ask Waris Shah today," the poet turns the image of corpses in the river to something more metaphorical, suggesting that the physical legacy of violence in terms of the bodies will lead to a wider, perhaps more devastating legacy: "Blood runs in the Chenab./ Some hand hath mixed poison in our five rivers."[64]

The sin of befouling of the river and its water cycle is one, Pritam seems to be suggesting, that the community will have to atone for, for a long time to come. It is almost as if the violence of partition has materially changed the waterscape and human beings' relations to it.

In the carnage of communal violence, rivers and waterways do not just act as receptacles for these anonymous bodies but can often be turned into weapons of slaughter as well. A.S. told the story of how his father died on the journey itself. When asked to describe the way in which he died, A.S. attributes it to poison: "Actually, when we were coming, the Muslims put poison or something else in the drinking water. When we drank, those of us who drank it, died from that illness."[65] He is certainly not the only person I interviewed to describe how water could be turned into a weapon. Zafar, making the journey in the opposite direction, outlined how the Indian army, pretending to guard the fleeing Muslim refugees, would deny them water in order to aid their attackers:

> Ok so we started at nine in the morning of the fifteenth from here—we traveled all day, all night sometimes we stopped somewhere for water for the engine, and they [the military] used to turn off all the water taps on the platforms. We did not have permission to get off, so no one could go and bring anything to eat either. There is a place called Muzaffarnagar, at the station, some people filled cloth bundles and brought them—chickpeas and they were throwing it to us through the window—they used to beat them and turn them away—we had no water, we only ate chickpeas—and got more thirsty.[66]

Even when water was not actively denied to the refugees, the contamination from dead bodies often made drinkable water a rarity. S.K.[67] provides an example of this as she narrates her eastward journey from west Punjab:

> Where our camp was, there was a huge lake. And instead of it being the color of mud, it had become red, it was very horrible and scary. The lake was full. The lake was full. People started to say we should throw the young babies into the lake. We saw many people throw their babies into the water. . . . My mum was really thirsty and kept asking for water. A man said he would get her some water, so he ran to a pond to get water; but the pond was filled with dead bodies.[68]

Wells, like ponds, become infamous sites of murder and suicide, thus becoming receptacles for dead bodies. In Chapter 2, I discussed the importance of the well in *Khamosh Pani* (2003). This is the well that Ayesha/Veroo runs away from in 1947, but to which she is forced to return thirty years later and complete the act of suicide that she had refused to do all those years earlier. The image of women jumping or being forced to jump into a well to save their "honor" has become indelibly associated with partition. In Urvashi Butalia's words,

> We had heard time and again that in many villages on both sides of the border hundreds of women had jumped—or were forced to jump—into wells because they feared that they would be taken away, raped, abducted, forced to convert to the other religion. This seemed bizarre: could the pull of religion be so strong that people—more specifically women—would actually kill themselves? And then I met Bir Bahadur Singh's mother Basant Kaur, a tall, strapping woman in her mid-sixties had been present in her village, Thoa Khalsa, in March 1947 when the decision was taken that women would jump into a well. She watched more than ninety women throw themselves into a well for fear of the Muslims. She too jumped in, but survived because there was not enough water to drown them all. She said: "It's like when you put rotis into a tandoor and it it is too full, the ones near the top, they don't cook, they have to be taken out. So the well filled up, and we could not drown. . . . Those who died, died and those who were alive, they pulled out."[69]

This image, like the one of trains being attacked, has entered the hegemonic memory narrative of partition. Again and again, my oral history interviewees cite this image, often using examples of cultural texts as "evidence." Raminder,[70] for example, describes her journey from west Punjab thus:

> So many girls jumped into the well, rather than end up in their hands. Because they used to take girls away. And bodies were just floating like this in the water. Still sometimes I remember. In that film *Gadar*, they showed it a bit, but we have seen so much more.[71]

In *Pinjar* (2003), for example, when Hamida/Pooro helps her sister-in-law, Lajjo, the men of the village immediately start dredging the well to see if she has committed suicide. As it happens, that is not what Lajjo has done, and the colorlessness of the water in the well presents a sharp contrast with the earlier moment when the riot is depicted through a close-up focus on the sewers running red with blood. This narrative cliché is repeated word for word across so many of my interviews and cultural texts. In *Ice-Candy-Man*, for example, Inspector Rogers and Mr. Singh threaten each other by making the same prediction: "Rivers of your blood will flow in our gutters!"[72]

With typically bitter ferocity, Saadat Hasan Manto takes the image of human beings voluntarily or forcibly jumping into wells and twists it to reveal the senseless brutality of partition related violence. In his vignette, "Miracle Man," Manto portrays a man who accidentally falls into a well while trying to dispose of bags of sugar that he had looted:

> His screams woke up everyone. Ropes were lowered but to no avail. Finally, two youths went down and pulled him out, but he died a few hours later.
>
> The next morning when people drew out their drinking water from the well, it was found to be sweet.
>
> That night, there were prayer lamps illuminating the miracle man's grave.[73]

Sukeshi Kamra, among others, has pointed out this overlap between public and private memory, in an argument that highlights the difficulty of getting memory narratives that are not mediated through cultural representation. Kamra argues that oral history narratives, along with literature and cinema, simply recycle

> images of raped women, orphaned children, refugee camps, bloodthirsty mobs of men, women throwing themselves into wells, miles and miles of refugee columns . . . and burning villages everywhere.[74]

While Kamra is correct in identifying the many similarities between memory narratives of various private and public genres, she does not place enough emphasis on the ways in which these testimonies may represent narrative agency.

Thus, it is noticeable, for instance, how the waterscapes of rivers, canals, or wells do not just serve as sites of violence, but in many ways are seen to be complicit in them. Changed physically by the blood, as in testimonies such as those of S.K. or Atul, or through the sugar of Manto's short story and the blood poison of Pritam's poetry, the waterscapes have also changed metaphorically into forbidding, vengeful entities. In other words, the violence of partition allows these narrators to actively, creatively reimagine the natural waterscape as contributing to the violence that they are trying to escape from.

Ananta, for example, explicitly links the erosion of the river to what he sees as the greed of the Muslims:

> Our place, our lands, everything has now been taken away by the Muslims. . . . Our Bangladesh, we had so much there, can't even put it in words. The river has taken everything. Even they can't enjoy it. It is only if another island forms, land rises again, only then can they take over that and enjoy it. We have nothing. It has all gone into the Padma. . . . There is no one left in my village anymore. It's all in the river. The Meghna river, the Padma, have broken it and taken it away. We left the village and came, and the Padma river broke it, the Meghna river broke it and took everything we had away.[75]

Rhetorically, the Muslims and the Padma seem to be on the same side in depriving Ananta of his ancestral property. Ananta is able, through exerting his own narrative agency, to link the natural phenomenon of a changing, ever-eroding river with the human event of partition in a manner that allows him to mourn the loss of his home. This trope of linking natural processes to the human violence of partition is visible in literary texts as well. Khushwant Singh uses the same trope in *Train to Pakistan*, when he links the fury of the flooded river to the communal violence:

> The river had risen further. Its turbid water carried carts with the bloated carcasses of bulls still yoked to them. Horses rolled from side to side as if they were scratching their backs. There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies; little children sleeping on their bellies with their arms clutching the water and their tiny buttocks dipping in and out. The sky was soon full of kites and vultures. They flew down and landed on the floating carcasses. . . . The men moved up toward the bridge to see some corpses which had drifted near the bank.
>
> They stood and stared.
>
> "Lambardara, they were not drowned. They were murdered."[76]

In a moment of pathetic fallacy, the violence of nature seems indistinguishable in terms of its effects on human bodies from the violence meted out by

other humans. Margaret Bourke-White, in her account of partition in Punjab, makes a similarly explicit link between the violence of partition and the violence of nature, as storms and floods turn the rivers into destructive forces, compounding the misery of the fleeing refugees:

> As though the travail of a people divided by pen strokes was not great enough, North India, in this year of all years, suffered the worst floods since 1900. In the Punjab, which means Land of Five Rivers, all five began overflowing their banks, tearing away the earth barriers in the network of canals, spilling into the fields, and trapping entire encampments of refugees. I was almost caught myself in the rising of the River Ravi. . . . Thousands of peasants less lucky than I were trapped—they had no jeep, no one to warn them. The River Beas claimed the most victims.[77]

Mohindra tells a very different story of natural violence compounding the effects of human violence on their journey from west Punjab:

> I was at that time playing near a pond and was throwing stones in the pond, just as children would do. Then suddenly . . . a scorpion bit me and I started crying and shouting because it was really very, very poisonous. And for about, almost three, four hours my mother tried to calm me down and by that time of course then journey has to also start so while I was still in pain we continued to walk.[78]

Rivers, ponds, lakes—water in all of these forms seem to contain within them the qualities of tranquility and destruction, homely protection and alien danger. It is of course entirely consistent with my argument about narrative agency that people are able to hold completely contradictory positions at the same time. While Ananta bemoans the loss of property that the erosion caused by the Padma and the Meghna has led to, he still says that he dreams of the Padma and the Meghna at night. He describes the rivers as beautiful and terrifying, as generous and cruel, as paradisiacal and nightmarish. Similarly, Kenneth is able to narrate the horrific stories of discovering bodies in the river Hooghly without it affecting his memories of a perfect childhood on the banks of the same river. Indeed, waterways carry within them both the danger of violence and the promise of liberation, sometimes in the same moment. As Manik narrates:

> You can't really call it a river, more like a canal—silted up in the middle with water on either side. In our country, there used to be these small dinghies, in our local language they used to be called *konda*, in Noakhali dialect. In one of those, there were two Muslims, and me. The Muslims

> were taking me to their house. Why? Because my father was the manager of the estate and the head teacher of the local school. Not everyone thinks the same. Perhaps my father helped them out in some way a few days previously. On the way, near the silted up area in the middle, another group of Muslims stopped the *konda*. This was during the riots, in the evening, all sorts of rumors were going around Noakhali. They stopped us and asked them: "Let him go, we will cut him"—just this language. . . I was just staring at him, I wasn't even old enough to think. But they were arguing among each other. These men were telling them that I was Sir's son, but they didn't want to listen. In the end, to use a contemporary phrase, the first group won out, and you could say that it was because of that, that I am here today.[79]

The river, according to this narrative, is both the site of danger and of deliverance, representing both communal prejudice and harmony. At the end of Prafulla Roy's "Boatman," Fazal's murder of Yasin and the probability of further violence have undeniably affected the world of his river, but it has not been allowed to completely redefine his relationship, either:

> He was reminded of the bloody head of the harpoon last night. It was popping up and down, swaying incessantly on the wave of his consciousness. How many times, in the scheming darkness of nights, would people like Yasin appear on his boat, before he was able to build a home with Salima in a quiet corner under the shade of a tree on the banks of the Dhaleswari? How many times?[80]

At the end of the story, we leave Fazal sharpening his harpoon in anticipation of future violence, but not willing to abandon his dream of a stable home with the woman he loves, on the banks of the river he loves. The river is able to bear the burden of multiple symbols—on the one hand, "Millions of fishes seemed to be emerging from the deep seas and laughing an earth-shattering laughter,"[81] but on the other, the river's "course was as straight as the fine parting of the thick dark cascading hair or a beautiful princess."[82]

It is perhaps because of this polysemic nature of rivers and waterways that, as I discussed near the start of this chapter, rivers can serve as both symbols of the lost home and barriers preventing one's return. In the scenes from *Komal Gandhar* that are set on the banks of the river, for example, the blissful joy of the east Bengali actors at seeing the Padma again is unalloyed. One of the characters makes his way to the silted-up island in the middle of the river and touches his forehead with the water, in a familiar gesture of obeisance. He is, in fact, worshipping the Mother river with a passion that is juxtaposed with, but crucially not hampered by, Bhrigu and Anasuya's pain as they stand by the yawning gulf of the same river between them and their lost homes.

Reminiscent of the ways in which my oral history narrators are able to infuse particular meanings of homeliness on apparently useless objects, these examples show how they are able to invest multiple narratives of meaning on public and private waterways in the shape of rivers, canals and wells. Indeed, in a final anti-nationalist gesture, these narrators are often able to reconstruct rivers as linking across nations. Discursively undermining the complex negotiations of water-sharing and the attempt at control that they represent, these testimonies in fact create a brand new riverscape that transcends state boundaries and symbolizes commonalities across the limits of the nation state. Amrita Pritam, for example, uses the symbol of a river to undo partition and reunite the two nations in a way that transcends any kind of simplistic nationalism:

> you step on your own body
> To span half the river
> While I will tread on my body
> And will receive you more than halfway.[83]

Even more explicitly, in his poem "East-West" Achintya Kumar Sengupta uses a lyrical litany of river names on either side of the Bengal border, that mirrors Pritam's narrative strategy. This lyrical list of river names amounts to a love letter across borders, not least a love of the riverscapes that Ghatak's cinematic lens renders so beautifully, and the love that Purnima, Ananta, Kenneth, and many others display in their testimony: "One water one wave one stream/One cool bottomless deep of prosperous peace."[84]

This trope is physically represented today through the persistent presence of the Meghna jute mill, which continues to exist in West Bengal, though it is named after a river that is now in Bangladesh. Like Sengupta's and Pritam's poetry, this jute mill is a physical manifestation of a discursive attempt to use the interconnectivity of waterways to evoke a pan-national, counter-statist community. This gesture is all the more radical because the relevant states are so often at conflict over the precise ways in which this connected resource of water should be shared.

In one remarkable interview, Jharna M. narrates a series of anecdotes, all of which cumulatively chart a sophisticated and complex trajectory in her relationship with rivers. Near the start of her interview, she invokes her lost home through the riverine metaphor that Ananta, Kenneth, and many others have also done. She discusses visiting her ancestral home on holiday in the days before partition:

> From there, my older sister and I used to go crazy: "Want to go home, want to go home!" We used to get on the train at Sirajganj. After that, our boat used to be at Chalabari or Porabari. We used to go back home on

> the boat, the both of us. At the time, there was such a, I mean, we used to shout and sing songs, sitting up top, playing the gramophone and singing along, all of that. With villages on either side, small river after small river. There was a small river flowing next to our home as well. Along that river, we could come straight from the Jamuna to our home. It was such a happy journey, villages on either side, houses on either side.[85]

When the specter of partition first appears, however, it also manifests itself on this river:

> The first time we got scared, in 1945 we first saw, when they were going along our river, no one ever shouted any slogans. First slogan we heard one day, that was "Allah ho Akbar," they were shouting this slogan. On two or three boats they were going toward the mosque. That's the day we got really scared.[86]

Later in her story, Jharna M. narrates a particular moment of vulnerability, when both the danger of violence and the salvation of cross-community support is also centered on the river:

> One night, suddenly, I am telling this about Narayanganj. The Muslims were about to attack the mill. They had a mosque there. From the evening on, that "Allah ho Akbar, Allah ho Akbar" these shouts. My brother put armed guards along the river, I mean, to protect the mill. . . . In the darkness of the night . . . all the women and children were put on a boat . . . my sister-in-law was going mad with fear, all of the children, nobody was even properly clothed or anything, carrying each other, just as we were, getting on the boat in the darkness, but the two men who were looking after us were both Muslim. They were the ones taking us across to safety.[87]

The river has already acquired multiple, contradictory meanings—from the danger of violence to the promise of salvation. Most remarkably, when Jharna M. finally crosses over to west Bengal, and decides to settle down in Chandannagar, this decision is also presented with reference to the river:

> My sister came and was really impressed by Chandannagar. It was so nice to see the children playing in the fields all the time, all looking so fit and healthy, all playing sports. The roads were beautiful, as was the ghat in the Ganga. Looking at the ghat in the Ganga, your eyes would be full of its beauty. My sister said, if we have to stay anywhere, we will stay in Chandannagar.[88]

Finally, when Jharna M. narrates the story of her return visit to Bangladesh, where the river stands for changes that have happened, changes for the worse, as she sees it, and which mean that her desire for return remains unfulfilled in spite of her visit:

> I didn't like it, I couldn't recognize anything. I couldn't understand anything. Because, where, all the rivers seemed to have dried up somehow, ponds have become clogged up, really dirty. The trees have all been cut down and replaced with health centres . . . I couldn't recognize the house anymore.[89]

In a remarkable series of vignettes, Jharna M. depicts the powerfully polyvalent role played by rivers in her own personal narrative before, during, and after partition. In her account, the river represents her memory of her ancestral home, the violence that forced her to leave, the prospect of deliverance that leaving implied, the ability to settle down and be happy in her new home, and the impossibility of return. Along with so many of my interviewees, and so many of the literary and cinematic texts that I am looking at, Jharna M.'s account demonstrates the sophisticated ways in which people are able to project contradictory meanings onto spaces such as rivers, or, trains, as seen in Chapter 5, and not allow any one of the meanings to undermine the other. Rivers and waterscapes assume and retain all these meanings, to be deployed in narratives as and when necessary, in a manner best suited for the purpose of the anecdote. These multiple meanings, a consequence of narrative agency, shows the fatal flaw in Radcliffe's approach—seeing rivers through statist eyes as material resources to be controlled would never have been an adequate model to account for myriad different meanings that waterscapes have for people. One very important way in which narrative agency can be detected in testimonies of partition is through the complex affective attachment that people can have for the waterscapes of their memory, the waterscapes of their present, and the physical and metaphorical links between the two.

7

"The Cause"

Working through the Memories of Partition

Anyone who has done oral history research will remember moments when the way a participant responds to a question makes the researcher readdress one or other of the unquestioned assumptions that structure their entire approach to their work. Such a moment happened to me when I was interviewing Bashir in Glasgow. Perhaps as a result of reading books such as *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and *Train to Pakistan* (1956), where partition is mostly presented as an event that imposes itself on the lives of ordinary people, perhaps as a result of my own post-partition generational identity and my consequent perception of partition as something that I heard about rather than lived through, one of the questions that I often put to my interviewees was, "Do you remember when you first heard about partition, that partition was happening?" Bashir's answer made me realize that the way I had been framing my questions was based on my unquestioned assumption that partition was experienced by people at the time as a top-down process—something imposed upon them which they had to negotiate:

> Yes, well, I was involved in the Pakistan movement as a student in my college I was the student of the Guru Nanak Khalsa College in Gujranwalla—that was the only college at that time in Gujranwalla. So naturally, it was seven miles from my village. I used to go there by cycle . . . I was an active member of the Muslim Students' Federation. We went around and you know at that time nobody knew the Muslim League, nobody knew what the concept of Pakistan was. And so it was the students who started going out to the public, the villages, the towns, everywhere, and explain to them, and bring them close to the Muslim League. I, myself, I was kind of a supporter of Congress Party. It was in the second year when I was, a friend of mine who had also studied with

> me in the high school, he one day came up but he convinced me—"this is it, we know not how we will be treated in India as a minority." So he explained the concept, and I then turned toward the Muslim League.[1]

Bashir's eloquent answer and the details he provides shows the level of engagement he and his friends had in the events that were going on at the time. The exact location of the border may have been a legal decision, a result of discussions among judges, lawyers, bureaucrats, and politicians, but that does not mean that the process was necessarily seen by everyone as a top-down one. At various levels, and in various ways, people actively engaged with the events and processes that led to partition. The ways in which people talk about their involvement in partition at the time, and in the ways in which they trace the effects of their own and inherited memories of partition in their work practices, provide examples of narrative agency. For many people, partition was and remains not just a traumatic event they lived through and remember but also a cause in which they actively participated at the time, and whose legacy they interact with on a daily basis today.

R.A.,[2] a community activist who was born many years after partition, remembers it, and the creation of Pakistan as a movement in which his family was deeply involved:

> One thing I would say that . . . he (my father) believed in the cause of partition, and he struggled for Pakistan—he and my grandfather struggled to create Pakistan . . . the moment they entered Pakistan, they were happy, they, the feeling of freedom, was like, he said that it was impossible to describe the feeling of freedom in words. . . . They chose to leave [India] because they believed in the cause. And it was very damaging to the entire family, because my family members were very well off in Ludhiana.[3]

For both Bashir and R.A., then, partition is not something that is imposed top-down, but a cause to be embraced, fought for, and achieved by them and their family members. Both Bashir and R.A. are social and political activists in the present, a fact which they explicitly trace back to this legacy of struggle. On the other side of the debate, Rami recollects his father's role, as he saw it, in attempting to prevent partition:

> That's when he got very disillusioned with the British police, British authorities, that their intentions were not very good. They are coming to do something bad to our country. Because they were encouraging people to demand countries on the base of religion. And he was a visionary, and he could foretell the consequences of religious disharmony. And he resigned. . . . My father warned, he tried, he became President of

> minorities—Hindus and Sikhs, who were very small number but were very concerned. He pleaded with Muslim leaders . . . but people didn't understand his vision, people thought by using religion card, it will be a panacea and then he said no, it will be very dangerous card, it will not bring peace to the subcontinent. And one fine morning, because he was very much against the partition on basis of religion . . . the fanatics saw him, at the time they were all very angry . . . so they killed him there.[4]

Rami's father's death, in this narrative, signals the defeat of the struggle against partition in a manner that is also seen in Bharati's testimony about her grandfather:

> He went to prison many times, when Pakistan, so Khulna was not in Pakistan at first. When Khulna went to Pakistan, whenever two people met on the street, they would all say, "If Nagen Sen was alive today, then Khulna could not have gone to Pakistan." He had only just died . . . a few months before. "If Nagen Sen was alive today, then Khulna could not have gone to Pakistan." I mean, that's how much influence he had.[5]

Bharati's faith in her grandfather's influence over events is mirrored by Harbakhsh Grewal's family memories of his uncle:

> My dad's cousin, B.S. Grewal. Now B.S. Grewal was also immediate family—his house was next to our house in the village. He had a very long career in the Indian Civil Service. And one of his early posts was during partition. I think he was a District Commissioner or Assistant District Commissioner. And I think it might be Ambala. . . . In Ambala district, allegedly, according to what my Dad said, under my uncle, B.S. Grewal, it was a safe place for Muslims, and where there was very little or no slaughter.[6]

In fact, Harbakhsh Grewal's uncle wasn't the only member of his family who was able to exert their influence in a positive direction during partition. In a story that has become talismanic for their entire family, Harbakhsh and his mother Amarjit[7] narrate their own inherited memories of his father's, and her husband's, actions to save a Muslim family. In Amarjit's words,

> I knew that when the people were, those were sort of doing the wrong things, they were attacking the Muslims, he was, our family was, reinstated, and they both my husband and my father-in-law, they protected those people and somehow—they knew that they can't live in the village, because they can't be protected all the time. They found time in the nights to escort them out of the village, so that safely they move

on, because they had to go. In that movement, my husband took part, he took part.[8]

Harbakhsh Grewal gives some more detail to the memory his entire family hold of this most important event:

> There was a woman in particular, a woman and her young kids, and Granddad and Dad—they escorted them in the middle of the night, and they had to be armed. They had to get their guns and swords, whatever. And escort them out of the village, to take them somewhere, where they would hopefully be safe, from where they could then get a train and get over the border. And Dad said, "If anyone stopped us, we would have to bluff it out." And if someone said, "What are you doing with these women, these Muslims?" He would have to lie to them and say, "Oh don't worry, we are taking care of them" as if to say, "We're going to kill them, don't worry." But in actual fact what he was trying to do was to get them to a safe place.[9]

While Rami, Bharati, and Harbakhsh Grewal are all understandably proud of their family's sphere of influence, it is not surprising that for both Rami and Bharati, in particular, the cause that their families espoused is presented as the losing one—after all, Rami's father and Bharati's grandfather campaigned against partition and therefore lost, and in both cases, Rami and Bharati present their death as emblematic of this defeat. What is also interesting, however, is that in the process, partition is presented not as a political issue that was only engaged with at the level of high politics but as a cause for everyday, localized activism as well. Rami and Bharati exert narrative agency on behalf of themselves and their families through the way in which they describe the influence that their families had in this political cause.

Bharati's narrative of influence on behalf of her family is echoed by Muqtada,[10] whose family were prominent supporters of the Muslim League in eastern United Provinces. In his account, he, too, paints a picture of a mass movement of which he was a part:

> In '45, '46, I was in Class Eight or Nine—so I was quite old. My father was a big supporter of Pakistan. . . . We took part as well, we took women to the polls so they could vote. We worked in the camps. All day we used to shout the slogans—plan meetings here and there, plan demonstrations here and there, people used to come to watch the demonstrations and listen to the speeches. Then Pakistan was made.[11]

Muqtada deliberately draws a clear causal link between his and his family's efforts and the creation of Pakistan. When asked to elaborate his family's involvement, he traces it to his father:

> [The Muslim League was] very powerful, very powerful, very powerful, very powerful. . . . A movement for Pakistan was very strong. It had entered people's minds. What was good, what was bad—people didn't always understand. They just thought it was all good. They may have suffered afterwards and realized the negatives but at the time it was all for the Muslim League. "We will get Pakistan," "We will get Hindustan," "We will take Pakistan"—these were the slogans. . . . [My father] was the main person. We were all involved because of him. Sons only learn from their father. We were fourteen, fifteen and he was fifty years old.[12]

What is interesting however, that this strong political commitment is not, in Muqtada's narration, translatable into any easy nationalist identity. Even though his entire family campaigned for Pakistan, he was the only one who decided to leave India for a new life in the new country:

> He thought, with such a family, we didn't know anyone, no land, no house, for us in our old age, it is difficult to do all this. We already have a built home here, we have our land here, you can eat and drink from your home, we spend a little, but vegetables and rice come from our land. Things were going along as normal. If we left there, there would be problems for us. We had no particular difficulties here, there were no riots or anything. Thinking of all this, they hesitated.[13]

Muqtada's family's divided loyalties and their ability to campaign for Pakistan while preserving such a deep, localized attachment to their home in India reminds me of Joya Chatterji's argument about post-partition citizenship:

> South Asian citizenship was produced, on the contrary, as a result of complex interactions between a bewildering plethora of actors: above all, by the actions of millions of people who became stranded minorities as a consequence of partition and independence, and whose decisions to flee, stay on, or return to their homes were posited on notions of where they belonged and where they were entitled to protection . . . these actions—small but decisive acts of agency by countless ordinary people firmly convinced of the justice of their claims –posed new questions of the states whose protection they sought, and elicited novel answers from them.[14]

People conceptualized their citizenship in the post-partition world in part through a variety of different professional and political practices. They then used their narrative agency to connect these practices to their experiences of partition, and to use it to formulate their sense of self. These include legal, semi-legal, and illegal economic practices in the immediate aftermath of partition, through new forms of political and social activism, to academic and artistic efforts by both survivors of partition and their descendants. Through analyzing these connections between work practices and the "cause" of partition, I would like to think of partition as a productive event, in the sense that it, in Ananya Jahanara Kabir's words, "demanded new ways of thinking about the self in relation to society, in particular the relationship between the individual's filial and affiliative connections."[15] The demand to have to define oneself anew can be experienced as deeply traumatic because it implies the loss of the certainty of old definitions. Along with the trauma, however, this also opens up spaces where new forms of existence can be imagined and actualized; the changed landscape of post-partition life allows for options that would not have been possible before.

In the immediate aftermath of partition, this productivity took the form of a struggle on the part of the refugees to establish themselves in their new lives. There remains, in the memories of those who made the journey in 1947, a complex dynamic of state assistance and self-rehabilitation, the intricacies of which helps to construct their identities as refugees both in 1947 and in the present. Among my interviewees, there are examples from a wide range of positions—from gratitude to the state for assistance, to a bitter denunciation of the state for its failure to perform its duty, and consequent pride at being able to achieve material stability in the new life in their new homes, in spite of the lack of state assistance.

Basudeb[16] provides a useful example of the complex relationship between state assistance and self-resilience that marked the refugee rehabilitation process in the years immediately after 1947:

> It was said that we divided the country in order to get independence, and those who were uprooted, forced to move county, where they moved to, they would be received with dignity and given a proper rehabilitation. Even after sixty-four years after India's partition, only one-fifth have had government rehabilitation, and the other four-fifths have had practically no rehabilitation. A few got some dole at some time. . . . They cleared out swamps, forests, and claimed land with their own strength, they rehabilitated themselves.[17]

Ananta, too, describes this combination of limited state assistance, combined with a much more important self-rehabilitation, as he describes the way he and his neighbors built their lives in Adi Shoptogram, in West Bengal:

> Dhubulia Camp, in that camp, our Government helped us and took us there. We were there two or three years, our Indian Government helped us so much. We couldn't bring anything, food, or anything. Our food was given from here only, by our Government . . . a huge camp. . . . From there government brought us here, to Adi Shoptogram. We were the first here from Dhubulia to Adi Shoptogram . . . I am the only old one left now. . . . When we came here, it was all forests, you couldn't enter. There were only a few houses of Santals. . . . From that pond, on the other side, tigers would come in pairs to drink water . . . we were the first ones here in Adi Shoptogram. Government saved us, we had tents by the pond. Government did a lottery and wrote us some land. Everyone got whatever was in their fate.[18]

Ananta's account reveals an interesting complexity. One the one hand he is grateful to the Indian State for all its assistance. He explicitly acknowledges the role played by the government, repeatedly signaling his relationship to the government using the first person plural possessive pronoun "our." Ananta reveals his emotional investment in the new nation state in which he has found himself. However, his gratitude does not mean he cannot be implicitly critical of the kind of help he has received. For instance, he describes how "uncivilized" a place Adi Shoptogram was when they arrived. He takes care not to blame the state authorities explicitly, though the implication is clear. Sitting outside his home in what looks today like any other small, semi-rural community with houses and shops and transport links to the city, his descriptions of the place as he first found it has to be read as an indictment of the kinds of places that were deemed suitable for refugee rehabilitation. In the process, then, he implies that the subsequent stability and transformation of Adi Shoptogram into the functional community it is today is due to the work done by the refugees rather than any governmental activities.

It is interesting that Ananta chooses to refer to the houses of the tribal Santals as an index for the unsuitability of Adi Shoptogram as a place to live. This can also be seen in Basudeb's testimony. Basudeb recounts an experience of visiting refugee camps and being told of the unsuitability of the land they had been allotted as part of the refugee rehabilitation scheme:

> They said, "How can we farm that land? It is stony land. Look at these hands, these hands, all blistered. All blistered. Can human beings live there? If we live there, all our children would become like animals. With the tribals and their culture. Mothers and sisters walking around half-naked. Men wearing hardly any clothes. How can we live there? What could we eat?"[19]

It speaks to a latent prejudice on the part of both Ananta and Basudeb that they use the presence of tribal communities to indicate the unacceptable nature of the place they had been offered by the state. For the moment, though, it is important to note that these accounts reinforce Joya Chatterji's observation that refugee rehabilitation sites such as Dandakaranya largely consisted of "barren waste[s] of scrub and forest [which] . . . was regarded as . . . expendable by the state governments."[20] There is a wider story to be told here, of the history of refugee rehabilitation and the ways in which national and local political interests intersected with and affected the nature of the refugee lived experience, but that is beyond the scope of this book. What is important, for the moment, is the ways in which the narrative of self-rehabilitation is used to construct a narratorial subjecthood through these testimonies. As non-tribal Bengalis, both Basudeb and Ananta distinguish themselves from the indigenous tribal population and the landscape which the state authorities considered suitable for them.

For H., on the other hand, whose family moved across the Bengal border a few times before settling in West Bengal, the lack of a fixed refugee identity meant that state assistance was unavailable and, consequently, individual and non-State collective agency becomes all the more important. Perhaps as a result, H. displays a very different attitude to the Santals:

> We didn't lose one thing [when we went to Pakistan to escape the riots] All the brass things, cooking pots and everything, one man, from the other side, the next village, he was a Santal, he took them away and kept it. And when we came back, he brought it all back. . . . He had kept it all in his home.[21]

As an Indian Muslim, H. perhaps identifies to some extent with the marginalization of the tribal communities. If so, we can see his anecdote as an example of forming cross-community links as a coping mechanism to survive the trauma of partition. Elsewhere, H. narrates his grandfather's reliance on neighbors and how, in the process, H.'s testimony helps to demonstrate the collapse of the border between family and non-family, between private and public, that partition entailed. Like other narratives of individual, community, and cross-community solidarity, this points to a complex dynamic between state assistance and individual resilience that marked the refugee experience in the years immediately after partition, and its memory many decades later. In the words of Ravinder Kaur:

> the making of and becoming post-colonial citizen-subjects were linked to the refugees' ability to self-rehabilitate rather than depend on the state for survival and recognition. Self-rehabilitation, here, suggests a governmental technology, pursued by the Indian state, aimed at producing

> self-supporting citizens out of the mass of refugees. . . . An individual's success in setting up homes, businesses and gaining employment, then, became the success of state policies, whereas failure to be self-reliant was an individual failure that the state was not responsible for. One's ability to survive outside of refugee camps and state institutions was linked to one's prospects of becoming relevant and full-fledged citizens of the new nation.[22]

This contradiction in the state's position with regard to refugee rehabilitation is exposed with devastating satire in Ritwik Ghatak's work. For example, the opening scene of *Subarnarekha* (1965) juxtaposes the individual agency of the refugees with what Ghatak sees as their illusory hope in the brand new nation state. The text that provides the preamble to the film refers to the agency of the refugees, coded as self-resilience: "Uprooted people, seeking a place to rest their heads, were forcibly occupying land at the time in the suburbs of Calcutta. The landowners were determined to use force to evict them. Facing this, people were building colonies, building communities."

The film opens on the inauguration ceremony of a school, to cater for the children of these refugee colonies. As Haraprasad says, "Remember, only education can be the backbone of a nation." The ceremony involves the hoisting of a national flag so that when Sita asks Haraprasad why there is so much fighting in their new home, his response is also seen through this nationalist lens: "Oh, it will all pass. There will be a new peaceful environment. You have your brother Iswar, he will fight for his only little sister. We will all fight as well." Ghatak's bitter denunciation of their faith in the nation state is clear when he juxtaposes one of the periodic attacks by the thugs of the landlord on the squatting refugees with Haraprasad's futile instruction to the children: "All of you chant the glory of the nation." The mere existence of the colony, and the people's determination for it to continue existing, however, represents the real alternative to the nation state. The individual and collective agency that drives refugee rehabilitation contrasts with and undermines the nationalist rhetoric of a unified nation state.

Similarly, Raj remembers the refugee camps as an oppressive, exploitative environment:

> But the conditions in the camps were so pathetic that we couldn't live over there. We were supplied with potatoes and onions and the wheat, wheat flour sometime and sometimes rice. By trucks. Once, because everybody used to stand in the queue. So what happened, I never liked to stand in the queue and neither I allowed my parents. Because when we migrated from Karachi, we brought, in olden days there used to be ghee cans, big ones, forty litres or whatever it is. So, this, fried wheat flour, fried one, they brought that and one can of pure ghee—that's it.

> So that in emergency we could roast it, bake it and eat it. So we used to eat that only. . . . So one day when I saw that the potatoes and onions, they were rotting, not edible. And fortunately or unfortunately at that time Dr. Choithram Gidwani, Jairamdas Daulatram and Dr. Valecha—three came to visit the camp. Because they were concerned. So I called them, I say "You see the conditions of the onions and potatoes. Are they worth eating? If they are, please, you first try and then distribute among the . . . no doubt you call us refugees, but we are not refugees, mind it." And they saw it and they immediately, they say, "Yes, we agree" and they told the truck man to go back and bring the fresh one and thereafter they used to get better one. Though I was fifteen years old. But I, what can we say, that rebellious type of mind used to be there but if there was anything wrong happening, I couldn't see, I couldn't tolerate.[23]

This is a particularly interesting anecdote because it places Raj himself and, by extension, the refugees as agents in control and with the ability to change the material conditions of the state-assisted refugee camps. Raj refuses the identity of the refugee, perhaps because he associates it with, to quote Ravinder Kaur, the "archetypal refugee [who] appears as an enigmatic construct—part pitiful, part heroic, though mostly shorn of agency."[24] Raj is careful to make his own agency in his and his family's post-partition rehabilitation very clear. Equally, refugee-status would imply that he was an outsider in India, a category which he vehemently rejects.

Raj's criticism of the camp and the state that is running it is mirrored in Basudeb's account of the camps in Bengal:

> In a huge godown, and in that godown, they put in innumerable refugee families. Each family were allotted a space marked out in chalk, five by seven, or ten by ten. Like this. . . . Everything from recreation, to cooking, eating, children urinating, all in the same space. I can't describe it. . . . I used to start crying. Like this, the refugees went through indescribable, not just suffering and grief, but hellish . . . I don't really have the words to talk about this. That they didn't become inhuman, didn't become animals, that is of course a good thing for our country and our society.[25]

Basudeb's account is in some ways similar to that of Haridas,[26] who continues to live in Dhubulia camp, and, like Basudeb, is immensely critical of the state's role:

> What did we get when we came here? We came here to Dhubulia Camp, here, nowhere else. At the time, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister, announced that those who came from east Bengal to this side, their

> property in east Bengal would be returned to them in west Bengal. Shyamaprashad Mukopadhyay asked for it to be written down in the new Constitution of India. But forget it. . . . So for refugees there is nothing, no law or anything in the Constitution, nothing for them. Tell me, in which country, today sixty-two years have passed, and we still say we live in a camp? We are still refugees today.[27]

Dhubulia was one of the largest and most important refugee camps established in 1947. Before partition, it had been used as an airfield during World War II, and, in the words of Ashok Mitra, was one of "two abandoned United States air bases on which refugee camps mushroomed like atomic clouds."[28] Today, Dhubulia continues to look like a refugee camp, with the houses that have sprung up in place of tents or sheds following the grid of an airfield turned into a camp. It does, however, also have markers of permanent habitation—shops, markets, schools, and other infrastructure of twenty-first-century suburban life in West Bengal. It is a strange place, at once permanent and transient, full of "people residing in between geographies and nationalities—border people with border identities,"[29] to use Devika Chawla's phrase. People have made a home for themselves in Dhubulia, though, as Haridas's testimony suggests, the "refugee-ness" of their identities is still clearly very important.

The differing positions of Haridas and Raj regarding their status as refugees shows both how diverse and how important engagement with one's status as a refugee was for so many people. For Haridas, his identity as a refugee and his life in Dhubulia serves to remind him, and his community of, as they see it, the state's failure to fulfill its responsibility toward them. For Raj, the rejection of the identity of the refugee is equally important in reminding him that he is not an outsider in India, and his subsequent success in life, first in India and later in the United Kingdom, is due to his self-resilience. Raj represents the kind of refugee that Md. Mahbubar Rahman and Willem van Schendel have identified as "optees":

> Although many rued the loss of their ancestral environment, most acknowledged that they had made good: Partition had provided them with career opportunities that would have been hard to come by if India had not been partitioned. They were certainly displaced by Partition but they did not consider themselves ordinary refugees.[30]

Rahman and van Schendel's argument can be seen in the way Raj elaborates on his rejection of the mantle of the refugee:

> When we were in Ullas Nagar [camp] we were in a very bad conditions, we were put. We were not used to that, those kind of conditions, the way we were. They started issuing refugee certificates. I opposed, I didn't

> accept. I say I am not refugee. I have just come from my birthplace to another land, it's my own land. Bharat. Why you people are calling us refugees? We have not taken refuge with you.[31]

One of the ways in which these refugee camps transformed the life and work practices of many of my participants is that it allowed them to find both paid and unpaid jobs in refugee rehabilitation. Sushanto recollects his work helping the thousands of refugees arriving at Sealdah station in Kolkata:

> We had to go to Sealdah station in the morning. The refugees who used to come, their, had a border slip. We used to see the border slip and enlist their names. Then they were kept. Then the Assistant Rehabilitation Officer used to come, he used to be given the list, he entered them in and Sealdah station has a shed, next to Platform 5, they used to be there. They were given temporary dole, money to eat.[32]

Rafique recounts his experiences as a volunteer in refugee camps in Lahore:

> Refugee camps were made inside Lahore. I, as a student, volunteer student, I started working in these camps. Especially, it was a horrible—trains were coming covered in blood, people slaughtered, injured, tents were put up, some arrangements for food, doctors were there, a very strange five or six months. The whole city would make rice and chapatis and send to the camps. These camps remained for two years but I worked there as a volunteer for six months.[33]

As a medical student at the time, Shakti,[34] remembers helping both in refugee camps and during communal violence in Kolkata:

> In Kolkata we were then going around in ambulances, rescuing Hindus from Muslim areas, and rescuing Muslims from Hindu areas—like this. It was like there were two halves of Kolkata—a Hindu area on one side, and a Muslim area on the other. . . . We used to go to refugee camps and give cholera injections, that was our job. We were never attacked, we used to avoid the areas of trouble. . . . Our work was mainly in the camps, distributing medicine, cholera injections. When many people are living together, sanitary conditions often get dangerous so we needed to give cholera injections.[35]

Amarjit remembers how her husband, as a young student, became gravely ill through his work during partition: "He got typhoid because of partition. There were refugee camps in Ludhiana, and the collegiate students were asked to do voluntary service, and from there he got it."[36]

Often refugee rehabilitation work could itself take the form of rehabilitation as refugees were themselves employed in this area. Jharna M. recounts how her father was given a job in refugee rehabilitation:

> When we came here, there was a relief rehabilitation officer, that gentleman said to my father—you are not going to do anything now, you've brought your children here to this country, you are going to find it difficult. Why don't you do a job? He told my father. He gave my father a job. He got it done—in Writers', there was Sukumar Sengupta—he got him to help and my father was given a job in the rehabilitation department.[37]

Reading partition not just as an event signifying trauma and loss but also as an event that demanded the creation of new employment practices and professional identities is a theme that runs through many of my interviews. Raj's account of his establishment of informal banking practices while still at school is a perfect example:

> My father had a fall while fetching water from a well. . . . So he was bedridden for about two years, two, three years. And during that time, in the morning I used to go to the school. Studied at convent. And then in the afternoon I used to do the business. My business was banking. . . . So what I used to do . . . it is called chillar, means retail banking. Means the hawkers and the footpath dwellers who are there, the vendors, they need everyday stock, fresh stock—vegetables, coconuts, and clothes even and other fancy goods. And there used to be a market. In that market, I used to give them five rupees, ten rupees, not more than ten like that to each one. And I used to collect everyday, as per agreement, four annas, eight annas, I used to take at that time, the interest rate was about 20 percent. . . . So that was the chillar. That was what I used to support myself and the fees, and the rationing of the house and the rent of the house, everything.[38]

The ability to make money, which can then be used to achieve stability in the precarious post-partition world, represents one of the most powerful examples of narrative agency across my interviews. Raj continues to outline the semi-legal and illegal activities that he resorted to, in order to survive:

> We might have done wrong things. Wrong things mean illegal things. That was the necessity of the time. . . . We didn't steal. We just become, what you call, cleverer than the law. . . . Hardship was also there, but these things were also there. . . . When I was a student, somebody gave me a mold of two annas, at that time annas were there still. I used to make at home two annas. And pocket money used to come from that,

> not only for me, for my friends also, own money . . . . This is anti-law, illegal but that was the necessity of the time . . . Not only that, in local trains, there used to be at that time olden days . . . punch ticket. So if you with a hammer de-punch it and change the date, you can re-punch it, right? We used to collect those tickets from the TC's, ticket-collectors, and bribe him.[39]

Suhas relates his decision to start a business to the enforced migration of partition in a similar way:

> After we came here, after partition, one thing is definitely true, financially, we, our family, has slowly done very well. That is quite normal too. It didn't take us more than four or five years to get over the poverty. And from then we had this thing in our minds, money, a sense of poverty had come to us in such a way, that we felt we had to stop studying, and do business. And earn a lot of money. And then I started business. . . . And gradually, today, we have improved a lot.[40]

Suhas's testimony here is interesting partly in its divergence from other established family narratives. Suhas is my great-uncle, and his claim that the family did not take more than four or five years to rebuild their fortune has been challenged by all the other interviews I have conducted with members of my family, and by family stories that have been informally handed down to me. What matters however, is not the factual accuracy or otherwise in this testimony, but the clear suggestion that economic success matters greatly to Suhas, both in and of itself and in terms of his own and his family's response to partition. Like Raj's account, economic resilience becomes for Suhas a marker of their agency in relation to partition. Partition, Suhas is suggesting, made them homeless and deprived them of their wealth, but it could not keep them down for long.

Geeta[41] makes the same point in a way that makes it clear the importance of financial success as a marker of agency on behalf of herself and her community:

> One lady, few years back, one lady tells me, yes, when we were in business, "Yes, you Sindhis, you can make money. You just left your Sindh, came with nothing, and you make. . . ." I said, look, we didn't steal, we didn't take anybody's money. We used our brain and our work, hard work. So, if we steal something then you can say. OK, we are very clever people, we use our brains and work hard.[42]

Zafar provides an example of the pride that many migrants felt at being able to depend on themselves and their own resilience to achieve stability in their new lives:

> There was a Miss Qureshi, she was a lecturer in Islamia College. . . . She asked -me, "What are your plans?" I asked what she meant. "I mean, do you want to work or live off charity only?" So I got very angry. Why would I beg? I will work. "What work do you want to do?" At this point, whatever I get. She said that there is a doctor who needs a cook. You will get a place to stay, you will get food as well, you just have to cook. So I was quiet. She said, "See, you are having to think. Think till the morning, I will come back then." There was another patient next to me, he started talking to me, he was from Delhi as well. He said, "Brother, just say yes." I said, how can I just say yes, Man, I don't even know the difference between salt and chili. What is salt, what is not enough, what is too much—they will kick me out in a day. He said, "Don't worry, I am lying down here, I will teach you to cook." I said, but you are lying here, I will be cooking there, can I bring the whole household here for you? "No, I can teach you lying here, you just say yes." So I did. She came back so I said yes. So she introduced me to the doctor. . . . They gave me money to go shopping and the first dish they wanted was Arvi Ghosht. . . . He [the patient] asked me to bring all the spices in a bag and a plate. He showed me all the spices, and showed me how to chop the onions like this, do things like this and that. . . . They came in the afternoon and asked "Zafar, is food ready?" I said "Yes" so I served him. . . . And he really liked the food, [he] said, "Friend, you should always make this." I worked for him some two or three months.[43]

While partition is commonly associated much more with loss and homelessness, it is also true that it sometimes provided opportunities that would otherwise not have arisen. Samar links the success of his career to the changes to his life that partition enforced:

> Sometimes I think if partition hadn't happened, would I have had a better living, or would I have had more enjoyment out of life? I don't think so because in Khulna city, let's say I had an education, I would have gone to college in Khulna and then perhaps I would have taught in the college but from there I am not sure what more I could have done. I don't think so. Sometimes I feel that if I had remained in Khulna, perhaps my ambition would have been less. I would have been happy with what I had had there. All my experience—working in many places, traveling to many places, perhaps I wouldn't have had all that, sometimes I feel that.[44]

Samar's attribution to partition the cause of increased opportunities is certainly not unique. In his memoirs, *The Race of My Life* (2013), Indian athlete, Milkha Singh makes the connection between his sporting prowess and his experience of partition. In the violence that snatched most of his family from him, the boy Milkha recalls his father's last words to him:

> As he fell, Father screamed "Bhaag Milkha, bhaag," . . . With my father's warning "Bhaag Milkha, bhaag" running though my head I fled for my life, sometimes running, sometimes walking all the way to Kot Addu.[45]

Years later, when he is at the starting line for the selection races for India's Olympic team, he remembers his feelings as directly linked to this childhood moment of trauma:

> In that moment, all the hardships I had ever faced in the past flashed before my eyes. This was the catharsis I had needed. In that moment I swore to myself I would not let anyone (or anything) come in the way of my *future* [original emphasis]. I focused all my energies on running fast.[46]

Given the overwhelming national, communal, familial, and individual tragedy that partition undoubtedly is, ascribing positive or productive characteristics to it remains a difficult task even today. We can see this difficulty in action in the cinematic adaptation of Milkha Singh's memoirs, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's *Bhaag, Milkha Bhaag* (2013). Even though, as we can see in his Olympic selection narrative, Milkha Singh uses his autobiography to explicitly link his achievements in athletics to that command from his dying father to flee, in the film version, partition is reimagined in a much more normative way, as a source of pain and loss. Perhaps Milkha Singh's most iconic moment as an athlete was when he lost the chance for a medal in the 1964 Rome Olympics because, in his own words, he "decided to slow down in case I collapsed."[47] In the cinematic version of this scene, however, Milkha Singh loses the race because he is haunted by the specter of the horseman who killed his father. Far from partition and its trauma driving him on to further success, it is causally linked to further loss—the loss of the father in 1947 linked to the loss of the medal in 1964 in a way that elides his narrative agency from the telling of his own life.

In reality, as was the case for Milkha Singh, partition was also experienced and remembered as an opportunity by many of my interviewees. All the gender violence of partition notwithstanding, many of my female participants have also stated that it was partition which allowed them to explore the possibility of a public life in terms of a career, by destabilizing the bonds between the public and the private. Indu provides a good example:

> There was one good thing which happened was that suddenly their womenfolk started working. So the education for women from those countries, those places, which was unknown after I think four, five classes. My father used to tell that look, for us partition has been very good. I said how, he said if the partition didn't happen you would have studied till only fifth class. And then you would have been at home. Or if you wanted to study you would have been in purdah. So here you have studied and you have gone to college and university which was not possible there. So for women, in one way, it was very, you see, kind of new freedom. People knew that if they work and they have four daughters, and they want them to get married, they cannot afford their dowry so they sent them to good colleges, got them a degree, got them a job, only then when they, you know, had some bank balance, got them married. So in one way, it has, you know, effect, it has been very good for women, though they suffered a lot at that time, the older women, the younger women, you know, got this advantage. And now I think there are so many families from Delhi, UP, which I found in colleges they were from first generation, or second generation. Because after this Punjabi effect, that their daughters are going, why don't we send our daughters? You see, it was very liberating from them also. . . . So you see, all these kinds of tragedies have their plus points also.[48]

Indu's experience is matched by Bharati's experience of being a refugee in West Bengal:

> First [mother] learned sewing. She used to make dolls. Then I learned. We used to do it in our house . . . in the veranda outside. They used to bring all the designs and equipment to us, the clothes, the needle and thread. And the teachers used to take it away, sell it and then bring the money to us. But at first [mother] would not allow me to do it at all, don't you know what kind of a house you are from, that you will earn money by sewing? But everyone was doing it, and I had learned it, so of course I wanted to do it. So I insisted—if you don't want the money, leave it to one side, but I will do it. The teachers came to try to persuade her: "See, Auntie, she worked so hard to learn", and I have a certificate from there, I passed in second division. "How much work will you be able to give her in the house? She will forget everything she has learned. Let her work for money, everyone is doing it, women from the influential families in the area were all doing it". So I started, I used to get money every month. But can the money ever be kept aside? When there isn't enough to eat, can the money be left? While doing that, I got married, moved to Assam, and then came back almost a year later. I signed for it and in those days. . . . I managed to save up eight hundred rupees. In those days

was that a small amount of money? And we didn't have enough to eat in those days.[49]

Both Bharati and Indu highlight the importance female labor power suddenly had for a family that had lost everything and needed to reestablish itself from scratch. Suddenly, the traditional taboos against women working had to be abandoned as the woman comes to be seen as a potential source of income. Ritwik Ghatak dramatizes this trope of the new working woman from a refugee family through the figure of Nita in his 1960 film *Meghe Dhaka Tara*. Nita's value as a human being has, through the ravages of partition, changed from the stereotypically female ones of housework and childbirth to the more urgent need of making ends meet. In the process, she moves from job to job, taking private tuition classes and working in an office, as her whole family comes to rely on and then exploit her labor. Her final, anguish-filled but deeply and fundamentally assertive cry of "I want to live" represents both the challenges and the opportunities posed by partition and the social changes it wreaks. Sipra echoes this same combination of challenge and opportunity when she links her access to higher education and a career to her family's partition experience:

If partition hadn't happened, then I think, higher education may have only been limited to the rich. Human beings claim their rights through their struggle. . . . Ordinary people, ordinary women, could come out [of the house] so rapidly. . . . My grandmother got married when she was thirteen, my mother got married when she was seventeen. Grandmother probably did not go to school, or even if she did, it was only in the very young classes. My mother studied to class nine, or class ten. I was born when my mother was nineteen. But the big gap, the big jump that happened, I think partition had a role to play there, if it hadn't happened, I think it would have taken much longer. But as true as that is, it is also true that the pain of partition, but I think of myself to be very lucky that I had the chance to study.[50]

Sipra's education and the material success it has led to allows her to begin to make up for some of the losses that her family suffered from, as a result of partition:

My father, before my father passed away, we bought a house. We bought the house we used to rent. I feel very good that before my father died, he used to sit in his easy chair on the balcony and say, "I have got another home now, I didn't have one before. We were refugees, and now we have our own place again. No one will be able to make us leave."[51]

Sipra's sense of achievement at being able to own property again is matched by Shefali's[52] account of building their new home. This home may not be able to replace the old home that is now lost, but it does signal a sense of stability that can be interpreted as an example of narrative agency:

> Even here, there was so much water, here, all the way up to here, when we made our house. . . . There were no roads, no lights. . . . We had to bring in truck after truck of soil in order to build the house. There was water on this side and on that side as well. Water everywhere. No streetlights here, or anything. We had so much energy, didn't feel any pain or anything. . . . There were no other houses here.[53]

Kamal G. is another of many of my participants who place great emphasis on the importance of house-building as a way to stave off the uncertainties of transience that partition induced:

> We shifted a few times. Till '61, we were in Lodhi Colony. In '61 we shifted to Arjun Nagar. We lived in Arjun Nagar for fifteen years. Then the DDNA did the demolishing, and our house was demolished. Then we shifted to this place. Here we built a house for the second time in '81. It was a single story house. Then when I retired from service, I demolished it and rebuilt this again. I built it in 2004. . . . In my life, I have seen, I have moved to a new house every twenty, twenty-two years.[54]

The financial aspirations of Raj and Suhas, the demands of refugee organizations represented by Basudeb and Haridas, and the desire for home ownership exhibited by Sipra, Shefali, and Kamal G. are all examples of this individual initiative. As such they seem to be reinforcing rather than challenging the narrative of the neoliberal state that considers its citizens to be individual agents, in charge of their own lives and limited only be their aspirations and their ability.

But individualized agency is hardly the only model constructed through these texts. Both in the immediate aftermath of 1947 and in what Vazira Zamindar has called "a long Partition,"[55] there are numerous examples of different models of collective agency. In the anecdote about getting a job as a cook, for instance, Zafar takes care to show how he benefited from the sense of solidarity that was present among refugees. He admits he would not have gotten the job or being able to perform his duties without help from others: "At that time, there was a fellow feeling, an empathy within our hearts for other people. People understood other people's pain." The needs that were being fought for might have been individual ones, but when many individuals are fighting together for similar needs, it is perhaps not surprising that they form alliances in order to carry the struggle on collectively.

Even the most neoliberal and individualist of aspirations, that of home ownership, can be read as a deeply radical, collective form of agency which is, in both oral history and cultural representation, directly linked to partition. Sujit, a one-time activist for the Communist Party of India (Marxist), is one of many of my interviewees to directly link the struggle for refugee rehabilitation with the Communist movement in post-partition West Bengal:

> When they [refugees from east Bengal] came here, after that, it was for somewhere to live. An organization grew up for that. A tremendous refugee movement. That refugee movement was led by my Communist Party. That refugee movement became deep-rooted, all, a major part of the east Bengali people, joined our side. This happened because the government here—the Central Government did not do even 5 percent of what it did in Punjab, for those who came from east Bengal. So, but there was a lot of propaganda here, that those who came would get all the rights and privileges of citizenship, but they got nothing here [from] the Congress government. That anti-Congress movement, especially against the Central Government, allowed us a great opportunity to make inroads.[56]

This trajectory from refugee aspirations for jobs and homes to an organized political movement is dramatized in both *Garm Hava* (1974) and Ritwik Ghatak's first film *Nagarik* (*The Citizen)*, which was completed in 1952 but not released until 1977. Both these films reject individual escapism for a model of collective, politicized, and connected resistance. In *Garm Hava*, the Mirza family decide that they should not escape to Pakistan but remain in their home and fight for their rights. As father and son join the demonstration, the camera zooms out to reveal its size and the movement's strength in numbers, while also visually demonstrating the film's rejection of individualism. *Nagarik* ends on a surprisingly similar note, as the protagonist Ramu performs a similar action. He takes the calendar, with its pastoral, idyllic image, which has sustained his own fantasy for his lost home throughout the film, and rips it in two. Instead of retreating into an alienated fantasy world, Ramu, like the Mirza family, also joins a demonstration. The final shot of the film shows the disembodied feet of the demonstrators as they march to the tune of *The Internationale*. Again, like Salim Mirza and his son, Ramu has got lost in the demonstration, as the individual protagonist is abandoned in favor of a wider, more radical, and more powerful collective.

In a sense this political agency is very different from my focus of narrative agency. Having said that, narrative agency can still be read in the ways in which the political agency is being discursively connected to partition. This is not to say that this form of political agency has no material connection to partition—the political situation in West Bengal in the years after

independence and partition certainly suggests that the rise of radical left-wing politics was not unrelated to partition and its legacies, but partition was only one of many other factors. Narrative agency can be seen in the way in which partition is overdetermined as the sole cause for the rise of political activism, and other, perhaps equally important factors are discursively elided in order to maintain this connection. Political identities in the present can then be traced through this narrative agency back to the rupture that was partition.

This form of narrative agency is most visible in the testimonies of Basudeb and Haridas, and in the ways in which they construct their own identities as refugee activists. Basudeb has been active both in the United Central Refugee Council and in the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPIM while Haridas is a local activist and leader of the Trinamool Congress Party (TMC). At the time of my interviews, the contemporary political landscape of West Bengal had recently changed. Less than a year earlier, the State Assembly Elections had marked the end, after thirty-four years, of the Left Front government and had brought the opposition TMC to power under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee. The intricacies of these political binaries are not relevant, but what is interesting is how for both Basudeb and Haridas, the dynamic of contemporary politics can so easily be mapped onto their experiences as refugees and refugee-rights activists. Here, for example, is Basudeb talking about the refugee occupation of land and defending both the occupation and his party's role in supporting it, in terms that are clearly colored by the recent election campaign:

> Mamata's Government has claimed that the Left Front government are land robbers, don't they? If the refugees, and their occupation of the land, if the Leftists had not been behind them, the refugees would never have been able to take the land away from the ruling landlords and keep hold of it. . . . Of the refugees who were provided land by the government schemes, five times as many had to occupy and claim land on their own, establish colonies, and rehabilitate themselves, give them somewhere to rest their head, this has to be remembered.[57]

Haridas, on the other hand, paints a very different picture, where the lack of state support for refugees, as he sees it, is also mapped onto the divisions between the CPIM and the TMC:

> Through our refugee organisation, we put pressure and the current Government changed the dole amount from 400 rupees to 1000 rupees per person. And six kilos of rice, eight kilos of flour, one and a half kilo of lentils, every month. This is our refugee life. . . . Mamata Banerjee listened to us with sympathy. . . . We had the same demand from the last government, but the last government did not listen. They only had

> one concern, to maintain their cadre. Their relatives, their family, people close to them got jobs, but ordinary people, outside their parties, the poor people, they did not consider them at all. They never did anything for them. . . . Mamata Banerjee has said she will try to get us jobs.[58]

If Haridas's criticism of the erstwhile Left Front government is based on its failure to help the refugee populations, then Sunil's[59] criticism and consequent support of the TMC is caused by the exact opposite:

> At the time, the whole thing, those who were in opposition at the time [Left Front] what they wanted was that all the refugees would come and live together in Kolkata. If they lived separately then they wouldn't have been able to, we had the first elections in '52, universal franchise, they wanted to get that vote, that was their political motive.[60]

Mira's account mirrors this sense of resentment at what she sees as unfair privileges being given to the erstwhile refugee population:

> For thirty-four years, we are declining and they are prospering. What oppression, you can't imagine. In Kolkata town, I can say. . . . In Bashirhat we had so much land, so much, my father, uncles, all of our family. All that land was occupied, and taken from us. In the end, after my father died, all my brothers had to sell it off to Jyoti Babu's[61] followers, at whatever price they named. Because we have no place there, we knew the land would be occupied, so we had to get out. That's the thing—when we have given you so much because you came from East Pakistan, then you should have some sort of a feeling toward us as well.[62]

Basudeb, Haridas, Mira, and Sunil are all able to link, their experiences of partition in 1947 with their opinions about contemporary politics in the twenty-first century. Whatever the issue under discussion, my participants are able to discuss it and articulate their position relative to it through the lens of partition. In the process, they are able to construct their political identities in terms of their relation to partition.

Partition is most obviously productive in the sense that it helps to produce new forms of identities—political identities such as the ones just outlined, national identities of "Indian" and "Pakistani," or even pan-national identities, as Nida's[63] testimony suggests:

> As a child we just took it for granted that we were from both India and Pakistan. But it wasn't something that got spoken about, the partition itself. It wasn't until I got to university that I started to make the links between what happened during partition and where our family was, had

> ended up . . . my South Asian identity is so important to me now. I live in Pakistan and work in India.[64]

Repeatedly in her conversations with me, Nida mentioned how important her south Asian identity was for her, and how much she valued being able to cross that border in both directions. Like many other families, Nida's family is split across the border though, at least for her, this seems to be more liberating than a source of pain or loss. Having lived and worked in Lahore and Delhi, she speaks of the ways in which she now feels comfortable in both places and how important that is for her—both personally and professionally as an academic sociologist who works in both India and Pakistan.

Nida's articulation and exploration of her identity, and its relationship to partition is reminiscent of that of another of my interviewees—Madhu, who takes great care to explain the changing national, religious, political identities as a result of partition and what she sees as the growing desecularization of India since the 1990s.

> When I was growing up in Calcutta and Bombay, I never felt as though I had been deprived of some, you know. Calcutta was my city, Bombay was my city. . . . But then we were all Indians, you know, in a very strange sense after partition. I think it was that decision to be a Republic, to be Indian, to not be divided by state, by religion, by caste. . . . But today I find that everyone is going to be that my state, my this thing, and then one suddenly feels—and where do we go back? . . . [My father] had a deep sense of revulsion against what people did in the name of religion. It was a quiet kind of thing. I think that explains why all three of us became Communists and nobody joined the RSS.[65]

Madhu's linking of her political identity to her family's partition experience is mirrored by Mal,[66] even though he comes from a very different class background from Madhu. Sitting on a charpoy outside Mal's house in rural Punjab seemed at the time like a very different experience from sitting in Madhu's mother's middle-class living room in Delhi. Sitting close to the river which K.S. described as clogged up with bodies, partition somehow seemed closer than it feels in the middle-class urban environment of Delhi, Calcutta, or Lahore. Under the circumstances, the similarity between Madhu and Mal's testimony, and the connection both of them make between their memories of 1947, and their political identities in the present is remarkable:

> It was what I saw that day that made me decide I want to be a Communist. I realized that the problem at the heart of it all was religious violence, and the only thing to do was to become a revolutionary—a true Communist. I couldn't stop the violence, but after seeing it, I changed.[67]

Rama[68] remembers her brother joining the Communist Party under similar circumstances in Kolkata:

> I was about twelve or thirteen, *dada* was about eighteen or nineteen. Pannalal Dasgupta was setting up the party, the CPI [Communist Party of India]. There were lots of very good boys, they all started a peace movement, they called the Muslims, and all the boys marched together for peace—many boys from about eighteen, nineteen, to about twenty-five years old. They stopped everything through this peace march. After that, in our Belgachiya, there was never any trouble.[69]

For all of these people, then, partition leads to their politicization in the form of collective activism. This can also be seen in the post-partition south Asian diaspora, as Trishna proves. Like Nida, Madhu, and Mal, the loss experienced by Trishna's family seems to be, in in the case of her diasporic life in Glasgow, responsible not for further sectarianism but for an active, assertive, particularly female agency that seeks to reestablish these lost connections:

> I think actually it [memories of trauma] strengthened it because equally in Glasgow at that time there was lots of Muslim families that came as well and they obviously, a lot of them, although nobody spoke about it, but when I think back now obviously these people came from the same kind of areas and things like that, and for them maybe somebody was over here and they came but there was actually quite a lot of unity amongst these people, you know, they didn't, because we had neighbors who were Muslim . . . and in the early days when we were growing up in the 1950s there wasn't, there was only a handful of people, right, but by the early sixties, mid-sixties a lot more families started coming in and although it was still, it was still quite early, ten-fifteen years since the partition so these families that were coming from the Muslim communities would obviously still have those kind of you know thoughts and had been through that process but when they came over here people just picked up, to me, when I think about it now, it was like people picked up their relationships where they'd left off—so before Pakistan was created Muslims and Sikhs and Hindus lived together. When they came over here they picked that up and started doing the same. Because we had, you know, neighbors and people that were my Mum's friends were Muslim women and they were like sisters. They would come to our house and we would go to their houses. And the women supported each other in the way that if you didn't have a sewing machine, somebody started sewing. So they knew they were helping her by giving them you know their sewing or their needlework to get done.[70]

Both Trishna and R.A. explicitly link their social activism—they are both community activists—to their inherited memories of partition and the drive they have acquired from their families to construct new community links to replace the ones that were lost in 1947.

Partition has also influenced the production of scholarly work by academics who have made it their focus for intense personal reasons. I began this book by highlighting my own and my family's partition story, and various members of my family have made multiple appearances throughout this book. In this I am not alone—academics working on partition from a wide variety of different disciplinary backgrounds have chosen to foreground their personal position with respect to their scholarly work.

Urvashi Butalia, in her pioneering oral history of partition, begins with her own story:

> like many Punjabis of my generation, I am from a family of Partition refugees. Memories of Partition, the horror and brutality of the time, the harkening back to an—often mythical—past where Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs lived together in relative peace and harmony, have formed the staple of stories I have lived with.[71]

If Butalia's Ranamama appears as a major figure in her work, the same may be said for Devika Chawla's father whose presence is palpable through her account of her ethnographic work in Delhi:

> For the subjects of *Home, Uprooted*, for Papa, for me, home is not *here*, it will always be *someplace else*—a border that cannot be crossed as easily as the one between Ohio and West Virginia, over a toll bridge [original emphasis]. Home is a field of memories. Of stories told and those I tell here. Home is an attempt to write a loss of landscapes. Consider these words one such attempt. Here.[72]

Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar starts from a very similar point of view:

> Since I belong to a divided family, I grew up with Partition in ways that have unavoidably shaped this historical fieldwork; it shaped my entry into the worlds of other divided families, and placed me in an emotional and political landscape which may have constrained me to "listen" to and struggle with that "drone of silence" that kept surfacing in my interviews.[73]

Even when the perspective is not an oral history one, the author and his or her personal relationship to partition is often foregrounded. Ananya Jahanara Kabir takes pains to emphasize that her work is not her family's stories, but in

doing so, she allows them entry into her book, and clarifies her own position in relation to her field of study:

> If my father's generation have maintained strong kinship bonds in spite of Partition, periods of scarce person-to-person contact, and potentially antagonistic citizenships, this was possible because they chose to refrain from discussing certain things and to celebrate others. As an inheritor of that scattered yet fascinating history, I am, however, of a generation that wants to know more and on my own terms.[74]

Bhaskar Sarkar makes a similar move in his account of cinematic representation of partition:

> I had not lived in a united Bengal or through the upheaval, yet my acquired knowledge of the event and its repercussions—what may be called my postmemory of Partition—was strong enough to produce, at the slightest provocation, a range of confusing emotions. While aware of my obligations to the truth claims of history, I cannot claim for this book any level of objectivity, narrowly defined, that purports to elude or sidestep this affective terrain: what follows is, of necessity, an *interested* account, one that engages the emotional and the expressive as constitutive of the experience under scrutiny. [original emphasis][75]

Yasmin Khan's look at official records and archives of partition is similarly inflected by her personal and familial story:

> Both my grandfathers were bit-players in the story of Partition as it unfolded in the subcontinent and both had their own lives profoundly shaped by the ending of the British empire. . . . Their walk on parts in the Partition story . . . and the stories that grew up around them, encouraged my interest in history, and provoked my curiosity about the origins of modern India and Pakistan—two states which are supposedly so different and yet have such recently intertwined roots.[76]

In her interview with me, Yasmin comments further on her family's partition story and the effect it has had on her academic work:

> I am a third-generation partition person and it was never directly connected to my life but I was still intrigued by the idea of movement in the family, the fact that none of my grandparents had been born in the UK. . . . For me, the idea of the British Empire was always of one connected with movement and migration and displacement and so it was always there in the back of my mind and my Mum was a very

> good person at telling family history and family stories . . . so a lot of it was very much received information, passed on by people, almost like Chinese whispers, so that I think that's what contributed to my interest because I then wanted to get back to the sources, get back to the place and actually discover these things for myself because I felt like I had a lot of unreliable but intriguing stories given to me. . . . Psychologically it is not very difficult to understand, it was a refilling in of a part of myself which wasn't there as a child.[77]

I do not know if the scholarship associated with any other single historical event has been as comprehensively intertwined with the personal and familial memories of the scholars concerned. For all of us, partition is at once both a deeply professional and a deeply personal interest. As Yasmin suggests, however, this personal aspect is not necessarily simplistically emotional. Rather, the personal relationship to partition can be an affective and emotional connection as well as an intellectual one. Subha,[78] who has used her family's stories as a basis for her filmmaking activities, reflects this as well:

> My motivation to make this film was not, you know, [to] tell my personal story, but in the process of doing research and when I visited the borderland and talked to the people and when I the first time saw the other side up close, okay, then all those stories came back to me, they kind of welled up in me, there was no escaping from them. So that way. But my motivation in making the film was, yeah, not any sense of trauma or anything. The motivation was very academic because fifty years of Indian independence. *Time* magazine carried a lot of interesting articles, interesting stories. *Outlook* also carried some interesting stories so I was reading those stories and I got interested so that from that, and plus the personal link was also there. From that I thought, that was a interesting material to be filmed.[79]

Partition scholarship can, I think, be seen as analogous to the ways in which the first-generation survivors defined their professional and political identities in relation to their partition experience. In both cases, partition is being read in different ways, to suit different needs, and, in the process, new narratives of meaning around partition are being constructed in ways that reveal complex and sophisticated layers of narrative agency that mark the relationship between those who lived through partition and those who grew up hearing stories of partition, and the ways in which their personal and professional lives were redefined as a result. It is interesting to note, for example, how many academics (including this one) have been careful to record how their interpretations of partition and the meanings they ascribe to it would not be shared by members of their family who have, in many cases, bestowed

the stories which have inspired the work in the first place. Like the models of citizenship, political activism, and economic practices that partition produced in the years immediately after 1947, the vast body of academic scholarship and cultural production can and should be seen as material evidence of narrative agency, in and through which the authors are ascribing different meanings to partition, and thus defining and redefining their own relationship to this inheritance. The act of constructing a home through one's academic monograph, as Devika Chawla does, or trying to fill a hole in oneself through one's scholarship, as Yasmin Khan does, is, then, similar to so much of the oral history testimony of survivors who, as I have discussed in these pages, use their narrative agency to take control of their memories and the significances these memories have in their lives. Whether narrating our memories to an interviewer with a microphone or writing a novel, conducting academic research, or making a film—we are all in various ways putting our memories to work, to better make sense of the stories of the past, our lives in the present, and the complex relationship between the two.

Conclusion

The Vital Importance of the Word

In August 2013, I was on fieldwork in Karachi, Pakistan—collecting oral history testimonies in and around the city. On my first day there, I visited the house of Aziz Fatima Qazi,[1] an eighty-two-year-old woman, who began her testimony with a forthright rejection of anonymity in a manner that demonstrated all too clearly how closely related her voice was to her sense of identity: "No, no, write my name. I don't want to be anonymous!"[2] Words and images that summoned the past were of paramount importance to Aziz Fatima Qazi and her sense of self in the present—she took great and understandable pride in showing me a photograph of herself as a child, sitting on Gandhi's lap. It is thus not surprising that Aziz Fatima Qazi chose to tell an anecdote in which words and the materiality of text assume actual physical power. She narrates the story of her family's escape from Delhi and, in particular, chooses to describe how one of her cousins was able to protect his mother from partition related violence using actual words on a page:

> They walked out and the thing that saved them, because one man tried to grab this girl's hand. He [her cousin] threw, not threw but hit him with his briefcase, and this briefcase had his love letters. So he was carrying that and my aunt, poor thing, who had all her jewelry and everything kept, was all left in the house and she came with a *paan-daan* to Lal Quila where she was given refuge.[3]

For me, part of the poignancy of this story comes from the juxtaposition of the love letters and *paan-daan*, both considered important and valuable enough to carry, with the jewelry, which for all its monetary worth was left behind. Like many of the objects that refugees carry with them on their journey, the value these objects had to their owner has nothing to do with their monetary value. It is impossible to know what made the anonymous cousin choose

the briefcase full of love letters over everything else when the family had to leave their home with an hour's notice. It is impossible to know the precise nature of the relationship he had with these letters, and with the person or people they were from, and who, perhaps, he was leaving behind in Delhi.

It is clear, however, that Aziz Fatima Qazi's testimony helps to subvert hegemonic expectations about what objects mean to their owners. Her interview was full of allusion to objects both lost and preserved—her photograph with Gandhi, her aunt's jewelry, the briefcase full of love letters—and one way in which her testimony can be read is through the ways in which she uses her narrative agency to reevaluate her relationship between these objects of radically diverse material value, and to construct a specific sense of self, in the telling of the stories behind these objects.

One could read the anecdote as a justification of the unnamed cousin's decision to pick up that briefcase—a decision that therefore validates for Aziz Fatima Qazi and for her audience the importance it obviously had for this cousin. The story is, in short, a parable that affords words material power—power that is effective in protecting oneself and one's family from the ravages of partition. The briefcase full of words assumes material force in helping to protect Aziz Fatima Qazi's aunt from partition related violence, in a way that somehow replicates the importance words have in Aziz Fatima Qazi's interview itself. For both Aziz Fatima Qazi and her cousin, words and the ways in which words are wielded helps to undo partition and some of its traumatic effects, both in 1947 and in 2013.

This perhaps explains why I was thinking of the power of words the following day, when I took some time out in between interviews to visit Jinnah's tomb in Karachi. I climbed up the marble stairs into the imposing mausoleum and standing in front of the tomb, I suddenly realized, with a surprise that was unexpectedly visceral, that the various languages that appeared on the tomb itself included Bengali. Of course, with hindsight, it is not at all surprising that Bengali should appear on Jinnah's tomb. When Jinnah died in 1948, the establishment of Bangladesh was still more than two decades away, and the Bengali language was very much a part of the Pakistani nation, at least officially speaking. By 2013, however, Bangladesh had been an independent nation for more than forty years, and Bengali had for many years been seen as a foreign language. Even for an expat Bengali partition scholar like myself, the presence of the Bengali script was shockingly unexpected. The power of words had never been so real for me as it was then, as the achingly familiar script at once reminded me of my own home and highlighted how far away I was. I wondered how many people around me recognized the Bengali script, and what, if anything it meant to them. To me, apart from my personal emotional connections to the language, the material existence of the script serves as a visible reminder of the intricacies of partition, of what happened in 1947, and then how it changed again in 1971. Like the words on Aziz Fatima

Qazi's cousin's now presumably lost love letters, the mere presence of these words serve at once as witness and challenge to the repeated drawings and redrawings of borderlines in the subcontinent.

There are other places where the persistent presence of words helps to challenge partition. In Chapter 1, I have written about the concrete monogram M.S. that is still visible on the mansion that used to belong to Mangal Singh Kot Shera, Gujranwalla, Pakistan. In Chapter 6, I discuss the Meghna Jute Mill in West Bengal, which to this day pays homage to a river that, since 1947, has become part of another nation. Similar traces persist across many places in the subcontinent. Jagmohan Lahore Band in Amritsar implicitly commemorates a distinctively Punjabi syncretic culture, while Karachi Bakery in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad commemorates the founder's place of origin in contemporary Pakistan. In February 2019, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Indian troops in Pulwama, in Jammu and Kashmir, nationalist protestors entered the Bengaluru branch of Karachi Bakery and demanded that the owners cover up their sign so as to demonstrate their patriotism. Sometimes the threat posed by the presence of words become all too literal.

These signs represent the potential of narrative agency and the way in which it allows people to invest particular spaces with particular meanings, thus constructing particular memory narratives of their own. The presence of these bits of text in places where they don't fit, their persistence on the "wrong" side of the border, allows one to imagine a different present—perhaps one in which partition can be undone. The effect of these bits of text is seldom coherent enough to amalgamate into any kind of concrete totalizing narrative, but perhaps it is more poignant and powerful as a result. The incendiary effect these words can sometimes have clearly demonstrate the threat they pose to the nation state.

My plan at this point of the book had been to outline my emotions at finally visiting my ancestral village in what is today Bangladesh, and to describe my own narrative agency at work in the ways in which I imposed meanings onto spaces, and the ways in which I developed emotional relationships with objects and spaces. However, I twice had to cancel my plans to do fieldwork in Bangladesh—because of political unrest and widespread violence between supporters of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her ruling party, the Bangladesh Awami League on the one side, and supporters of Khalida Ziya and her Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The intricacies of this particular conflict lie well beyond the scope of this book, though it is important to note that the 1971 Bangladesh War of Liberation and, consequently, 1947 has a role to play in this conflict as well. In 2014, and then again in 2015, I had planned my trip and booked flights and hotel reservations, only to have to cancel following advice from friends in Bangladesh and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).[4]

This was obviously deeply frustrating, not least because it means this book remains incomplete in one crucial aspect—it features almost no voices from people who identify as Bangladeshi. Personally as well as intellectually, my inability to visit my ancestral village, what I have come to think of as my own point zero—where it all began—is a source of real trauma. I have heard stories of the village and the house, both as it was, and as it has now become, and in the process I have created an imagined version of the village and of the spaces within it that are significant to my family and to me. It remains a source of pain that I have been unable to visit the actual village, to compare it to my imagined version, and to hear the stories of the people who today call it home. This pain is exacerbated by the realization that most of my family members who remember the house as it used to be, have now passed away. I have been able to represent some of their memories in these pages, but when I do go "back" to my own point zero, there isn't anyone left with whom I can compare the space as it is now, with the space as it was when our family left it. My inability to visit Bangladesh serves to remind me of the limitations of the powers of language and of the painful fact that taking control over one's past, one's memories, and therefore of one's identity will not necessarily help overcome the material borders that both limit and police the contemporary nation state and its citizens. Standing in front of the Meghna Jute Mill or Jagmohan Lahore Band reminds me of the millions of people who were and remain forcefully separated from their own points of origin by the statist narratives that insist that they cannot identify with or belong in the spaces that they left behind, and that now belong to another, enemy nation.

Narrative agency may not enable one to cross a border or directly challenge the hegemony of the state. What remains, however, is an unfulfilled demand and an unquenched hope. At multiple points during the research that led to this book, my interviewees would talk about the home that they remembered, and that they would love to revisit, while knowing that this is not possible. When interviewing in Pakistan, I was repeatedly asked about India—what it was like, what the people were like, what life was like. One gentleman in Maan, Gujranwala, was visibly disappointed on learning that although I was Indian, I was not from Punjab and therefore could not be of great help in describing contemporary Indian Punjab. His equally obvious disappointment at my inability to arrange documents for him that would allow him to cross the border and visit India only helped to remind me of my own privilege at crossing the border. The tears of people who would like to see their place of birth but who have been forcibly alienated from it may not be as powerful as the nation state and its borders, but that does not make them any less real, or any less important.

What no border is able to do is to prevent people from using their narrative agency to imagine what life may be like across the border, or, indeed, what life may be like without borders. As Mihir[5] eloquently argued in his interview:

> Our country is one of feeling, there is no geographical limit, there is no armed soldier, no police, there is nothing there. In some places, there are some memories, and in most places, just a feeling—a feeling that I have inherited from my forefathers, a feeling called country. I have no problems with land. . . . When I first left my country, standing in no-man's land, I had a thought—It's like there is a big crack, and on either side of the crack, there are two unfeeling States, which are depriving you in every possible way. It has no meaning. Even so, can they stop me from this space of feeling? They cannot.[6]

The border, however, remains, and, it remains mostly impenetrable. Nowhere is this more evident than at the Wagah-Attari border crossing—a checkpoint apparently designed to allow people to move across borders but where the overwhelming majority of people come to witness a performance of immobility. Much has been written about this border[7] and the ways in which narratives of nationalism are performed through the flag-hoisting and -lowering ceremony that Indian and Pakistani soldiers carry out every day. Like all performances, however, the ways in which the discourse of the border performs nationalism remains ambiguous and polyvalent. The border is effective at controlling movement of peoples, but much less so at controlling meanings and narratives. The ambiguities of meaning that are perhaps inherent in any performance are equally visible in the various ways in which national identities are enacted through the flag ceremony at the border. Words, gestures, actions—things that are said and things that are left unsaid—all assume huge significance in this space where the definitions of nationhood assume the most importance.

The first time I visited the Wagah-Attari border was on August 14, 2013, the sixty-sixth anniversary of Pakistan's independence. I had only just arrived in the country and was still very much finding my feet. On this day, I joined thousands of other visitors in the pouring rain of a Punjabi monsoon's day, waiting to take part in the Independence Day festivities. In one of the most politically sensitive spaces in south Asia, the queues were accompanied by a very high-profile presence of police, paramilitary, and armed forces. A mere year and a half later, a suicide bomber would target this same place, leading to the death of fifty people.

What was interesting for me, as I was queuing in the rain, however, was the different ways in which people engaged with, and subverted the overwhelming rhetoric of nationalism that emanated from all the official performances. At one point in the queue, an anonymous voice called out, "They should have named this country 'Lineistan'—wherever you go, you have to stand in line!" The same voice changed seconds later, however, as a group of soldiers walked by, and a much louder chant of "Long live Pakistan! Long Live Pak Force!" was heard. As soon as the soldiers walked past, another voice called out. "At least

let us through now?" Within the structures of performance lies the ability to undermine its meaning in unexpected if sometimes materially ineffective ways. It is in the apparent insignificance of text—the way words can assume meaning based on irrelevant or coincidental facts, such as where they appear or how long they persist, that make narrative agency at once slippery and tenuous and challenging and destabilizing.

Just over four months later, I was again at the border, but this time on the Indian side. Using the zoom lens of my camera, I was able to see the part of the gallery on the other side where I had sat on my first visit. Until then, I don't think I had ever quite understood the "othering" nature of partition. I had read a lot about partition, and spoken to many people who had lived through it, but I had never felt its inherent bizarreness. Partition is, at its heart, a mechanism for reordering space and, through the border ceremony, both countries enact different meanings that are imposed on space as a result of partition. The positions that I occupied on my two visits were physically separated only by a few hundred yards, if that, but they may as well have been on the other side of the world. For most of the people visiting Wagah-Attari, its significance does not lie in the fact that is a border crossing—they are not able to cross anyway—but rather in the fact that it somehow becomes the limit point of the nation, beyond which they are unable to go, but where their nation can define itself in opposition to its neighbor. This dislocating experience of being able to see the spot I occupied only a few months earlier, but not being able to access it again, is so reminiscent of Bhrigu and Anasuya standing on the banks of the river Padma in *Komal Gandhar* (1961). It is a mark of the extent to which nationalized narratives of history have become normalized that it seems so completely natural to be able to look at a point in space some two hundred yards away and yet to treat it as if it was a completely different, unfamiliar, almost alien world.

The emotional experience of standing at a border, looking over onto the other side, speaks to the ability of the border to determine our access to what was at one time continuous space, but thanks to the regulatory role of the same border is so no longer. Even for someone like myself, who, under the right conditions and in possession of the right paperwork, possesses the privilege of crossing the border, its very existence means it serves to regulate not just how we move through space but what meanings we bring to it in the process. The spaces occupied by the seat I sat on in the Pakistani side of the border and the seat I sat on in the Indian side mean different things in and of themselves, and in relation to each other, thanks to the presence of the intervening border.

There is a memorial to partition at the Wagah-Attari border. Funded by the Folklore Research Academy of Chandigarh, the memorial was inaugurated in 1996 by veteran Communist leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet. It is a little strange that this memorial is so little known—I have not seen it mentioned in any academic or popular account of the border. Why not? It is almost

impossible to give a definitive answer, though it is interesting that, like most memorials, it says as much as it elides. In perhaps the most remarkable example of the incendiary danger of particular words in particular spaces, this memorial to partition does not actually use the word "partition." The clearly carefully chosen text on the memorial reads: "Dedicated to 10 Lakh Punjabis Who Died Unsung in 1947." If one did not know what caused so many people to die, there is nothing on the memorial to explain.

The memorial's avoidance of the word "partition" is perhaps not unrelated to its wider narrative which, according to the website of the Folklore Research Academy, is as follows: "The foundation stone of this five-dimensional memorial was laid down by the editors of five Punjabi dailies using the sacred water of the five rivers of Punjab." The joined hands on the top symbolize friendship and the tip of pen represents the contribution of writers in building the congenial relations between India and Pakistan.

Not using the word "partition" is a gesture that refuses the totalizing narrative of Indian or Pakistani statist historiography in favor of a cross-national, pan-Punjabi identity, reinforced through the rhetorical use of the five rivers of Punjab and the presence of the newspaper editors. This reading matches the stated intent of the Academy, to "keep in mind the historical perspective of Punjab" and remain "committed to Punjabi language and literature." In focusing on a defined tradition of Punjabi cultural lineage, the memorial helps to undermine the nationalist narrative that elevates the division of Punjab as the moment of national birth, instead celebrating the continuity of a now marginalized, and therefore radical, Punjabi nation.

In a sense, then, the narrative agency at work in this memorial is not that different from those in oral history, film, and literature. Words that are said, words that remain unsaid, words and memories that are clung onto in the face of external pressure, words and memories that are reimagined, re-created, and reused in the present—all of these remind us of the plurality of narratives, the polyvalence of history. Rabisankar Bal, in his 2012 novel about the literariness of history through the figures of Mirza Ghalib and Saadat Hasan Manto, writes, "I for one cannot consider stories that have been passed down through generations in a lesser light than history."[8] Bal's sentiment was unknowingly echoed by H., who finished his interview with the following statement:

> This, too, is history. What is happening now is history as well. This, too, is being written. People like you and me are writing it.[9]

H.'s sense of the relationship between the present and the past, Aziz Fatima Qazi's cousin's love letters, and all the various written and unwritten, spoken and unspoken words that have featured in these pages, and many, many more that haven't—all of this and more constitute what I have called narrative agency. All of this and more have helped to make what partition is today. From

the nostalgic descriptions of Lahore or an anonymous village in east Bengal as they used to be, from the memory of the river flowing next to one's home to the memory of the blanket one used to sleep under as a child, from the stories of murder and separation, hope and redemption, the ways in which memories of partition haunt our dreams, help us relate to people and places, help us give meanings to our lives, provide us the impetus for moving forward—all this and more constitute history—and we ignore or forget it at our peril.

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Name	Gender	Year of birth	Place of birth	Religion	Date of interview
Sher Singh	M	1916	east Punjab	Sikh	6/22/11
Nayur	F	1976	Wales, UK	Muslim	10/3/11
Jaswant	M	1936	west Punjab	Sikh	10/14/11
K.R.	F	ca. 1959	Pakistan	Muslim	10/16/11
Shameem	F	ca. 1954	Pakistan	Muslim	10/16/11
Uzair	M	ca. 1945	United Provinces	Muslim	10/16/11
Gurbakhsh	M	1935	east Punjab	Sikh	1/27/12
Amarjit	F	1931	Kenya	Sikh	1/30/12
Harbakhsh Grewal	M	1967	Kenya	Sikh	1/30/12
Harbakhsh	M	1941	east Punjab	Sikh	5/31/12
Rami	M	1947	west Punjab	Sikh	2/1/12
Parkash	F	1930	west Punjab	Sikh	2/2/12
K.S.	M	1933	east Punjab	Sikh	2/3/12
Rajinder	M	1934	west Punjab	Hindu	2/16/12
Gargi	F	1942	west Punjab	Hindu	2/16/12
Kailash	F	1925	east Punjab	Sikh	3/5/12
Raj	M	1932	Sindh	Hindu	3/5/12
Geeta D.	F	unknown	Sindh	Hindu	3/5/12
Liaquat	M	ca. 1948	Kashmir	Muslim	3/8/12
X.	F	unknown	Kashmir	Muslim	3/8/12
Bandana	F	1936	east Bengal	Muslim	3/11/12
Yasmin	F	1977	London	Muslim	3/13/12
Dilawar	M	1934	United Provinces	Muslim	3/18/12
Ananta	M	ca. 1912	east Bengal	Hindu	3/21/12
Jharna D.	F	1948	east Bengal	Hindu	3/25/12
Jogesh	M	ca. 1945	east Bengal	Hindu	3/25/12
Nihar	M	1938	east Bengal	Hindu	3/28/12

Name	Gender	Year of birth	Place of birth	Religion	Date of interview
Shefali	F	1942	east Bengal	Hindu	3/28/12
Raminder	F	1938	west Punjab	Sikh	3/29/12
Purnima	F	ca. 1947	east Bengal	Hindu	3/30/12
Jagadish	M	1937	east Bengal	Hindu	3/30/12
Sushanto	M	1934	east Bengal	Hindu	3/30/12
Geeta M.	F	1936	east Bengal	Hindu	3/30/12
Priyotosh	M	1929	east Bengal	Hindu	4/2/12
Hiren	M	ca. 1927	east Bengal	Hindu	4/4/12
Suhas	M	1925	east Bengal	Hindu	4/7/12
Panchanan	M	1922	east Bengal	Hindu	4/9/12
Sunil	M	1929	west Bengal	Hindu	4/9/12
Mira	F	unknown	west Bengal	Hindu	4/9/12
Bharati	F	ca.1930	east Bengal	Hindu	4/10/12
Basudeb	M	unknown	east Bengal	Hindu	4/11/12
Samar	M	1933	east Bengal	Hindu	4/13/12
Haridas	M	ca. 1937	east Bengal	Hindu	4/16/12
Jharna M.	F	ca. 1930	east Bengal	Hindu	4/17/12
Arati	F	ca. 1940	east Bengal	Hindu	4/17/12
Mihir	M	1946	east Bengal	Hindu	4/17/12
Amiyabala	F	ca. 1926	east Bengal	Hindu	4/18/12
Anil Ranjan	M	1932	east Bengal	Hindu	4/20/12
Atul	M	1926	east Bengal	Hindu	4/22/12
R.A.	M	1980	Pakistan	Muslim	6/30/12
Kenneth	M	1937	South Africa	Christian	11/11/12
S.K.	F	ca. 1937	west Punjab	Sikh	11/27/12
Trishna	F	1953	Glasgow, UK	Sikh	1/28/13
Asia	F	1947	east Punjab	Muslim	2/26/13
Bashir	M	1926	west Punjab	Muslim	6/18/13
Mohindra	M	1941	west Punjab	Hindu	6/20/13
M.H.	M	1946	east Punjab	Muslim	8/21/13
Hasina	F	1939	east Punjab	Muslim	8/27/13
Gaffar	M	1942	east Punjab	Muslim	8/28/13
Abdul	M	1936	east Punjab	Muslim	8/29/13
Jahangir	M	1924	west Punjab	Muslim	9/1/13
Nida	F	1978	Stoneham, Massachusetts, USA	Muslim	9/6/13
Rafique	M	1927	west Punjab	Muslim	9/10/13

Name	Gender	Year of birth	Place of birth	Religion	Date of interview
Muqtada	M	1934	United Provinces	Muslim	9/11/13
Aziz Fatima Qazi	F	1931	Bhopal	Muslim	9/11/13
Sophiya	F	ca. 1932	United Provinces	Muslim	9/11/13
Zafar	M	ca. 1930	Delhi	Muslim	9/12/13
A.K.	M	1944	United Provinces	Muslim	9/12/13
T.K.	F	1945	United Provinces	Muslim	9/12/13
Salim	M	1925	Hyderabad	Muslim	9/13/13
Sabiha	F	1936	Madras	Muslim	9/13/13
Saeed	M	1925	west Punjab	Muslim	9/13/13
Sakina	F	1920	United Provinces	Muslim	9/13/13
Zahid	M	1920	east Punjab	Muslim	9/13/13
Subha	F	1958	east Bengal	Hindu	12/15/13
Janak	F	ca. 1933	west Punjab	Hindu	12/19/13
Kamal G.	M	1942	west Punjab	Hindu	12/22/13
Mal	M	1930	east Punjab	Sikh	12/27/13
Madhu	F	1946	Peshawar	Hindu	12/30/13
Chander Prakash	M	1932	west Punjab	Hindu	12/31/13
Kamal D.	M	1939	west Bengal	Hindu	1/2/14
A.N.	M	ca. 1931	west Punjab	Hindu	1/3/14
Indu	F	1938	Peshawar	Hindu	1/3/14
Santi	M	1934	east Bengal	Hindu	1/51/14
Sujit	M	1928	east Bengal	Hindu	1/6/14
Shakti	M	1928	west Bengal	Hindu	1/8/14
Chitta	M	ca. 1933	east Bengal	Hindu	1/9/14
Manik	M	1942	east Bengal	Hindu	1/9/14
Sipra	F	1948	east Bengal	Hindu	1/16/14
Alok	M	1947	east Bengal	Hindu	1/16/14
Sultana	F	1946	east Bengal	Muslim	7/24/14
H.	M	ca. 1946	west Bengal	Muslim	1/8/15
Lalita	F	unknown	east Bengal	Hindu	1/14/15
Sankar	M	unknown	west Bengal	Hindu	1/14/15
Rama	F	1934	east Bengal	Hindu	1/20/15

Appendix 2: Glossary of South Asian Words

***almari* (Bengali)**—a wardrobe, made out of either wood or metal
***annas* (Bengali, Hindi)**—a pre-decimal unit of currency; one Rupee is equivalent to sixteen *annas*
***Asr* (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—the evening prayer in Islam, also see *Namaaz*
***azaadi* (Hindi, Urdu)**—freedom
***Azaan* (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—Islamic call to prayer, performed at prescribed times of day, also see *Namaaz*
***Bangal* (Bengali)**—an east Bengali, whose family origins lie on the eastern side of the India/East Pakistan, and, after 1971, the India/Bangladesh border
***barbaadi* (Hindi, Urdu)**—destruction
***bari* (Bengali)**—literally house, but used to refer to the ancestral home, or at least a permanent home which one owns, as opposed to transient rented accommodation
***basha* (Bengali)**—literally house, but used to refer to temporary, rented accommodation, as distinct from the permanent, or ancestral, home
***basti* (Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—township, settlement, neighborhood, slum, or ghetto
***chappal* (Bengali, Hindi)**—slippers, or sandals
***charpoy* (Bengali, Hindu)**—a movable bed, that can be taken to any part of the house, inside or outside, in order to convert the space into somewhere to sleep
***crore* (Bengali, Hindi)**—a unit of number, equivalent to ten millions (10,000,000)
***dada* (Bengali)**—literally older brother, but often used as a way to greet any male stranger
***dal* (Bengali, Hindi)**—lentils, and the commonly used name for a variety of dishes cooked with lentils
***ghat* (Bengali, Hindi)**—pier, usually on a river, and intended for bathing or accessing rivercraft
***ghazal* (Hindi, Urdu)**—a lyric poem set to music and with a fixed number of verses and a repeated rhyme, often on the theme of love
***ghee* (Bengali, Hindi)**—clarified butter
***Hajj* (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, the most important piligrimage for any devout Muslim
***haveli* (Hindi, Urdu)**—an elaborate, multistoried home, a mansion
***kabaristan* (Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—cemetery
***kathi* (Bengali)**—a unit of area, used mainly in east Bengal and roughly equivalent to five cubits, squared
***khafila* (Urdu)**—a caravan of refugees, most often referring to the long line of refugees traveling on foot, or by horse or bullock cart, across the border in both directions
***Kirpan* (Punjabi)**—the ceremonial sword that is one of the five signs of Sikhism
***kolshi* (Bengali)**—a pot of either earthenware or metal, used particularly to store water
***lakh* (Bengali, Hindi)**—a unit of number, equivalent to a hundred thousand (100,000)
***lakhpati* (Bengali, Hindi)**—someone who has at least a hundred thousand (1000,000) rupees
***majhi* (Bengali)**—boatman
***murgir jhol* (Bengali)—chicken curry**

***Namaaz* (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—Islamic prayer, typically to be done five times a day

***namashudra* (Bengali)**—low-caste, or untouchable

***paan-daan* (Urdu)**—a receptacle for storing betel leaves, a common digestive

***paisa* (Bengali, Hindi)**—a unit of currency, $1/64^{th}$ of a rupee before decimalization, now worth $1/100^{th}$ of a rupee.

***Salaam* or *Salaam Alaikum* (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—Islamic form of greeting; literally, meaning "peace be upon you"

***santals* (Bengali, Hindi)**—an indigenous tribe living mainly in eastern India

***shehnai* (Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—a wind instrument, similar to an oboe, used particularly at weddings and other auspicious occasions

***tabure* (Bengali)**—an indigenous boat

***Wazu* (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu)**—ablutions that are required before Islamic prayer

***zaildar* (Urdu)** —a feudal administrative title in colonial Punjab; usually refers to someone who is in administrative charge of a number of villages

Notes

Introduction

1. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1948, Bolpur, West Bengal, India.

2. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.

3. After writing the first draft of this introduction, I discovered that Devika Chawla also begins her book on the oral history of partition with memories of conversations while out walking with her grandmother. While this similarity is coincidental, it perhaps also says something about the role of peripatetic conversations in the transmission of family memory.

4. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (London: C. Hurst, 2000), 23.

5. Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 293.

6. Kavita Daiya, *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and National Culture in Postcolonial India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 6.

7. Ian Talbot, "The 1947 Partition of India," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 420.

8. Ibid., 420.

9. Ibid.

10. Daiya, *Violent Belongings*, 6.

11. See, for example, Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*; Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

12. See, for example, Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta, eds., *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India* (Kolkata: Stree, 2003); Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

13. A notable exception is Nandita Bhavnani, *The Making of Exile: Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India* (Chennai, India: Tranquebar Press, 2014).

14. This argument is, of course, not without precedence. See, for example, Alistair Thomson, "Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2006), 244–55; Michael Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War," *History Workshop Journal* 50, no. 1 (2000): 181–204; Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates," *Oral History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 35–44; Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994); Penny Summerfield, "Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews," *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 68–69.

15. T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, eds., *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000), 34.

16. Jill Ker Conway, *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 6.

17. See, for example, Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

18. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 306.

19. See, for example, Graham Smith, "Beyond Individual/Collective Memory: Women's Transactive Memories of Food, Family and Conflict," *Oral History* 35, no. 2 (2007): 77–90.

20. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "*Adda*, Calcutta: Dwelling in Modernity," *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 110.

21. See, for example, Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 10.

22. As Devika Chawla, among others, has pointed out, no oral history work in south Asia is possible without partaking of huge amounts of food. As the interviews almost always take place in the participant's house, the interviewer is usually cast in the role of the guest and, as such, has to be fed. The result is a much more enjoyable research experience, though the consequent effect on one's waistline is lamentable.

23. In April 2012, I visited Dhubulia in West Bengal, which was established as a refugee camp in 1947 and continues to this day as a permanent version of refugee housing. See, for example, Prafulla K. Chakrabarti, *The Marginal Men* (Kolkata: Naya Udyog, 1999); Monika Mandal, *Settling the Unsettled: A Study of Partition Refugees in West Bengal* (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 2011).

24. It is very difficult for people holding Indian or Pakistani citizenship to cross the border and work in the "other" country. That I was able to conduct fieldwork in both countries was thanks in large part to the privilege of British citizenship.

25. There was a general strike called by the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) during my stay in Karachi (September 10–14, 2013). My interviewees in that city were practically only possible because I had the resources to hire my own transport.

26. See, for example, Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

27. Katherine Borland, '"That's Not What I Said'": Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2006), 312.

28. This religious identity is intended to highlight the participant's cultural background and not necessarily his or her personal faith.

29. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1972 and Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013), 15.

30. Ibid., 16.

31. To say this is not to say that agency has been completely overlooked in oral histories of partition. For example, see Pippa Virdee, "Negotiating the Past: Journey through Muslim Women's Experience of Partition and Resettlement in Pakistan," *Cultural and Social History* 6, no. 4 (2009): 467–84 and Ravinder Kaur, "Distinctive Citizenship: Refugees, Subjects and Post-Colonial State in India's Partition," *Cultural and Social History* 6, no. 4 (2009): 429–46. However, in both of these cases agency is conceptualized as something close to practically emancipatory activism which is very different from my conception of agency, as shown below.

32. Sumi Madhok, Anne Phillips, and Kalpana Wilson, *Gender, Agency and Coercion* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

33. Ibid., 2.

34. Sumi Madhok, *Rethinking Agency: Developmentalism, Gender and Rights* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2013), 37–38.

35. Saba Mehmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), x.

36. Helen M. Buss, "*Katie.com: My Story*: Memoir Writing, the Internet and Embodied Discursive Agency," in *Tracing the Autobiographical*, ed. Marlene Kadar, Linda Warley, Jeanne Perreault, and Susanna Egan (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 9.

37. Susan Hekman, "Subject and Agents: The Question for Feminism," in *Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 203.

38. Deborah Youdell, "Subjectivation and Performative Politics—Butler Thinking Althusser and Foucault: Intelligibility, Agency and the Raced-Nationed-Religioned Subjects of Education," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27, no. 4 (2006): 519.

39. See, for example, Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Sumi Madhok and Shirin M. Rai, "Agency, Injury, and Transgressive Politics in Neoliberal Times," *Signs* 37, no. 3 (2012): 645–69.

40. Rebecca Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust: The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 21.

41. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essay*s (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

Chapter 1

1. Intizar Husain, *Basti* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2013), 70. Originally published in Urdu in 1979.

2. Ibid., 67.

3. Sophie Ernst, *HOME: Architecture of Memory* (Wakefield, Yorkshire, UK: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2012), 53.

4. Kamila Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 125.

5. Ibid., 126.

6. Male, Muslim, Originally from west Bengal, India, b. ca. 1946, undivided India.

7. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bilkuli, West Bengal, India, January 8, 2015.

8. Male, Muslim, b. ca. 1945, Mainpuri, United Provinces, undivided India.

9. Interview with author, Newport, Wales, October 16, 2011.

10. Male, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1942, west Punjab, undivided India.

11. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 22, 2013.

12. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1933, east Bengal, undivided India.

13. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 13, 2012.

14. Samar Roychoudhury, *The Roy Choudhurys of Siddhakathi: A Journey through Time* (Kolkata: privately printed, 2014).

15. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 13, 2012.

16. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1947, West Bengal, India.

17. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.

18. Ibid.

19. Ritwik Ghatak, *Stories* (New Delhi: Srishti, 2001), 153–55.

20. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 13, 2012.

21. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1934, east Bengal, undivided India.

22. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 5, 2014.

23. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1920, east Punjab, undivided India.

24. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.

25. The present owners of the house.

26. Ved Mehta, "A House Divided," in *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore*, ed. Bapsi Sidhwa (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), 120.

27. Female, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1946, Rawalpindi, undivided India.

28. Interview with author, Gurgaon, Haryana, India, December 30, 2013.

29. Ibid.

30. Urvashi Butalia, "Ranamama," in *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore*, ed. Bapsi Sidhwa (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), 138.

31. Mehta, "House Divided," 113.

32. I encountered this piece in the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, UK, in June 2012.
33. Ernst, *HOME*, 44.
34. Ibid., 18.
35. M. Athar Tahir, *Body Loom* (London: Oxford, 2006), 36.
36. Kavita Panjabi, *Old Maps and New: Legacies of the Partition* (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2005), 11.
37. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1942, east Bengal, undivided India.
38. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, January 9, 2014.
39. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1939, Delhi, undivided India.
40. Interview with author, New Delhi, India, January 2, 2014.
41. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.
42. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1925, east Bengal, undivided India.
43. Suhas is probably referring to Richard Casey, who was the colonial governor of Bengal from 1944 to 1946. It would appear that Suhas is mistaken about the year, however.
44. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bolpur, West Bengal, India, April 7, 2012.
45. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1912, east Bengal, undivided India.
46. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.
47. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1947, east Bengal, undivided India.
48. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bonhooghly, West Bengal, India, March 30, 2012.
49. Male, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1932, west Punjab, undivided India.
50. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 31, 2013.
51. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. ca. 1933, west Punjab, undivided India.
52. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 19, 2013.
53. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. year unknown, West Bengal, India.
54. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 9, 2012.
55. Samaresh Dasgupta, "Home, Sweet Home," in *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter*, ed. Bashabi Fraser (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 318.
56. Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Interpreter of Maladies*, New Delhi: HarperCollins India, 1999), 71.
57. Ibid., 72.
58. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bolpur, West Bengal, India, April 7, 2012.
59. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1930, east Bengal, undivided India.
60. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.
61. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.
62. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1948, east Bengal, Pakistan.
63. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
64. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1945, east Bengal, undivided India.
65. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
66. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 13, 2012.
67. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.
68. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 120.
69. Male, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1941, west Punjab, undivided India.

70. Interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, June 20, 2013.
71. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
72. Female, Muslim, Bengali, b. 1936, east Bengal, undivided India.
73. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), London, March 11, 2012.
74. Female, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1947, east Punjab, undivided India.
75. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Edinburgh, Scotland, February 26, 2013.
76. Female, Muslim, Bengali, b. 1946, east Bengal, undivided India.
77. Interview with author, London, July 24, 2014.
78. Interview with author, Gurgaon, Haryana, India, December 30, 2013.
79. Female, Muslim, b. ca. 1932, United Provinces, undivided India.
80. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 11, 2013.
81. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1936, west Punjab, undivided India.
82. Interview with author, Cardiff, Wales, October 14, 2011.
83. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Edinburgh, Scotland, February 26, 2013.
84. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
85. Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*, 71.
86. Devika Chawla, *Home, Uprooted: Oral Histories of India's Partition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 13–15.

Chapter 2

1. Female, Muslim, b. 1959, Pakistan.
2. Interview with author, Brynmawr, Wales, October 16, 2011.
3. Ibid.
4. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
5. Female, Sikh, b. 1953, Glasgow, Scotland.
6. Interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, January 28, 2013.
7. Male, Muslim, b. 1944, Lucknow, United Provinces, undivided India.
8. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.
9. Male, Muslim, b. 1934, United Provinces, undivided India.
10. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 11, 2013.
11. He is referring to the practice which still exists by which Indian citizens traveling to Pakistan, and Pakistani citizens traveling India are limited to visiting a certain number of cities.
12. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 11, 2013.
13. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (London: C Hurst, 2000), 25–26.
14. Ibid., 28.
15. Ibid., 30.
16. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 22, 2013.
17. Female, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1925, Lahore, west Punjab, undivided India.
18. Interview with author, London, March 5, 2012.
19. Female, Muslim, b. 1920, United Provinces, undivided India.
20. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.
21. Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.
22. Ibid.
23. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1936, west Punjab, undivided India.
24. Interview with author, Cardiff, Wales, October 14, 2011.
25. Ibid.
26. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 22, 2013.

27. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.

28. Saadat Hasan Manto, *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*, trans. and ed. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 12–13.

29. Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Interpreter of Maladies* (New Delhi: HarperCollins India, 1999), 70–71.

30. Ibid., 71.

31. Ibid., 70.

32. Female, Muslim, b. 1945, Lucknow, United Provinces, undivided India.

33. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.

34. Ibid.

35. Michael Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War," *History Workshop Journal* 50, no. 1 (2000): 183.

36. Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*, 72.

37. Ibid., 79.

38. Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Dissimilar Twins: Residue of 1947 in the Twenty-first Century," *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 4 (2009): 441.

39. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

40. See, for example, "Bridging a Great Divide: True-Life Tales of Families Separated during Partition," *India Today*, August 18, 1997, http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/true-life-tales-of-families-separated-during-partition/1/276461.html, and "The Pain of Partition," *Dawn*, August 15, 2012, http://www.dawn.com/news/742361/the-pain-of-partition, among many others.

41. Interview with author, Brynmawr, Wales, October 16, 2011.

42. Ibid.

43. Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*, 114–15.

44. Ibid., 160.

45. Furrukh A. Khan, "Speaking Violence: Pakistani Women's Narratives of Partition," in *Gender, Conflict and Migration*, ed. Navnita Chadha Behera (London: Sage, 2006), 99.

46. Alok Bhalla, *Stories about the Partition of India*, vols. I–III (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 2011), xxvi.

47. Ibid., 58.

48. Ibid., 62.

49. Male, Muslim, Kashmiri, b. ca. 1948, Mirpur, Azad Kashmir.

50. X was the only one of my cohort of interviewees who only agreed to speak to me on condition that I would not ask her name, or any other identifying characteristics. I interviewed her in Pahari with the help of an interpreter, which is why I do not quote her directly but paraphrase based on the interpreter's translations. The interview was conducted in her home on March 8, 2012. In an effort to respect her desire for anonymity, I do not mention her location either.

51. Interview with author, Bradford, UK, March 8, 2012.

52. Interview with author, Brynmawr, Wales, October 16, 2011.

53. Rabea Murtaza, "Still Waters: Memory in Pakistani Cinema," *Tanqeed: A Magazine of Politics and Culture* 7 (September 2014), http://www.tanqeed.org/2014/09/still-waters-memory-in-pakistani-cinema/#sthash.9cZzGfc5.goorqoPE.dpbs.

54. Bhalla, *Stories about Partition of India*, 65.

55. Ibid., 65–66.

56. Female, Muslim, b. 1977, London.

57. Interview with author, Egham, Surrey, UK, March 13, 2012.

58. I have not been able to find out who was responsible for the subtitles. I cite here the subtitles of the version that was televised on Channel 4 in the UK on October 14, 2014.

59. Hasan Ajijul Huq, *Aagunpakhi* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2008), 243.

60. Ibid., 244.

61. Ibid., 245.
62. Ibid., 247.
63. Ibid., 252.
64. Interview with author, Bradford, UK, March, 8, 2012.
65. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bilkuli, West Bengal, India, January 8, 2015.

Chapter 3

1. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), 92.
2. David Montenegro and Bapsi Sidhwa, "Bapsi Sidhwa: An Interview," *Massachusetts Review* 31, no. 4 (1990): 519–20.
3. Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, 22.
4. Sudha Bhuchar, *Child of the Divide* (London: A&C Black 3PL, 2007), 3.
5. Margaret Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), 3.
6. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1933, east Punjab, undivided India.
7. Interview with author, Eastbourne, UK, August 27, 2013.
8. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1935, east Punjab, undivided India.
9. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
10. Female, Muslim, Punjabi, b. ca. 1939, east Punjab, undivided India.
11. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan, August 27, 2013.
12. Saadat Hasan Manto, *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*, trans. and ed. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 404.
13. Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time* (London: Vintage, 1994), 33.
14. Ibid., 42.
15. Marianne Hirsch, "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 16.
16. Ibid., 13.
17. Male, Muslim, b. ca. 1930, Delhi, undivided India.
18. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.
19. Interview with author, Brynmawr, Wales, October 16, 2011.
20. Interview with author, New Delhi, India, January 2, 2014.
21. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1930, west Punjab, undivided India.
22. Interview with author (originally in Punjabi) via an interpreter, Luton, UK, February 2, 2012.
23. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1949, Glasgow, Scotland.
24. Interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, December 3, 2012.
25. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. ca. 1937, west Punjab, undivided India.
26. Interview with author (originally in Punjabi), Edinburgh, Scotland, November 27, 2012.
27. Warner, *Managing Monsters*, 62.
28. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 65.
29. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bonhooghly, West Bengal, India, March 30, 2012.
30. Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 45.
31. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
32. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1942, east Punjab, undivided India.
33. Interview with author, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan, August 27, 2013.
34. Interview with author, New Delhi, India, January 2, 2014.
35. Rob Stone, *Spanish Cinema* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 85.
36. Vicky Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 40.
37. Female, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1942, west Punjab, undivided India.

38. Interview with author, Beckenham, Kent, UK, February 16, 2012.
39. Female, Hindu, b. ca. 1939, Delhi, undivided India.
40. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 19, 2013.
41. Interview with author, Eastbourne, UK, August 27, 2013.
42. Interview with author, New Delhi, India, January 2, 2014.
43. Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, 138.
44. Interview with author, Newport, Wales, October 16, 2011.
45. Female, Muslim, b. 1936, Madras, undivided India.
46. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.
47. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 22, 2013.
48. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
49. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 19, 2013.
50. Interview with author, Brynmawr, Wales, October 16, 2011.
51. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.
52. Male, Hindu, Sindhi, b. 1932, Quetta, undivided India.
53. Interview with author, London, March 5, 2012.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 13, 2012.
57. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1928, east Bengal, undivided India.
58. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.
59. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
60. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 11, 2013.
61. Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: Creation of Coherence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 105.

Chapter 4

1. Ian Talbot, "The 1947 Partition of India," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 421.
2. Purnima Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood and Nation in Postcolonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 332.
3. Urvashi Butalia, "Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency during Partition," *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 17 (1993): 13.
4. Apart from the ones mentioned above, see, for example, Kavita Daiya, *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and National Culture in Postcolonial India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).
5. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 63.
6. Talbot, "1947 Partition," 420.
7. Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 19.
8. Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 2.
9. S. Settar and Indira B. Gupta, eds., *Pangs of Partition: The Parting of the Ways* (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 2002), 7.
10. Bashabi Fraser, ed., *Bengal Partition Stories* (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 2.
11. Alok Bhalla, ed., *Stories about the Partition of India*, vols. I–III (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 2011), viii.
12. Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 56.
13. Alok Bhalla, "Memories of a Lost Home: Partition in the Fiction of the Subcontinent," in *The Partition Motif in Contemporary Conflicts*, ed. Smita Tewari Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari (New Delhi: Sage, 2007), 176.
14. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1916, east Punjab, undivided India.

15. Interview with author, Caerphilly, Wales, June 22, 2011.
16. Male, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1934, west Punjab, undivided India.
17. Interview with author, Beckenham, Kent, UK, February 16, 2012.
18. Ibid.
19. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
20. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiv.
21. Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, vol. 1 (London: Verso, 1994), 17.
22. Terry Eagleton, "Making a Break," *London Review of Books* 28, no. 5 (2006): 25.
23. Carrie Hamilton, "Happy Memories," *New Formations* 63, no. 1 (2007): 66.
24. For more information about this point, see Anindya Raychaudhuri, *Homemaking: Radical Nostalgia and the Construction of a South Asian Diaspora* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018).
25. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. year unknown, Rangoon, Burma.
26. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. year unknown, West Bengal.
27. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, January 14, 2015.
28. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
29. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1926, west Punjab, undivided India.
30. Interview with author, Glasgow, Scotland, June 18, 2013.
31. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, January 6, 2014.
32. Samaresh Basu, "Adaab," in *Samaresh Basu Rachanabali* [*Complete Works*], vol. I (Kolkata: Ananda, 2011), 532.
33. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), 183.
34. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
35. Interview with author, Brynmawr, South Wales, September 16, 2011.
36. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
37. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1967, Nairobi, Kenya.
38. Interview with author, Surbiton, Surrey, UK, January 30, 2012.
39. Basu, "Adaab," 537.
40. Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, 174.
41. Male, Hindu, Punjabi, b. ca. 1931, east Punjab, undivided India.
42. Interview with author (originally in Hindi, New Delhi), India, January 3, 2014.
43. As a Hindu, A.S.'s father would normally be cremated, and as his son, A.S. would be expected to figure prominently in the funerary rituals, including lighting the funeral pyre.
44. Margaret Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), 3.
45. Interview with author, Eastbourne, UK, August 27, 2013.
46. Devika Chawla, *Home, Uprooted: Oral Histories of India's Partition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 32.
47. Hamilton, "Happy Memories," 66.
48. Veena Das, "Collective Violence and the Shifting Categories of Communal Riots, Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 94.
49. Hamilton, "Happy Memories," 65.
50. Ibid., 70.
51. Khan, *Great Partition*, 20.
52. Krishna Kumar, "Partition in School Textbooks: A Comparative Look at India and Pakistan," in *Pangs of Partition: The Parting of the Ways*, ed. S. Settar and Indira B. Gupta (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 2002), 22.
53. Jill Didur, *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 4.
54. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1927, east Bengal, undivided India.
55. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Baruipur, West Bengal, India, April 4, 2012.

56. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.

57. Ibid.

58. Interview with author, Glasgow, Scotland, June 18, 2013.

59. Interview with author, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan, August 28, 2013.

60. Saadat Hasan Manto, *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*, trans. and ed. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 411.

61. Ibid., 404.

62. Ravikant Saint and Tarun K. Saint, eds., *Translating Partition* (New Delhi: Katha Books, 2001), xvi.

63. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1934, east Bengal, undivided India.

64. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1936, east Bengal, undivided India.

65. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Belgharia, West Bengal, India, March 30, 2012.

66. Male, Hindu, Punjabi, b. 1934, west Punjab, undivided India.

67. Interview with author, Beckenham, Kent, UK, February 16, 2012.

68. Ibid.

69. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up* (New York: New Directions, 2009), 69.

70. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1946, east Punjab, undivided India.

71. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, August 21, 2013.

72. Khan, *Great Partition*, 84–85.

73. Interview with author (originally in Urdu, Lahore), Punjab, Pakistan, August 21, 2013.

74. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1924, Lahore, west Punjab, undivided India.

75. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, September 1, 2013.

Chapter 5

1. Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," in *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: General Works 1844–1895*, vol. 12, [English Translation] (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 220.

2. Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 15.

3. See, for example, Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008).

4. See, for example, Sitansu Sekhar Mittra, *Bengal's Renaissance* (Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 2001), 50.

5. Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1991), 27.

6. Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 84.

7. Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power, 1942–1947*, vol. 12 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 752.

8. In the following discussion, I use the word "trainspace" to represent the material and discursive space of the train, the railway line and the railway stations. In other words, I examine both the actual physical space and how it is constructed, transformed, and reconstructed through narrative agency.

9. Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 75.

10. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 46.

11. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1925, east Punjab, undivided India.

12. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.

13. Male, Muslim, b. ca. 1930, Delhi, undivided India.

14. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.

15. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1927, west Punjab, undivided India.

16. Interview with author (originally in Urdu, Lahore), Punjab, Pakistan, September 10, 2013.
17. Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 75.
18. Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 15.
19. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.
20. Khan, *Great Partition*, 136.
21. Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 75.
22. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.
23. Interview with author, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan, August 28, 2013.
24. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1936, east Punjab, undivided India.
25. Interview with author, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, August 29, 2013.
26. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, January 3, 2014.
27. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.
28. Krishan Chander, "The Peshawar Express," in *Stories about the Partition of India*, vol. 3, ed. Alok Bhalla (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 2012), 210.
29. Ibid., 212.
30. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b.1941, east Punjab, undivided India.
31. Interview with author, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, UK, May 31, 2012.
32. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.
33. Interview with author, Eastbourne, UK, August 27, 2013.
34. Chander, "Peshawar Express," 214.
35. Ibid., 215.
36. Ibid., 128.
37. Male, Muslim, b. 1925, Hyderabad, Deccan, undivided India.
38. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.
39. Female, Muslim, Punjabi, b. 1976, Cardiff, Wales.
40. Interview with author, Bristol, UK, October 3, 2011.
41. Saadat Hasan Manto, *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*, trans. and ed. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 409.
42. Saadat Hasan Manto, "Hospitality Delayed," in *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, vol. 1, ed. Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: Roli Books, 1995), 97.
43. Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan* (New Delhi: Roli Books), 7–9.
44. Ibid., 51.
45. Ibid., 120.
46. Interview with author, Gurgaon, Haryana, India, December 30, 2013.
47. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 13, 2013.
48. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.
49. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
50. Khan, *Great Partition*, 162–63.
51. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1932, east Bengal, undivided India.
52. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 20, 2012.
53. Sujata Bhatt, *Augatora* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), 34.
54. Chander, "Peshawar Express," 209.
55. Female, Muslim, b. ca. 1954, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
56. Interview with author, Newport, Wales, October 16, 2011.
57. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1938, east Bengal, undivided India.
58. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bhadreswar, West Bengal, India, March 28, 2012.
59. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1947, west Punjab, undivided India.

60. Interview with author, London, February 1, 2012.
61. Male, Muslim, b. 1934, Indore, undivided India.
62. Interview with author, London, March 18, 2012.
63. Interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, June 20, 2013.
64. Male, Muslim, b. 1951, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
65. Interview with author, Newport, Wales, October 16, 2011.
66. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bolpur, West Bengal, India, April 7, 2012.
67. Interview with author (originally in Punjabi via an interpreter), Luton, UK, February 2, 2012.
68. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b.1938, Peshawar, undivided India.
69. Interview with author, New Delhi, India, January 3, 2014.
70. Chander, "Peshwar Express," 215.

Chapter 6

1. Anindya Raychaudhuri, "Resisting the Resistible: Re-Writing Myths of Partition in the Works of Ritwik Ghatak," *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 4 (2009): 474.
2. Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* (New York: Mariner Books, 2005), 190.
3. Achintya Kumar Sengupta, *Pub-Pashchim* (Kolkata: Anandadhara Prakashan, 1970), 10.
4. Nitish Sengupta, *Land of Two Rivers: A History of Bengal from the Mahabharata to Mujib* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2011), 5.
5. Daniel Haines, "Disputed Rivers: Sovereignty, Territory and State-Making in South Asia, 1948–1951," *Geopolitics* 19, no. 3 (2014): 633.
6. Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power 1942–1947*, vol. 12 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 747.
7. Ibid., 746.
8. Ibid., 619.
9. Ibid., 620.
10. Haines, "Disputed Rivers," 634.
11. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1930, east Bengal, undivided India.
12. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 10, 2012.
13. Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2005), 7.
14. Male, Christian, British, b. 1937, South Africa.
15. Interview with author, Monifieth, Scotland, November 13, 2012.
16. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bonhooghly, West Bengal, India, March 30, 2012.
17. Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan* (New Delhi: Roli Books), 6.
18. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1922, east Bengal, undivided India.
19. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Belgharia, West Bengal, India, April 9, 2012.
20. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Ghoom, West Bengal, India, March 25, 2012.
21. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.
22. Sunil Gangopadhyay, *Arjun* (Kolkata: Ananda, 1995), 59. This extract was translated by Debali Mookerjea-Leonard.
23. Debali Mookerjea-Leonard, "The Diminished Man: Partition and 'Transcendental Homelessness,'" in *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement, and Resettlement*, ed. Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia (New Delhi: Pearson, 2008), 60.
24. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1922, east Bengal, undivided India.
25. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Belgharia, West Bengal, India, April 9, 2012.
26. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1937, east Bengal, undivided India.

27. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Belgharia, West Bengal, India, March 30, 2012.

28. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1929, east Bengal, undivided India.

29. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Baranagar, West Bengal, India, April 2, 2012.

30. Ibid.

31. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.

32. Kenneth's father worked for a local jute mill named Meghna Jute Mill after the river of east Bengal. The mill still exists, though much attenuated, and, as of February 2019, is still open and functioning. Its presence in post-partition West Bengal is reminiscent of the ways in which cultural texts and oral history testimonies are able to use the interconnectivity of rivers to establish counter-hegemonic links between nation states. I discuss this further in the final chapter of this book.

33. Interview with author, Monifieth, Scotland, November 13, 2011.

34. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1916, east Punjab, undivided India.

35. Interview with author, Caerphilly, Wales, June 22, 2011.

36. Interview with author, Lewisham, London, January 27, 2012.

37. Interview with author, Beckenham, Kent, UK, February 16, 2012.

38. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bolpur, West Bengal, India, April 7, 2012.

39. Hindu, Male, Bengali, b. 1946, east Bengal, undivided India.

40. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bhadreswar, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.

41. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1933, east Bengal, undivided India.

42. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, January 9, 2014.

43. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), 116.

44. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.

45. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bolpur, West Bengal, India, April 7, 2012.

46. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1972 and Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013), xiii.

47. Bashabi Fraser, ed., *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter* (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 186.

48. Samaresh Basu, "Adaab," in *Samaresh Basu Rachanabali* [*Complete Works*], vol. I (Kolkata: Ananda, 2011), 535.

49. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.

50. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Belgharia, West Bengal, India, April 9, 2012.

51. Interview with author, Monifieth, Scotland, November 13, 2011.

52. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.

53. Interview with author, Eastbourne, UK, August 27, 2013.

54. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1926, east Bengal, undivided India.

55. The Hooghly is a tributary of the Ganga, but Bengalis often, as Atul does here, refer to it as the Ganga.

56. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 22, 2012.

57. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1926, east Bengal, undivided India.

58. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Hridoypur, West Bengal, India, April 18, 2012.

59. Female Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1940, east Bengal, undivided India.

60. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Tribeni, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.
61. Shiv K. Kumar, *A River with Three Banks* (New Delhi: UBS, 1998), 158.
62. Ibid., 161.
63. Ibid., 161–62.
64. Amrita Pritam, *Selected Poems*, ed. Khushwant Singh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1982), 93.
65. Interview author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, January 3, 2014.
66. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.
67. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. ca. 1937, west Punjab, undivided India.
68. Interview with author (originally in Punjabi), Edinburgh, Scotland, November 27, 2012.
69. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (London: C. Hurst, 2000), 35.
70. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1938, west Punjab, undivided India.
71. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 29, 2012.
72. Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, 62.
73. Saadat Hasan Manto, *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*, trans. and ed. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 404.
74. Sukeshi Kamra, *Bearing Witness: Partition, Independence, End of the Raj* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002), 1.
75. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.
76. Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, 202.
77. Margaret Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), 5.
78. Interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, June 20, 2013.
79. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, January 9, 2014.
80. Fraser, *Bengal Partition Stories*, 187–88.
81. Ibid., 185.
82. Ibid., 175.
83. Pritam, *Selected Poems*, 37.
84. Sengupta, *Pub-Pashchim*, 1.
85. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.

Chapter 7

1. Interview with author, Glasgow, Scotland, June 18, 2013.
2. Male, Muslim, Punjabi, born in Lahore, Pakistan, 1980.
3. Interview with author, London, June 30, 2012.
4. Interview with author, London, February 1, 2012.
5. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, April 10, 2012.
6. Interview with author, Surbiton, Surrey, January 30, 2012.
7. Female, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1931, Kisumu, Kenya.
8. Interview with author, Surbiton, Surrey, January 30, 2012.
9. Interview with author, Surbiton, Surrey, January 30, 2012.
10. Male, Muslim, b. 1934, United Provinces, undivided India.
11. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Pakistan, September 11, 2013.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Joya Chatterji, "South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946–1970," *Historical Journal* 55, no. 4 (2012): 1050–51.
15. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1972 and Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013), 9–10.
16. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. year unknown, east Bengal, undivided India.
17. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Konnagar, West Bengal, India, April 11, 2012.
18. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Adi Shoptogram, West Bengal, India, March 21, 2012.
19. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Konnagar, West Bengal, India, April 11, 2012.
20. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 136.
21. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bilkuli, West Bengal, India, January 8, 2015.
22. Ravinder Kaur, "Distinctive Citizenship: Refugees, Subjects and Post-Colonial State in India's Partition," *Cultural and Social History* 6, no. 4 (2009): 430.
23. Interview with author, London, March 5, 2012.
24. Kaur, "Distinctive Citizenship," 429.
25. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Konnagar, West Bengal, India, April 11, 2012.
26. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. ca. 1937, east Bengal, undivided India.
27. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Dhubulia, West Bengal, India, April 16, 2012.
28. Ashok Mitra, "Parting of Ways: Partition and after in Bengal," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 44 (1990): 2442.
29. Devika Chawla, *Home, Uprooted: Oral Histories of India's Partition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 11.
30. Md. Mahbubar Rahman and Willem Van Schendel, "'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 3 (2003): 564.
31. Interview with author, London, March 5, 2012.
32. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Belgharia, West Bengal, India, March 30, 2012.
33. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, September 10, 2013.
34. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1928, west Bengal, undivided India.
35. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bankura, West Bengal, India, January 8, 2014.
36. Interview with author, Surbiton, Surrey, January 30, 2012.
37. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.
38. Interview with author, London, March 5, 2012.
39. Ibid.
40. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bolpur, West Bengal, India, April 7, 2012.
41. Female, Hindu, Sindhi, b. year unknown, Karachi, Sindh, undivided India.
42. Interview with author, London, March 5, 2012.
43. Interview with author (originally in Urdu), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, September 12, 2013.
44. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 13, 2012.
45. Milkha Singh, *The Race of My Life* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2013), 12.
46. Ibid., 37.

47. Ibid., 96.
48. Interview with author, New Delhi, India, January 3, 2014.
49. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Chandannagar, West Bengal, India, April 10, 2012.
50. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 16, 2014.
51. Ibid.
52. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1942, east Bengal, undivided India.
53. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bhadreswar, West Bengal, India, March 28, 2012.
54. Interview with author (originally in Hindi), New Delhi, India, December 22, 2013.
55. Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.
56. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, December 27, 2014.
57. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Konnagar, West Bengal, India, April 11, 2012.
58. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Dhubulia, West Bengal, India, April 16, 2012.
59. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1929, west Bengal, undivided India.
60. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 9, 2012.
61. Referring to Jyoti Basu, leader of the CPIM and chief minister of West Bengal from 1977 to 2000.
62. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, April 9, 2012.
63. Female, Muslim, b. 1978, Stoneham, Massachusetts, USA.
64. Interview with author, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, September 6, 2013.
65. Interview with author, Gurgaon, Haryana, India, December 30, 2013.
66. Male, Sikh, Punjabi, b. 1930, east Punjab, undivided India.
67. Interview with author (originally in Punjabi), Ludhiana, Punjab, India, December 27, 2013.
68. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1934, Kolkata, west Bengal, undivided India.
69. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, January 20, 2015.
70. Interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, January 28, 2013.
71. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (London: C. Hurst, 2000), 3–4.
72. Chawla, *Home, Uprooted*, 224.
73. Zamindar, *Long Partition*, 13.
74. Kabir, *Partition's Post-Amnesias*, 3.
75. Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 11.
76. Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xiii.
77. Interview with author, Egham, Surrey, March 13, 2012.
78. Female, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1958, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.
79. Interview conducted with author, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, December 15, 2013.

Conclusion

1. Female, Muslim, b. 1931, Bhopal, undivided India.
2. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, August 11, 2013.
3. Interview with author, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, August 11, 2013.
4. As my insurance was provided through my British-based university, I was required to follow FCO advice at all times.

5. Male, Hindu, Bengali, b. 1946, east Bengal, undivided India.

6. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), in Bhadreswar, West Bengal, India, April 17, 2012.

7. See, for example, Jisha Menon, *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

8. Rabisankar Bal, *Dozakhnama*, trans. Arunava Sinha (Noida, India: Random House, 2012), 2.

9. Interview with author (originally in Bengali), Bilkuli, West Bengal, India, January 8, 2015.

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