

## Spatial Visions: Mobility and the Social Order in Pakistani Women's English-Language Partition Fiction

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### Abstract

Two fictions by Pakistani women about the “long partition,” a concept introduced by Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar to refer to the temporally expansive “postcolonial burden of [the] political partition” of the subcontinent (3), provide unique insights into a vision of emplaced citizenship from a non-Muslim minority perspective. Bapsi Sidhwa’s 1991 novel *Cracking India*, for instance, offers readers an opportunity to understand territories as spaces created through mobility of and interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims during the partition era. The novel’s historical focus brings forth questions about how places and groups affected and were affected by the British withdrawal from the subcontinent, the violence that ensued, and the efforts to (re-)constitute place and peoples – or, a social order – that occurred subsequently. Similarly, Maniza Naqvi’s 2008 novel *A Matter of Detail* features toothless efforts to reclaim place through mobility so as to reanimate a belonging changed or hidden in the aftermath of partition and the development of an increasingly religiously intolerant Pakistan. While I make no claim to the unmediated representational abilities of partition fiction, I do contend that novels like Sidhwa’s and Naqvi’s grant imaginative insights into lived experiences and possibilities, which, in turn, can motivate alternative social orders. For instance, *Cracking India* demonstrates the effects of the dissolution of one type of order and the struggles to establish alternatives in the newly created Pakistan. In contrast, *A Matter of Detail* considers the consequences of the durability of a social order when alternatives fail.

### Keywords

Partition, Sidhwa, Naqvi, spatial, minority, religion

In Jinnah’s well-known address to the Constituent Assembly, delivered on 11 August 1947, he proclaims, “You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place [of] worship in this State of Pakistan” (para. 7). Jinnah embeds these assurances of freedom in rhetoric that promises equality and other like abstractions, and, as Salman

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Sayyid and David Tyrer argue, this particular speech forms the basis of an ongoing debate in Pakistan over not just what Jinnah intended the nation to be but also “to determine what kind of country Pakistan is and will be” (57-58). Yet, in addition to these abstractions that can be bent toward either a “secular” or more religiously oriented political culture, Jinnah’s statement about the freedom to attend any place of worship is also a vision of spatiality and mobility. That is, Jinnah acknowledges both the existence of temples and other places of worship as physical structures that take up space, as well as citizens’ rights to move about cities and villages *freely* to attend these places. Jinnah, thus, offers a conceptualization of lived, emplaced citizenship that explicitly makes room for non-Muslim minorities.

Two fictions by Pakistani women about the “long partition,” a concept introduced by Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar to refer to the temporally expansive “postcolonial burden of [the] political partition” of the subcontinent (3), provide unique insights into this vision of emplaced citizenship from a non-Muslim minority perspective. Bapsi Sidhwa’s 1991 novel *Cracking India*, for instance, offers readers an opportunity to understand territories as spaces created through mobility of and interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims during the partition era. The novel’s historical focus brings forth questions about how places and groups affected and were affected by the British withdrawal from the subcontinent, the violence that ensued, and the efforts to (re)constitute place and peoples – or, a social order – that occurred subsequently. Similarly, Maniza Naqvi’s 2008 novel *A Matter of Detail* features toothless efforts to reclaim place through mobility so as to reanimate a belonging changed or hidden in the aftermath of partition and the development of an increasingly religiously intolerant Pakistan. While I make no claim to the unmediated representational abilities of partition fiction, I do contend that novels like Sidhwa’s and Naqvi’s grant imaginative insights into lived experiences and possibilities, which, in turn, can motivate alternative social order.<sup>2</sup> For instance, *Cracking India* demonstrates the effects of the dissolution of one type of order and the struggles to establish alternatives in the newly created Pakistan. In contrast, *A Matter of Detail* considers the consequences of the durability of a social order when alternatives fail.

Jinnah’s articulation of this spatialised vision of mobility for all citizens within the new nation just days before Pakistan’s official independence punctuates a larger discussion about the place of space or territory in the idea of Pakistan. That is, as many historians acknowledge, a bounded, bordered, independent Pakistan was not a foregone conclusion in the decades leading up

<sup>2</sup> On the relationship of partition fiction to the historical events themselves, see especially Jill Didur’s “Fragments of Imagination: Re-thinking the Literary in Historiography through Narratives of India’s Partition” and *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory*, as well as my *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State*.

to the 1947 partition. Indeed, this manifestation of the idea of Pakistan came only to seem a done deal in 1946 with the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan. A firmly territorialised Pakistan's late arrival matters, because it complicates the realisation of Jinnah's vision of spatiality and mobility by making urgent the need to establish state-based functions and a national identity across diverse areas, the most populous of which – such as cities like Karachi and Lahore – underwent radical demographic and topographical changes in the summer of 1947 and after. This diversity encompasses language, culture, ethnicity, and, most germane to this discussion, religious identities. Moreover, this diversity provides a unique analytic by which to understand the effects Pakistan's state- and nation-making activities have had on the material lives and built environments in which its citizens experience social orders.

More specifically, the relations between Pakistan's citizens, as well as their interactions with places, serve as an entry point into apprehending the creation and experience of everyday and macro indicators of difference, most especially religious difference, in the present discussion. As many scholars and commentators note, the stakes associated with religious difference or diversity have risen throughout Pakistan's history, from the legalised persecution of Ahmadis to the brutal and often extra-legal enforcement of blasphemy laws, for example, illustrating that Pakistan's history of social orders exist at a far remove from the freedom of space and mobility Jinnah articulated in 1947.<sup>3</sup> The concept of mobility is key to examining the lived experience of difference in place. As Tim Cresswell argues, mobility “is socially produced, is variable across space and time and has visible effects in people, places, things and the relationships between them” (20). Thus, mobility provides ways to see how religious tensions animate interrelations between peoples and places arising out of the territorialisation of Pakistan. As I hope to show, such tensions – though not necessarily their resolution – are crucial to the maintenance of a public order responsive to difference.

To think through any type of difference as connected to interrelations between and within communities and places is to reconceptualise the nature of place or space or territory. Territorial issues are a perennial concern for scholars of Pakistan, and they are frequently conceived of in terms of attempts to unify diverse regions or, similarly, of functioning according to a centre-periphery model. In such framings, territory can serve as an empty container, a blank screen across which actors move. These framings posit territory as a stable foundation for the cultural, social, economic, religious and familial trappings of its inhabitants. In this scholarly context, sociologist Shelley Feldman encourages efforts to take up territory in a different way: “Why do we reify Pakistan as a

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Sadia Saeed's “Political Fields and Religious Movements: The Exclusion of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan” and Shaun Gregory's “Under the Shadow of Islam: The Plight of the Christian Minority in Pakistan.”

territorial unit rather than a space that is reproduced as Pakistan with assumed borders...?" (30). Clearly, Feldman's question presents "territorial unit" as that blank screen, and "space" as a lived, experienced location. In addition, her verb choice matters. To "reify" Pakistan is to make the abstract conceptualisation of it appear real, given, immutable, while the reproduction of Pakistan calls attention to how aspects of Pakistan – in material and in discursive terms – achieve durability.

Durability itself emerges as of central importance, because it requires an examination of how the vicissitudes of interactions at times lock into predictable forms. Such an examination invokes an idea of the "social" borrowed from non-representational theory. If we start with an understanding of one claim from this corpus of work, namely that humans are "in [a] constant relation of modification and reciprocity with their environs" to the extent that "all action is interaction" (Anderson and Harrison 7), then we can better understand how the "social" amounts to "a practical achievement [that] provides a method for thinking through how... processes... *become* systematic" (Anderson and Harrison 18).<sup>4</sup> That is, any specific instance of the "social" draws attention to when the "modification and reciprocity" of interaction between people and within places operate fluently or when they become clogged or ossified. An emphasis on interaction and the possibility of systematisation highlights how, when, and, through analysis, why interactions operate as though fixed and when they contain their own potential for change. Further, interaction and systematisation, insofar as they call upon the instance and the context, the immediate and the situational, the local and the inter/national, also facilitate the type of spatial and mobility analysis through attention to diversity by calling attention to the tensions existing in these domains and how groups process them. In effect, the "social" as outlined in non-representational theory is highly spatialised and concerned with mobility, and, given its additional interest in systematisation, non-representational theory similarly provides a way to think through the tensions between the openness conveyed in Jinnah's address and the increasingly ossified – from a non-Muslim minority perspective – relations between peoples and within places.

Thus, the concept of the "social" is not automatically rigid or systematised; it can also operate more contingently as one possible social order, as circumstances, places and groups engage with one another. With respect to late colonial and partition-era Pakistan specifically, David Gilmartin's work on the establishment of moral public orders helps clarify how Muslim and non-Muslim minorities experience mobility and its requisite interactions. In Gilmartin's view, the need to establish a moral order operates as the linchpin that connects the

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<sup>4</sup> Anderson and Harrison are careful to note that action is not deliberative agency but rather a combination of "embodied and environmental affordances, dispositions, and habits" (7).

high politics of partition with the localised and sweeping violence that ravaged especially the northwestern province of Punjab. With reference to pre-partition “public arena performances” in 19<sup>th</sup>-century northern India, Gilmartin asserts that such performances, which involved religiously and economically mixed groups engaged in “competition and debate” (“Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History” 1076), “did not simply ‘enact’ community, they were a central part of the process by which a sense of moral order was created” (“Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History” 1074). Significantly, such performances were highly localised, regularly contentious, and, as the 19<sup>th</sup> century closed, largely “autonomous from colonial intervention” (Gilmartin, “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History” 1075). At this time, a new “public realm” emerged “from a fusing of the realm of letters with the autonomous public arena of cultural performance and religious ceremonial – a central reason, perhaps, why the language of religion and moral order came to play such a central role in it” (“Partition” 1075). The “realm of letters” to which Gilmartin refers is the advancement of print media, a textualisation of the public that illustrates how textual and material realities intersect. Further, this “realm of letters” also begins to evidence the larger, supra-local ideals that span geographies, which included the growing dominance of the Muslim League and the idea of Pakistan. As Ayesha Jalal observes, “A shared religious identity was felt at the level of lived culture but rarely at the expense of the emotive affinity with local and regional cultural traditions” (17). Jalal articulates the central tension: that between a call to Muslim unity at a higher level and the lived connections through which everyday life occurs.

As the idea of Pakistan began to take hold, various political forces engaged with this tension in different ways. For some time, the Muslim League forwarded the idea of Pakistan “as a symbol defining the moral sovereignty of the Muslim community in the public realm,” while also working within the localised conflicts and divisions between groups, including groups with different religious identities (Gilmartin, “Partition” 1079). Such an approach – one that rested on the irony of “unity” amidst division – allowed for a new “public language of moral community” to take shape (Gilmartin, “Partition” 1079). Yet, the League’s political gains came about through bureaucratic practices such as separate electorates. Gilmartin argues that, in the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, various types of colonial practices, such as the census (which pre-dates the 20<sup>th</sup> century), flattened interrelations between groups and places into two-dimensional communal identities that were, in turn, used as the basis for separate electorates: “Separate electorates... provided a bureaucratically fixed frame for Muslim community definition that had little reference to ongoing public debates” that had been a part of the process of creating moral social orders (“Partition” 1079). With a focus specifically on the effects of these electorates on India’s Muslims, Gilmartin argues that they also “subsumed”

Muslim political diversity, thereby resulting in “the image of a common Muslim community fixed by state definition, and the reality of deep provincial and local divisions” (“Partition” 1079). Separate electorates appear to contribute to the systematisation of interrelations between peoples and within places, that is, separate electorates helped render durable a certain social order. The “flat” identities upon which these elections depended indicate a clogging of interaction, as individuals inhabit fixed communal identifications, and places come to reflect such meanings.

The territorialisation of the idea of Pakistan further reinforces this durability. According to Gilmartin, “[O]nce the Pakistan idea was fixed onto a particular piece of territory, the moral meaning of the politics of place was undone” (“Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History” 1086). Consequently, these new Pakistanis in their specific locations and changed communities “had, in a sense, to be symbolically and morally reconstituted (as the relations between individuals and moral symbols themselves transformed) in order to find place in the larger territories of which they were now a part” (Gilmartin, “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History” 1085-86). In Gilmartin’s formulation, the territorialisation of Pakistan was a transitional moment in which to create new or other social orders. As history demonstrates, one order dominated: partition violence was part of these efforts to reconstitute moral orders, and the state’s eventual intervention via the Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Act, for instance, resolved the uncertainties and secured these orders in dominant religious and patriarchal terms (Gilmartin, “Partition” 1090).

Sidhwa’s novel engages with this transitional period, though not just because it attempts to narrate partition violence. The novel also imagines how alternative moral orders that continue to rely on interaction rather than fixity might operate. In effect, *Cracking India* maintains the tensions that coincide with interaction to provide “the framework for linking the self to the larger social and political order,” which Gilmartin identifies as “mak[ing] collective life possible” (Gilmartin, “Living the Tensions of the State” 524). And, significantly, these alternatives allow for non-Muslims to participate in this ordering. What results is a vision of an order that, in addition to including non-Muslims squarely in this new nation called Pakistan, also challenges to a degree the restoration of patriarchal order. Indeed, *Cracking India* gestures toward – but doesn’t fully define – a genuinely new place at the moment of partition and immediately afterward.

*Cracking India* focuses intently on the circumstances that allow non-Muslim female characters to move through and occupy space. Significantly, this focus trains attention on the sexualisation of these characters, an emphasis that invites consideration of Elizabeth Jackson’s claim that, in South Asia, “women’s

mobility in public spaces is still curtailed by ideologies of respectability” (58). Understood as shorthand for sexual norms that reinforce patriarchal power, “ideologies of respectability” also function, as Gilmartin points out, as a reassurance of a certain social order’s durability through radical transitions, such as partition (“Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History”).

Shanta, the young Hindu woman who serves as the narrator’s Ayah, stands as the most obvious example of the novel’s fixation on space, mobility and sexualisation. Nearly every time Ayah is in a scene, Lenny, her charge and the novel’s narrator, describes the desirability of her body and/or its effects on other characters. Within the first pages of the story, for instance, Lenny portrays her Ayah in sexualised terms: “[A]s if her looks were not stunning enough, she has a rolling bouncy walk that agitates the globules of her buttocks under her cheap colorful saris and the half-spheres beneath her short sari-blouses” (Sidhwa 13). Ayah’s physical attractiveness establishes a pre-partition framing of space and mobility, and plays a crucial role in subsequent framings as well. Before the turmoil of partition, Ayah draws a sizable circle of admirers from a variety of religions and occupations: for instance, Ice-candy-man and Masseur are Muslims, the Government House gardener is Hindu, and Sher Singh, a Sikh, tends the lion’s cage at the zoo.

Further, Shanta’s allure facilitates her own and Lenny’s movement:

I gain Ayah’s goodwill and complicity by accommodating her need to meet friends and relatives. She takes me to fairs, cheap restaurants and slaughterhouses. I cover up for her and maintain a canny silence about her doings. I learn of human needs, frailties, cruelties and joys. I also learn from her the tyranny magnets exercise over metals. (Sidhwa 29)

Lenny’s presentation of this mobility as transgressive suggests how the ability to move through and occupy places is already gendered and sexualised, and the transgressions mark the tension these dynamics create. The assistance Lenny lends her Ayah at staving off unwanted advances – such as slapping Ice-candy-man’s wayward toes – further hints that, together, the Hindu ayah and the young Parsee girl are negotiating public orders in alternative ways. In this respect, the locations at which Ayah engages with her admirers – not just the places listed above, but also especially Queen’s Park and the Sethis’ house – further indicate that these female characters’ efforts operate and succeed in private and colonial spaces, too.

At the same time, however, the novel also tracks other tensions in which this mobility operates. Ayah’s admirers’ paternalism, for instance, represents the (re-) assertion of masculine dominance. When Ice-candy-man invites Ayah and Lenny to a rooftop in Lahore to witness the city’s conflagration, as well as to get a bird’s eye view of mob violence, for instance, Masseur objects, telling his rival, “You shouldn’t have brought them here, *yaar*.... They shouldn’t see such

things.... Besides, it's dangerous” (Sidhwa 145). Masseur distinguishes between appropriateness and danger, pointing toward an order in which men regulate female presence at certain locations, here, a public one. Perhaps as a way to illustrate how this regulation operates, in increments doled out over the run-up to partition, Lenny portrays the admirers' fervour, especially that of Ice-candy-man, as predatory and threatening: Ice-candy-man is “stealthy”; he “lurks” and “prowls”; he has as many eyes as a peacock's feathers, and “they follow” Ayah and Lenny, especially when these two female characters are with other admirers (Sidhwa 130, 189). The all-male mob's abduction of Ayah, orchestrated by Ice-candy-man's perfidy and obsession, represents an effort to resolve the tensions between the orders that Ayah and Lenny negotiated through the first half of the novel. A patriarchal order that seeks to restrict Ayah's movement and abilities to occupy space prevails. Further, given how many partition narratives focus on Hindu or Sikh women in Pakistan or Muslim women in India, this resolution of Ayah's storyline bears consequences for non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan and stands in closest relation to the effects of actual historical events and their aftermath.

Yet, *Cracking India* also forwards an alternative order, one that uses tensions to bend more deliberately toward the justice and equality for non-Muslim minorities Jinnah articulates in his spatialised vision of mobility. This alternative takes shape through the novel's representations of Lahore's Parsee community, especially Lenny's mother and Godmother. From one perspective, the novel's portrayal of the Parsees and of these two prominent female characters appears to reinforce the patriarchal order that eventually prevails in Ayah's storyline; that is, this order relies on the durability of a given set of resolutions. For instance, at a temple gathering, Colonel Bharucha, the leader of the community, exhorts, “I hope no Lahore Parsee will be stupid enough to court trouble.... I strongly advise all of you to stay at home – and out of trouble” (Sidhwa 45). The Colonel's counsel is itself spatial, a remonstrance over where Parsees can and should be. And, while the assemblage does attempt to challenge this view, to recharge tensions, the community seems to accept the reasonableness of the Colonel's statement, especially because it aligns so well with the Parsee myth of arrival in South Asia: “The [Parsee] refugees would get absorbed into [pre-colonial India] like [sugar in milk].... And with their decency and industry sweeten the lives of [India's other] subjects” (Sidhwa 47). The sweetened milk metaphor prescribes Parsee invisibility, suggesting that dissolution is the appropriate resolution, precisely because it fixes interactions between Muslims and Parsees.

Similarly, Lenny's depiction of her mother and Godmother also appear to slot them in the same sexualised terms that contain Ayah and, consequently, eventually reinforce the resolution of her storyline. However, the novel inserts enough uncertainty, enough tension, to allow for the possibility of another type



of order, one in which these Parsee women implicitly challenge the Colonel's resolution. Mother has "unconscious and indiscriminate sex appeal" (Sidhwa 51), for instance, while Godmother embodies the sexually unappealing: she "looks like an upended whale in her white sari with her sloping shoulders and broadening torso and the sari narrowing around her ankles" (Sidhwa 150). These two characterisations abide throughout Lenny's presentation of her mother and Godmother, even as Lenny in her role as narrator also expands both characters' significance by sketching – never fully capturing – their interactions with others. Arguably, Lenny's inability to represent fully her mother's and Godmother's many facets replicates how linkages within and between groups and places form and change.

In other words, Lenny conveys her limited understanding of these characters' existence as females. The gender scripts do not hold. Ambiguity surrounds the Sethis' marriage, for example. While in some instances Lenny portrays her mother as deploying a manipulative, sexualised hold over her father, which would fit into the same framework as Ayah's hold over her admirers, at other times, Lenny indicates her inability to figure out how her parents interact. Late in the novel, Lenny's narrative perspective focuses a great deal on the confusion and upheavals wrought by partition, and she includes observations of her parents' marriage in such moments:

And closer, and as upsetting, the caged voices of our parents fighting in their bedroom.... I know they quarrel mostly about money. But there are other things they fight about that are not clear to me.... Although Father has never raised his hands to us, one day I surprise Mother at her bath and see the bruises on her body. (Sidhwa 224)

This passage shows how Lenny tries to make sense of her parents' relationship in terms she understands, i.e. the scripts that accompany heterosexual middle class marriage in her community. And, yet, her admission that not all matters are clear to her, coupled with the lack of evidence that her father is actually an abuser, marks the limitations of these scripts' relevance to the social order her mother helps create and negotiate.

Similarly, Lenny possesses some awareness of Godmother's status in the city, but she does not grasp fully what power the older woman has. In Lenny's understanding, "Godmother has established a network of espionage with a reach of which even she is not aware.... The day-to-day commonplaces of our lives unravel to her undercurrents that are lost to less perceptive humans" (Sidhwa 222). Lenny cannot account entirely for how Godmother knows things, nor how the older woman influences others' actions. That is, Lenny does not perceive how Godmother relates to others, including individuals from outside the Parsee community. In this way, the narrative gestures toward the tensions

that, significantly, allow female characters to participate authoritatively in public in terms that do not rely heavily on sexual desirability.<sup>5</sup>

The novel's oblique presentation of the tensions Lenny's mother and Godmother negotiate, carried out through Lenny's limited understanding, proves most significant and impactful through mobility: Lenny's mother and aunt illegally assist the evacuation of non-Muslims and the reclamation of abducted women.<sup>6</sup> Initially, Lenny and the other children in the novel think that the two women are responsible for setting the fires that burn throughout Lahore during the worst of the partition riots and protests:

We now know who the arsonists are. Our mothers are setting fire to Lahore!  
Back and forth, back and forth, go our mothers on their secret missions,  
carrying their sinister freight in the dicky of our Morris Minor. (Sidhwa 184)

This false realisation plummets Lenny into guilt, worry, fears of complicity, all reactions that demonstrate her inability to imagine that her mother and aunt could be doing something else entirely. When her mother finally reveals why she hauls gas in the trunk and what she and Lenny's aunt do with the car, Lenny attempts to "stay the threatening surge of self-loathing and embarrassment from annihilating" her (Sidhwa 254). Lenny's use of the word "threatening" at this moment of actual realisation speaks to more than a maturing child's acknowledgment of the stakes of adult life. In addition, "threatening" also points toward how the interactions in which her mother and aunt engage challenge the durability of the order that displaces non-Muslim minorities and allows for the abduction of women with different religious identities as an act to desecrate the enemy. Similarly, Lenny's fear of annihilation shows the depths of that dominant order's reach into Lenny's self-conception. If an alternative order is possible, this passage suggests, then different conceptions of self, derived from tensions within and between groups and places, are, too.

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, Godmother is married to Oldhusband, so the argument may be made that she is already enmeshed in the patriarchal order that grants legitimacy to women as a function of their "respectable" sexuality. However, in one of the few instances Oldhusband functions as an actual presence in the narrative, he very explicitly challenges such masculinist views. Overhearing a conversation in which his brother-in-law is extolling the attractiveness of women's eyes, Oldhusband bursts out, "'What's all this business about eyes! eyes! eyes!... You can't poke the damn thing in their eyes!'" (Sidhwa 180). As narrator, Lenny also conveys the other characters' shock at Oldhusband's declaration. This scene suggests that Godmother and Oldhusband's marriage operates on terms different from dominant social norms.

<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, I have argued that Lenny's narrative voice is highly metafictional, a claim that necessitates a reevaluation of the child's perspective. My argument is that this reevaluation allows for a critical analysis of Lenny's memories of partition, a move that highlights how conventionalised partition narratives are. The points I raise here regarding Lenny's admission of the limits of her understanding fit into this previous argument. Please see my *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State*, especially chapter one.

*Cracking India's* conclusion works through, but does not completely resolve, the effects of these tensions in alternative orders. When Godmother and Lenny pay a visit to Ice-candy-man in Lahore's red light district in order to see Ayah, for example, the novel displays an uncertainty over who the young woman is. At the start of the visit, Ice-candy-man refers to Ayah, whom he has since married, as "Mumtaz," a name change that indicates her conversion to Islam (Sidhwa 271), and, yet, the narrative continues to refer to this character, at least for the next few paragraphs, as "Ayah" (Sidhwa 272-73). In response to Godmother's direct questions – "Isn't he looking after you?" – the narrator conveys, "Mumtaz nods her head slightly" (Sidhwa 273). For the next two pages, the novel alternates between referring to this character as "Mumtaz" and as "Ayah," with no comment on the shifts. This jarring though unremarked-upon alternation plays out the tensions between orders, with "Mumtaz" being a signifier of a dominant order and "Ayah" of a possible alternative, one in which her "name" develops from her relations to others. Importantly, by referring to this character as "Ayah," the novel displays a nostalgia for a time earlier in the narrative when Ayah, sexualised and desirable, was able to negotiate tensions and move through spaces with more volition.

Given that the tensions which the novel appears to pine for nostalgically were not sustainable, the novel's final representations of Ayah's character make more sense. That is, the novel attempts to illustrate the delinkage of this character from the tensions that connect individuals, groups and places. Thanks to Godmother's influence, Ayah leaves Ice-candy-man and briefly stays at the recovered women's camp next door to Lenny's house before the young woman returns to her family in India. In her final appearance in the novel, amidst Lenny's and the other children's chanting, "Ayah! Ayah! Ayah! Ayah!" the young woman "looks up at us out of glazed and unfeeling eyes for a moment, as if we are strangers" (Sidhwa 285). While, on the one hand, the "as if we are strangers" observation indicates the extent to which Ayah has been traumatised by her experience, on the other, this line also leaves open the possibility that Ayah's exit from this social order means that she will engage with new tensions in the order that awaits her upon her return to her family.

Historians and other scholars of partition have argued that "recovered" women were not always welcomed back to their home communities, and, within Sidhwa's novel, Hamida, Lenny's new ayah, makes this very point (Sidhwa 233-34). Further, as Gilmartin and others contend, the "return" of abducted women resolves tensions by re-establishing moral orders in patriarchal terms. This resolution insists upon gendered ideas of respectability and their attendant notions of mobility. And, yet, within Sidhwa's fiction, the Parsee women are the ones responsible for these efforts – not the state – and their "success," as qualified as that term needs to be, does indicate a spatial politics,

an open mobility closer to the vision Jinnah articulated at the moment of Pakistan's creation.

Though less violent and less public, the tensions operating in Naqvi's *A Matter of Detail* also function as the field in which Hajrabai, one of the novel's central characters, attempts to reclaim place and re-establish belonging or, in other words, to recover or shore up an order since past. Hajrabai challenges a durable order. The results here lean less toward alternative imaginings, though, and more toward what is lost once a fixed order takes hold and identities get stuck. As in Sidhwa's novel, these attempts play out through Hajrabai's mobility, though, in this novel, that mobility remains largely confined between two domestic locations: a Lawrence Road flat, which was Hajrabai's family home before she married, and a house referred to as 43-G, which Hajrabai shares with her husband Rezzak, her co-wife Zareena, and, on their visits, their five adult daughters. These narrative details already make plain that Hajrabai's status as first wife enable her movement within the tensions associated with these two locations, an affordance that sets limits on her mobility's progressive potential.

Naqvi's novel gradually unfurls the circumstances of Hajrabai's movement between Lawrence Road and 43-G. The novel opens at the former location and features Hajrabai awaiting the arrival of one of her piano students. She marks the time by the call to prayer, realizing that once Maghrib is called, her student will be unlikely to show at all (Naqvi 2). As the subsequent scenes flash back to the history of Karachi long before Hajrabai's own birth, the narrative establishes the character's long roots in this place and, once that rootedness takes hold, the third person limited narrator reveals the type of place to which Hajrabai belonged:

As a girl she would have been looking this way from the balcony, leaning forward impatiently, her long, black hair falling about her shoulders and stirring in the breeze as she tried to spot her father.... And this way, a mile down from here, is where she would have been at this time on a Friday evening in days gone by. At Magain Shalome. (Naqvi 12)

With a vision that still sees locations in memory, Hajrabai acknowledges her Jewishness and, significantly, the places through which she moved as a Jewish person in pre-partition Karachi.

Indeed, Hajrabai wants to reclaim exactly this mobility, as is evident in the argument that erupts with Sara, her eldest daughter, and Zareena when the two older women reveal Hajrabai's decades-long concealed Jewishness to the younger one:

“Karachi was a place where people went to jamaat khans, and temples, and churches, and synagogues and imam bargahs. There were fire temples and

towers of silence where bodies were left out in the open for the vultures and at Mangopir, a festival of crocodiles!” (Naqvi 29)

Nearly echoing the lines Jinnah spoke in his Address, cited at the outset of this essay, Hajrabai casts a memory/vision of a Karachi in which religiously diverse groups moved freely and, in doing so, co-created what the city was. Hajrabai continues, “This was all part of the way of this city” (Naqvi 29-30). Clearly, Hajrabai’s migration to Lawrence Road, precipitated first by her own decision, two years prior to the novel’s contemporary narrative plane, that she was tired of concealing her Jewishness (Naqvi 25) and then by Zareena’s thoughtless dismissal of Jewish customs – “[W]e are Shia and these are not our traditions” (Naqvi 32) – values interaction and mobility in public places. In many ways, such interactions with place and between peoples facilitated even transgressive mobility, as the streets of mid-century Karachi were so busy that she and Rezzak, as yet unmarried, could walk together unremarked upon, without societal approbation (Naqvi 11).

The realities of Hajrabai’s present, however, significantly alter her mobility. While she can move freely between both houses, though not without bearing the brunt of her family’s concerns, Hajrabai cannot reclaim or reconstitute the Karachi that was. In the novel’s present, Hajrabai reflects on her decision to move back to Lawrence Road, marking it as “a mistake” and acknowledging that she misses 43-G and her life as first wife (Naqvi 24). By framing Hajrabai’s regret in domestic terms, the very terms that also allow or indulge her move to Lawrence Road, the narrative illustrates the weight of the existing order’s durability. That is, unlike Lenny’s mother in *Cracking India*, who appears to work within patriarchal and heterosexist norms as she negotiates the tensions of place and strives to create an alternative order, Hajrabai concedes, even yearns for, the hold such norms exert. *A Matter of Detail* does, in fact, neatly resolve the tensions involving Hajrabai’s mobility within the first fifth of the novel. Hajrabai reveals her Jewishness to her other daughters and they, unlike Sara, the eldest, take the news in stride, an ability Hajrabai attributes to the fact that “[l]iving in New York had made them view things quite differently” than if they had remained Karachiites like Sara (Naqvi 118). With this complication smoothed, Hajrabai can move back permanently to 43-G and resume her life of prominence as Rezzak’s first wife. In other words, order is restored thanks to the resolution of tensions. By relegating Hajrabai’s Jewishness to and resolving the conflicts it sparks within the domestic sphere, Naqvi’s novel detaches the character’s mobility, her ability to move through Karachi as a non-Muslim, from larger concerns of public order and the processes through which an order achieves durability.

Notably, interrelations with a larger public are missing from Hajrabai’s efforts to re-animate her non-Muslim minority identity. Her story – from her

elopement with Rezzak in the years immediately after partition to her roles as first wife and bari-ma in the novel's present – tracks increasingly inward to the domestic. The novel's domestic turn or, more precisely, its resolution of the tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim, and their relations to places within this sphere marks a retreat from a transformative engagement with the dominant social order. Thus, in some contrast to the imaginative alternatives *Cracking India* provides, *A Matter of Detail* corrals the interrelations that create orders, than enable mobilities, that maintain productive tensions within strict parameters, offering a starkly more circumscribed spatial vision than did Jinnah himself.

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