THE PARTITIONED SUBJECT: NARRATIVE, NATIONALISM, AND SILENT SUBJECTIVITY IN KHUSHWANT SINGH’S *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in English

By

Tarranum Kohli, B.A.

Washington, DC
January 9, 2013
THE PARTITIONED SUBJECT: NARRATIVE, NATIONALISM, AND SILENT SUBJECTIVITY IN KHUSHWANT SINGH’S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Tarranum Kohli, B.A.

Thesis Advisor: Andrew N. Rubin, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1947 the British government granted India its independence and partitioned the colony into two nations: the Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India. The partition displaced over 10 million people and an estimated one million people died in this transfer of populations. Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan (1956) provides a narrative account of the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan, which marked a bloody period of South Asian history. Building from previous scholarship on post-colonial national identities and the process by which post-colonial nationalism makes itself coherent, this project demonstrates the way in which individual subjectivity is altered by partition by engaging with Khushwant Singh’s novel.

In order to illustrate the contours of a partitioned subject, this project has three interrelated sections. Chapter One provides a history of the 1947 Partition of India and a discussion of Khushwant Singh’s novel, and draws upon the work of a group of theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben to address the complexities of the relationships between the post-colonial and partition state, a subject that, with the exception of Joe Cleary’s Literature, Partition, and the Nation State, few have addressed. Chapter Two advances a detailed analysis of Train to Pakistan and argues that the narrative is a historically contingent account of silence. Lastly, Chapter Three argues that the silence of the “partitioned subject” is much more than a split subject, but marks a historical threshold instituted by the territorial act of partition itself.

iii
The research and writing of this thesis
is dedicated to Dr. Surjit Kaur, for whom these, indeed any, words are not enough.

Additionally, I cannot express enough gratitude to Professors Ricardo Ortiz and Andrew Rubin for their guidance, faith, and most importantly, patience. I am indebted to my family, my friends, my colleagues, and the great conversationalists at Tel’Veh for all their support. Lastly, this project would not have been possible without Sardar Khushwant Singh and his blessings.

TARRANUM KOHLI
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter One: “A Tryst with Destiny” ............................................................................................. 5
    “At the Stroke of the Midnight Hour” ........................................................................................ 5
    The Subject of a Post-Partition State ....................................................................................... 12

Chapter Two: Narrative and Nationalism in the Post-Partition State ........................................... 20
    Productive Fiction ..................................................................................................................... 20
    Contingent Narratives ............................................................................................................. 24
    Nationalism as Narrative ......................................................................................................... 29

Chapter Three: Silent Subjectivity and Agency ............................................................................ 38
    Silence in Narratives ................................................................................................................. 38
    Subjectivity as a Narrative ....................................................................................................... 45
    The Partitioned Subject .......................................................................................................... 53

Works Cited .................................................................................................................................. 62
INTRODUCTION

On July 9, 2011 when Sudan partitioned into the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of the Sudan, I began thinking about another partition that took place over sixty years prior and to whose history I belong. Until the summer of 2011, my interest in the 1947 Partition of India had been defined by an inherited sense and history of loss. I always was aware of the contours of my family’s history: both sides of my family had migrated from present-day Pakistan Punjab to India, and in both sides of the family, a number of people were killed. I believed, however, that partition was not necessarily undesirable. While the 1947 Partition of India was orchestrated by a small group of English and Indian national elites and resulted in over a million deaths, the partition of Sudan was the clear preference of the Southern Sudanese.\(^1\) It is hard to compare the two partitions as the complicated case and violent history of Southern Sudan is one of a region gaining independence, rather than a group of people migrating to a new home as both sides win their independence from a colonial power. However, the vague conceptual similarity poised me for a series of unrelated events that would alter my academic trajectory.

Sometime in the middle of the same month, while I was working at the World Bank, I met a colleague from the Islamabad office, who, in a friendly conversation, told me in Punjabi that his family had been from Jalandhar, which is now in India. The maternal side of my family is from the same town, having resettled there after partition; and when my colleague mentioned that his parents always wanted to return home, but could not, it occurred to me that it was not a stretch to imagine that his parents and my grandparents could have been neighbors. The

---

\(^1\) The referendum on South Sudanese independence took place January 9-15, 2011 and passed with a 98.83% majority (Southern Sudan Referendum 2011, see Works Cited).
alienation from and camaraderie with him, a partitioned subject, that I felt has since stayed with me.

For Christmas that year, a friend of mine gave me a late 19th century map of pre-partition India, as if I should have some sort of memory or nostalgia for a world I never knew.\(^2\) My parents display the map in their home as a gesture of kinship to their Pakistani Punjabi friends. Over the last 18 months, I have gotten used to seeing the pre-partition map of India such that India’s modern borders are reminiscent of scars after an amputation. The land is now two separate nations, and their national narratives and identities have developed separately and are incompatible with each other.

These moments occurred against a background of personal hesitation, academic uncertainty, and intellectual paralysis. The price of my academic choices had been an agreement to eventually move back to India. Having always felt out of place during my two decades of residing years in the United States and knowing I belonged neither in India, I could not envision a unified future for myself and began viewing my hyphenation as a form of exile.

Having understood that language is arbitrary, I had come face-to-face with its material ramifications when my maternal grandmother, Dr. Surjit Kaur, died a few years earlier and I did not have the words to provide an account of her life. Nothing caused me more anxiety than a blank piece of paper. *What desperation there was on that blank page: a series of unexpressed and inexpressible thoughts.* My grandmother had been an active writer, and yet I did not have the

\(^2\) When he asked me if I could locate my hometown on the map, I scoffed since Chandigarh was the first post-partition planned city in India and was not developed until the 1950s. In more ways than one, a map of pre-partition India did not represent an intelligible home.
same gifts of words. In its place, a silence weighed upon me, and I felt as if there were no adequate way of providing an account of the loss.

The acute alienation I felt and my decision to return to India in a few years inspired me to think about partition in relation to questions about subjectivity (of whom or of what was I a subject). After my grandmother died, I happened upon a number of letters from Khushwant Singh to her. The two of them had been friends, and from a young age I knew him as Khushwant Uncle, but it had been at least a decade since I had seen him. From there, it became almost inevitable that I would write on Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*. I wrote him a letter to convey as much, and he, at the age of 97, replied with his blessings.

And so the parameters of my thesis project were set around a blank page…

This project is structured so to reiterate the way nationalism informs subjectivity and to assert that, like Latino studies’ border subject, the partitioned subject ought to be theorized and studied within the framework of the Lacanian barred or split subject. Chapter One offers a history of the 1947 Partition of India, a brief overview of Khushwant Singh’s novel, and a theorization—invoking Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben—of the subject of a post-colonial and post-partition state. Chapter Two puts forward a more detailed analysis of *Train to Pakistan* vis-à-vis its historically contingent narrative as an articulation of a silence. To expatiate on this, I rely heavily on the works of Terry Eagleton, Edward Said, and Benedict Anderson. Lastly, Chapter Three presents the culminating argument on the need to acknowledge (if only because an authentic articulation is impossible) the silence of the partitioned subject; the

---

3 In the interest of full disclosure, Khushwant Singh edited, wrote the foreword, and held the release party for my grandmother’s last book, *Amongst the Sikhs*. 

3
premise of my argument here not only utilizes the works of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, but also attempts to marry the theories of Gayatri Spivak and Antonio Viego among others.
CHAPTER ONE: “A TRYST WITH DESTINY”

It is a shame that it is not deemed credible to begin a theoretical argument in medias res (or for that matter, with an invocation of the muse). After all, a nation, let alone a national narrative, has no temporally discernible beginning or end. So, then, where (and when) does one begin to tell the story of the 1947 Partition of India? And how does one locate the entry to a tangled web of theories in order to find the most lucid, most persuasive way to the partitioned subject?

Contrary to what I will eventually assert in my final chapter that academics ought to do, I offer below only a static history, one filled with dates and events, of the summer of 1947. I focus on Punjab, because not only is it the setting of Singh’s novel, but also it was the stage for the worst violence of partition. From there, I summarize Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, before eventually elaborating on the post-partition state. Because the partition of India was a violent undertaking, I end the chapter on the role of violence in sovereignty as understood by Giorgio Agamben’s reading of Water Benjamin.

“At the Stroke of the Midnight Hour”

On August 14, 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru, who would become the first Prime Minister of India the next day, began a speech to the Constituent Assembly of India in New Delhi with the following words:

---

4 The title of this chapter is borrowed from the title of Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech to the Constituent Assembly of India on August 14, 1947.
Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.

The temporal flaws of the speech aside, his opening sentiments—however eloquent—pit themselves against the reality of India’s independence. India did not win its freedom, indeed no country ever won its freedom, with the turn of the hour hand. Neither does one age end and another begin within a moment. And lastly, the soul of India, long suppressed, long uttered, even after partition, only the words of its national elites, those with British education. I highlight these points not to criticize Nehru’s stirring speech, but to illustrate the sharp distinction between the reality on the ground and the poetry in the upper echelons of politics.

The fight for India’s independence had been violent since long before the British began to consider the prospect seriously. The idea of the partitioning of the nation was first documented only seven years prior to independence. The Muslim League, a political party in pre-partition India, took up the cause of a separate sovereign Muslim state, knowing that such was possible only if granted by the British at the moment of independence. Accounts of the meetings surrounding the Mountbatten Plan, which laid out the instructions for determining the division of India, suggest that while Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, too wanted

India to be partitioned, he was unhappy with the way in which Viceroy Mountbatten had

---

5 Midnight in India would be 8pm in England, and earlier the farther west one goes; and so, contrary to what the speech implies, the world was not asleep when India awoke, as an insomniac, at midnight to its freedom.
conducted the administrative proceedings (Collins and Lapierre 159). Among the leaders who collaborated on the plan, none were happy. Mountbatten spoke first, as an outsider, addressing Indians on “All India Radio” on June 3, 1947 that the country would be partitioned. Nehru, who had been against partition, followed and stated in Hindi, “It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you” (Collins and Lapierre 162). Jinnah, who, while happy he had secured a separate state for Muslims, had been anxious about the proceedings, spoke last in English and had to be translated into Urdu.6

The Mountbatten Plan left the decision to join India or Pakistan to the Indian people and left the demarcation of the borders to the Boundary Commission, whose chairman was Sir Cyril Radcliffe (Collins and Lapierre 180). The date of independence was chosen on the spur of the moment by Lord Mountbatten at a press conference. He made the decision that “the final Transfer of Power to Indian hands [would] take place on 15 August 1947” based on quick calculations about parliament’s summer recess back in London and personal significance of the date (Collins and Lapierre 165).7,8,9 On July 18, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act, which outlined the administrative details of Independence and Partition.

The Radcliffe Line, which drew “a line through the homelands of 88 million human beings” and divided Bengal and Punjab, was not published until two days after India was given

---

6 Interestingly enough, as the founder of Pakistan, Jinnah a year later stated in a speech in English that Urdu should be the official language of Pakistan. The disconnect between the people and their leaders is hard to ignore.
7 Mountbatten admitted that “it was a date linked in his memory to the most triumphant hours of his own existence” (Collins and Lapierre 165).
8 The date was deemed inauspicious by many Indian astrologers. Sundays and Fridays were inauspicious, and the star charts indicated that Friday, August 15, 1947 would be “cursed by the stars” (167).
9 Pakistan became its own country a day earlier on August 14, 1947.
its independence (Collins and Lapierre 180). Leaders from the would-be countries had agreed with Mountbatten that they would not contest the borders; as a result, the two nations came into existence as political entities without defined borders and existed without formal boundaries until August 17, 1947 (three days since Pakistan had come into existence, and two days since India gained its independence). The Dominion of Pakistan was made of two non-contiguous parts on the west and east side of India.

The Radcliffe Line divided the state of Punjab into two, the western half for Pakistan and the eastern half for India. Punjab and Sikhs had posed a special problem for the British all along. Sikh leadership had demanded a separate country (Khalistan) for Sikhs. However, Sikhs were scattered all over Punjab and no where were they the majority. Additionally, neither Hindus nor Muslims would have agreed to live in a Sikh nation-state. While Muslims were the majority in Punjab, there was no way that Punjab, a state known for its resources and now known as the bread basket of India, in its entirety could be given to Pakistan (von Tunzelmann 218). The border was thus created to “fairly”—if not equitably—divide the land and resources, leaving roughly five million Muslims and Hindus/Sikhs each on the wrong side of each border. Amritsar was given to India and Lahore to Pakistan. In fact, many cities in Indian Punjab, Jalandhar included, had a Muslim majority, and the inverse was true of a number of Pakistani Punjabi cities and villages. As a result, estimates of over ten million people migrated from one country to the

---

10 Kashmir was not taken into consideration by the Radcliffe Line and remains a source of intermittent hostilities and wars (1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999) between the two countries. Additionally, at the time of independence, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Indore, Kalath and Junagadh had not acceded to either country.

11 The Dominion of Pakistan was eventually partitioned again into The Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People’s Republic of Bangladesh in 1971.

12 There were sixteen million Muslims in Punjab in comparison to eight million Hindus and four million Sikhs.
other in one of the fastest and largest migrations in human history (Bharadwaj 39).\textsuperscript{13} Estimates of those who died range from 200,000 to two million, with most historians’ and censuses’ approximations ranging from half a million to a million (von Tunzelmann 228).

The violence of partition was believed to be nothing that the British had ever seen before. Punjab suffered partition the most; its landscape was littered with blood and corpses. Collins and Lapierre eloquently describe the scene:

> It was not a war, not a civil war, not a guerrilla campaign. It was a convulsion, the sudden, shattering collapse of a society. One act provoked another, one horror fed another, each slaughter begot its successor, each rumor its imitator, each atrocity its counterpart, until, like slow-motion images of a building disintegrating under the impact of an explosion, the walls of Punjab society crumbed upon each other. (284).

Collins and Lapierre, though often rightly criticized for their obvious bias and prejudice, spare no one in their descriptions of personal detailed accounts of the survivors and victims (one and the same) of partition. Among many senseless and horrific atrocities, there was organized ransacking and setting fire to Hindu homes in Lahore (285); killing of Muslims riding through streets in Amritsar (286); the cutting of Muslim women’s breasts (290); and raping and/or abducting of women from every group. The most vulnerable and horrific scene of violence, however, was the train.

\textsuperscript{13} In a detailed article, Prashant Bharadwaj (Yale University), Asim Khwaja (Harvard University), and Atif Mian (Chicago University), estimate that there were “inflows of 14.5 million and outflows of 17.9 million, implying 3.4 million “missing” people” (39). See Works Cited.
In order to migrate from one country to the other and to escape the violence that had erupted in villages and cities, millions of Punjabis turned to the train as their last resort. What they had hoped would be a safe haven and would take them to their new, safe home, the train, a symbol of modernization, instead became, as Collins and Lapierre describe, a “rolling coffin” (298). Trains would roll into stations in the dead of night, full of dead or wounded passengers. Rather than detail the various occasions on which trains, full of refugees, leaving one country for the other, were attacked, I defer to Collins and Lapierre once again to summarize the sheer horror that took place on these trains:

…those train-loads of wretched refugees became the prime targets of assault on both sides of the border. They were ambushed while they stood in stations or in the open country. Tracks were torn up to derail them in from of waiting hordes of assailants. Accomplices smuggled into their compartments forced tem to stop at pre-chosen sites by pulling on the emergency cord. Engineers were bribed or cowed into delivering their passengers into an ambush…There were periods of four and five days at a stretch during which not a singled train reached Lahore or Amritsar without its complement of dead and wounded…[one] train-load of dead and wounded rolled into the railroad station […and] blood seeped out form under the doors of each of its silent compartments. (300).

There was no one group to blame;14 victims and murderers were Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu. Not until three weeks later did the leaders of India, with the assistance of Lord

---

14 There has been a tendency amongst historians to blame Lord Mountbatten for the violence and chaos of partition. However, as von Tunzelmann points out, he is no more at fault than the other leaders for the disorganized way in
Mountbatten, act. It would take months for the violence to end and years for the scars to form, and as of today, the wounds have still not healed.

Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* uses this history as the backdrop of a fictional account of one village’s experience during the summer of 1947. Mano Majra, a fictional Punjabi village, sits on the border of Pakistan and India, near the Sutlej river and an important train station. For as long as the villagers can remember, Sikhs and Muslims, along with one Hindu family, have co-existed peacefully. However, after two trains roll into the train station full of dead bodies, fear grips Mano Majra. The head constable visits and declares that all the Muslims in Mano Majra must evacuate to a refugee camp before being sent to Pakistan. After the Muslims leave for the camp, an outside group of young Sikh men visit Mano Majra and ask for volunteers to help slaughter the Muslims, including those from Mano Majra, on the next train to Pakistan.

Caught within this historical moment are various characters; however, I will be primarily focusing on two: Juggut Singh or Jugga, a young Sikh village ruffian, and Iqbal, a European-educated communist who comes to Mano Majra and whose religion is never determined (though descriptions suggest and the villagers assume he is most likely Muslim). Both Jugga and Iqbal are wrongly implicated in the murder of the Hindu moneylender. During the night of the murder, days before the bloody trains came to Mano Majra, Jugga had been with Nooran, his Muslim lover, and Iqbal had not even arrived at Mano Majra. Right before the end of the story, they both are released from jail.

which partition occurred and by which the bloodbath ensued (217). I offer no historical hypotheses of guilt or on the causes of the violence of partition.
Singh’s novel serves as an ideal landscape on which to survey the terrain of partition with regards to post-colonial national elites, nationalism, and individual subjectivity since all these themes and groups figure prominently in the story. The colonialist, as a character, is never present in the novel; and while the story starts post-partition, under the guise of a fresh start, the colonialist’s presence is felt throughout the novel in the manners of the native elite, in the perspectives of the lower classes, and ultimately, in the ending of the novel. Because there is no one character to personify the colonialist or the political players of partition, the story is ripe for analysis of the subjective ramifications of colonialism and partition.

*Train to Pakistan*, published in 1956, entered the world literary arena when post-colonialism was not only a political reality, but also, as a result, an intellectual seedling. The 1947 Partition of India was one of many movements of the reconsolidation of relationships in and with population, territory, and power. The drawing of borders, the independence versus liberation of oppressed peoples, and the ability to discern analytical narratives of the modern nation-state all find their intelligible roots at this particular historical moment.

**The Subject of a Post-Partition State**

While the reasons for dividing the territory are nuanced, it is widely understood that India was divided in order to create peace between the minority Indian Muslims and the majority Hindu population. Joe Cleary in *Literature, Partition and the Nation State* engages with Benedict Anderson’s explanation of post-colonial nationalism in *Imagined Communities* to criticize it for not fully struggling with the role subaltern groups play in the creation of a national identity. Cleary’s and Anderson’s projects are sufficiently different that one can perhaps excuse the latter
for falling short of Cleary’s eventual theorization of partition (I will return to Anderson in the next chapter). Cleary, however, admonishes the over-whelming advocacy of this “best-worst” solution of “violent ethnic conflict partition represent[ing] the only humane means of interventions available since its aim is to spate the conflicting groups into ethnically homogeneous states” (20). He explains that the ethno-nationalist reasoning underplays the imperial power’s role in partitioning, does not seek to explain international power politics effect on domestic relations between groups, ignores non-ethnic (ideological) divides within the population, and falsely masks the nationalist nature of the argument (25-28). The counterfactual cannot, however, be proved. One may never know whether these groups could peacefully coexist or whether partition could have happened peacefully. Violence was a cornerstone of partition.

The examination on the nature of this violence through Frantz Fanon and Walter Benjamin necessitates first an understanding of the biopolitical body’s subject who died during partition and the exploration of contemporary analytical narratives on biopolitics through the work of Giorgio Agamben, which uses Michel Foucault’s analysis in *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* as its foundation from and on which it sometimes deviates or further expatiates. Here I pay particular attention to the way in which way Agamben treats language and

---

15 The parsing of reasons for partitioning, the theorization of national identity, and the historical facts surrounding the transfer of populations aside, the effects of partition on individual subjectivity are raised by neither Cleary nor Anderson. Building from Cleary’s work on post-partition national identities and Anderson’s explanation of the process by which post-colonial nationalism makes itself coherent, I hope to propose in the remainder of this chapter the way in which the individual is altered politically by partition. This will help to elucidate on the circumstantial contingency of partition and the synecdochical nature of split subjectivity in partition in the last chapter.
the role it plays in the creation of a political body, and the subject and object of such. This will ultimately nuance and bridge the argument between nationalism and individual subjectivity.

Biopower, as theorized by Michel Foucault, was indispensable to the development of capitalism as seen in the 18th century. Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality* that “Biological existence was reflected in political existence […] Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subject over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings […] it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body” (142). Previously, Foucault in a lecture had stated that modernity marked the shift, and not transition, from management of a territory to management of a population. The latter, without which, production and consumption of capital would not be possible (Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 365). Colonialism was an extension of this change.

India, as Joe Cleary points out, was a colony of exploitation, not settlement (5). The rule of the people, then, was a necessary step in the reaping of goods. It would be simpler to argue that the rule over the natives was not only a means to an end, but India not being a settlement colony complicates the argument. Not just production, it is politics. However, I point to the institutions that Britain created, and the extension of its own juridical and political systems that to this day exist in India.

The same biopolitics is at stake post-partition. This time, however, the post-colonial nation-state is the sovereign. Agamben’s exposition on modern biopolitics relies on the distinction he makes between the Greek words for life: *zoe* (bare life, the biological fact of living) and *bios* (contemplative life, that which distinguishes humans from animals). While most modern theorists would agree that the State makes man into its object, they fall short of
Agamben’s inquiry into biopolitics by considering only contemplative life as the object of the state. Agamben, however, further asserts that man in modernity becomes no longer just the object, but also the subject of politics, now biopolitics. This slow convergence of these two opposing processes makes bare life, not the traditionally accepted contemplative life, the biopolitical body of humanity.

To understand this process, we must begin with the paradox of sovereignty, which “consists in the fact that the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order” because he who makes the law must be outside of the law in order to make it (15). He is the exception. Agamben further clarifies that the structure of sovereignty is a relation of exception and also a relation of ban. A ban, denoting both an exclusion from a community and a sovereign’s insignia, places a subject “on the threshold in which life and law…become indistinguishable” (28). This abandonment is not a negation of law; instead it serves as a confirmation of it by its very suspension.

By excluding bare life from the political order and as a result, by capturing it within the political order, “bare life…becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it” (9). Agamben shows through the concept of *homo sacer* that bare life, in the form of an example, is included in politics through its exclusion.

*Homo sacer* designates a man who can be killed (without it being considered homicide) but not sacrificed, and as a result “is situated …outside both human and divine law” (73):

Once brought back to his proper place beyond both penal law and sacrifice, *homo sacer* presents the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and
preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted… The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life—that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed—is the life that has been captured in this sphere…and in this sense, the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty. (83)

It is life that is able to die, or bare life, that is the object and eventually the subject of the political sphere. Man entered the political realm “with an unconditional subjection to a power of death, as if life were able to enter the city only in the double exception of being capable of being killed and yet not sacrificed” (90). As such, *homo sacer* is similar to the law in that “the law, in the sovereign exception, applies to the exception case in no longer applying” (82).

Agamben’s illustration of the inclusive exclusion is a structuralist demonstration of the role of language (that is, Sassurean *langue*). The way in which “language as the pure potentiality to signify, withdrawing itself from every concrete instance of speech, divides the linguistic from the nonlinguistic and allows for the opening of areas of meaningful speech,” so too the sovereign “opens the space” for rules (21). He further describes language as “the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside of language and that language is always beyond itself” (21).

Having created this space for the sacred life, sovereignty subjectifies bare life (even though it pre-dates the State). In this space of indistinction, sacred life is “neither political *bios* nor natural *zoe*, [it is rather] the zone of indistinction in which *zoe* and *bios* constitute each other
in including and excluding each other” (90). The sovereign tie, the most originary of ties, is in fact an untying of bios and zoe that then creates bare life as its own subject

Here we see Agamben bring to fruition his earlier claim that “the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power. It can even be said that production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (6). Sovereignty, through a complete subjectivization of the object, creates space for bare life.

After having gained independence, post-partition, bare life, the subject and object of biopolitics, is who died in the violence necessitated by decolonization. Frantz Fanon first argues in *The Wretched of the Earth* that violence serves as a means of liberation in the decolonization process and then differentiates liberation from independence, which is granted by the colonialist to the subjugated. With being granted independence, rather than winning liberation, “it is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject” (2). Because decolonization comes part and parcel with globalization, leaving behind national elites who are educated in the colonizer’s language, system, and values, there is a danger that it eliminates “heterogeneity, by unifying it on the ground of nation and sometimes race” (10). The only way then to assert a national identity for the subjugated classes is through violence. For Fanon, then, subaltern agency is claimed in violence (as opposed to in silence on which I elaborate more in the final chapter).

Was the violence of partition, like the violence of liberation, one of claiming agency by a biopolitical body within a sovereign state? No, it was clearly not. The violence of partition overlaps with the violence of independence in many obvious ways. However, the violence of the latter is necessitated by the desire for liberation, whereas the violence of the former is founded
on a newborn nation’s survival instincts. I do not want to posit a hierarchy of post-colonial violence; suffice it to say that independence, liberation, and partition are all inter-connected.

To understand what kind of violence Fanon describes, I turn to Walter Benjamin. Benjamin, in his “Critique of Violence,” analyzes the various means and ends of violence. Benjamin explores the privileged place strikes have in modern law when another entity has “the right to use force in attaining certain ends” in order to alter legal conditions (Benjamin 282).

However, the law has a fundamental interest in a monopoly of violence, not for the preservation of legal ends, but more essentially for the preservation of law itself (281). Benjamin explains that militarism is the use of violence for the state’s ends and as such is one of two forms: lawmaking violence occurs by natural means and for natural ends, that is “whenever external powers force [the state] to concede them the right to conduct warfare” (284); and law-preserving violence “consists in the use of violence as a means of legal ends” to sustain the law which has already been made (284). While it may seem that lawmaking violence, without historical precedence, is the more threatening of the two forms, Benjamin argues that it is rather law-preserving violence that is more threatening.16

The state relies on the military use of violence for both lawmaking and law-preserving purposes in a “dialectical rising and falling” (300). However this dialectic is both enabled and undermined by the fact that “all law-preserving violence, in its duration, indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence represented by it, through the suppression of hostile counter-violence” (300), undermining its credibility as law.

---

16 Agamben ultimately agrees on this point as well (64).
While Benjamin sees the two forms of violence as parts of a dialectic, Agamben writes in *Homo Sacer* that sovereign violence cannot be reduced to either form. Benjamin envisions a pure violence that is outside the law, which neither makes nor preserves law. The violence of partition seems to be neither a lawmaking nor a law-preserving violence. It may be tempting to posit that the violence of partition or of decolonization, as described by Fanon, is Benjamin’s pure violence, but that too is not the case. The violence is not sovereign; though, perhaps one could view the violence of partition, inflicted by and on the subaltern, as a legitimization for the creation of the two nation-states.

As such, the subject (and object) of the sovereign, biopolitical body—the partitioned state—suffered the violence of partition and died.
CHAPTER TWO: NARRATIVE AND NATIONALISM IN THE POST-PARTITION STATE

There are always at least two histories at stake. One articulated, and the other silent. The silence stands for all that possibly could be, such that no matter what can be—or is ultimately—articulated, there is always an irreducible, infinitely faceted, and largely unknown counterpoint. Similarly, the blank spaces surrounding a text not only make the text intelligible, but also remind a writer and a reader of that which is not written.

A novel, it seems, is an articulation of one silence, and its fictive nature does not undermine its ability to pronounce interpretations of history and reality. Realist fiction, in particular, serves as a playground for the potential significance and possibilities of scientific facts.

This chapter aims to explore the relationship between narrative and nationalism in post-colonial, post-partition India through an examination of Khushwant Singh’s 1956 novel Train to Pakistan, which I argue serves as a narrative account of a historical silence.

PRODUCTIVE FICTION

In The Event of Literature, Terry Eagleton dialogues literary theory and the philosophy of literature to offer up tentative answers to the basic question plaguing (and sometimes ignored by) English departments: what is literature? In the chapter “The Nature of Fiction,” Eagleton expatiates on the various theories posed and opposed in the study of literature, before ultimately creating a genealogy from speech-act theory to a working theory of fiction. If both an act and a word embody its respective meaning, Eagleton offers that “a work of fiction, likewise, consists
of a set of realities which have no existence apart from in its act of enunciation […] Fiction, too, accomplishes its ends simply in the act of saying. What is true in a novel is true simply by virtue of the discursive act itself” (132). Fiction, Eagleton states, is the performative masquerading as the constative (137).

Eagleton compares language and fiction for their circularity and expands on Wittgenstein’s notion that “language neither corresponds to nor constitutes reality. Instead, it provides us with the criteria for determining what kinds of things there are and how we are to speak of them” (I will expand on the circularity of language in the following chapter) (156). The “reality” that fiction presents is by definition both constituted by language and also responsive to it. The determination of truth is a matter of what language allows one to establish; language, however, is a reflection (and I use the word here crudely) of actions (158). This parallels the dependence constative statements have on the performative, while still allowing for a great interdependence and circularity. Additionally, like language, fiction, especially realist fiction, has guidelines for intelligibility and determination.

Eagleton rejects the premise that language is limiting and instead views language as a tool. Borrowing from Umberto Eco, Eagleton writes, “Bodies and languages are ways of being in the midst of things, rather than obstacles which shut us out from them. It is by being on the ‘inside’ of a body or language, not by over-leaping them as so many barriers, that we can encounter one another and intervene in what is misleadingly known as the outside world” (143). The utility and potential productivity of language is thus replicated in fiction. If reality is subjective, then fiction allows for the dropping of the veil.
The enigmas generated by fiction do not stop there. Indeed, another “paradox of fiction is that it refers to reality in the act of referring to itself” (138); however, this does not divorce fiction, not in the least that which resonates, from reality. Fiction, like language and individuals, is a product of history and society. This is not to say that a piece of literature is an inevitable articulation or product of a moment of history; instead, authors utilize history, language, institutions, etc. to create a fiction that stands simultaneously within a set of circumstances and also potentially transcendent of them. Determinants or scientific facts-as-truth are seen not as boundaries (which they may very well be), but rather as tools for self-determination.

In his most comforting sentiment, Eagleton remarks that “freedom is not a question of being bereft of determinants but of making them one’s own, turning them into the ground of one’s self-constitution” (140). This echo of Heideggerean authenticity creates room for fiction as a credible, authentic self-creation of reality, regardless of its facticity. In this sense, reality serves as a tool for fiction to articulate a silence through language.

The background of realist fiction is reality (and/or history); this gives a novel its saliency and the ability to posit an otherwise limited perspective. Although realist fiction is contingent on the background or reality from which it stems, it attains a sort of universality by acknowledging this and making this perspective, previously a silence, accessible to a reader. Eagleton summarizes and awards fiction its coveted place by stating:

17 Because in-the-world “the self of everyday Dasein is a one’s self…As a one’s-self, the particular Dasein has been dispersed into the “Anyone,” and must first find itself,” it follows that the Anyone, the normative world, is so powerful we are given to ourselves through Dasein (as world) not as authentic Self but can only be given as Anyone-self (Heidegger 167). To take oneself from the world (as opposed to be given oneself by the world) as oneself gestures then to authenticity.
In reading realist fiction, we are able as in some controlled experiment to grasp the meaning of what is said against a background of experience and activity – a background which for Wittgenstein himself is in real life so complex, implicit and untotallisable as to be ‘inexpressible […] but to which fiction can lend some more determinate shape. (160)

To be fair, being able to entertain an idea or a narrative does not lend it legitimacy as real; regardless, this interplay between fathoming something and the question of its existence allows fiction to be a fruitful landscape for theory and, if nurtured, secular criticism. Because reality is not necessarily objective, fiction—realist fiction, to maintain a semblance of credibility—serves as the other side of the coin. Eagleton asserts that there is no clear distinction between pretense and reality, and that “to pretend, after all, is to do something for real” (124). Like Nicolas Wolterstorff, Eagleton posits that fiction does not necessarily pretend but rather presents. A realistic story of a village on the border of the newly-created nation states of India and Pakistan in the late summer of 1947 perhaps better illustrates the consequences of partition on the ground than a macrocosmic, factual historical account would.

In a realist novel, something can be fictional, but also plausibly true. This possibility is what gives fiction its abundant productivity: “If [realist fiction] gives us images of the rough ground of everyday existence its messiness and indeterminacy, it also eradicates the friction between word and world” (161). In no place is the constitutive nature of language more obvious and more productive in discovering narratives and in acknowledging silences. Or as Eagleton concisely states, “Fiction is testimony to the fact that the world does not force us to depict it a single way, which is not to say that we can depict it in any old way” (165). As I will illustrate in
the next section, the scene of partition, then, is fictively depicted—convincingly and productively—as reality in *Train to Pakistan*.

**CONTINGENT NARRATIVES**

What then makes Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* a salient articulation of the trauma of partition is the background it utilizes to communicate a silence. The strength of Singh’s novel is that Singh—like Joseph Conrad—does not aim to speak for both a history and its counterpoint, but rather lends voice to one particular history without crowding out other possible histories and identities, and this narrative strategy allows the reader to interrogate the remaining silences. The history that Singh invokes in his novel is, like any, a complex one and is tied to the division of a physical territory and the re-appropriation (or misappropriation) of populations.

In this section, I am interested in investigating the productivity of Singh’s text through the lens of imperialism as expatiated on by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. While Singh’s novel is set at the moment of independence, the legacy of imperialism undoubtedly lives on. Additionally, Said’s careful examination of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* sheds light on how Singh’s novel is a productive work of fiction.

To start, Said differentiates imperialism and colonialism. He defines imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory,” and defines colonialism, a consequence of imperialism, as “the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (Said 9). Imperialism, then, is not an amassing of land, but rather a relationship of power underpinned by the ideological belief of superiority over another people.
This belief of superiority is cultural, economic, religious, political, etc. and as a result, culture is always already involved in empire building. I am not interested here in positing a clear causal chain of imperialism as it is certainly a complicated and admittedly important one to understand. Rather, given the connections Said posits between culture and imperialism, what can be said about the role culture plays in a post-colonial, partitioned state?

Said ties human history to the earth, and while this Vician understanding does continue to hold its credibility, I will ultimately attempt to progress the argument and link it to the role territory plays on the psyche and in turn, on the subjective understanding of identity in the next chapter. For the meantime, suffice it to say that culture, including narratives, fictional or otherwise, serves as a tool for the colonized and post-colonized people to assert their identities, and ultimately their nationalism. Empire-building, rather than a simple acquisition and accumulation of territory or subjugation of one people by another (9), is a synthetic and dynamic relationship in which both the colonizer and colonized are not only implicit but also complicit. This, of course, is not to say those who were ruled over were at fault for their passivity. Clearly the time for the acceptance of such a tidy explanation has passed. Not only does a post-structuralist study require more nuance but contemporary society, despite the 24-hour news cycle (or perhaps because of its incessant chatter) must demand a less blanketed understanding of political events.

Said turns to English literature at the moment of England’s imperial movement to illustrate the way in which “cultural forms and structures of feeling” of domination permeate the colonialist culture at its core (14). To borrow from Said’s analysis of Dickens, I would like here to posit—or, if I may, claim—that the way in which Singh conveys the ignorance of the villagers
and endows one of the characters with agency through martyrdom is dependent on the very same “tried and true discourse of imperialism” (14). The obvious difference between the two writers is the physical location of their subjectivities. Dickens, an English writer, represents the discourse of the colonizer, while Singh, writing in English in India, was a post-colonialist writer. However, both are products of the culture within which they exist.

The comparison to Dickens aside, Said’s engagement with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* seems acutely fruitful in elucidating the salience of Singh’s novel. Said proffers Conrad as an exemplary author of his circumstances, because of Conrad’s obvious self-consciousness in his writing and his awareness of his characters’ historical contingency (24). Marlow’s journey into the heart of darkness does not seek to represent a universal experience of imperialism; rather, as Said argues, Conrad’s narrative techniques and prose seek only to affirm that:

> like narrative, imperialism has monopolized the entire system of representation—which in the case of *Heart of Darkness* allowed it to speak for Africans as well as for Kurtz and the other adventurers, including Marlow and his audience—[his] self-consciousness as an outsider can allow [him] to actively comprehend how the machine works. (25)

The likeness between Conrad and Singh, however, is problematic when it comes to this “ironic distance” each has within and with respect to their stories (25). Conrad, a Polish expatriate, can be pitted against Singh, the native elite. Singh, with his education and mobilization of the English language, would also place him squarely within Deleuze’s and Guattari’s *minor literature*; however, whereas Singh is undoubtedly a product of the system

---

18 In Chapter 3, I discuss why Jugga’s martyrdom at the end of the story is a product of imperialism and the only way in which he could assert his agency.
within which he writes and within which his characters act, Conrad has adopted (has been
adopted into) the imperial system and “business of empire” (23). Conrad’s ironic distance allows
him to convey Marlow’s contingency and authority as a white male narrator within the
imperialist setting. Alternatives outside the contingent, historical landscape are, as Said writes,
unthinkable, and “the circularity, the perfect closer of the whole thing is not only aesthetically
but also mentally unassailable” (24).

Similar to Conrad’s depiction of Marlow’s journey, Singh’s Mano Majra is not offered to
the reader as a microcosmic representation of the imperial world, but rather as a fictional account
of its legacy with a contained yet contingent plot. Singh can lend the novel a position on
imperialism without commenting directly on it by lending its aesthetics and politics an imperial
background (Said 24). The characters are local to the historical moment and do not unravel with
an awareness of future historical moments. Singh can and perhaps does achieve this with a
Conrad-like self-conscious awareness. The painstaking effort necessary to set such a contingent
and realistic historical stage makes the fact that Heart of Darkness and Train to Pakistan are both
short novels not an insignificant coincidence.

Said conjectures that the efficacy of Conrad’s novel is that he did not (because he could
not) utilize Marlow “to present anything other than an imperialist world-view” (24). Similarly,
Singh did not mobilize a grand narrative in which the Sikh protagonist saves Mano Majra’s

19 Singh’s depiction of village life is an example of the use of reality as determinants to constitute the story, rather
than to constrain the story. On a personal note, while I will continue to assert that the events of the story and Mano
Majra itself are not necessarily [only] symbolic or representative of a greater historical experience, I am compelled
to admit that I experienced the eerily similar daily occurrences depicted in the beginning of Train to Pakistan during
a short trip to Chandigarh (the capital of Indian Punjab and Haryana) while writing this thesis. Bordering
Chandigarh is an old village, Mani Majra, and early in the mornings, one can wake to hear the orphan dogs barking,
the morning trains pass by Mani Majra (as opposed to the novel’s Mano Majra), the local mosque’s call to prayer,
and then the Sikh temple’s morning hymns, before the day begins. All these events are depicted in the beginning of
the story and revisited throughout the story to convey what a normal day is like in the fictitious border town.
Muslims and goes on to marry his Muslim lover. Instead, the novel’s poignancy and narrative authority stem from Singh’s mobilization of realistic tools available to the characters. Not only are the characters made to exist within a contained, contingent landscape, Singh, as Eagleton would likely commend, employs the determinants of the historical reality to fashion a self-constituting fiction. Like Conrad’s Marlow, Singh’s Jugga and Iqbal cannot utilize more than the attitudes and incomplete knowledge, by which they are informed. Conrad did not attempt to salvage imperialism and Singh seemingly does not attempt to rescue the consequences of partition.

As a piece of realist fiction, *Train to Pakistan* exemplifies what Eagleton describes as utilizing determinants of a historical reality. The self-consciousness for which Said lauds Conrad is ultimately the same notion to which Eagleton refers to freedom positively as self-determination (as opposed to negatively as a lack of constraints). The novel maintains its secularity and its freedom by not parading itself as a microcosm of imperialism or partition, which would ultimately make the story a slave to reality: instead, Singh’s Mano Majra neither overstates nor ignores its complex context by serving only as a slice of historical experience.

Having established the value of the narrative, I want to poise this argument for an engagement with the creation of nationalism in the next section. The novel’s legacy and induction into a national identity have allowed the silences to which the story gestures to be included and perhaps excavated in the greater narrative of nationalism.20

---

20 Indeed the novel has become a part of Indian national identity, and in some ways, has been appropriated by the nation as its own. In a letter written on March 29, 2012 to me, Khushwant Singh lamented that while new editions of *Train to Pakistan* continue being released, he sees none of the royalties.
NATIONALISM AS NARRATIVE

Having outlined the realignment of sovereign focus from a management of territory to a management of population and the implications deterritorialization has for post-colonial nation-states in the previous chapter, I would like to shift my attention to the creation of national identities, by continuing to engage with Benedict Anderson and by dialoging *Imagined Communities* with Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large*. While the previous chapter discussed the historical stage for the creation of a post-colonial collective identity, this next section aims to elaborate on the theoretical landscape of nationalism as narrative.

The post-colonial nation develops its identity much in the same way Anderson describes in *Imagined Communities*. He describes a nation as “an imagined political community […] as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). The nation is imagined because the citizenry never know each other and instead buys into their collective identity based on the limits (or borders) of the nation. As a descendant of the Enlightenment, a nation is sovereign in the sense that it is free to be pluralistic as a sovereign state, no longer bound to one religion. A nation is a community because it is “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Despite it being an *imagined* community, national identity works in a very real way even if its existence is fictive. Nationalism is the narrative of an imagined geography, with all the positive and negative connotations that are implied and may apply. Anderson views the national form as a psychic collective that trickles down to the individual; this understanding, as I have elaborated on in the first chapter, has its opponents who believe Anderson does not give enough agency to the subaltern national groups.

Before print-media and print-capitalism, the national form finds its cultural roots in the religious community and the dynastic realm. The two most fruitful topics vis-à-vis post-colonial
states from Anderson’s exposition on the genealogy of the nation-state are one) language’s role in shaping a collective identity, and two) secular continuity.

The role language and how it is understood plays in the rise of nationalism, regardless of location. Language in the religious community, Anderson argues, was not a proxy for the signified: “in effect, ontological reality is apprehensible only through a single, privileged system of re-presentation: the truth-language” (14). Imagined communities do not just grow out of and replace religious ones or dynastic ones; behind the decline of sacred communities, there was a change in the understanding of language that allowed it to be possible to conceptualize “nation.” Anderson also points to the changes in Latin and the creation of an administrative vernacular not as ideological tool for national identities, but for having laid the groundwork for the articulation of such (37).

The bifurcation of Hindi and Urdu (with the latter serving as the courtly language and the former as the vernacular) and the codification of Hindu Law by the British also laid the groundwork for the national identities India and Pakistan would later take on and cultivate.21 This formation of a collective identity was seen in the educational systems, which the British used to educate native elites. Anderson cites Thomas Babington Macaulay, president of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1834 in Bengal, to explain that “a thoroughly English education system was to be introduced which […] would create ‘a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect’” (91).

As a result, an Indian collective identity, post-partition, was and would necessarily always already have been permutated and permeated by an English education and imperial

---

21 See Chapter 3 discussion of Spivak.
agenda. Indeed, Anderson revises his initial thesis that nationalism in colonized states was
directly modeled “on the dynastic states of nineteenth-century Europe” to account for the relative
stability that the national elites—educated as they were within the colonial power’s system—lent
the decolonization period. By listing the census, the map, and the museum as inherited
nationalist tools and the administrative embodiment of language, Anderson states:

the immediate genealogy should be traced to the imaginings of the colonial state.

At first sight, this conclusion may seem surprising, since colonial states were
typical anti-nationalist, and often violently so. But if one looks beneath colonial
ideologies and policies to the grammar in which, form the mid nineteenth century,
they were deployed, the lineage becomes decided more clear. (163) 22

Post-colonial nationalism was administrative in that it inherited its determinants from the
colonial power and “shaped the grammar which would in due course make possible” India and
Indian (185). 23 Language, and its descendant, education, played a significant role in the sense of
parallelism or simultaneity, which allows for a community to think itself a community.

Alongside the role language and its administrative manifestations play in the creation of a
national identity, Anderson explains that nationalism serves as the modern version of coping
with fatality. His exposition on continuity is the second way in which the idea of imagined
communities helps explain post-partition nationalism.

One purpose religion had served (and continues to serve) is the “imaginative response to
the overwhelming burden of human suffering” and death (10). Post-Enlightenment Europe

——

22 In the discussion of violence, Anderson and Fanon can be dialogued (see Chapter 1).
23 Anderson uses South East Asian examples of Burma and Indonesia; however, the same theory, ultimately, applies
to India as well.
required a secular version of salvation, the after-life, reincarnation, original sin, etc. to cope with mortality, and did this by creating a narrative of continuity of a community outside of religion and within the modern nation-state. Anderson writes:

What then was required was a secular transformation into continuity, contingency into meaning […] Few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation. If nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical,’ the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. (11-12).

The nation-state, this imagined community, lent its subjects a sense of continuity, and it is not hard to then fathom the earnest fervor to expand the community. If, in this sense, territorial expansion and population increases were a sign of health and longevity and the anachronistic fear of conquest was akin to national death, then partition surely is an amputation of a collective identity. Anderson explains in his chapter, “Memory and Forgetting” that:

Awareness of being embedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of ‘forgetting’ the experience of this continuity […] engenders the need for a narrative of ‘identity’ […] Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural” (205).

Without a birth and a death, but with a narrative for its identity, a nation transcends the physical human experience of time and lends its people a similar immortality to that which religion offers.

Arjun Appadurai, in *Modernity at Large*, relays his own experience of evolving post-colonial national subjectivities, from the glorification of British performances of culture to the
more recent idealization of American culture (2). While Appadurai’s book focuses on the relationship between post-colonialism and globalization, his work on the imagination and culture is particularly relevant to the post-colonial moment about which Singh writes. Appadurai, similarly to Anderson, writes that “it is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood” (7).

However, because culture is no longer bound to territories in the modern era, and I would argue was not (indeed, could not have been) contained within political borders dividing one culture (but two religions), nation-states are “poorly equipped to deal with the interlinked diasporas of people and images that mark the here and now” (19). Perhaps this serves as one explanation of the ongoing, if somewhat currently tame, hostilities and mistrust between India and Pakistan. Disputed territories between the two nations may serve as a proxy for the contention of a culture, and obviously, its people. I will discuss the consequence this has on individual subjectivity in the next chapter, but here hope to elaborate on the implications it has for a collective.

Based on a Foucauldian interpretation of governmentality, colonies pose a special challenge in the shift from states of territories to states of populations. On one hand, colonies-as-territories are exploited for their physical resources, while on the other, the colonial power governs the colonized as colonies-as-populations.\(^\text{24}\) The drawing of borders creates a situation in which a population is displaced because a territory is respatialized. Whether the territory is imagined or not, this displacement occurs in the material world. Deterritorialization, while a shift

\(^{24}\) Clearly acknowledges that India was a colony of exploitation and not of settlement (5); however, Spivak traces the shift from India being a mercantile colony to an administrative one. These two arguments are not mutually exclusive and in fact, demonstrate how the imperial project was not only about the accumulation of resources, whether goods or labor. See chapter 1.
of priorities from the territorial to the population-as-labor, does not negate the importance of land to the subjects of a community. Partition, not only subjectively, but also collectively, is therefore a form of exile. This theme reappears repeatedly.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is another historical example of the complicated relationship between the psyche and the material world vis-à-vis national territory and individual identity. The treaty ended the Mexican-American war and set the terms of the division of land and the implications for the affected individuals. Article VIII of the treaty allowed those who were Mexican citizens and owned land in what was to be now the United States to retain or sell their land. Those who wished to stay were allowed to become citizens of the United States or maintain their Mexican citizenship. Those who had not within a year “declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans” would automatically become U.S. citizens. On one hand, each Mexican citizen in the United States was given a year to declare his intent before the land in which they lived (that of the US) would govern the citizenship with which they would be endowed, cementing a strong association between territory and identity. On the other hand, those who wished to retain their Mexican citizenship, whilst owning land in the United States, were allowed to “retain the character of Mexicans,” thus divorcing identity and territory, at least in law.

With regards to the partition of India as depicted in the novel, the trains—a material reality traversing the land—that pass by Mano Majra, a border town with an important train station for this very reason, make its people aware of their larger context. The trains bring the news of partition and eventually, the dead bodies crossing the border from each side. Singh,

---

25 See Works Cited.
when first describing life in Mano Majra, distinguishes between the goods trains and the passenger trains. In understanding what has been partitioned—a territory or a people—the existence of both types of trains is essential. If the migration of a people (dead or alive) represents the partitioning of a population, the goods train, whether it continues to run or not, represents the division of resources. What Said describes as colonialism is a crude extension of the governing of territories, while imperialism is an extension of the governing of populations. The role culture, or rather, the exporting of culture, plays in this shift or development (and deployment) of governmentality is not insignificant.

The disruption that partition causes on a collective narrative is different from the rupture that independence creates for a colonial state. The latter, presumably, conserves a territorial border, which according to Anderson is fundamental to the ability to think a community as a nation. There are obvious cases, mostly in the sub-Saharan African continent, where the borders given to newly-created nation-states are more artificial than those returned to a territory that already had a semblance of geographical limits. While it is largely agreed that British colonialism endowed India with its territorial coherence, there was already a logic to the subcontinent’s boundaries before colonization. In fact, if anything, the British did not partition India on racial lines, as South Indians are largely Dravidian, while North Indians and Pakistanis are predominantly Indo-Aryan.

On one end of this spectrum, there is the post-colonial nation that retains its borders from prior to colonization and as a result, can more neatly narrate its colonial past and sovereign present. On the other end of this spectrum, there is the partitioned state, which has to narrate not

---

26 Before the British Raj, India was never an organized collective. Instead, what are now states within the country operated as inter-dependent sovereign territories before colonization.
only its domination by an imperial power, but also the amputation it experienced at independence. The migration of ten million people across the Indo-Pak border at partition further supports the artificial nature of the division. In fact, the migration could be seen instead as a re-settlement of peoples. The religions were not partitioned in place, but were appointed new borders. Shared language and cultural practices were divided on another dimension.

Nationalism—a collective narrative—like realistic fiction utilizes its factual determinants to constitute itself. Given this, the violence of partition is understandable, though by no means condonable. If the physical determinant of the dividing of a territory is religion, the identity of the two factions would logically be informed by that particular dimension, pitting one group against the other, regardless of other shared cultural, ethnic, and racial attributes.

The collective takes on its identity as an imagined community, aware of its territorial borders and its difference from its neighbor. This division, however, is not an organic one, and Singh repeatedly shows how outsiders and outside news instigate violence. At the very beginning of the novel, as Singh is setting the stage for the story, he explains that “the summer before, communal riots, precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, had broken out” (Singh 9). The riots were not a result of an internal dispute in Calcutta, but were motivated by news of a division, which realigned neighbors by religion.

Even within Mano Majra, the Sikhs had offered to protect their Muslim neighbors until the head constable visited and proclaimed the Muslims had to leave. Singh describes that “the head constable’s visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter” (141). It is the head constable’s visit, not internal village feuds or mistrust, that
divides Mano Majrans from each other. A few moments later, the Muslim religious leader, cries out, “What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers” (147). To Mano Majra’s Muslims, Mano Majra is home, even if it is within India’s borders. The nation to which their village and their home belong does not matter to them. And finally, when the plan is hatched to sabotage the train carrying Mano Majra’s Muslims to Pakistan, it is an outside group that comes to Mano Majra and inspires rage within a small group of young Sikh men. Left to their devices and their emotions, it seems that Mano Majrans would not have participated in any plan to kill their neighbors and would have, as they had promised, protected their neighbors’ belongings until they could return.

The events and the attitudes of the villagers from the outrage of the neighboring village’s Hindus to the silence of the Sikhs in Mano Majra, are but one reflection of—indeed are contingent on—the determinants of another fiction, that of a national narrative as bestowed upon and self-constituted at the moment of partition. Singh’s novel and his characters do not offer an answer to the horror of partition. Like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* does not overplay its narrative, and is instead contingent on the historical and political era within which it operates.
CHAPTER THREE: SILENT SUBJECTIVITY AND AGENCY

Imagine having gone to sleep at home one night, only to wake up in the morning to discover that you no longer belong in the place you have referred to as home your entire life. You did not sleep walk in the middle of the night; instead, an outside power has drawn territorial borders that will force you to journey to your nation and away from your home. And so it was for over ten million people in the summer of 1947.

The first chapter of this project described the partitioning of the land, while the second elaborated on the theoretical underpinnings of a partitioned nation’s narrative. In this chapter, I will elaborate on the partitioning of the subject at the moment when its past, its community, and essentially, its subjectivity are severed into one of two nation-states with a new and deliberately constructed collective identity to which the partitioned subject is forced to ascribe.

To start, I will focus on the role of silence and blank space in historical and fictional narratives. From there, I will turn to subjectivity in language, before continuing on to elaborate on the potential lessons from Latino Studies for subaltern studies.

SILENCE IN NARRATIVES

In order to fulfill my undergraduate major requirements at the University of Virginia, I took “Early African History,” which was quite possibly the most challenging—and consequently intellectually productive—course on my undergraduate transcript. Having concentrated in Inter-War Polish history, I quickly learned the importance of various elements of historiography that I had previously taken for granted or of which had been unaware. A relevant history needs to look
beyond events and themes to the individual. Abstractions do not have agency and do not do anything; rather abstractions are created by human agents and serve only as the background in which individuals act and cause an effect. Professor Joseph Miller,27 the instructor for the course, was adamant that the most fundamental method of historiography is establishing a narrative.28

The creation of a historical narrative, however, is plagued with obstacles as narratives inevitably tend to be teleological and the historian writing the narrative looks for the present in the past in a hope to tell a story of continuity so that he ignores “history’s core emphasis on change arising from contingency and complexity” (Miller 7). In some respects, because early African historical studies is a young discipline, it provides the most fertile landscape in which to discover the importance of excavating silences in order to articulate one of infinite histories as opposed to one, Western narrative of the Other. To avoid teleological interpretations, which, while sometimes perfectly legitimate in critical theory (as I was rather unprepared to discover), are not credible by the standards set by modern historiographical practices, one turns then to potentially silenced or silent narratives. In a sentence that has stayed with me since April 2007, Miller eloquently states, “One breathes life back into the gasping body of a world history of triumphal Western modernity—or steadily creeping globalization—only by focusing on the domestic, regional, local histories, and personal biographies of the people who made and continue to make history happen” (16).

27 Joseph C. Miller has been T. Cary Johnson, Jr. Professor of history at the University of Virginia since 1972 and served as the president of the African Studies Association in 2005 and 2006 and as the president of the American Historical Association in 1998.

28 In African historiography, one looks at the narrative, the evidence in all shapes and forms, and finally the thematic interpretation of the past, in a hope to build a coherent reconstruction of the past. However, as this is an English thesis, I will be focusing on the narrative.
Saidian humanism takes the same stance. Both are characterized by their engagement with, rather than a static observation of, their subject. In Humanism and Democratic Criticism, Edward Said attempts to reconstruct humanism with a secular pivot. By studying simultaneously the various perspectives to a story and engaging them contrapuntally, there exists the possibility to reclaim a more coherent understanding. In this way, history, the institutionalized hegemonic collective memory, will no longer be the story of only the victor. Because history is never complete, but rather is always being recontextualized, scholarly studies “will always remain open to changing combinations of sense and signification; every reading and interpretation of a canonical work reanimates it in the present, furnishes an occasion for re-reading, allows the modern and the new to be situated together in a broad historical field whose usefulness is that it shows us history as an agnostic process still being made, rather than finished and settled once and for all” (Said 25). The core of Saidian humanism is the “understand[ing of] human history as a continuous process of self-understanding and self-realization… for everyone” (Said 26). The same can be said about realist fiction.

While not necessarily true, realist historical fiction illustrates various possibilities that are ignored by the history textbook. Establishing the import silences have in the excavation of historical narratives requires an understanding of language both as it constitutes the self and as it relays history as well the other side of the linguistic coin, silence and its physical manifestation, the blank space. Hoping to explain why silences should not be, but still manage to be, ignored, I will introduce a post-structuralist critique—by way of Lacanian and Derridean texts—to demonstrate that the silences and blank spaces are not empty, by deconstructing the mark and the blank space.
History, a story of the past, is a narrative; and narratives, whether written/read, spoken/heard, or understood, are linguistic and relayed in words. At its most basic, a word as a sign is conceived by Saussurean linguistics as an arbitrary union between a signifier (the sound-image) and a signified (the concept) in order to represent a referent (the real-world object). Saussure’s semiology, however, does not elucidate the division between the signifier and the signified, and treats writing as secondary to speech. Traditional linguistics understood writing to function only as the representation of spoken language and conceived language as signs. Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* shows that speech and reading, reliant on arbitrary signs, are other forms of writing, a structure always inhabited by the trace and by absence.

Because meaning is generated by difference, meaning is then not self-contained in the signifier, let alone in the sign. In the introduction to *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Spivak explains that “the sign cannot be taken as a homogeneous unit bridging an origin (referent) and an end (meaning) ... The sign must be studied “under erasure,” always already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such” (Spivak xxxix). To understand any one signifier, one needs an endless array of signifiers such that “Signifier of the signifier” describes … the movement of language: in its origin…whose structure can be expressed as “signifier of the signifier” conceals and erases its own production. There the signified always already functions as a signifier” (Derrida 7).

Because the sign is recontextualized every time it is read, not only within the same sentence but also each time it is used in different contexts, the meaning of a sign, and of language as a result, is never identical to itself. The sign, then, is a structure of difference. A practice in deconstruction shows that a text (and a subject, as I will elaborate in the next section)
deluded into believing it has static meaning, is actually open so that “one consistent reading continually erases itself and invokes its opposite, and so on indefinitely” (Spivak xxxvii). Similar to the psychoanalytical structure of presence to which Freud continually gestures and which I will elaborate on below, “the structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent” (Spivak xvii).

In this never-ending chain of signifiers, one hopes to uncover a transcendental signified, but instead only finds a trace, which:

is not only the disappearance of origin—within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin.(Derrida 61)

Like the difference between the sign and the referent, between the signifier and the signified, “the unheard difference between the appearing and the appearance (between the “world” and “lived experience”) is the condition of all other differences, of all other traces, and it is already a trace” (65).

Differance denotes not only the other implicit in the sign but also postponement contained in reading/writing signs. Derrida suggests that:

the appearing and functioning of difference presupposes an originary synthesis not preceded by any absolute simplicity. Such would be the originary trace.

Without a retention in the minimal unit of temporal experience, without a trace retaining the other as other in the same, no difference would do its work and no meaning would appear…The (pure) trace is difference. (62).
All this is to say that there is no self-contained meaning and there is no signified, because the signified is “originarily and essentially…trace, that is always already in the position of the signifier” (73). A history, a narrative of the past, parades around as a monolithic representation of the past, when, in fact, at its very fundamental level, historical narratives are always necessarily open to reinterpretation.

Because language gives us a structure by which to articulate our existence and our history, there is nothing intelligible before intelligibility or as Derrida states in his later work, *Dissemination*, “There is nothing before the text; there is no pretext that is not already a text” (328). Although the a narrative—an accumulation of marks, spoken or written—are a trace, marks, more so than blank spaces, guarantees nonpresence. The deferral inherent in writing “must be capable of being carried to a certain absoluteness of absence if the structure of writing…is to constitute itself. It is at that point that the differance as writing could no longer (be) an (ontological) modification of presence” (Derrida, *Signature 7*). Differance marks the non-finite temporality of writing, such that:

What will have been written—the past of an anterior future or the future of an anterior past—… is itself neither anterior nor ulterior…. What is in question here is not a thing—a “reality” or “meaning”—that would come to achieve inscription…This non-belonging [of the present]—textuality as such—intervenes…as the very “first” trace. (Derrida, *Dissemination* 329)

A historical narrative, like any sign, is not a fixed event in time, because it marks an unstable collective signer. A signature, being read in another time, is shown to be repeatable and as such, its context (like a subject’s life) “is never absolutely determinable” or a context’s
“determination can never be entirely certain or saturated” (Derrida, *Signature* 3). Every sign, especially those written, presupposes a certain absence, which is “a rupture in presence, the “death” of the possibility of “death” of the receiver inscribed in the structure of the mark” (8). History (narrative of otherwise, if that is even possible as everything intelligible is linguistic), written or spoken, like all language is unstable, and to take it as static, to ignore the silence, provides an unintelligible understanding of subjectivity; and while no understanding of subjectivity or of a narrative can ever be complete in language as I will illustrate below, refusing to recognize the blank space around a text makes any understanding further incomplete.

Having explained how a written mark does not have a stable or a self-contained meaning and is not only a guarantor of having-been present but also of nonpresence, we can turn now to the blank spaces, which are understood also as silences. While silence or blank space on a page can be mistaken for nothingness or a lack of meaning, Jacques Lacan’s explication of psychoanalysis sheds light onto the significance of silence.

Lacan writes in “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis” that “even if it communicates nothing, discourse represents the existence of communication; even if it denies the obvious, it affirms that speech constitutes truth; even if it is destined to deceive, it relies on faith in testimony” (Lacan, *Function and Field* 209). Silence is not nothing and is rather taken “as the whole lyrical development it stands in for” (Lacan 209); and the silence of silenced/silent agents stands for a whole other history. Because a subject creates her narrative “in effect, onto the World, but onto the Word realized in discourse … the meaning that makes this act an act of his history and give it its truth” (215). Even silence is a response and a narrative.
Nationalism as narrative, whether written, spoken, or inherited as knowledge, like all words, is “already a presence made of absence” and limits possibility in a way blank spaces do not (228). Historical narratives privilege writing over silence, presence over absence, even though they are one and the same. However, silence is not empty; instead silence embodies or rather promises the alienated subject that which cannot be articulated in empirical language. Writing presupposes the writer’s nonpresence, while blank spaces and silence leave the question unanswered while still acknowledging the question. *The subject, in order to be a subject, not only requires empirical language but also silence to mark that there is that which is not or cannot be put into language.* Likewise, a narrative is intelligible because it is not fully articulate in the same way that a sentence needs blank spaces in between words to be intelligible. It would of course be foolhardy to privilege silence over speech for this reason, but only as foolhardy as to privilege a traditionally accepted understanding over silence as a way to assert meaning.\(^{29}\)

**Subjectivity as a Narrative**

To bridge my hypothesis on the implications of ignoring silences in historical narratives to my eventual theorization of the partitioned subject, we can examine the word *I* as a placeholder for a subjectivity. The *I* is a formal indicator for the subject that is speaking, but the *I* does not have to be inscribed for there to be a subject present in (and also as we have seen above, absent from) the text. Indeed, all writing presupposes two subjects: a writer and a reader.

Before examining the *I* in psychoanalysis and language as the other, we can follow Derrida’s lead in examining subjectivity in empirical text and speech. The presence of text is

\(^{29}\) Spivak, as I will discuss below, similarly asserts that “part of our ‘unlearning’ project is to articulate that ideological formation—by measuring silences, if necessary—into the object of investigation” (296).
“the pressing solicitude of the interlocutory voice that calls you “you.” Thus invoking the presence of the reader-spectator who attends the spectacle or discourse while it is happening” and is always already happening (Derrida, *Dissemination* 324). The empirical text, as well as language in general (and as a result, ideology and narratives, as I will explain in the next section), by presupposing an audience, creates the writer (even if she is only a reader) before the text has been written and by the text merely existing. In writing (or writing by reading), one becomes a subject.30 The I, whether it indicates the reader or the writer, functions “as a pure passageway for operations of substitutions, is not some singular and irreplaceable existence, some subject or “life”” (325).

The I does not need to be empirically written for it to function linguistically or to assert subjectivity; the I is implicit in language. The I states “itself true instead of stating the truth of the story in progress” and creates the illusion of the subject’s empirical complete presence even though it is a mark that presupposes an absence and is the myth of completeness (Derrida, *Dissemination* 326).

The I functions not just in the paroles of a language, but in the language itself as described by Jacques Lacan. The I is a signifier and “designates the subject insofar as he is currently speaking. That is to say, it designates the enunciating subject, but does not signify him” (Lacan, *Subversion of the Subject* 677). The structuralist split between the signifier and signified “verifies the structure of the subject as a discontinuity in the real” because the signified is in the Imaginary and it is in this bar between the Real and the Imaginary where the subject loses herself through the symbolic (678).

---

30 Althusser, in Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, argues that as subjects, we are born into an ideology (175). I will take up this argument in the next section.
Blank spaces give rise to the possibility of empirical communication and mark by the lack of a mark the existence of a mark in the same way that a signifier is a promise that is always being made but never yet kept for signification. Similar to the signifier’s yet-to-be-kept promise, “the subject’s submission to the signifier...is truly a circle, inasmuch as the assertion that is established it it…refers back only to its own anticipation in the composition of the signifier” (683). Silence, left as silence, is a nod to the loss between the real and the Imaginary. However, as there are infinite silences, one can acknowledge this articulable loss and still excavate silences. A subject, whether barred, bordered, or partitioned, can never not feel alienation because “the squaring of [this signifying] circle is nevertheless impossible, …because the subject constitutes himself only by subtracting himself from it and by decompleting it essentially, such that he must, at one and the same time, count himself here and function only as a lack here” (683).

The loss or alienation that any subject, including a partitioned subject on whom I will further expatiate in the next section, feels is best illustrated in Lacan’s “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in which the split subject enters the Imaginary and sees itself separate from Other in the realm of language. An infant, seeing himself in a mirror, recognizes the simultaneity of his actions and those of the image in the mirror and eventually locates himself in that image. By doing so, “the I is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject” (Lacan, Mirror Stage 76). However, the image in the mirror and the body “is more constitutive than constituted” of the subject (Lacan, Mirror Stage 76). The body and the intelligibility the self
attains through language “symbolizes the I’s mental permanence, at the same time as it
prefigures its alienating destination” because the I, the body, and the image in the mirror are not
all that the subject is (76). However, in becoming the social I, the specular I or this fragmented
body buys into a myth of completeness.

In short, the I is only a placeholder for what constitutes it, because the I is not fully
constitutive of the subject; and the remainder of the subject, which the I does not represent, is
alienated from the subject who has assumed the specular image as his identity. Language, which
gives a subject and narrative intelligibility, also alienates the subject from itself.

While language, as the other which exists before the self, gives the self an intelligible
ego, in doing so it sacrifices that which is not knowable in the structures of language. A subject
is more than “what is experienced “subjectively” by the individual…this truth of his history is
not all contained in his script, and yet the place is marked there in the painful conflicts he
experiences because he knows only his own lines, and even in the pages whose disarray gives
him little comfort” (Lacan, Function and Field 219). To illustrate this, Lacan explains how
language and the unconscious are linked, because unconsciousness can only be studied
phenomenologically in language. The unconscious is embedded in, or rather is, language. Lacan
writes, “the subject’s unconscious is the other’s discourse” and is always already allowing and
limiting the subject’s intelligibility (219).

The very lure of the other and of language is the yet-to-be-kept promise of the signifier of
signification. However, having become alienated from itself by locating its ego elsewhere, the
subject can never be complete not even when it articulates itself. Lacan writes about the subject
and the I that “the point is not to know whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what
I am, but rather to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak” (Lacan, *Instance of the Letter* 430).

Language gives subjects their intelligibility in that subjectivity is conveyed and understood linguistically. Analytically-speaking, “language, with its structure, exists prior to each subject’s entry into it at a certain moment in his mental development,” and certainly one could not imagine an intelligible human before language. (413). Language gives rise to discourse in which man is contextualized. On the face of it, man thus seems to be dependent on language, but he “is still more the slave of a discourse in the universal movement of which his place is already inscribed at his birth, if only in the form of his proper name” (414).

Louis Althusser, in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” extends Lacan’s argument on being born into a language as discourse to ideology. Althusser posits that it is impossible for the subject to escape ideology and its effect, repression. At this point, I am not as interested in the political implications of Althusser’s argument as I am in the consequences this has for subjectivity. Althusser writes, “the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” such that ideology, as it informs language and is informed by it, constitutes a subject (171). For Althusser, there is no temporal dimension to this phenomenon; concrete individuals “are always already subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition” (172).

To illustrate how ideology interpellates individuals as subjects, Althusser points to the moment at which a police officer says “Hey, you there!” and immediately, nine times out of ten, the correct individual turns around. At the moment in which the individual realizes it is she who
is being address, she becomes a subject. However, there is no moment as such during which this happens, because “the existence of ideology and the hailing of interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing” (175). A concrete individual interpellated into a subject is always a subject of ideology, and because ideology is eternal, individuals are always already subjects.

Althusser’s “ideology” can be likened to Foucault’s elaboration on hegemonic truth. Foucault’s elaboration on power in *Power/Knowledge* emphasizes that the discourses of common activity, and indeed common activity itself, are forms of domination. In fact, power cannot be exercised “without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (93). Foucault explains that all power-systems, in their diversity, utilize, give rise to, and are sustained by their respective languages. Foucault accounts for the heterogeneity of power and of truth by stating that each society conceives of their relationship with and the origin of truth differently. However, one constant remains: there is no truth without power; and power is derived from its construction of truth.

Because language gives the world and the self its intelligibility, articulations of such are tainted with the hegemonic truth or, as Althusser states, ideology. Even rebellions against society’s norms are deployed only by the constructs the hegemony allows to be conceived within its language. Foucault, then, can see no possibility for rescuing the self from beyond the linguistic subject; as he so eloquently writes, “It is at the center of the subject’s disappearance that philosophical language proceeds as if through a labyrinth, not to recapture him, but to test
(and through language itself) the extremity of its loss" (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 43).

Because, as Derrida shows us, there is no signified, the self as a subject of the signified is situated in the Lacanian Imaginary, radically ulterior and exterior to the subject of the signifier, and is thrust into an ideology, a national or collective identity, and a historical narrative. Figure One, below, illustrates all that which takes places in subjectivization, the self being made into a subject, and the implications this has for the relationship between national identity and individual subjectivity. Because subjectivization happens in no discernable instance and is not a process, the arrows used in the figure do not imply a temporal dimension or chronology.

*Figure 1: Subjectivization in Relation to the Nation*

Language acts as one of the many border patrols of society (if not the most pervasive one), filtering and limiting what is knowable. The development of knowledge “is not tied to the
constitution and affirmation of a free subject; [rather the production of knowledge] creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence [and] the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge” (163). If, as Foucault proclaims, the philosopher, the time-honored possessor of wisdom, “does not inhabit the whole of his language like a secret and perfectly fluent god” (41-42), then so too any historical narrative does not and cannot convey a whole past.

Simply put, a narrative is crowded with the nonpresence of other narratives. The same way in which the meanings of words etched into stone are reconstituted as the following word of the sentence is inscribed, the signification of each event is reconstituted by all the following events. In fact, not only the meaning, but also the subject at each of these events is reconstituted such that who the subject was yesterday is never who she is today. Although recounting or verbalizing a past event is also a resubjectivization in a new context, the analyst “simply presupposes all the resubjectivizations of the event that seem necessary to him to explain its effects at each turning point at which the subject restructures itself” (Lacan, *Function and Field* 213).

Lacan describes the dependence of subjectivity in language as the other and its temporality in one’s history:

I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object. What is realized in my history is neither the past definite as what was is, since it is no more, nor even the perfect as what has been in what I am, but the future anterior as what I will have been, given what I am in the process of becoming. (247)

An individual’s subjectivity is always already informed by an ideology, by a collective narrative and dream. What does this mean for historical narratives and collective identities? Both
are at unease within the undescribed, indescribable background, the ineffable sentiments of being, not understanding that aural silence does not imply emptiness. The only way forward, then, is a continual, if always incomplete, articulation of subjective silences.

**The Partitioned Subject**

When conceiving of the ideas that I will outline below, I wondered whether to mirror my concept on the border subject and refer to a subject affected by partition as a “partition subject.” However, as a nod to my preliminary educational background in history, I chose to move away from an abstract and instead inch closer to an agent (passive, nonetheless). A “partition subject” conveys a subject of an event, whereas a partitioned subject conveys a subject who is partitioned (along with the land).

In order to show how partition affects subjectivity, I will first borrow from Antonio Viego’s exposition on the border subject in Latino studies. In *Dead Subjects*, Viego laments that ego psychology wrongly assumes a whole or mastered subject for the ethnic-racialized subject, and as a result, covers up a trauma. Ego psychology glosses the history of the traditionally envisioned border subject; it does not necessarily ignore the silence, but rather assumes there is not any silence. Ego psychology’s presupposition of a whole subject arms it with futile “strategies for adjusting and adapting the trouble and conflicted ego to the demands of reality” (3). Viego, instead turns to Lacan, to recast the border subject.

The significance Lacan places on language is one difference between him and ego psychology, and is what Viego chooses to focus on: While ego psychology presupposes a whole
subject who can be rehabilitated, Lacan via Freud argues for a subject that is divided in language—the barred subject.

Viego argues that the assumptions of ego or social psychology are still held in clinical psychology and have a particularly racist implication for the ethnic-racialized subject. Viego quotes Bhabha that “Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy, and daemonic repetition” (10). Viego goes on to say that ego psychology “compels an Imaginary ego politics in ethnic-racialized minoritarian discourses that will not be able to offer a truly transformative vision of justices because instead of a subject, an ego is installed at the center of these politicized discourses” (10). Not only is there no fixed ego that can adapt to reality, Lacan and Viego argue that there is no stable reality to which a subject, let alone an ego, can adapt.

The border subject, based on ego psychology’s understanding of the ego, results in an “undertheorized explanation of loss and trauma at the psychic, political, juridical, and economic levels” for Viego, and I would argue further alienates the subject from the self, when the subject is theorized as whole. As Viego plainly states, ego psychology’s border subject works against a productive therapy, because “the fullness granted and the lack and loss that goes unconsidered work together to deny ethnic-racialized subjects their humanness and their status as subjects of desire” (24).

The overlap between the barred subject and Viego’s border subject is a particularly intriguing locus from where to theorize a partitioned subject. Viego sees the recasting of the Latino studies border subject, one that is living between two or more cultures, integral to a
secular future in which racial labels hold no import. Traditionally, the border subject is one that is bordered by “social, cultural, and historical determinants” and not language (128). Instead, Viego argues that we must:

lace our critical race and ethnicity studies inquiries with a Lacanian theoretical understanding of the Latino subject as a subject of the signifier to understand where the Latino subject resists and where it doesn’t, to understand that language as structure determines the subject but does not exhaust it, which can be read as meaning that the subject resists at the very level of language. (125)

Only in this way can we even begin to understand what the subject is resisting and to theorize what she is losing. I want to make very clear that there is no possibility for the reconciliation for any subject—barred, border, or partitioned—with its self. However, there are ways to mildly mitigate the trauma and articulate the loss and the silence. By understanding the border or partitioned subject as a subject in language, it is only then possible to “read for both the losses that constitute subjectivity as such as well as those losses attributable to the unequal distribution of social and material resources” (129). Viego’s nod to the relationship between the ethnic-racialized subject and power brings to the forefront the age-old fact that nothing and no one escapes power.

In certain regards, the partitioned subject can be defined as opposite to the border subject. While the latter is ethnic-racialized, the former, at least in the Partition of India (specifically north India), describes one race divided into two ethnicities along religious lines. Despite the religious differences, the pre-partition subjects shared a culture and a language. However, post-partition, they have become two difference ethnicities, because if you separate out two identical
organisms, they will mutate differently according to their environment, especially if one environment is more secular than the other.

The question remains to be answered: *why does partitioning of a land affect subjectivity?* I have gestured to the answer in the previous section (see Figure 1), but want to unequivocally theorize here the relationship between the nation and the subject. The following is a simplification of the arguments I have made in this project:

IF, according to Lacan, an individual is made into a subject and alienated from herself; and

IF, according to Althusser, a subject is always already a subject of ideology; and

IF, according to Foucault, hegemonic truth, like ideology, is created and sustained by and also constitutes language; and

IF, according to Anderson, a nation as an imagined community is limited, because it has physical borders; and

IF, according to any linguistic constitutivist, the background into which the subject is thrust is language (as informed by all the arguments above),

THEN it must hold that the partitioning of the land to which one belongs significantly alters the ideology and the national narrative in which her subjectivity is interpellated.

Although the idea of a national identity or nationalism really only exists in the psychic, collective level, the experience of material reality is both informed by and informs subjectivity. While it is the physical land that is partitioned and ideology represents the Lacanian Imaginary and not reality, the violence of partition occurs in the Real and the national identity to which a subject ascribes—not out of choice, but through interpellation—changes; and as a result, another
psychic loss, one that is not yet studied in partition studies, is suffered by the subject. The loss becomes a silence that must be measured.

This theorization of the partitioned subject must necessarily remain descriptive at this point. I am unequipped with the tools beyond those I can borrow from Viego and Spivak to theorize a prescription and an answer. However, by doing a close reading of the ending of Singh’s novel, I hope to show how in realist historical fiction a silence can stand for a narrative. Having shown already the significance, necessity, utility, and possibilities of silence in Chapter Two (in narrative) and the previous section (in subjectivity), I want to turn my attention to the role silence plays in \textit{Train to Pakistan} by engaging with Spivak and her theorization on sati and silence in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

To begin with, I agree with Spivak that both Foucault and Deleuze seem to generalize the Other and present it as a knowable subject, and in doing so, render not only the Other but also themselves as the intellectual knowable, which is highly problematic given the alienation any subject experiences in language. She turns to representation (\textit{vertreten} as proxy) and re-presentation (\textit{darstellen} as portrait), which are wrongly run together in various discourses of the Other such that the grand analytical narratives we study today are based on “the relationship between global capitalism and nation-state alliances [that] is so macrological that it cannot account for the micrological texture of power,” (279) and as I argue, the subjectivity of a partitioned subject.

Spivak discusses subaltern female agency to answer the title question, because “both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no
history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (287). Is there, then, any possibility for subaltern agency?

Spivak eventually comes to the conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak, but this does not mean that the subaltern does not have agency. To expatiate on this, she turns to the Hindu practice of sati (widow sacrifice). The outlawing of sati—making a ritual into a crime—was the first, in the codification of Hindu Law, to transition between the private and public domain within the British imperial governing system (298). This parallels the shift the British make from being “a mercantile and commercial to a territorial and administrative” presence (298). In a detailed account of sati and tatvajnana, she explains that the abolition of sati, based on it being misunderstood as suicide, extorted agency as action from the subaltern. Sati becomes, for Spivak, exemplary of Jean-Francois Lyotard’s term diffrénd, that which is untranslatable from one discourse to another.

Spivak concludes that “between patriarchy and imperialism, a subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (306). She locates the subaltern agency within the silence between the two, opposing sentences: one) “White men are saving brown women from brown men;” and two) “The women actually wanted to die” (296-297). The subaltern woman has no intelligibility for the western intellectual, and as such, her silence becomes critical for understanding the subaltern.

If the subaltern female’s agency is located in silence, in the loss in the translation of sati, and the space between the above-referenced sentences as Spivak argues, then it is clear that
silence too is an agency. Similar to the subaltern female, the protagonist of *Train to Pakistan* claims his agency and asserts his partitioned subjectivity through the ultimate silence and nonpresence: death.

Towards the end of the story, an outside group of young, male Sikhs come into Mano Majra, harassing the villagers for not being true Sikhs by letting their Muslims neighbors leave and not killing them. To exact revenge on the Muslims for the train that arrived from Pakistan with dead Sikh and Hindu bodies, the leader of the group asks for volunteers to help murder the passengers on the next night’s train to Pakistan that includes Mano Majra’s Muslims. A few men eventually agree, despite the village leader protestations that it is wrong to punish those who have done no wrong only because they are of the same religion as those who have.

The next day, Iqbal, the communist educated in Europe, and Jugga, the village troublemaker, are released from jail and sent back to Mano Majra. There, they are separately informed about the plan. The reader is given a detailed account of how Iqbal finds out, but continues to drink from his flask. He thinks, “Wrong triumphs over right as much as right over wrong. Sometimes its triumphs are greater. What happens ultimately, you do not know. In such circumstances what can you do but cultivate an utter indifference to all values? Nothing matters. Nothing whatever…” (197). Iqbal, the educated native elite, then falls asleep. His indifference, his lack of action, and his falling asleep come as close to a lack of agency as is possible. The same cannot be said about Jugga.

While the reader never knows how Jugga learns of the plan to kill the passengers (his mother perhaps tells him), the reader is made aware of Jugga’s unease when that night he goes to
the Sikh temple to speak to the priest (who happened to be the one to share the news with Iqbal). Jugga asks for a prayer, and then leaves.

In the very last scene of the story, the men who are trying to sabotage the train tie a rope across where the train will pass so that the rope will knock off hundreds of people on the top of the train, causing the train to halt and allowing the group to kill the remaining passengers. The moment when the group sees the light from the train, they also notice a man trying to cut the rope. His name is never given; however, he is described as “a big man” who could only be Jugga. Jugga manages to cut the rope, but with no time to spare: the group shoots him and he falls on the tracks. The novel ends with the simple sentence: “The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan” (207).

Jugga, then, is recognized in his final act: saving the train and martyring himself. Knowing that the train was fatally near, Jugga continued to cut the rope; surely he knew he would die. The train, a symbol of partition, is what kills him, not his fellow Indians’ gun shots. In this case, partition kills the partitioned subject. However, his death is not without agency. Death is a silence and a nonpresence; Jugga’s death is martyrdom and serves as the only way in which he can assert his agency and save the Muslims of Mano Majra, his beloved Nooran included.

This example of agency within silence is, of course, an extreme case. Coupled with Spivak’s exposition on sati, it wrongly could be assumed that death, whether suicide, sacrifice,
or martyrdom, is the only way for the subaltern to assert its agency. Quite the contrary; though, the theorization of subaltern agency should be left for another project. Suffice it to say, however, that the silences in narrative, in subjectivity, and in history are rich for discovery. Silences and blank spaces are not empty; rather they too constitute and are constituted by language and ideology. Theorizing the partitioned subject as a subject in language, already alienated from itself, allows one to turn to the loss suffered in this subjective alienation and in the silence experienced in partition. Silence suggests an abundance, nay, infinite possibilities of narrative and subjectivity. Acknowledging silenced and silent subjectivities will help uncover the knowledge, factual or not, we stand to lose to a monolithic understanding of the past.

---

31 Partition studies has made great strides in excavating personal testimonies from the restoration of women who were abducted during partition and of other victims of partition. Subaltern studies, on the other hand, has prioritized silence of the subaltern, and perhaps is, as such, best poised to theorize on partitioned subjectivity.
WORKS CITED


