

**RE-MEMBERING WOMEN'S BODIES:
THE PROBLEMS OF VOICE AND REPRESENTATION IN
TWO PARTITION NARRATIVES**

by

Lisa Muirhead

**A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

**Department of English
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Abstract

The trope of the woman's body as metaphor for the nation is one that is replayed throughout both colonial and postcolonial literatures dealing with political, ethnic or religious battles, indeed almost any conflict that involves the violent encounter of two or more defined groups, especially if that conflict is waged over the territory of a "Motherland." In the novels *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin, the authors attempt to recuperate voices of women who experienced the violence of the Partition of India and tell their stories.

Ideas of space, the regulation and negotiation thereof, and the regulatory gaze borrowed from the fields feminist geography, postcolonialism and feminism, are used as a framework in order to examine the manner in which female characters in the novels negotiate their positions within their societies and how these negotiations change with the heavy religious signification that becomes important during the months leading up to and during Partition. As women's bodies begin to stand in for nation and future generations of their religious and ethnic groups, the boundaries of their bodies and their homes become as contested as those of the splitting nation. Many of the female characters in these novels are border-dwellers, neither fully a part of nor apart from the political, ethnic and religious battles that become violently inscribed on and in their bodies by men on all sides of the conflict. While both Baldwin and Sidhwa recognize the need to find the voices of women's experiences of Partition, both try to work through the difficulty of representing the traumatic events of Partition without reducing their experiences to trite metaphor.

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Introduction

Even as I look back to the history that we know of Partition, my purpose is not to question the veracity of its 'facts' but to question what I can best describe as the 'adequacy' of such facts: can we continue to think of the history of Partition only in terms of broad political negotiations? Where then do we place the kinds of 'facts' I have talked about here, and where the stories that lie beneath and behind them?

-- Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*

In *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin and *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa, the questions of history and fiction become enmeshed. The stories that are told in the novels of Baldwin and Sidhwa detail the rising divisions between the major religious groups that led to the violently abrupt movement of over 12 million people across newly charted borders when India gained its independence from Britain in 1947. The authors tell the stories of how women were affected during this period of civil unrest. Both Baldwin and Sidhwa paint portraits of the lives of women who must negotiate the regulations that restrict the movement of and meaning invested in their bodies as “mothers” of the nation. When the women’s bodies, reduced already to their performance as fertile soil used for the propagation of the nation, are further invested with the symbolic importance of increasingly divided religious groups, they are used as a means to send messages of contamination, mutilation and conquest to the male members of their communities by those of rival communities. While both Baldwin and Sidhwa take on the task of telling the stories of what happened to women beyond their symbolic

purposes, the horrible violence committed against women's bodies in these novels still always happens to bodies other than those involved in the immediate narrative of the text. Both authors display the difficulty of representing the atrocities experienced by "other" female characters within their narratives.

While Baldwin's and Sidhwa's novels attempt to provide a more personal representation of the events surrounding Partition, it is important to place these two novels in their historical context. While the actual date of Indian independence from Britain is the 15th of August, 1947, the struggle for Indian independence and the communal division that led up to it had been rising to a boil for decades. The primary political parties responsible for pushing ahead the question of independence were the All India Congress Committee (originally the Indian National Congress), which comprised mostly Hindu leadership, and the Muslim League, formed early in the 20th century to counterbalance the power of the mostly Hindu Congress. As official leader of the Congress until his resignation in 1934, when he simply became the unofficial leader of the party due to his influence with the masses, Mahatma Gandhi led several campaigns of civil disobedience, starting with 1930's protest of the salt tax, in order to protest Britain's continuing rule in India. Gandhi chose Jawarharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel to succeed him as the leaders of the Congress; Nehru was a key figure in the difficult and lengthy negotiations that led up to Partition and became the first prime minister of independent India. Michael Edwardes states that between the 1933 and 1936-7 elections, there was an important shift in the goals of the Muslim League. Under the influence of a new Leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the "Muslim League was transformed from an organization designed to protect a religious minority into one pledged to the creation of a

separate Muslim state” (62). In March 1940, Jinnah made it official, proclaiming that “Muslims are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory and their State” (Edwardes 70). Neither the Congress nor the British supported Jinnah’s desire to split the country, and both pushed for a unified independent India.

During and after the Second World War, Britain approached the leaders of the two major parties with several offers, but were rejected time and again by either one or both of the party leaders, usually Jinnah, who was not going to be satisfied with anything short of a sovereign nation for Muslims. While Edwardes claims that Jinnah did not necessarily represent the sentiments of the Muslim majority in his push for sovereignty, the growing divisions between Muslims and Hindus were causing a rift that would not be easily repaired. It is important to note here that though struggles between the Muslims and Hindus were most prominent due to their majority populations and political power, there were several other minority religious groups whose futures hung in the balance, not the least of which being the Sikhs, who were later to become a strong force in the armed uprisings stemming from Partition decisions.

While the politicians bandied about in their negotiations, the blood of the citizens of India was beginning to spill. Although, according to Edwardes, rumours of massacres were circulating as early as the early 1940s, the first major riot took place in Calcutta on Jinnah’s proclaimed Direct Action Day in August, 1946. Official figures estimate that 4,000 Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims lost their lives and an additional 10,000 were injured over a four day period in Calcutta’s riots (Edwardes 119). On 20 February 1947, British leaders set a date for Indian independence no later than June 1948 in an effort to pressure

the Indian leaders into making a decision. Unfortunately, Edwardes states, this pressure did not force the cooperation of the Indian leaders, but instead put more pressure on the growing fissures between the masses: "By fixing a date for the transfer of power, the British had done no more than intensify the fight for succession. They had encouraged Indians to take the decision into their own hands, but those hands now held knives" (141). By March 1947, the British had sent in a new viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, to orchestrate a plan for British withdrawal from India. By the end of April 1947, Nehru conceded that Indian independence would necessitate the partition of India into India and Pakistan. Faced with the collapsing British administration, Mountbatten soon realized that the date of June 1948 was too far away and moved India's partition and independence up almost a year to 15 August 1947. In order to settle the problem of dividing up the country, Sir Cyril Radcliffe was sent to India on 8 July 1947, five weeks before his divisions would go into effect.

Although Edwardes describes Radcliffe as a "distinguished lawyer," he admits that Radcliffe went into the partition of India with no knowledge whatsoever of the people or geography of India (204). He was literally handed maps and out-of-date census information and told to split up the country along religious lines. Urvashi Butalia describes Radcliffe's duties:

With a bare five weeks in which to decide [...] Radcliffe got down to the momentous task of deciding a boundary that would divide a province of more than 35 million people, thousands of villages, towns and cities, a unified and integrated system of canals and communication networks and 16 million Muslims, 15 million Hindus and 5 million Sikhs who, despite their religious differences, shared a common culture, language and history. (*Other* 65-6)

The divisions that were made were based primarily on the majority populations concentrated in each area, with an eye to the economic ramifications of the divisions. In the end, of course, no one was satisfied and the economies of both of these new nations were affected by the rushed nature of the division. However, the actual movement of the people across these newly formed borders resulted in much more than economic hardship; it consisted of the loss of family, property and the honour of millions of individuals from various religious and cultural groups.

While mere numbers cannot represent the trauma that was suffered in the massive migration that took place across the new borders of independent India and East and West Pakistan, they are a part of the picture of what happened. Between August and November 1947, Butalia places estimates of the number of people that crossed borders in both directions at about 12 million. As she describes, people crossed the border by plane, train, boat and by “kafila,” which are described as “massive human columns,” which numbered, at their largest, up to 400,000 people (*Other* 60-61). It was along the fringes of these kafilas that many fell victim to the violence of Partition. Butalia explains:

Everywhere along the route, whether people were on foot, in trains, cars, or lorries, attackers lay in wait. As kafilas crossed each other, moving in opposite directions, people who looked exactly the same – for little in their appearance would, at first glance, tell whether they are Hindu or Muslim – and were burdened with poverty and grief, would suddenly turn in murderous attack on each other. Of the thousands of women who were raped and abducted, large numbers were picked up from the edges of the kafilas. In the desperation of flight, the weak and vulnerable – the old and infirm, the physically disabled, children, women – often got left behind. (*Other* 61)

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin state that while official estimates put the number of lives lost during Partition at about a half a million, the effects of the losses suffered by the uprooted masses would cause massive destitution for years to come (3).

In the mayhem that characterized this massive upheaval, women were often singled out as victims of torture, mutilation, rape and abduction. Menon and Bhasin state that

the material, symbolic and political significance of the abduction of women was not lost on either the women themselves and their families, or communities, or on leaders and governments. As a retaliatory measure, it was simultaneously an assertion of identity and a humiliation of the rival community through the appropriation of its women. (3)

Menon and Bhasin cite the official number of abducted Muslim women at 50,000 in India and 33,000 non-Muslim women in Pakistan, although, they assert that these numbers have been considered exaggerated by some and wildly under-estimated by others, who put the number at ten times official estimates (4). In her article, "Community, State and Gender," Butalia explains that untold numbers of the victims of Partition were women killed by their own families or communities, or who 'martyred' themselves, in order to preserve the honour of the entire community by protecting their bodies from contamination by the seed of other religious groups.

In order to examine the novels *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India*, it is important to examine where the authors are writing from. Both authors grew up in India and are now scholars in North America. As members of the Indian diaspora, Baldwin and Sidhwa occupy a difficult place in relation to where they are from and where they currently reside. While Baldwin took her historical facts largely from secondary resources ("Bold" 2), Sidhwa accessed both historical research and her own

memories as an eight year old Parsee girl living through Partition. Growing up in Parsee house, Sidhwa witnessed the predominantly Muslim, Hindu and Sikh struggles at Partition¹ from the position of an upper-middle class child in what is present-day Pakistan. Basing some of the events in *Cracking India* on her own experiences during Partition, Sidhwa reinforces the process of interpreting historical moments when she writes that “memory demands poetic license” (149). Even having experienced Partition first-hand, Sidhwa acknowledges that the process of remembering and recording involves an interpretation of the past that incorporates both narrativity and creativity. Although both writers grew up in India, Baldwin in present-day India and Sidhwa in present-day Pakistan, their retrospective telling of this stories about Partition cannot help but be affected by the distance they have gained as scholars in the West. This distance is amplified by the time that has elapsed between the period of Partition and the writing of these two novels. The novels are narratives of what happened in the lives of women during the moment we recognize as Partition, but they are written in dialogue with the present time and how they have come to see Partition after this passage of time. These narratives lend to the historiographical tradition of adding narrative interpretations of “historical” moments in order to participate in the telling of not only what “happened,” but how we have come to interpret an event to the present day. The geographical and intellectual distance from India and Pakistan that both authors share is mirrored in the instability of the period of Partition itself. Their ideas of India, as a nation in a historical moment and, more narrowly, as a context for the stories of their characters, are

¹ In characterizing the civil clashes at Partition as primarily Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, I do not wish to elide the trauma and violence suffered by men and women of different religious groups. My motives in

characterized by a certain hybridity that they inject into the main characters in their novels.

In considering the positionality of the two authors as diasporic writers, it is important to examine how their diasporic natures link to a hybrid position in regard to their subject. While it is important to avoid the homogenizing of a “diasporic” identity, the negotiation of which is highly contested, differentiated and even personal, there is in the diasporic identity a sense of hybridity through which I will link the authors and the characters they create. Crossing the idea of diaspora is the idea of “home,” both the home as an imaginary, originary location and the present “home” of the geographical location of the diasporic person in the world. John McLeod states that “conventional ideas of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ depend upon clearly-defined, static notions of being ‘in-place,’ firmly rooted in a community or a particular geographical location” (214). McLeod posits that this static notion of “home” is complicated by the diasporic individual in their hybrid location between the imaginary “homeland” and the land in which they live. This contested idea of home manifests itself in how the female characters in these novels view their relations to the home as a space that presupposes a protection and belonging that are challenged in the events of their lives, and during the process of Partition. McLeod states that the position of the diasporic individual is a better position from which “to realize that all systems of knowledge, all views of the world, are never totalizing, whole or pure, but incomplete, muddled and hybrid.[...] In these terms, the space of the ‘in-between’ becomes re-thought as a place of immense creativity and possibility” (215). The hybrid,

highlighting these groups is primarily due to the focus in the novels on the violence between these three groups specifically.

or in-between position, can also be seen as a border. McLeod defines “borders” as being “important thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places” (217). These authors are in a position to bring a narrative of Partition to English-speaking audiences that speaks to both how they see the moment of Partition in their conception of the imaginary they construct as India at that moment, and also to the narrative of Partition as they see it in the present day. In both novels, several of the female characters are presented as border-dwellers in the same manner as both Sidhwa and Baldwin can be considered such: they are both a part of and apart from their homes and the conflicts that arise during Indian partition.

In my examination of the female characters in *Cracking India* and *What the Body Remembers*, I explore the characters as “border inhabitants,” to borrow a phrase from Ambreen Hai (378). The spaces in which the female characters in both novels dwell are monitored and often defined by an external, regulating gaze. Their mobility within their communities is contingent upon the regulation of the female body as the sexual and procreational object of the masculine gaze and their abilities to negotiate this gaze are diverse. In *What the Body Remembers*, Roop internalizes the regulatory gaze that falls upon her and internalizes the fears that it carries with it – fears arising predominantly out of her inability to control the penetration of this gaze into her body and the symbolic meanings it attaches to her body. Her foil in the story, Satya, the barren wife whom Roop displaces with her fertile body, returns the calculating gaze of her husband, refusing to be defined by his standards, and is subsequently discarded. In *Cracking India*, the narrator, Lenny, is a young girl whose pre-menstrual body is yet unguarded by the regulatory masculine gaze. Instead, her gaze and narrative voice in the novel are themselves

distinctly masculine in their possessive objectification of women's bodies. One of her main marks is her Ayah, who uses her highly sexualized body to negotiate her place within society, until her body's religious signification outweighs its value as a sexual object and she is abducted. At various points in the stories, all of these female characters inhabit borders in the sense that they must negotiate a place for themselves in a world of flux of which they are variously a part of and apart from. This flux is caused both by the political unrest that Partition brings and also by the exchange of women's bodies in these books as commodities and ethnic signifiers, leaving their place in their societies contested and unstable.²

It is simple, and perhaps simplistic, to see all of the female characters in these two novels as being trapped by the heavy symbolism that is placed upon their bodies, automatically relegating them to a margin. While the margin connotes a horizontal relation of power, there are always negotiations of power, that can be considered more carefully through an examination of these characters' positionality as "borderhood." As I am approaching both texts as attempts to add the voice of female experience to the historical narrative of India's Partition, I must examine how these voices can be heard through the novels. I chose a theory of borderhood because of its approach to representability. This idea of borderhood can also be described as an in-between, or hybrid, space or place of flux from which new ideas and negotiations can emerge. As Homi Bhabha explains,

² It is important to note that while my thesis focuses on the topic of women's bodies as metaphor and the representation of trauma, there are several issues in the novels that could have been dealt with in theses of their own, including the performance and representation of such categories as religion, class, ethnicity, and the male body.

The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original movements from which the third emerges, rather, hybridity [...] is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. [...] The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation. ("Third Space" 211)

This space of negotiation, initially termed the "beyond" in Bhabha's *Location of Culture*, is an in-between site of transition. Bhabha theorizes that "the 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, or a leaving behind the past [...] we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (1). While both Baldwin and Sidhwa struggle to find a way to represent the trauma of what many women endured during Partition, both realize that some experiences still cannot be represented within the limits of language, and exist in a liminal space in between experience and representation.

In order to tease out this liminal space of negotiation, I will explore *Cracking India* and *What the Body Remembers* using several theoretical frameworks. Working with the scholarship of feminist geography, I will examine how the female characters in these novels negotiate their physical surroundings in the novels. At first glance, the women seem to occupy stereotypically domestic spaces, the negotiation of which become very important when these domestic spaces are interrupted during Partition through violent invasion and forced abandonment in the movement across newly formed borders. The idea of "home" is immediately problematic for Baldwin's female characters who seem to be the guests of men wherever they reside, whether it be in their father's, brother's or husband's homes. In Sidhwa's novel, the female characters are more freely mobile until

the violent divisions that arise during Partition lead to restriction, abduction and violation. Placed in the larger context of Partition, the idea of home and community and the male and female gender roles within these two paradigms become important sites of negotiation in emerging national definitions.

One of the primary negotiations that are being made on a large scale during Partition is a drawing of more distinct boundaries between religious and ethnic groups. While the religious groups are more narrowly defined in terms of affiliation, ritual and signification, ethnic divisions are sometimes more difficult to separate in the division of a country. According to Tina Mai Chen, "ethnicity acquires meaning as a constellation of factors including, but not limited to, gender, race, class and religion. It does not necessarily draw on group identity/ies (Hong, 1992) although it always incorporates gender into emerging identities" (45). This is an important distinction, as the negotiation of identity partly takes place on the level of ethnic identification. The patriarchal nationalist struggles detailed in the novels often impose a primordialist approach to ethnicity, which is characterized by a focus on the affective attachment to blood ties. Chen explains that "communities acquire meaning through the appropriation (by men) of the concept of blood ties associated with the mother-infant relation. The concept is used to promote emotional loyalty to a (male-defined) group extending beyond these ties" (46). This appropriation of the maternal concept of blood ties manifests itself in the sense of entitlement that the men in the novels hold over both the bodies of female characters and their reproductive powers. This primordialist approach to ethnicity is essentialist and often serves to keep women in a domestic, "traditional" role (Chen 46; Chatterjee 120-21), while a constructivist approach to ethnicity is "a more complex and fluid

relationship between gender (as gender not as “woman”) [that] emerges as the spaces of political activity are enlarged and the prevailing structures of meaning examined” (Chen 50). The constructivist approach recognizes gender as an important part of ethnicity, but one that is as fluid and socially constructed as gender itself. It allows for an examination of the performance of gender in relation to ethnicity but not necessarily within a “boundary” of ethnic ideals. Chen goes on to say that:

A constructivist approach gleaned from [Judith] Butler’s feminist theory would examine the regulatory norms through which subject positions are performed, rather than presupposing the subjects we need to put into question. Our focus shifts from pre-given communities and identities, usually associated with hierarchies of identities, to the processes through which ethnicity and gender appear to have boundaries, fixity, and surface” (51).

In the novels, both Lenny and Roop recognize the reduction of individuals into the narrow signification of their religious and ethnic groups. Rather than regarding emerging identities during Partition as a negotiation of past roles and relationships to each other, the boundaries between Muslim, Hindu and Sikh become so rigid that essentialist definitions are advanced in order to raise the emotional tenor of the civil clashes. The female characters in the novels struggle against essentialist notions of their bodies as representing tradition, the wombs of the nation and religious purity that precipitate their victimization as symbols of their ethnic group. The place of the female characters within these definitions, after the dust of Partition begins to settle, is the space that is opened up for negotiations by the end of both novels. Self-definition in both novels begins with an examination of how women’s bodies are used in war as symbolic devices and ends with a process of recording that tries to recuperate the lost stories of women in the largely male violence of Partition.

During Partition, the violation of female bodies was considered an important means of sending messages to the members of the women's entire communities, especially to the men of their communities. The commodification and objectification of women depicted in these novels serve to reduce them, in the eyes of their communities, to their symbolic function as the wombs of the nation, and to elide their subjectivity. When the future of the various religious groups becomes uncertain in these novels, the differences between the groups become heightened and the definition of people narrow to their religious affiliation. When all bodies begin to stand in for symbols of religious affiliation, the women's body, already highly symbolic, becomes overwrought with signification. While not considered at length in this thesis, the issue of male bodies at this moment of shifting borders is also rich in the two novels. The symbolism invested in male bodies is that of the "carrier" of the active seed that will be planted in their women's wombs in order to propagate the future generations of their ethnic group. Furthermore, the men are the figures that mark religious difference in the novels, as they wear their religious signs directly on their bodies – as clothing, facial hair, head wear and foreskin. While men symbolize the political and military power of the nation, their power is contingent on its longevity, which rests in the fertile wombs of the nation's women. To interrupt the patriarchal line of inheritance of their power, one must interrupt or contaminate the vessel of future generations – the women. While the violation takes place in the women's bodies, the symbolic aggression is pointed toward the men of the community. In this way, women's bodies are reduced to the vessels of male honour and progeny and their suffering is subordinated to their signification to their communities.

Baldwin and Sidhwa use their power as storytellers to fill out the void of subjectivity left behind when the symbolic bodies of women have fulfilled their purpose. The female characters they create are fluid, unstable subjects who are trying to negotiate their place in the world at a time in history that is equally unstable. The stories of what happened to abducted, mutilated and raped women during Partition are lost in the staggering numbers of statistics; similarly, the exact details of what happened to these violated women are left largely unrepresentable in both Sidhwa's and Baldwin's novels. While historical fiction can work to tease out the silent voices of women's experiences, the experience of violation, abduction and rape are still relegated to the edges of these texts; they happen to other women. Both Sidhwa and Baldwin recognize that while the experiences of women must be recognized, representing the traumatic events of their lives is much more complex than a mere recognition that they happened.

Chapter One

The Regulation and Negotiations of the Female Body: A Theoretical Framework

In my experience as a reader, one of the most striking features of both colonial and postcolonial literature has, to me, always been the versatile use of women's bodies in representing so many facets of experiences that tend to privilege the male body, from war and conquest, to capitalism and production, to tradition and independence. In reading *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India*, it is apparent that both Baldwin and Sidhwa are aware of the historical objectification of the female body as a political trope and subsequently explore the various effects of this objectification through female characters. Neither Baldwin nor Singh conclude with these tropes, however, as both authors explore how women negotiate their roles and try to show how one can peel back these tropes to uncover the female voices beneath them. My first task in studying these novels is to look at where and how female bodies are situated in the narratives and how their stories are represented by the narrators within the social context of the narratives. In doing so, I will examine the two different conceptions of "space." First, I will look at the material spaces in which women dwell, in terms of the physical spaces that they are relegated to in society and their ability to move from the domestic to the public space. Second, I will examine the metaphorical spaces in which their stories dwell within the Story of Partition. In this exploration, I will look at how Baldwin and Sidhwa use their narratives to create a space where women's voices will be heard, but also how they complicate the notion of this space in their inability to represent the traumatic physical violence suffered by female characters who remain largely peripheral to their narratives. In studying the location of women's bodies in the texts and their movement

within the stories, I examine the surveillance of women's bodies through the regulating gaze, both internal and external. This gaze fortifies the boundaries that surround the woman – both corporeal and architectural – and is negotiated differently by the female characters in the two novels. Geography becomes even more intricately wound into the stories as both deal with the events surrounding Partition, which resulted in the shifting of national boundaries and filial loyalties. The unsettling of the geographical borders parallels the intrusion of the corporeal borders of women's bodies as the female body becomes a site of symbolic, violent communication between the men of opposing religious groups. Neither Baldwin nor Singh abandon their narratives here, however, as both develop female characters who bear witness to the suffering of women and whose observations about negotiation, victimization and survival offer the reader insights into the stories of women during this moment in human history.

By using the genre of historical fiction, Baldwin and Sidhwa are able to lend their voices to the evolving process of telling the story of Partition and how it affected and continues to affect the national memories of India and Pakistan. Rumina Sethi addresses the manner in which history and fiction can compliment each other:

Fiction and history have a similar discourse, in terms of both their narrative structure and the location of each in historical time. It is, therefore, prudent to recognize the fictive nature of narrative history. In the same way, all literary fictions are also forms of history. [...] What binds together history and fiction is the historicity of our experience which can be best represented in the two narrative genres working together in a symbiotic relationship. (965)

In their narrative nature, both history and fiction are tools that we use to make sense of the events of human experience. While History, as a discipline, can provide us with a broad picture of what “happened,” the narrative natures of both historiography and fiction can be used as tools to flesh out the more individualized experiences of broader historical events.

Urvashi Butalia explains that the “official” history of Partition found in books often centers around political events and statistics and often avoid dealing with the more “human” side of the traumatic events surrounding the upheaval because of the difficulty of capturing the “human dimensions” of tragedy: “These other aspects [...] somehow seemed to have ‘lesser’ status [...]. Perhaps this was because they had to do with difficult things: loss and sharing, friendship and enmity, grief and joy, with a painful regret and nostalgia for loss of home, country and friends. [...] These were difficult things to capture ‘factually’” (*Other* 6). While Butalia separates history as a grand narrative and fiction as a personal connection to these events a little too neatly, the representation of the personal experience of past moments is an incredibly important part of how fiction adds to the historiography of a nation. Butalia joins James H. Young in the belief that representing a traumatic historical event can benefit from several different kinds of “remembering.” Through memory, testimonial, fiction, statistics and public record, a picture of what happened and how it continues to affect generations to follow a traumatic historical moment can be conceived. In *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, Young states that,

Instead of isolating events from their representations, this approach recognizes that literary and historical truths of the Holocaust may not be entirely separable. That is, the truths of the Holocaust – both the factual and the interpretive – can no longer be said to lie beyond our understanding, but must now be seen to inhere in the ways we understand, interpret and write history. (1)

Young’s discussion of the traumatic events of the Holocaust in some ways parallels the effects of Partition in their effects on several generations following the event. In Butalia’s words, “the way people choose to remember an event, a history, is at least as important as what one might call the ‘facts’ of that history” (*Other* 8). Events as traumatic as the Holocaust or Partition are not a single historical moments for a nation. Rather, they must be

examined through generations and through various modes of representation in an attempt to work through the events and their effects. Fictional texts can be used in conjunction with historical sources in order to personalize the events that have traumatized a nation and its people to aid in the process of understanding and healing. Each text adds to the body of texts that make up how we remember, represent and attempt to understand a human experience that is not singularly interpretable. Our attempts to represent the voices and experiences of our past must involve an understanding that, in every telling of the past, there lies an implicit silencing of other voices of experience.

Postcolonial feminism was born out of several parallel concerns in postcolonial and feminist thinking about the representation, or lack thereof, of women and the colonized subject in patriarchal and colonial discourses. Much of the work in the field arose out of a sense of frustration and anger over the marginal positions of women and colonized subjects in dominant global culture. In *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin state that "in many different societies, women, like colonized subjects, have been relegated to the position of 'Other,' 'colonized' by various forms of patriarchal domination. They thus share with colonized races and cultures an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression." Postcolonial feminism deals with the problem of voice and representation in historical experiences of those who are not represented in the dominant group. While at first both postcolonial and feminist scholars sought a shift in power through a simple inversion of the "center" for the "margin," for example, substituting a female or native canon for the traditional Western male canon, both eventually moved toward an examination and questioning of the "established" canons of traditional authority (Ashcroft et al 249). This is not to say that there is an easy alliance between the fields of feminism and postcolonialism.

Colonial tropes of conquering a virgin, female territory and using the female body as a metaphor for a nation, are often renewed in post-colonial independence struggles. As Sangeeta Ray demonstrates, the male postcolonial subject looks ahead to a future of political progress for the nation, while the female postcolonial subject is often made to represent the tradition that existed before colonial interruption (2). Sara Mills explains that, in *Real and Imagined Women*, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan “stresses that the parameters of post-colonial female subjectivity are mapped out both by colonial and anti-colonial forces, and that the boundaries and content of femininity, at a symbolic level, are often where issues of national identity are worked out” (103). The women of a nation are not recognized either by colonial or anti-colonial patriarchal forces as metaphors of conquest and tradition. In order to counter further relegation into the margin, W.D. Ashcroft suggests that feminism borrow from postcolonial theory in order to re-negotiate these boundaries and find a place for their voices in fighting the reduction of the women to a metaphorical role in postcolonial struggles.

Ashcroft first aligns the two disciplines:

Both [postcolonial and feminist discourses] are articulated by resistance to dominant authoritarian and neo-authoritarian orthodoxy and both speak from their position within the hegemonic language to subvert that language. But the most profound similarity is probably the extent to which both ‘woman’ and ‘post-colonial’ exist outside representation itself. [...] At this point, post-colonialism can be of some use. For the woman may not speak so much from the position of her *exclusion* from language as from the position of its inadequacy for her experience. (23,26, emphasis Ashcroft’s)

Like the postcolonial subject, the feminist writer finds difficulty in representing herself and her experiences using the language that has traditionally excluded her. Ashcroft asserts that

part of the process of liberating what [Dennis] Lee calls the ‘cadence of home’ in postcolonial writing is the reconceiving of the lived space within which difference is focused. This need to write out of a sense of place is equivalent to the exhortations of *écriture féminine* to ‘write the body.’ [...] In most respects, it would seem that the settler colonies had a greater problem in

writing out of their sense of place, because place had to be constructed in that writing. But this is precisely how women must 'write their bodies,' by reconstructing, revisioning the body as a site of difference. (27, emphasis Ashcroft's)

In effect, it is exactly this sense of placelessness that women must draw from in order to open up a space that allows for a writing or representation of their experience in their bodies and their lives. In order to examine this sense of placelessness in Baldwin and Sidhwa's novels, we must examine the physical spaces that their female characters are relegated to and their negotiation of these spaces in a period when the symbolic exigency of their bodies led to massive victimization and crises in the definition of "home."

In examining spaces in the novels, and specifically the spaces in which the female characters dwell (both figuratively and literally), I borrow heavily from the discipline of feminist geography. Linda McDowell describes feminist geography as addressing "three of the central concepts – space, place and nature – and the ways in which these are implicated in the structure of gender divisions in different societies" ("Space" 159). Space and who occupies that space has been implicated in the feminist movement, written in response to the sense of a public/private binary that divided the experiences of men and women in society. While men were associated with the public space, women were generally aligned with the private, domestic space of the home. The binarism that characterized the feminism of the nineteen-sixties to the early eighties has been affected by contemporary schools of thought – most notably postmodernism and deconstruction – having been interrupted by concepts of negotiation and the fluidity of identity. According to McDowell, the ideas of fluidity and negotiation also flow into the discipline of feminist geography:

Geographers now argue that places are contested, fluid and uncertain. It is socio-political practices that define place and these practices result in overlapping and intersecting places with multiple and changing boundaries,

constituted and maintained by social relations of power and exclusion. Places are made through power relations which construct rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a space and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of experience (*Gender* 4)

McDowell's description of the fluidity of borders is important in the examination of Baldwin's and Singh's novels, as they deal with the establishment of and movement across newly formed political borders, as well as the negotiation of social borders by several female characters. Aside from the political border being drawn across India, the female characters in *Cracking India* and *What the Body Remembers* must negotiate the social boundaries that entrap them in roles constructed by the patriarchal societies in which they dwell.

In the novels, one of the primary regulatory forces that reinforces the boundaries of the woman's body is the regulatory masculine gaze. The gaze that falls upon the woman's body is a gaze that defines the woman as the object of that gaze. In a sense, this gaze that defines woman as object in that it treats the woman's body simply as a reflection of what the gazer wants it to be. The gaze instills the body with significance that is outside the looked-upon woman's control and strips the woman of her subjectivity and ability to control the meaning of her own body. The two novels reveal two different ways in which the gaze can be negotiated. The first way is described by John Berger in his book, *Ways of Seeing*:

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. [...] And so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. (46, emphasis Berger's)

In *What the Body Remembers*, Baldwin's main character, Roop, internalizes the regulatory gazes of her father and surrounding family in order to prepare herself for the marriage market,

resulting in the self-regulation that Berger addresses. The character is always aware of the penetrating gazes of non-related men and their potential to transform her body into unacceptable definitions. In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa's character Ayah internalizes the masculine gazes that surround her and caress her curves, but, before the violence of Partition, she is able to negotiate her movement in and around these gazes. The character is able to manipulate her sexuality and its effect on the men surrounding her, but only until her body comes to signify the religious designation that is to be eliminated or desecrated in the nationalist fervour of Partition. Lenny, as a young girl who is not yet considered in the sexual market, is not subjected to the regulatory masculine gaze in the same way that her ayah is, and therefore is able to act as the gazer. Her position as narrator of the story necessitates that, to some extent, she be the eyes of the story, but her gaze is masculine in character in that it is a possessive and sexualized gaze that is predominantly centered on the two sexualized women in the text, her Ayah and her mother. While her gaze could be viewed as the curious gaze of the prepubescent girl, learning her place in society, I characterize Lenny's gaze as "masculine" because of what it projects upon the bodies of her mother and Ayah. There is a possessiveness in her gaze that acts to project upon these women what she desires them to be. Although the argument has been made that Lenny's gaze is homoerotic (Hai 395), I believe that Lenny's gaze can be both homoerotic and masculine, if I define the masculine gaze, as Berger does, as one that wields power, and retains the power to define its object. As Berger defines it, the masculine gaze holds within it a sense of entitlement to define its object as it needs to in order to retain and reinforce its own self-definitions. The social constructions of women, which are defined by the self-reflective masculine gaze, are important precursors to understanding the use of women's bodies as metaphors in these two novels. When Roop

internalizes the regulatory gaze, she initially submits to its definitions. Knowing that she is defined in terms of the value of her beauty in the marriage market, she sees herself in the commodified terms of society. Similarly, Ayah internalizes the sexualizing gaze of men in order to surround herself with generous admirers. The violence of Partition, witnessed by Roop and experienced violently by Ayah, takes the symbolic nature of the female body to extremes; women's bodies and their accepted symbolic worth as mothers (and the sexuality that motherhood implies) are used to justify them as intermediary sites to be brutalized and used by men. The invasion of the woman's body that is symbolic in the gaze becomes tangible and visceral as a way of usurping male proprietary rights and power.

As the objects of the masculine gaze, the signification of women's bodies in a patriarchal, nationalist discourse are aligned with the political objectives of constructing new definitions and delineating boundaries where none previously existed, or where they were previously contested. Although Rey Chow discusses patriarchal systems of domination in ideas of nationalism in the context of China, her ideas are germane in to discussion of India:

Time and again in the last few decades, when things have just begun to be open enough for such issues of [feminist] liberation to come into their own, we see a crackdown of the kind that immediately requires the postponement of the consideration of such issues. As a result, Chinese women, like their counterparts in many other patriarchal 'Third World' countries, are required to sacrifice and postpone their needs and their rights again and again for the greater cause of nationalism and patriotism. ("Violence" 88)

Chow obviously aligns nationalism and patriotism with patriarchal definitions. When a nation is being defined, it is the male definition of the nation that is primary. During the violent conflict that seems to precipitate the solidification of boundaries necessary to the defining of a new nation, these definitions are given significance by the violent inscription of difference that imposes itself on the body of the "enemy." In *Cracking India* and *What the Body*

Remembers, it is the male characters who are portrayed as the violent arms of the struggle to delineate difference, while the female characters fulfill the role of recuperation and nurturing after the violent men have done their damage. In these novels, women's bodies are considered the vessel through which the seed of the man and his family, and, by extension, his ethnic³ group, is carried on into the future. Seen as such within the social roles ascribed to them in these two novels, women's bodies are reduced to metaphors for the entire ethnic group to which they belong; their wombs are seen as the soil in which the seed of the nation (the originary source of ethnic distinction) is planted. Symbolic messages are sent to the men of the opposing group by interrupting the patriarchal and ethnic lines of progeneration through the rape and mutilation of a "nation's women." It is in considering the theory of the masculine gaze along side the dozens of raped and mutilated women's bodies in these two novels that we are able to begin to understand the effect of this reduction of body to metaphor.

As the object of the desirous masculine gaze, the woman's body is made to represent that which the gazer needs her to represent. Jenny Robinson, in her analysis of Luce Irigaray's work, describes the relation of the masculine gazer to the object of his gaze as a self-reflection: "The masculine subject produces a self-referential, limited knowledge, reflecting only who he (imagines he) is" (287). In her book, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray describes the masculine gaze as a mirror which only reinforces how he must see himself (129). In using the bodies of women as violent messages from the men of one side of a conflict to another, it is presumed that the significance of the woman's body is static. Women's bodies, as constructed by the masculine gaze, are not dynamic, signifying bodies

³ I use "ethnic" as it was defined in the primordial sense in this argument.

with internal agency. If they were, then the “messages” that the mutilated bodies of women carry to the opposition in a conflict would not be presupposed to be so clear and relevant to the men. If a woman’s body was not seen as the property of the men of the nation, to be used as the “alchemists of men’s seed,” as Baldwin puts it (*What* 304), or fertile soil in which to sow their progeny, then the rape of a woman would not be considered a symbolic act of interrupting the patriarchal and ethnic blood lines. If a woman’s womb did not signify to men the “womb of the nation,” then the significance of the evisceration of the woman’s womb would not have a personal significance to the men of the nation that elides the experience of the woman who suffers the mutilation. It is women’s positions as the social constructions of the masculine gaze that allows the signification of women’s bodies to be considered static enough to act as message boards between men, ignoring the experiences of the bodies, and therefore the voices, of women and their stories in both of the novels. Allowing the bodies of women to remain mere symbols of meaning in relation to men and their nationalist efforts discounts the negotiations that women make in their lives in order to function within restrictive social constructions. Gillian Rose states that “a single glance, no matter how sustained or how penetrating, will see a coherent and orderly space of self/knowledge only at the cost of denying and disavowing its disruptions” (“Distance” 778). While this gaze acts to elide the subjectivity of women, one of the primary issues in these texts which I will examine is how female characters who are both subject of and subject to the masculine gaze attempt to negotiate the boundaries that are placed upon them in order to survive the violence and political upheaval that they experience during Partition. One way into these negotiations is through an examination of the metaphorical spaces created by borders and boundaries.

Through feminist geography, we can use the terms of the discipline to examine how women negotiate what seem like the very rigid borders of socially constructed roles. Caren Kaplan explains that “maps and borders are provocative metaphors, signaling a heightening awareness of the political and economic structures that demarcate zones of inclusion and exclusion as well as the interstitial spaces of indeterminacy” (144). The period that marked the delineation of religious groups and political borders during Partition is characterized in these novels as a period of heightened flux. The identities and loyalties of friends and neighbors changed daily, based on their alliance with the increasingly divided groups of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. While the creation of borders connotes a division and a definition of difference, the creation of borders simultaneously involves the presence of a certain amount of flux. It is in this flux, according to Homi Bhabha, that the negotiation of identities occurs: “These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (*Location 1-2*). This space of flux, or ‘interstice’ as Bhabha names it, involves “the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” (*Location 2*), and allow us to re-examine spaces that have been previously described in postcolonial theory as ‘margins’ as, instead, recuperative, ‘in-between’ spaces where the re-negotiation of previous constructions can be initiated. Ambreen Hai describes this condition as one of “borderhood” and distinguishes it from marginality: “*marginality* is to be differentiated from *borderhood* because the former rests upon a binary opposition between a presupposed strong center and weak margin, while the latter suggests a third or non-aligned space between and unsettling to binarisms” (382,

emphasis Hai's). Bhabha describes how this 'Third Space' unsettles the static meanings that binaries presume to impose:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding process. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by an originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. (*Location* 36-7)

In this Third Space, there is a resistance to essentialist notions of such categories as gender, ethnicity, race, and all those which enclose being and an utterance of that being in rigid, presupposed definitions and language. Through the Third Space, we can see a fissure opening up within traditional representations where new ideas of meaning can emerge and previous points of reference can be unseated. The intervention of this Third Space on our ideas of the creation of meaning results in the destruction of the naturalization of constructed roles as well as opening up a space for contested and contesting definitions to be re-formed. Inhabiting this Third Space is, in a sense, the condition of inhabiting a border or in-between space where meanings become fluid, speaking to multiple struggles with power as opposed to the somewhat unidirectional "fighting back" that characterizes the struggle from the margin toward the centre. Hai describes border inhabitation as "a critical if ambiguous site of vital reconstruction, position replete with contradictions and difficulty, but also with regenerative promise" (380). Both Baldwin and Sidhwa address the contradictions and difficulty that Hai mentions in their struggle to represent the unrepresentable trauma experienced by women during Partition. Urvashi Butalia speaks to the inability of language to represent what many women experienced during Partition in her book, *The Other Side of Silence*. She also raises the question of what needs to be spoken: "it is never a simple question of silence and speech,

for speech is not always cathartic, not always liberating" (42). Both Baldwin and Sidhwa must find that balance of representation and responsibility that a writer of fiction risks upsetting in rewriting, or perhaps more aptly, re-listening to, the past. Mirroring both Baldwin's and Sidhwa's hybrid positions, the characters that both authors develop in order to take on this task of witnessing and recording can be described as inhabiting a border, struggling within a Third Space, in order to perform these negotiations.

In *Cracking India*, the narrator, Lenny, can be seen as a border-dweller, while her Ayah's position becomes much more rigid by the end of the novel. While Ayah's character can initially be posited as a border-dweller in that many classes and religious groups converge in her company and her servant class allows her a certain mobility in the public sphere, Ayah's highly sexualized servant body is turned into the victimized body of the Hindu woman at the hands of her former suitors, and her experience is subsequently relegated to the margins of the story. As a Parsee, Lenny does not fit into the religious binary lines that are being drawn between Muslim groups and Hindu and Sikh groups. Her young age, situated as she is as a prepubescent girl in a culture that commodifies the woman-as-mother, allows her to move in social spaces from which she normally would be "protected." Lenny's servants, especially her Ayah and her cook, Imam Din, enable her to circulate between various classes of people. Ayah represents a figure around which the various religious groups congregate at the beginning of the novel, only to emphasize the restriction of her movement as her religious signification outweighs her social mobility. As a border figure within the novel who is also aware of the fictionality of the genre, Lenny's mobility gives her the access to the stories that have been largely silenced in the reduction of the women of a nation into national signifiers. The voices of Ayah and the fallen women, victims of kidnapping and rape,

however, are still marginalized, lost to silence in Lenny's narrative. Lenny's borderhood is characterized by her multiple positionings (as prepubescent, as Parsee, as child) and movement (usually mediated by the access of a servant) across class, religious, and ethnic lines, while Ayah is silenced by a narrator who cannot access her experience. While the narrative turns briefly away from the experiences of Lenny to see Partition through the eyes of a village boy, it never gives the reader a way into the silence that surrounds the experiences of women that is unmediated by male experience. The narrative, instead, while it gives a nod to the violence that occurred against women's bodies, leaves the actual experiences of these women and the results of their "fallen" status in society (as they are now ruined as pure, untainted wombs) mired in silence.

Roop's position as a border figure is problematic, but results in hope for the telling of women's stories. Women's bodies are represented as bridges in many ways. Sangeeta Ray states that women act as bridges to the past, with their bodies often signaling the tradition that is masked in male 'Westernized' bodies, which necessarily indicate an eye to 'progress,' or the future (1-2). While women are often invisible in the present, they represent tradition (past) and house the future (womb) that is animated by the active male seed. As seen through the commodification of women through marriage in *What the Body Remembers*, Elizabeth Cowie describes the woman's body as a sort of social bridge, in anthropological terms, that unites two groups (kin) in a filial structure of support and exchange of goods (51-52). Women, in their function as mothers, also act as genetic bridges for the male patriarchal structure. Roop's body acts in all of these ways in the novel. Although she can be seen as having internalized the masculine gaze and is constantly trying to be what she is expected to be, Baldwin sets Roop up as being the carrier of stories. This is the problematic part of Roop

as a border figure, as her being the vessel of stories does not do much to discount her positioning as simply a mother-body. In a sense, she is germinating the stories of these women through the words of the men. However, due to the fact that the stories are coming from a place of male-construction into the birthing of female constructed stories, Roop can be seen as a border figure in the sense that it is through her that the transformation of men's silences into women's stories takes place. After Satya dies, her presence and her strong, independent ideas speak to Roop and feed her strength as she tries to get her family through the trauma of Partition. Roop takes the stories of the dead or missing women in her family, Kusum, Revati Bhua and Gujri, into her body to be carried on, so as not to be lost. With her observations of men and how they see their women (as reflections of themselves), Roop realizes that these women's stories exist in the silences of the men's stories and she must remember these women and their stories, not as reflections of male experience, but through the silences that speak to female experience.

In both postcolonial and feminist theories, the ideas of space and language are pivotal in beginning to examine how and where groups subordinated by the patriarchal, colonial power that has dominated human history can find their voices. In order to tease out these voices, they must first somehow be located in the context of the dominant voices and then in the context of the space popularly referred to by postcolonial theorists as the "margin." In the struggle to find a way of representing the female postcolonial subject, one must deal with a sort of double silence – first to patriarchy and then to colonialism. The female characters in this book, while central to the narrations that privilege them, dwell in a social space that is separate from the public political world. Simultaneously, however, these female characters and women that surround them are viciously implicated in the violence that accompanies

ethnic clashes over territory. In both novels, the female characters are represented as being highly regulated by a regulatory masculine gaze that first positions them as sexual objects, then as symbolic indicators of nationalism and difference. In trying to recuperate the stories of women during the violent partition of India, both Baldwin and Sidhwa struggle with the difficulties of representation and end up crossing some boundaries of silence, while finding others impenetrable within the limitations of language.

Chapter Two

The Imaginary Boundaries of Home and the Body: Negotiating the Regulatory Gaze

The field of feminist geography examines the different spaces that are occupied by men and women in society, and how these spaces contribute to the construction of gender roles in society. Early feminist work outlined various binaries within which the gendered roles of men and women fell. One of the prominent divisions was the alignment of males with public and political spaces and females with private, domestic spaces, especially with the home. Many of the contemporary “post-” schools of thought (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, for example) have worked to elide this binarism, instead adopting a more fluid concept of gender and identity studies in general. In postcolonialism specifically, the recognition of the fragmentation of culture and geography, the voices of the exiled and repressed, and the diasporic nature of the post-colonial world have precipitated the bending of such rigid categories of identity in order to accommodate the issue of ideas on identity and its relation to a space called home. As W.D. Ashcroft explains, “writing postcolonial ‘place’ is not writing the lineaments of some geographical given but writing out of a difference which seeks to dismantle the binary structures in which the colonial margin is negated” (28). In *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India*, both Baldwin and Sidhwa attempt to write out of a space where not only the colonial margin is negotiated by giving a voice to the individual experience in the political upheaval of Partition, but also the voice of female experience is complicated by who tells the stories, and whose stories are told.

The violence that enveloped the rapid, fracturing process of Partition in India in 1947 precipitated and plagued the movement of approximately twelve million people across the newly scrawled border. Both Baldwin and Sidhwa set their narratives around the time of Partition. This period of political transition mirrors the personal transitions experienced by their female characters. Baldwin's novel, *What the Body Remembers*, spans the period from 1928, when the main character, Roop, is seven, to September of 1947, a month after Roop and her Sikh family's migration across the border into India. Roop is from an upper-middle class rural Sikh family and is taken as the second wife of an upper class urban Sikh engineer. In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa's narrator, Lenny, ages from approximately four to nine years old over the course of the novel. Lenny is Parsee (or Parsi), a religious minority that did not fit into either side of the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh split that emerged geographically and socially during the process of Partition. Her position as an upper-middle class Parsee child allows for a certain detachment as well as a certain freedom from the forced up-rooting and movement that other characters in the novel suffer. In this chapter, I examine the geography of several female characters in the novels. Through geography, I mean to discuss the locus of female spaces in the novels how these locations serve as a means of regulating women's activities and roles within society. I explore the negotiation of both domestic and public spaces in the novels by male and female characters. Within this discussion, I introduce the effect of the gaze as a regulatory force upon women, disciplining (although often characterized by the male characters in the novel as "protecting") their bodies to occupy only certain spaces within the culture. The effect and regulation of place and space, as well as the notion of "home," on women's bodies in

these novels are especially important in contrast to the forced movement and dislocation of most of these bodies in the upheaval of Partition.

While the female characters' lives are mostly relegated to the domestic space, the idea of home is immediately problematic. The homes they inhabit are the homes of men – fathers, husbands, brother – and their places in these homes are represented, especially by Baldwin, as tenuous at best. The illusory “protection” of women within these walls is exposed as such when the violence of Partition penetrates the imagined boundary between the public and the private. Women are abducted from their homes; men enter the homes of other men and violate “their” women within these supposedly safe walls, erected around them under the guise of their own protection. The condition of “borders” and inhabiting these borders lends to the creation of an in-between space, in which the stories of the women can be revealed. As Ambreen Hai states in her article “Border Work, Border Trouble,” “the position of one on the border (not simply crossing it, but *inhabiting* it), while previously seen as representing marginality (resting on a binary opposition of center and margin), can now be seen as a third or non-aligned space between and upsetting binarisms” (2). The female characters in these two novels all recognize the permeability of the walls of the home; Lenny does so particularly when Ayah is abducted from her home, and Roop does so in her constant insecurity in each home she enters. When the imagined security of the home is breached, the women begin to look at their world partly as participants in it, but also as witnesses somewhat outside of it. They are not fully a part of these “homes” they inhabit in that their presence is perpetually uncertain.

The concept of home and its relationship to identity is an important issue in postcolonial studies. "Home" to the indigenous person is complicated by colonialism, with its appending exile from traditions, and often, religion, culture and home itself. Gita Rajan and Radhika Mohanram describe the resulting relationship between home and identity:

The relationship/difference between the postcolonial and the indigenous person can be positioned in the spatiality of location and the meaning of "home" to these two groups. Identity (or lack of it) emanates from the space that we occupy and call home, its construction within history, and its entangled relationship with the mother country. (9)

While the concept of "home" connotes a connection, an originary source where one can connect with the roots that can form identity, the notion of home and the connection of the female characters to home as "their" space, not just the space they are kept, is complicated by both Baldwin and Sidhwa. The authors the invasion of the domestic space as intricately linked to the invasion of women's bodies: Kusum is eviscerated and killed in her husband's father's home and Ayah is abducted from Lenny's home. The invasion of these homes highlights the precarious boundaries that the walls of the home are supposed to create in order to protect women from the dangers of the public world. In describing the condition of the colonized man, Frantz Fanon states that: "The look the native turns on the settler town is a look of lust, a look of envy; [...] to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible" (*Wretched* 39). In order to recuperate the power that the colonizer, gendered here as a male, has stolen from the native man, the native must look to the locus of power: the colonizer's home. Fanon's statement locates the source of colonial and patriarchal power in the home, and within

that, in the body of the woman. Encroachment upon the domestic space of the home and contamination of the bloodline serves as an interruption or a usurpation of power.

As one tries to sort out a post-colonial identity after the presence, if not the influence, of the colonizer has been eliminated, the space of the home (as in *homeland*, as in a renegotiation of pockets of power that have left) must be reconciled with a new/old, or hybrid, identity which is a negotiation of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial identities. It is this space that opens up to cause the violent (re-?) drawing of imaginary (and geographical) lines between religious identities. In this vacuum that is created, Homi Bhabha states:

In a feverish stillness, the intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement the border between the home and the world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us the division that is as dividing as it is disorientating. ("World" 445)

The invasion of the home is ultimately an invasion of identity, or an invasion of where the identity is traditionally sought and protected. In these two novels, the invasion of the home is amplified by the invasion of the body. When the border between the body and the world is crossed, whether it be through rape, mutilation, or abduction, the subjectivity of the individual is pierced. One's identity is attacked through the objectification of and lack of authority over one's own body. The confusion caused in the blurring of the body/home and the world leads, in these novels, to a blurring of identity that seemingly can only be wrought by its inscription upon and *in* the bodies of those who represent what one is *not*. In this moment of displacement, the violence erupts out of an imposition of identity through difference, the imposition of which can cause the traumatic moment that intrudes on the space of negotiation of identities through a violent objectification of

the body. The female characters' relation to, and at times contradictory dissociation from, the domestic space in both novels begins in childhood with the contrast between the young girls' relations to the home and movement outside the home with that of their brothers'.

In the first part of both novels, we see the narrators of the respective novels in relation to their brothers, contrasting the relative stasis of the girl-child with the dynamic movement of the boy-child. In *Cracking India*, Lenny begins her narrative with the statement, "My world is compressed" (11). She then outlines the borders of her immediate world, both geographically and economically: "Warris Road, lined with rain gutters, lies between Queens Road and Jail Road: both wide, clean, orderly streets at the affluent fringes of Lahore" (11). Her world seems to be contained, or compressed, by the colonial (Queen) and the regulatory (Jail), although it is urban and "affluent." Lenny describes her little brother, Adi, as a beautiful figure who is always in movement:

He is formed of gold mercury. He never stands still enough to see. He turns, ducks, moves, looks away, vanishes [...] Quickly he shifts to another heap of toys and garbage in another corner; or out the doors into the garden, or vegetable patch, or servants' quarters at the back of the house" (32-3).

Adi's world is not compressed; in contrast to Lenny, his life seems limitless. While Lenny still fits into her childhood cot at home, Adi, her younger brother, outgrows his by the time he is four (33). About this same time, Adi outgrows the domestic space that, as a girl, Lenny is tied to, to go to school. As her doctor states, "'She's doing fine without school isn't she?' says the doctor. 'Don't pressure her ... her nerves could be affected. She doesn't need to become a professor. [...] She'll marry – have children – lead a happy, carefree life. No need to strain her with studies and exams'" (25). The doctor's

assumption is that no choice means no pressure; no freedom means that Lenny will have no choice but to be happy with her carefree, simple life in the home. Tagged onto this ignorant assumption of women and work outside the home is the doctor's assumption that work in the home is no work at all. Paired with the fact that "a great deal of [Adi's] life is lived apart [at school]" (33) is the fact that Adi is light-skinned enough to "pass" as a British child (Ayah calls him her "little English baba"[34]), allowing him to cross cultural, as well as private/public boundaries. Like "gold mercury," his identity is fluid. He is mistaken for an English child, and their ayah takes them to Lawrence Gardens where she "encourages him to run across the space separating native babies and English babies" (35). Adi's gender and skin tone allow him to pass across borders that are not open to Lenny as a dark girl. As Jill Didur points out, they also "emphasize the racial and patriarchal privilege that Adi shares with the white boys," while Lenny's "surplus of pigment is considered a double liability" (52, 53). Lenny states that "everyone says: 'It's a pity Adi's fair and Lenny so dark. He's a boy. Anyone will marry him'" (90). Not only does Sidhwa present Lenny's gender as a restriction on her freedom of movement, she also shows that Lenny's skin tone restricts her options for the future, creating what appears to be a doubly enforced margin of gender and race.

The contrasting conditions of brother and sister is reiterated in *What the Body Remembers*. As a child of seven, when Roop's story begins, Baldwin aligns Roop with her brother, Jeevan, making her unaware that the freedom allotted to him is not accessible to her. Roop imitates him, boxes with him, and tries to eat the egg and meat that is meant only for him, intended to ready him for a life of "what-men-are-for," a life of "real" work, while Roop's diet is strictly vegetarian, covering her dietary needs for

“what-women-are-for,” “just” child bearing. In contrast to Jeevan’s, Roop’s movement outside the home is also restricted and, when allowed, closely monitored by other characters. Upon returning from a picnic, “Jeevan jumps off the back of the camel with a thud and embraces his friend. They are off to play a few rounds of kabaddi near the Mughal tombs at the far end of the village. But Roop must go home with Gujri and [her sister] Madani” (26-27). Roop is not allowed to go and play unsupervised for “her own protection.” Her world is limited to her family haveli. She is not allowed to cross the border of the tunnel, the line between her family’s property and the public space of the village. Even when her mother dies, she is not allowed to participate in the ceremony of her funeral, as it is “men’s work”; instead, she “stands at the mouth of the tunnel [the boundary of her world] and watches till Mama’s body is just a small white dot squeezed between the walls of the village” (39). The image of the constricted female body is carried through right into death.

Roop and Madani are sent to a relative’s house to attend a Sikh girls’ school and to be cared for by an older sister-cousin, “like-a-mother” (82), amidst the protests of neighbors: “Abu Ibrahim says Papaji will be sorry one day that he is educating Roop and Madani because ‘what do they need it for?’” (82). They are sent to learn Sikh languages, and to be prevented from learning Hindu and Muslim customs and stories. While up to this point, their ethnic identities have encompassed Sikh, Hindu and Muslim cultures, the narrowing of religious definitions and ethnic affiliations hint at the growing divisions among the religious groups in the village. The girls end up attending a boarding school, due to a spoiled Roop’s insistence on attending a school with chairs, playing on her father’s sense of honour, where both Roop and Madani stay until their respective

marriages. Although this seems like a movement into the public realm, their ignorance of national politics (the execution of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh following his bombing of the legislative assembly, Gandhi's salt protest, the exclusion of a Sikh presence in Mahatma's flag for free India, and various important other arrests and protests) indicates otherwise: "Roop and Madani were in school with walls twelve feet high, and all this passed them by" (92). Their movement out of the boundaries of the home is not a movement into the world, but rather a dislocation into another compressed, sealed space, a space that is contained by the seemingly impervious walls of the home.

When her sister is married, Roop spends her summers off from school inside the haveli, learning the discipline she will need to become a "suitable" wife. In the space of time between rebellious youth and her marriage, through the tutelage of the other women in her family, "Roop has learned shame" (115). Within the walls of the haveli, Roop "absorbs [her father] Bachan Singh's fears, just as her Mama did while confined in purdah, and ripens them to fullness" (114). Her father's fears of other men invading the space of her body, whether it be with their eyes or their bodies, heightens to the point that she herself is kept in purdah, restricted to the walls of the home. She is not even allowed to cross the street to her aunt's. Her father's fear restricts her to the protection that the walls of the home are supposed to provide, but at the same time, it de-stabilizes another boundary: that of her own body. Baldwin writes, "it is a dread Roop shares with other girls in Pari Darvaza – Sikh, Hindu or Muslim – fear of her own body, that lurer of lust from the eyes of unrelated men" (115). This description of the female body as "lurer of lust" creates a central contradiction in the lives of the female characters in both novels. As Linda McDowell notes in her book, *Gender, Identity and Place*, E. Tseelon describes

this as the “modesty paradox [where] woman is constructed as seduction to be punished for it” (48). This paradox implies that the female body actively lures men into penetrating it (again, with their eyes or their bodies, one seems to be inextricably tied to the other), yet this agency given to the woman’s body is not that of the woman herself. The woman’s body no longer belongs to her as it seems to be signing independently of, and indeed contradictorily to, the woman’s intentions, values or honour. The boundary between her self and the outside world, the mediating, material body, therefore, is not controlled by her. Its boundaries are vulnerable to penetration and its signs are independent of her. They are controlled by the observer, the masculine gaze. McDowell explains that the assumption that the private or that the body should not enter the study of geography has been “challenged and rethought in recent feminist work which shows the body itself is constructed through public discourse and practices that occur in a variety of spatial scales” (*Gender* 35). Roop’s body is exiled from a childhood union with her self and has entered the adult world of dislocation; her body has fractured away from her childhood self and has been taken custody by the gazes of others. This lack of an abode or a “home” within her own body reflects the uneasy, unstable space of “home” that the women in Baldwin’s novel are relegated to, without fully being a part of it. Baldwin’s female characters occupy spaces whose constructed borders of home and body, boundaries which are supposed to mediate their contact with the outside world, are compromised by their unstable place in society.

In *Cracking India*, telling the story of Partition through the eyes of a upper-middle class Parsee child, as noted, allows for some distance from the events that took place primarily between the Muslims, Hindu and Sikhs. Lenny’s ayah, because of her religion,

her class and her admirers, is Lenny's bridge into this world. Harveen Sachdeva Mann observes that, "initially cast as a metaphor for undivided India, Ayah – as she is generically identified by her labour and class position – a Hindu in West Punjab, attracts Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Parsi admirers alike" (74). The metaphor of woman's body as nation violently rent in two is a metaphor that is linked to the discourses of conquest and settlement. Lenny herself casts Ayah as a body that is always under surveillance. The dangerous, covetous gazes that Roop's body is shamed by and protected from are transformed into looks of desire and appreciation from which Lenny finds herself learning: "The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down, they look at her" (12). Not only do they look at her, but Lenny is constantly learning from the way Ayah negotiates public spaces; as opposed to living on the peripheries and avoiding the objectifying gaze, she seems to take in and control the gaze. The boundary of her body does not seem to be in the immanent peril that Roop's is in (this may be for several reasons, including their differences in class, urban and rural settings, or simply narrative exigency), even though it does seem to be regularly under attack (or stimulation, depending on the interpretation). While her body is on display, its accessibility, and therefore its boundaries, are constantly being tested by her suitors. As Lenny comments, "things love to crawl beneath Ayah's sari" (28): "catching us unawares, [the Ice-candy-man's] ingenuous toe darts beneath Ayah's sari"; "Imam Din must have attempted with some part of his anatomy the seduction Ice-candy-man conducts with his toes" (38,59). Yet Ayah still emits a sense of control over her body and its boundaries that Roop has lost with her youth. Lenny observes her ayah and her negotiations of various social settings, as it is through her ayah that Lenny gains some social mobility.

Lenny's mobility, achieved through two of the family's servants, Ayah and Imam Din, exposes her to the political changes going on in the world outside her own compressed circle. Didur asserts that "Lenny's intimate relationship with her *ayah* and her visits to the Sikh/Muslim village of Pir Pindoo take her outside the bourgeois circle of the Parsi community and make her aware of the heterogeneous cultural context of her society at large" (47). While Roop's movement outside her haveli is a matter of dislocation to other enclosed spaces, Lenny's movement, courtesy of the social fluidity of her lower-class servants, takes her out of the domestic into the public space. Ayah often takes Lenny to Queen's Park, a public space that serves as a microcosm of what is unfolding in the nation. At first, the park is a community composed, it seems, largely of Indians of all religions who sit in the shadow of the statue of Queen Victoria, a fairly obvious metaphor for the colonial era. The circle that surrounds Ayah is composed of the serving or lower merchant class and, when not wooing Ayah, their conversation centers on the political. In Sidhwa's novel, political talk before Partition is often discussed outside of the domestic sphere; it is discussed in the park, in the wrestler's restaurant and in the Parsee Temple. As Partition nears, the conversations enter the home, with political arguments taking place at the dinner table in Lenny's house, foreshadowing the violence that will soon penetrate the domestic space. As Lenny is exposed to the political debates among Ayah's suitors, she begins to notice differences and boundaries where before there were none:

I become aware of religious difference. It is sudden. One day everyone is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. *People shrink, dwindling to symbols.* Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah – she is also a token. A Hindu. [...] *Crammed* into a narrow religious slot, [Imam Din and Yousaf] too are *diminished*, as are

Jinnah and Ibal, Ice-candy-man and Masseur. Hari and Moti-the-sweeper and his wife Muccho, and their untouchable daughter, Papoo, become ever more untouchable as they are *entrenched* deeper in their low Hindu caste. (101-2, emphasis added)

The vocabulary that the narrator uses to describe this process of *becoming* an identity is one of reduction. Instead of expanding their identities, these religious categories are abridging the people that Lenny thought she knew. Soon after religions are solidified, both by other characters' comments and by Lenny's evolving perspective of the slots various religions fit into, Lenny notes a change in the Queen's Garden, one she "can't seem to put her finger on" at first (104). Lenny soon realizes that there are divisions in the park that were not there before: Muslims, Sikhs and Brahmins all sit apart from each other in their own areas. Lenny observes that "only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her" (105). Eventually, however, even Ayah's circle of admirers is reduced to accommodate the ever-narrowing definitions surrounding various groups in Lahore, and the threat of former neighbors overshadows that of the receding British, as symbolized by the disappearance of the Queen's statue in the park. It is replaced by the cloud of violence that falls upon the country. Lenny's access to knowledge of how national politics affect various groups is further expanded by her exposure to the rural perspective through her family's cook, Imam Din.

Sidhwa uses Imam Din's character to expose Lenny, and with her, the reader, to the rural perspective of the changing political climate. Imam Din has gone to the village to discuss the violence that has been erupting in the cities between various factions, including Sikh-Muslim trouble, a concern of the Muslim village and their nearby Sikh

neighbors from the village of Derra Tek Singh. When he mentions the Sikh-Muslim trouble, the villagers of both religions protest what, to them, is a false division:

“‘Brother,’ the Sikh *granthi* says when the tumult subsides, ‘our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?’” (64). For these villagers, the lines that divide are those of the urban and the rural, not the religious. Their definitions of ethnic community are based primarily on their blood ties and their communal, agricultural needs, and less on their religious affiliations. As the *chaudry* states: “‘The city folk can afford to fight ... we can’t. We are dependent on each other: bound by our toil; by Mandi prices set by the Banyas – they’re our enemy – those city Hindus. To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh?’” (65). The primary division affecting their lives is economic; their community is that of the rural peasant, whose only battle is the one to survive off the land with the restrictions placed upon them by the urban Banyas. The conversation ends with both the Sikh and Muslim leaders pledging to protect their brothers with their lives. Lenny is once again a party to these conversations through the affiliations of her servant, making herself a part of men’s discussions of politics. When she returns to the village with Imam Din nearly a year later, Lenny goes with the men to a fair, and in fact is at the head: “I ride on Imam Din’s shoulders, Ranna on his father’s – at the head of the procession of nephews, uncles, cousins, brothers, grandson and great-grandsons. The women and girls – except for me, because I am insistent, and from the city – stay behind as always” (113). Lenny’s place in the village as a “city girl” is somewhat transformed. She is allowed into the public spaces that are not for village women, exposing a kind of class hierarchy, as well as a rural and urban hierarchy. The

village women do not go with the men to the mosque, they do not go to the fair, they do not speak at, and indeed, it is uncertain if they even attend, the village meetings where the men discuss what to them appears to be “city” politics: the violence between religious groups and the growing push toward Partition. Lenny, as upper-class, urban female, is more mobile and her identity is more fluid than the village-dwelling female, as we see in the increasing ease with which she circulates. Lenny’s mobility destabilizes the binary connections of men with public spaces and women with enclosure within domestic space with her character’s movement through social spaces. Lenny’s movement through the world shifts with several different factors, including the religion and class of whomever she accompanies, where they go (urban or rural) and her position as a young girl who is upper-class and not yet commodified as a mother-body in the marriage market. Her mobility and negotiation of space allow Sidhwa to tell a story of Partition that accesses various realms of experience. Her borderhood, often portrayed through the mediating body of others, allows her to witness the effects of Partition on various different groups.

Sidhwa creates a narrator whose mobility allows the reader to, in effect, cross boundaries and catch a glimpse not only of life outside the home, but of life in other people’s homes, while Baldwin’s main female characters negotiate their places in the world from within the walls of the “home.” However, the concept of “home” for the women in *What the Body Remembers* is a precarious one. As is explained to Roop by both her father and her sister, Roop’s real home and family are those of her future husband, not her birth home: “Roop, like Madani, is Papaji and Jeevan’s guest for a while, just till her marriage” (26). The home follows a patriarchal line of inheritance: when her father dies, it will go to her brother. When Roop is married to Sardarji, she is

moved into his home, the home she will share with his first wife, Satya, who is unable to bear a child for Sardarji. Due to her inability to do “what women are for” (a phrase repeated several times in the text indicating child bearing), Satya’s status in the home becomes increasingly uncertain. She is told by religious men called sants that she should be “grateful for her undiminished status, the magnanimity of her husband, her continued unharmed existence,” in light of her inability to perform her duty to her husband by bearing him a child, and more specifically, a son. Out of fear of being replaced by a second wife who could displace her and a fear of being poisoned by Sardarji’s family to make room for a new wife, Satya retreats to her home, “revert[ing] to the custom of purdah [...] seeking the sanctuary that she had once decried in Muslim women around her” (10). Despite this fear of being replaced, Baldwin states in an interview that “first wives couldn’t complain because polygamy was society’s way of ensuring that they didn’t end up homeless, fighting for custody of their children, or requiring public assistance” (“Borders.com” 4). This sentiment exposes the lack of “belonging” that is associated with the home and women. That a woman is so socially unattached to the home that she could be ejected without her own consent points to an absent link to the home that would preclude a sense of belonging.

When Roop first moves into Sardarji’s home, the two women are contained within the same walls, yet separated in the two sides of the haveli. Satya situates them for us: “You are alone on your side of the house, I am alone on my side” (7). Roop once believed that marriage would be the answer to her immobile status as a girl:

Roop’s in-laws won’t live in a little village like Pari Darvaza. Her husband will take her away and show her what Jeevan and the traders speak of – The Mall Road in Murree, a fisherman casting his delicate net in the

Indus, the mountain paths of Hunza. Even the capital of all of India – Delhi” (113).

Instead of acquiring mobility with her marriage, however, Roop spends her wedding night locked in a storeroom in Sardarji's brother's home. This sense of imprisonment is shared by Satya: “So ... we sit here together. Birds in the same cage” (268), but their competition to be the wife who has secured her position in the home prevents any sort of commiseration on Satya's part beyond this observation. Imprisonment is juxtaposed with the sense of the precarious presence the women have in their “home.” In his review of the novel, Amit Chaudhuri observes:

The story of what marriage means to a conventional Indian women is, here, told as a story of exile and being uprooted – Roop leaves one “home” and goes to another; and for both Roop and Satya, the meaning of “home” is a constantly evolving and fraught one that exists on the interstices of the familiar and the strange. (2)

When Roop becomes pregnant, Sardarji tells her that she will give her first child to Satya to appease her. Roop considers protesting this decision, but, due to her position as a lower-class woman in relation to her husband, she is afraid: “If she refuses, she can be sent home a failure, a burden to Papaji” (184). Where is this home she will be sent to? Baldwin creates a world where women are guests in any “home” they arrive at, regardless of their relation to the man of the house. Despite his protests to the contrary when Roop first enters the family home, Satya experiences exile from her home and life as soon as she threatens Sardarji's honour. When Sardarji agrees to make Satya live separately, without him, Roop, or the children that Sardarji have given to her, his thoughts are only of what he will lose in his decision: “Satya will have his name as protection, but he will miss the comfort of her capable presence, her anticipation of his habits” (316). Satya

eventually sees that the only escape from the loneliness and rejection that she feels is suicide. Even in death, she protects her husband and his honour, consciously contracting tuberculosis so that her suicide cannot reflect on the husband that she still loves. Early in the book, Satya states that she will not die a “useless, meaningless death, Satya will not die that way. No, when she dies, there will be a reason” (9). This quotation not only foreshadows Satya’s death, it shows the power that she believes she gains in it. She feels that the only way in which she can regain control over her life and punish Sardarji by making him feel her true absence – absence from this life and this body – is to choose to move on to her next life.

Didur provides a description of the female characters’ actions in *Cracking India* that also resonates in the characters of *What the Body Remembers*: “their actions are generally isolated, in the private sphere and mediated by restrictive social discourses that are not necessarily ‘self-conscious’ in Enlightenment terms” (50). In Satya, Baldwin shows that a woman’s ability to have control over her own life, while limited, is not impossible. Satya’s protest is the closest any woman in the novel comes to asserting true agency about where and what she is and is not to abide. While Satya feels that her only choices are this life of shame and rejection or death, she does take control of how she lives or dies. Baldwin is able to create a character who finds meaning in her negotiation of what she will and will not live for. More strikingly, Satya’s death does not mean the end of her character. Instead, her spirit haunts the rest of the text, speaking to Roop and to the reader from a space that is ultimately in-between: she exists on a spiritual plane, in a space between two bodies – her body as Satya and the body she will occupy in her next life. Her location outside of a bodily existence allows her voice to be heard without the

noise attached to her signifying female body mediating the message. The transcendental aspect of the novel, enclosed as the narrative is by the journey of Satya's spirit from one physical vessel to another, only reinforces the homelessness of the spirit that is embodied in the lives of girls and women.

Although Roop's stability in the home is strengthened by Satya's separation and subsequent death, her world is once again uprooted by the emigration across the border into the newly-formed India. She is forced to leave her home and travel across the border on the Grand Trunk Road with her children and with all of the other dislocated Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus. The movement outside the home, just like the life inside the home, is not within the control of women: "Everywhere, men are choosing to stay or choosing to leave. And where men go, their women and children must also go" (430). Although she has two male servants with her, the physical threat of being exposed is real on this journey. Not only are those en route to their new "homes" leaving behind most of their belongings and their abodes to travel into the unknown, the greatest uncertainty lies in their safe passage amongst their neighbors-cum-enemies. Roop observes homes are not all that is being left behind: "A woman with a bandage where her breasts should be staggers against the white-striped barrier arm. She falls. [...] The woman is left behind where she lies. *Alone*" (431, emphasis Baldwin's). This image of the violated woman with her breasts, a symbol of her womanhood as mother and as sexual object, cut off is recalled when Roop and her families (Sardarji, her children and what is left of her birth family) are brought back together in a tiny hovel in Delhi. Roop states that although the widows weep, even they pity the kismet, or fate, of "the silent women [...] the ones who were raped; [...] families with any sense of izzat [honour] are not likely to take them

back" (484). It is recognized that these women are the most homeless of all – they are not welcome in any home due to the violation and contamination of their bodies.

As Roop tries to become accustomed to her newest "home," she realizes that it is up to her to "create" a new home for her family – both her birth family and her family with Sardarji. She finds that the only way that she can recreate some semblance of "home" is to reassert the power differential between herself and her husband by telling him of the physical handicap she promised her father she would never reveal for fear that it would make her less "valuable" a commodity on the marriage market: that she is deaf in one ear. Seeing that her husband's power is waning, "she gives her weakness now, for him to take strength from his knowledge of it. [...] If he spurns her now, sends her back to Papaji as damaged goods though she has done what women are for, she will have no where to be" (514). Roop sees that what she has to accomplish is to give Sardarji back his sense of power and control, in order to recreate the power dynamic of the "home," even if it means once again threatening her own position within that home. In a sense, the home, here, in this undefined, unmolded space, can only be defined by reinforced definitions of gender roles within a family space. In Roop, Baldwin has created a female character who recognizes the importance of the constructed masculine and feminine roles in re-establishing the imaginary protective boundary between the home and the world. Roop's knowledge of the falsity of these boundaries and their real power to protect the family that dwells within them come from her existence in a perpetual state of flux. Baldwin creates an ironic contrast between Roop's persistent insecurity in places called "home" and the impetus on her to perpetuate the fallacy in order to establish some kind of order for her family. Roop is a border-dweller in that, although she is perpetually the

guest of others in their homes, she recognizes that in order for her family to get beyond the trauma of Partition, it is up to her to reinforce the roles and systems that leave her homeless, in order to create a home for her family. While Baldwin's novel centers on the experience of Partition for a upper-class Sikh family, Singh tries to provide more of a glimpse across class lines.

The experience of Partition in the rural spaces of India is represented in *Cracking India* by Ranna's story, an interjection into Lenny's narrative by the grandson of her servant, Imam Din. The villagers reject earlier offers by soldiers in lorries to relocate them to "Pakistan." The rural farmers locate their home in the land, not in what they see as a contrived "nation":

"Do you expect us to walk away with our hands and feet? What use will they serve us without our lands? Can you evacuate our land? [...]
 "Do you expect us to leave everything we've valued and loved since childhood? The seasons, the angle and colour of the sun rising and setting over our fields are beautiful to us, the shape of our rooms and barns is familiar and dear. You can't expect us to leave just like that!" (118-119)

While they show that they have faith in Allah with the statement, "if it is Allah's will, we will go when the time comes" (119), they do not subscribe to the nationalism that creates an artificial regional divide that nullifies their roots in the soil. Unfortunately, when Partition does arrive, former alliances between "brothers" from neighboring villages are powerless against the forces sweeping across the country. The first to hear the shouting of marauding Sikhs in the distance is Chidda, Ranna's grandmother. (Hindus are also later implicated as accomplices to the massacres.) She stands on the threshold of her home, staring into the distance as the villagers gather in the town square. When the search party returns, they report that the Sikhs "are like swarms of locusts [...]. They are killing all

Muslims. Setting fires, looting, parading the Muslim women naked through the streets – raping and mutilating them in the center of villages and in mosques” (209). The Sikhs are striking at the very heart of the community: the home. The home, in this sense, too, can be expanded to encompass the domestic space and the woman’s body, as womb, the home of future generations of Muslims. Anne McClintock states that “decolonization is waged over the territoriality of the female, domestic space” (354). The women are being stripped of their clothing, a signifier which plays a primary role in drawing boundaries between the different religions. Then, by burning their homes and bringing the women into the open space of the village to be raped and mutilated, the Sikh men are literally and symbolically destroying the home and future of the Muslims by fire and physical “contamination” of the women’s bodies. Knowing that they are powerless to fight the mob, the villagers of Pir Pindo decide that the only way to “protect” the women from contamination and humiliation is to enclose them in the home and burn it down themselves. This plan would serve to maintain proprietary rights over the women’s bodies and they would die where they lived, enclosed in the “safety” of the home. The finality of the women’s fates is contrasted to the pleas to let the young boys live: “‘I beg you in the name of all you hold sacred, don’t kill the little ones,’ Ranna heard his father plead. ‘Make them Sikhs ... Let them live ... they are so little ...’” (212). This plea recalls the earlier assertions that the differences between the religions, to the villager, were not as important to the villagers as the lives of their young boys, but it is a harsh contrast to the fates of the women. The conversion of the men would not bring about the same shame or contamination as the intrusion of Sikh men into their women’s bodies.

The women's shame, although not a voluntary conversion, would be greater and more unbearable for the community to support.

This breaking up of the domestic space continues in the city of Lahore as Ranna goes in search of his relatives. The violence that he sees is not the violence of battle – male soldiers fighting each other; rather, it is the violence of rape and the degradation of women and children and it is happening within the walls of the home:

No one minded the semi-naked specter as he looked in doors with his knowing, wide-set peasant eyes as men copulated with wailing children – old and young women. [...] He saw babies, snatched from their mothers, smashed against walls and their howling mothers brutally raped and killed. (218-219)

Women are not only torn from the home, but the home, that space they are relegated to for “protection” from the penetrating gazes and bodies of strange men, is invaded as are their bodies. While Lenny's Parsee family seems to be immune from religious persecution, their home is not safe from intrusion, although the victim is the Hindu Ayah. Ayah's movement between her religious suitors becomes more restricted as the tensions increase in Lahore. She no longer seems to control the surveillance of her body; she becomes vulnerable to the penetrating masculine gaze and it is reflected in her own “haunted, nervous eyes” (190). Although women inhabit the domestic space, their right to it and their ability to protect it are illusory in this political climate:

Mother, voluptuous in a beige chiffon sari, is alert. In charge. A lioness with her cubs. Ayah, with her haunted, nervous eyes, is lioness number two. Our pride on the veranda swells as Moti's wife and five children join us. [...] Flanked by her cubs, her hands resting on our heads, she is the noble embodiment of *theatrical* motherhood.” (190-91, emphasis added)

Although she is characterized as a lioness, a running symbol of the growing threat of physical harm in the novel, the theatricality of her mother's stance reveals the lack of

substance behind her power to protect her home and its inhabitants. Her impotence is realized when the crowd of Muslims enter her home and cart out the hiding Hindu Ayah: "They move forward from all points. They swarm into our bedrooms, search the servants' quarters, climb onto the roofs, break locks and enter our godowns and the small storerooms near the bathrooms. They drag Ayah out" (194). The freedom that has characterized Ayah and her movement in the public arena has come to an abrupt end, as she disappears into this suddenly unsafe public, in the hands of one of the suitors whose desire and access to her body she previously governed. Lenny, whose consumptive gaze is turned continually on Ayah, is aligned with Ayah's suitors throughout the novel. She is also implicated in Ayah's abduction when she mistakenly tells the Ice-candy-man, Ayah's abductor and future pimp, where Ayah is in the house, solidifying her problematic position as a narrator with a distinctively possessive relation to her Ayah, aligned with the male characters in the novel. While there is no question that Lenny loves her Ayah, her desire to possess Ayah is aligned with the Ice-candy-man's eventually violent covetous desire. Lenny's borderhood lies in the fact that she has access to several social groups and situations, and Sidhwa uses this quality of borderhood to provide a contrast between the mutable world Lenny dwells in and the very strict boundaries that are imposed on Ayah due to her religious affiliation and her highly sexualized body. While Ayah is trapped in her previously negotiable sexualized body, Lenny's borderhood, along with her perpetually judging, qualifying eye, places her firmly in the position of witness to other women's traumatic experiences of Partition.

During the massive migration across the newly formed border, tens of thousands of women were abducted by men of all religions. Statistics available estimate that 89 per

cent of the Pakistani women and 94 per cent of the Indian women abducted were under the age of thirty-five, with 45 per cent and 35 per cent respectively under the age of twelve (Menon and Bhasin 4). Of the women who were “recovered,” many ended up in refugee camps, such as the camp for “fallen” women that is set up in the property beside Lenny’s home. The plight of the raped women that is briefly touched upon in *What the Body Remembers* is dealt with more extensively in *Cracking India*, although it still remains largely unrepresentable for Sidhwa. The camp is at first mistaken by Lenny as a jail: “the courtyard has been walled off and a very tall and burly Sikh with curling hair on his legs stands guard outside a high, tin-sheet gate, criss-crossed with wooden beams. There is a padlock the size of a grapefruit on the gate and a large key hangs from the steel bangle around the Sikh’s wrist. [...] We assume it’s a women’s jail” (201). One of these women, Hamida, comes to work as Lenny’s new ayah, and tells Lenny that these women are not prisoners, except to their own fate (karma): “We’re all fate-smitten” (226). It is Lenny’s grandmother who tells her that Hamida was kidnapped by Sikhs. She explains that “Once that happens, sometimes, the husband – or his family – won’t take her back. [...] Some folk feel that way – they can’t stand their women being touched by other men” (227). Although Lenny sees the inherent unfairness in this situation, she notes her grandmother’s acquiescence and aligns this situation with one played out in nature:

I think of what Himat-Ali-alias-Hari once told me when I reached to lift a tiny sparrow that had tumbled from its nest on our veranda.

“Let it be,” he’d stopped me. “The mother will take care of it. If our hands touch it, the other sparrows will peck it to death.”

“Even the mother?” I asked.

“Even the mother!” he’d said. (227)

This aligning of the socially constructed situation of the rejection of “fallen” women with the natural workings of nature helps Lenny accept the dislocation of these women. The rejection by their families out of their homes is rendered “natural” in a sense. It is this kind of naturalization of gender roles in society that leads to the unconscious repetition of restrictive social discourses such as those that lead women to be enclosed in a “home” that is as insecure as the outdoors they are being protected against.

In terms of geographical location and mobility, the women in these two novels suffer from an uncertain place in their worlds. The domestic space is considered a place where women “belong” in the sense that only in being contained can they be “protected” from the penetrating eyes and bodies of non-related men. One of the primary themes in both of these novels, however, is just how tenuous any boundaries are – from national to domestic to physical – in the period surrounding India’s Partition by Britain. In a country struggling for independence from a colonial power, the most important identity distinction is often grounded in the difference between colonizer and native. With the departure of the colonizer, a re-thinking of identity and home, theoretically without the colonial influence, takes place. To the women in these novels, however, “home” is a highly contested and precarious space that does not seem to have a center, in the sense that their identity cannot be anchored in a space they are expected to inhabit, as, in the end, they have no social claim to that space. In both novels, however, Baldwin and Sidhwa recognize this uncertainty as an in-between space, wherein many of their female characters already dwell; a space in which their female characters may be able to negotiate their roles and places in the emerging nation. In *Roop*, Baldwin creates a character who recognizes the fiction of national constructions of gender and home. As an

outsider to the machinations that seem to control her life, along with the guidance of Satya's transitional spirit, Roop is able to recognize the fallacies that control her life and can therefore articulate them in a way that characters who rely on these fictions to maintain their power cannot even fathom. Tempering Roop's enlightenment, however, is her recognition that, in order to re-establish the semblance of order and boundary, she must in some ways reinforce the imaginary boundaries as a foundation for a stable future for her family. She does carry her insights about herself and her role in her family into the space of a developing nation as a way of keeping the door open to future negotiations. Sidhwa uses Lenny's status as a border-dweller in a similar fashion, with her young narrator fulfilling a role as a witness to women's experience. While Lenny does not experience nor fully understand the trauma experienced by women such as Hamida and Ayah, her position as watcher and recorder serves to document the fact that these traumas happened to individuals. This is, at least, a beginning point into the experiences themselves.

Chapter Three

Recuperating the Metaphorical Body: Voice, Silence and the Problem of Representation

In both *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India*, women's bodies and their positions within the context of their worlds are rendered ever more insecure with the social upheaval caused by the independence of India and its division into India and Pakistan. The female bodies in these novels become charged with symbolic meaning in the rising tension between religious groups. But the body is always much more than just a symbol. The body is a tangible site whereon the visceral conflicts of war can be waged. Traditionally, the bodies of men would go into battle to defend their territory against the invasion of foreign bodies. In nineteenth century colonial discourse, Anne McClintock observes that the woman's body was often used as the metaphor for the "virgin" territories that were penetrated by European explorers and Imperial forces (3-4). McClintock states that colonial success depended, in part, on the diversion "of female power into colonial hands [so as to] disrupt the patriarchal power of the colonized man" (364). She quotes Frantz Fanon's description of the colonial plot: "If we want to destroy Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first conquer all of the women" ("Algeria" 37-8). Women were aligned with the actual territory of the nation in the discourse of "conquest"; their bodies were aligned with the soil that the Empire wished to invade and exploit in order to extend their power. This reduction of the woman to a "territory" to be conquered in the quest to squelch the "authentic" power – men – aligns women with the body. This alignment intersects with the position that the native man

occupies in relation to the European colonizer. While the mind was considered the domain of the white male power structure during the height of the colonial conquest, all of those humans who did not fall into this category were aligned with the body, most significantly, women and persons of colour. This lumping together has created a shared space within the largely divergent spheres of feminist and postcolonial theory in creating a dialogue of the shared experience of vulnerable and violently (for women, often sexually) invaded bodies. Subsequently, these vulnerable bodies litter the pages of postcolonial fiction, haunting them not as lived and shared experience, but rather as metaphors of the spoils of both the colonial and postcolonial conditions. These bodies-as-metaphors are stripped of their subjectivity in order to stand in for the experience of the entire nation. Through their purpose as metaphor, the vulnerable bodies presented in various postcolonial texts, invaded by dominant bodies, are often stripped of their subjectivity to become mere receptacles of the oppressor within the artistic frame of the story and of the symbolic meaning without. While both Baldwin and Sidhwa create texts which reinvest women with subjectivity and give the reader a female perspective of Partition, each recognizes, to some extent, the inadequacy of language to represent the horror that the eye sees and that the body records.

The paradigm of the woman's body as belonging to, or as synecdoche for, the nation is one that carries over into the post-colonial period of "independence." That is to say that the notion of the woman's body as nation or belonging to the nation is not simply a colonial trope, but one that is prevalent in patriarchal discourses of nationhood. In her book, *Engendering India*, Sangeeta Ray defines this patriarchal notion as a symptom of patriarchal nationalism:

Women have been variously implicated in nationalisms. Even though they are often active participants in national struggles, the gendered and sexed female body is made to bear the burden of excessive symbolization – “as the biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities, as reproducers of national culture [and] as *symbolic signifiers of national difference*” (McClintock 355, [emphasis Ray’s]). Perhaps the negation of such positive difference is what drives men to commit outrageous violence on women in the name of a putative national unity. (135)

This “putative national unity” is based on a definition of primordial ethnic divisions that necessarily involves an uninterrupted bloodline. The need to situate women as a synecdoche for the nation is a means by which the patriarchal power structure can retain control over women’s bodies as the vessel of future generation(s). Verna Stolke quotes an unnamed doctor from the mid-nineteenth century who proclaimed that “the uterus is to the Race what the heart is to the individual: it is the organ of the circulation of the species” (275). The woman, or more specifically, her uterus, belongs to the nation and should be protected as the vessel of future progeny to carry on the lineage of the race, ethnicity, religion, nationality or other category that the conflict necessarily divides. This biological imperative stands as the underlying justification for the regulation of female sexuality and movement within a society. In turn, the woman’s body, in times of violent insurrection often becomes the battle ground upon which territorial and ethnic conflicts are waged. The violent rape of a “nation’s” women stands in for the rape of the land and an attack on the male reproductive rights to “his” women, while the experience of rape as an attack on an individual woman and the integrity of her own body is largely silenced. While both these novels strive to tell the stories of women, the details of their experiences remain on the margins representation.

In *Cracking India* and *What the Body Remembers*, Baldwin and Sidhwa tell the story of the Partition of India and Pakistan through the point of view of the female experience, and ostensibly tell the story through a female lens (or female gaze, if you will), inasmuch as the narrator of *Cracking India* is a young girl and *What the Body Remembers* is centered around the life of Roop from childhood into her twenties. As previously discussed, the gaze plays an important role in the construction and maintenance of the woman's "place" in both of these novels. John Berger posits that the construction of female identity depends upon an internalization of the dominating masculine gaze: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (46-47). Berger's notion of the masculine gaze infiltrates not only how women are seen, in terms of the construction of the woman in a given culture, but also how they see themselves, incorporating the regulatory masculine gaze in their construction of identity, inasmuch that it is the dominating masculine gaze that defines gender roles in a patriarchal society. This external locus of gender construction complicates how the narratives of the two novels can be viewed in terms of their ability to "tell the woman's story" in the events that unfold during Partition.

The masculine regulatory gaze as it is represented in these two novels is complicated by the colonizer's gaze that falls upon the body of the native "other," highlighted specifically in *What the Body Remembers* in the character of Sardarji. Throughout the narrative, Sardarji's actions are regulated by the internalized gaze of the British colonizer in the form of the voice of Cunningham, that part of Sardarji's conscience that has given itself over to British perspective since he moved to England to

learn the nature of those he then considered the adversary. Calling him his “English-gentleman-inside,” the reader gets a glimpse into the mind that Satya describes as colonized by the British:

Cunningham still saddles Sardarji’s mind, hoary phantom remnant of his years in England. And now Sardarji cannot remember how he thought before he learned to think with Cunningham. Cunningham, grafted so long ago, does the watching now and argues less and less as long as Sardarji asks only the questions Cunningham approves of, walks and talks the way Cunningham has taught[...] and now that he has trained Sardarji on what is Done and Simply Not Done, [he] generally stays within the bounds of reasonable discourse. (147)

Sardarji has internalized the colonizer’s gaze in such a way that he considers himself distinctly split, to the point where he guards what he considers “essentially” Indian about himself and keeps it from Cunningham: “he still keeps from Cunningham what he calls his ‘ten per cent,’ his turban, his faith, the translated, untranslatable residue of his being” (147). Although this “Indian-ness” is posited by Sardarji as separate from his acquired “British” self, Sardarji represents a hybrid character whose struggles with the colonial gaze is parallel with the struggles of Roop and Satya under regulatory gaze that is imposed upon their bodies. Sardarji considers his “British-ness” to be a “rational, objective” voice that imposes itself upon any sort of foolishness he may be tempted by through his links to the Indian masses (149) – for example, his brother’s propensity to “open the doors of the flour mill every time there was a famine, telling the poor – come, take what you need” (147). For a large part of the novel, we can see through his conversations with Cunningham that Sardarji occupies a very difficult position in relation to the British and the Indian parts of him. While he carries disdain for the native Indian who has not seen the “progress” that the British way has imposed upon India, he will also

never truly be accepted by the British elite. When pursuing a promotion, he is told by his British superior that he “must face the fact that Indian engineers are simply incapable of anything but assembly. Little boys playing with Meccano sets purchased for them by Central Design Division” (197). After it becomes clear that the British are leaving India, Sardarji slowly comes to realize just how divorced he has become from his Indian self. When Sardarji begins to see the future of India as an Indian future, not British, Cunningham notes sarcastically, “‘Calling ourselves Indian today are we?’ And Sardarji says simply, ‘Yes. Though I’ll have to find out what an Indian *is* and how to become one. But, yes.’” (399). As Sardarji opens himself up to this possibility, he eventually starts to rebel against the “rational” British voice of Cunningham. As he struggles against Cunningham’s intrusions, he suddenly hears Satya’s spirit-voice, describing the a voice that is uniquely Indian: “Those who never heard a dilruba cannot miss it. But a man who has heard it once, just once, never forgets its voice” (423). This voice is the voice (although essentialist in nature) of Sardarji’s Indian self. Once he gives himself over to hearing and listening to this part of himself, to strategizing for a future India without British oversight, Cunningham’s voice is silenced. When the British leave, Sardarji is in the position to regain control over who he is and what his position in India will be in a way that is never explicitly available to female characters in the novel. Both Satya and Roop recognize that Sardarji’s mind is colonized by the British, as they recognize that they are colonized by Sardarji. While Sardarji recognizes the effects of the British gaze upon his own mind, he never reaches the point where he turns a critical eye onto his own regulation of the women colonized by his gaze.

In *What the Body Remembers*, Baldwin shows that Roop's body and how she performs within that body are constantly under surveillance. Early in her life, Roop is taught "what women are for" (36) when her mother gives birth to a little brother. The idea of the role of women as bearer of children, or "alchemists of man's seed" (304) is reiterated throughout the novel. Roop grows up in a protected environment, knowing that her beauty is a commodity that, along with her father's social status, will bring her a high status marriage. Roop's body is regulated by those around her in order to make her body as desirable as possible for the marriage market: "Gujri waving a ladle at her from the rasoi. 'Ay, you'll get dark. No one will marry you if you lie in the sun'" (61). She is chastised for using Jeevan's swing, "What will people say, boys' things happening in a girl's body" (95), and sworn to secrecy about her deaf ear by her father, because, "What rich man will marry a girl with one ear?" (78). Indeed, the value of a woman's body, if it is not found in beauty, lies in its usefulness. Roop comments that "cooking should be learned by women who need it in place of beauty" (88). Her sister, Madani, is one of these women, "in whom service and loyalty must take the place of beauty, a woman of average kismet and no power to change it" (61). The woman's desirability, whether it lies in her physical beauty or in her practical utility, can also be threatened by too much education: "a too-smart woman can be left unmarried and remain without children for her old age" (12). A woman's place is that of the body, not the space of "rational maleness" that Sardarji, as a man, and especially as a man who aligns himself initially with the British colonizers and their ways of thinking, embodies. Baldwin creates an environment for her female characters to dwell where a woman's place is strictly within the body, in order to highlight how her female characters navigate within these boundaries. Roop

internalizes all of the boundaries placed upon her and absorbs the fears of her family in regards to her body: that it could be invaded, altered or somehow seen as damaged and therefore ruin her value as a commodity in the exchange of marriage. The protection of Roop from this gaze is signified first in the regulation of Roop's body for fear of "what-people-will-say" and then in her containment inside the haveli. The narrator states that Roop has learned shame, but it is the shame of a body over which she has no power. Her body is defined by others in that she has no control over what her body signs to others. Her body is characterized as a "lurer of lust," because her face tempts men by accidentally becoming uncovered. Her body is characterized as having the active roles of "tempting" and "luring," yet it is the men whose gaze fall upon Roop's body that construct its meaning. Berger states that "how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. To acquire some control, over this process, women must contain [the gaze] and interiorize it" (46). In order to negotiate her way in a world constructed by the external, masculine gaze, Roop must interiorize what that gaze reads from her body in order to try to control what is being signed. This internalized gaze acts as a form of internal regulation, so that the woman is in effect watching herself and trying to regulate her signing body by the rules she is taught by her culture.

There is a link between women's bodies and language in that women are "read," in terms of their value in the cultures represented in these novels, through their bodies. As previously discussed, Roop's activities are regulated in order to fit into the prescribed role assigned to a girl that will be married. Unlike Lenny, whose movement in the novel is linked to her premenstrual state, Roop's body is ready for the demands of marriage – that is, she is of a childbearing age. Her body is being conditioned and readied to be a

“proper” body for marriage. At age sixteen, Roop is no longer allowed to ride their horse, “for fear she will have no blood on her sheets when she marries” (116). The blood on the sheets after the consummation of marriage is a sign that the young girl’s hymen is intact. Her virginity is important in proving that there has not been any other men’s seed planted in her womb. The woman’s reproductive powers are the primary commodity that is being exchanged in the marriage of their bodies to their husbands. Roop’s position in Sardarji’s household is that of second wife, or *choti-sardarni* (“little mistress”). Sardarji calls her his little “koel,” after a bird who lays its eggs in the nest of another bird (69). Sardarji has married Roop because his first wife, Satya, is unable to bear him any children. Roop recognizes that her place in her husband’s house is secure only as the vessel of his seed, and, even then, she is not singular: “She is the means by which his seed produced them – without her, they could not be. But then, she thinks, it was not she herself, Roop, who is required. Any other woman’s womb would have been just as useful” (412). Her presence in Sardarji’s home is predicated upon the functionality of her womb, as is emphasized when Satya is removed to live on her own. Roop’s symbolic presence is articulated by Gillian Rose in her theory of the “male geographical imaginary”: “Woman [...] is only more or less an obliging prop for the enactment of a man’s fantasies. [...] And she is a spatialized prop: matter, earth, nature, interval, ground, envelope, container. [...] She is both infinite matter and an envelope or mirror, always carrying his meaning” (“Mirrors” 71). This quotation applies to the woman’s body as metaphor on several different levels. Roop represents earth, nature and ground in several metaphors where the woman’s body is compared to fertile soil: “a woman is merely cracked open for seeding like the earth before the force of the plough” (11); “from between Roop’s legs there sprout apricot bud

ready to open into flowers" (16). Her position as the passive ground in which the active seed is sown shows woman not only as receptacle (envelope, container), but also as the incubator of the seed, literally carrying a man's meaning in his sperm. Woman also carries man's meaning in that she is only identified through him: her true family and home are defined by him, her religion is defined by him (440) and her status is defined by him. She reflects the man, however, only in the positive – that is, only if she is fertile: "If she is fertile, good for the farmer, if not, bad for her" (11). If she is not the fertile ground within which to sow his seed, then the woman, as in Satya's case, is left undefined and in a precarious position in society. Baldwin uses Satya's independence as a foil to Roop's acquiescence to her subordinated position early in the novel. It is through the trauma of Partition that Baldwin is able to develop Roop into a character with a hidden inner strength and sensitivity to the gender role constructions that dominate her world. It is in this capacity that she is able to bear witness to the women's lives that surround her.

While Baldwin presents Roop as a woman who has internalized the masculine gaze and its regulation of her body, her foil, Satya, is a woman who returns the gaze. Although Satya loves her husband very much, she cannot bring herself to bend to his gaze. Satya has felt the colonization of the country in that she has felt it directly on her body. As a woman, she knows that her body is a territory colonized by patriarchy, but she also has the intuition to see that Sardarji is as subjected to the English as she is to him: "All of us need our own ideas, not foreign ideas; this is what I tell Sardarji. But he – his mind is their colony also." She laughs bitterly. 'I told him, 'I too am a colony – your colony'" (268). Because Satya's body resists her role as a vessel of reproduction, her place in the world is unsure. When Sardarji rejects her and makes her live apart from

him, Roop and his children, she no longer has a place in the world as defined by or in reference to any man:

I am not a wife for my husband has abandoned me. I am not a widow, for he still lives. I am not a mother, for the son he gave me is taken away, I am not a sister, for I have no brother. With no father, I am but daughter of my Bebeji.

And so I am no one. (341)

Having failed in the prescribed activity of "what women are for," Satya finds that there is no place for her in her world. She tries to assert her usefulness on an intellectual level, but in doing this, aligns herself with the masculine rational world. She learns that there is no place in her husband's life for a woman who deems herself an equal by resisting the imposition of a definition of her as simply a body, much as Sardarji found that there was no authentic role of power for an Indian engineer such as himself in the British conception of India. Although she wants to be with Sardarji, Satya can only do it on her own terms, as an equal, the same position that Sardarji strives for in the British Indian government. Before Sardarji turns his back on Satya for good, he turns to her for comfort when Roop takes her children back to her father's home for a brief period. But Satya cannot be the deferential, self-sacrificing underling that he has found in Roop. Instead of reflecting the man he wants to be, as Roop does, Satya's gaze, as her name indicates, holds the truth:

It was the moment when his beard scratched her cheek and his falcon eyes looked directly down upon her, held her eyes until he must have seen how very small his face was, how very tiny, reflected in her grey eyes. And in that long, long moment, she knew Sardarji expected her to lower her eyes before him.

But she couldn't.

Just. Could. Not.

She was a woman who came into the world with her eyes wide open and so could never lower them before a man.

And when that moment had passed, Satya felt his disappointment, knew that he saw himself reflected small in her grey eyes. So very small that he could not bear the image of himself.

With a deep groan, he rolled away from her. (307-8)

To see himself reflected in the eyes of this woman is unbearable to Sardarji. While Roop's gaze deferral to Sardarji gives him the superiority he lacks in his interactions with his British superiors, Satya's gaze reflects back the reality of what he is. Satya's gaze challenges his own, self-constructed identity by taking it in, judging it for herself and returning the truth of what she believes back to him. Berger states that:

A man's presence is dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies. [...] The promise of power may be moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual – but its object is always exterior to him. A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. His presence may be fabricated, in the sense that he pretends to be capable of what he is not. But the pretense is always towards a power which he exercises on others. (45-6)

In this quotation, Berger characterizes masculine power as being potent only when it can be wielded over someone or something. The key to masculine power is the acquiescence of the object of his gaze to the man's internal locus of self-definition. By returning his gaze, Satya usurps the power to define him. A lowered gaze, such as Roop's, does not challenge the integrity of Sardarji's constructed identity, the one that makes him believe that he is equal to, and even the same as, the powerful British colonizers. It does not challenge that construction as an internal manifestation. By usurping his role as the gazer, Satya reclaims some of his power and feminizes Sardarji by defining him for herself and by reflecting back at him (therefore *onto* him) how he *appears* to her, thereby placing the definition of him outside of his internal locus of control. Baldwin thereby subverts the authenticity or naturalization of masculine power over the female as well as the notion

that male identity is rational and internal as opposed to the female identity which is externally affixed. Through Satya, Baldwin renders the relegation of the female to the one realm of motherhood problematic and highlights Sardarji's inability to find another place in his life for her. When Satya rejects his definition of himself, she becomes dangerous to the structure that keeps him in power and must therefore be disposed of.

In looking at these two texts in terms of the gaze upon the characters, it is useful to examine the iconography of the eyes in both novels. In *What the Body Remembers*, Roop is presented as the passive subject of the masculine gaze, a character that internalizes her own objectification in order to try and be successful in the definition assigned to her by her family and culture. The women in her family depend on the men for definition: "[Roop] turns back to Revati Bhua who sits glum and expressionless until she can see Papaji and know from his face what she is expected to think" (121). The woman's gaze, however, is only to be turned toward the man in deference. The gaze is not to be turned *on* the man. Sardarji chooses Roop over Satya, not simply for her reproductive abilities, but for her deference to him: "Roop will listen to him admiringly, her eyes upon his mouth as if ropes of pearls fell from his lips, while Satya has never lowered her eyes before him and carries herself far too confidently" (319). The gaze that Satya turns on Sardarji is one of judgment. It is the gaze of someone who considers herself equal and sometimes, perhaps, even above. Satya's challenge to Sardarji's authority is perhaps too reminiscent of the condescension he suffers as an Indian man in a British system, while Roop's deference reinforces his patriarchal privilege. In her discussion of subjectivity and Luce Irigaray's work, Gillian Rose states that "far from being a means of elaborating particularity and context, then, for Irigaray the mirror is a

means only of affirming and reaffirming the subjectivity of he who looks" ("Distance" 762). Roop's lowered eyes allow Sardarji to reflect back at himself only what he wishes to see or what he projects onto her, while Satya's returned gaze turns that subject into an object to be evaluated externally. Baldwin is able to show the initially subtle influence that Satya's independence has on Roop. It is not, however, until Satya is dead and her perceived threat to Roop's family is gone that Roop begins hearing Satya and learning from the sharp gaze and judgment that falls upon her world.

The role of the gaze is perhaps more complex in *Cracking India*. In a first person narrative, the gaze of the narrator on the other characters is much more tangible, as it is a character who is looking, evaluating and telling the story and the characters within it as he or she perceives them. Patricia E. Johnson states that in his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, "Michel Foucault makes it clear that the gaze is connected to power and surveillance: the person who gazes is empowered over the person who is the object of the gaze" (39). While the story is told by Lenny, the narrator, the story that she tells of life and the effects of Partition on life is largely the story of her Ayah. Lenny is a girl who is yet learning her place in the world. She dwells in the body of a prepubescent girl. Like Roop, Lenny eventually learns the shame of being a woman, but she is both a part of and apart from this shame as it is the shame of other women, such as Hamida and Ayah, that instructs Lenny. Sidhwa presents a narrator who is trying to navigate her place in her ever-expanding world, Lenny actively watches the women in her life, and often through their relation to and negotiation of the men in their lives. The female characters that Lenny observes in her life include her mother and her Godmother, as well as Ayah.

Lenny's Godmother is one of the only women that Lenny watches who is not defined or observed in her relation to men. Godmother's husband (Oldhusband) is self-consciously described by the narrator near the end of the book as having been

hauled through the book, zombie-like in his cane-bottomed chair, white-stubbed, unprepossessing ... He has been dragged, disgruntled, from the earliest pages to sit mute on the drive with Godmother and Slavesister while they chatter and fight and clap hands and sing. [...] Now that he's had his say, he can peaceably pass away (181).

This assertion by the narrator stresses the fact that this is a story about women, and that men can only assert themselves on the text when the narrator allows them to. What is said about women, however, is said always through the critical eye of the narrator.

Godmother occupies the central role in her household from Lenny's perspective. Lenny de-sexualizes her Godmother in her first description of her in the text: "She is childless. [...] She wears only white kaddar saris and white kaddar blouses beneath which is her course bandage-tight bodice. In all the years I never saw the natural shape of her breasts" (13). Later in the novel, during the violent uprisings in and around Lahore, several women are mutilated, their femininity desecrated by the removal of their breasts. In order to occupy the powerful position in her home and in the city that Lenny portrays, her Godmother's femininity (as represented by motherhood and sexuality) is distinctly neutered. Within the home, she also has another woman, her "Slavesister," a relative who has never married and is therefore placed in the care of Godmother's home, probably because of Oldhusband's presence. Godmother treats Slavesister much the same as Roop's Papaji treats Revati Bhua, as a surrogate wife to run the domestic affairs of the home. Godmother does not concern herself with these. In order to occupy a powerful position in the novel, the narrator seems to understand her Godmother as a masculine

figure, implying that, although she recognizes the sexual manipulations that Ayah and her mother use, authentic, independent power is recognized by the narrator as masculine.

Lenny's mother's agency as a woman who is working to help other women through recovery from their abductors is undermined by its secrecy. While her work in the community is peripheral to the story, an undercurrent surrounded by misunderstanding, Godmother's power and agency are characterized by directness and visible results – she confronts Ice-candy-man, locates Ayah and is able to arrange her rescue. Although Lenny is a female narrator, Sidhwa shows that she too has internalized gender constructions at an early age.

In contrast to Godmother's masculine power, Lenny's mother is highly feminine and sexualized. Her character is exposed in her interactions with Lenny's father, which often take place in their bedroom and around the bed. Lenny notes the different inflections of her mother's voice as she pleads with, teases and appeases her husband. Lenny's relationship with her father mirrors her mother's, as she seems close to her father only on his terms, when it is convenient for him. Her mother's love for her husband is apparent, as is the emotional distance that he keeps between them. Lenny observes, "Mother hates it when he covers his face, as if he is distancing himself from her even in his sleep" (20). There are also hints in the text, in the form of the innocent observations of a child, that her father is physically abusive toward her mother and is having an affair: "Sometimes I hear Mother say, 'No, Jana; I won't let you go! I won't let you go to her!' Sounds of a scuffle. Father goes anyway. [...] Although father has never raised his hands to us, one day I surprise Mother at her bath and see the bruises on her body" (224). Although she lives in the same house as her mother, the narrator cannot tell

the story of her mother's physically abusive relationship. While this is a story about women, it is only told within the scope of what this young narrator can fathom.

Lenny's mother is portrayed as representing the two stereotypical aspects of womanhood: motherhood and sexuality. Lenny states that her "Mother's motherliness has a universal reach. Like her involuntary female magnetism it cannot be harnessed" (51). Lenny perceives both motherhood and sexuality as "involuntary" signals that seem to emanate from her mother. Berger states that "presence for a woman is so intrinsic to her person that men tend to think of it as an almost physical emanation, a kind of heat or smell or aura" (46). This intrinsic presence, this uncontrollable magnetism is most notable in Lenny's monitoring of her Ayah and highlights the masculinity of the narrator's gaze. Gillian Rose describes the pleasure of the cinematic gaze as a "heterosexual masculine position [that] is to look actively, possessively, and erotically at women, and the feminine position is to be looked at" ("Distance" 767). If we are to take Rose's description of the cinematic gaze alongside Berger's description of how men see women and apply them to this text, we would have to describe Lenny's surveillance of Ayah as having a distinctly masculine quality. While Lenny states that "covetous glances" of men "educate her. Up and down, they look at her" (12), a closer examination of the text reveals that Lenny's surveillance of Ayah is just as erotic, possessive and constant as that of the men she refers to. The education that she is receiving can be construed as that of the power of the gazer to define the object in the terms that suit the looker. Ayah is one of the only characters that Lenny describes in a purely physical manner by describing not only her physical attributes, but also the manner in which she moves. There are few indications of Ayah's personality aside from references about how

she deals with her suitors. After describing her physical attributes, Lenny states that the “Englishman had no doubt noticed” (13). The reader cannot know the Englishman in question’s mind, but can certainly read Lenny’s desire and surveillance of Ayah projected onto him.

Like Lenny’s mother, Ayah’s body is seen as signing uncontrollably. Ayah’s body magnetically and unaccountably attracts the gaze of the male viewer. According to the narrator, “of its own volition his glance slides to Ayah and, turning purple and showing off, he wields the flag like an acrobatic baton” (27). The attraction of Englishmen, this one wielding his big, phallic flag on Ayah’s behalf (although “wielding” has a faintly violent undercurrent that perhaps foreshadows Ayah’s fate), shows Ayah’s universal attraction. All men’s gazes are involuntarily drawn to her, “their leaden eyes attracted to the magnet leaning against the gatepost” (27). The men’s lack of control over their gaze does not signify that Ayah is necessarily in control of it either. Rather, her body’s presence, in the sense that Berger describes it, draws their gaze as well as Lenny’s. In her critical reading of the novel, Ambreen Hai examines the role of Lenny’s gaze upon Ayah and its complicity in her victimization:

[The] salacious vision [of the Englishman] is mediated through and shared by the child-narrator who remains unaware (as indeed does the narrative) of her replication of what she indicts. [...] This narratorial complicity becomes paradigmatic of the novel’s strategic modes: it illustrates in the very beginning how Ayah’s heavily sexualized servant body will become valuable not only for multiple masculine desires, but also for certain budding feminine ones. (395)

Lenny’s desirous gaze fixed upon Ayah’s body is implicitly linked to Ayah’s lower class position. Hai believes that Ayah’s body acts not only as the object of Lenny’s budding sexuality, but also as a stand in for Lenny’s body and those of the upper-class women in

her family when dealing with the violence of Partition. She states that Ayah is sacrificed not simply to divert the violence from Lenny's body, her victimization and subsequent rescue "emphasize the goodness of the ethnically neutral and upper-class Parsee (border) women who volunteer to save her and others like her" (391). Ayah's voice and her experiences are conspicuously missing from the narrative, subsumed by the necessity to use her body as the sexual object-turned-symbolic victim in the narrative.

As sexual object, Lenny's desire for Ayah's body is oddly conflated with the desire of her male suitors. Hai describes this as "another occasion of triangulated desire [...] in which the female narrator's fascination for her servant's body is catalyzed by her intense observation of male fascination for the same – as if both Lenny and Ayah's men were rivals for Ayah" (398). During a tender moment shared between Ayah and the Masseur, Ayah confesses that she belongs to him forever. Lenny reacts violently, like a lover scorned, and then involves herself in the intimacies that are being shared by the Masseur and Ayah:

"Don't you dare marry him!" I cry. "You'll leave me ... Don't leave me," I beg, kicking Masseur.

"Silly girl! I won't leave you ... And if I have to, you'll find another ayah who will love you just as much."

"I don't want another ayah ... I will never let another ayah touch me!"

I start sobbing. I kiss Ayah wherever Masseur is not touching her in the dark. (168)

This passage shows not only Lenny's possessiveness, it mimics an intimacy shared by lovers. Lenny's eventual betrayal of Ayah also parallels the betrayal of another one of Ayah's suitors – Ice-candy-man. Although she is portrayed as an innocent witness of Partition whose family's religion and class exempt them from a certain amount of danger

in the conflicts of Partition, Sidhwa uses Lenny to represent the far-reaching complicity, even of the innocent, in the chaos of Partition.

In her observations of Ayah, Lenny is also learning the art of negotiating the desirous gazes of others. When Roop first internalizes the judgmental masculine gaze that surrounds her, she internalizes the judgment and the shame that they attach to her signing body. Later, during her marriage to Sardarji, Roop learns how to manipulate the masculine gaze in a manner similar to Ayah's character in *Cracking India*. Ayah internalizes the desirous, masculine gaze and, internalizing it, learns how to manipulate and negotiate the motivation behind the gaze: desire. Ayah entertains many suitors at once. All of them are negotiating for her favour at any given time. While they all desire her, she controls access to her body: "Ice-candy-man's hand strays to Ayah's knees, and as he raises it to her shoulder his fingers brush her bosom. Ayah's eyes flash a warning and Ice-candy-man's serpentine arm floats away" (133). In this case, Ayah's gaze still holds some power in its ability to control the limits of her body. Ayah's eyes are very powerful and she uses them to negotiate, flirt and control. When Ayah overhears Lenny's uncle compliment her eyes, she puts on a performance for him, aware of his gaze: "Ayah, aware she is the star attraction, rolls and slides her thickly fringed eyes to glamorous affect as she passes the tea." She "[peeks] at the bald doctor from the corner of her teasing eyes" (179), performing her femininity for the delight of the control it wields over the doctor. Ayah has learned how to harness the power of her feminine beauty, but when the rules change and the nationality of her body supersedes her femininity in terms of powerful signs, Ayah loses her ability to negotiate the signs emanating from her body and she is reduced to the definition of others. Up to this point in the novel, Ayah's body has

represented sexual desire, which she has been able to harness and manipulate. However, as nationalist fervour rises, the significance of Ayah's body shifts: rather than a purely sexual object, her body becomes charged with the significance of religious difference and motherhood, with all of the importance that these carry in the religious conflict. The value of her reproductive body in its nationalist signification as mother to future generations supersedes the quotidian flirtations of sexual desire.

There is a substantial shift in the novel when all the characters' bodies become so full of signification that they cannot be contained nor controlled. Lenny notes this shift: "My perception of people has changed. I still see through to their hearts and minds, but their exteriors superimpose a new set of distracting impressions. The tuft of *bodhi*-hair rising like a tail from Hari's shaven head suddenly appears fiendish and ludicrous" (103). The narrowing definitions of the people around her change the involuntary signs of their bodies. Bodies and the religion inscribed upon them suddenly become signs of difference. These divisions, based on the appearance of the body, affect Ayah's diverse group of suitors and her control over them. Jill Didur explains:

The tension between the material and imaginary events described in Sidhwa's narrative suggests how the discourses of gender and nation overlap, converge, and become increasingly restrictive of women's agency as the country faces independence. Whereas before Partition, Ayah is able to express her sexuality within her circle of companions in a multiple and fluid fashion, after Partition, her sexuality is exploited, policed, and made emblematic of the national imaginary. (44)

The violence that accompanies this shift starts as distant rumours, which become more gendered the closer they travel into Lenny's immediate realm of knowledge and experience. In the discussions that take place in Ayah's ever-dwindling circle of suitors, Didur observes that "images of emasculation are linked with the identity of the minority

community on each side of the border. [...] The subjugation of the Other nation/community is repeatedly associated with a feminization of the men and the violation of the women" (61). The Ice-candy-man reports the arrival of a train full of Muslim corpses that have arrived from Gurdaspur: "There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women's breasts!" (159). The fact that it is young women who are taken, along with the mutilation of their bodies, sends an ominous message about their fate. Even Lenny links the image immediately to an attack on motherhood, imagining the amputation of her own mother's breasts. When the violence of Partition enters Lenny's home, it is Ayah's body that becomes the target of violence. Harveen Sahdeva Mann states that, "thus marked by her gender and religion as well as class, Ayah, unsurprisingly, becomes the site upon which the violence inherent in nationalist discourse is emplotted" (74). Sidhwa positions Lenny as witness to Ayah's victimization in her neutral position, but the young narrator is also somewhat implicated in her Ayah's victimization.

When Lenny inadvertently betrays her Ayah, their house is invaded and she is carried out of Lenny's home by a mob of Muslim men, led by her former suitor, Ice-candy-man. As she is dragged out of the house, the final images of Ayah are still sexualized, with her body straining almost to the bursting point under its sexual signification. As they drag her out, Lenny notes that "her violet sari slips off her shoulder, and her breasts strain at the cloth so that the white stitching at the seams shows. A sleeve tears under her arm." Most chilling, perhaps is Ayah's silence: "Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth." Ayah's silence is reinforced by the terror that shows in her previously

seductive eyes. These eyes that once returned and tamed the gaze of men cannot fathom the terror that they are about to confront. The final image of Ayah is of her “staring at us as if she wanted to leave her wide-open and terrified eyes behind” (195). The iconography of Ayah’s eyes is important in that, while they once represented a part of her performance of femininity, they are now going to suffer through witnessing the violation of her body, over which she believed she had governance. In Lenny’s interpretation of her desire to leave her eyes behind, we can read the idea that if something is not witnessed, it can be denied. What Lenny cannot see, she cannot tell. A witness to Ayah’s trauma would lead to a redefinition of her ayah in ways that she cannot understand and cannot accept as they would disrupt her idea of who and what Ayah represents to her, which is a bursting sensuality that Lenny needs to believe, for her own budding sexual identity, she can control. The violent intrusion into Lenny’s home and her betrayal of Ayah represent the complicity and guilt of a people whose warring factions turned their anger and violence toward the women of the nation. The victimization of women of all religions by all sides (including some by those who claimed they did it out of love) is a national tragedy that is difficult to articulate because, to do so, necessarily implicates every person of the nation in some form or another. By implicating the young narrator who is not obviously a part of the national conflict in the violence of Partition, Sidhwa demonstrates the complicity and the subsequent sense of guilt shared by everyone who survived Partition.

Ayah’s absence in the house is soon symbolically replaced by the appearance of the “fallen” women who are enclosed in a camp next door to Lenny’s house. When one of the women enters Lenny’s house to replace her missing ayah, the issue of these

recovered women is brought to light. The pain and shame of what Hamida has experienced and witnessed is registered in her averted eyes. Her eyes stay averted from Lenny's father and at times, tears roll from them involuntarily. Hamida tells Lenny that "When the eye is wounded, even a scented breeze hurts" (205). In essence, when these women's bodies are violated, whether it be through rape or mutilation, it is their eyes that register the damage to their souls. They cannot look on the world as they once did, as their frame of reference has been violently dislodged. The women are mostly silent during the day, but their wailing and cries in the night are described by Lenny as "verging on the inhuman" (224), as if their humanity has been questioned and their ability to communicate their experiences in human voices, within the limitations of language, is lost within this deprivation. In her exploration of the silences surrounding Partition, Urvashi Butalia tries to describe the fracture between language and experience:

For many women, Partition represented a very fundamental tearing up of the fabric of their lives: the family is, after all, central to the lives of women, its loss was therefore deeply felt. For those who had been taken away from their families through rape and abduction, the loss was even more profound: would they even be able to find the words to articulate their feelings?

And words are, after all, all we have. One of the things that I found in the course of my interviews and research was that people struggled to describe what they had been through at Partition, and often ended by saying that what they had seen was indescribable. (*Other* 285)

Language's inability to represent what the eye has witnessed is reiterated when Ayah is found and subsequently recovered by Lenny's Godmother.

When Ayah is finally found, Lenny goes with her Godmother to see her at the Ice-candy-man's home in the prostitution district of Lahore. The Ice-candy-man, in his newest configuration as a poet, tries to transform Ayah's experience with his words. He

explains to Godmother that, while the lot of the other girls in the district is “pitiful and hideous, [...] We marry our girls ourselves. [...] They are artists and performers ... beautiful princesses who command fancy prices for their singing and dancing skills!”

(259). Godmother replies with a condemnation of the Ice-candy-man’s attempts to reconfigure what truly happened:

“No harm?” Godmother asks in a deceptively cool voice – and arching her back like a scorpion, she closes in for the kill. “You permit her to be raped by butchers, drunks, and *goondas* and say she has come to no harm? [...] Is that why you had her lifted off – let hundreds of eyes probe her – so you could marry her?” (260)

Ayah’s rape is not simply in the manner of violent sexual intrusion; the Ice-candy-man has put her on display for hundreds of men to project their needs and fantasies onto, stripping her of her previous regulation over her own body. The Ice-candy-man has taken control of how Ayah is seen and consumed. Godmother explains that the betrayal was even more personal, as Ayah was shamed not by the strangers who carted her off, but by her former suitors, all of whom took the opportunity to enjoy Ayah as they would have her: “They have shamed her. Not those men in the carts – they were strangers – but Sherbat Khan and Ice-candy-man and Imam Din and Cousin’s cook and the butcher and the other men she counted among her friends and admirers.” Lenny’s reaction is her desire to comfort her Ayah “and kiss her ugly experiences away” (266). She wants Ayah to know that her view of her has not changed because of what has happened to her body. She recognizes, in a way that others who have internalized the shame of women’s bodies cannot, the causes of these violations upon women’s bodies: “I’ve seen Ayah carried away – and it had less to do with fate than with the will of men” (226). While the shame of the “fallen” women lies in the idea that it is their *kismet* that has brought them to this

place, Lenny recognizes that it is the will of men in their nationalist campaigns that has imposed itself on these women by imposing their own meanings upon their vulnerable bodies. When Lenny finally gets to see her Ayah, while her outward appearance has not changed – she is “achingly lovely” – the reality that she is what her body has come to signify to herself is apparent: “the illusion is dispelled the moment she opens her eyes” (273). These eyes that once governed the gaze than fell upon her have been transformed by what she has witnessed and experienced. The eyes once admired as glamorous, gorgeous and ravishing are transformed into “glazed and unfeeling eyes” by the time Ayah is transported to the camp for fallen women (285). Ayah’s perceived control over her own body – over who gains access to it as well as her manipulation of its signals – has been destroyed. The violation of the boundaries of the body that she believed she controlled exposes the vulnerability of women when their bodies become more meaningful to the nation as symbols than they are as citizens.

The violence that is meted out upon the bodies of women as a symbolic act of violence toward the men of their religious affiliation division is also reflected in the narrative of *What the Body Remembers*. The growing division among religious groups is symbolically played out in violence upon the bodies of “other” groups (primarily between Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs), but it is the message that any of the ritualistic violence carries with it that indicates the different positions that men and women occupy in national signification. The violence meted out to the men in *What the Body Remembers* is either murder or that of a symbolic conversion, a stripping of the religious identity that defines the man, and therefore his national affiliation. As in *Cracking India*, it is the man’s body that indicates the religious membership of him and his family. Men’s bodies

are the signifiers of religious membership, that, as Baldwin points, define their families as well: "A woman in a cotton salwar-kameez, her head covered by a stark white chunni – was she Hindu, Sikh or Muslim? Impossible to tell, without a man beside her" (440). The violence against women, however, is still symbolically violence against men. Stolke discusses the use of rape as symbolic act against the men of a nation: "The assault on indigenous women was not a matter of pleasure forced from the women of the vanquished; it was a definitive way of sealing the [conquerors'] victory through the appropriation of that which, in the conquerors' reasoning, constituted the valuable possession of the defeated" (272). The valuable possession in this case is the women's bodies and, specifically, their wombs. Baldwin describes two incidents which mark this division of symbolic violence. The first takes place in Rawalpindi as a precursor to Partition: "There Muslims singed the beards of easily identifiable Sikh men, tore off the turbans of young and old alike and [...] pulled babies from mothers' arms, threw them to the ground and raped their mothers and sisters before all" (406). While the violence against the male Sikhs is a destruction of the signs of their religion, the violence against the women are, in a sense, crimes against their property. Raping the mothers of discarded babies contaminates a Sikh bloodline, while raping the sisters of the babies disrupts the exchange of women and goods in marriage. As Ray explains, this attack on the family is an attack on the nation: "The purity of the family mirrors the purity of the nation, and the raped woman cannot be the vehicle of the familial metaphor that enables narration of the nation" (136). This violence is revisited on the Grand Trunk Road when Roop and her family are traveling with other Sikhs and Hindus towards an unknown border, with the threat of "erstwhile soldiers" who drag women into their lorry to rape them and shoot,

maim, "or at a whim, [convert] men to Islam, simply, by tearing off salwars or dhoties, and slashing foreskins" (460). In an essay entitled "New Neighbors," Sidhwa states that "terrible vendettas were enacted on [the bodies of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh women], not so much to dishonour them as to humiliate the men of another faith" (3). The pain of the raped woman is not hers, but that of the men in her family.

The idea that the dishonouring of the women is the dishonouring of the family or community to which she belongs is reinforced by the fates of the fallen women in both novels. In both *Cracking India* and *What the Body Remembers*, women who have been raped are largely silent women, whose fates are uncertain. Ayah begs to be taken out of the Ice-candy-man's home in order to be returned to the home of her relatives, although it is uncertain if she will be welcomed in her fallen state. When Ayah states that she wishes to leave, Godmother insinuates that Ayah can and must forget what has happened and try to live with this man who is now her husband because he "truly cares" for her (274). Ayah, who is now addressed by the name that the Ice-candy-man has given to her, Mumtaz, refuses, stating that she is beyond forgiveness because she cannot forget the things that have happened to her: "I am past that," says Mumtaz. "I'm not alive." Godmother is cautious about returning her to her family however, verbalizing Mumtaz's uncertain place with them: "What if your family won't take you back?" (274). Like Lenny, Roop recognizes that the fate of raped and kidnapped women has to do with the pride of men, not the culpability of women: "Men etch their anger upon woman-skin, swallow their pride dissolved in women's blood" (473). Observing the violated women who exit the trains into Delhi, Roop notes that the pride and honour of women is rendered secondary to the violent, nationalist pride of men: "Everywhere on this

platform, women pull the remnants of rags over their breasts – Satya would say they have learned shame, shame of their own bodies, from men of all faiths who cannot trust each other” (478). While the men’s nationalist struggle lies in the intersection of religious lines, women are the victims of all men – some are killed by the men of their own communities in order to protect the honour of the family, while others are killed by men of other faiths in order to destroy the honour of the patriarchal lineage. Like Ayah, the raped women that seek refuge on Sardarji’s property are silent, uncertain of their fate: “even widows pity their *kismet*; families with any sense of *izzat* are not likely to take them back” (484). In having been used by the men of the rival communities, Urvashi Butalia explains, “some of the women were now ‘soiled,’ having lived with, married, borne children to the men of the ‘other’ community, they had therefore ‘diluted’ the ‘purity’ of the community, how could they now be taken back?” (“Community” 17). These women, whose fates have always been the business of everyone in the community, are suddenly dropped by this community and set adrift to look out for themselves. They are of no use to their community as a vessel of reproduction, and they are a continual reminder of the community’s shame.

In *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India*, both Baldwin and Sidhwa attempt to tell a story of what happened to women during the violence of Partition. The act of story-telling is highlighted several times by the narrator in *Cracking India*, although it is presented with the caveat that “memory demands poetic license” (149). The fictionality of the tale is stressed in such meta-fictional, self-conscious comments as: “Is that when I learn to tell tales?” (88). *What the Body Remembers* is equally conscious of its story-telling capacity as Roop tries to learn the stories of what happened to the women

in her family. Roop is seen once again as a sort of vessel, this time for the stories of the women in her family: "Jeevan continues and his story enters Roop's body. This telling is not for Roop, this telling is for Roop to tell his sons, her sons" (488). The stories of Gujri, Kusum and Revati Bhua can only be told by the men in the family, Jeevan and Papaji, as none of these women's bodies survived to tell their own stories. Their stories are implanted in Roop by Jeevan and Papaji, not to preserve the women's experience, but to carry the message that it holds on to their sons. The experiences of the women are not told to be carried on to their daughters. There seems to be a silence between the women, as if the stories, though germinated through Roop, are only intended for the instruction of the future of the family, held in the active bodies of the boys. The stories are told through men's eyes, as they saw them as mediated through their male experience – a perspective or gaze that, as Roop reiterates several times in the narrative, can only see their women "from the corner of their eyes" (47, 256). They do not see the women's experiences as their own, but rather as reflections of themselves and their honour. When Jeevan tells the story of Kusum, he sees it as it affects him. He recounts that he found Kusum's dismembered body in the family haveli, but he does not read her body in terms of her experience. Instead, he reads the message that has been left for him in the form of her body. At first he cannot understand the message, as his wife's body, although dismembered, was not raped: "To cut a woman without first raping – a waste, surely. Rape is one man's message to another: 'I took your pawn, Your move.'" Roop is struck by her brother's tunnel vision: "*Even in death he can see Kusum only from the corners of his eyes. For how can he know, how does he know, if she was raped or not, when he has heard the same stories I have heard*" (490). Allowing him to continue, however, she

finds that, while Jeevan is unable to read the experience of Kusum, he is able to read the message that her body carries from other men:

He received the message. Kusum's womb, the same from which his three sons came, had been delivered. Ripped out.

And the message, "We will stamp out your kind, your very species from existence. This is no longer merely about izzat or land. This is a war against your quom, for all time. Leave. We take the womb so there can be no Sikhs from it, we take the womb, leave you its shell." (491)

While men cannot see the experience of their women, they can clearly read the messages that other men carve into their bodies. By taking the womb, the men have, in essence, as far as they are concerned, taken the vitality of the body. The woman that remains behind is simply a shell, the former house of their seed, and the harm done to the body is the desecration of one man's property by another. Jeevan states, "my heart was full of grief and anger from the message that came to me in my woman's body – Kusum's body" (494). Jeevan's grief and anger is not for the suffering of Kusum, but rather for the damage to his Sikh pride that has resulted from the ability of another man to turn his woman's body into a message to him. Jeevan burns the haveli because "that message was one that should go no further. It must be ignored, so that no Sikh man show weakness and fear" (491). He attempts to silence Kusum's experience in order to preserve the honour of Sikh men. But in telling the story to Roop, she vows that she will "remember Kusum's body, re-membered" (495). She will attempt to preserve Kusum the woman along with Kusum the message.

The story of Kusum's body and part of the message that it carries is partially transformed by Papaji's additions. He also relates what he knows of Gujri and Revati

Bhua, but again, his stories of these are women couched only in the story of what happened to him. When the danger in the village became immanent, Papaji states,

“I had to think very quickly, quickly it became clear: Revati Bhua was old, if her izzat went, what man would feel dishonoured? Gujri was already a widow, long past childbearing age. But I had given your Nani my bachan, so long ago I gave her my word, that I would protect Gujri.” (499)

Papaji had to figure out each woman's worth to him and his honour in order to decide who to save. While both women's commodity-values were zero, due to their inability to perform “what women are for,” he still had a stake in Gujri's well-being, as he had given his word that he would protect her, and going back on that would result in damage to his honour. Kusum, on the other hand, who was “still of childbearing age,” was his priority: “I cannot endure even the possibility that some Muslim might put his hands upon her. Every day I had been hearing that the seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women's wombs. No, I said: I must do my duty” (499). His duty, as he sees it, is to himself and his Sikh community. He must kill Kusum, in order to preserve the honour of his family and of all Sikhs. Papaji beheads her and leaves her decapitated body in the haveli to be symbolically altered later by Muslim intruders. Roop feels the outcome of the story before her father recounts it:

Roop knows because Papaji's story cannot be so very different from other men who see their women from the corners of their eyes, who know their women only as bearers of blood, to do what women are for. She knows this story, knows it like some long-forgotten, undeciphered dream.

But it must be spoken. (499)

The story of Kusum, while couched in the story of Papaji and the justification of his actions as protecting his honour, must still be told in any configuration possible. The silences still retain a voice of sorts, even if it is in the interstices of someone else's story.

Roop tries to read Kusum's story in her father's tale: "What is not even in Bachan Singh's silence, that Roop must fathom, to know the story?" Roop sees Kusum's death as a direct result of Kusum's silence. It was her inability to say no to Papaji that led to her death. She finds that it is Kusum's silence that, for her, is hard to articulate:

How will she explain to This-one and That-one that Kusum – daughter-in-law who always followed rule number one, never say "nahinji" or "no-ji," who found her way around and under Papaji's directions and Jeevan's orders in her real home [...] – could not find the words *nahinji* and *no-ji* when the kirpan lifted above her bare neck? That those words could not get past her lips because her lips had no practice in speaking them, because those words drowned before they took shape or sound, in the blood she bore within.

Blood of the quom. (501)

How can Roop explain to two boys the oppression of the silence that Kusum suffered? Her inability to speak, to challenge Papaji's conclusion to her story, is, in the end, part of the story that Roop is trying to tell.

The imposition of an end to Revati Bhua's story is also apparent in Papaji's story. Papaji states that the Muslims took her away with them, and that they must have made a Muslim out of her. Roop observes, "*He says it as if Revati Bhua is dead, because she agreed to be a Muslim, though she saved him and the boys.[...] He tells of her sacrifice as if it was only what he expected of her – that she owed him no less for all the years of hospitality.*" Unfortunately, Roop recognizes her limitations as simply the receptacle of the story; "Papaji is the teller of Revati Bhua's tale and he tells it as he wishes it repeated" (502). Papaji tells of Gujri, who decided to stay behind on Grand Trunk Road because she slowed Papaji and Jeevan's boys. When Roop asks herself, "*Why does a woman choose to die?*" the shadow voice of Satya, whose voice is heard by Roop only after her death, whispers in her ear, "'Sometimes we choose to die because it is the only

way to be both heard and seen, little sister'" (505). Only when these women (Kusum, Gujri, Revati Bhua, Satya) have shed the encumbrance of their womanly bodies, either in death or in their absence, can their stories begin to be extricated from the dominant stories of the men. Baldwin's own struggle to tell the stories of female characters whose experiences cannot, perhaps, be fully represented in language is reflected in Roop's problematic position as the bearer of stories. In the absence of the women to whom these atrocities happened, Roop (and Baldwin in the problem of representability) runs up against the impossibility of filling in silences while avoiding trite expressions of unimaginable trauma. The dilemma of telling a story without encroaching upon the problems of appropriation and reduction are important issues that both Baldwin and Sidhwa attempt to negotiate.

One of the contentious issues in Sidhwa's novel is the marginalization of Ayah through Lenny's narrative voice. Hai brings up an important issue when she discusses the issue of class. She sees the victimization of Ayah in the novel as having very strong resonances in the use of class and the representation of the servant class body as separate from the representation of the higher class body. While both Lenny's mother and her Ayah are sexual beings in the novel, both recognized for their ability to attract the appreciative gazes of men, only Ayah's body is victimized in the turbulence of Partition. Hai claims that

This narrative ends up rendering the class- and ethnically inscribed figure of the ayah both expendable and usable for its own purposes. One form of border trouble that is this potentially border writing runs into is, finally, that it actually remains quite ambivalent about the borders of class and ethnicity it purports to cross. The border – as limit—then becomes literalized as the body of a female Hindu domestic servant, the only site upon which the unspeakable can be permitted to happen, and questions of

boundary-crossing be posed and played out. In fact, the work that this working-class woman does in the narrative is to become the epitome of absolute otherness, the “‘other’ of the other.” (391)

This lengthy quotation outlines the major problem in the text: if the narrative postulates a female point of view in telling the story of Partition, why is the silence of “fallen” women’s stories (including Ayah’s) still so palpable? The narrative of the text breaks away from Lenny’s perspective at one point to show the events of Partition on the small town of Pir Pindo through the eyes of Ranna, Imam Din’s grandson. Ranna tells the story of the women in his village preparing to burn themselves in order to save the honour of the community. He sees women being raped and mutilated, looking on with “a child’s boundless acceptance” (218). It is hard not to read a measure of this “innocent” acquiescence in the narrative itself. While the stories of women are once again told through the eyes of a male character, the stories of Ayah, Hamida and the kidnapped women in the camp next door to Lenny’s house are couched in silence. When Ayah is taken away, “her mouth slack and piteously gaping” (195), she never recovers an ability to speak. To this point, Lenny’s narrative voice has been mediating Ayah’s story, and when she is removed from the critical eye of the narrator, Ayah’s story, even as told by Lenny, is silenced forever. While the narrator speaks of her desire to comfort Ayah, to reassure her that she does not judge her for ordeal, the narrative is never given over to Ayah in the way it is to Ranna, to allow her story to be told by her. Most troublesome of all is the straightforward manner in which that which Ranna sees and experiences is represented in the narrative. Although couched in this child-like “boundless acceptance,” which seems to connote an unmediated testimonial, the only access we get into the violent, traumatic experiences of women is mediated through the eyes and the story of a

male character, as in the stories of the fates of Roop's female family members in *What the Body Remembers*. While the voices of the women in Roop's life are silenced by their death or their absence, like the female victims' experiences in Lenny's story, they are also silenced by a combination of a sort of spiritual death that leaves their stories beyond representation and by a limited narrative that does not let these women's stories enter it unmediated by male experience.

The class distinction is also present in *What the Body Remembers* in that the violence happens to other women's bodies. When Roop and Jorimon are confronted by a group of drunk Muslim soldiers, the narrative voice claims that, confronted by immanent danger, the class lines between these women are eradicated: "No longer are they mistress and maidservant – for this moment, they are just two women, equally vulnerable" (462). But when it comes down to it, it is Jorimon who is grabbed by the men and attacked: "Before Roop can stop him Jorimon's sari-clad body jerks to the dirt beside the car with a gasping cry. In a second, it disappears under a charged mass of men, grunting like animals in the dark" (463). In the end, it is Roop's authority, borrowed from Satya's haughty treatment of the servants, which gains the attention of the men and saves Jorimon from being raped. She borrows the status of her brother, claiming that he has the authority to have these men court-marshaled. Without this authority, learned from her social status, both women would have been raped and possibly murdered. Although she is in danger, it is her servant who receives the beating and Roop who saves her, a construction that mirrors the manner in which Lenny's family saves the shamed body of Ayah from enduring any more in the Ice-candy-man's home.

In *Cracking India*, Ayah's body goes from a body that can transcend ethnic and religious boundaries, a body that can negotiate the desirous masculine gaze in order to perform a fluid sexuality, to a marginalized body that is trapped in the silence of shame. Even Lenny, who is a border-dweller in many ways – in her mobility through the bodies of her servants and in her position as a Parsee outside the prescribed Muslim, Hindu and Sikh conflicts – cannot provide a bridge into Ayah's experiences through narrative. Even though the narrator is entirely conscious of the narrative craft – its fictionality and its ability to give poetic license to history – she is unable to find a space in the narrative in which these traumatized women's stories can be told. Sidhwa's narrator cannot reach beyond her childhood frame of reference to make sense of what happened to Ayah and the refugee women in the camp. Ranna's narrative breaks away to tell what he witnessed, but it too is limited in the innocence of the observer. While Lenny and Ranna can report *what* they saw, they cannot begin to fathom *why* these events took place. Couched in the innocence of childhood, Sidhwa exposes her own inability to make sense of what happened. She cannot fully understand and, therefore, represent the trauma sustained by the victims of Partition within the limits of language. While Roop tries to extricate the stories of women out of the silences in men's stories, Baldwin presents her as feeling inadequate, as though she, one of the privileged women who escaped their fate, is not worthy to tell them. Even though she is a woman, not a man who can only see women out of the corner of his eyes, she, as Baldwin's voice in the text, recognizes the limits of her ability to represent these women, their stories, their lives and their deaths. Roop also expresses the difficulty of trying to tell these stories to a people who can only see the shame of the women's bodies, not the richness of their experiences. While she awaits

Sardarji at the train station, she witnesses the stream of shame-filled women exiting the train and wishes that, for just one moment, people could see through the shame of these women to what they really are: "every man, woman and child should, just once in this lifetime, see a woman's body without shame. See her as no man's possession, *see her*, and not from the corners of your eyes!" (478, emphasis Baldwin's). In an effort to break out of the shame of her woman's body, Roop begins undressing: "She wants to scream, *See me, I am human, though I am only a woman. See me, I did what women are for. See me not as a vessel, a plaything, a fantasy, a maidservant, an ornament, but as Vaheguru made me.*" (479). Unfortunately, Roop fails in her effort, as a sepoy runs up to cover her almost naked body. Roop realizes that the regulation of her body is larger than just her own family's honour – it is her whole country's: "*If a man doesn't lay claim to my body, the country will send someone to do so*" (479). There is a certain amount of redemption at the end of *What the Body Remembers* that is missing in *Cracking India*. The text of *What the Body Remembers* is embraced by the movement of a spirit (the spirit which becomes Satya in this story), from one life into the next, and the circular movement of the text, with its repetition of passages and expressions, emphasizes the movement through various bodies in the spirit's journey through its lives. Certain things, however, are remembered in the body. The girl's body remembers its experiences in that girl's body and carries them into each life. In this manner, the stories that Roop is trying to take into her body will not be forgotten. Rather, they will be remembered, just as the spirit is re-membered, with each journey. The silences will gain a voice in the whisperings of one's body as each new life cycle is negotiated.

Conclusion

The role of the critic here is not to sort "fact" from fiction [...], but to sustain an awareness of both the need for unmediated facts in this literature and the simultaneous incapacity in narrative to document these facts.

-- James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*

In tackling the difficult task of writing out of the silences of the past, both Shauna Singh Baldwin and Bapsi Sidhwa explore the limits of language in representing truly unimaginable traumas. Both have discovered ways into the pages of history in order to try to recuperate the largely silenced voices of women's experiences during the violent Partition of India. In using fiction as a way to search for the voices of women of Partition, both authors simultaneously encounter freedom and restriction; their limitation lies in the daunting responsibility of representing violence and trauma that is largely unrepresentable in language. While both *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India* are written about the experience of Partition by female characters, the violence against women that was so prevalent during the religious conflicts of Partition is witnessed by the main characters rather than experienced by them. While these characters can be seen as occupying an in-between space that carries with it regenerative promise in the sense that they bear witness to female experience and carry the stories of these women forth, the problem of representation is of primary importance to both texts.

One of the reasons that there is silence where women's experience in history is concerned is connected to the reduction of the female body, and therefore eradication of female experience, to its national signifier as Mother of the nation. As Anne McClintock explains, national conflicts, and men and women's places in them, are highly dependent on ideas of gender roles:

All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference between men and women serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit [...] Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency. As Elleke Boehmer notes in her fine essay, the "motherland" of male nationalism thus may not "signify 'home' and 'source' to women." (354)

Both Baldwin and Sidhwa raise the issue of the woman's body as trope for the nation, through Roop's, Lenny's, and Ranna's observations as well as through Ayah's victimization at the hands of her former suitors. Women are symbolically killed by the men of the opposing religions as well as by their own families in the name of the honour of both sides. The battles that are being waged are territorial battles over who can live where, and the problem of home and the protection it provides for women is raised in both novels. The women are relegated to the home in order to protect them from the penetrating masculine gaze, yet their place within the home, especially highlighted in *What the Body Remembers*, is tenuous, and becomes increasingly so when the walls built around them are unable to protect them from either the men of the opposite side trying to destroy their honour, or their own families who must kill them in order to "save" their honour.

The novels deal with the manner in which the female characters negotiate their lives in the spaces they occupy and how these negotiations are transformed as a result of Partition. One of the major negotiations for both the characters and the reader, however, is the manner in which the stories are mediated by the male perspective in both novels. Although both Roop and Lenny are posited as witnesses to the experiences of other female characters and the traumas they suffer, the perspectives that they offer are interrupted by male voices. In *What the Body Remembers*, the fates of the women in Roop's family are related to her through the stories of her brother Jeevan and her father. Both men see the women's fates only as ancillary details in relating their own experience. Jeevan's wife is killed by Roop's father in an attempt to save the family's honour and her death and subsequent mutilation by unknown assailants are interpreted by Jeevan as a message to him. He elides Kusum's experience in telling the story of her death only as it relates to him and the honour of the Sikh community. In *Cracking India*, Lenny's narrative is tainted by a distinctively masculine gaze that aligns her with the suitors who eventually betray her Ayah. The stories of honour killings and the widespread rape and mutilation that take place in both Lahore and rural India are told by Ranna, a young boy who manages to survive, in a detached, third person account, the only interruption into Lenny's narrative. While the survival and detached position of both of these characters allow for the telling of these stories, the reader is still left with the feeling that they do not have access into the experiences of these victimized female characters in the texts. The peripheral nature of those women's stories to the novels give the reader an idea of how this female silence in historical accounts of Partition arose, but at the same time, leaves the reader with a distinct feeling of dissatisfaction, a shared perturbation with the

authors, that the silence that surrounds female experience cannot be represented in our patriarchal systems of language.

In both *What the Body Remembers* and *Cracking India*, the violence happens to “other” women’s bodies, not those of the main female characters. The distance that the main female characters retain from the violence and trauma that other women suffer affects the reading of the novels in several ways. In one sense, it reflects the struggle of the authors to find a way to speak of the trauma of Partition without, in Urvashi Butalia’s words, having to “try and prise open [women’s] silences” only to commit another violation (*Other* 282). Butalia states that “it is never a simple question of silence and speech, for speech is not always cathartic, not always liberating. In my work, I have tried as far as possible to take responsibility for what that speech meant” (*Other* 42). It is clear that both Baldwin and Sidhwa are aware of the grave responsibility of attempting to give a voice to the silenced women of Partition without reducing their traumatic experiences to trite metaphor, trope or paradigm. Both authors teeter on the brink of telling a full range of individual women’s experiences during Partition, but neither can seem to find a way into the trauma. It is apparent that both authors recognize the danger of speaking *for* the women who lived through these experiences, though Baldwin addresses this issue a little more directly than Sidhwa. Through her character Roop’s impetus to draw women’s experiences out of male characters’ stories, Baldwin points to the danger and difficulty of speaking for those who cannot. She highlights the difficulty of knowing even the “facts” of what happened, let alone representing the experience of what happened to someone else. Sidhwa uses the youthful point of view in her narrative to dodge the problem of representation and interpretation, which, along with the masculine quality of her

narrative voice, despite the gender of her narrator, results in less of an illumination of the dilemma of representation than Baldwin accomplishes. She opens up a tentative space for this representation through her narrator's meta-narrative musing, but fails to find a way to bring it to fruition. The responsibility that Baldwin and Sidhwa share lies in recognizing the limits of their ability in language to represent trauma while simultaneously responding to the need to find the woman's voice in the history of Partition. Neither author attempts to represent an all-encompassing voice of female experience, but both try to add their narratives to a body of texts in order to try and fill the void of the female voice in texts about Partition.

The fact that an event is unrepresentable does not mean that it is necessarily a void. That space of traumatic memory that is perhaps not representable in language still exists in its own space. By conceding to its unrepresentability, trauma is given a space beyond linguistic representation, a space in-between experiential, emotional reality and representation. It is in this interstice between experience and representation that the voices of trauma often reside. John McLeod posits that this space is where hybrid forms of knowledge exist. He discusses Bhabha's theory that it is in the interstitial space that one

could take on the task of unhousing received ways of thinking about the world and discovering the hybridity, the difference that exists within. However, and importantly, these internal differences are displaced, existing beyond representation. This is why Bhabha calls them 'incommensurable.' This term refers to the existence of something that cannot be measured or described by the prevailing system of language. [Instead it is] figured as unrepresented, uncanny presences which bear witness to displaced experiences, histories, and lives. (220)

In a sense, Ayah and the fallen women in both texts occupy this hybrid position; who they are and what happened to them, which is unavailable to the main characters of the texts due to distance, class, and difference of experience, is both a part of who they were and the dislocation of what happened to them in the traumatic, unrepresentable events of Partition.

The trauma an event such as Partition leaves scars a nation for generations. In this sense, a traumatic historical moment is never completely told, as it continues to haunt generations of people after the event itself has passed. Each generation must take in the facts, memories and stories of the event in order to try and understand how it is a part of their individual and collective selves. Shauna Singh Baldwin and Bapsi Sidhwa use storytelling as a bridge into the events of Partition in order to add their stories, their voices, and the voices of their characters to the history of what we conceive of as "Partition," in order to take one more step toward understanding the unfathomable, and speaking the unspeakable.

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