Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer and Rahul K. Gairola, eds. *Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2016. xxxv+363 pp. ISBN 978-81-250-6412-1.

Although the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 was a cataclysmic event that left millions of people stunned and brutalised, it has taken most historians and literary scholars years to understand the true import of the disruptions that were caused in the lives of ordinary people in South Asia. Because of this, the Partition continues to be written upon, year after year, in creative and critical writings. As recently as October 22, 2017, *The Tribune* (Chandigarh) carried an exhaustive review of three new books on the Partition. The volume under review is yet another commendable effort at unravelling its complexities.

The editors of the volume state in its "Preface" that they put it together because literary scholarship on the subject had "rarely gone beyond a few well known novels, short stories, poems, or films" (ix). In October 2012, they organised a one-day mini-conference in Madison, Wisconsin, to locate the subject's unexplored aspects, sought out scholars across the globe to write on a wide range of topics, and followed it up by reading and editing the essays to fit its design. All this took three years. The result is a volume of high quality scholarly essays that is varied and comprehensive and quite different from the usual run of edited volumes of essays that are often repetitive and of uneven quality.

In their "Introduction," the editors dwell on how the hasty and arbitrary division of the subcontinent by the British led to the "rupturing of shared histories, cultures, and memories between Muslims, on the one hand, and Hindus and Sikhs, on the other" (xvi). These ruptures were so intense and traumatic that they still haunt "South Asian cultures and lives on a daily basis" (xvii). Extending Vazira Zamindar's idea of the "the Long Partition" (xvii), the editors examine the continuing cultural, political, economic and psychological effects of the Partition, beyond 1947, to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the Sikh riots of 1984, the Gujarat violence of 2002, the attack on Indian Parliament in 2001, the Mumbai attack in 2008 and the resurgence of Hindutva within India.

The editors' introduction also provides a synoptic account of the essays, which are organised into five sections, to emphasise their two main features: that they study the partition from varied theoretical perspectives, such as, trauma studies, gender studies, postcolonial studies, ecocritical theory and digital humanities theory, and they dwell on the impact of Partition on hitherto neglected writings and geographical areas. Thus, Singh, Iyer and Gairola establish that the "Partition is not a static event of the past, but an evolving moment in history with a resounding impact on all of contemporary South Asia and its inhabitants" (xxviii). And without being overly didactic, they signal in the direction of much-needed healing and reconciliation.

In the opening essay of Section I, Radhika Mohanram argues that the Partition, though an event of the past, is constantly in negotiation with memory and forgetting, and connected with "nation and cultural memory," "democratic memory" and "bodily memory" (4), particularly for women. Using the notion of the ghost and hauntology from Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, Mohanram unveils the gap between collective national and individual memories, for amidst celebrations of nationhood, loss and pain of individual lives become a part of collective amnesia. Because of this, Partition violence continues to turn into communal violence within a democratic structure. She shows how in *Khamosh Pani* (*Silent Waters*), a Pakistani Punjabi film, a Sikh woman who had converted to Islam after the creation of Pakistan, is constrained to jump into a well in 1979, something she refused to do in 1947. Thus the Partition did not mark a rupture but is a continuum between the past and the present. Jasbir Jain touches upon the complexities of home and homelessness in the context of cultural memories, and extends the meaning of the word "refugee." She uses a wide array of texts – Saadat Hasan Manto's stories, Tahira Iqbal's story "Deshon Mein," Intizar Hussain's "The Unwritten Epic," Attia Hosain's fiction and non-fiction, a poem by Munawar Rana and many more – to show that a search for home is essentially a search for belonging in a culture that was seriously ruptured by Partition, leading both to nostalgia and regret in human lives. Since mainstream histories generally tend to eulogise national leaders and silence individual lives, Parvinder Mehta argues that creative writings provide an alternative space for accommodating them. Mehta acknowledges how Urvashi Butalia has captured these histories through the oral mode, but she highlights the ways in which we experience them in the writings of Rajinder Singh Bedi and Shauna Singh Baldwin, and in the aforementioned film *Silent Waters*.

Rahul K. Gairola shows how digital humanities make us understand that though Coca Cola and Google promote their business by using Partition narratives, they also provide a new insight into the event. The advertisements of their products "capitalize on the trauma of Partition by celebrating a neoliberal millennium in which the products facilitate harmony between India and Pakistan, Hindus and Muslims, Indians and Pakistanis, men and women, and the rich and the poor" (55). By bridging the time and space gap and promoting a new kind of bonding, digital humanities creates possibilities of joy and reconciliation for people who have been sundered from their native space.

The essays in Section II look at writings that provide space for varied alternative narratives resulting from the Partition. Tarun Saint states that Partition created two kinds of narratives from both sides of the divide: political ones, written by politicians like Maulana Azad and Ram Manohar Lohia, and personal ones, written by survivors, especially women, like Jahan Ara Shahnawaz and

Kamlaben Patel. Though both kinds perform a testimonial function, there is a difference between the two. The second variety brings out the horrific nature of the "strange bestiality" (76) that overtook people, the anguish that it bred in the saner elements of the society, the outrageous conduct of government officials, and the complicity of the state in what happened. Though most of these writings are in the realistic mode, some, like that of Fikr Taunsi, employ irony and absurd humour for interrogating what happened.

Debali Mookerjea-Leonard's essay focuses on a host of Bengali novels to show that the dislocation caused by the Partition compelled many middle class women to take varied kind of jobs, ushering in significant changes in the social set up. Women became assertive and independent and lent acceptability and respectability to what they chose to do. But this also affected moral norms and led to conflicts in the lives of young women. Daughters who provided income to their families were compelled to stay on in them and the ones who did not were given away in marriage to lessen the family burden. At the same time, the ones who stayed on found it difficult to negotiate the tension between their affective and familial bonds. Amrita Ghosh's essay uses Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* to uncover the "massive gap and silence" (107) over the refugees from East Pakistan into India, who returned to settle in the Sundarbans. They were marginalised and virtually written out of historical accounts. She provides an appropriate background to understand the complexity of their situation and argues that Ghosh gives them voice to expose the brutalities they were subjected to by the state. She considers their location – the Sundarbans, where the brutality was unleashed – a "heterotopia" and the Dalit refugees "homo sacer." By helping us understand the complexities of the migration that resulted from the Partition, Amrita Ghosh provides a fresh insight into the refugee question.

The essays in Section III focus primarily on the effect of Partition on locations that have not been written about, although they were deeply affected by the turmoil that engulfed the people who lived there. Nandita Bhavnani takes us to the Sindh province where not much violence was witnessed in 1947, mainly because the Hindus and Muslims shared a culture of peaceful togetherness. But because of the changes that had taken place there during the British era, which helped the Hindus to become landowners, violence overtook Sindh in 1948. Ilyas Chattha takes us to the Jammu and Kashmir of 1947 and argues that though Kashmir has always been written about right from the time of the tribal invasion of the Valley, not much has been written about what happened to the Muslims of Jammu soon after the Maharaja ran away from Srinagar. The Dogras of Jammu were given weapons by the government to launch a massive attack against the Muslims, in which 250,000 to 300,000 people were massacred, to change the demographic character of the city, and to create a Hindu majority in the region.

Another area that has suffered neglect is the northeast of the country, with a past that Babyrani Yumnam thinks is "contentious, rooted in specific historical formations and conjunctions" that have contributed to its "geographical, political, and economic marginality" (158). Till 1947, it was a landmass that had a close connection with Burma, Bengal and southwest China, and constituted the colonial frontier of the Empire. The British drew and redrew its boundaries to suit their commercial interests, and the area had very little connection with the mainland country. But all this changed after 1947. From a "colonial frontier,' the northeast changed into a "post-colonial border zone" (158). Having enjoyed an autonomous position, the people living in these areas did not feel secure in the new set up, which resulted in national and ethnic identity clashes, creating a series of secessionist movements. In a similar vein, Amit R. Baishya's essay signals another area of neglect in Partition Studies – Burma's "forgotten long march" (177), when 450,000 to 500,000 Indians walked into British India, because of the ethnic violence in Burma caused by the Japanese advance that resulted in the death of nearly 50,000 people. Baishya analyses the representation of the "Long March" in the Assamese novel *Jangam*, through which he explores the ecocritical condition, another neglected side to existing studies of Partition. In *Jangam* by Debendranath Acharya, environment "emerges as a complex, dynamic subject that functions ambivalently as a source of menace for the 'human'" (179). Hence Baishya's plea that "partition studies need to pay closer attention to such representations that engage with the fluid interactions between 'nature' and the 'human'" (179).

The essays in the Section IV relate primarily to the impact of Partition upon Pakistan and Bangladesh (East Pakistan, until 1971). Amber Fatima Riaz avers that though Pakistan came into being in 1947, it has struggled with its identity because the regionalisms within it militate against the unifying idea of Pakistan. Riaz shows how the United Muslim Front tried to project that the idea of Pakistan had existed since 1857, but it did not work because historically it was inaccurate. Beginning with 1947, the nation of Pakistan took years to consolidate itself but could not succeed completely because of the increasing role of the army in its political life. Riaz uses the work of several writers to substantiate her view. Bengal too had its peculiar problems. It had to suffer a series of partitions – the first one in 1905, though it was repealed in 1911; the second one in 1947; and then the most brutal one in 1971, when East Pakistan became an independent country of Bangladesh. Poet Kaiser Haq studies these changes in the fortunes of Bangladesh and their impact upon its Hindu and Muslim populations, by examining the writings of Syed Walliullah, Abu Fazl, Shahidullah Kaiser, Akhteruzzaman Elias and Mahmud Rahman. The opening section of Haq's essay provides a personalised account of the 1971 struggle for independence from West Pakistan and the many cultural and political factors leading up to the formation of Bangladesh as a separate nation. Masood A Raja discusses Shakeel Aadil Zada's novel *Baazigar*, which has been serialised in *Sab Rang*, a pulp magazine in Pakistan, for over thirty years, primarily because the "local and regional historical originary narrative" (234) of Pakistan as a nation has been replaced by an official Pan-Islamic narrative with Arab connections, giving boost to reactionary forces in the country. Raja's argument is that the novel, which has already run into more than 2500 pages, provides a collective history of a people that have their roots in India, and signals a more nuanced and more inclusive national narrative for Pakistan. Raja believes that this more inclusive narrative needs to be retrieved to restore normalcy in the nation.

Mohd. Rezaul Haque draws attention to yet another neglected area: Bengali Partition writings by Muslims who left India and settled in East Pakistan. The focus is on the stories of Hasan Azizul Huq, who left India in 1954 and settled in Khulna. In a personal essay "He Who Comes Inside" Huq writes how, after leaving the country of his birth, he became an insider, without any problems because of being part of the Bengali culture, for he considered himself Bengali first and Muslim later. His stories revolve round the trials and tribulations of working-class men and women who had to live through the experience of Partition, of the "conflict between memory and desire" (245), and the pain that they had to suffer. Some of Hasan Azizul Huq's stories also deal with the effect of the 1971 War of Liberation.

In their erudite essay on novelist Intizar Husain (1923-2016), Tasneem Shahnaz and Amritjit Singh show that although Husain had at one time predicted the disappearance of short stories, he has himself written many great ones that superbly combine the native oral features with modernist elements. In deftly drawn settings, Husain's narratives enact human search for self and identity, in which optimism soon gives way to pessimism. Like Shakeel Aadil Zada, Husain spurns the narrow identity politics that raised its ugly head during the Partition and that has persisted in Pakistan to this day. Shahnaaz and Singh note how Husain uses his writings, steeped in references to Hindu and Buddhist ancient texts, to dramatise the loss, disruption and dislocation that Partition has caused in the lives of millions of people.

Section V, the final unit of essays in this comprehensive volume, takes us back to India and deals with the impact of Partition violence in places like Varanasi and Hyderabad and its representation in the fiction from south India. Though Varanasi was far away from the main theatre of the violence of 1947, Jeremy Rinker analyses the complex social dynamics of the city to trace the Partition's "historical legacies and memories of unmet needs" (285). In this context, Rinker looks at custodial tortures among low castes and Muslims, which led to the rise of a human rights campaign within the city to raise critical consciousness among its inhabitants to promote peace and social harmony. Nazia Akhtar repudiates the generally held belief that Partition did not affect the southern parts of India and argues that except for a few literary representations, not much has been written about how Hyderabad was invaded by India on September 13, 1948, in which 30,000 to 40,000 Muslims were killed by Hindus, police and armed forces. She states that in Kishorilal Vyas Neelkanth's *Razakar* the episode called "Durga" about an eponymous Sikh woman protagonist projects the strong Hindutva image of a warrior goddess, "a model of moral force and martial prowess" (308), reminiscent of Bankim's *Anandmath*, to provide a rationale for present-day Hindu nationalism. As part of her argument, Akhtar also provides a critical reading of the Hindutva's misrepresentations of Sikhs and Sikhism.

The essay by Nalini Iyer extends Akhtar's analysis to argue that South India and South Indians more broadly were affected by the Partition through empathy and the collective sense of post-Partition India as a nation. Iyer's contention is that the Partition did affect people in the South, even though they saw it from a distance, and she analyses its reflections in selected South Indian writings. R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* evokes "deep cynicism about Gandhian nationalism and the possibility of a secular national vision to thrive" (334). Lalithambika Antherjanam's work focuses on the "gendered and violent nature of the Partition experience" (335) as a means to embrace national oneness through female sisterhood. Balachandra Rajan's novel *The Dark Dancer* deals extensively with the Partition experience through Krishnan and Kamala, who "represent the empathy of southern people as well as their transformation by shared experience" (339).

The essays in the welcome volume, as I have tried to demonstrate, merit attention because they live up to the promise of using new approaches to study the known and not so well known writings on Partition, broadening the range of enquiry by looking at writings from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and also uncovering areas that had not been explored by earlier critics. This makes the volume useful not only as a source of new knowledge, but also for demonstrating new approaches to the subject and suggesting fresh areas of inquiry. All the essayists argue their point of view robustly and convincingly, because of their sharp focus, which is backed by considerable research and scholarship. Nearly one fifth of the volume is covered by extensive notes and bibliographies, which provide a treasure trove of resources for further research. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of most of the essays, the volume is a must for students of literature and social sciences, and because of the clarity of their presentation, almost all of these essays could be read profitably by general readers as well.

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