

**Persisting Partition: Analyzing South Asia's Partition Memory
and Trauma through the Characters in Amitav Ghosh's *The
Shadow Lines*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Kamila
Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron***

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Introduction

The 1947 Partition of the Indian subcontinent gave birth to two independent countries, namely India and Pakistan. With the end of the British Raj, that had lasted from 1858 to 1947, and the subsequent creation of new borders, Partition is often regarded as an event of independence of which India and Pakistan were by-products. This framing of Partition, while it rightfully marks a shift from a colonial- to a post-colonial era, often reduces the happenings of Partition to the contexts of events having taken place in 1947. This thesis seeks to reframe Partition not only in terms of the events of 1947 but to enlarge it by seeing it as a continuing process of violence that affects lives in the Indian subcontinent even today. I will analyze how the memory and trauma of Partition is addressed or not addressed in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron*, and how the characters vocalize and navigate through their trauma.

Urvashi Butalia, who is an Indian feminist writer, publisher and activist, and well known for her work in the women's movement in India, wrote a ground-breaking book *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from and the Partition of India* (1998) about this ongoing violence. Aware of a master-narrative around the politics of Partition, she shifts her focus onto the human dimensions of the event. Not only is her book path-breaking in the scope in which Butalia conducts interviews over a span of ten years but it crosses societal hierarchal boundaries and asks how marginalised people, namely children, women, the lower castes, the untouchables and ordinary people, have been affected by Partition. In the opening pages of the book she writes how twelve million people crossed newly formed borders in the first few months following Partition, how today the number of deaths involved is estimated to have been one million, and how about 75,000 women were abducted and raped by men from a different religion than theirs and even sometimes by men of their own religion (Butalia 3).

After providing some other facts she points out how “[t]his is the generality of Partition: it exists in history books. The particular is harder to discover; it exists privately in the stories told and retold inside so many households in India and Pakistan” (Butalia 3). Having begun reading about Partition she notices how the stories of

‘human dimension’ of this history – somehow seemed to have a ‘lesser’ status in it. Perhaps this was because they had to do with difficult things: loss and sharing, friendship and enmity, grief and joy, with a painful regret and nostalgia for loss of home, country and friends, and with an equally strong determination to create them afresh. These were difficult things to capture ‘factually’. Yet, could it really be that they had no place in the history of Partition? Why then did they live on so vividly in individual and collective memory? (Butalia 6)

These human dimensions that Butalia talks about in 1998 are still today deemed of lesser importance. However, testimonies like the ones Butalia collected are essential not only because they provide a counter-narrative to the sanitized ‘facts’ making up the master-narrative of Partition, but also because oral history projects such as Butalia’s book, literature and by extension art, become sites of mourning or at least enable people to start a process of dealing with the trauma of Partition, its memory and its aftermath. They are also vital in the sense that they interrogate the meta-narratives of history.

I would like to start by acknowledging the fact that much has been written about the Indian side of Partition, whereas the Pakistani and subsequent Bangladeshi side has not gotten as much attention. Thus, there has been a stronger focus on the Indian perspective on Partition. However, any analysis or discussion on Partition should incorporate the Partition of 1971 that gave birth to Bangladesh, which in many ways is also a consequence of the 1947

Partition. Although Amitav Ghosh is not a Bangladeshi author, I chose to discuss his novel *The Shadow Lines*, as it emphasizes the riots in East Pakistan and the struggle in Calcutta and in doing so focuses on the Bengali side of Partition. I also deliberately chose *Salt and Saffron* because Shamsie is a Pakistani author and finally I opted for Salman Rushdie because his *Midnight's Children* is in many ways a classic.

I chose this topic because not only am I interested in Partition and how it continues to affect individuals, but I also think it is incredibly fruitful to look at it from a trauma and memory perspective. Although much has been published in the field of trauma and memory studies, most of it is predominantly a product of Western theorization. While the contributions of Western trauma theorists, such as Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, to name a few, have been incredible in advancing trauma theory, one cannot ignore the fact that they were produced by and for Westerners keeping a Euro-American society in mind. Trauma- and memory studies saw a shift, around the 2000s, when critics such as Michael Rothberg demanded for a reflection on the limits of representation and for models applicable to Non-Western societies. Since then the decolonizing of trauma theory has come a long way. Michela Borzaga argues in his essay "Trauma in the Postcolony: Towards a New Theoretical Approach" (2012), drawing on the work of Patrick Braken, how Western models of trauma are connected to a society where the individual comes first; they have a PTSD oriented approach, based on linear models of time, and are constantly subverting the societal and cultural context (75). This is the reason why I want my thesis to be predominantly based on South Asian trauma theorists because one cannot simply impose a Western model of trauma on a post-colonial and post-Partition society. However, I do recognize that theory does not exist in a vacuum and therefore I will employ Western models of trauma and memory along predominantly South Asian ones. My main motivation for writing this thesis in this way is to give South Asian writers and trauma

theorists their due credit, for the ways in which they have helped to deal, to a certain extent, with the Partition of India. It is time that one acknowledges that trauma theory is not particularly interested in traumas that have affected citizens in Non-Western countries. Is the message then that some trauma, and with extension lives, are worth investing in and others are not? Bringing this topic to the foreground, I want to be part in whatever small way possible, that rights these wrongs.

Literary Theory:

Theorists like Ananya Jahanara Kabir urge people to move away from Western models of trauma theory that write about complex, postcolonial societies, thereby neglecting how culturally and socially dependent concepts such as trauma, melancholia and mourning are. In her essays “Affect, Body Place” (2014) and “Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women’s Novels on the Partition of India” as well as in her book *Partition’s Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971 and Modern South Asia*, she tries to develop *vernacular* frameworks to analyse trauma, loss and memory. With such vernacular frameworks relying on cultural artifacts such as poetry, mourning rituals, and expression of grief, songs and dance need to be closely inspected since they are the gateway to trauma through which the unconscious is expressed. She also argues that narrative, testimony and talking are privileged ways of mourning and healing and how we should question them.

Gyanendra Pandey has widely written about South Asian and African American subjects. He is also the founder and one of the leading theorists in the Subaltern Studies project. He provides another way of thinking about the violence of Partition and its consequences. In his book *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (2006) Pandey argues how routine violence is written into political arrangements and into the production of majorities and minorities in a society. He continues how it is vital to recognize violence not only in its

explosive form but also discern its more subtle guise in day-to-day life. His book is vital in understanding why trauma and violence are often domesticated in Partition narratives.

Bhasker Sarkar is an author whose book *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (2009) is an asset to Partition studies. The book incorporates film theory, trauma theory and South Asia's cultural history. Sarkar argues how the nation is always born and experienced through loss and how therefore nationhood is always nested in mourning. Mourning and melancholia are two vital points he elaborates on in his book. He also writes about how the moment of a death of a collective dream is at the forefront of nation building. What is so ground-breaking about Sarkar's work is that he pushes back against many axioms of mourning, collective mourning, nationhood and independence, and tries to look at the sacrifices and suffering that go into the writing of a new nation, and hence he sheds light on a darker side of it.

As I will show, Marianne Hirsch and her work on postmemory in her book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (1997) is incredibly helpful in analysing the memory part of Partition and how it in many ways is related to trauma. Post-memory will help me to comprehend the characters in the novel which have not themselves lived through the Partition but are descendants of its survivors. It will also help me to analyse the 'amnesia' of Partition that many scholars talk about.

Methodology:

As mentioned above I will not use one specific framework that deals with trauma narrative but use different writers and theorists and apply those to the three texts. For my thesis I am taking the approach of close reading, and I will examine how the characters in the novel deal with the trauma and memory of Partition. At a first instance I will try and determine whether the characters are truly traumatized, because some of the characters did not physically live

through Partition, and how the memory of Partition is represented in the novels. I will then analyze the trauma and how it is represented in the novel. Alongside the characters, I will also focus on how the story is written and what role language plays in the specific representation of trauma of the different characters.

The first step towards writing about this trauma would be to define it. Ron Eyerman gives a good definition of “cultural trauma” in his book *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. Although his text is about slavery and African American identity, I will use the definition and apply it to Partition’s trauma.

As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. (Eyerman 2)

Professor Ananya Jahanara Kabir is a literary and cultural historian who is invested in the intersections of embodiment, post-trauma, memory and affect works, especially in South Asia. Author of several books on Partition, her works can be considered groundbreaking in the domain of South Asian trauma studies. She argues in “Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women’s Novels on the Partition of India” that Partition fits in Eyerman’s definition of cultural trauma since Partition “tore the social fabric that had woven regional communities and groups together and demanded new ways of thinking about the self in relation to society” (Kabir 2005: 180). India’s Partition came with a loss of identity and therefore, following in the footsteps of Professor Kabir, I am using this definition of cultural trauma to define the trauma of Partition, which serves to frame and narrow down the scope of my thesis.

Chapter 1: Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron*

Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* (2000) revolves around the upper-class Pakistani family of the Dard-e-Dils, who were formal rulers of a feudal principality in pre-Partition India. Shamsie skilfully chose the name of Dard-e-Dil, to be placed at the heart of the novel, as in Urdu 'Dard-e-Dil' literally means "The Aching Heart". Bruce King argues in his article "Kamila Shamsie's novels of history, exile and desire" how "Dard-e-Dil might be figuratively translated as the heart's yearning or desire. It represents the large, unrealizable emotions in much of the literature that Pakistani and north Indian Muslims inherited from Farsi and the Sufi traditions" (153). While I disagree with the claim that this inheritance and influence is exclusive to Muslims, King's notions of yearning and desire going back to Farsi and Sufi traditions are noteworthy. Indeed, Dard-e-Dil represents a desire and yearning for a whole and united home that was lost when Partition divided up the family between India and Pakistan. The tropes of desire and yearning coupled with the words Dard-e-Dil are reminiscent of the great Urdu and Persian poet, Ghalib, who rose to prominence during the last years of the Mughal Empire and who is celebrated in the Indian Subcontinent and its diaspora to this day. Poetry and in particular the many references to Ghalib throughout the novel, are not only used by Shamsie to frame her novel, but will also be essential to analyse the trauma of Partition and its memory in this chapter, in which I will focus specifically on the characters of Alia, Mariam and Abida.

The allegorical side of the novel

Kamila Shamsie uses the representation of family memories and conflicts in an allegorical manner to represent India's Partition and its aftermath, thus intertwining family history with national history, while framing Partition as an intergenerational "dialogue". Quratulain

Shirazi argues in her article “Revisiting History and Reconstructing New Forms of Belonging and Identity in Kamila Shamsie’s *Salt and Saffron*” that the novel “depicts two sets of characters based on the generational divide” (6). She adds that

One group comprises the ancestors of the Dard-e-Dil family such as the founders, their successors, the princes and nawabs; all of them mostly male patriarchs who are revered with the family tradition as paragons of power and control. This group includes the female matriarchs such as Abida (in Pakistan) and Baji (in India), who, after the death of family patriarchs; assumed authority and control to retain family superiority and pride. (Shirazi 6)

Shamsie uses this group allegorically to represent both the nation and the national narrative. However, while the group represents a depiction of national history that revolves around the rulers, those who are being ruled are left out. The rulers are the bearers and writers of history and hence their position as storyteller are dependent on stories about *Begums*, *Nawabs* and *Sahibzadas*. This is strategically used with the character of Abida, who is the embodiment of exclusion, as she leaves out everyone on the margins of those stories, in order to sustain their self-image of high aristocracy during the Mughal and Colonial eras. Shirazi further points out how when Alia starts looking into the stories for “the authenticity of the claims of family superiority and nobility, [...] she discovers the other sets of characters, who rebelled against family traditions. [...] They are silenced within the family traditions and are marginalized as outcasts and rebels” (Shirazi 7). These rebels and outcasts are an allegorical representation of those who are being ruled over, the ordinary and marginalised people who fall outside the national narrative of history. These are the stories of people that were omitted, silenced and written over when thinking about Partition and its legacies.

Alia's and Mariam's trauma and the not-quite-twins

One of those marginalised rebels is Mariam, Alia's aunt. She is the cause of the central conflict in *Salt and Saffron* between the protagonist Alia and her *Dady* (paternal grandmother), named Abida. The conflict arose when Abida called Mariam a “whore” because Mariam married the family cook, Masood (Shamsie 112). Before the feud, Alia adored her grandmother and looked up to her. She grew up listening to her grandmother's family stories and grows up to be a storyteller herself. However, the problem is that she has internalised the stories of her paternal past. One reoccurring trope in those stories among all the generations are the stories of the not-quite-twins, rebels who tarnish the nobility of the family. Alia later learns that Mariam and she are also considered not-quite-twins, because on the day Alia was born, Mariam showed up on the Dard-e-Dil doorstep for the very first time and came to live with them. Hence, they were metaphorically ‘born’ on the same day. Mariam's rebellion and Alia's internalised fear of whether and/or how she will be detrimental to the family, becomes a source of anguish and sends her on a quest into the Dard-e-Dils' family history.

Alia in many ways reproduces her grandmother's stories that she has internalised. However, she is aware on what her storytelling abilities are based: “At college I was famous for my storytelling abilities, but I never told anyone that my stories were mere repetitions, my abilities those of a parrot” (Shamsie 18). In London, when asked by her cousin Samia, “Have you ever asked yourself why you don't tell that story?” (Shamsie 9), Alia does not answer and goes to take a shower. In a self-reflective mode, she asserts:

I was not showering, I was carrying out a ritual, a ritual of arrival in London, and part of that ritual was to miss Mariam Apa, which I did, but the other part of the ritual was

to imagine what she was doing, right now, and that I couldn't do. My imagination could accommodate aliens and miracles and the taste of certain men's sweat, but not that.

I turned off the shower and said, 'I don't tell that story, because it still doesn't have an ending'. (Shamsie 10)

What becomes evident is that Alia is not only invested in finding out the family history, but she is also deeply traumatised by her aunt's disappearance and exclusion from the household. It is essential to read Alia's trauma as a result of Mariam's disappearance as well as Mariam's own trauma of not being accepted by the family for marrying a cook, through the lens of Partition's trauma.

In her analysis of women's narratives of the Partition, Shumona Dasgupta reflects on how a lot of writers "locate women's experience of violence at the intersections of the private/public and the personal/political domains while disrupting the "othering" of violence, and rupturing its teleological positioning in the *aftermath* of the breakdown of social order during Partition" (38). Dasgupta depicts violence against women as a continuum and not something that was merely a repercussion of Partition, thereby blurring the lines between the extraordinary events of the past and the everyday present. Locating violence in the sanctuary of the home then counterpoints the idea that Partition's violence against women, which predominantly took the form of rape, was inflicted by men of "other" communities and not of their own. Dasgupta also points out how the State changed the narrative of such violence and by doing so rendered it invisible (38). The home, then, becomes a site of violence, exclusion, of not-belonging, which is embodied by the family's treatment of Mariam. Mariam's history, representative of the women's history after Partition, is then rewritten by the Starved Aunts, who in a family gathering imply that Mariam was an imposter and opportunist from the lower

class. Mariam's disownment by her own family reflects in many ways the women who were raped by men, and then disowned by their own family, for violence that was inflicted on them by someone else. This gendered trauma that occurred during and post-Partition is to a large extent disregarded and written over in the politics of nation building and master narrative of national history.

Alia, Khaleel and the issue of Liaquatabad

While Ali in Shamsie's novel is convinced that her grandmother's treatment of Mariam was wrong and wrongly determined by ideas of elitism and classism, she is unable to fully face up to her own internalised prejudices through repetitions of storytelling throughout the years. In the novel Alia meets Khaleel, a lower-class American Pakistani, and feels attracted to him. After meeting again a few times, it becomes evident that they both like each other, but Alia does not pursue her love-interest due to intrinsic class-bias of her own that she does not want to fully acknowledge. Parting their ways on a train, Alia reflects on her own class prejudices: "[i]f I had amnesia, would I have stayed on that train? Imagine that. To be freed of remembered biases. To have nothing to consider but the moment itself; nothing but the moment and the touch of his fingers" (Shamsie 32). Muneeza Shamsie argues how "The novel developed into an exploration of loss and absence and drew parallels between class divisions in Pakistan with the division of a family and a country at Partition" (139). Indeed, Kamila Shamsie uses the word amnesia, which urges one to connect class with Partition. Furthermore, the trope of the train is linked to the separation of Alia and Khaleel. The reader is forced to connect this image of separation to the overloaded trains that crossed borders on both ways, thereby dividing numerous loved ones. Trains were also a site of detrimental violence connected to the image of a slaughterhouse. Rituparna Roy in her study of Partition Fiction observes that the image of is one that is "permanently imprinted on the nation's

collective imagination”, and has become a “shorthand to refer to Partition” (35). Shamsie’s passage quoted above is self-reflective and portrays an attempt to disentangle and understand Alia’s relation between her memories and decision-making. The passage following, however, depicts Alia stripping herself away from any agency in her decision to part ways with Khaleel:

Our lives don’t await memories, I decided; they are crippled by memories. Oh, I knew exactly which memories crippled me into running away from him. [...] But I’ve accepted what happened four years ago! I wanted to shout out. I’ve deconstructed it, analysed it, and I have refused to take the attitude of my relatives with their centuries of inbred snobbery. Why can’t my heart be as evolved as my mind? Why did ‘Liaquatabad’ hit me so bruisingly in the solar plexus? (Shamsie 32,33)

Although Alia claims to have fully deconstructed her decision, it becomes evident that it is a rushed one based on ignorance. The fact that she has not found an ending to Mariam and Masood’s story, proves her own class-bias. In this way Mariam and Masood function as doubles for Alia and Khaleel. This is strengthened by the family lore of not-quite-twins that connects Mariam to Alia. Finally, on the same page Alia concludes that “Perhaps there is no escape from wounding memories. [...] We are all the walking wounded” (Shamsie 33) While this comment may seem to be a general utterance, it is an attempt of Alia to cut herself free of all guilt, for making Khaleel aware of his lower class status being the sole cause for her rejection of him. Moreover, while she claims that wounding memories cannot be escaped, she is unaware of the wound she herself inflicts on him. This more ‘subtle’ kind of violence that manifests itself in the everyday is what Gyanendra Pandey calls ‘routine violence’, that is, “a

violence written into the making and continuation of contemporary political arrangements, and into productions of majorities and minorities” (Pandey 1). He continues how

we must recognize violence not only in its most spectacular, explosive, visible moments, but also in its most disguised forms -- in our day-to-day behaviour, the way we construct and respond to neighbors as well as strangers, in the books and magazine we read, the films we see, and the conversation and silences in which we participate. (Pandey 8)

Alia’s statement and her attempt to position herself as a victim re-enacts the violence of 1947 that occurred in the form of ethnic violence in Pakistan. Despite benefiting from her privileges of belonging to the upper class during the deadly riots, her words and her self-inflicted victimhood overwrites the trauma of those like Khalil and his family living in Liaquatabad and belonging to lower classes. One of the legacies of Partition was the ethnic violence that took place between Sindhis and Muhajirs in 1980s and 1990s Karachi. Sindhis are the “native” inhabitants of the Sindh, while Muhajir is a term used for Urdu speaking migrants from India post-partition and for their descendants. The conflict between the two distinct ethnicities was largely due to the quota-system that was introduced which made it nearly impossible for many often well-educated Muhajirs to find a job. The use of Liaquatabad as the location is a particularly deliberate authorial choice of Shamsie. Liaquatabad was by the 1950s predominantly inhabited by lower-middle-class and often well-educated Muhajirs. Shamsie also subtly hints at marriages between Muhajirs and Sindhis and points out through other characters how this is frowned upon by society, thereby referring to the ethnic violence (2, 124). Liaquatabad was badly affected by the riots and by the 1980s it became a “no-go area for non-residents and the police” (Khan 21). Alia’s

reactions stem from a state of amnesia when it comes to Partition and its aftermath, and how these stories came overwritten by the stories she has been told. They also depict Alia's own ignorance, elitism and restricted exposure, since it makes the reader aware that she has not heard of the violence going on in lower-class quarters. On a macro-scale this represents the strict class-based, ethnicity-based division of Pakistan.

Alia as the character suffering from Partition's post-generation amnesia

Marianne Hirsch has been pathbreaking in coining the word postmemory to describe the transgenerational act of memory transfer. In her book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Hirsch argues how postmemory "characterises the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evaluated by the stories of previous generations shaped by traumatic events that can neither be understood nor recreated" (22). While postmemory is essential in understanding the trauma and memory of Partition, especially in the way memory can affect the generations after a trauma, the passing down of Partition memories was very different from one generation to the next, compared to that of the Holocaust. Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory was further developed by Ananya Jahanara Kabir in *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971 and Modern South Asia*. In her book Kabir sheds light on the difference between Partition and the Holocaust, and coins the term post-amnesia:

The postmemory of the Holocaust exemplarily constitutes the memory of memory, coupled with the retelling of its telling; in contrast, the politics of memory regarding 1947 and 1971 are characterized by an intergenerational movement from amnesia to a retrieval of those affective and cultural connections that amnesia denied. This retrieval I term *post-amnesia*: a symptomatic return to explorations of places lost to the

immediate post-1947 and post-1971 generations through combination of psychological and political imperatives. (Kabir, *Post-Amnesias* 26)

This state of amnesia in which Partition's following generations find themselves, is embodied by the character of Alia in Shamsie's novel. She is unable to understand the divide that was created when one part of the family moved to Pakistan and the other stayed in India. She is unable to fathom how someone can just breach contact with people one once used to love. Before meeting Baji, Abida's cousin, for the first time in London, Alia tries to grasp this breach of contact:

Baji. Fifty years on from Partition, and according to Samia she still couldn't talk about those who left for Pakistan without rancour. That whole generation of my relatives mystified me. How had they sustained, for so long, the bitterness brought on by the events of 1947? I could not believe it of one person, or two, but good God! Our family was huge and yet there was never any word of reconciliation across the borders of India and Pakistan. They grew up together: Dady and Baji and the triplets and scores of other cousins. They were to each other what Samia and Sameer were to me, and I to them. They were to each other what Mariam Apa...Oh, Lord. How do you stop missing the people you loved before you could say 'love'? (Shamsie 33)

This passage in the novel does multiple things. On one hand it displays the ignorance and the state of amnesia that Alia finds herself in, while on the other hand it makes the reader aware that Partition and how it affected family politics, was not discussed in the household despite the tradition of storytelling being passed down by her grandmother. However, the mere fact that Alia is willing to go and meet her grandmother's cousin who remained in India after

Partition, opens up Alia's search into the family past. This action of deciding to meet Baji portrays what Kabir describes as the movement from a state of amnesia to that of the retrieval of familial and national history.

Abida (*Dadi*), Farahnaz (*Baji*) and the triplets

As mentioned above, Abida, Farahnaz and the triplets, Sulaiman, Taimur and Akbar, all grew up in the same Dard-e-Dil household in pre-Partition India. The triplets are also considered not-quite-twins, cursed by birth. After the Jalianwalla massacre in 1919, Taimur the middle child and later Mariam's father, leaves a note saying that the family tradition of an English schooling abroad has deprived his ability to write in Urdu. Without saying where he is going, Taimur's parting words are "No more the Anglicized Perci, I. I am now *Taimur Hind*" (Shamsie 21). Before Partition, when the possibility of Pakistan was being discussed coupled with what independent India would look like, the remaining brothers Sulaiman and Akbar get into a fight due to political disagreement. Sulaiman believes in Congress and Akbar in a secular Pakistan (Shamsie 167). The disagreement escalates into a physical fight and Sulaiman shouts, "Akbar do me a favour and go to Pakistan the day it becomes a reality", whereupon Akbar replies, "I'll leave now and stay away altogether. For ever" (Shamsie 171). At this point Abida and Akbar were married. Akbar took up his job offer at a British company and both never went back to India, whereas Sulaiman and Farahnaz stayed in India. This breach of contact and loss of loved ones in connection to history and its expression in art is explained by Bhasker Sarkar when he argues how "the nation is always born and experienced through loss -- be it the loss of difference, the loss of other forms of community life, even the loss of idealisms that drives nationalist imagination and creativity—nationhood always entails a dimension of mourning" (Sarkar 303). This loss that nation building entails is here experienced by both the family who remained in India and those who went to

Pakistan. Shamsie thus allegorically represents the divide of a nation through the narrative about the two brothers.

Abida's trauma

Abida and Farahnaz are both identified as the matriarchs of the family, on both sides of the borders, that maintain the aristocratic pride of the family. One can read this reaction to events as a way of dealing with the trauma of Partition. Abida's persistent narration of lost glories of the Dard-e-Dils in many ways is an attempt to cling onto the memories of a shared, unified home. Sarkar's calls this a "proleptic melancholia" and argues how "the precise moment of the birth of a nation-state" is marked by "the death of a collective dream" (42). Sarkar further asserts how this "proleptic melancholia arises from a loss of futures and possibilities, the loss of idealism" (42). Her retelling of the stories of the Dard-e-Dils can be interpreted as Abida being in a state of "proleptic melancholia", as she is self-aware of all future losses and what remains then for her is to live in the past. In the book *Memories and Postmemories of the Partition of India*, Anjali Gera Roy gives a reason for Abida's excessive storytelling:

Partition literature abounds in survivors' nostalgic reconstructions of remembered homelands, villages, towns, cities and neighbourhoods in which emotions, affect and atmosphere displace the material, real, cartographic spaces with emotions and affective geographies. These affective and emotional geographies produced by survivors' memories are viewed as completing, supplementing and disrupting the cartographic contours of real cities, villages and regions. (129)

This nostalgia can be felt in the stories of the grandmother of the *nawabs*, the numerous not-quite-twins, since they are always linked to the House of the Dard-e Dils, located in pre-

Partition India. When Alia is investigating the family history, she finds out that in the grand schemes of things, the feudal principality of Dard-e-Dil was not as royal and influential as their family claims it to be. This is in line with Roy's claim that survivors' nostalgic memories can sometimes disrupt the mapping of real places. A by-product of this would then be that survivors' visions of how the places were in pre-Partition times become distorted and clouded by a sense of longing which results in romanticising the lost home.

Poetry as a coping mechanism for Mariam's trauma

In the novel, Mariam is presented as someone who is deliberately silent, and mostly only speaks to Masood. Silence is represented as an empowering tool in the novel to combat oppression. Alia's cousin rightfully points out how her "silence was subversion", and hence she was going against class-based prejudices (Shamsie 214). Thus, Shamsie deliberately wants to steer the reader away from narration and look at other ways of dealing with trauma. Kabir argues against the excessive reliance on narration in her article "Affect, Body Place", in which she explains how the "axiom of telling a story" through narrative, testimony and talking, is actually a privileged means of mourning and healing (65). Mariam's selective mutism is contrasted with Alia's over-excessive need to speak. Kabir emphasizes how "mourning on a collective level has to embark through radical, non-narrative works of the imagination that foreground that void's untranslatability into narrative" (Kabir *Affect* 190). Kabir provides examples of such non-narrative works in her article "Affect, Body Place": "for me, however, it became impossible to ignore lyric poetry and song, particularly expressions for lost, pre-traumatic pasts articulated through vernacular mythopoesis, which repeatedly erupt through the surface of modern and modernist genres" (65). This brings us back to poetry and how Shamsie really tries to "capture the essence of Urdu literature and its culture" (M. Shamie 141). Indeed, although Mariam is silent, her room is filled with

literature. On the wall one can find a couplet of Ghalib written in Urdu, which in translation reads: “How long shall I write of my aching heart? Come! I will show my Beloved/ My wounded fingers, my pen dripping with blood” (Shamsie 97). Ghalib portrays his frustration of writing about the pain in his heart. Instead he just wants to show the state of his bloody, sore fingers to his Beloved. This is representative of Mariam’s trauma in which the Beloved is the family, who just cannot comprehend the pain and longing in Mariam’s heart for Masood. Reading lyric poetry as a “lyric impulse” Kabir claims that there is “coexistence, and dialectic relationship, between two basic impulses: one, which we may term, the ‘narrative impulse’, which moves forward in time, and the other, then, the ‘lyric impulse’, which lingers over moments and demands we linger with it” (*Post-Amnesias* 19). Therefore, lyric poetry disrupts the narrative in the novel and demands the reader to spend more time on it. Moreover, on Mariam’s bookshelf, there is also a poetry book by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, a celebrated poet across the subcontinent. Aamir Mufti observes in his book *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* how Faiz’s poetry articulates the dilemma of the “partitioned-self” which is “not at home with itself, desiring reconciliation and wholeness and yet cognizant that its own distance from itself is the very source of its movement and life” (Mufti 220). This placement is a deliberate authorial choice of Shamsie. In post-Partition times poetry became a popular medium to express pain and longing, as it surpassed physical borders and was enjoyed by everyone regardless of class, ethnicity and religion, and consequently united people. Mariam’s pain and longing is nested in her inner feeling of suffering, a concept that Anne Castaing argues is essential when thinking about the Partition trauma:

This alternative narrative of the history of Partition, as inhabited by emotions, can be perceived as women’s sociolect as actors of history and not as mere objects. The

rhetoric of intimacy and inner sufferings should not be understood as an essential characteristic of female discourse, but rather as an attempt to narrate Partition through its *experience*, which, for women, was the experience of pain. (168)

Thus, it is essential to not dismiss Mariam's account as merely a love story, but to analyse it through the lens of Partition trauma.

Family as a potential site of reconciliation

From the start of the novel, Alia's view on Partition is one of "Fruition. Revision. Condition." (Shamsie 37). Shirazi points out how her representation focuses on "moving on" (15). Upon meeting Farahnaz in London Alia realizes that her Indian relatives see Partition more as a "Division" (Shamsie 37). During the novel she is able to realize her own class-bias.

Rethinking her initial reaction to Masood and Mariam's union, she remembers feeling "disgust. *She's having sex with a servant.*" and so she hits Abida to prove to herself that she did not think like her grandmother (Shamsie 113). Alia is only able to start understanding the repercussions of Partition and its trauma after Abida gets an understanding of the family politics at play surrounding the event of 1947.

Towards the end of the novel it is revealed to Alia that Akbar and Abida left in the summer of 1946, before Partition, making the reason for departure personal, not political. While Akbar and Sulaiman disagreed politically, it was Taimur's reappearance for a last time, to meet his dying mother, which Sulaiman knew about, that made Akbar move away. By this time, Akbar was married to Abida, and knew about Abida being in love with Taimur. Taimur's reason to disappear was also a personal one, as he got confused by the fact that Abida loved Akbar, and he decided to leave without saying a word. This confusion was

caused involuntarily by Sulaiman who comes back at the end of the novel to reveal the truth to Abida.

Abida also opens up and confesses that it was easier to believe in the curse of the not-quite-twins, than to deal with the horrors of Partition (Shamsie 122). The novel also tells that it was easier for Abida to breach the contact completely and to not look back (Shamsie 175). This is Abida's attempt at mourning. Sarkar explains how "mourning can be explicit or subterranean, direct or displaced; it can help us come to terms with and to move beyond the experience, or it can protract, even compound, the sense of loss" (31). Indeed, Abida's mourning was subterranean in the way she and Akbar did not speak much to each other during the monsoons. Taimur had left during the first day of the monsoons, and Akbar and Abida "knew each other's need to grieve and remember" (Shamsie 203). Also, on the first day of the monsoon rain, Akbar had a stroke and Abida has avoided the monsoons ever since, because she did not want to know who, between Akbar and Taimur, she loved more (Shamsie 203). It also became evident that Abida called Mariam a "whore" because like Taimur, she had also ended up leaving her.

Finally, having heard the whole family story of Partition and hence having made a shift from amnesia to retrieval that Kabir suggests, Alia is willing to go to Liaquatabad to meet Khaleel. Sarkar states that "mourning work in a riven social formation would involve the gradual divestment or *decathexis* from a lost ideal of unity, and the subsequent mitigation or communal distrust and antagonisms" (Sarkar 31). This can be seen in Alia who gradually lets go of her obsessive search into the family history and her concern with class differences. The home becomes a site of reconciliation, when Khaleel shows up in Pakistan after having met Alia's Indian relatives in London and having arrived with food that smelled and tasted exactly like Masood's food. He metaphorically unites the divided family in India and Pakistan, while the food ties back the disowned Mariam to the family, thereby restoring her

honour. She recognizes that the “saffron had been sprinkled with a hand that knew the thin line between stinting and showing off”, which only a Masood could do (Shamsie 241). It is suggested that Masood and Mariam opened a restaurant in Turkey, and for the first time Alia is able to imagine Mariam as being happy as she can envision Mariam listing names of vegetables as it were a *ghazal*.

In conclusion, it is clear that Shamsie uses the family as a microcosm to represent the macrocosm of Partition. The novel ends on a positive note, where the home changes from a site of violence to one of reconciliation. Alia and Abida are capable of mourning, both in their own ways. Alia retrieves the voice and honour of Mariam and incorporates her silences into a narrative. At the end of the novel Alia gets an answer to her question when she asks herself: “What about the forgotten commas which shape us as much as the exclamation marks? Masood once said to me, ‘Why is it that when people exchange recipes they so often forget to mention salt?’” (Shamsie 178) Alia comprehends that often the answers are more painful than the stories we tell and retell to ourselves and others, in order to cope with trauma, something this analysis of the novel has demonstrated.

Chapter 2: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) is a story of a British and a Bengali family and their friendship crossing three generations both pre- and post- Partition. The novel jumps back and forth in relating its stories set in London, Kolkata¹ and Dhaka. In this chapter I will analyse the characters' trauma and memory of Partition and compare its (re)presentation to Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* (2000) which was analysed in the first chapter.

The allegorical side of the novel

Amitav Ghosh represents the Bose's divided family home in Dhaka as an allegory for India's Partition. In pre-Partition India, the family Bose, consisting of two brothers with their respective wives and children, is still living together. However, a family feud results in the two brothers taking the decision to divide the family home in half: "they decided to divide the house with a wooden partition wall: there was no alternative. But the building of the wall proved to be far from easy because the two brothers, insisted on their right with a lawyer-like precision, demanded that the division be exact down to the minuscule detail" (Ghosh 151). The symbolic use of a physical wall and the word partition are used by Ghosh to urge the reader into making a connection with India's Partition. The narrator, who is the great-grandson of one of the brothers, makes the reader aware that after the wall was put up and everyone remained in their part of the house, "instead of the peace they had so much looked forward to, they found that a strange, eerie silence had descended on the house" (Ghosh 151). With this Ghosh tries to convey how traumatic Partition was and that the trauma did not stop when India and Pakistan became independent nations. He shows the reader that Partition's trauma was glossed over by narratives of independence and peace.

¹ In 2001 Calcutta was changed back to Kolkata to reflect its original Bengali pronunciation.

The narrator reveals how this was more difficult for his grandmother, Tha'mma, than for her younger sister Mayadebi because Tha'mma had memories of a time when they lived all together. Tha'mma makes up stories of the other part of the house for Mayadebi and tells her how everything is "upside-down over there" (Ghosh 155). Suvir Kaul argues in "Separation Anxiety: Growing Up Inter/National In *The Shadow Lines*" how "[t]he unseen other side becomes a source of endless fascination for the two girls: the object of laughter, but also an imaginary haven from family problems on their own side" (145). When looking back, Tha'mma notes that "the strange thing was that as we grew older even I almost came to believe in our story" (Ghosh 155). This in many ways echoes the way people felt across the newly lined borders after Partition. Kaul reasons that "[b]orders and frontiers, shadow-lines etched on maps, sustain political separation, but even more strongly, teach the inevitability, and even absoluteness, of socio-cultural difference across nations" (138). Ghosh depicts this inevitability and absoluteness through the character of Tha'mma who strongly believes in a fundamental socio-cultural difference between India and Pakistan. Shamsie's and Ghosh's novels, then, both locate Partition in the family home. Marked by a conflict between two brothers that causes a breach of contact between two families, home as a microcosm is used to represent the macrocosm of Partition, which leaves two families strayed and separated in India and Pakistan.

Tha'mma's trauma

After Tha'mma's husband died, she had no choice but to work. She was offered a teaching job in Kolkata because she held a BA degree in history from Dhaka university. Tha'mma got busy in the first few years of her job, but it did not enable her to go back to Dhaka. Then Partition happened, and she did not see a point in going back, since Dhaka now became the capital of East Pakistan. In the following years, she lived in a one-room tenement in a slum.

There she would think back to their old house in Dhaka and “all the things people think about when they know that the best parts of their lives are already over” (Ghosh 154). Tha'mma's sentiment reflects Baskar Sarkar's idea (elaborated in the first chapter), of how “the nation is always born and experienced through loss”, and thus “nationhood always entails a dimension of mourning” (303). Tha'mma feels like now “it's all gone. They're all dead and I have nowhere to invent stories about and nowhere to escape to” (Ghosh 155). Tha'mma thinks that everyone who lived in the other side of the house is dead, and it is only later in the novel that she finds out that her cousin Jethamoshai is still alive and living in their old house in Dhaka.

The Shadow Lines' Tha'mma and *Salt and Saffron's* Abida are both female matriarchs of their respective families and represent the first generation of Partition migrants. They share their lived trauma of Partition survivors and are very similar despite their class difference. Abida and Tha'mma have power over their families and try and influence their grandchildren, who are also protagonists and narrators of the novels. Both also present a strong outer appearance behind which trauma lurks. What strongly connects them is their sense of pride. Abida's pride entails storytelling of the glories of the Dard-e-Dils while Tha'mma's pride stems from sharing stories of her struggle that led her family from the slums to a middle-class suburb in Kolkata. Their trauma thus comes to the surface in both novels differently, which is due to class privilege. Hence, Abida's trauma of Partition differs in terms of hardship compared to that of Tha'mma.

The tropes of *dahshat* (horror), *himmat* (courage) and *mehnat* (hard work) in *The Shadow Lines*

Tha'mma, the narrator's grandmother is an advocate for *himmat* (courage) and *mehnat* (hard work) in the novel. She wishes to instil both these qualities into the narrator. The narrator, however, views his uncle Tridib as his idol, a role-model the grandmother does not approve

of in the slightest. From the beginning of the novel it becomes clear that Tha'mma does not want the narrator spending time with Tridib. Tha'mma calls Tridib a "loafer" and a "wastrel" who "doesn't do any proper work" and "lives off his father's money" (Ghosh 4). For Tha'mma "time was like a toothbrush: it went mouldy if it wasn't used" (Ghosh 4). Upon the narrator's questioning about what happens to wasted time, Tha'mma answers that "[it] begins to stink" (Ghosh 4). In the book *Memories and Postmemories of the Partition of India*, Anjali Gera Roy provides an explanation for Tha'mma's way of thinking;

Survivors' own explanation of their inability to perform the work of mourning oscillate between the three tropes of *dahshat* [horror], *himmat* [courage] and *mehnat* [hard work]. Whether they were unable to articulate their suffering because of their petrification by the horrifying violence of Partition, repetitive invocations of proverbial resilience or exhortations to the ethic of hard work ascribed to the particular ethnic communities, survivors undoubtedly indulged in both willing forgetfulness and selective remembering. (6)

Indeed, what lurks beneath Tha'mma's obsession with time and hard work is her undealt trauma of Partition that comes to the surface in her use of metaphors such as the mouldy toothbrush. Tha'mma herself strongly believes in such metaphors, and therefore is determined that everyone in her household follows her work ethic. The narrator stresses the fact that

in our flat we all worked hard at whatever we did: my grandmother at her schoolmisting; I at my homework; my mother at her housekeeping; my father at

his job as a junior executive in a company which dealt in vulcanised rubber. Our time wasn't given the slightest opportunity to grow mouldy. (Ghosh 4-5)

Anjali Roy further argues while referring to Partition refugees how “their struggle to get on with the business of living deprived them of the luxury of mourning and postponed the work of mourning” (180). This is especially true for Tha'mma, who moves from Dhaka to an undeveloped part in Kolkata, where a lot of refugees are relocated to after Partition.

Tha'mma's experience of Partition's hardship is further emphasised in the novel when she, the narrator and his parents go and visit a relative who lives in a poor, undesirable part of the city. When a relative asks the narrator's father whether he could help his son find a job, to which the narrator's mother sympathetically wants to agree, since the narrator's family now belongs to the middle-class, results in Tha'mma's anger. She asks “[did] anyone do anything when I was living like that?”, further claiming that when “these people start making demands it never ends”, and that the relative “looks quite capable of managing by herself” (Ghosh 167). Tha'mma's statement conveys to the reader to what extent she has been desensitized to pain and misery and the reader can only imagine under what conditions Tha'mma must have lived after arriving in Kolkata. She also distances herself from “these people” who rely on the mercy of others, whereas she built herself a better life by working tirelessly. Tha'mma is in this sense a stark contrast to *Salt and Saffron's* Abida who belongs to the upper-class, and therefore does not face the hardship of refugee camps once she moves to Pakistan or at the least does not struggle to the extent Tha'mma does. The privilege of wealth and class makes the transition easier for Abida than it does for Tha'mma.

The tropes of *himmat* (courage) and *dahshat* (horror) are also meticulously used by Ghosh. The narrator recalls how his grandmother insisted on the importance of physical activity alongside his homework. She strongly believes in how “[you] can't build a strong

country, [...], without building a strong body” (Ghosh 9). Tha'mma values strong courageous men, who can stand tall in the face of horror and violence and protect their homeland if needs be.

Tha'mma's nationalism

In *The Shadow Lines* Gosh depicts nationalism through the character of Tha'mma. She tells the narrator that during the British Raj she wanted to join a terrorist group who were fighting for independence and she was willing to do anything for freedom and even kill (Ghosh 49). Later in the novel, the reader learns that she donated her last bit of jewellery, the only thing she had remaining of her dead husband, to fund the Indo-China war to ensure the freedom of her family and the narrator's generation (Ghosh 291). Suvir Kaul argues that Tha'mma is an “exemplar of militant nationalism [...], who has lived the nationalist dream and experienced the set-backs and successes that give it its character” (134, 135). The passage where she gives away her jewellery really depicts the extent of conviction with which she believes in the nationalist dream that was “current during the first half of the twentieth century” (R. Roy 119). Indeed, this militant nationalism is confirmed by Tha'mma in the way she responds to Ila's being bullied at school. Ila is the narrator's love interest who lives in London. She does not have any friends at school and one day she comes home bruised. When the narrator mentions the incident to Tha'mma she responds as follows:

Ila has no right to live there, she says hoarsely. She doesn't belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, years and years of bloodshed. Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're

a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood. [...] War is their religion.

That's what it takes to make a country. (Ghosh 96)

Tha'mma was raised during the British Raj and later experienced the hardships of Partition, which formed her worldview on nations and citizenship. In his article "The Burthen of the Mystery: Imagination and Difference in *The Shadow Lines*", Jon Mee observes that

"Tha'mma sees national identities not in terms of imagined communities, but as a deeply rooted connectedness to a place borne out of the blood sacrifices of generations" (109).

Meenakshi Mukherjee also asserts that "Thamma does not fall outside the novel's inclusive ambit of sympathy; the author allows her historical position to confer a certain inevitability to her ideology" (265). Thus, it is important to see the trauma behind Tha'mma's militant nationalism that was reinforced through Partition's violence and its aftermath.

Tridib's nationalism

Tridib is the narrator's uncle, the son of a rich diplomat. The narrator is fascinated by Tridib: "That was why I loved to listen to Tridib: he never seemed to use his time, but his time didn't stink" (Ghosh 5). Tridib is working on a PhD in archaeology, but Tha'mma does not value this because she believes he could have done much more with his family connections (Ghosh 8). The narrator recalls how "even as a child I could tell she didn't pity him at all - she feared him" (Ghosh 8). This is because he believed in a different type of nationalism that stands at odds with Tha'mma's beliefs:

(...) one could never know anything except through desire, which was not the same as greed or lust; a pure, painful and primitive desire, a longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried one beyond the limits of one's mind

to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (Ghosh 36)

Tridib longs for a time and space before borders and a “wholeness of identity. Such desire can of course only exist prior to historical or geographical calculation, and is manifestly unrealizable. In its function as critique and as utopian hope, however, it is quite as real as the shadow lines that mock the limits of our political consciousness and imagination” (Kaul 142). Tridib's nationalism and yearning for a time before subcontinental borders can be understood in terms of class and his position as Mayabedi's son, and as such he represents the second-generation descendants of Partition migrants. Ananya Kabir argues in her article “Affect, Body, Place” for the importance and recognition of “lyric iterations” that are “alternative modes of collective response to trauma, (...) which mirror symptoms of a melancholia unacceptable to the Freudian casebook” (69), one of which is “*moonjh*”:

Nukhbah Langah's exploration of ‘moonjh’ (longing) in contemporary Siraiki poetry of Pakistan (Langah 186–230) exemplifies scholarly recuperations of a vernacular affective vocabulary, aligned to ‘our poetry and the Sufi gnosis’ (Naqvi xxxi). These ‘lyric iterations’ exist alongside and seep into the Anglophone realms of the novel, (...). (Kabir “Affect” 66)

This affective concept of *moonjh* indeed lurks beneath Tridib's passage. The use of imagery in the passage makes one think of Sufi poetry, especially the themes of longing and of nationhood. After Partition, the themes of longing in connection to nationhood were increasingly prevalent in Sufi poetry. However, Ghosh urges the reader to make connections in particular to Rabindranath Tagore, the celebrated Bengali poet, artist, musician and

novelist, because his works also saw a distrust of nationalism, which reflects Tridib's negative outlook on nationalism. Moreover, his works had an optimistic tone, which is something that can also be seen underlying Tridib's utopian hope. One should not disregard that Tridib's understanding of nationalism is one that is shaped through class, a privilege Tha'mma did not have, when she lived in her one room tenement in a slum, prior to moving into a middle-class area. This in combination with her experience of the hardship of colonialism and Partition makes her more susceptible to the nationalist dream she is continuously being fed by national, political discourse of nationhood.

The narrator's trauma

The narrator's story is one of coming-of-age. At the start of the novel, the young narrator tries to navigate between the two forms of nationalism that both Tridib and Tha'mma try to teach him. As he grows older, however, it becomes evident that he follows in the footsteps of his idol, Tridib. The narrator continues to see the world through Tridib's eyes even after Tridib's death: "But how could I forget? [...] because Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with" (Ghosh 24). Rajeswari Sundar Rajan rightly claims how the narrator's "entire adult life is later played out at a level of loving imitation, even surrogacy: he sees through Tridib's eyes, studies history like Tridib does, thinks Tridib's thoughts, and even finally loves Tridib's lover" (296). The narrator's admiration for Tridib is reinforced after his death, which is an extremely traumatic experience for the narrator. Tridib's death is hidden at first for a few years from the narrator, and Tridib is later said to have died in an accident. This occurs after Tridib, his brother Roby, Tha'mma and Tridib's British lover, May, arrive in Dhaka to get Tha'mma's cousin Jethamoshi back to Kolkata. The narrator is forced to promise his father that he will not talk about this incident to anyone and he must not ask any questions about it (Ghosh 293, 295).

The reality is that Tridib died in a riot in Dhaka, caused by the theft of a sacred relic, the Mui-Mubarak, the hair of the Prophet Muhammed in Srinagar, India, that occurred the previous week. The day after the theft is announced, Srinagar sees huge demonstrations, in which “Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus alike took part” (Ghosh 276). In the whole Kashmiri valley not one incident of ethnic violence is recorded and brings people together “as never before” (Ghosh 277). Finally, with no further information provided, the relic is found by the officials of the Central Bureau of Intelligence. Ghosh depicts how peaceful demonstrations in Kashmir, in which citizens of different religious backgrounds cause ethnic violence in Dhaka, resulting in Tridib’s death. Tridib dies because he is a Hindu, making him a target and representative of the religious background of the perceived culprit, who committed the theft of the relic. Rituparna Roy rightfully asserts that Tridib’s death in 1964 indicates a “far-reaching consequence of the long-age event of 1947” (R. Roy 114). Hence, this incident is representative of the hostility between Hindus and Muslims, that rose through the 1947 Partition, which in its premise is a division along religious lines. Indeed, the narrator remarks the contrast between Kashmir where people are celebrating, and the violent demonstrations which take place in Kulna and Dhaka in East Pakistan and in Kolkata in India. Ghosh is skilfully able to depict the far-reaching, detrimental consequences one incident can have on the subcontinent.

The narrator is a third-generation descendant of a Partition survivor, as Alia is in *Salt and Saffron*. Both are post-amnesia subjects — a term explained by Kabir in the first chapter — and thus go from a state of amnesia to retrieval of their own Partition history. It takes the narrator seventeen years to fully understand the cause behind Tridib’s death. Having the reality concealed from him, a remark by one of his friends, who could not remember the riots in Kolkata, which the narrator experienced, leads the narrator to a quest into old newspaper reports. There he finds out that Tridib was killed in the riots in Dhaka and that those riots also

sparked the riots in Kolkata the narrator experienced as a child. The narrator points out how there was only the slightest reference to the riots in the newspaper, an event that was so traumatic and personal to him. The narrator uses the phrase “Do you remember?” over and over again to ask his friend if he really does not remember the riots (Ghosh 271). Kaul points out how this question “shapes the narrator's search for connections, for the recovery of lost information or repressed experiences, for the details of great trauma or joy that have receded into the archives of public or private memory” (125). This makes the narrator realize that the Kolkata paper was “run by people who believed in the power of distance no less than I did” (Ghosh 279). The narrator notes how

Every word I write about those events of 1964 is the product of a struggle with silence. (...) The enemy of silence is speech, but there can be no speech without words, and there can be no words without meaning-so it follows inexorably, in the manner of syllogism, that when we try to speak of events of which we do not know the meaning, we must lose ourselves in the gap between words and the world. (Ghosh 267-68)

It takes the narrator seventeen years to understand the events of 1964, which cannot be explained without the events of 1947, which the author makes the reader aware of through the narrator. For he finally realizes: “I believed in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality” (Ghosh 279). The narrator’s outlook on borders changes, when he realizes that the same riots from which he escaped safely in Kolkata, caused Tridib’s death in the neighbouring country. This belated realization enables the narrator to stop living in Tridib’s stories and thus create his own stories, reflecting on his own experiences.

Ghosh's gendered representation of Partition

Ghosh uses Ila, the narrator's love interest in the novel, to depict a gendered experience of Partition and how this affects national identity. Debali Mookerjea-Leonard explains how in the nineteenth century, Hindu cultural nationalism gave rise to a discourse of women's chastity which was used to counter problems of colonial dominance (12-13). Mookerjea-Leonard explains that nationalists presented the myth of "feminine sexual purity" as a "signifier of national virtue, which simultaneously shielded masculine proto-nationalism from the narration of its failures" (13). This gave rise to the "figure of the chaste upper-caste, upper- and middle-class Hindu woman". Hindu nationalism, Partition and its mass abductions and rapes led to the "'purity" of Hindu and Sikh women [becoming] a political prerequisite for their belonging in the new nation" (13). Tha'mma is the principal character in *The Shadow Lines* who grows up believing and internalising this nationalism. On the other end of the spectrum, there is Ila, who belongs to a wealthy Bengali family and lives in London. Like the narrator's, Ila's story is also one of coming-of-age and therefore Ghosh encourages the reader to compare their national belonging as third generation Partition subjects. Ila functions as a "scapegoat" in the narrative for the "many sexual and cultural anxieties" (Kaul 130). "Ila's cosmopolitanism is suspect, because it is not rooted in a full observance of 'Indian' norms" (Kaul 129). For Tha'mma even Ila's outer appearance does not align with being 'Indian' and thus she is portrayed by Tha'mma as being foreign and sexually promiscuous: "with her hair cut short, like the bristles on a toothbrush, wearing tight trousers like a Free School Street whore" (Ghosh 99). While discussing with the narrator why Ila lives in London Tha'mma claims that "She's gone there because she's greedy; she's gone there for money" (Ghosh 97). Tha'mma thinks that Ila is living in London because she wants Western things that you cannot get in India. The narrator then cries that she is not materialistic and that "she spends her spare time going on demonstrations and acting in radical plays for Indian

immigrants in east London”, whereupon Tha’mma answers that Ila is a “greedy little slut” (Ghosh 97-98). The narrator reveals to Tha’mma that Ila wants to live in London because she wishes to be free, which infuriates Tha’mma because the freedom she believes in is acquired through war and resilience and not merely through a plane ticket:

It’s not freedom she wants, said my grandmother, her bloodshot eyes glowing in the hollows of her withered face. She wants to be left alone to do what she pleases: that’s all that any whore would want. She’ll find it easily enough over there; that’s what those places have to offer. But that is not what it means to be free. (Ghosh 110)

Tha’mma’s behaviour towards Ila in many ways echoes national and political discourse surrounding the importance of women’s chastity and how Partition’s violence seeped into the private sphere of the home. Mookerjee-Leonard argues that the “violence on the part of the state during the recovery mission often led to uprooting women who had settled into life in their new homes. This uprooting was normalised as benevolence, while women’s rights to self-determination regarding their future domiciles (and citizenship) were obliterated” (13). This nationalist violence after Partition that uprooted and deprived women the right of where they can live is in many ways similar to how Tha’mma regards Ila’s choice of living in London.

Ghosh wants the reader to realize through the characters of the narrator and Tridib that “the shadow lines that connected people were infinitely more significant than the ones that divided them” (R. Roy 114). However, national transgression in the novel is limited to men. Kaul rightfully remarks how “The novel offers a radical critique of political boundaries (...) [and how the] relationship between women and culture is less hopeful -- for them there are no transformations of cultural frontiers, only inelegant transgressions” (144). Kaul thus

agrees with Dasgupta's critique, explained in the first chapter, of how violence towards women was not merely a by-product of Partition but already in existence before then. Thus, representing violence against women as a continuum, located in the 'sanctuary' of the home.

As argued in the first chapter, home becomes a site of violence, exclusion and not-belonging. In *Salt and Saffron*, this results in Mariam also being called a "whore" in the same way Ila is. Another consequence thereof is Mariam being disowned from the home and labelled as being not one of their own. Similarly, Ila is in a way "disowned" from the country for not being "Indian" enough. This idea is reinforced during a night out with Roby and the narrator in Kolkata, when Ila wants to dance with someone on the dance floor, and Roby comments how "girls don't behave like that here" (Ghosh 109). This then leads to a discussion between Ila and the narrator:

do you see now why I've chosen to live in London? Do you see? It's only because I want to be free.

Free of what? I said.

Free of *you*! She shouted back. Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you.

(Ghosh 109).

Ghosh contrasts this incident with a passage in which the narrator confesses going to prostitutes in Delhi. This hypocritical attitude towards Ila is inherent in how women's roles were perceived after Partition by men who themselves raped and abducted women or at the least were free of the burden of sexual "purity". While in the end the narrator pushes for an inclusive worldview that transgresses borders, he does not see his own bias against women. This is a brilliant authorial choice by Ghosh, and it depicts the ongoing violence of Partition towards women through the lens of a middle-class, male, cisgender, heterosexual perspective.

Coming home vs going home

Tha'mma decides to go back to get her old cousin Jethamoshi, so back from Dhaka to Kolkata, despite their family feud. Fu Chun argues in his article "Parting, Partition And Purloined Stories In *The Shadow Lines*" that "The grandmother's own transformation revolves around a binary logic, either seeking reconciliation or inflaming hostility" (294). This binary logic really represents Tha'mma's state of mind, which is emphasised through her experience of trauma and her need to mourn. The estranged cousin in Dhaka gives her a possibility to start the mourning process, even if she does not want to realize this. Instead she rationalizes her decision to go and get him back:

If I go it won't be for a holiday. You ought to know I don't believe in luxuries like that. I haven't taken a holiday all my life and I'm not starting now. If I go it will be for the sake of Jethamoshai. Since I am the only person in the family who cares, it is my duty to see if I can bring the poor old man back. (Ghosh 183).

Tha'mma's nationalist dream shatters when she realizes that "borders have a tenuous existence, and that not even a history of bloodshed can make them real and impermeable" (Kaul 136). Before taking the plane she asks whether she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan, asking herself: "But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? [...] What was it all for then- Partition and all the killing and everything -- if there isn't something in between" (Ghosh 186)? This instance in the novel really depicts the naivety of Tha'mma. She then gets to know that the border is in the airport, to which she says "travelling was so easy then. I could come home to Dhaka whenever I wanted" (Ghosh 186) The narrator then mocks Tha'mma by

saying, “How could you have ‘come’ home to Dhaka? You don’t know the difference between coming and going” (Ghosh 187). Many scholars have noted that this confusion surfaced because language stops to make sense when Tha’mma thinks about her maiden home (Kaul 137). However, “*The Shadow Lines* challenges the seemingly uniform nationalities created at Partition by subtly incorporating Bengali language into the English prose” (Soukai 75) Indeed, as Nivedita Sen explains:

In traditional Bengali households, there is something inauspicious about saying, “I take your leave” or “I will go now,” when one actually means to depart for any destination [...]. When one is going away, therefore, one is expected to say *Aashi*, which literally means its opposite, that is “I am just coming,” its nearest English equivalent as a farewell statement would be “See you soon” or “Until we meet again.”

(132)

This interchangeability is incorporated beautifully by Ghosh whose use of language goes back to a pre-partitioned time, which shows the reader the lasting impact of a unified culture long after its separation. Ghosh also does this while referencing the poet Tagore in the novel (Ghosh 240). This use of language is meticulously used by Ghosh to connect the past to the present and the socio-political reality post-1947 to that of pre-1947.

Arriving in Dhaka Tha’mma constantly asks “But this is for foreigners; where’s Dhaka” (Ghosh 39)? To which Tridib while referring to his British lover May says “But you *are* a foreigner now, you’re as foreign here as May- much more than May, for look at her, she doesn’t even need a visa to come here” (Ghosh 239, 240).

Arriving at their old house Tha'mma says that this is not where they lived because she cannot see Kanababu's sweet-shop (Ghosh 253). However, she reminds herself that "she hasn't come all this way merely to indulge her nostalgia – she hates nostalgia, my grandmother, she has spent years telling me that nostalgia is a weakness, a waste of time, that it is everyone's duty to forget the past and look ahead and get on with building the future (...)" (Ghosh 255). This passage shows that Tha'mma felt really happy to come back but was disappointed when she realized that everything had changed. The old Jethamoshi does not want to go back and hence Tha'mma tells him that they will bring him back to Dhaka if he still wishes to. This is when the riot breaks out and Jethamoshi is attacked in the rickshaw behind Tha'mma's car. May gets out of the car calling everyone a coward, which makes Tridib run behind her, resulting in both Tridib's and Jethamoshi's death. The cultural ignorance and insensibility of May causes Tridib's death, while she herself remains unharmed as an English mehmshahib. This revelation at the very end of the novel should be read as Ghosh's way of hinting at Partition being a parting gift from the British Raj (Brar 2). Ghosh depicts Tha'mma as someone who until her death believes in her nationalist ideals, which is why despite their trip to Dhaka, she gives away her jewellery to fund the Indo-China war in 1965.

In conclusion, it has become clear in this chapter that Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* have quite a few similarities in their representation of the effects of Partition, whereas the differences are mainly due to class-differences and gender. Shamsie's novel is more hopeful when it comes to women, whereas Ghosh's text is unfortunately more realistic. I would like to conclude with Ghosh's words of wisdom that represent the core of *The Shadow Lines*: "Everyone lives in a story, (...), because stories are all there are to live in, it was just a question of which one you choose..." (224).

Chapter 3: Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Salman Rushdie's 1981 Booker Prize-winning novel, *Midnight's Children*, is considered a "turning point" in Indian literature in English because it marks the start of "new energy that was infused into Indian Writing in English in the 1980s by its reception in the West in a way it had never experienced before" (R. Roy 89). *Midnight's Children* is a landmark novel because of Rushdie's unique way of dealing with the theme of Partition. Rushdie himself, however, does not consider *Midnight's Children* to be a Partition novel. In a 1983 interview given to Salil Tripathi, he said that "Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is about the only good book on that theme. *Midnight's Children* uses Partition somewhat at a distance because the action is in Bombay" (Reder 25). However, in this chapter I will argue that *Midnight's Children* must be regarded as a quintessential Partition novel, in particular because the novel covers the timespan from 1915 to 1977, which includes the 1947 Partition but also the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. This is why I chose this novel for my last chapter of my thesis, since this novel frames Partition not solely in terms of the 1947 events, but also depicts its aftermath which includes the 1971 Partition. Rushdie's way of writing about Partition aligns with the framing of my thesis that sets out to analyse Partition's trauma and memory as not only confined to the events of 1947 but as an ongoing process of violence.

The novel's representation of Partition

Midnight's Children is the only novel in this thesis which deals with the major historical events leading up to Partition in 1947, which led to the independence of India and the creation of Pakistan and later the subsequent independence of Bangladesh. The novel deals with major historical moments both pre- and post- Partition times. Indeed, Timothy Brennan notices how

Midnight's Children is distinctive (...) in the way that it systematically sets out in a discursive fashion, all key historical road markers of the Indian postwar period inserting them into the narrative like newspaper reports or like textbook lessons in modern Indian history: the massacre of Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar in 1919; the Partition of 1947; Nehru's First Five-Year Plan in 1956; Ayub Khan's coup in Pakistan in 1958; the India-China war of 1962; the India- Pakistan war of 1965; the creation of Bangladesh in 1971; and the Indian "Emergency" of 1975. (83)

An effect of these elaborate historical moments in the novel is that the reader ties some of them to the aftermath of the 1947 Partition in the respective countries of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, thus depicting the trauma and violence of Partition as ongoing, even after 1947. All of the characters in Rushdie's novel also move through and live in the three subsequent independent countries of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which is a very innovative and multifaceted approach to literature dealing with Partition trauma. At the core of the novel is the precise moment of India's independence in 1947 that ties the characters to the history of the nation.

The precise moment of India's independence

Rushdie represents the transition from colonial- to a post-colonial era through the parting of the colonial Methwold. He agrees to sell his estate, consisting of four houses, in Bombay to selected Indian elite families. One of those houses is sold to Ahmed Sinai, who is the father of the narrator/protagonist Saleem. However, Methwold has two conditions, namely that "the entire contents be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer should not take place until midnight on August 15th" (Rushdie 126). Hence, Rituparna Roy rightfully

remarks that “the transfer of the assets at Methwold’s estate is thus both a metaphor for and a parody of the political transfer of power that was happening in India at the time” (92).

Born at the stroke of midnight, Saleem is considered to be the “chosen child of midnight” (Rushdie 157). However, Saleem turns out to be the Anglo-Indian, illegitimate child of Methwold. Thus, the new country is marked by the identity of the British colonizer. “Rushdie seems to be arguing that the new state that came into being on the 15th August 1947 was Indian in its colour, composition and make-up, but its pedigree was unmistakably British” (R. Roy 92,93). The newly independent state of India and by extension the 1947 Partition thus are products of the British Raj. In Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* this connection is also made, although more subtly, when May’s cultural ignorance and insensibility result in Tridib’s murder.

The allegorical side of the novel

In *Midnight’s Children*, the development of the narrator/protagonist, Saleem, is an allegory for the history of India. Saleem is born at the stroke of midnight on August 15th, the same way India is “born” through the independence on the same date. In the novel, India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru makes a direct analogy by congratulating Saleem on his birth in a letter, which further strengthens the notion of Saleem as an allegory for India: “You are the newest bearer of the ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of or own” (Rushdie 167). Further on in the novel, Saleem himself erases all doubts when he says: “I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically” (Rushdie 330). Rituparna Roy rightfully concludes that “Saleem’s life is the history of the country and that Saleem is India, and India is Saleem” (92). Therefore, Rushdie urges the reader to perceive Saleem’s personal history as

an allegorical reflection of India's public history, which includes the fate of the nation after Partition.

Saleem's trauma of betrayal

Saleem's/ India's trauma is the betrayal of the promise of independence, a trauma which comes to the surface on Saleem's body in the form of cracks. The narrator emphasises that "the cracks in the earth which will-be-have-been reborn in my skin". (Rushdie 144) The "cracks in the earth" stand for the lines of Partition that divide the newly born countries, India and Pakistan. The cracks on his skin represent the narrator's/ country's struggle to stay alive, and the narration shows how Saleem has to navigate his existence and identity in the different countries. This fight for survival and the cracks on Saleem's body are inflicted during post-Partition times, by its on-going violence and betrayal. Bhasker Sarkar argues how

[s]peaking about 1947 remains a difficult task even after the passage of five decades; the corporeal, the material, and psychic losses, the wide-spread sense of betrayal, the overwhelming dislocations — in short, the deep lacerations inflicted on one's sense of self and community — bring up intense and consuming passions. (9)

The term "lacerations" here reflects the trauma of Partition that can be found on Saleem's cracked skin, which give him the feeling of falling apart: "I (...) have begun to crack all over like an old jug — that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage (...). I am literally disintegrating" (Rushdie 43). Saleem has the feeling of being drained by history, thus echoing Sarkar's idea that the lacerations/cracks are intense and consuming. Indeed, Saleem is obsessed by the act of writing before the trauma overtakes him and obviates him into nothingness: "I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six

hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous and necessarily oblivious dust. This is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. (We are a nation of forgetters)” (Rushdie 43). There is an emphasis on pouring Saleem’s personal history out on paper and in jars as a means of preserving. Saleem confesses how

my chutneys and kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings — by day I spend amongst the pickle-vats, by nights within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks. (Rushdie 44)

Rushdie tries to convey through Saleem’s comment that memory is further distorted through the passing of time. More importantly, however, his comment depicts Saleem’s lack of trust in the national history and narrative, that disregards and writes over the personal histories and narratives of its country’s people. Therefore, Saleem is obsessed with writing down his own history.

In addition to wanting to write down his own story, Saleem is also compelled to talk about his trauma to his girlfriend Padma. In Shoshana Felman’s and Dori Laub book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, they emphasise a need on part of the traumatized for a hearer, claiming that “[t]he testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time” (57). Mieke Bal further explains that “[i]n the absence of a sympathetic listener with whom to construct the story, the trauma continues to surface as symptom-waiting-be-narrated. In other words, psychoanalytic accounts suggest that to the effect of healing, a circuit of communication must come into being” (56) Thus, the

narrator's compulsion to tell his story is an attempt at healing from his trauma of betrayal. By constructing a narrative, he tries to make sense of his trauma.

This trauma of betrayal is strongly marked by the violence that occurs in post-Partitioned India, which was glossed over by national speeches of promise concerning India's independence. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan argues in "Zeitgeist and the Literary Text" how "Rushdie clearly made a decision about the national narrative; his focus on the celebration of the simultaneous birth of his protagonist and the nation would require the elision of Partition" (459). This celebration of Saleem's birth depicts Rushdie's narcissistic narrative and its attempt to focus on Partition's celebration rather than its slaughter:

I shall not describe the mass blood-letting in progress on the frontiers of the divided Punjab (where the partitioned nations are washing themselves in one another's blood, (...); I shall avert my eyes from the violence in Bengal and the long pacifying walk of Mahatma Gandhi. Selfish? Narrow-minded? Well, perhaps; but excusably so, in my opinion. After all, one is not born every day. (Rushdie 150)

Ananya Jahanara Kabir rightfully argues that "Rushdie's 'light-touch' depiction of the violence of Partition, (...), asserts the survival of a core belief in a redeeming 'spirit of India', which he defiantly claims as part of Saleem's syncretic inheritance" ("SML," 262). While the initial attempt at omitting the violence should be read as a reaction to trauma, Rituparna Roy notes how a few pages later in the novel the "unavoidable facts of Partition" surface in a "very unusual and macabre fashion" (95):

(...) Saffron-shirted, green-skirted, they throng in the illuminated streets, beneath the infinite balconies of the city on which little dia-lamps of earthenware have been filled

with mysterious oils; wicks float in the lamps which line every balcony and rooftop, and these wicks too, conform to our two-tone colour scheme; half the lamps burn saffron, the others flame with green.

(...) And in all the cities all the towns all the villages the little dia-lamps burn on window-sills porches verandahs, while trains burn in the Punjab, with the green flames of blistering paint and the glaring saffron of fired fuel, like the biggest dias in the world.

And the city of Lahore, too, is burning. (Rushdie 154, 155)

These passages in the novel are incredibly impactful because they depict the force of trauma and violence and how it seeps through the narrative even when Saleem decides not to incorporate it. Rushdie beautifully uses the colours of the newly changed flag of India, to show that while some celebrate the nation with its newly found colours and its representative values, others use the same colours and ideals as a premise to slaughter people. Rushdie tries to suggest that saffron, which stands for courage and sacrifice, and green, which stands for fertility and faith, have found new meanings and seem to compete, resulting in countless deaths. The fact that Rushdie omits the white colour *dia* of the flag from the celebration and violence, suggests that socio-political realities post-1947 are deprived from peace, unity and truth, the ideals the flag is also supposed to stand for. Throughout *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie plays with these colours of the flag and urges the reader to connect the values of the colours of the flag to post-Partition realities. Rituparna Roy rightfully asserts that Rushdie uses these passages to depict “a number of contrasting realities and displays the varying impact of the event of the Partition on different sections of the people” (96). Rushdie skilfully depicts the irony of India’s independence: while the liberation from the British Raj is a celebratory moment, the celebration is tainted by the Partition’s violence.

The Kashmiri Muslim subject in 1947 India

The 1947 Partition changes the socio-political climate of India. Overnight, the identities of numerous people are challenged. The violence of Partition, the uncountable rapes and abductions of women and children and the very creation of Pakistan, destabilize the Indian Muslim Identity in India. Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* both use a narrator/protagonist who belongs to the dominant religious faith in their respective countries. Alia is a Muslim subject in Pakistan, while Ghosh's narrator is a Hindu in India. Interestingly, Saleem in *Midnight's Children* is a Kashmiri Muslim, living in Bombay. This makes him a minority within a minority, since the Partition of 1947 complicates the Kashmiri identity, especially with Kashmir being the subject of dispute between India, Pakistan and China. Choosing the character of Saleem to be a Kashmiri Muslim Indian in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie challenges the very idea of the newly born secular India. The term *Kashmiriyat* is often used as a social consciousness that binds people of different religious backgrounds together. Kashmiri people and their identities are marked by shared customs and rituals, in which people from different religious backgrounds take part together. Kabir argues how

Rushdie's public subjectivity wishes to celebrate the birth of India, but his private subjectivity mourns two losses: the cultural ecosystem of Kashmiriyat ("Kashmiriness") and the mythic geography of South Asian Muslim high culture, specially that invested in the imperial Mughal past. (...) For Saleem, and, we may impute, for Rushdie himself, these losses represent two stages in the loss of selfhood. (Kabir "SML," 252, 259)

In the novel, the reader can sense the distress of Saleem about his Kashmiri identity when he asks himself whether he is Kashmiri or Indian, to which he ambiguously answers that he “throw[s] [his] lot in with India; but the alienness of his blue eyes remains” (Rushdie 144). The blue eyes here are representative of his Kashmiri “inheritance” since his grandfather had blue eyes. Therefore, Rushdie’s choice of using a Kashmiri Muslim subject provides a very distinctive lens to look at Partition, since Partition at its core is a division of countries among religious lines.

Although Saleem Sinai’s family is Muslim, they do not want to leave India For Pakistan. When Partition was still not confirmed, India saw the rise of an anti-Muslim movement, while Muslim factories, shops and warehouses were being burned (Rushdie 93). The novel depicts how there is no distinction in treatment of Muslims who want to remain in India compared to those who want to leave once Partition would become a reality. Ahmed Sinai, Saleem’s father, “distrusted Muhammed Ali Jinnah” and his vision of Pakistan (Rushdie 108). When his warehouse was burned in Delhi, he decided it would be best to seek refuge in the metropolitan city of Bombay. Rushdie questions the very idea of the so-called “secular” India and shows its discriminative attitude and politics when the government freezes the assets of Ahmed Sinai among other affluent Muslim families, forcing people to forcefully migrate to Pakistan. This is emphasised in the novel when the narrator recalls: “(‘We are a secular State,’ Nehru announced, and Morarji and Patel and Menon all agreed; but still Ahmed Sinai shivered under the influence of the freeze)” (Rushdie 187,188). In the course of the following years, Ahmed Sinai’s mental health aggravates, which convinces the family to start over in Pakistan, where Saleem’s aunt already lives. Rushdie incorporates Jawaharlal Nehru’s words to the Assembly: “‘No time for ill-will. We have to build the noble mansion of free India, where *all* [italics added] her children may dwell” (Rushdie 158). The

“all children” reappears as a false promise of independence, which after 1947 obviously excludes Muslim Indians who are discriminated against.

Rushdie makes the reader aware of the loss and sacrifices that nationhood entails. In this sense, Rushdie through his depiction of the Sinai family echoes Basker Sarkar’s idea that “the nation is always born and experienced through loss” (explained in Chapter 1), which in this case is the loss of community life, Muslim Indian identity and the Kashmiri identity which is shattered through the birth of Pakistan, because it turns Muslim Indians into second-class citizens in their own country (Sarkar 303). Even at the very end of the novel, Kashmir for Saleem appears inaccessible: “And I see that I shall never reach Kashmir, like Jehangir the Mughal Emperor I shall die with Kashmir on my lips, unable to see the Valley of Delights to which men go to enjoy life or to end it or both.” (Rushdie 646)

Rushdie’s depiction of nationalism

In the second chapter, we analysed how in *The Shadow Lines* Amitav Ghosh depicts two opposing forms of nationalism. On the one hand, there is Tha’mma’s nationalism which is a mirror-image of the government’s national narrative of nationalism which she accepts without questioning. On the other hand, we have Tridib’s nationalism, who views artificial physical borders as a political construct, whose aim is to impose a difference “between oneself and one’s image in the mirror” (Ghosh 36). As such this distinction shows that the difference between the newly partitioned Subcontinent and between its various peoples is not innate but is imposed to fit nationalist agendas of the respective countries.

Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* takes Tridib’s idea a step further and shows how nationalism is an artificial construct, mass-distributed through the national narrative of a country, and appropriated by the citizens of a nation as a means to belong. Thus, Rushdie mocks the very idea of nationalism, while portraying its dangerous power, that is

discriminatory in nature. He achieves this by having his characters move and live in the three countries of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Once Saleem and his family have moved to Pakistan, Saleem's parents claim that: "We must all become new people"; in the land of the pure, purity became our ideal. But Saleem was forever tainted with Bombayness, his head was full of all religions apart from Allah's (...) I had lived in a country whose population of deities rivalled the numbers of its people" (Rushdie 431). This passage, while it shows the absurdity of physical borders, also depicts the vital need for humans to belong. Saleem's parents' determination to become new people is an effort and need to incorporate the nationalist discourse of Pakistan as a means to partake in Pakistani society. Saleem's dilemma is that of a great number of people who migrated to Pakistan or stayed there after Partition, who had to rethink their identity that was before largely based on syncretism. Thus, the migration to Pakistan for Saleem proves to be incredibly disorienting and difficult, shown by his statement how "I never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay" (Rushdie 427).

India-Pakistan-Bangladesh

The narrator's trauma of exile is one that is marked by disorientation, nostalgia and amnesia. When writing about trauma, Saleem uses magic realism and sometimes refers to himself in the third person: "I will not say he was not sad; (...) [h]is dreams, denied the children of midnight, became filled with nostalgia to the point of nausea, so he often woke up gagging" (Rushdie 439). After Saleem's arrival in Pakistan, he can no longer reconnect through thought-transmissions with the other children of midnight (Rushdie 394). The borders are now also closed with India, which denies him the possibility to mourn the death of his grandfather (Rushdie 440). This disorientation is further emphasised when he expresses his different experiences from his Indian childhood and his Pakistani adolescence in claiming "that in the first I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was

adrift, disoriented, amid an equally infinity number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies”

(Rushdie 453).

Rushdie uses magic realism to describe trauma that would otherwise be indescribable. In 1965 during wartime, Saleem is hit on his head with a spittoon, the very one he always carries with him, which erases his memory. Saleem forgets his name, and joins the Pakistani army, where his comrades nickname him Buddha. It is only when Saleem is “emptied of history” and learns “the arts of submission” and does “what was required of him” that he is able to say, that he is finally “a citizen of Pakistan” (Rushdie 488). Here, Rushdie gives the answer to what nationhood entails, which strongly criticizes Partition, while Saleem’s amnesia must be read as a symptom of trauma. Even after becoming “a citizen of Pakistan”, Saleem unconsciously carries the spittoon everywhere. The spittoon is essential in understanding Saleem’s trauma, as Kabir explains:

The significance of the whimsical contradiction between its function and form must be put into the context of Rushdie’s descriptions of the old men’s game of hit-the-spittoon, as played in front of an Agra paan-shop (p. 44). The seriousness with which the men pursue ‘this serious art’ with the aid of ‘an old brass spittoon’, and their periodic accommodations of the street urchins’ parallel game of ‘dodging in and out between the red streams’, transmutes the quintessentially abject act of spitting through that peculiarly South Asian vice, paan. Their symbiotic play sums up what Rushdie finds valuable in Indian culture: the inseparability of serious art and game, of high culture and low, and of the mundane and the playful. (“SML,” 258, 259)

Thus, the spittoon represents an object of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh’s shared past, prior to Partition. After regaining his memory and becoming a deserter, Saleem understands why

he held on to the spittoon: “I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done to me. (...) [T]o understand me, you’ll have to swallow a world” (Rushdie 535). Thereafter, he returns to India with the help of Parvati, the witch. With the war of Bangladesh’s independence, Rushdie depicts the absurdity of the war, which led to Pakistanis killing themselves internally in the East wing.

Women, the bearers of nationalist values

In *Midnight’s Children* the role of women is marginal. However, there are two instances in the novel that are worth analysing. The novel starts with the introduction of Aadam Aziz, Saleem’s grandfather, who is a doctor returning home from his education in Germany. His education abroad and “European scepticism has destroyed his faith in “Islam” and in “India”” (Natarajan 170). *Hartal* was a day dedicated to peacefully mourn the occupation of the British which took place on April 7th in 1919. On the same day, Adam forces his wife to come out of *purdah* (to take off her veil). He then takes all of her veils and sets them on fire, claiming, “Forget about being a good Kashmiri girl. Start thinking about being a modern woman” (Rushdie 39). This occurs against her wishes, and she remains voicing her defenceless disapproval: “You want me to walk naked in front of strange men. (...) They will see more than that! They will see my deep-deep shame!” (Rushdie 38). Nalini Natarajan rightfully argues that “[t]his imagery uncovering/covering of woman becomes a site for national self-definition, a site where (...) national ideology [is] played out” (170). Thereby, women are “the figurehead[s] of national culture” (Natarajan 170). Natarajan further criticises how “[t]he text announces within brackets ‘(he has told her to come out of purdah),’ the punctuation indicating that women’s freedom is aside in the narrative of nationalism” (Natarajan 171). In Amitav Ghosh’s novel a similar point is made in Chapter two, when Ila is written out as not being Indian enough, by Tha’mma for the way she dresses. Aadam

Aziz's behaviour towards his wife Naseem Aziz depicts how strong national narratives are, and how women's rights of choice are being trampled over. Naseem is basically forced to disregard her Kashmiri Muslim upbringing and values to conform to the image of the "modern Indian woman" because the Indian society is undergoing modernization.

Later in the novel, Rushdie beautifully contrasts the behaviour towards Naseem in 1919 with Jamila Singer, Saleem's sister. Arriving in Pakistan "she became public property, 'Pakistan's Angel', 'The Voice of the Nation'" (Rushdie 435). Rushdie depicts how Jamila Singer is used to advance the nationalism of Pakistan as the new "daughter-of-the-nation" (Rushdie 436). President Ayub claims how "[her] voice will be a sword for purity; it will be a weapon with which we shall cleans men's souls" (Rushdie 437). Indeed, to fulfil this image of how a good "daughter-of-the-nation" must be, Jamila is never shown to the public, as her appearance is concealed behind a perforated sheet. Hence, these two opposing examples of writing over women's wishes serves to show that women bear the burden of nationalist values. Their bodies become sites where history and nationalism are largely played out. Women are repeatedly victimised: in 1919 traditional women were forced into the role of the modern woman, after 1947 women in Pakistan had to conform to strict ideals of purity and modesty, and post- 1947/1971 Partition women were subjected to rape and abduction in the name of nation-building.

The ending of the novel

At the end of the novel, Saleem works in a pickle production company, in whose jars he is "able to include, memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them" will come to know his personal history (Rushdie 643). These will then be "unleashed upon the amnesiac nation" with Saleem being aware that history, whether

personal or public should be analysed and its “process of revision should be constant and endless” (Rushdie 643).

To sum up, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* has a unique way of dealing with Partition’s trauma, and as such it is very different from Kamila Shamsie’s *Salt and Saffron* and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*. Its depiction of nationalism and the fate of women is similar to Ghosh’s novel, whereas Shamsie’s fate of women is more hopeful. *Midnight’s Children* remains a classic and thought-provoking novel in the way it depicts Partition’s trauma and violence as ongoing and multifaceted. Rushdie’s novel is unique because it is able to both incorporate the 1947- and the 1971- Partition, while at the same time making its central characters live in the three partitioned countries. This enables Rushdie to demonstrate how nationalist discourses change from one country to another, how characters must reimagine their identities to match those of their country’s ideals, how the birth of a new country forces its citizens to forcefully and persistently forget their past and shared history with their former fellow citizens across the border.

Conclusion

At the start of my thesis research, I expected to be able to use the various current models of trauma and memory to examine the representation of trauma of the 1947/1971 Partition in fiction. I quickly realized that while Euro-American models of trauma provided me with the basics in trauma and memory studies, I became aware that the models took a PTSD-oriented approach, which looks at the individual instead of at the collective (like a family or society), and relies on linear modes of narratives as well as relying heavily on testimony and on the act of talking. Thus, they are not fully applicable to a post-colonial, post-Partitioned society, in which the collective comes first and in which shame and honour are paramount. In such societies, people cannot just “speak” of their problems, therefore the act of talking about one’s trauma as an attempt at healing must be regarded as a privileged form of mourning. This led me to use different theorists as a more fitting framework. Bhaskar Sarkar and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, among others, have incorporated South Asian culture into their theory and developed vernacular frameworks, which I was able to use in my thesis, to analyse transgenerational trauma and memory.

The three novels I analysed show a gendered view on Partition, which functions at the detriment of women. It shows the ongoing violence towards women located on their bodies, in the sanctuary of the home. Among the three novels, only *Salt and Saffron* offers a positive, perhaps even a slightly utopian ending. In the other two novels, the authors depict a more realistic view of the situation of women. Ghosh and Rushdie’s novels both demonstrate that nationalism relies on women, their bodies and their choices to advance ideals in the post-Partitioned nations. Rushdie’s novel is striking for the way it depicts women as vessels for advancing political agendas.

Class was also one of the major differences among the three books. Ghosh's novel is the only one in which the narrator belongs to the middle-class. In this thesis I have shown how the experience of middle-class Partition survivors is drastically different from that of their upper-class counterparts. Thus, Tha'mma's experience in *The Shadow Lines* differs drastically from Abida's in *Salt and Saffron* and Saleem Sinai's family in *Midnight's Children*. The privilege of wealth allows them to dwell on the past, their lost home and romanticize it in a way that Tha'mma cannot. She is forced to work hard and move on, for herself and for her family. The middle-class generation of Partition survivors rely on the values of courage and hard work in the face of hardship and horror. These attributes help them to climb the social ladder and are values they want to instil in their next generations to harden them so that they can face hurdles of their own. Therefore, Tha'mma forces her grandson, the narrator of the novel, to be courageous and hard working. Tha'mma's pride stems from how she faced hardship, while the pride of Abida and other wealthy first-generation migrants lies in retelling the stories of their past glories.

While Shamsie and Gosh in their texts domesticated Partition by representing it allegorically through the conflict of two brothers, Rushdie represented Saleem allegorically as India. His tale was one of survival, regardless whether he lived in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Rushdie uses magic realism to express traumatic instances and he relies on Padma as a listener, which gives a testimony feel to the novel. He also uses a minority figure as his narrator/protagonist, which gives a different and stronger critique of nationalism and Partition. Additionally, *Midnight's Children* provides a wide perspective on Partition by incorporating both the 1947- and the 1971 Partitions.

Taking my cue from South Asian theorists on trauma, I strongly believe that there is a need to look into vernacular, affective vocabulary and concepts such as *moonjh* (longing), *ishq* (desire), *mohalla* (urban locality) and *adda* (a location for social interaction) to name a

few, which escape the radar of English language but still lurk beneath it. They represent a gateway of analysis, which goes back to traditions, cultural expressions and sites of pre-Partition times. More thorough research is needed into these and other affective vernacular vocabulary, in order to further analyse Partition trauma and pre-Partition sites.

Lastly, I would like to add that the current socio-political situation in India with the rising of Hindu nationalism and the passing of the Citizen Amendment Act, that uses Partition as an excuse to pass a law that discriminates on the basis of religion by excluding Muslims, shows that the violence of Partition is still ongoing. It saddens me to see that a lack of knowledge around Partition and its trauma continues to be used to fester hate in the nation. I genuinely hope that the NRC Act does not pass, and that Partition and its trauma is further analysed, because more than ever people are being pitted against each other. The demonstrations in India and coming together of people of all religions and expressing their anger makes me hopeful for a future of people that believe that there is indeed no difference “between oneself and one’s image in the mirror”, be it a Muslim Indian, a Pakistani or Bangladeshi (Ghosh 36).

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