

PARTITIONS SPECIAL ISSUE

INTRODUCTION

UNCONSCIONABLE MAPS

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography. – Jorge Luis Borges, 'Del rigor en la ciencia' (1958)

Jorge Luis Borges' one-paragraph story, credited as a quotation from the fictional 'Suárez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lérida, 1658', is tinged with a certain magic realist/creole-baroque irony.¹ The scattered, tattered precision of this fabulated map is a cogent device for the 'decolonial abyss'.² The decolonial abyss pertains to a kind of ethico-political potentiality which can help explain, or at least to identify, experiences of suffering, socio-political trauma and colonial violence. It also addresses creolization as the afterlife of trauma.³ Inspired by the mystical figure of the abyss (explored variously in negative theology, German idealism and Afro-Caribbean philosophy) An Yountae raises the question of the decolonial condition. The decolonial/postcolonial condition in relation to Partitions in South Asia is the subject of this volume.⁴

In the context of modern-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the map as palimpsest, as *fata morgana*, as ruination or as scrap, has been looked at by various contemporary artists: Shilpa Gupta's hairline drawings, Somnath Hore's wound scoured paper, Rashid Rana's mirrored crowds; Nalini Malani and Iftikhar Dadi's *zari* cartography, Amar Kanwar's sentient filmmaking. Regarding instability and contestation these practitioners speak to many generations.⁵ But to introduce some manifestations of South Asian Partitions in the visual arts, it is worth turning to the practice of an artist who has long weathered some such legacies (fig.1). Experimenting with video and digital montage, artist-poet Gulammohemed Sheikh envisages what might be a mappa mundi now. Sheikh's artworks evince syncretism of many painterly and poetic forms including Sienese and

¹ Jorge Luis Borges, 'Del rigor en la ciencia', 'On Exactitude in Science', in Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley, London: Penguin, 1999; p.101.

² An Yountae, *The Decolonial Abyss: Mysticism and Cosmopolitics from the ruins*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

³ An Yountae, 'From Exile to Cosmopolitics: Creolizing the Spiritual after Trauma', *Horizontes Decoloniales*, 1.2 (2015): pp.143-163.

⁴ Yountae, *Decolonial Abyss*.

⁵ See Ananya Jahanara Kabir, 'Cartographic Irresolution and the Line of Control', *Social Text*, 101, Vol. 27, No. 4, Winter 2009, p.47.

Mughal art, magic realism (Borges *et al*), personal photographs and sacred cartography. Perhaps a decolonial heterotopia? ...

THE WRETCHED OF THE TEAR

Each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it, in relative opacity. – Frantz Fanon, 'The Wretched of the Earth' (1961)

To revisit or (re)view Partitions, several generations have had to think through relative opacity. In 1947, a drab backdrop of food rationing, coal shortages, and national debt perhaps hastened 'British leaders [to make] their decision to relieve themselves of their Indian burden, and to do so quickly'.⁶ A kind of boundary between India and future Pakistan had been sketched by Archibald Wavell- the Viceroy prior to his replacement by Louis Mountbatten in February 1947. In order to determine exactly which territories to assign to each country, in June 1947 Britain appointed Cyril Radcliffe to chair two Boundary Commissions—one for Bengal and one for the Punjab. On 15 July 1947, the Indian Independence Act of the UK Parliament stipulated that British rule in India would end in a month's time. Swift, secretive, indifferent towards the populations involved for sure, Radcliffe's Line was published August 1, 1947. Such a tearing of the cartographic scape can be viewed in the light of what Sumathi Ramaswamy and Edward Said before term the 'gift of empire'.⁷ Gift, as Marcel Mauss proposed, is coercive by nature.⁸

The Act of Indian Independence abandoned the suzerainty of the British Crown over the princely states and dissolved the Indian Empire. Pakistan was intended as a Muslim homeland, while the Union of India it was determined should be 'secular'. To be geographically 'precise': the Muslim-majority British provinces in the north were to become the foundation of Pakistan; the provinces of Baluchistan (91.8% Muslim before partition) and Sindh (72.7%) were granted to Pakistan. However, two provinces did not have an overwhelming majority—Bengal in the north-east (54.4% Muslim) and the Punjab in the north-west (55.7% Muslim). The western part of the Punjab became part of West Pakistan and the eastern part became the Indian state of East Punjab, which was later divided between a smaller Punjab State and two other states. Bengal was also partitioned, into East Bengal (in Pakistan) and West Bengal (in India). Following independence, the North-West Frontier Province (whose borders with Afghanistan had earlier been demarcated by the Durand Line) voted in a referendum to join Pakistan. This referendum was boycotted by the most popular Pukhtun movement in the province at that time. The area is now a province in Pakistan called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁹

⁶ Lucy Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2009, p.2.

⁷ Edward Said, 'Partition as a Parting Gift of Empire,' *Dawn*, 22 November 1999 as cited in Mahbubar Rahman and Willem van Schendel, 'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2003), pp. 551-584, p.583.

⁸ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, London: Continuum, 2013 (1925).

⁹ For Partition studies see David Gilmartin, 'Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History', *Journal of Asian*

Studies, 57.4 (1998), pp.1068-1095; Vazira Failya-Yacobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, boundaries, histories*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

The Punjab's population distribution was such that any division based on religious communities would entail the destruction of road and rail communications, irrigation, electric power systems and disrupt what might be understood as the rule of property. The British believed that a well-drawn, 'immaculate' line could minimize the separation of farmers from their fields, and also minimize the numbers of people who might feel forced to relocate. Thus they sought to 'equitably' divide 175,000 square miles (450,000 km²) of territory with a population of 88 million. Nonetheless in the summer of 1947, an estimated 10 to 15 million people lost their place of dwelling, members of their family and clan, their community. It was Mountbatten's admittance: 'I fucked up'. Partition resulted in a death toll estimated at well over one million. Partition created lasting communalist divisions between what can be crudely termed a largely Muslim Pakistan and a Hindu India. In the wake of '47, the new nations and their subjects sought stability perhaps in the map. In her account here of the watercolours of Atul Dodiya, Sumathi Ramaswamy expresses the tearscape of 'the wretched'. Tearscape can be read as tears, rips; to tear as to seize, to pull, to pluck. As 'scape' tearscape can be seen to stretch Arjun Appadurai's idea of 'scape' as a spatially, politically and imaginative means of conceiving of modernity at large.¹⁰

1947 was not the first time that the British had attempted Partition. Neither was it a decisive or final cut – hence the title of this volume meant in the plural. Raj-projected lines of control have lineages back to at least 1905. That year, Viceroy George Curzon sanctioned the division of eastern and western Bengal. This cartographic incision, as Christopher Pinney has argued, generated a kind of 'guerrilla' imagery – imagery that might be perceived as allegory – or overdetermination of meaning.¹¹ For instance, the Hindu goddess Kali, the predominant deity in southern Calcutta and subject of numerous Kalighat paintings, posters, chromos and temple effigies, whipped up colonial paranoia.¹² Kajri Jain (this volume) pushes this play on allegory towards visual culture as *partage*. Precedent set, in 1943 the British torched the borders of eastern Bengal. If Burke's 'Philosophical Enquiry' has morphed into 'meatless days', the Bengal Famine is a scholarly blind spot.¹³ In her essay here on Zainul Abedin, Sanjukta Sunderason shows how Leftist artists then involved with the Communist Party of India (CPI) railed at this partition – her partition read as scorch. Not bare life but necropolitics laid bare.¹⁴ Famine reignited debates on the Sublime. Artists including Abedin and Chittoprasad Bhattacharya and the photographer Sunil Janah, did much to put pressure on the CPI's official publication 'People's War' to include photo essays and a form of reportage aimed at capturing the voice of the subaltern, as in the case of villager Santi: 'I am ashamed to be ill. I don't like to being sketched in my sickbed, the last place a Bolshevik should be'.¹⁵

¹⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural dimensions in globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

¹¹ Christopher Pinney, 'Photos of the Gods': The printed image and political struggle in India, London: Reaktion, 2004.

¹² Pinney, *Photos of the gods for the overdetermination of meaning in an image in colonial India around the time of Partition*, 1905.

¹³ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993; Suleri, *Meatless Days*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

¹⁴ Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 1.1 (2003), pp.11-40.

¹⁵ Chittoprasad, 'Help Chittagong', *People's War*, August 27, 1943, p.2.

To jumpcut across partitions to the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 which led to the formation of Bangladesh, is noted for death figures three times that of 1947.¹⁶ Jason Cons' recent scholarship alerts up to what it means to live with(in) the barbed wire interdictions of the everyday.¹⁷ The 'shadow lines' of British colonial attempts at Partition have been seemingly relentless.¹⁸ Devika Singh (this volume) makes the case for the voice of artistic production during this time of crisis. She identifies the rise of 'Third Worldism' and how the work of Somnath Hore, K.G. Subramanyan and Bhupen Khakhar made a profound impact on western intellectuals of the Left (Malraux et al).

As 'the underside of independence' the trauma Partition (in the singular of the plural) 'remains a festering wound in the collective psyche of South Asia'.¹⁹ Whilst Bhaskar Sarkar has focused on speculative media and what might be a postcolonial cinema of affect, Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nassar draw our attention to the sheer number of contemporary artists who engage with legacies of Partitions.²⁰ This move might be read in relation to migrancy, art and emergency. TJ Demos's excurses on photography *qua* 'a life full of holes' and his recourse to Glissant's desire for 'the right to opacity' have especial valence.²¹ Aside from the exigent artwork of Nalini Malani and Amar Kanwar, and the *Mappings* exhibition (1997 New Delhi, Eicher Gallery), perhaps it is Shilpa Gupta's *In Our Times* (2007-2008) (fig.2) which best captures cacophony and sway.

In *The Human Condition* (1958) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1958), Hannah Arendt sought to account for the devastation of war.²² Horkheimer and Adorno had weighed violence on a scale of the mimetic – the scapegoat, the collective.²³ Frantz Fanon embraced absolute violence.²⁴ Violence as

¹⁶ See Nayanika Mookherjee, *The Spectral Wound and Sexual Violence: Public memories and the Bangladesh War of 1971*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015; Samita Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War*, London: Hurst, 2011.

¹⁷ Jason Cons, *Sensitive Space: Fragmented territory at the Indo-Bangladesh border*, Washington DC: University of Washington Press, 2016.

¹⁸ Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, London: Penguin, 1988. See Pinaki Roy, 'Coming Home: Passage from Anglophilia to Indocentrism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*', in *Postmodern Indian English Fiction*. (ed.) A.S. Kaushik, Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2012, pp.62–77.

¹⁹ Bhaskar Sarkar quoted in *Lines of Control*, p.9.

²⁰ Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian cinema in the wake of Partition*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2009. Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nasar (eds.), *Lines of Control: Partition as Productive Space*, London: Green Cardamom, 2012.

²¹ TJ Demos, 'The Right to Opacity: On the Otolith Group's *Nervous Rerum*', *October* 115 (Summer, 2009), pp.113-128; Demos, 'Life Full of Holes', *Grey Room*, (Summer, 2006), pp.72-87.

²² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958; Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Meridian Books, 1958. See also Kathryn T.Gines, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014; Marilyn La Fay, *Hannah Arendt and the Specter of Totalitarianism*, (eds.) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Waseem Yaqoob, 'Reconciliation and Violence: Hannah Arendt on historical understanding', *Modern Intellectual History*, 11.2 (2014), pp.385-416.

²³ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W.Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical fragments*, (ed.) Gunelin Schmid Noerr, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002,

²⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, London: Grove Press, 1961.

purifying. Recently, Aamir Mufti has tested the limits of 'Enlightenment in the Colony'.²⁵ Mufti identifies the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India as a colonial variation of what he calls 'the exemplary crisis of minority' – Jewishness in Europe. He shows how the emergence of conflict in colonial India in the later 19th century represented an equivalent of anti-Semitic racism. We must in contrast seek out secular, minority and exilic perspectives.

The idea behind Mufti's project emerged in the wake of the communalist riots which led to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Uttar Pradesh on 6 December 1992. Such 'terrorized and terrorizing figures of minority [...] delineate central categories and narratives of liberal culture and thought concerning the question of minority existence – assimilation, emancipation, separatism, conversion, the language of state protection and minority rights, uprooting, exile and homelessness'.²⁶ His perspective draws its inspiration from how *les Lieux de Mémoire* can be inflected by 'minority' literature.²⁷ A fundamental figure in this narrative, Muhammad Hasan Askari writing as the founder of the Urdu school of literary criticism known as *jadīdiyat* in the 1940s and 1950s, advocated literary practice as 'absorption'.²⁸ Absorption of Joyce and other writers of equivocal colonial status, equipped Askari with a vocabulary for reimagining occupancy qua the decolonial. Mufti's own desire to produce a 'lyric history' of South Asia 'even in the face of communalism'²⁹ alerts us to the exigency of the poet philosopher and their search for what might be 'seamless' translation.³⁰ At the same time, it underlines the violence of the line.

ICONOPRAXIS: WORLDING, LINES OF FLIGHT

The Line: Olde English line 'rope, series', probably of Germanic origin, from Latin linea (fibra) 'flax (fibre)', from Latin linum 'flax', reinforced in Middle English by Old French ligne, based on Latin linea.

As its etymology suggests, the line is fibrous, capable of many forms of seriality. This special issue on 'Partitions' wishes to account for many entangled genealogies of trauma, memory, forgetting and more ludic legacies of devastating violence. Is there any kind of *jouissance* possible? How best through the visual can Partitions be approached? Perhaps iconopraxis can inspire.

Iconopraxis, as Kajri Jain reminds us in this volume, is preoccupied with how the power of the visual might occupy the space of politics – especially when politics have been condemned to failure. Jain stresses in her essay on *partage* that the struggle for re-enchantment of a subaltern modernity is

²⁵ Aamir Mufti, 'Zarina Hashmi and the Arts of Dispossession' in Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nasar (eds.) *Lines of Control: Partition as a productive space*, Ithaca: Cornell, 2012; pp.87-101. See also Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the crisis of postcolonial culture*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007; Mufti, *Forget English: Orientalisms and world literature*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016.

²⁶ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the colony*, pp.2-3.

²⁷ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (Spring, 1989), pp.7-24.

²⁸ Muhammad Hasan Askari, 'The Last Stage of Western Literature', *Majūma'a*, Lahore: San-e Mī, 1991.

²⁹ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the colony*, p.235.

³⁰ The concept of paraphrase and the practice of seamless translation is a current project of poet-translator Alípio Correia de Franca Neto.

one which deals with ‘the capaciousness of allegory’³¹. Here allegory is understood in relation to the aesthetics of presence, iconopraxis and the distribution of the sensible.³²

Addressing the sensible, agency and materiality, the essays in this volume engage with many prescient media and technologies including cinema, exhibitions, artist collectives/networks, censorship, ephemera, art writing and photographic abstraction. Collectively they show how the experiences of partitions must be construed through various affective registers and temporalities. Partition as interdiction, slippage; to slip by. Atreyee Gupta alerts us to the musical sense of ‘segue’: segue meant as movement without interruption – perhaps the slide of scales. Salma Siddique shows how the tradition of *qissa dastan* can provide a ‘pliable’ insight into 20th-century Lahori cinema.³³ For Arindam Dutta, censorship is a ‘fungible domain’ – one which had to deal with ‘Nehruvian disgust of subalternity’.

Narratives of Partitions inherently entail failure and recalcitrance, as Karin Zitzewitz points out in her contribution on Triangle Networks. Nevertheless, she also suggests that contemporary art can offer a glimpse of ‘transcendental, redemptive power’, while its attendant disciplinary system of framing, Art History, is subject to criticism in Saloni Mathur’s contribution. Mathur, paying due respect to Geeta Kapur’s seminal series of essays *When Was Modernism* (2000), and building upon her own collection *The Migrant’s Time* (2011) takes the current state of the discipline of Art History to task.³⁴ Certainly in the UK there is now a woeful lack of interest in the global, the postcolonial, the decolonial.

So how can Partition challenge the very practice of Art History? What ‘Strange Historicities’ inflect the visual?³⁵ With recourse to Antonio Gramsci on the anti-teleological and the subaltern, coupled with her concern for a cinema of affect (montage, jump cut) Mathur offers a method for the panning of new scholarly practices. These new practices might be shaped by fabulation. As Gayatri Spivak and Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay propose, fabulation is a device for worlding in the vernacular.³⁶

³¹ Quotes from contributors are not paginated. Jain draws inspiration from Own Lynch, ‘We Make These Floats So That They Will See What We See/Feel’, in Gary Tartakov (ed.), *Dalit Art and Visual Imagery*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012, 179-218 and the classic essay by Lawrence Babb, ‘Glancing: Visual Interaction in Hinduism,’ *Journal of Anthropological Research*, no 37, vol 4, 1981, 378-410.

³² Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of the Aesthetic: Distribution of the sensible*, London: Continuum, 2004.

³³ William Elison, Christian Lee Novetzke and Andy Rotman, *Amar, Akbar, Anthony: Bollywood, Brotherhood, and the Nation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2016; Sidharth Bhatia, *Amar, Akbar, Anthony: Masala, Madness and Manmohan Desai*, HarperCollins India, Noida, 2013; Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, Routledge, New York, 2001.

³⁴ Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on contemporary cultural practice*, New Delhi: Tulika, 2000; Saloni Mathur (ed.) *The Migrant’s Time: Art History and diaspora*, Williamstown: Clark Art Institute & New Haven: Yale University Press, c.2011.

³⁵ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003. On the ‘normative secularity’ of modern and contemporary art see David Morgan, ‘Art and Religion in the Modern Age’, in James Elkins and David Morgan (eds.), *Re-Enchantment*, Routledge, New York and London, 2009, 25-45 and Karin Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism: The Cultural Politics of Modernist Art in Contemporary India*, Hurst Publishers, London, 2014.

³⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in cultural politics*, London: Routledge, 2012; Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, *The Rumour of Globalization: Desecrating the global from local margins*, London: Hurst, 2011.

Worlding, as a strategy for knowledge/conjecture on the global stage, has also recently been advanced by Pheng Cheah.³⁷ Construed through the lens of the decolonial, worlding might be inflammatory or it may pertain to the transnational and ‘worldly affiliations’. In this volume, Claire Wintle, Rebecca M. Brown with poet-artist Gieve Patel, and Sonal Khullar address respectively the task of translating notions of national identities to exhibition contexts in post-Independence Delhi, the U.S. Festival of India, 1985-86, and the Venice Biennale, 2015. Their essays challenge what we might comprehend to be both national identity and cosmopolitanism.³⁸ Not everyone occupies the same now. This is glimpsed in the darkened spaces of subalternity and the shades of opacity discussed by many of the essays here.

TO SPOOR, CONJECTURES

Jacques Derrida in ‘Of Grammatology’ advances the ‘enigmatic model of the line’. The line as:

Structurally bound up with that of economy, of technics and of ideology. This solidarity appears in the process of thesaurization, capitalization, sedentization, hierarchization of the formation of ideology by the class that writes or rather commands the scribes.³⁹

But the line could also be seen as spectre, as trace, read as track, path or mark. In the preface to her 1976 translation of ‘Of Grammatology’, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak had recourse to a defensive mimesis: ‘I stick to “trace” in my translation, because it “looks the same” as Derrida’s word; the reader must remind himself of at least the track, even the spoor, contained within the French word’.⁴⁰

Certain liberal(ist) historians justify partition-as-line as the ‘most humane lasting solution’ to intense conflict.⁴¹ Partition then would seem to transgress *the ban*, – the threshold of law and sovereignty.⁴² In 2012, Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nasar redressed the trauma of decolonization in the exhibition *Lines of Control*, staged at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University. Including the

³⁷ Pheng Cheah, *What is a World? On postcolonial literature as world literature*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

³⁸ Robert J McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994; David C Engerman, ‘South Asia and the Cold War’, in Robert J McMahon, ed, *The Cold War in the Third World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 201; Andrew Jon Rotter, ‘Culture, the Cold War, and the Third World’, in Robert J McMahon, (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, (1967) trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1976.

⁴⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Introduction’, ‘Of Grammatology’, p.6.

⁴¹ Jerry Z. Muller, ‘Us and Them: The Enduring power of ethnic nationalism’, in *Foreign Affairs*, 87.2 (March/April, 2008); p.34 cited by Hammad Nasar, ‘Lines of Control: Partition as a productive space’, in Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nasar (eds.), *Lines of Control*, London: Green Cardomom and Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, 2012; pp.9-17; p.12..

⁴² The notion of the ban is a key concept relating to Giorgio Agamben’s multi-volume *Homo Sacer* project.

artworks of Raqs Media Collective, Farida Batool, Rashid Rana, Emily Jacer, Amar Kanwar, and Bani Abidi⁴³ the exhibition used the Partition of 1947 as a device for thinking through border controls as 'a chance for the "undisciplined" work of contemporary artists to enter into a diverse set of conversations'.⁴⁴ Central to the exhibition was Murtaza Vali's on-going project, *Proposals for a Memorial to Partition*. Vali solicited proposals for a memorial to Partition from a number of artists, architects and cultural practitioners; these proposals might be seen in relation to an aesthetic of prosthetic trauma. The project's first iteration appeared in 'Manual for Treason' Shahraj Biennial X (2011) and was intended as 'a collective gesture towards excavating the traumatic underbelly of nation-building in the Subcontinent'.⁴⁵ This excavation might involve catastrophe, not only the camp⁴⁶, the trudge, the flight, the fight but also other forms of violence. And as such, perhaps partitions can also be said to contain 'lines of flight'.

A line of flight (French: *ligne de fuite*) is a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and used extensively in his work with Félix Guattari:

Fuite covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing point in a painting is a *point de fuite*). It has no relation to flying.⁴⁷

It can offer up the potentialities of multiple modernities. Within what might still be termed 'parallel modernities' Fanon and writer-translators such as Borges, indicate the possibilities of the lines of flight of decolonial imaginaire.⁴⁸ Whether this entailed the figure of the abyss or revolution construed as absolute/total violence it has powerful resonance for the study of Partitions in South Asia. Vali's opening premise declared 'commemorating history's largest mass migration, one that was marred by horrific violence, is a somewhat tricky proposition'.⁴⁹ There is the vexing question of whether extant forms of memorialization are in any way appropriate given that 'there was no clear distinction between perpetrator and victim as both "sides" raped and killed and were raped and killed [...] As such there was no single traumatic event [...] a *single* memorial will always be inadequate'.⁵⁰ But perhaps his project can be said to operate as a memorial per se. Its 'open ended spirit' presented the modest, the ad-hoc, the sketchy:

⁴³ The show included over 45 works by 33 separate artists/artist collectives and 12 brief art critical/historical essays. Its genesis -- a symposium organized at London's Royal Geographical Society, December, 2005 under the 'directorship' of Sarat Maharaj with the assistance of Green Cardamom.

⁴⁴ Hammad Nasar, 'Lines of Control: Partition as a productive space', in *Lines of Control*, pp. 9-17; p.11.

⁴⁵ *Lines of Control*, p.117.

⁴⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The witness and the archive*, New York: Zone, 2000.

⁴⁷ Brian Massumi, 'Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgments', in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London: Continuum, (2006), p.xvi.

⁴⁸ For parallel modernities see Brian Larkin, 'Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the creation of parallel modernities', *Africa*, 67.3 (1997), pp.406-440.

⁴⁹ Murtaza Vali, 'Proposals for a Memorial to Partition', in *Lines of Control*, p.117.

⁵⁰ *Lines of Control*, p.117.

‘Above all, the hope is that they will be traitorous, unsettling the hegemonic narratives and ideologies of nations somewhat build cynically built atop the death and suffering of million’.⁵¹

Contributors to Vali’s collaborative intervention included Yamini Nayar’s *Mapping Obscura (memory and place)*, a travelling camera obscura which invites photograms made from a wooden shipping container with a lens in the ceiling producing ever shape shifting clouds. Into the interior of the projected nebulous, visitors are requested to bring an object of personal significance which would, through the camera, then be photographed or experienced as amorphous, ephemeral projections. Nalini Malani’s contribution *Memory Aid* took inspiration from Faiz Ahmed’s poem, *In Search of Vanished Blood*, which she proposed to transcribe in copper, onto a 4-metre human brain, carved in pink marble:

This blood which has disappeared

Without leaving a trace

Isn’t part of written history:

Who will guide me to it?

THE PLAY OF SILENCE: SUBCONTINENTAL BRITAIN

There is something strikingly different about the quality of photographs of that time. It has nothing to do with age or colour, or the feel of paper [...]. In modern family photographs the camera pretends to circulate like a friend, clicking its shutters at those moments when its subjects have disarranged themselves to present to it those postures which they would like to think of as informal. But in pictures of that time, the camera is still a public and alien eye. – Amitav Ghosh, The Shadow Lines (1998)

The person who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner. – Edward Said citing Eric Auerbach

Raminder Kaur Kahlon in her essay here on the play *Silent Sisters* challenges the threshold of representation, where representation even in its most elliptical forms is regarded as authentic and due attention. She senses the dynamics of the lost and found as cinema, and its osmosis with theatre and photography. Photographs, familial and defamiliarizing, offer a snapshot of identification with Partition as suggested by Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*.⁵² Such umbra is tricky to put your finger on. What Kaur Kahlon and Alice Correia identify here, is the violence of Partition for women that included rape and trauma, but which also finds corporeal vengeance as art. Gendered retribution assumes many forms – forms which carry across generations. Both Correia and Kaur Kahlon draw us to ‘Subcontinental Britain’ and recount how partitions and their ramifications traverse geographical and temporal specificities. These papers that address articulations of Partition narratives on international stage suggesting that it is possible to deprovincialise those histories hitherto bonded to the cartographic line; simultaneously Correia and Kaur Kahlon arguably provincialise British histories, problematizing the indexical relationship between national boundary

⁵¹ Lines of Control, p.117.

⁵² Amitav Ghosh, *Shadow Lines*, London: Black Swan, 1989.

and nationalist history. Homi K. Bhabha identifies 'a conspiracy of silence around the colonial truth',⁵³ a silence which facilitates the sublimation or avoidance of Britain's post-colonial responsibility. As Correia suggests, foregrounding Partition stories in British exhibition spaces goes some way to counter the ideological forgetting of Britain's colonial past.

DECOLONIAL LINEAGES

Partition – Definition: a sharing, distribution, division.

Third Text has always been committed to thinking about the decolonial line. Other journals now insist on kinds of globality and attention to regionalism, even to the migrant at times; it has always been our commitment to see to the violence, the poetics of decolonization. This is not 'elliptical' tokenism. It is the legacy of Black Phoenix and Third Text's commitment to combatting racism and marginality in the academia we stress. Ten years on from the fiftieth anniversary of 1947 it is possible to read the 'global turn' and Partition together – Nalini Malani's *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* (1998), Bani Abidi's *The News* (2001), Amar Kanwar's *The Lightning Testimonies* (2007). To quote Sonal Khullar (this volume) is Partition a 'longue durée'? 'Long Partition'⁵⁴ might be seen to be between memory and history.

In October 2016, The Arts and Cultural Heritage Trust (TAACHT) opened the first Partition Museum in the dusty old Town Hall, Amritsar.⁵⁵ TAACHT works as a not for profit NGO which is now partnered with *The Hindustan Times*, the Tuli Family and Teamworks Fine Arts Society as well as individual donors. According to the founder Kishwar Desai, 'A Partition museum is something I have been thinking about for 20 years now. I used to work in television earlier, so could never make the time for this project. Now when I see that generation – the only one that experienced the Partition – get older, I feel it is important to record that history. Their sacrifice needs to be appreciated.'⁵⁶ The

⁵³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.123.

⁵⁴ See also Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; Zamindar, 'Sadequain: The Making and Unmaking of a National Artist', *The Holy Sinner*, edited by Salima Hashmi. Karachi: Herald Publications, 2003; 'Edward Said and Eqbal Ahmad: Anti-Imperialist Struggles in a Postcolonial World', *ISIM Review*, No. 13. December 2003. Also on the Eqbal Ahmad: Cherishing His Courage website: http://www.bitsonline.net/eqbal/tribute.asp?id=13&tribute_from=FAP.

⁵⁵ According to the museum's electrical expert Neeraj Sahai, "The buildings were very dusty. We were not in a position to bring in all the objects that are in our possession. So we agreed to bring a few, key objects, some old letters etc. But the exhibition was becoming very flat," recalls Sahai. They decided to add some installations, a well, symbolic of the ones in which so many women had jumped to avoid being abducted and raped by the rioters. "A well is very simple, just a cylinder and you put it there. But to put it there and to make it look authentic, it had to be downscaled in a way that it did not look like a plastic toy. That was the challenge. We researched with various photos of wells from Lahore, downscaled it, We were lucky to get these Nanakshahi bricks – these are thinner than the ones that we use now-a-days, that helped us give the well look closer to the wells of those times." There are plans for elaborate lighting and a fog machine. See *The Hindustan Times*, October 30, 2016 <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/displacement-diaries-partition-museum-revisits-history-with-hopes-of-a-better-future/story-jUN5sWDR37Inbk9Mxb4QBJ.html>

⁵⁶ The museum reportedly cost more than 1 million pounds and involved meetings in the UK for instance at the House of Lords. Desai's team is supported by an advisory board that includes veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar

museum's self-proclaimed mission is to become a site of memory analogous to The National September 11 Memorial and Museum, New York and the Apartheid Museum, Cape Town.

All are invited to contribute to the museum – by way of funding, archival material, interviews or exhibits through their website: thepartitionmuseumproject.com. Its founding donors in particular have contributed objects relating to their own or their families' experiences of 1947. Desai's own parents Padam Ajit Rosha and Rajini Rosha donated a version of *Muraqqa-i-Chughtai*, which considers Abdur Rahman Chughtai's painterly interpretation of Ghalib's couplets. The *Muraqqa* was a prized possession of Desai's maternal grandmother, recalls Rajini Rosha, who was 13 when their family crossed over from Lahore:

'We didn't bring everything with us when the Partition happened. Everyone was under the impression that we would all go back to our homes once the violence subsided. But that didn't happen. My father had gone back to Lahore to retrieve some of the things we had left behind. This book was one of them.'

Desiccated, disintegrating, moth eaten, the volume is nonetheless a highlight of the thousands of artefacts donated to the museum. University of Montreal student Aanchal Malhotra exhibited a part of her fine art thesis, *Remnants of a Separation* for the launch: 'There are objects preserved from the time of the holocaust in museums, but there hadn't been a material study of partition so far', says Malhotra who was not only seeking out the obvious objects but also the unlikely: 'There is, of course, jewellery, which people carried thinking they could sell it. I found some well-preserved *zari* thread, even a nameplate carved in Rajasthani stone! [...] It takes courage to carry an object when one's life is in danger. These objects have stories behind them.'⁵⁷ Donated things (objects as raconteurs) include a wedding *duppata*, a *gadwai*, a *phulkari* which are set off against blown up photographs of migration and centre pieces including the model of a brick well. Although in many ways the format of the museum resembles that of other museums, it is the gifting of objects and attempt to break what many still perceive to be the silence veiling Partition that distinguishes the Partition Museum.⁵⁸ According to Indira Chand speaking of her experience as a migrant at that time, Christianized and perhaps somehow protected by being so, 'families have been heavily splintered [...] you can't just wipe it out and say it never happened'.⁵⁹

(who thought of such a museum in the 1950s), Meghnad Desai, Ashis Nandy, Jugnu Mohsin and Salima Hashmi.

⁵⁷ Kim Aroral, 'Partition Museum to Preserve a Memory Almost Lost', The Times of India, August 28, 2015, accessed online September 12, 2017; <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Partition-museum-to-preserve-a-memory-almost-lost/articleshow/48703239.cms> See also The Times of India, October 27, 2016 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/amritsar/17-year-old-to-bring-app-on-partition-museum/articleshow/55082917.cms> In Amritsar, Viren Gupta (17) was so much moved after hearing the story of the perilous journey of his grandfather Dharam Chand Laat, who had migrated from Jhelum (Pakistan) to Gurugram in India following the Partition in 1947, that he decided to set up a mobile phone app with the help of a programming company. He recounts how his grandfather Dharam Chand had long told him harrowing and fascinating tales of Partition. He believes that the app will reach out to the younger generation as a way of making the museum relevant.

⁵⁸ The museum does draw some inspiration from museums such as the Birla Science Museum (head museum, Kolkata plus a fleet of museobuses) which includes such 'fads' as a singing bucket placed over an 'infinity' well.

⁵⁹ <http://www.partitionmuseum.org/get-involved/request-for-oral-history/>

The museum reports that some days it receives more than one thousand visitors – ‘from schoolchildren to Partition Survivors, from international tourists to village dwellers, from politicians to scholars’.⁶⁰ It is a critical component of the new Heritage Street that runs between the Town Hall and the Golden Temple. The plan is for the museum to be seven rooms covering 16,000 ft² of the Town Hall. The galleries will be divided thematically into ‘synthetic Punjab’, Independence, Partition, migration, research, rehabilitation, resettlement and the gallery of hope. The gallery of hope is to be dominated by a tree fashioned from barbed wire from which will be hung ‘leaves’ – messages of peace and healing left by visitors aspirant of a reconciliatory future set off against images of despair, exemplified by Sardari Lal Parashar’s paintings produced during his confinement in a refugee camp.

Perhaps the museum can be viewed as part of a certain turn in governmentality best represented by the Indian Memory Project. Such institutionalization of memory is not necessarily celebrated by artists, as the recent installations of Raqs Media Collective attest.⁶¹ The lure of *lieux de mémoire* involves also what Kamala Visweswaran terms ‘everyday occupations’.⁶² Rejecting an event-based or episodic account of violence, Visweswaran focuses on the intersection between politics and culture under occupation, a condition of ‘violent peace’ that is socially generative and foundational to democracy in South Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. By her account, occupation offers a method and material that revises conventional histories and temporalities of domination, resistance, violence, peace, life, death, exception, and the everyday. Although Visweswaran and her collaborators privilege poetry, song, and story as genres expressive of political ambiguity, hegemony, and subversion, visual art has been a crucial site of power-knowledge and its critique in contemporary South Asia. This visual art operates between elite and the politics of the governed.⁶³

Partition can of course also be the space of psychological boundaries, trauma and ‘ruptured psychogeography’ (TJ Demos) opening up questions of commemoration and belonging, ‘permanent exile’ (Edward Said) or ‘being in exodus’ (Agamben). Given certain disillusionment with political forms of engagement, this Special Issue explores the possibility that art can, and did, take the place of failed political initiatives, not so much as an obvious replacement but as a supplement, as another form of the right to representation. In 1947 the newly formed Progressive Artists Group (mostly Bombay and Baroda) invoked Partition as a major force driving their desire to be a collective. Partition calls to mind what the Otolith Group have termed ‘past-present futures’ and the opening of a space for negotiating the political, the imaginary and the artistic – something that was commemorated in 2007.

⁶⁰ See <http://www.partitionmuseum.org/about-us>. The Partition Museum was inaugurated October 24, 2016, by the Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, Sukhbir Badal and visited by several ministers November 1, 2016, which is Punjab Day. The major international partner of the museum is the LSE South Asia Centre (est. 2015).

⁶¹ Natasha Eaton, ‘Subaltern Rustle: Raqs Media Collective, the colour blue and the colonial archive’, MARG, 67.1 (September, 2015).

⁶² See Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minnesota, 1994) and *Un/common Cultures: Racism and the Rearticulation of Cultural Difference* (Duke, 2010). See also Visweswaran, (ed.) *Perspectives on Modern South Asia*, London: Blackwell, 2011; (ed.) *Everyday Occupations: Experiencing Militarism in South Asia and the Middle East*, Pennsylvania, 2013.

⁶³ Partha Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on politics in most parts of the world*, New York: Chicago University Press, 2004.

So what has happened since 2007 aside from the recent institutionalization, fetishization of Partition within, as museum? A lot it would seem – for artists in search of the ‘spirit’ of the archive and its perceptual caesura.⁶⁴ Although a rich and incrementing interest in the ‘cosmopolitan’, nomadic artist exists, repercussions for partitions in South Asia remain a kind of blind spot. Partition has long been subject to cinema and literature, as we have suggested above, the narratives of which inflect the work of artists and writers – including our contributors. Our contributors here are drawn from several spheres of academia – film studies, art history, history and museum studies to name but a few. Their rich and extensive essays probe the (im)possibility of representing Partition and its legacies. Partition as distribution of the sensible, partition and the politics of affect, partition as expanded field are just a few of the issues we address.

Rebecca M. Brown’s essay with poet-artist Gieve Patel questions what it means to see South Asian History as jump-cut. Their collaboration *To Pick Up a Brush: A Double-take, Gieve Patel, and Indian Art of the 1980s* shows how India emerged as a globalizing figure. India as Orientalist trope had then to be taken seriously in ways not seen since the days of the curatorial hegemony of Grace Morley. Figure here can be understood in the spirit of Christopher Pinney’s excursions on Jean-François Lyotard, as a space where intensities are felt.

The untimely death of Communist Party activist/playwright Safdar Hashmi provides Arindam Dutta with a device to take censorship law apart. Censorship is contentious, even downright anachronistic. Anachronism can be anarchic. There is no ‘vertical prophylaxes’ only dissipation. Dutta’s attention to ‘seditious’ ‘acts’ puts the law on the line. Such indeterminate thresholds bring into question what might ‘the ban’ qua modernity.⁶⁵ Atreyee Gupta’s essay on abstraction addresses the segue within the context of modernism. Shamefully neglected, abstraction in South Asia offers a critical lens for revisiting the relationship between photography, architecture and sculpture.

Engaging with Rancière’s *partage*, Kajri Jain considers his ‘distribution of the sensible’. Her take on the sensible spans 19th-century theatre, the radicalism of Tilak, chromolithography. Such high drama is nonetheless enchanted and vernacular. Raminder Kaur Kahlon’s *Skipping Memories on Partition and the Intersensory Field in Millennial Britain* is a fascinating recall (replay) of the research and development of a play, which utilised oral histories and testimonies of those who lived through partition. Working in the UK, Kaur Kahlon’s work identifies how the experiences of British Asians and East African Asians have been regarded as ‘inauthentic’ compared to those who remained in South Asia, while the site of the theatre provides a space in which those experiences can be validated.

In her critical analysis of two exhibitions, *My East is Your West* (Venice Biennale, 2015) and *This Night-Bitten Dawn* (Delhi, 2016), Sonal Khullar suggests that contemporary South Asian art and curatorial practice can offer a perspective on contemporary nationalism and globalization through the barbed fissures of partition. The harsh barbed wire line and its no man’s land nonetheless open up the potentiality for deterritorialization.

⁶⁴ See for instance the ‘archival’ projects of Pushpamala N, Zarina Bhimji, Nikhil Chopra and Raqs Media Collective to name but a few artists deeply and intimately committed to exploring and critiquing the colonial archive.

⁶⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*, Stanford: Stanford University of Press, 1998. See also William Mazzarella, *Censorium: Cinema and the open edge of mass publicity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Like Jain, Saloni Mathur writes with methodology in mind. She challenges the discipline of Art History to face up to Partitions. Attention to the barbed fissure of *The Line* throws into perspective the practice of writing on the art of South Asia. Hers is an attention to trauma and migrancy. Geopolitics of the nation at stake, Sumathi Ramaswamy questions whether 'the national yearning for cartographic form always takes the route of adulation and deification'. Her desire for barefoot cartography is extended to the emotive watercolours of Atul Dodiya. Dodiya's *Tearscape* series (1999-2000) is as tattered as Borges' map: A 'haggard and hideous naked crone taking up residence in India's geo-body which itself in the process comes to be variously disaggregated, de-formed, and denuded'.

The Bangladesh War perceived by Bhupen Khakhar, K.G. Subramanyan and Somnath Hore are the subject of Devika Singh's paper. Ranciere's naked things offer a device for thinking about bare life. Bare life is meant here as an expanded field. In her detailed, archival study of Zainul Abedin's 65-foot ink and watercolour scroll, *Nabanna* (1970, Dhaka Art Institute) Sanjukta Sunderason proposes that the trauma of the Bengal Famine of '43 continued to operate as powerful allegory. The mnemonics of line as torched 'suggests a metaphoric harvesting of struggle, a radical moment of becoming': artist as 'its harbinger'.

Although still attuned to militant alterity, the networks of artistic diplomacy are the subject of several essays. Complementing Sonal Khullar's concern with the crossing, twisting of barbed wire as line, Karin Zitzewitz's *Infrastructure As Form: Cross-Border Networks for South Asian Contemporary Art* compliments Sumathi Ramaswamy's scholarly practice of barefoot cartography. Zitzewitz's study of the micro and macro geopolitics of the transnational emphasizes the interconnected and the rhizomatic. Transnationality is the subject of Claire Wintle's study of art and diplomacy. Whilst she argues for the heterogeneity of the nation state, Wintle also impresses the need to revisit the exhibitionary complex in the postcolonial now. Alice Correia shows the criticality of art to artistic identification with the quandaries of partitions. Her powerful contribution also emphasises the dilemmas of gender and what it means to be in limbo. The exilic can be devastating, slight or exhilarating. As is evident, contributors are preoccupied with the interface between postcolony and the decolonial of exigency to Third Text.

Is it possible to think of a decolonial line? Would this be a trace? A 'line of flight'? Although this volume is dedicated to scholarly essays on South Asia, it is our intention to show how the line can be a line of flight and a trace. To cite Partha Chatterjee, this 'politics of the governed' might be heterotopic.⁶⁶ Heterotopia invites palimpsest.⁶⁷ This is where perhaps Gulammohamed Sheikh's *Mappa Mundi* can allow allegorical recourse to Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on History'. Not Klee's Angel (much cited by scholars) but that slither of light. Light, the gap as ruins if the future: 'For every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter'.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *Politics of the governed*.

⁶⁷ See Lu Xinyu, 'Ruins of the Future: Class and History in Wang Bing's Tiexi District', *New Left Review*, vol.31, London, 2005, Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four photographs from Auschwitz*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008.

⁶⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 'B', in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn, London: Penguin, 1970, p.255.