DOI: https://doi.org/10.64501/jpmxw197

Violence, Trauma, and the Haunting Memories of Partition Novels

Fayeza Hasanat, PhD
Associate Lecturer
Department of English
University of Central Florida
Email: fayeza.hasanat@ucf.edu

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64501/jpmxw197

Abstract

Trauma is a haunted bridge between unfaceable memory and inexplicable reality. Memory, on the other hand, being rooted in past, cannot manifest itself in the present without triggering or recalling trauma. Theories of trauma and memory are interdependent, and one cannot be discussed without the other. Memory is always 'postmemory,' and trauma is always intergenerational, especially when it is connected with collective memory and collective trauma. Using the early Partition novels as a platform, this paper aims to examine how the Partition narratives address these issues of haunting memories of communal violence and mass migration. This paper will focus on the various aspects of social and cultural trauma and collective memory and will briefly discuss some major traits of trauma and memory theory to provide a theoretical background. The comprehensive theoretical framework will be put into perspective through the lenses of earlier novels on Partition, such as, Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961),* Manohar Malgonkar *A bend in the Ganges (1964)* Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1988), to name a few. However, the textual discussion will be more reflective in nature than analytical in the sense that it will pose questions and open a potential array of critical discussion instead of offering a traditional method of critical analysis of the selected novels.

Keywords

Trauma theory, Collective trauma, Partition, Memory theory, Partition novels

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Introduction

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* Lacan uses an anecdote of a burning child from Freud's *Interpretations of Dream* in which an old man fell asleep in a room adjacent to his sickly child's bedroom and had a dream of his child caught on fire and crying for his help. The father went to check on his child and found him dead, and the dead body was damaged in a sudden fire caused by a burning candle. The father's dreadful encounter with his burning child in the dream and the real shock after finding his dead child's burnt body comprise a repetitive traumatic impact. Lacan uses this example to define a subject's (in this case, the father's) trauma as a double event that occurs both externally and internally and emphasizes on the recurring emotional turmoil caused by one psychical event. The physical incident may have happened once, but the subconscious event becomes repetitive, with the capacity to control action and emotion, and eventually absorbs into the subject's history and identity. In the end, the event passes, but trauma remains with its own trigger point and latent ferocity. I begin this essay with Lacan's 'burning child' metaphor because it succinctly exemplifies the trauma and the haunting memories of the partition of 1947. The physical event of the partition has become a repetitive traumatic occurrence in the psyche of partition literature. Like trauma, memory is also an indeterminate process, or rather a way of processing and reworking of remembrance. Memory is both representation and repression of trauma; and at the same time, memory is also a resistance to trauma. The traumatized subject continuously reconfigures the borders and boundaries of individual and collective identity and seeks meaning through collectively negotiated memories. Like the burning body of a dead child, the traumatic memories of violence and dislocation have become a haunting theme for the partition novels.

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While defining the post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD as an anxiety disorder in their 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, The American Psychiatric Association listed four specific criteria based on stress level, recurrence of traumatic memory, constricting impact, and aggressive symptoms. According to this manual, PTSD contains a i. recognizable aggravation with the ability to provoke distress and fear, ii. Recurrent recollection of same traumatic even either in dream or in certain physical or emotional situation, iii. A constricted affect and feeling of detachment caused by such recurrent recollection, and iv. experiencing symptoms of hyper alertness, sleep disorder, panic, and other such reactions provoking benumbing fear and/or survivor's guilt[1]. The 1947 partition survivors could easily check all these four boxes, because theirs was an undiagnosed PTSD, and the neuroses of Partition literature tends to expose the entangled webs of PTSD in contexts of socio-politico-cultural and historical trauma. Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950, later translated into English by Khushwant Singh), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar *A bend in the Ganges* (1964) Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1988) come to mind as pertinent examples of early partition novels in this context. The purpose of this essay is to give an overview of the various aspects of trauma theory and draw attention to the way these novels recognize and recollect traumatic memory of violence.

[1] Amy Griffiths does a comprehensive analysis of the range and limitations of APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in her book, *In a Shattered Language* (U of Minnesota press, 2011). She also gives a brilliant overview of the history of trauma theory.

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Part One: Theorizing Trauma[2]

Sociologists define trauma as a fearful reaction to some shattering events that impact individual or collective well-being and provoke repression of recurrent memories. In *Trauma: Social Theory*, Jeffrey Alexander calls trauma a sociological process that defines a painful injury, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences, and because trauma experience is evoked through memory, the process of re-membering, reconstructing, and re-presenting gets intertwined with the repetitive psychical experiences of the traumatized subject.[3] If the traumatized subject is a woman or a gendered minority, the psychophysiological struggle becomes violently political in nature. If such political violence causes displacement and dislocation, then the recounting of loss and absence that takes place is what Dominick LaCapra would call a historic trauma[4]; and if such historic trauma dismantles one's individual identity and collective history, then the memory it invokes and revokes is what Stef Craps would call a narrative impossibility[5]. While individual memory of political/historic trauma works in terms of repression, collective memory of collective historic trauma works through negation and normalization. In context of mass trauma, collective memory becomes an effort to either suppress collective trauma or 'normalize' it by reconfiguring the trauma

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[2] The two most comprehensive anthologies on trauma theories are *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma (*eds. Davis and Meretoja, 2020) and *Trauma and Literature* (ed. J. R. Kurtz, Cambridge *UP, 2018).* Shoshana Felman and Laub, D. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (Routledge, 1992) is also a very good resource for critical understandings on early trauma theory. Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (Johns Hopkins Press, 1996)*, Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins Press, 2001), Richard McNally's *Remembering Trauma* (Harvard UP, 2003) are some of the books I have consulted here. For postcolonial aspects of trauma theory, I have relied heavily on Stef Craps's research articles and books, especially, on his *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Palgrave, Macmillan, 2013). Fassin and Rechtman's *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton University Press, 2007) is also a great resource in this regard.

[3] For a detailed explanation, see Alexander's *Trauma and Social Theory*, 33-39.

[4] For a detailed discussion, see his *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2001).

[5] For his detailed analysis of postcolonial trauma, see *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds,*

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as an inevitable impact of war and/or political turmoil, especially when it comes to the female Body[6]. As Aleida Assmann discusses it in her *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity,* when it comes to collective trauma, many war-impacted nation makes it a political agenda to reconfigure and reform their past by institutionalizing remembrance.[7]

An event can be historical or political in nature, but the trauma of that event is a social signification, and collective trauma is the signification of event on a group consciousness. Sociologist Jefferey C. Alexander calls such imposition of group consciousness a 'Lay trauma theory' and criticizes the tendency to give a fixed meaning to a cultural trauma in a society's effort to suppress or minimize the impact. For Alexander, trauma is a natural reaction to some shattering events. Society cannot control individual trauma, but when it comes to collective trauma about a public or mass event, society does facilitate a blockage, "not only by the depersonalization of the victims but also by their historical and sociological specification" (2012, 34). As Alexander explains it, Lay trauma theory follows a naïve and moralistic psychological framework and is either unable or indifferent to the grid through which the facts of trauma are "mediated, emotionally, cognitively, and morally." For Alexander, this grid "has a supraindividual, cultural status; it is symbolically structured and sociologically determined[8]"(2012, 35). Society intends to routinize the representation process of trauma in a way that would eventually desensitize people, and the collective memory of trauma would not be able to "evoke the strong emotions, the

[6] I took up this issue in my discussion of the wartime rape survivors of our liberation war and examined the issue of collective trauma in *The Voices of War Heroines: Sexual Violence. Testimony, and the Bangladesh Liberation War* (Brill Publishers, 2022).
[7] *See* Aleida Assmann*, Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (Fordham University Press, 2016).
[8] For a detailed discussion on Lay Trauma theory in context of rape trauma of women of the Bangladesh liberation war, see my *The Voices of War Heroines: Sexual Violence. Testimony, and the Bangladesh Liberation War* (Brill Publishers, 2022).

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sentiments of betrayal, and the affirmation of sacrality that once were so powerfully associated with it" (Alexander 2012, 37). Alexander proposes to consider social and cultural process of collective trauma and wants the focus to be shifted from the specific event of trauma to the meaning and impact of it. Alexander says, "It is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events themselves. Whether or not the structures of meaning are destabilized and shocked is not the result of an event but the effect of a sociocultural process" (2012, 39). Cultural trauma is usually based upon mass events, such as war, genocide, or mass migration—events that are not there anymore or events that we may not have experienced in our lifetime but read or heard of it. But for national, cultural, or historical trauma, the question of origin is not the concern, because we are not set to justify one's memory or verify the validity of trauma.

Philosophical theory of trauma generally springs from the post-structuralist perspective and points out the indeterminacy and fluidity of both memory and trauma. Cathy Caruth[9] and Shoshana Felman[10] examine the performative function of language and explore the difficulty of translatability of trauma into language. Hanna Meretoja[11] elaborates on this poststructuralist philosophy of trauma in *The Ethics of Storytelling: Narrative Hermeneutics, History, and the Possible,* and states that "trauma is fundamentally unrepresentable, unsayable and unspeakable – it eludes language, knowledge and narrative as systems of representation" (2020, 24). Both trauma and memory are subject to linguistic aporia in the sense that, in order for the traumatic recollection to reach a path to [therapeutic] solution, the subject will need to express their memories in

[9] See Cathy Caruth *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Johns Hopkins University Press,1995). I also found the Routledge *Companion to Literature and Trauma* (eds. Davis and Meretoja, 2020) to be a poignant source in this context.
[10] See Felman, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History (*Routledge.
[11] See Meretoja, "Philosophies of trauma," *in Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma.*

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language. And language, like memory is fallible, and some memories (rape trauma[12], for example) are even unspeakable. According to Cathy Caruth, "the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs" but returns to haunt the subject through "repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" (1995, 8).

Being a devoted phenomenologist, I cannot overlook Levinas in this instance, because this is where I can connect Stef Craps postcolonial trauma theory, asking the western readers to redirect their focus to the Other otherwise seen as minority. The fundamental belief in the otherness of Other is a key component in Levinas's theory of *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas talks about the ethics of infinity, or rather about ethics and infinity in context of the Other's right to exist, breathe, or even grieve. Acknowledging the Other's multiple retellings and fluid narratives of a trauma as truth and its haunting is in fact an acknowledgement of the Other's ability and inability to narrativize the inexplicable. On the other hand, totalizing the traumatized subject or the trauma event would diminish the possibility of healing and denounce the existence/otherness of the traumatized subject. Listening to them, reading about them, acknowledging their repeated horrifying emotional journey through the darkest memory lanes would qualify as recognition of their narratives as truth (as they feel or remember it). This phenomenology of trauma invokes reciprocity between the world, the people with traumatic experience or the generations that grew up with what Marianne Hirsch[13] calls 'postmemory' of trauma or those haunted by mediatized

[12] Ann Burgess wrote about rape trauma syndrome, coining the term, pointing out the similarities of traumatic neuroses between war veterans and raped and bettered women. For more detail, see her article*, "Rape Trauma Syndrome,"* in *Behavioral Sciences and the Law Vol. 1. No.3. 1983. 97-113.* Also see *Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery* (Basic Books, 1992), in which she discusses the limitations of trauma studies in context of sexual and domestic violence against women and children; and see Jennifer Griffiths's "Feminist Interventions in Trauma Studies" in *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge Up, 2018).

[13] See her *The Generation of Post memory* (Columbia UP, 2005).

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trauma, as Ann Kaplan calls it[14], and the privileged ones that have no direct or indirect connection with the trauma event. I am not one with the generalization of the status of victimhood, or victimization of selfhood in regard to trauma and traumatic memories, because I do not believe the concept universal trauma. I agree with Dominick LaCapra on the distinction between historical, clinical and real trauma along with his theory of trauma as performative engagement[15] that allows posttraumatic writers to convey to readers a feel for the terrifying experiences" (2001, 137).

Now, if trauma talks about reality that is otherwise unavailable, and if trauma is a reenactment of memory, then how do we perceive or define this memory? How do we vouch for the memory that is connected with the trauma of physical and cultural displacement, such as the 1947 Partition and the inherent violence? What is that memory, or where did that memory take the displaced bodies? How do we examine the bodies that migrated, bodies that left behind its past life and whole ancestral history, bodies that got violated in transit or in displaced lands, bodies that got dislocated, as in bones and minds, and histories, and cultures. What do we make of the able Bodies that felt the pain of being crippled in a displaced land, being unable to protect their women and children or themselves from the event or its multifaceted impacts and multiple meanings and truths? How do they incorporate memory? Which memory do they recall? Do they recall the one that they left behind, or one that they are yet to construct? What I am trying to say is that memory is actually an absence. Memory is when it is not. Memory is a migrant, wandering in the realms of

[14] See her *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (Rutgers University Press, 2005).

[15] Reference is to Judith Butler, of course. Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman have also written about the performative engagement of trauma in their works mentioned in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History,* respectively.

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past and present, wearied about premonitions of future[16]. In an article, titled, "The Cultural Trauma Process, or the Ethics and Mobility of Memory," John Sundholm writes that "memory is essentially a phenomenon of migration" and that "the notion of cultural trauma implies that trauma is treated as a phenomenon of migration" (2014, 12). For Sundholm, memory is migration because it is a signifier of the absence, presupposing a subject living the past in the present. Trauma and memory are associated with paradox, as Bassel Van der Kolk notes in his case studies of traumatic narratives. The horrific experience of trauma of an event makes it difficult to coherently narrate or consciously remember. Memory triggers trauma, and trauma forces to reenact memory. Memory is therefore performative.[17] Agreeing with Van der Kolk, Caruth also says that trauma indicates the impossibility of representation and the possibility of attaining truth that has been otherwise unclaimed by our cognitive knowledge.[18] In other words, trauma recalls past as something trapped in present memory. What we remember is something that is not here and now; in a sense, memory is a sense. The *Dasin*[19] of the memory—the being and nothingness of it is connected with us—living—remembering, dismembering the trauma of something that has left a mark in our consciousness, and something that we will take with us when we die. Of course, the retelling,

[16] My understanding of —or rather rambling on memory here is emerging mostly from my indebtedness to memory theorists from Plato to contemporary thinkers, such as Julia Creet, John Sundholm, and Marianne Hirsch. I am specifically indebted to Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (MacMillan, 1911), Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (U of Chicago Press, 2004), Marianne Hirsch's *The Generation of Post memory (*Columbia UP, 2005), Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory (*Columbia UP, 1996)*, and* Julia Creet's introduction to her coedited book *Memory and Migration,* and John Sundholm's article, "The Cultural Trauma Process, or the Ethics and Mobility of Memory," in *Memory and Migration* (eds. Creet and Kitzmann, University of Toronto Press, 2014).

[17] Judith Butler, yet again.

[18] See Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[19] My phenomenological mind is bound to come back to Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Blackwell Press, 1962). After all, our trauma and our memories emerge and contain with our being in the present and as we think we remember.

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recounting and reimagining will keep taking place through books and writing and mass media, but an individual, or collective, or generation will take their memories with them: hence memory is always migratory, something absent, something reminding us what is not here: memory is melancholy, and memory is organic in that sense. Sundholm differentiates between history and memory by saying that history is a statement of an event from a past, and past to a historian is a foreign country. Memory in history is a standpoint, it stands—still, immobile, whereas memory is fluid. It is constantly moving and being created, recreated, and reshaped. To put it in Zofia Rosinska's words, memory is "identity-forming, therapeutic, and bond forming. [20] Like a train or the stream of our consciousness, memory is a ceaseless movement, vacillating between then, now, and nowhere, while staying trapped in the burning house of trauma.

Part Two: Trauma and the Partition Novels

Before delving into a discussion of the partition novels, I intend to linger on a little on the aspects of historical and psychological framework of trauma and traumatic stress by mentioning the 'Railway spine' and the traumatic war-neurosis as two essential features in literature of war and political violence. In "History of Trauma Theory", Nicole A. Sütterlin brings out the historical reference to the train wrecks of Victorian Era and examines the railway spine of 19th Century Britain as the clinical beginning of the term 'trauma.' Railway spine was a medical condition that was noticed among the train wreck survivors. The victims might not have any type of physical injuries, but they would feel physical pain and would visit the doctors. Railway spine caused a

[20] See Zofia Rosinska, "Emigratory Experience: The Melancholy of No Return," in Memory and Migration (eds. Julia Creet, Andreas Kitzmann, University of Toronto Press, 2011).

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neurological shock to a physically unharmed body, a reaction that the Victorian physicians were curious to define. The physician John Erichsen identified the railway syndrome as a physical reaction caused by the concussion of the spine[21] (in 1866), while another physician, Herbert Page, identified it as a neurological shock (1883). Hermann Oppenheim later defined the shock as 'traumatic neurosis' (1884).[22] After the first World War, Oppenheim's concept of traumatic neurosis became an important subject in context of war neurosis, which Freud later took up in his *Beyond Pleasure principle* in his discussion of shell-shocked soldiers. Needless to say, both the first World War shellshock and the Victorian train wreck incidents were related to the real action (of violence) and the fear of such violence (or trauma). Nicole Sütterlin's summation on this issue of war and trauma is noteworthy as it links the traumatic neurosis of the 19th century and the PTSD of the two world wars with the trauma of wartime violence:

> First World War soldiers incapacitated by shell shock, and Second World War soldiers disheartened by "combat fatigue" all faced skepticism as to the reality of their suffering. In the postwar period, the dispute surrounding traumatic neuroses continued when victims of Nazi persecution presented with symptoms of so-called "survivor syndrome." In the United States, meanwhile, soldiers returning from Vietnam presented with similar symptoms, termed as 'post-Vietnam syndrome.' And amidst all this, we should also remember the

[21] See Erichsen, J. E. *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System* (Walton & Waberly. 1866).

[22] For a detailed discussion, see Nicole A. Sütterlin's "History of Trauma Theory" *in Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*. Also see Ralph Harrington's *"The Railway Accident: Trains, Trauma, and Technological Crises in Nineteenth-Century Britain", in M. S. Micale and P. Lerner (eds) Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31–56.*

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war-time violence on women and children and the rape trauma syndrome experienced by the sexual assault victims.[23]

In *Beyond Pleasure Principle,* Freud talks about two kinds of dreams: one that works in terms of wish fulfillment, and the other that recurs to inflict traumatic neurosis. Such dreams force the traumatized subjects sleep and wake up in fear of reexperiencing the event (10). Freud describes the war neuroses as an overwhelming traumatic impact that breaks the protective shield of subject's psyche and compels them to reexperience the trauma in dreams, "with a view to the psychical binding of traumatic impressions, obey the compulsion to repeat" (33). For Lacan (and Freud before him), the event of trauma is ambiguous in nature and recedes to the background, while fantasies based on it overpower individual and collective psyches, since "fantasy aspect is infinitely more important than its event aspect." We can interpret this fantasy aspect as the fabrication of memory and/or the retelling of it, as exemplified in the partition novels. As Lacan sees it, the father's traumatic dream about his son's desperate cry has more control over his psyche than does the event of having found his son dead and caught in fire.[24] The memory of the child's death gets triggered by the trauma of having seen him burnt, and the inexplicable trauma invokes a numbing chill going down his spine.[25]

In context of the partition novels, Freud and Lacan's 'burning child' becomes analogous to the death of hope of two children nations burning in violence, dreamt by helpless adults who got caught in that fire as well. The narrative impossibility of the 'historic trauma' of displacement and dislocation caused by the political violence is noticeable in many of the partition novels, where

[23] See Nicole Sütterlin's "History of Trauma," in *Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma.*
[24] Lacan, The Seminars of Jaques Lacan, Book1, 1953.
[25] Needless to say, I am referring back to the railway spine syndrome of Victorian Britain, yet again.

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the characters are seen either failing or frailing in recounting collective memory. In these novels, memory works as a phenomenon of migration, signifying the acute presence of trauma and the absence of home. The structural framework of partition novels revolves around the cause, the process, and the aftermath of a traumatic dislocation, while either recollecting or repressing the memory of a dismembered home. Repression of memory, and at times, institutionalization of mass event and dehumanization of suffering subjects become essential tools of negotiation with one's own conscience and individual memory. Take for example, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975). One of the four novels of his Gandhi Saga, *Azadi* tells the story of trauma and home in context of institutionalization of trauma and recalibration of memory as a routinely violence of migration. The plot revolves around Lala Kanshi Ram, a Hindu merchant living a harmonious life with his Muslim friends in the Muslim dominated city of Sialkot. But the friendship between the Hindu and Muslim neighbors cracked after Partition, and so did other relationships. Lala Kanshi Ram's son Arun's love for Barkat Ali's daughter Nur waned as neither of them was ready to give up religion over love. Kansi Ram's daughter Madhu and her husband Rajiv were killed by the rioters in a train massacre. Kanshi Ram and the rest of his family fled the atrocities by migrating from Pakistan to India. The train journey and the arrival to his new 'homeland' changed Kanshi Ram's perception about communal violence after witnessing the violence inflicted upon the Muslim population in Delhi. "Whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here" (1975, 338), Kanshi Ram told his wife as he realized that border does not only divide a nation but also dehumanizes and divides people in the name of attaining unity. The partition of 1947 divided countries and provided dreams for freedom, but painful memories also tagged along as unremitting burns of traumatic and migrating memories.

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It is quite remarkable how the railway spine symptom can be traced in early Partition novels from Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950),[26] to Bapsi Sidhwa's *Iced Candy Man* (1988),[27] and many other novels that fall in between, such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*(1961), Manohor Malgonkar's *A bend in the Ganges* (1964), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), among others. All these novels either directly or indirectly connect and/or recollect a train journey in the aftermath of Partition. In each novel, the railway motif signifies the trauma of dislocation and violence, and like the two rail lines running parallel to each other, the trauma and its memory run parallel as well, keeping the characters vested in their ominous train journeys, experiences of rape and abductions, and the perils of displacement from a loving home in order to rebuild a home in a 'foreign' land, haunted by the memories of a deserted home.

In some of these novels, the railway spine works as a metaphor for gendered violence, while in some others, it becomes a winding abyss of riot, massacre, revenge, and distrust, leading to the repetitive psychical experience that either gets normalized as an inevitable impact of political turmoil or dismantles the traumatic subjects identity in such a way that they succumb to the sentiments of betrayal to fit in what Jefferey Alexander has called a "supraindividual, cultural status"(2012, 37). Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* exemplifies the railway spine as a metaphor of fear of gendered violence and the vilification of women's individual identity, while Manohor Malgonkar's *A bend in the Ganges* reiterates the trauma communal violence and the sentiment of betrayal and revenge.

[26] Translated into English by Khushwant Singh as *The Skeleton* in 2009.
[27] Originally published as *Iced Candy Man, it was republished as Cracking India in 1992.*

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In *Pinjar,* Amrita Pritam tells the story of a Hindu woman named Pooro. After being abducted, raped, and forcefully married, the protagonist Pooro surrendered to her new name (Hamida) and a new 'home' in Pakistan with her children. During the turmoil of the Partition, she took up the role of a savior by rescuing Hindu women from their Muslim abductors. With her husband Rashid's help, she also rescued her brother's wife Lajo and sent her back to India, However, when her brother requested her to return with him, she refused the offer declaring Pakistan as her new home. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* also mentions the train massacre and rapes of women. The rape of Lenny's *ayah* (nanny) Shahana by the Ice Candy man, along with Lenny's predicament as a survivor of the horrors of Partition contribute to the overwhelming impact of the cracking of a nation. Like Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* also include the railway spine as an inevitable trauma, referring to the murders of friends and family in the trains, and negotiating with the emotional burns.

Manohor Malgonkar's *A bend in the Ganges* (1964) sees the communal violence of the Partition through the eyes of an Anglo-Indian narrator, named Freddy Spencer. Keeping the conflict between Gandhi's call for non-violent protest and the violent communal riots as one of its dominant themes, the novel brings up the traumatic neurosis of 'railway spine' using the bends of the Ganges as its ominous signifier. Just like the train tracks that run through the Sikh and the Muslim or the Hindu and the Muslim localities, transporting communal violence in partition inflicted areas, the refugee convoys and the river bends also transport and transmit trauma. Teckchand fell a victim to that communal violence, living trapped in a city of Muslim majority and later murdered in that house.

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While Teckchand and his family meet their tragic end waiting for their convoy, Saleem Sinai's family in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Night children* outlive the trauma of mass migration through their train journey to Karachi. The railway spine in fact becomes a dominant symbol in Saleem Sinai's case. Even though Saleem's narration includes random references to real train journeys from Lahore to Delhi, before or at the onset of partition, mentioning instances, such as the death of "S. P. Butt who will die in a train to Pakistan, and Mustapha Kemal who will be murdered by goondas in his grand Flagstaff Road house and have the words 'mother-sleeping hoarder' written on his chest in his own blood…(1981, 57*)*, it is the boisterous train of his consciousness that controls the railway spine of his narrative. The metaphorical train locates and relocates Saleem Sinai through his ancestral past to turbulent political events during the birth of two nations and his telepathic connection with all the five hundred and eighty-one children of Midnight, driving him through the fragmented nation and the disintegrated notions of birth and death, freedom and bondage, or truth and reality, making him realize "What's real and what's true aren't necessarily the same"' (1981, 49). And the truth is, as Joseph D'Costa tells Mary, "This independence is for the rich only; the poor are being made to kill each other like flies. In Punjab, in Bengal. Riots riots, poor against poor. It's in the wind" (1981, 65).

The railway spine trauma is portrayed at its best in Khushwant Sing's *A Train to Pakistan.* As the novel begins, a village called Mano Majra, located in the India-Pakistan border, finds itself as the junction of the partition. A train from Pakistan weaves the plot of *A Train to Pakistan*. The train from Pakistan brought compartments full of dead bodies of Sikh people, murdered and sent to India. The retaliation plan was to send a train load of dead Muslims back to Pakistan. The whole novel then was set in tune around this revenge motif, which later got prevented. Singh opens the

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64501/jpmxw197

novel describing the horrendous acts and impacts of communal violence: "According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims" (1956, 6). As the novel proceeds with its plot entangled in robbery, communal violence, and friendship, the trauma of seeing train-loads of dead people puts everyone on the edge, and the definition of a safe home gets deconstructed according to one's religious affiliation: "Quite suddenly, every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent. His long hair and beard appeared barbarous, his kirpan menacingly anti-Muslim. For the first time, the name Pakistan came to mean something to them—a refuge where there were no Sikhs" (1956, 98). Later in the novel, Meet Singh gives a succinct update to his friend Iqbal: "Trainloads of dead people came to Mano Majra. We burned one lot and buried another. The river was flooded with corpses. Muslims were evacuated, and in their place, refugees have come from Pakistan" (1956, 142). The train tracks between India and Pakistan thus become a peripatetic symbol of vacillating home and identity, reemphasizing the trauma of all the dangers ensued by such forced migrations and new renaming of home.

In the partition novels mentioned above, the definition of both home and identity were decided by religious binaries. The body became divided in binaries (Hindu body/non-Hindu body; Muslim body/ non-Muslim body; Hindu female body/ non-Hindu male body; Muslim female body/non-Muslim male body) and the fate of the body got decided through phenomenological and/or epistemological violence. The phenomenological violence got enacted through trauma (of rape, shaming, subjugation, assault, or murder), while the epistemological violence of Partition

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worked in terms of memory and migration. Fragmentation (of all sorts) emerged as an inevitable outcome, as it did in the novels mentioned in this discussion, and the subject's ability to adapt with their fragmented selves mostly got determined by their gender[ed] privilege. The notion of home or identity perceived by a Pooro (*Pinjar*), a Noora (*Train to India*), Lenny (*Ice Candy Man*), Amina Sinai (*Midnight's Children)* or Laila (*Sunlight on a Broken Column*) would not be the same as the male characters of these novels, who had the privilege to choose their fate (to fight or flee). The remembering and dismembering of the trauma creates a gender binary of men's active involvement/women's passive acceptance. Rescued women of Partition were either handed over a country based on their religion or were forced to reconfigure their religion based on the prowess of the abductor or the rescuer. These women became subjects to "depersonalization and sociological specification,[28]" and were threatened to face a complete epistemic erasure unless they learned how to negotiate with the borders and fragments of memory, home, and identity. A Hindu woman named Pooro therefore makes an active decision to live the life of a Muslim woman in Pakistan (in *Pinjar*), or a woman named Mumtaz Aziz (in *Midnight's Children*) handles her fractured identities by divorcing tradition (the first husband) and marrying the new prosperity (second husband, Ahmed Sinai). Among all these characters, the most audaciously outspoken one is Laila from Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, who makes a conscious choice of a home instead of being thrown into one. As a college educated Muslim girl of an elite Muslim family, Laila had the privilege to voice her opinion by marrying a financially disadvantaged man named Ameer against her family's will. Her uncle Hamid was invested in a career of a politician, and most of her family members had a mixed reaction about having a separate country based on

[28] I am referring to Jefferey Alexander's trauma theory, which I have discussed in detail in part one of this essay.

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religion. However, after the Partition, while many of her relatives migrated to the new country, Laila chose not to leave. The concept of Partition is connected with both home and identity for Laila, who "has never been allowed to make decisions" (1961, 265) in her home, just as the rescued women of Partition were not given the chance to choose their homes. She asserted her identity by marrying a man against her family's will and by deciding to raise her baby daughter in her late husband's house. According to Zofia Rosinska, "Memory plays a triple role: it is identity-forming by maintaining the original identifications; it is therapeutic because it helps bear the hardships of transplantation onto a foreign culture; and it is also community-forming, by creating a bond among those recollecting together" (2014, 38). Against the apocalypse of the Partition, Laila decides to build a new utopian home for her baby daughter and herself in her late husband's house in India. However, one cannot forget the shattered ground that dream house is built on. The memories of a dead husband and the broken columns of traumatic past will be haunting that house. After all, no matter how bright the sun shines, the cracks in the broken column will remain ingrained, like the post-traumatic stress of partition and its haunting memories.

Conclusion

I side with critics, such as, Henri Bergson, Paul Ricoeur, and Pierre Nora who deal with the phenomenology of memory in context of situ or site. Sometimes the geographical place is the site, and sometimes, as it was with the violated women of the Partition, the corporeal body is the site for memory. Unlike Sundholm, who emphasizes more on social value of trauma than on epistemology, I give emphasis to both the sociological and epistemological aspect of original event and its traumatic impact. The social or cultural event (be it an ethnical or racial cleansing, a

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holocaust, or a genocide) maybe grounded or located in a site experiencing physical annihilation, but its repeated experience or 'postmemory' may pose the danger of extinction of populations as well as epistemic erasure. When memory triggers and the candle of trauma burns our already dead existence, we need someone to hear our cries in their dreams. Else, humanity's past will not be able to resurface to reestablish a link between its decaying present and promising future.

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