Chapter III

History and Body

The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs...

—Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.

The question of finding appropriate images of nationhood is a highly contested and ideologically far-reaching issue. For the emergence of new images promote alternate ways of envisioning the nation as a social construct and facilitate the advancement of traditionally undervalued social groups as well as the potential demotion of formerly powerful groups. Rewriting of history and the re-narration of the nation from perspectives which are not overwhelmed by dominant paradigms have played crucial roles in producing the changing picture of India as evident from the discussion in the previous chapter. These changes in the representation of history and nation seek to address questions that engulf communities and people within the nation, questions like what kind of social and political entity India is and should be. The nation and history are changing, and the anxiety generated by change underscores the need for an image or model of nationhood that would enable one to gain a purchase on the developments taking place.

Rushdie says we need new metaphors to write and understand or imagine the nation. This project of imaging the nation in alternate ways has been addressed quite distinctively and forcefully by many Indian English writers. As we have already seen in the last two chapters, these texts are engaged in a fundamentally ideological conflict over how to represent the nation. The arguments put forth in this chapter go to the extent of implying that the dominant image of Indian nationhood to which these writers subscribe is not that of the land but the body. The novels by these writers intervene in the ideologically charged issue of imaging the nation by making powerful use of the body metaphor as a way of assessing the severe social problems
afflicting postcolonial India. The writers attempt to make sense of the disintegration and dissolution of the social body through the exploration of the grotesque condition and dissolution of the fictional bodies.

This chapter would examine how Indian English novels reproduce the strategies by which the history of the sub-continent is represented through the "body". This chapter presents a sustained discussion of the impact of history, in case of these novels mostly disruptive and traumatic history, on the "body." The most important questions of agency of the oppressed, the colonized and the marginalized, and of postcolonial identity can, to a large extent, be tackled through a close reading of the corporeal metaphors deployed in these texts, because, as Stallybras and White contends "the body cannot be thought separately from the social formation".¹

Corporeal imageries are abundantly employed by these authors in making sense of the trauma, violence, chaos, and cruelty of history. Like most postcolonial writers from other regions, these writers self-consciously present history as registered on the body. Representations of markings on individual bodies (scars, diseases, dismemberments, mutilations, and losing of the "body") along with representations of internalized responses to body (impaired self-image, mental ailments, fear, ambivalence) that we find in these texts can be read as commentaries on the state (condition, health, corruption, cruelty, injustice) of the body politic. By foregrounding the fictional interface of body and history, these novels highlight the corporealizing process of Indian history. A close reading of these texts shows that they are thoroughly imbued with an insistent corporeality where the body functions mnemonically.

The body or corporeality is of significant importance in postcolonial literature and theory. In her book Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel, Sara Upstone argues that "postcolonial texts aim to magically reconfigure the body's significance in a way that marks the ultimate reduction of spatial scales, as the site of greatest colonisation becomes a resource facilitating the most powerful statements of resistance".² The body is a vital site by means of which structures of power, knowledge, meaning and desire get established.Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observe:

In a more general way the 'fact' of the body is a central feature of the post-colonial, standing as it does metonymically for all the 'visible' signs of difference, and their varied forms of cultural and social inscription, forms often either
undervalued, overdetermined or even totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse.³

Minorities and the colonized, the oppressed suffer bodily subjugation in the hands of the colonizer and dominant power structures. Not only colonization, but history in general abuse the body, and the body itself becomes a literal text on which some of the most graphic and scatological messages of history get written. Again in the words of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin,

"The body...has become then the literal site on which resistance and oppression have struggled, with the weapons being in both cases the physical signs of cultural difference, veils and wigs, to use Kadiatu Kenneh's terms, symbols and literal occasions of the power struggles of the dominator and dominated for possession of control and identity".⁴

In the previous chapters we have discussed the sort of historical narratives and historical shapes that these texts present. This chapter concerns itself with a somewhat different but very relevant line of argument which would, it is hoped, further supplement the main thesis: that the novels under the present study engage with not only historical shape but also body shapes. This chapter explores how grotesque realism of these texts, also play, distortion, exaggeration and deformation of body shapes, wounds, scars, markings, sickness, highlight and support their visions of history. Bodies in these novels are inscribed with historical conflicts and paradoxes, and as such they are crucial for comprehending the visions of history that the writers attempt to represent. The contestation of nationalist history and the nationalist construction of a unitary, monologic India attempted by these writers have mostly been framed in body imageries and metaphors. Salman Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children is a prime example of this where Nehruvian concept of nation and history as proposed in The Discovery of India has been disrupted by Rushdie's extravagant body metaphors. By focusing on an India "riven by all sorts of conflicts and contradictions literalized in the disintegrating body and spirit of its central protagonist,"Midnight's Children rejects Nehru's bourgeois nationalist history and its attempts to shape a unified history of India.⁵ The corporeal imageries in these novels create the picture of an

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India that is suffering from the maladies of communal, economic, and ideological conflicts and rifts.

This chapter mainly explores body images in terms of Bakhtin's grotesque realism. It goes on to examine how this grotesque realism played on the site of the body problematizes the totalizing structure and meaning in historiography and the nation itself. In the previous chapters, we have already discussed how alternative historiography of these texts disrupts the fixity and monologism of official totalizing History. They also point to the possibilities of opening up spaces for different discourses. This process of disruption and creation of new structure and meaning of historiography goes hand in hand with grotesque realism.

It will be argued that "The traditional historiographic trope of 'the body politic' is undermined by stressing the discontinuous and excessive nature of the body". The broken, fractured bodies in these texts, on the one hand, metaphorize the postcolonial nation with all its hegemonic tendencies to subjugate, control, and limit the pluralistic essence of Indian identity, and on the other hand, the excessive and carnivalesque nature of the bodies subvert and contest hegemonic power structures and discourses, be it colonial or postcolonial. The excessive bodies in these historical novels are seen "to imply that the body politic is not a closed and definite form". While these historical novels project history as discontinuous, fragmented and not contained by the logic of linear objectivity, the excessive body becomes the preferred image to show "the unruliness of the history...of the country...." Eating and other bodily functions also play crucial role in this re-presentation of history and the nation. Next to grotesque functions also play crucial role in this re-presentation of history and the nation. Next to grotesque realism, this chapter will explore politics of visibility and the process of 'othering' or marginalization on the basis of corporeal difference. Finally, the chapter examines the depiction of wounding, sickness, markings, scars, torture, and disabilities in the bodies to show how the violent effects of history are seen on the texts of individual bodies.

1.

In any discussion of Indian English writing, it has rarely been pointed out that the narrative styles of much of this writing employ grotesque images and tropes that can be related
both to grotesque satire and the Bakhtinian "grotesque realism". The idea of grotesque was brought into prominence by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. In his formulation, the grotesque encompasses a wide range of meanings from an aesthetic category denoting fantastic hybrid creatures to ideas of corporeality connected with popular/folk rituals like the carnival, and finally a representational mode that involves exaggerations, excesses, caricatures and other forms of linguistic excesses. Grotesque as a literary mode is an effective means for satirizing and critiquing social and political conditions. Among various definitions of the grotesque in literature, Bakhtin’s theory of grotesque realism is chosen as the main groundwork for this chapter. Before we go on to explore the employment of grotesque realism and the corporeal images employed by the writers, it would be useful to outline some of the basic tenets of Bakhtin which are relevant to my discussion.

Mikhail Bakhtin proposes “his grotesque realism” in his famous work *Rabelais and his World*. He emphasizes its focus on the material bodily principle in the context of the culture of carnivals of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Corporeality plays a key role in the concept of “grotesque realism”, and this corporeality centres around images of food, drinks, defecation, sexual and other bodily activities. Bakhtin reveals how the human grotesque physical features are sites of social and political conflicts. In Bakhtin’s idealized account of the carnival, the stress on the collective or communal aspect of corporeality as opposed to the “private egotistic form” is prominent.⁹

Bakhtin’s idea of the grotesque and his idealized account of the carnival emphasize the functions of the “lower bodily stratum”. The notion of the carnivalesque celebrates the crowd and emphasizes resistance, disruption and subversion through parody and satire of structures of power. Like the mechanism of the carnival, the emphasis on the “lower bodily stratum” also effects a kind of degradation which is a debunking of the dignity usually associated with all things high, spiritual, ideal, abstract:

To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, pregnancy and birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect but also a regenerating one.¹⁰
Connected to this idea of the joyous celebratory aspects of carnival degradation is his notion of the “grotesque body”. The grotesque image points to that which protrudes from the body, to all that seeks to go out beyond the body’s confines. Special attention, Bakhtin writes, is given to the “shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside”.11 This “grotesque body” is a key element in Bakhtin’s theory of carnival, which he developed based on his studies of early European folk culture. In *Rabelais and his World* he writes:

[T]he essential roles belongs to those parts of the grotesque body, in which it conceives a new, second body: the bowels and the phallus. These two areas play the leading role in the grotesque image, and it is precisely for this reason they are predominantly subject to positive exaggeration, to hyperbolization.12

This description applies very accurately to the grotesque, excessive bodies employed by writers like Rushdie, Sealy, Chandra and Mistry, which through an overemphasis on bodily functions, excretions, and sexual acts can cause the destabilizing, scandalous behaviour that they use to subvert, and desacrilize hegemonic discourses and established hierarchies. In their project of unseating of colonial and nationalist historiography, as well as their scathing critique of the postcolonial, neo-colonial nation-state, these grotesque bodies play crucial functions as they disrupt and destabilize the monologic ideal of hegemonic powers and discourses.

The grotesque bodies in these texts, though, victimized by power and harried at the hands of history, show their subversive potential by intervening effectively in to dominant discourse. It will be suggested that the narrative styles of these writers often straddle both these notions of the grotesque. These abused, broken, grotesque, excessive bodies provide an impetus for a subversive and debunking critique of prevailing socio-political conditions and historiography. Mostly, this critique is directed against the postcolonial nation that is governed by ruthless autocratic authority in tandem with a corrupt bureaucracy. In this case, the bodies are very much grotesque products and victims of, and at the same time in contestation with history. On the other level they employ a Bakhtinian grotesque realism of collective corporeality of the subaltern class.

It was Spinoza who contended that “a body is not a fixed unit with a stable or static internal structure. On the contrary, a body is a dynamic relationship whose internal structure and
external limits are subject to change. Deleuze draws on Spinoza and works through Nietzsche to define the power of the body as its capacity to affect and be affected. This power, according to Deleuze, underlines the receptivity of the body in its process of becoming and dynamic change. This is a useful insight when we are about to undertake an examination of history through the body. Lisa Helps in her attempt to map Canadian body history incorporates the ideas of both Deleuze and Foucault:

...when we think of the body through Deleuze as a desiring organ whose power lies in its capacity to engage with, to affect, and be affected by other bodies, we can conceive of the body as the motor of history. Undeniably, however, the body is also a product of history, a product or an effect of systems and technologies of power and disciplinary regimes.

In unravelling the corporeal dimension in Indian English writing, this idea of the body as a “motor” and “product” of history is immensely fruitful.

Midnight’s Children is a highly corporeal book. This novel, more than any other novel, displays the instability and dynamism of the body, and its ability to affect and be affected by currents of history. The birth, growth, maturity and the final fissure of Saleem and his body parallel that of postcolonial India itself. As Neil ten Kortenaar says, “The organic metaphor of the body that contains the members of the nation is central to Midnight’s Children.” The novel is actually a debunking of the standard narrative of Indian history. It exposes the fictionality inherent in the national history. Rushdie does that by exposing, bit by bit, the fictionality of Saleem’s pedigree. The physical abuse, sickness, battering, and grotesqueness suffered by Saleem and other characters are symptomatic of the newly independent nation.

The body of Saleem is the body politic of the postcolonial nation itself. Besides Saleem’s and India’s fates being linked, their physical features also resemble each other: Saleem’s facial traits cast a fun analogue to the subcontinent of India. His geography teacher Zagallo calls his face “human geography” because it resembles the whole map of India. As Zagallo sees it, with the birthmark on the right ear embodies East Pakistan, and the stained left cheek is West Pakistan (“Pakistan is a stain on the face of India!”); a drip from his nose represents Ceylon (MC 231-32). History of the nation has been narrativized in the novel as the record of a body’s growth. The
growth of Saleem, from a foetus, intact, whole, to the final bursting point is metonymic of the
growth of the nation itself.

Rushdie extensively employs the organic metaphors of the body and bodily senses to
explore and comment on the new historical and political realities of the subcontinent. Speaking of
this centrality of the alternative register of bodily perceptions in the novel, Jean M. Kane says:

His condition underscores the impossibility of the novel's imaginative and political
project to fashion a nation from the diverse subcontinent. Saleem's fatalistic
contention is finally realized when he disintegrates as a result of this disease. His
chronicle alone remains as the material container of national meaning, for the
nation dies with Saleem's body.¹⁷

Rushdie is definitely influenced by Rabelais (as Bakhtin was) which is evident from the
abundance of grotesque bodies in Midnight's Children. Rushdie, in an interview, acknowledges
his debt to Rabelais, along with Gogol and Boccaccio—writers whose "outburst of large-scale
fantasized, satiric, anti-epic tradition" has influenced his works. Most of the characters in
Midnight's Children are "in some way broken" and they are not "fully rounded;" Saleem's body
is the most grotesque and deformed among all characters.¹⁸ Al-Azm even dubs Rushdie as
"Muslim Rabelais" and he sees in Rushdie's writing "the spirit of Rabelais' debunking of the
fundamental dogmas, sacraments and narratives of an outmoded medieval scholastic
Christianity".¹⁹ Both Rabelais and Rushdie creates satiric "portraiture of contemporary politics
and society," and both of them ridicule authority by mingling of "the sacred and the profane, the
sublime and the ridiculous".²⁰

Bakhtin's idea of grotesque realism focuses on unusual physical enlargement,
exaggeration and caricatures. Grotesque realism is characterized with bodily excess. The
protruding body parts (genital organs, breasts, the nose, knees etc.) in grotesque realism are
characterized with "excessiveness" and "superabundance,"²¹ and they seek to transcend beyond
the body's confinement, transgressing all limits and boundaries of the body. Rushdie clearly
subscribes to this notion of transgression through grotesque realism, as evident from his notion of
excessiveness of Indian reality portrayed through his historiography. This sense of excess defies any attempt at confinement, both in historiography and body parts.

Saleem continually emphasizes his grotesque condition. Saleem’s grotesque physical features are described in Midnight’s Children as the following: “cucumber-nose stainface chinlessness horn-temples bandy-legs finger-loss monk’s-tonsure” (MC345). When Saleem founds his Midnight’s Children’s Conference, he sends out visual messages of his face with friendly intention; however, his psychic self-portrait is deformed “as hideous as a portrait could be, featuring a wondrously enlarged nose, a completely non-existent chin and giant stains on each temple” (MC251).

The grotesque nature and physical deformities have their parallel in the body politic of the nation and currents of history. The grotesque growth and expansion of Saleem’s body is a metaphor of the excessive, uncontainable nature of the Indian reality. Saleem’s story acquires gargantuan proportion because “there are so many stories, too many, such as excess of intertwined lives”; “the raw unshaped material” (MC 199) he uses consists of “teeming multitudes” (MC 121). Saleem is a “swallower of lives” (MC 4), and he can sense the “consumed multitudes...jostling and shoving” inside him (MC 4). The India that he narrates is characterized by excessiveness. To retain his individuality amidst the overwhelming crowd, Saleem consciously tries to make himself grotesque because the grotesque is always distinguished from the others. Saleem tells us:

If I seem a little bizarre, remember the wild profusion of my inheritance...perhaps, if one wishes to remain an individual in the midst of the teeming multitudes, one must make oneself grotesque. (MC 109)

The speed and scale of his enlargement is a point to this. Right from the time of his birth, we are not allowed to forget the fact of Saleem’s grotesque nature; he adds to his deformities as he grows:

Form the very first days I embarked upon an heroic programme of self enlargement... By mid-September I had drained my mother’s not inconsiderable
breasts of milk. A wet-nurse was briefly employed but she retreated, dried out as a
desert only after a fortnight... I moved on to the bottle and downed vast quantities
of the compound... I expanded almost visibly, enlarging day by day...Waste matter
was evacuated copiously from the appropriate orifices; from my nose flowed a
shining cascade of goo. Armies of handkerchiefs, regiments of nappies found their
way into the large washing-chest of my mother’s bathroom... (MC 124)

This is an excellent example of Bakhtin’s grotesque body which is always unfinished,
always in the making, and transgresses its own limits. T. N. Dhar says: “Saleem’s grotesquerie is
Rushdie’s ploy for gifting him with extraordinary omniscience: for making him see, know, and
report more than an ordinary mortal can, a substantial part of which is national history”. At one
point, Saleem says that his life “has been transmuted into grotesquery by the irruption into it of
history” (MC 57).

Descriptions of physical enlargement abound in Midnight’s Children. Saleem says that
Indians have the natural tendency of expanding or growing larger as they age (MC 294).
Reverend Mother grows with alarming rapidity “until she resembled the Sankara Acharya
mountain” (MC 311). From the time of his birth, Saleem grows with vertiginous speed. The
healthy expanding baby Saleem reflects a generally healthy young Indiancontinent full of
enthusiasm and promise after two centuries of foreign dominance. But as Saleem advances in
years, and with him the young republic, all this promise and dreams begin to collapse; the cracks
in the body politic leaving their marks on Saleem’s body.

Saleem’s grotesque double Shiva, a rat-faced youth with filed-down teeth, has two of the
biggest knees the world has ever seen. His face is of “grotesque proportions” (MC 251). Saleem’s
son also fits the definition of protruding body in Bakhtinian grotesque realism. Like Saleem, he
grows at an enormous speed; he is said to be “going to be bigbig; a real ten-chip whopper for
sure” (MC 479). Saleem’s son has grotesquely large ears. Saleem says that “elephantiasis”
attacks his son in the ears instead of the nose. Both Saleem and his son’s expanding bodies,
Saleem’s large nose, his son’s large protruding ears, and Shiva’s huge knees—all strive to
embody the excess in historiography, and the burgeoning Indian excessive reality. They are
excessive contents that transcend the body confinement, and they indicate the futility of all-
inclusive containment and any totalizing drive.
In Midnight’s Children, Rushdie extensively employs the metaphor of the nose, skin, ear, and sight. One of the earliest body images to occur in the novel, one that becomes a recurring motif (among other leit-motifs) throughout the text, is that of the nose. One fine morning Aadam Aziz kneels down to pray and breaks his nose on the prayer mat. At the beginning of the novel Aadam Aziz is told by Tai the boatman that his protuberant nose is

a nose to start a family on, my princeling. There’d be no mistaking whose brood they were. Mughal Emperors would have given their right hands for noses like that one. There are dynasties waiting inside it...like snot. (MC 14)

As Saleem grows up, he says “between my eyes, it [the nose] mushroomed outwards and downwards, as if all my expansionist forces, driven out of the rest of my body...my nose bloomed like a prize marrow” (MC 176). The nose helps both Aadam Aziz and his grandson Saleem to sense winds of change in the public sphere. The nose of Aadam Aziz begins to itch whenever something significant is about to happen. Saleem’s sensitivity to historical events and changes is made possible by his telepathic sinuses which help him to smell dangers brought on by currents of history. This receptivity to history implicates his private participation in larger historical events:

Nasal passages had started everything in my head.....nasal fluid had been sniffed upupup into somewhere-that-nose fluid shouldn’t go....the connection had been made which released my voices. (MC 303)

Despite the ability of “sniffing-out-the-truth, of smelling-what-was-in-the-air, of following trails” (MC 307), “nose-given telepathy” does not help in surviving the relentless, destructive tide of history. The powerful smells of history draw him into the vortex of chaotic historical process. He becomes a plaything of history and ultimately he shatters completely. His power of nasal telepathy gets interrupted in a sinus operation at a crucial moment of history as India goes to war with China. Losing his nasal connection, he experiences silence, disaffection, disenchantment as India gets defeated in the hands of China.
In Midnight’s Children, Saleem equates his olfactory ability to the craft of writing by saying “what is required for chutnification? ...above all a nose capable of discerning the hidden languages of what-must-be-pickled, its humors and messages and emotions” (MC: 530). Images of grotesque bodies or body features in the novel are closely associated with Indian national history. The deformed body of Saleem connects him to the main currents of Indian history, and in this regard it is his nose that steers the narration.

Apart from the nose, the skin metaphor is also extensively used in the novel. The skin of Saleem is most affected by history and the relentless pressure of the crowd. Judith Halberstam says “Skin is at once the most fragile of boundaries and the most stable of signifiers,” and in Saleem’s case the skin signifies the collective and interconnected life of memory, hopes, fears, narratives, and the multitudes of the nation. The skin metaphor is used throughout to make sense of the changing socio-political complexities of the nation since independence. The story is also held together by “used skin of the metonymically proliferating life of the nation”.

As the story progresses, we see that the skin of Saleem’s body is cracking, and this hysterical skin of Saleem mirrors the pathologies of the postcolonial nation. Sara Suleri, in The Rhetoric of English India, points out that Midnight’s Children takes as its shaping narrative premise “the centrifugal divisibility that the idea of nationalism produces in the Indian subcontinent”:

Once the anachronistic idiom of religious difference is rendered coterminous with the rhetoric of independence, that narrative emerging from the curiosities of such historical conflation must pursue its most brilliantly literal query: what does it mean, for a populace to be born at the degree zero of its national history. In Midnight’s Children ... such oddities of national chronology translate into infinite possibilities for further partition, so that the eros of nation cannot but represent, for the subcontinental psyche, a somewhat titillating induction into the idiom of perpetual separations, or the perpetual recuperation of loss.

The fissured skin of Saleem is a metonym for the inevitable and internal divisibility of the nation. The cracking up of the protagonist’s body parallels the rapid disintegration of the democratic, liberal ideology of the sub-continental narrative. Saleem says:
Please believe that I am falling apart. I have begun to crack up like an old jug—that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams. In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment. (MC 37)

The grotesque becoming or expansion of Saleem’s body is a metonym for the excessive, uncontainable nature of Indian reality and identity. Against the official drive for containment and fixity, Saleem in his gargantuan growth and expansion celebrates the multitude, the crowd. If in his becoming, Saleem celebrates resistance, the cracking of his skin and final fission suggest that systems of power and history are also related to the body’s unmaking.

Devoid of the telepathic connection Saleem, for the first time in his life discovers “the astonishing delights of possessing a sense of smell” (MC 306). After mastering the physical smells, Saleem experiences different kinds of smells, smell of emotions, prejudices, and attitudes. It grants Saleem the “nasal freedom to inhale a very great deals more than the scents of purely physical origin with which the rest of the human race has chosen to be content” (MC 307). The time Saleem spends in Pakistan is one of intrigue, discord, and confusion. His senses of smell and taste make him experience an array of loathed flavours in the diseased reality of Pakistan, as he goes on ingesting “the birianis of disension and the nargisi koftas of discord” (MC 330).

Apart from the three principal corporeal images of the nose, the ear, and the skin, Rushdie also employs the images of sight and taste in narrating the ongoing drama of a nation. Vision in Midnight’s Children is always partial and faulty. Rushdie, in the novel, emphasizes that the history of the nation is full of holes and fragments; what is shown is simply not the complete picture. Saleem once says his narration is guided only by the memory of a “large white bed sheet with a roughly circular hole some seven inches in diameter cut into the center” (MC 4). By this perforated bed sheet, Saleem indicates that there is not a single perspective which can claim an all-comprising view for the variegated reality and not a standardized containment for the overwhelming excessive Indian content. Nancy E. Batty comments in “The Art of Suspense:
Rushdie’s 1001 (Mid-) Nights” on Rushdie’s narrative that it follows the viewpoint of a “perforated sheet, concealing the whole while revealing a part”.26

Aadam is allowed to examine Naseem through a perforated sheet so that he could see only the supposedly afflicted parts of her body. The implication is that woman cannot be seen whole, but a more serious point being implied is that India can be seen, and understood, only in parts, in fragments. Rushdie implies that the excessive reality of India cannot be contained within a unified, concrete historiography. This partial accessibility of facts through vision is related to Rushdie’s idea of historical truth. Rushdie himself, in Imaginary Homelands, speaks of himself as someone “forced by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties”.27Rushdie, in the novel, attempts to represent a “plural history”28 of India, where nothing is fixed, unitary, whole and complete; where truth is always partial, digressive, and in the process of transformation. Kumkum Sangari says that such a model “privileges faulty sight, peripheral or incomplete vision, limited perception, deliberate fallibility, and the splinter effect”.29

The sense of taste is enumerated in the concept of ‘chutnification’ or pickling. Chutnification in the novel is “shorthand as it were for a postcolonial aesthetic judgement that accommodates diverse and conflicting multitudes”.30 The gastronomic metaphors become metaphors of history. “Pickle fumes...stimulate the juices of memory” (MC 166) and it is in the pickle factory that Saleem re-collects his life and the life of the nation and makes an attempt of “chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time!” (MC 459-60). Jean M. Kane says, “Just as Saleem is India, he is the chutney jar, the text, and the family, a chain of identifications that aligns each term with all the others”.31

1. Allan Sealy’s The Trotter Namaand Vikram Chandra’s Red Earth and Pouring Rain also depict this excessive, gargantuan character of India by telling stories of epic proportion with intertwined lives and histories that defy the linear dictates of conventional historiography and the fixity of nationalist narratives. Here we encounter characters and stories that resist and mock the hegemonic urge to contain and privilege. The fluidity and carnivalesque dynamism of the body that we saw in Rushdie are also evident in these two texts. This corporeal fluidity is one way of subverting the fixity and restraining nature of nationalism and other hegemonic structures.

Like Saleem in Midnight's Children, Justin Trotter, the founder of the Trotter clan in India is a gargantuan figure with a voracious appetite for food. Unlike the later Anglo-Indians who did

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not enjoy political power, the Great Trotter was a man of power who played crucial role in colonial power games. The later Anglo-Indians were insulted by the British and Indians alike for their dark skins and impure pedigree. But Justin Trotter suffered no such anxiety and even though he went native to a great extent, he was revered by the colonials. Sealy shows this man of power as a grotesquely large man in love of food. Men in power are characterized by a voracious appetite for food, for sex, and for material wealth; their big bellies serve as symbol of their status.

The first Trotter never had to confront the disturbing question of belonging in this new land, far away from Europe. He made his vast fortune and fell in love with India, and decided to spend his life here, despite retaining the colonialist’s characteristic of exploitation and cruel financial exaction. As time passed and he had earned fortune and power, Justin Trotter tried to acquire Indian ways of life. Trying hard to become a native, he took to wearing Indian clothes and smoking hookah. But, though he was never ridiculed as being a half-caste, he himself knew all too well that he would never be able to become one of the natives, and all his efforts in this regard would go in vain: “Justin (who) had just decided that he could never, no matter how hard he tried, turn Indian (any more than he could revert to a European), and it was best if he were reconciled to the fact and became a third thing…” (TTN 195). Throughout the novel, Sealy emphasizes the hyphenated condition of these in-between people. Despite his growing hyphenated condition, Justin Trotter was perfectly at ease in his adopted country.

The process of neglect and dispossession that started with the Next Trotter branch, starting with Mik, had to do with the fact that they were country-born, had different skin complexion, and so they were not quite Europeans as to enjoy the privileges accorded to pure-blooded colonialists. Sealy shows how the contributions and achievements of the Anglo-Indians were ignored and relegated to the dustbins of history, and it is shown metaphorically in terms of missing, invisible bodies.

The predicament of the Anglo-Indian community had much to do with the way they looked—very unlike the Europeans, not quite like the natives, and the distinctive body of these people was a result of history. E. M. Collingham’s book The Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj (2001) argues that the British experience of the Raj was intensely physical. The long history of the Raj and Englishman’s constant and inescapable entanglement with all things Indian produced distinctively Anglo-Indian bodies that, despite their pretensions to a metropolitan “Britishness,” were indelibly marked by their colonial Indian experiences.
According to Collingham, the Anglo-Indian bodies so constituted articulated the changes in the expression, manifestations, and strategies of British power in India from the nineteenth century to the end of British rule.\textsuperscript{32} It can be inferred from such assumptions that the history of the Anglo-Indians, from their original glorious rise to their decline in the later part of the colonial period and in the postcolonial times can be read and understood in bodily terms or from the perspective of History’s impact, effects and manipulations on the Anglo-Indian bodies.

The representative figure of the next generation of Trotters, Mik, starts getting blue in his skin during childhood, and he completely takes to the native ways. He has many grotesque adventures with native women and Sealy elaborately describes his sexual exploits and his blue male organ:

There the boy and the half-Macedonian nymphets would sport, thrashing about from pool to pool... At the end of a year, these revels had turned the Second Trotter completely blue. The rest of his wild strong body now matched the blue spigot with which he had been born... (TTN 153-54).

Mik is even compared to Lord Krishna after he had left home to escape his father’s stern measures: “...reports had already begun to trickle back to Sans Souci of blue revels and god-sightings at cowdusk by girls returning to their villages along the road to Calcutta” (TTN 156). Later Mik became a surveyor and travels to far places like Isphahan and Turin: “The blueness of his skin which had returned briefly in the snows had long since left him, so that the soles of his feet were yellow once more and the rest of his person (the monumental member apart) a dark khaki” (TTN 198).

He was a country born, and now he was turning into a complete native in colour. Mik’s father, Justin, a colonial master himself, was not happy about his son looking increasingly like a native. He beat up the boy and restrained him from playing in the pools, but with no result. Justin was afraid that “If he grows any darker he will be invisible” (TTN 154). Of course, in due course, Mik became invisible to the British, because in spite of his loyal service to the British, he was never allowed to forget that he was a country born and dark-skinned, and so he would never be allowed to enjoy the privilege and power of a European. Because of his dark skin, Mik and
countless Anglo-Indians remained neglected, forgotten lives as the grotesque “Others” of the white colonial Europeans.

Just before Mik was to leave for India after his training in the Military Academy in England, the Court of Directors of the East India Company issued a resolution that “no person the son of a Native Indian shall henceforth be appointed by this Court in employment in the Civil, Military or Marine services of the Company. Standing Order”. (TTN 201, Italics in original). This was, in sum, the content of the actual Minute of the Resolution taken on April 19, 1791. This was the beginning of Mik’s further ordeal to come as a result of his being a country-born.

Mik would have lost his job there and then; but the major who was struck by Mik’s potential as spy and soldier, intervened and convinced the authority by highlighting not only “the irrefragible necessity of a khaki skin for British military espionage in India”, but also the financial expense incurred on Mik’s training (TTN 201). Finally, the financial consideration moved the Directors to relent, and Mik was allowed to proceed to India on sufferance. Mik had been taunted and jeered by fellow officers all the way back to India.

His stint under the British flag was ended by another order from the Governor-general in Council, Calcutta, Fort William, on the 21st of April, 1795. But Mik was not the only one suffering on account of this new order. It was an order that rendered many Anglo-Indian officers jobless, and turned them bitter against the British, under whom they had been serving until then. Mik had evidently a satisfying time serving the Maratha princes, but such satisfaction was short-lived. After a crucial battle against the East India Company (where Mik and his father the Great Trotter ranged on the opposite sides as enemies and Mik lost one of his hands from a wound by his father’s cannon ball, described by Scaly in the manner of Firdausi’s Sohrab and Rustam), Mik had to pay another big price for being a so called “half-caste” when a further warning The Governor-General in Council, Calcutta at Fort William ended his military under the Indian princes.

All through his military career, Mik had to contend with and suffer for this perception on the part of the British. The fact that he was a country-born haunted him for the rest of his life. Despite being a great soldier and showing all respect and passion for the regimented life Mik had to run from one camp to another as the British never trusted his colour of the skin. This pattern continued throughout history as we see the later generations of Trotters continuing to suffer for this.
Sealy brings out the complexity of the physical dimension by an intertextuality of Kipling’s Kim and Mik. These examples show how Sealy intends to not only speak out but correct the abuse and wrongs done to the Anglo-Indian community by the pure-blooded, white-skinned British. In other words, in Sealy’s novel, the Anglo-Indians, maligned by imperialist Kipling and the British in general, body forth as a community of people that cannot be ignored because the very presence of this hybrid people problematize the concept of a unified unproblematic Indian identity. The dark body of the Anglo-Indian is also a mimic threat to the racial pride of the British colonialists.

In a section of The Trotter-Nama entitled “Another Kahani” (TTN 170-73) Sealy offers an alternative to the picaresque travels of Kim and his Lama in which Mik, rejected both by the Company and the Marathas alike, embarks on a “Little Game” (unlike Kipling’s “Great Game”) (TTN 172) in the company of an old Tibetan monk. Whereas Kim and the lama had travelled along the Grand Trunk Road, Mik and the monk travel along the coastal route from Calcutta to Madras, lighting fires as they go:

Only towards the end did intelligence reports piece together a picture of the criminals’ mode of operation: a boy neither dark nor fair would appear in the town’s public offices asking if his father worked there. He would pass from one embarrassed firangi to the next and leave or be ejected. That night a fire would break out in the sonless offices… (TTN173).

What Sealy highlights here, in town after town, is the British denial of the hyphenated Anglo-Indians, their continued refusal to accept their mixed-blooded progeny as their own, while in Kipling’s novel the “white” Kim is embraced by his father’s old regiment.

In the second instance, the Indianized body features of Mik has been used by Sealy as a site of resistance to both the colonial racial pride and abuse, and the power of politics and history that tends to see bodies in a narrow stereotype gaze. Elizabeth Grosz has observed that despite being a site of knowledge-power and a target of control and constraint, the human body also exerts an unpredictable and powerful threat to codification and control. She calls such dynamic, resistant bodies “volatile bodies”—bodies who are not simply passive objects upon which
regimes of power are played out, but display capacity for protest and self-representation in alternate ways.\textsuperscript{33}

Sealy displaces the authorial position of Kim by making Mik totally Indianized in his body features. While Kipling emphasises Kim's whiteness as a marker of racial superiority, Mik as an Anglo-Indian is of dark complexion. Mik is a grotesque product of history who poses challenge to the racial pride and exclusivist construction of identity of white Europeans. In celebrating and highlighting the corporeal differences of Mik and other Anglo-Indians from the colonial British, and at the same time in providing them a counter-canonical status in the novel, Sealy attempts to recuperate this colonised subject's body since it had been rendered insignificant, invisible, maimed, ignored—and to transform its signification and its subjectivity. The very fact that these other bodies exist as a result of historical turns of events, is a strong reminder that an oppositional embodiment are always at work which resist an "imposed, imperialist calculation of otherness".\textsuperscript{34}

Vikram Chandra's novel \textit{Red Earth and Pouring Rain} also presents us characters that defy the corporeal fixity and highlights the human spirit's refusal to be confined by its body. In this process, these excessive bodies resist the hegemonic desire to contain and classify bodies into neat, convenient categories. The human-monkey reincarnations and consciousness beyond death depicted in the novel are supreme instances of the fluidity of bodies. In the words of Upstone, such bodies "undermine any absolute categorization...a refusal to be hemmed in by conventional boundaries or limits reflected in a flexible, choric body".\textsuperscript{35} At the same time, it must be remembered that, such transgressive bodies are marked with oppression, yet they display possibilities rather than trauma, as we have seen in the case of Anglo-Indian bodies like that of Mik and Queenie in \textit{The Trotter-Nama}. These bodies are victims of historical events and trends. Saleem, Tai, Mik, the other Trotters, Sanjay—all of them are victims. Their grotesque condition is a result of historical suffering. In the novels of Mistry, Kesavan, Baldwin and Sahgal also we have such mutilated, sick, dying, mad bodies harried by history. But in most of the cases, these bodies, by going against the normative and imposed categorization, disrupts the high status of classical, ideal bodies, and offer an alternative perspective to history, power and the nation. We shall discuss these scarred, harried bodies later in the chapter.

As we have seen in the novels of Rushdie and Sealy, the bodies in Chandra's novel also keep changing and transforming themselves. They are always in the process of becoming. In the
previous chapter we discussed how these texts are re-defining Indian identity as plural, multiplicitous, and continually renewing itself against the dictate of narrow nationalism. In Chandra’s novel this project of redefining identity as something that keeps changing is shown through nomadic bodies. In this regard Alexandru says:

The process of redefining identity as a matter of becoming through figurations and mappings within changing boundaries determines changes in the body...³⁶

Chandra’s novel dramatizes the effects of colonization and the English language through corporeal images. It is through these images that a subversive agenda is offered by the narrative. Especially in the character of Sanjay, Chandra reveals the resentment for and contestation of the linguistic politics of the colonizers. Sanjay, though working for Markline, inserts hidden fonts to undermine the meaning of Markline’s book. When he was about to be caught in his rebellious act, he swallows the metal fonts. Much later, during the Sepoy Mutiny, these metal fonts start falling from his body in the shape of letters which are used as hurling weapons by the rebel Indian soldiers. Sanjay understands the power of the English language as he realizes that it is through this that the British are conquering India. He is ready to pay the ultimate price to master the English language. When he loses all battles to defeat the British, he asks Yama, the god of Death to grant him immortality to be able to go on fighting and take revenge for all the humiliations, Yama asks for a terrible price. He says to Sanjay: “You will be everything you want. You will never die. But you must give me, now, the thing that is most holy to you” (REPN 442). Sanjay knows what that thing is and does not flinch:

...Sanjay reached up, opened his mouth and jammed his fist inside, caught his tongue which squirmed away, held it roughly and pulled it, tore it out by the roots and flung it at Yama wet with blood. This time the pain was too great and Sanjay fell unconscious to the ground (REPN 442).

This not only emphasizes the grotesque subversive body but also fluidity of the human body which allows the powerless to fight back against the forces of control and dominance.
Apart from the grotesque elements and carnivalesque celebration of corporeal fluidity and disruptive excessiveness, these novels also incorporate the other important Bakhtinian emphasis on lower bodily stratum. Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* relates human grotesque physical features to social and political conflicts. Inspired by the pervasive images from bodily lower strata including intestines, urine, bleeding diarrhea, and excrements in François Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Bakhtin scrutinizes the material acts related to the functions of bodily human functions such as eating, drinking, defecation, and copulations into cultural and artistic contexts.

Besides protruding parts, another important feature of the grotesque bodies is the plentiful open orifices such as the nostril, mouth, and anus. Those orifices serve as entrances (for foods and air) and exits (for excrements) and generate the new-born lives; they are all vital for the sustaining of life because the body will not be able to function properly without those orifices. They are where “the main events in the life...the acts of the bodily drama, take place”37 and “passageways that ingest and communicate with the world”.38 Those open orifices are the places where the major events of life occur, such as the swallowing of foods and the defecation of excrements; therefore, open orifices are essential for vitality and nutrition to enter the body.

Clair Wills argues explains that Bakhtin emphasizes the openness in orifices of the grotesque body which has been steadily denied since the Renaissance.39 The grotesque body with open orifices opposes the classic body which is smooth and finished, with all orifices of it closed and all attributes of the unfinished body being carefully removed. Ann Jefferson claims that the classic body aims at “sealing the body’s orifices...smoothing out its convexities and moving it away from the thresholds at which the body either enters or leaves life” and it is also “sealed off both from the world which is its context and from other bodies”.40 The grotesque body provides a sharp contrast to the static ideal represented in classical Greek marbles. The classic body lacks life and energy because it lacks orifices and resists any change and newness.41

On the contrary, open orifices of the grotesque body render it “pregnant, abundant, procreative, and open to fertilization and conception”.42 Images of procreation, fertilization and conception showcase the sense of regeneration in Rushdie’s historiography. Bakhtin says that “the grotesque body...is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body”.43
In Midnight's Children we see the abundant use of the images of excrement, swallowing and of the mouth—an open orifice—all of which embody the regeneration of life. The image of mouth/swallowing is claimed by Bakhtin as related to death/birth at the same time. He explains this ambiguous relationship by the hell image on the medieval morality play stage, incarnated as monstrous jaws by which old life is devoured while from it another new life looms. Therefore, the hell-gate incarnated by the jaw image on the stage “swallows up and gives birth” simultaneously. Consequently, the mouth/swallowing image is linked to death and decay; it celebrates cycles of life and indicates eternal regeneration.

From the very beginning, Rushdie employs images of mouth/swallowing in Midnight's Children. According to Saleem, in the context of India, one cannot think of individual identity without referring to the crowd. This perception is linked to swallowing images when he says “to understand just one life, you have to swallow the world” (MC 121); the way Saleem understands things is by swallowing them.

The very act of narration and telling stories is linked to the image of eating and drinking in the novel. When Saleem tells his family stories, he says those stories have their “proper dietary laws,” and he is supposed to “swallow and digest only the permitted parts of it;” however, Saleem wants to “flout the laws of halal [Muslim] to arrive at the unspeakable part,” because deleting that part will “make the story less juicy” (MC 62). Stories are described as edible for readers. It is mentioned in chapter one that Saleem swallows stories from all folks in India then digests and reshapes them into his narration. The whole process of Saleem’s writing is also the process of digestion and defecation.

Drinking, eating are swallowing are all related to the mouth image, an open orifice of the Bakhtinian grotesque body. Saleem constantly applies swallowing images to his perception in Midnight's Children:

I [Saleem] am ingesting thumb-and-forefinger, swallowing the moment at which Aadam Aziz did not know whether he was Kashmiri or Indian; now I’m drinking Mercurochrome and stains the shape of hands which will recur in spilt betel-juice, and I’m gulping down Dyer, moustache and all. (MC 119)
Saleem loses his memory in the Sundarbans forest, but later regains parts of his memory when he is accidentally bitten by a transparent snake. He narrates his restored life stories to the soldiers and they “drink his life like leaf-tainted water” (MC 420).

Widely using mouth/swallowing images, Rushdie shows how grotesque bodies regenerate and procreate through open orifices. When Saleem is still a fetus in her mother’s womb, he “feeds on” humming bird’s “hum”; “fattening up on washing chest and the under-the-carpet love;” he “swallows Zulfikar’s dream;” a marriage disintegrates and feeds him and his aunt’s running away feeds him as well; all these events become his nutrition supporting his enlarging body and he swallows them all (MC 120). Bombay, though it looks like a hand, “it’s really a mouth, always open, always hungry, swallowing food and talent from everywhere else in India” (MC 142).

Saleem’s growth and expansion signify the ever-growing state of Indian reality. After Saleem digests so many stories, his body inevitably enlarges and finally approaches explosion into many minuscule particles as “history pours out of my [Saleem’s] fissured body” (MC 37). The readers sense the burgeoning vitality and Indian regeneration in Midnight’s Children from the images of the open orifices. Though Saleem’s broken body reflects the conflicts, disruption, and chaos in the newly independent India, it still burgeons and revitalizes resiliently due to its regenerative nature.

After acts of swallowing (mouth/an open orifice/the entrance for food), internal body organs function following digestion and defecation; the images of anus/excrement (an open orifice/the exit for excrement) is brought out. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin eulogizes the obscene excrement as the catalysis that refreshes the world and he highly praises Rabelais’ pervasive use of images of excrement, urine, and defecation. Bakhtin considers excrements like urine, dung etc. as “intermediates between earth and body;” after they are divided from bodies, they further nourish the soil and bring lives to the world.46

In Bakhtin’s opinions, not only do excrements nourish and transform the soil and regenerate other lives but the demise of any life-form will definitely fertilize other lives, and it is fair to say they re-live again in other forms. He takes the killing of the giant Abel as an example of the first death to fertilize the earth with his blood in history; another example is Pantagruel’s birth over his mother’s death in Gargantua and Pantagruel when the mother is suffocated to death by her gigantic baby.47 Death is fused with new birth—ending anticipate new beginnings; death

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and death throes, labor and childbirth are intimately interwoven in excrement images in grotesque realism.

In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie provides plentiful sensuous descriptions of odor and excrements. He describes the smell of urine and cow dung from the streets and slums. Rushdie mentioned that “India is a country with the smell and volume control turned up to the maximum”. Apart from providing familiar landscapes of Indian cities and villages, these scenes of odors and excrements bring vitality and spanking freshness into the new-born India because excrement nourishes creatures on the earth, regaining the power of reproduction. The excessive nature of the sounds, smells and sights of India gets reflected in Rushdie’s historiography which always savors of the sense of excess.

The first excrement image is related to Padma, the “lotus goddess”. The locals call her “The One Who Possesses Dung” (MC 20), and Saleem keeps calling her his “dung-lotus” (MC113). In one episode Saleem writes a brief paean praising the dung in an effort to console her who got upset due to Saleem’s mockery of her name:

Dung, that fertilizes and causes the crops to grow...which is patted into the chapatti-like cakes when still fresh and moist, and is sold to the village builders, who use it to secure and strengthen the walls of kachcha buildings made of mud.

(MC 29)

Thus, dung strengthens buildings and fertilizes the nation and fosters growth with its regenerative force. Excrements refresh and renew, and it is Padma who with her earthy spirit and nourishment regenerates Saleem. Saleem’s grotesque nose discerns “the odor of the street—overspiced, hot, dung-ladden odor;” (MC 361) and “tin-and-cratewood shack, where cockroaches [spawning] where rats [making] love, where flies [gorging] themselves on pie-clod dung” (MC 448).

After losing his memory, Saleem has an affair with a latrine girl, who has “a soul composed of pig-droppings” and “a tongue caked with excrement also” (MC 406). Another soldier Ayooba, with a crush on that girl, wants to take revenge on Saleem, thus he designs a trick of the electrified urinal—Saleem will be electrified when he urinates. In this episode, readers are shown a chain of images of genital organs and excrement which are crucial elements
in Bakhtinian grotesque bodies. They all perfectly support Rushdie's historiography in regenerative aspect with their proliferative connotations.

The last excrement image appears in the final chapter of the novel, "Abracadabra". Right before midnight of August fifteen, Saleem's planned wedding, a significant day for him, a man on the street abruptly "stops, squats, shits" in front of Saleem and produces "the longest turd" Saleem has ever seen—fifteen inches (MC 526-27). This episode may seem abrupt and irrelevant; however, examined under Bakhtinian study of excrement images, it unravels overtones of excrement: regeneration is brought to Saleem right in the night before his wedding, another new phase of life. At the end of the novel, this episode also anticipates a new phase of India—thus the excrement images in Midnight's Children imply regeneration and renewal. All excrement images from the beginning to the end of the novel anticipate an optimistic future of India with its regenerative force. Therefore, excrement as well as mouth/swallowing images related to open orifices of Bakhtinian grotesque bodies highlight the Indian sense of regeneration in Rushdie's historiography and the bursting energy in Midnight's Children.

The image of taste which is related to the process of eating is used by Rushdie to embody the volatility of historical meaning. The metaphor of pickling is of crucial significance in the novel. Saleem is a pickle factory worker at day and industrious writer at night, and he links his own writing to pickling, applying the art of altering taste and preserving foods to the writing of his autobiography. He describes chapters as pickle jars in the novel and he "hope[s] to immortalize in pickles as well as [what he does with] words;" thus words of his choice are pickled and preserved; Saleem literally bottles historiography in the form of chutney and pickle. Pickling involves with a finite number of ingredients producing an infinite variety of tastes. Saleem picks up stories and memories, introducing new characters and plots in writing his life and the history of the nation—just like the way he picks up ingredients in making his pickles and chutneys. During the process of pickling, changing of taste is a necessity, which is also manifest in Saleem's fictionalized historiography; Saleem thus says,

I reconcile myself to the inevitable distortions of the pickling process...the art is to change the flavor in degree, but not in kind; and above all...to give shape and form (MC 531).
The changing of flavors in the process of pickling proves Saleem's historiography is always in the state of becoming, anticipating infinite possibilities. Historical meaning is unstable and open to any modification and accidental additions.

Most of the major events in Midnight's Children occur due to the mutilation or injury of Saleem's body or references to the bodily lower stratum. His nose, a container of mucus and an image from bodily lower stratum, is directly linked to the happening of some major historical events. His nose is hit by a spittoon which renders him amnesiac. Furthermore, the mutilation of his genital organ, another image from bodily lower stratum, makes him impotent and disconnects him from the responsibility of bearing the whole nation's history. What's more, the moment that Saleem first discovers his telepathic ability is when he hides himself in the washing chest and suddenly finds he is able to intrude his mother's mind. Saleem says at that moment "mucus rises higher than mucus is ever intended to rise," which is also related to the bodily lower stratum (MC 184). Thus we know Saleem's grotesque body and other body images or images from bodily lower stratum define his involvement with Indian national history.

It is a carnival reversal moving the conventionally upper body parts including brain, heart and soul to the bodily lower stratum such as defecation, copulation, pregnancy, and conception—it is an inversion of the hierarchy of upper and lower parts of the body. It is also a subversion of power by the lower classes, the powerless subalterns. This subversion through the open description of lower bodily stratum and images of excrement and obscene sexual images is also seen abundantly in novels like Such a Long Journey and Looking through Glass.

In Rohinton Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey, we see the mass of marginal, poor, ordinary common men and women offering resistance, in their own grotesque ways, to the growing fascism of a corrupt state. The folk humour, shrewd skepticism and zest for life demonstrated by these people debunk the ideals of the brutal, annihilating nation-state. They see the pettiness of their leaders and understand the failure of the state in providing them the basic instruments of civic service and civil liberty. They also transform the crisis of the war into a carnival, debunking the operations of a ruthless realpolitik with their quotidian concerns of survival, food, drink and sex. The obscene, scatological jokes and corporeal imageries used by the characters in discussing the war and historical events show irreverence that has all the elements of Bakhtinian parody. Driven by the "lower bodily stratum", they reduce political grand rhetoric as well as history to absurdity through parody and burlesque.
Dinshawji’s reductive account of the Cold War describes the CIA’s “anus-fingering tactics” (SALJ 145) which provoke an Indo-Pak conflict and destabilize Indira Gandhi’s power because America does not approve of her friendship with Russia:

Makes Nixon shit, lying awake in bed and thinking about it. His house is white, but his pyjamas become brown every night”. (SALJ145)

In another incisive political analysis he demands unabashedly:

Where is madder chod America now? Not saying one word. Otherwise, if Russia even belches, America protests at the UN. Let Kosygin fart, and America moves a motion in the Security Council... No one cares because these are poor Bengalis. And the shootie Nixon, licking his way up into Pakistan’s arsehole. (SALJ76)

The corporeal imageries in Mistry’s novel are not just metaphors; they also become a means of literal protest also, as can be seen in the office peon Bhimsen’s grotesquely comic account of children being made to defecate on newspaper pictures of Kissinger as part of the Indian proletariat’s anti-imperialist propaganda (SALJ 299).

The character Peerbhoy Paanwala in the novel is a folk figure who is a teller of lurid, grotesque tales and the maker of aphrodisiacal paans like “paalangtode” which promise endless potency. He is described as having “wrinkled, old-woman dugs” which hung over a “loose-skinned belly equipped with a splendid ageless naval” (SALJ 175). During the war time, he tells lewd stories which are in fact complex political satires. These stories abound in images of open orifice, protruding body parts and vulgar sexual zest. He narrates the story of an ageing and impotent drunkard in the “West Wing” who tries out guns to revive his flagging sexual interest and sends out men to the “East Wing” to slaughter the Bengalis. The story ends with the triumphant intervention of the Indian army and the selling of the “patriotic paan”.

The wall and the activities revolving around it are crucial elements in Such a Long Journey. Deepika Bahri writes:

From Gustad’s perspective, the wall offers a retreat from the maelstrom of a burgeoning and hostile metropolis seeking to reorganize the space of the city in
the name of development or in the majoritarian quest for a univocal identity by replacing colonial street names with nationalist ones.49

The wall also divides the hapless, dark underbelly of the city who does not figure in the master-plan of the modern metropolis. It also functions as a safeguard to the Noble family and other members of the Parsi community from the outside world. But this wall comes under attack as the government decides to push it further back to widen the street, and Gustad is apprehensive of this fact:

The compound would shrink to less than half its present width and the black stone wall would loom like a mountain before the ground-floor tenants. More a prison camp than a building, all cooped up like sheep or chickens. With the road noise and nuisance so much closer. The flies, mosquitoes, the horrible stink, the bloody shameless people pissing, squatting alongside the wall. Late at night it became like a wholesale public latrine (SALJ 16).

The bodily deposits of the population bereft of public facilities and access to sanitation bespeak the abjection of the common men as well as the vacuity of the ideals of modernization and progress by the nation-state. But the common men and women in the novel display a subversive humour and carnivalesque zest for life that defies the failed reasons and corrupt ideals of the bourgeois nation which bring upon then more and more misery and abjection in the name of progress and modernity. The unmanageable mass of copulating, defecating, urinating proletariat mass continue to resist the operations of an evil, warring state with their bodies and the stubborn rhythm of unspectacular everyday living.

Images of excrement and other lower bodily stratum are also found in *Looking through Glass*. The raid on the Madhuban police station by a festive crowd of rebels during the feverish days of the Quit India Movement has all the elements of the grotesque comedy. In this scene, we see anti-imperialist fury expressed in abject corporeal terms. The rebels first assault the station with stones and slingshots, and later with a battering ram in the form of a small tree-trunk. But the plan of the battering ram backfires when two of the ram-bearers are shot by the British officer Niblick, and others are injured by it. After hours of indecisive and intermittent fighting, the
raiding party comes out, among other things, with a framed portrait of King George VI in full colour. Tojo who led the assault smashed the picture on the ground:

Eunuchs, he bellowed as he stomped rhythmically on King George’s upturned face, eunuchs...eunuchs...eunuchs...eunuchs. (LTG 114)

After that he pissed upon the picture. But he did not stop at that. He sits down in a squat as the rest of the crowd looks on in horror and disbelief “at this spare, stripped-down rendering of the nationalist project: a man in a dhoti shitting upon King George. But he didn’t, quite, because...the main gate opened and Niblick appeared, squinting down the barrel of a rifle, the Empire’s avenging angel. Tojo had gone too far” (LTG 115). Niblick tries to shoot Tojo for this heinous crime, but the breech of Niblick’s rifle burst wounding his eye. Ultimately Tojo dies in police fire but not before he sends a terrible message to the Imperial order and dignity through his grotesque corporeal act: “Tojo died clutching his groin: someone avenged his king by shooting low” (LTG 116).

Images of excrement and lower bodily stratum are also found later in the novel when during the terrible days of partition riots and violence, the Ganjoo family, among hundreds of others took refuge inside the Old Fort. The sickness of the subcontinent got transferred to these unfortunate victims as they got entangled in the dark currents of history:

The first thing anyone running through the gates seemed to do was find a bush or shielding outcrop and shit. It was as if they were expelling the last residue of the country they had fled...They shat so much and so often that they returned to the motherland the substance they had drawn from her. Many were buried in the fort and in them the new Republic lost nothing—they had paid their dues in full....There were others like us...who became constipated. We walked about pent up and farting, firing off little salutes to India or Pakistan or the not-quite dead Empire. The ones who were undecided about their loyalties developed stomach aches from the wind trapped inside. Masroor suffered particularly. (LTG361)

As two nations were taking births and were being celebrated by the leaders in eloquent terms, the people caught in the violence, and rootless and uncertain about their nationality and identity, could pay homage only in terms of excrement.
Sexual metaphor is used by Tharoor in *The Great Indian Novel* to depict the shared heritage of the postcolonial nation. He shows the mixed, hybrid lineage of India as born through the sexual union of blind Dhritarashtra (Nehru) and Lady Drewpad:

No country whose colonists' imagination had created an Adela Quested and a Daphne Manners could have denied its seed to the most yielding of its vicereines. And so it happened; on the soft capacious bed of the private suite, within four posts of fragrant sandalwood, cushioned by the finest down ever stuffed by colonised fingers, my blind son of India took possession of all that Britannia had to offer him. And as the passion and the coolness of their coupling, the touch and the withdrawal of their contact, the tenderness and the rage of their caresses, mounted into a dizzying, tearing burst of final release, the fireworks burst white, saffron and green in Dhritarashtra's mind. Midnight exploded into dawn. He was free (TGIN 230).

Here Tharoor invokes the literary figures of Adela and Daphne, but the trope of rape has been transformed by a more peaceful, mutual sexual act. Through this sexual act Tharoor presents an alternative historical view of the British experience of India. Ralph Crane comments:

The sexual act still takes place, and again between an English woman and an Indian man, but without, in Salman Rushdie's words, 'conjuring up white society's fear of the darkie, of big brown cocks'. A shared history is not one which need necessarily be feared. The colonial process need not only be viewed as an assault, as the coupling of Dhritarashtra and Lady Drewpad demonstrates.50

In Vikram Chandra's novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, images of lower bodily stratum are used to undermine power-structures. For example, in one scene Ram Mohan narrates from a play written by him involving the adventures of Alexander the Great in India. Here we see a naked Indian *sadhu* fearlessly confronting Alexander who wants to know why he is naked. The interpreter tells the *sadhu* that Alexander is the king of Kings because he has come all the way from Greece killing other kings. To this the *sadhu* calls him "Fool of Fools. Master-Clown of Clowns. Maha-Idiot of idiots" (REPN223). When Alexander wants to know what mystic path the *sadhu* follows to reach this "sublime state of indifference" (REPN223), the *sadhu* says: "When I
feel like shitting, I shit; when I feel like eating, I eat” (REPN224). Apparently, Alexander the Great does not like the answer and says (through the translator) that it is irresponsible of one to shit when one feels like shitting, and that “people who shit when they feel like shitting never do anything with their lives” (REPN224).

But the naked sadhu is not swayed by it and asks the translator to ask Alexander how often Alexander, the King of King, shits. The translator is awed by such impunity on the part of the sadhu and refuses to put that question because he says Alexander will get very upset and go on to kill all of them and many more people of the country. The sadhu diagnoses the root of Alexander’s problem thus:

O-ho. I thought he looked constipated the moment I saw him....Tell him that’s probably why he’s impelled to invade other nations and massacre tribes and all that—any student of yoga will tell you that mistreating the body leads to mental disaster. Yogic science has shown that people who hold it in are inescapably driven to behaviour like running about slashing at people, besieging towns, and frivolous acts of bravery...He’d be a lot better off if he shat more often. I wonder what his per week rate is...Get this fellow shitting right and he’d probably go home, quiet as a lamb (REPN 224-225).

In the context of the novel, this scene, with its images of excrement, is directed at revealing and subverting the brutality of the British conquest of India. The play from which this scene was narrated by Ram Mohan was performed in front of a British audience in the court of Skinner. But this scene was edited out of the play during the performance because according to Skinner, this was “incompatible with the dignity of the court” (REPN 222).

Thus, it has been seen that the grotesque realism and grotesque, excessive bodies in the novels not only depict the nation’s essential non-fixity and ever-evolving character but also subvert the will to dominance and repression by the structures of power. In the following section, we will examine how the national system or similar structures of power dominate some bodies on the basis of the way they look like and the ways they behave.
II.

The body has been redefined by the claim that it is not only a natural reality, but also a cultural concept: a means of encoding a society’s values (customs, beliefs, oppressions, cruelty, histories) through its shape, size and ornamental attributes. “The body is...both an object represented...and an organism that is organized to represent concepts and desires”. A culture constructs meanings and its subject-positions through structures of signification with pervasive use of images of the body. All societies create images of the ideal body to define themselves: social identities have a lot to do with how we perceive our own and other people’s bodies. This may explain why different cultures have regularly tried, through a variety of laws and rituals, to delimit the body: to erect clear boundaries around it. We have seen this process in Sealy and Chandra in the case of the Anglo-Indian bodies. Now we discuss Kesavan and Baldwin’s novel and other partition narratives. This section will examine how some bodies are regarded as normative while others are marginalized and unrecognized due to their differences—the sick, disabled, feminine bodies—who remain on the periphery of the system as the “Others” of the normal bodies. We shall also see how structures of power attempt to contain and frame some bodies as “others” in order to maintain and perpetuate dominance over them.

The fact that the body is often a site or a visual marker of identity is explored in Sealy’s novel *The Trotter-Nama*. It is already discussed how the Anglo-Indians were marginalized by the British because of their dark skins. People like Mik, the second generation of native-born were given the insulted label of “half-caste” and they were denied of the privileges and rights despite their loyal and dedicated service to the British imperial mission. Sealy employs the trope of ‘invisibility’ to depict the predicament of the Anglo-Indian community. Justin, the first Trotter, enjoyed respect and power because he was a pure European. But his son Mik was a country-born with dark skin. Mik’s skin got darker and darker as he advanced in to youth. Justin Trotter was afraid that if he gets any more dark, Mik would become invisible. What Trotter meant was that the British would refuse to see him as one of their own rank because of his dark skin.

The theme of invisibility is further employed by Sealy with regard to Thomas Henry Trotter who takes active part and ultimately wins the Victoria Cross for his courageous service during the long, bloody siege of Lucknow in 1847. In a painting commemorating this siege of the Residency, the figure of Thomas Henry Trotter remains in the sideline as a grey blur which
symbolizes how the British refused to acknowledge the service of the Anglo-Indians during the Mutiny. In spite of the dispossession and deprivation of rights and privileges, Mik fights valiantly alongside the British in crushing the Mutiny, and one such battle he loses one of his hands. The questions of embodiment and the politics of visibility are most powerfully treated by Kesavan in his novel *Looking Through Glass*.

Kesavan's novel *Looking Through Glass* reveals that binary categories not just of male/female or white/black, but of Hindu/Muslim, patriot/enemy, are also historically and ideologically conditioned. In a particular historical setting and under a prevalent political discourse it so happens that how people look and are seen determine for others and themselves what they are. Kesavan's novel is concerned with the marginalization and "erasure" of the body of the Muslim nationalist during the high time of Indian freedom struggle under the aegis of Indian National Congress.

*Looking Through Glass* is a text where history is presented in revisionist and corporeal terms. The politics of seeing, and the question of historical visibility of the body of a certain class or community of people that we witnessed in Sealy's *The Trotter-Nama*, can be seen in Kesavan's novel, too. In *Looking Through Glass*, we have a narrator who is a photographer and he is experiencing the history of the time by "looking through glass" literally, through his camera lens. Through this strategy, the novelist emphasizes the "drive to see" embedded in historical inquiry.

The question of embodiment is essentially related to agency. *Looking through Glass* represents the issues of embodiment, and the dynamics of physical visibility and invisibility while dealing with the complex and controversial question of nationalist agency or identity. The novel chronicles the ways in which the discourse of Indian nationalism has snapped the Muslim body into a stereotype, something that can never be a true nationalist, and is made to remain "invisible" from the mainstream, Hindutva-ridden Congress nationalistic ideology. Kesavan engages this politics of visibility/invisibility by way of an investigation of post-1940s Indian nationalism which projected the crisis of nationalist agency (immanent in the event of the partition in 1947) on to the figure of the "Muslim separatist" or the "enemy within".

It was the timing and tone of the Quit India movement that constructed the invisibility of the Muslim nationalists such as Masroor "who believed in the Congress and its dream of India, free and united, and for whom it was critical that the Congress continued to believe in him" (LTG 247). It is also this historic event and its rhetoric of excessive, biased, and rigidly Hindu
nationalism that made for the disappearance or the constructed invisibility of three nationalists, Masroor (the Congress Muslim nationalist), Dadi (the narrator’s grandmother and social worker), and Parwana (the orphan girl who becomes the victim of Gyanendra’s film script, “Kamasutra”).

It is this predicament of being hypervisible to the Hindus and to the British, while at the same time that he is invisible as a Muslim body to the Congress party (the party that has the power to set the agenda for nationalism), that Masroor knows too well:

Eighty...million Muslims. This is the truth, the government’s own truth-printed, bounded, and published. But for us the Muslims, the whole truth is that there are eighty million Musalmans in this country who are invisible...Not invisible to everyone. Not to the British who count us. Not to those Hindus who hate us, who see us everywhere-circumcised monsters who bathe once a year and breed all the time. It is the Congress which can't see us...It first bleaches us with its secularism till we are transparent and then walks through us, as you and I walk through finns and ghosts...When we're for it, we're human beings, transparent in our humanity. When we are against it, we still aren't Muslims, because then we are feudal or bourgeois, some abstract sort of anti-social villain. (LTG 190)

The disappearances of Muslim nationalists like Masroor whose disappearances are symptomatic of the constructed erasure by the dominant Congress nationalism. Kesavan depicts this grotesque drama very effectively in the novel. A mere glance at the headlines of the August 9 newspaper is enough to make Masroor invisible. One moment Masroor is on his knees, “reading on all fours this confirmation of everything he feared” (LTG 46), and the next moment, the narrator sees him disappear into a military lorry hurtling down the road. Masroor has literally vanished into invisibility. As the truck picks up speed, the narrator finds Masroor’s image flattened on a recruiting poster painted on the side of the truck; “Take the King’s Commission: The Noblest Life on Earth” (LTG 47).

As if to fulfill the nationalist imaginary in which there is no Hindu-Muslim problem (read “the Muslim problem”), the Congress Muslims, in proportion to their involvement in the Congress pact, literally disappear. This mass disappearance marks the strong presence of

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communalist elements in Congress nationalism which refused to “see” the point of view or the anxiety of loyal Muslim nationalists in the wake of the passing of the Quit India Resolution:

The degree of disappearance was in inverse proportion to the victim's commitment to the Congress. Some just became lighter skinned which they didn't mind. Others, more involved with the party, sometimes became translucent. With Inayat Sahib, a veteran of the great Khilafat campaign, who had grown away from the Congress after the Kanpur riot, the most that happened was during a meeting of the Municipal Board he found himself completely naked in the middle of an argument... The more committed they were, the less they left behind. One just left his name behind in the novel he had been reading when he heard the news. He had been reading Forster and when they found the book by the empty armchair, Aziz had become Salman on every page... His brother Saleem had been subbing the late city edition when the news came down the wire ... he was translated into the lefthand corner of the day's cartoon, just under the last fold of the Mahatma's loincloth” (LTG 248).

These erased bodies regain their materiality only after the wave of Quit India Movement dies down. To make his presence felt to the Congress, Masroor takes on the appearance of a typical Muslim, because he comes to realize that the Congress can see him only as a Muslim, and never as a Muslim nationalist. In an attempt to countering the symptomatic invisibility to the Muslim body, Masroor takes on the simplified image of a Muslim—“a beard, skullcap, and a lungi” (LTG 191):

Since the Congress loves simple ideas like Freedom and Masses, Muslim must simplify themselves. Since our problem is transparency, we must become opaque in the name of Islam. Even here, in a mosque, I can see Muslims dressed like civilians—but remember they cannot see you in these clothes. So burn your shirts and trousers and grow your beards... Force the Congress to look you in your beards and burquas... because only then will they know we are here. Only then will they see. (LTG 191)
It becomes apparent that what we see, what is immediately visible determines what we think of what we see. In other words, the body has a terrifying visibility and materiality that cannot be escaped. Masroor’s masquerading of Muslim embodiment has its parallel in Hassan’s story, and this story sheds further light on the concept of the immediate transparency of the body and corporeal identity. Hassan was a Hindu Brahmin and made his living by selling banana chips and pickles in Calicut. He felt compelled to make for himself a new identity, the cut-out image of a Muslim to be safe because a rumor was spreading that “British garrisons were put to flight by mobs of rampaging Muslims” (LTG 82). So he cross-dressed as a Muslim and designed for himself a beard, wore a small lace cap and assumed another name, Ali Musalialar. But one day, as he stops at a Brahmin Hindu eating place he is beaten up and brutalized by the cook and other Hindu customers. In spite of his being a Hindu, the attackers assumed Hassan to be a Muslim as he had all the “markings” of a Muslim on his body:

Someone kicked my jaw and then another temple. I must have stayed semi-conscious because I can remember the others closing in around me and kicking me in the ribs a few times... Someone shouted cut it off, cut it off and another laughed and someone else said no... and then the terrible line of fire and pain spread across my chest... They had etched him with the logo of their faith. This swastika. In the weeks of pain that it took for the scabs to form properly, he often wished they had lifted lis lungi and looked. And seeing that he was already a member of their flock, that further markings would be redundant. But it was his fault that he’d been mistaken for a Muslim. The initial markings had been his... He had simplified himself into a cut-out Muslim. The cook had simply gone by appearance (LTG 84-85).

Since Hassan is a Hindu, he is not circumcised, and so he is “already a member of their (Hindu) flock”. But his tormentors could not see it, and Hassan’s body is brutalized because his embodiment as a Muslim is immediately transparent. To his tormentors, only his Muslim “body” is self-evidently transparent and intelligible, as only the Muslim-ness of Masroor is intelligible or visible to the Congressmen. Hassan’s brutalization is not historically related to Masroor’s
predicament. Hassan's story is set in the year 1920, while Masroor's invisibility occurs in the year of the Quit India Resolution. Moreover, Masroor's corporeal predicament is more resonant with history.

The predicament of Muslim nationalists like Masroor must be seen in the context of the troubled relations between Congress nationalism and the nationalism of the Muslim League in the years before the independence and partition. Masroor decides to look like the usual notion of a Muslim because it was the only way he could be visible to the overtly Hindu Congress party. The story of Masroor's invisibility and his conscious effort to look like a typical Muslim and the story of Hassan's brutalization reveal "the politics of seeing and the annihilation of political subjectivity that results from it".52

Kesavan's novel is a powerful critique of the overtly male, Hindu-centric version of nationalism as practiced by communalist organizations such as the RSS. This male-dominated Hindu nationalism built their nationalist narratives on the body-building programs in the akharas and concept of anushilan as a metaphor for celibacy, discipline, control, spirituality, and masculinity. Milind Wakankar points out that the reforming of the male body was projected as a necessity for the rejuvenation of the (Hindu) nation itself in the face of centuries of Muslim and British oppression. This body was to serve as a link between culture and power, between an aesthetics and politics, and between what was after all a Hindu-elitist program for national-cultural regeneration and the dispersed Hindu national-popular itself.53 Through such nationalist program of anushilan, and the process of "bodying forth" from the akhara culture, the Hindu-centric male-oriented nationalism sought to purge the Hindu body of all that was considered representative of the male Muslim body: proselytizing, lustful, perfidious, unpatriotic, and alien.

Looking Through Glass makes this critique of this version of nationalism by framing the Akhara culture and its culture of stoicism, manliness, virility, and discipline, within the logic of the Kama Sutra culture which is here connected to rape. This critique is presented through the story of rape of Parwana, a major protagonist in the novel. Parwana, an orphan girl and actress, rescued and given shelter by Gyanendra, one of the gurus at the Pant Ram ka Akhara, is forced into playing the role of a desiring femme fatal in a cinematic enactment of the Kama Sutra. But during the shooting, Parwana is raped by Chaubey, the hero of the film and a body-builder in the akhara. The narrator had to man the camera during the shooting. It is only belatedly that he
realizes his complicity in the violence on Parwana’s body. Kesavan drives home the point that while the akhara culture insists on the purging of the Hindu body and spirit by celebrating celibacy and sexual restraint (as against the over sexual, lustful Muslim “other”), it is nonetheless immersed in the traffic in women and lust and rape. Challakere connects the story of the rape of Parwana with the historical problem of the Hindu-Muslim unity during the crucial year of the Quit India Resolution:

By imagining nationalist agency as masculine, stoical and pure, the Akhara culture hopes to suspend the body itself which it associates with the unassimilable feminized and hypersexualized other. This puts us in mind of the Quit India resolution and its hope that the attainment of immediate independence would, by itself, suspend the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity.\textsuperscript{54}

Frantz Fanon argues that Othering occurs on the basis of physical and verbal difference.\textsuperscript{55} To that end, narrative desire—the impulse to tell stories—“underlies the ways we construct the so-called normal and the aberrant, and the ways we explain the disjunctions between the two”.\textsuperscript{56} Similarly, Judith Butler writes that “the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside”.\textsuperscript{57} The idea that we can only conceive of normalcy by conceiving of its opposite: deviance. And in traditional readings, the colonized body has been that abjected outside against which the British body—civilized, civilizing, and normal—is constituted, at both a cultural and a more literal level.\textsuperscript{58}

Most of the time, this constitution of the abjected outside is part of what Alexander and Mohanty call a “citizenship machinery which excludes and marginalizes particular constituencies on the basis of their difference”.\textsuperscript{59} It is through an embodied politics of exclusion and marginalization that some people and communities are made to remain as the “others” in a national system, as evident in the case of Sealy’s Anglo-Indians and Kesavan’s Muslim nationalists.

In Such a Long Journey by Mistry we can see this process of “Othering” on the basis of corporeality. The Parsi community in Mistry’s novel, like the Anglo-Indians, remains outside the
hegemonic construction of national identity. Discussing the fate of the Parsis in the city of Bombay, Chakrabarti and Ganguly write:

Never integrated in the formal ‘master-plan’ of the metropolis it is the unacknowledged but indispensable dark underbelly of the city, its grotesque ‘other.’ The inhabitants of this ‘unintended city’ are obsolete citizen, the masses who provide cheap labour...⁶⁰

The Parsi community in the novel lives isolated lives threatened by the growing fundamentalism in the city of Bombay. Gustad and other Parsis are apprehensive and sad about the fact that streets are re-named and Hindu right-wing parties are destroying the plural culture of the city. As in the time of the Partition, the nation is seen to be getting segregated and invisible boundaries are being drawn between people and communities. It is as if the nation is trying to consolidate and maintain its national identity by a process of “differentiation and displacement—the differentiation of the national [us] from aliens within and without”.⁶¹

But the carnivalesque presence of the grotesque body of the “Other” is itself a disruptive act of resistance. The grotesque bodies of the Muslim nationalists and the Anglo-Indians do not disappear despite the oppression of hegemonic power. In these texts the subversive agency of the grotesque body cannot be missed. The grotesque figures in these novels enact what Bakhtin calls a “gay relativity”, eliciting an insistent sense of comedy, caricature, parody, or carnival irony which often gives them some agency despite their oppressions.⁶²

The deployment of the carnivalesque can be read as an attempt at recuperating lost, suppressed, invisible, ignored subjectivities by dismantling constructions of the docile (colonized/oppressed) body in favour of an “unruly body that always threatens to loosen institutionalized authority’s grasp on representation”.⁶³ In other words, the carnivalesque foregrounds an element of resistance on the part of those figures who have been victims at the hands of history by dismantling the hierarchized corpus of the dominant/imperial culture without simply perpetuating the victim/victimizer cycle. Despite the rejection by the British and the long history of marginalization and erasure at the hands of history, the Anglo-Indians have remained and the very presence of these “other” bodies disrupts the monologic narratives of a unitary Indian identity.
The common men and women in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* stage such a disruptive, carnivalesque act by the collective protest march against the apathy of political authorities. In their struggle to survive and assert human needs, these poor people forge solidarities and relationships across class boundaries. Mistry describes the grotesque appearances of these people as they march in protest:

All manner of vendors and tradespeople, who had nothing in common except a common enemy were waiting to march. There mechanics and shopkeepers, indefatigable restaurant waiters, swaggering tyre retreaders, hunch-shoulderred radio repairers, bow-legged tailors, shifty transistors-for-vasectomies salesman, cross-eyed chemists, sallow cinema ushers, hoarse-voiced lottery ticket sellers, squat clothiers, accommodating women from the House of Cages. (SALJ 312)

This joyous, carnivalesque crowd enacts an act of resistance, though it is not something revolutionary, and ultimately, it is crushed by the police. Though small and feeble, such acts of resistance nonetheless threaten the logic of authority, and therefore they are sought to be contained, punished and broken. Elleke Boehmer elaborates:

The seductive and/or repulsive qualities of the wild or ‘Other’, and the punishment of the same, are figured on the body, and as body. To rehearse some of the well-known binary tropes of postcolonial discourse, opposed to the colonizer (white man, West, center of intellection, of control), the ‘Other’ is cast as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloguing, description or possession.64

In the next section we shall look at the ways in which disruptive, unruly bodies—bodies that threaten the hegemonic structures of power—are broken, tortured and branded.

This “othering” process through which dominant narratives cast some bodies as normal/desirable and others are marginalized and kept outside the narrative of nation and history

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is also seen in the ways sick and disabled bodies are represented. Recently, postcolonial scholars have turned their attention to the issue of disability—both physical and mental—and the ways in which disabled and sick bodies suffer oppression and marginalization. The disabled bodies provide one such difference against which an able, total national body is defined. The homogeneous nation is identified with normalcy and well-regulated selves and bodies. In such a scenario, each body with disability is a threat to the well-regulated nation “bodies out of bounds are understood to have the potential to undermine the project of nationalism”.

In Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*, the grandmother holds a rather aggressive notion of nationalism based on ideas of protection and self-definition against enemies across the borders. Her idea of nationalism collided with the cosmopolitan world-view of Tridib who did not believe in the temporality and fixity imposed by borders and boundaries. Tridib, in the eyes of the grandmother, was a wastrel and he did not fit in her idea of a good citizen of the nation. Her views of nationalism were constructed around bodily terms. For example, she says “you can’t build a strong country without building a strong body” (*TSL* 8). She shows distrust to Tridib’s behavior and ways of life (and ideologically his view of nationalism) because he suffers from dyspepsia.

In Siddhartha Deb’s novel *The Point of Return*, we see Dr. Dam is paralyzed after being assaulted by the tribal mob during times of ethnic conflicts in the hill town. His disabled body can be seen as a metonym for his failure to get integrated into the map of the nation even after the long dedicated service he has given to the state. He and countless others like him have remained marginalized, forever carrying the label of a foreigner in the postcolonial nation. In a hegemonic national paradigm bodies with disabilities and sickness are projected as the “Others”.* Deb’s novel is a meditation on the search for home and belonging. But people like Dam have never found a home and are forced to stay out of the system.

In Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*, Tehmul’s decaying mind and body throughout the narrative function as a literal manifestation of Gustad’s psyche and the state of the nation. Tehmul, a seemingly unimportant and mentally disabled character, is essential in Gustad’s life, as he brings out the tender side of him and represents the innocence of life. Tehmul represents both Gustad’s damnation and his salvation. Like Gustad, Tehmul has a hip injury, but while Gustad’s accident left only a limp, Tehmul is physically and mentally crippled. Gustad sees Tehmul as a more unfortunate version of himself, so he treats Tehmul like a son and with gentleness. Gustad
and Tehmul's lives parallel each other in their respective secret dealings. Bilimoria involves Gustad, against his will, in a Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) plot designed by the crooked Indira Gandhi, while Gustad's wife Dilnavaz, and her reclusive friend, Miss Kuptipia, initiate the innocent Tehmul in their dangerous, superstitious rites.

Tehmul with both physical and intellectual disabilities is portrayed as a passive victim of exploitation. He is used as a receptacle for spells to reverse the ill-fortunes plaguing the protagonist Gustad's household. Ms Kuptipia, the local herbalist in the novel, has few scruples in casting the spell on Tehmul. She convinces Gustad's reluctant wife by saying:

> How much brain does he have to begin with [...] so what difference will it make [...] Tehmul himself will not notice anything. What I say is that we should be happy that for the first time he will do something good for another person (SALJ 110).

People like Tehmul are not only expendable for normal people but later he dies for others. Tehmul, like Tridib in The Shadow Lines becomes the ritual sacrifice for the angry crowd. Tehmul, in his death becomes the innocent victim on the altar of national chaos. In his death, Tehmul unwittingly becomes the agent of Gustad's salvation. Just as Bilimoria carried Gustad to Dr. Bonesetter's clinic, after his accident, Gustad conveys Tehmul to his deathbed and prays and cries over his broken body. Tehmul's tragedy dissolves Gustad's disappointment and sorrow, all of which Tehmul embodied but which seem inconsequential in the light of Tehmul's death. Gustad's tears cleanse and signify rebirth, and he reconciles to his rebellious son Sohrab. Thus, at the end of the novel, Gustad removes the blackout paper from the windows and allows sunlight into his house for the first time in many years.

Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day narrates Partition and its aftermath from the perspective of a cast of misfit characters—an autistic man, his eccentric sister, and the unmarried siblings of a once genteel, now impoverished Hindu family. The particular nature of the characters' oddities conveys metonymically the sterile, residual nature of Old Delhi where time seems not to have moved after Partition. In the novel, Anita Desai explores the ambivalent role of characters with disabilities, both as sites of transgression and as repositories for cultural tensions in a postcolonial world. It is through the character Baba, the man with developmental disability, and through his

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body, his silences and ghastly presence, and his interactions and complex relationship with others, that a negotiation is being sought between the old and new India.67

Sick and disabled bodies are sites of historical chaos and paradoxes. In Midnight Children, for example, during the first nine years after independence, the skin of businessmen in India attaching to Western ideology or styles of living literally turn white, which according to Saleem is the “the outward expression of the internationalism” (MC 45). The skin of Saleem’s father, Ahmed Sinai turns pale—a condition that signifies his craving for British life style and his inability to attain complete whiteness of the British. He is an example of westernized native and a victim of confusing in-betweenness.

Dr. Aziz is another example of a westernized native intellectual, who embodies cultural conflicts and the impossible reconciliation between the colonizing British and the colonized India. Dr. Aziz is relentlessly tortured by a hole in his body signifying his religious uncertainty, also a symbol of failing to identify with neither the East nor the West. Abdulrazak Gurnah claims the hole in Dr. Aziz’s body is a “metaphorical and physical location of unsettling knowledge whose outcome is division and doubt”.68 The pigmentation disorder among Indian businessmen and Aziz’s hole both reveal the non-integrated identity under the clash between two cultures or religions in the modern history of India. Bodies are the epitome of the unresolved clash of incompatibles; they and history in Midnight’s Children are in this way inseparable and connected.

In Tharoor’s novel The Great Indian Novel, “Draupadi is emblematic of Indian democracy, her attempted disrobing a symbol of what was sought to be done to democracy not so long ago”.69 While Yudhistir is Morarji Desai, Arjun, Bhim, Nakul, and Sahadev are conceived as embodiments of the institutions of the press, army, bureaucracy, and Foreign Service respectively, meant to keep democracy in good health. “Draupadi in The Great Indian Novel expresses in her own body the post-independence turmoil of India, its symbolic changes in fortune, as she oscillates between sickness and health”.70 During Nehru’s tenure her health remained more or less stable. But it becomes utterly sick during the time of Indira Gandhi.

To depict the political chaos in the life of nations, Mistry brings in metaphors of sickness and medicines in Such a Long Journey. Dr. Paymaster, the irrepessible physician in the novel,
compulsively uses images of a diseased body to discuss the plight of Bangladesh (East Pakistan during that time):

East Pakistan is suffering from a diarrhea of death...attacked by a strong virus from West Pakistan, too powerful for the Eastern immune system. And the world's biggest physician is doing nothing. Worse, Dr. America is helping the virus... Only the complete, intravenous injection of the Indian Army will defeat the virus. (SALJ 164-5)

The grotesque medical metaphors, along with the sexual images used by Dinshawji and Peerbhol Paanwala give us a carnivalesque, subversive picture of global and national politics around the India-Pakistan war of 1971. Roshan's sickness in the novel worsens as the domestic life of the Noble family and national events slide into further chaos: Gustad receives threat over money and the clouds of war darken over the country.

In Mukul Kesavan's novel Looking through Glass we have images of sickness which metaphorize the sickness of the nation. Dadi internalizes the guilt about her non-participation in the Quit India movement and finds that she cannot rid herself of the memory of 1942. When the government of India awards her a "Freedom Fighter" citation for her contribution to the Indian independence struggle, her suffering becomes even more acute. Even though Dadi was jailed in the 1932 nationalist movement (the salt satyagraha), she is so burdened with a sense of guilt about not participating in the "real" struggle for independence—the Quit India movement of 1942—that the pension award for doing so makes her virtually disappear. This sense of guilt, a consequence of history of a volatile time shows its effect on her body also:

I thought she was being silly, but the guilt consumed her. Every month I found her thinner and more obsessed than before... Dadi never spoke of what she actually did in '42, of her children, her husband, their life together. The August rebellion became a black hole in her memory that sucked everything that ever happened to her afterwards, that collapsed her entire life into a single non-event. (LTG 5-6)
The theme of sickness is brought in the novel to illustrate the ills besetting the nation and body-politic during the volatile years just preceding independence and the Partition. Independence brought sickness to those people who were victims of the riots and communal violence, preceding and immediately following the Partition.

The politics of visibility, embodiment and "othering" on corporeal terms are closely allied to the logic of hegemonic perpetuation of oppression and dominance. Bodies are sites where power writes terrible messages. History and its train of traumatic events leave their marks on human bodies. In the next section, we shall examine how the novels depict the violence of history as inscribed on bodies by employing images of wounding and markings. With regard to the novels on the Partition, it will be seen that map inscription was often asserted as violent bodily inscription. It is through such violent images of torture and physical violation that these texts attempt to make sense of colonial and postcolonial historical trauma and burden.

III.

Images of wounding, torture and assaults are abundantly employed by the writers to display the violence and brutality of history and the nation-state's politics of domination and control. The following section attempts to chart the tortured, wounded, brutalized bodies in the novels. It will be seen that the body is often the text on which power structures and history write their violent effects. Elleke Boehmer writes:

The silenced, wounded body of the colonized is a pervasive figure in colonial and postcolonial discourses, but its valencies differ significantly. In the process of postcolonial rewriting the trope of the dumb, oppressed body undergoes significant translations.\(^1\)

Saleem’s body suffers multiple injuries and mutilation, and almost every major events in the novel occur due to the mutilation or injury of his body. Saleem’s body is deformed under the disturbance of Indian history. The first mutilation of Saleem’s body occurs when his geography teacher pulls off his hair and makes him bald permanently; the second one is the cut of his mid-finger followed by the blood test revealing his false parentage, resulting in his first exile to his
uncle’s house. Other events include his being hit by the silver spittoon. His body in Midnight’s Children splits, disintegrates, and cracks due to the unbearable burden of history of a nation; it is the site where conflicts of history and ideology are inscribed. Led by his nose, Saleem explores odours of history in the novel with it and his body functions as the foundation of his narration. Grotesque bodies destroyed and deformed by violence in Midnight’s Children are thus crucial for the understanding of Rushdie’s historiography.

In Vikram Chandra’s novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain we have the character Sarthey, a protagonist in a detective story who is an Englishman with a dubious past. This character is a projection of Sanjay’s more complex act of investigation into the meanings of the world, and is also a metaphor of the shock of history, represented by the British rule. One gruesome incident involves Sarthey cutting up the pregnant wife of Sanjay to investigate the anatomy of the native body. It shows the fascination of the European/Western fascination for the colonized body, and the fact that the body was one of the prime sites upon which the dominance of imperialism got inscribed.

The violence of the Emergency era is depicted by Rushdie and also by Mistry and Sahgal in corporeal terms. In Mistry’s Such a Long Journey we have the character of Major Billimoria who is tortured by the authority to silence him because he knew too much. Once he serves the purpose of aiding in the nefarious design of the corrupt government activities, he is thrown into jail and tortured to death. In Mistry’s other novel A Fine Balance we have depictions of tortured bodies (forced vasectomies, killings, murder etc) which reflect the menace of a brutal nation-state.

In Nayantara Sahgal’s novel Rich Like Us we see broken, disabled bodies symbolizing the effects of ruthless state machinations on the hapless citizens. The mutilated personal and political freedom and its precarious survival in the dark days of the Emergency imposed by the tyrannical Indira Gandhi are symbolized by the recurring image of the handless, helpless beggar condemned by society ladies. These disabled, powerless bodies are stark reminder of a nation that has failed to deliver its promised freedom and security even so long after the Independence.

The novel exposes the reality of the repressive Emergency in all its ugly aspects. During the Emergency, thousands of people are held under detention without trial, and “citizens [are] broken on the wheel for remembering their rights” (RLU 258). The farmers and the workers are exploited and the resources of the whole nation are quietly used for the benefit of a few. In forced
vasectomy camps even the old and the unmarried are not spared. In the novel, Sonali says: "It did not need much imagination to sense the hate and fear inside the vans with iron-barred windows, like the ones used for collecting stray dogs for drowning, that now roamed the streets picking up citizens for vasectomy" (RLU 27). People who were deemed to be obstacles to the regimes and the reason of the state, the opposition and the strikers, were just bodies to be controlled, jailed and punished. As an active supporter of the new regime, Dev justifies the detention of people by stating that it had brought stability to the country and created healthy climate for business, trade and industry: "...this emergency is just what we needed. The troublemakers are in jail. An opposition is something we never needed...Strikes are banned" (RLU 10). The "other" bodies of the selfish, corrupt state are made powerless by brutal means.

Sahgal’s novel also depicts instances of torture of bodies during the time of the emergency. The travails of Kishori Lal typify this tendency of the times. When he is arrested, he is slapped, pushed, prodded, humiliated, and, finally, put in a lockup because he is branded an RSS man. Like several others, he is charged with being a “saboteur, part of a conspiracy to overthrow the government” (RLU 190). The officials in charge of carrying out the task of the government dug up old and tried-out methods of torture: “upside-down hangings, rods up anus, lighted cigarettes held to tender organs” (RLU 207); they also showed keenness to make new experiments, so that they could improve upon them.

These scenes of tortured bodies in jails make us see the level of degradation in the body politic; that “righteousness had decayed and rotted. And there was no sign of renewal or rescue” (RLU 214). But to cover it up, the official media had started legitimizing its actions by offering their version of things. That is why he fears “that history would now be revised and rewritten. All dictatorship meddled with history” (RLU 175). What becomes evident in the narrative of the novel is that this rewriting of history is done on the expense of the bodies of the powerless.

Sahgal’s novel brings up another issue of significance: the issue of female agency amidst patriarchal/traditional and political domination that takes physical forms. She elaborates on the issue through the question of sati or bride-burning/self-immolation of Hindu women. This also sheds light on how women’s bodies are often used as symbols of religious and nationalist sentiments. Sati is a site on which debates about female agency and dialogue between the discourses of feminism and nationalism converge. Though Sahgal depicts sati as a problem of the
past, this menace has not completely disappeared. In recent decades, there have been a few incidents of sati in the country.\textsuperscript{72}

Sahgal exposes the dark side of this Hindu cultural tradition of sati through the events related of Sonali’s great-grandmother committing sati in 1905. The action goes back in time through a manuscript, written by Sonali’s grandfather; in 1915 (this manuscript is presented as evidence of the willingness of some Hindu citizens to finish with such practices themselves, which is an important detail to bear in mind from a postcolonial perspective).

In a novel where the narrator is female, Sahgal situates the recovery of the history of women’s bodies as a site of contest between tradition and modernity through the lens of a male narrative (in the form of the grandfather’s memoir). It is in this memoir that the male narrator offers a sympathetic recognition of the lack of choice and free will in women’s lives which are constructed by ancient custom and cultural practice. Sahgal makes it clear that patriarchy and certain forms of nationalist ideology press upon women’s circumstances restricting and containing free will.

The first thing Sahgal denies about sati is the widow’s supposed consent: they were often sedated and drugged, which is why there were no screams when they were dragged to the pyre, making the victims look complicitous with the sacrifice. Secondly, Sahgal goes on to describe how some of them actually tried to run away from the fire. Beyond direct enforcement to perform sati, as is clearly the depicted case, the text does not dismiss the power of superstition and social pressure in convincing some depressed widows to go ahead with it. The hostility shown towards women who fail to carry out their act of self-immolation is depicted in the account quoted by Sahgal of the widow who refused to return to the pyre after escaping and immersing herself in the river:

When the inhuman relatives saw this, they took her by the head and heels and threw her into the fire, and held her there till they were driven away by the heat; they also took up large blocks of wood with which they struck her, in order to deprive her of her senses, but she again made her escape, and without any help ran directly into the river...The people of her house followed her here and tried to drown her by pressing her under water. (RLU 154)
Once a woman decided to commit sati on her free will, turning back was regarded as an act of transgression and a dishonor to the family, and for which she was to be punished. In Sahgal's second account of sati from the colonial archives, the magistrate having twice failed to dissuade a young widow from carrying on with the self-cremation is described as a "victim of superstition" (RLU 156). In either case women are only perceived as acting autonomously by nationalist and colonial patriarchal authority alike when they conform to their particular narratives. These alternative cultural positionings objectify women by situating them as the site of conflict.

Through this exposure of the shameful practice and tradition of sati, Sahgal denounces the patriarchal and oppressive form of Hinduism. Outraged over his mother's murder/self-immolation, and unable to find any way of explaining it to himself, Keshav's grandfather writes: "So I cannot believe in Hinduism, whatever Hinduism might be. Not because of such evils as sati, but because evil is not explained" (RLU 136). That torture or violation of female bodies is commonplace in the country is revealed by Sahgal when she mentions of the rape and killing of lower-caste/class women in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Sahgal mentions the names of several cities and towns where women are fed to brick kilns after they have been abused: "Muzzafarpur, Samastipur, Bhojpur, Begusarai, Monghyr, Purnea, Gaya, Patna, Chapra" (RLU 68). Finally, Rose herself is murdered by her stepson Dev. All these, then, are instances of the oppression of women by tradition.

Against such oppressive traditional/patriarchic norms that objectify bodies of women as symbols and personal properties, Sahgal posits her idea of "the new woman". On several occasions she has stated that one of her major themes is the definition of the virtuous woman. In the "Meet the Author" address organized by the Sahitya Akademi in 1988, she said:

In every novel the heroine has moved one step further away from the stereotype of the virtuous woman into a new definition of virtue... What does these three women [Rashmi, Saroj, and Simrit] walking out have to do with their virtue? The meaning of sati is a virtuous woman. And this is synonymous with self-immolation—a tradition arising out of the concept that woman is her husband's property and has no other life. Traditional virtue lies in staying put, suffering. The new woman does the opposite. No more sati, she is determined to live, and to live
in self-respect. Her virtue is courage, which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences.\textsuperscript{73}

In *Rich Like Us* Sonali is the prime example of the “new woman” who decides to walk out. She decides that she can no longer be a part of the corrupt system: “The Emergency had finished my career, but suddenly I didn’t want a career in the crumbling unprofessionalism that bowed and scraped to a bogus emergency” (RLU 36). Individual acts of bravery, Sonali feels, are always worth doing, whether the ends are achieved or not. “The book closes on a note of hope; artificial limbs for the beggar and the realization by Sonali that Emergency could and would be over”.\textsuperscript{74} But the sad fact remains that not many women have the privilege of Sonali’s class/caste background to walk out of the system, or to defend themselves against bodily violence and violation. As we come to the Partition, we see women again being violated in the name of nationalist and religious/communal sentiments.

Markings and brandings on bodies had become wide and more violent with the Partition of the sub-continent. In novels like Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers*, Kushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy Man* we witness how map inscription was often asserted as bodily inscription. The violence and horror of the Partition and the accompanying communal hatred was transferred and written onto the bodies by one community on the other. Partition narratives, both in English (*The Ice-Candy Man*, *What the Body Remembers*, *Train to Pakistan*, Meera Syal’s *Anita and Me* etc; and other languages (Bedi’s *Lajawanti*, the stories of Sadaat Hasan Manto, Bhisam Sahani’s *Tamas*, Sobti’s *Zindaginama*, Rahi Masoom Raza’s *Adha Gaon*, Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning* etc.) speak abundantly about the unspeakable horror, mayhem, physical and psychological wounds, scars and the enduring trauma of the holocaust. They also give voice to the rarely told story of violence on female bodies during the communal conflicts of Partition.

Both in fictional and non-fictional writings, the body politic metaphor with regard to Partition has remained insistent. Writers and politicians have employed the analogy of physical dismemberment or amputation while writing and speaking about the Partition of the subcontinent. Mahatma Gandhi, who campaigned passionately against partition, declared that “the vivisection of India is like the vivisection of my own body”.\textsuperscript{75} Jinnah, who campaigned with no less passion
in favor of partition, likened it to "a surgical operation".\textsuperscript{76} Even Jawaharlal Nehru came to believe that "[by] cutting off the head we will get rid of the headache".\textsuperscript{77}

The unprecedented communal violence, massacres and corporeal gore, and mass-scale displacement of bodies, both dead and alive, during Partition find expression in the novels written in the backdrop of the Partition. People killed by marauding mobs, Sikhs shearing their hair in train carriages, men's heads chopped off as yanked-down trousers yielded evidence of circumcision or the absence of it, dead bodies piled high on roadside, trains full of dead bodies on the either side of the border—such scenes are abundantly found in the fictional representations of the Partition.

In Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man (1988), we have such descriptions of mob fury. Once it was confirmed that the division of the subcontinent was imminent, rioting starts in Lahore. Muslims and Sikhs and their Hindu supporters became vengeful towards one another. Passages describing bloodshed and murder highlight the brute in human beings. The central narrator in the novel, Lenny observes:

The Sikhs milling in a huge blob in front wildly wave and clash their swords, kirpans and hockey-sticks and punctuate their shrieks with roars: Pakistan murdabad death to Pakistan!—And the Muslims shouting: "So? We'll play Holi-with-their-blood".\textsuperscript{78}

The terror the mob generates is palpable—like an evil, paralysing spell. The terrible procession, like a sluggish river, flows beneath us. Every short while a group of men, like a whirling eddy, stalls—and like the widening circles of a treacherous eddy dissolving in the main stream, leaves in its centre the pulpy and red flotsam of a mangled body. (IM 135)

The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot. I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. I start screaming: hysterically sobbing—how long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months? (IM 139)
The pictures of mayhem, bestiality and mass scale destruction can also be traced in Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956). It is a novel that teems with bodies. One of the earliest instances of extreme physical violence in the novel is the attack on Ram Lal, the money lender, by dacoits, and this incident disrupts the serene atmosphere of Mano Majra. The situation is worsened when two ghost trains arrive from Pakistan, carrying the bodies of Sikhs and Hindus, all of whom have been gruesomely hacked to pieces. The severity of the situation can be judged from the fact that the fuel stock for pyre to burn the corpses was totally used and bodies could not be given cremation. Many dead bodies were buried in a big pit dug near the station. The novel describes how during the monsoon, the gory remains of the dead Muslims came floating in the river Sutlej after a massacre upstream. Sikh villagers describe the panic in the following words:

An old peasant with a gray beard lay flat on the water. A child’s head butted into the old man’s armpit. There was a hole in its back. There were many others coming down the river like logs hewn on the mountains. (...) Some were without limbs, some had their bellies torn open, many women’s breasts were slashed. They floated in the sunlit river, bobbing up and down.79

That the body is often abused by those in power is demonstrated by Singh in the novel in the character of Juggut Singh who was detained and tortured by the local police on the false charge of being involved in the murder of Ram Lal:

He had been through it once. Hands and feet pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one became senseless with pain. Powdered red chillies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sense of having the tail on fire for several days. All this, and no food and water, or hot spicy food with a bowl of shimmering cool water put outside the cell just beyond one’s reach. (TP 91-92)

Later, Juggut Singh sacrifices his body on a railway track to save a trainload of his erstwhile Muslim neighbours, including Nooran, the Muslim weaver’s daughter whom he loved.
The violation of bodies and of humanity during the violence of the Partition is a stark reminder of the failure of the utopian dream of peaceful national becoming in the subcontinent. Thus while new borders were being mapped across the land, people on both sides of the border were violently trying to map their communal identities onto the bodies of the members of each other's communities. During Partition, the mapping of borders and bodies became mutually constitutive. Bodies of both men and women were mapped by India and Pakistan as dispensable yet symbolic of countries' and communities' body politic. However a more detail exploration on women's bodies is necessary because of the disproportionate way in which they are targeted.

At Partition women's bodies became the sites of contestation for different competing discourses regarding religion, community and nation. Female bodies were violated, tortured, maimed and marked. The physical markings, bodily inscriptions and memories carried by thousands of women act as counter-narratives that ensure such atrocities are not edited out of the stories that India and Pakistan create of their pasts. The substantial recent feminist scholarship on partition by Urvashi Butalia, Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon, and others shows how women were subjects as well as victims of the re-formation of national boundaries, agents as well as victims of new and virulent cultural identities fundamental to the politics of the subcontinent today. The violence of partition comprised both physical and psychological wounding, with the physical wound bound up with aspects of somatically marked cultural identity. For men, bodily symbols of religious affiliation—circumcision or its absence, uncut hair of Sikh males—exposed their bearers to life-threatening violence. Feminist scholars argue that women's bodies are mapped, or defined with a particular embodiment of unproblematic identity, due to their culturally reinforced materiality and their institutionally sanctified appearances. Approximately 70,000 to 100,000 women on both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border were raped, abducted, mutilated, tattooed with nationalistic slogans whereby Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim men sought to humiliate and annihilate the “other” while imprinting their own identity on the bearer of future generations.

In Ice-Candy Man, the violence of the Partition is narrated from the perspective of the child narrator Lenny whose Hindu Ayah (nurse) is abducted by Ice Candy Man and the mob. The Ayah is forced to prostitute her body and coerced into having sex with Ice Candy Man. He strips Ayah of her identity as a woman and as a Hindu. Whatever love he has for Ayah is smothered by his complete subjugation of her. He keeps her in the kotha (brothel) even after marrying her. Although Ayah escapes her abductor, but even with her family in Amritsar, she will be marked
by her defilement during Partition. Thus, she will suffer the psychological and emotional outbursts forever. This is true of Hamida, the new ayah of Lenny. She depicts a woman who has been besmirched and subsequently discarded by her family. Godmother tells Lenny about Hamida that she was kidnapped by the Sikhs. People “can’t stand their women being touched by other men” (IM 227). Lenny is tormented by the wailing of a recovered woman at the refugee camp near her house.

In Train to Pakistan, Khushwant Singh gives a similar account of atrocities being inflicted upon women of other religions. He tells the tale of a young girl, Sundari. She was going to Gujranwala with her husband on the fourth day of her marriage. Her arms still covered with red lacquer bangles and her palms bright with henna (mehndi), she is happily day-dreaming on her way to her new home when the bus on which they are riding is attacked by Muslims. Her husband is stripped naked and dismembered before her eyes; she is gang-raped.

Many women died trying to avoid sexual violation, preserve their chastity, and protect their religious and family honour. Some women set themselves ablaze and sometimes all the women in family committed mass suicide. The amputation of breasts of women is one of the most gruesome injuries faced by the women. Ice Candy Man in Sidhwa’s novel reports to his friends that a train from Gurdaspur has arrived in Lahore filled with murdered Muslims. He shouts, “Every one is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead. Only two gunny bags full of women’s breasts” (IM 159). This act of violence against Muslim women spurs him to inflict violence on Hindu and Sikh women. He exclaims, “I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women” (IM 166). He satiates his appetite for revenge by kidnapping Ayah and forcing her to prostitute her body. Train to Pakistan mentions the mutilated breasts of the bodies arriving from the Pakistani side, even as Ice Candy Man also uses the same reference. Apart from the mention of mutilated breasts on both the sides, the way Ice Candy Man expresses his determination and convincing his friends to take revenge upon the Sikhs and the Hindus, the Sikh leader in Mano Majra in Singh’s novel is also shown doing the same and invoking the Sikhs:

I’ll tell you what to do. He paused, looked around and started again. He spoke slowly, emphasising each sentence by stabbing the air with his forefinger, —for each Hindu and Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct
or rape, abduct two...For each trainload of dead, send across two...That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we can also play this game of killing and looting. (TP 162)

The history of the subcontinent is rife with ethnic and communal conflicts, the Partition being the most traumatic one, in which women have not only been the victims but the weapons of war. Novels like Train to Pakistan, Ice-Candy Man and What the Body Remembers have raised serious questions regarding the incidental violence towards women as well as its instrumental nature in targeting the female body. These novels have exposed the terrible social practice considering female bodies as repositories of a community’s honour and identity. Defilement of a woman's body was, therefore, considered to be the greatest dishonor that a family and a community had to endure. And the violence inflicted upon women and an admission of violation was equivalent to a sacrilege against one's religion, country, and family. Writing about the depiction of such violation of female bodies and the testimonial nature of such bodies in Sidhwa's novel, Deepika Bahri says:

The damaged bodies and psyches of women who became the sites of the worst violence at the time and continue to be the first target in communal violence serve as living, if muted and distorted testimonial to their token status in the war over contending factions, the punishment of the female body becoming an attack on the opponent through an elaborate inscription of women as the patrimonial body of state and religion.81

Women are often fetishized as symbols of national and religio-communal being and pride. In such a situation, the image of the chaste or pure woman becomes the icon for the purity of the nation. Urvashi Butalia points out how the Organizer's front page story on 14 August 1947 carried an illustration "of Mother India, the map of the country, with a woman lying on it, one limb cut off and severed, with Nehru holding the bloody knife responsible for doing the severing."82 Five decades later, novelist Shauna Singh Baldwin depicts the gendered nature of Partition violence in her novel What the Body Remembers, and makes visible the way
displacement, abduction, rapes, and murders systematically marked women’s bodies to signify community, nation, and state.

In the section titled “Delhi, September 1947” of *What the Body Remembers*, Jeevan (Roop’s brother) describes his discovery of the mutilated body of his wife Kusum:

[a] woman’s body lay beneath, each limb severed at the joint. This body was sliced into six parts, then arranged to look as if she were whole again’ (WBR510).

The “partitioning” of Kusum is symptomatic of the vicious nature of attacks, but Jeevan, who as a soldier is accustomed to brutality, is unsettled as his wife has not been the victim of sexual assault: “[I]o cut a woman apart without first raping—a waste, surely” (WBR 511). Jeevan is aware of the prevalence of rape as a weapon to emasculate men of a different religious community. However, a closer examination of Kusum’s body reveals that her body has been ravaged by the Muslim gang. Her body is made the tabula on which the Muslims inscribe their message for Jeevan and the Sikh community. The gang removed her womb to symbolize their desire to eliminate all Sikhs, in the present and in the future:

We will stamp your kind, your very species from existence. This is no longer merely about izzat or land. This is a war against your quom, for all time. Leave. We take the womb so there be no Sikhs from it, we take the womb, leave you its shell. (WBR 450)

The notion that the honour of the community lay in protecting its women from male aggression of other communities was so strongly embedded in the minds of the men that it made them propel their women towards annihilation either willingly or forcibly. Roop could not understand why it was only Kusum who was killed and the rest of the family escaped. She uncovers a terrible secret when, at last, her father Deputy Bachan Singh unburdens himself to her, revealing that he beheaded his daughter-in-law to save the honour of the family: “[e]very day I had been hearing that the seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women’s wombs. No, I said: I must do my duty” (WBR 520). He delineates that he called Kusum and explained to her that he had to do what Sant Param Singh said the Sikhs must do. He tells Roop

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how he explained what 'had' to be done to Kusum. He also describes how she concurred, allegedly, with his plan. However, his martyring of Kusum is presented as being more about his wishes than about the aspirations of his daughter-in-law. Though Bachan Singh presents Kusum's death in the heroic mode and considers her sacrifice as an inevitable response to the violent times, Baldwin depicts Roop as unprepared to accept the execution as a necessary sacrifice. She wants Kusum to be remembered in her own right, not as a victim of her father’s unstinting belief in the need to maintain female sexual purity and family honour. Throughout her father's narration of the last moments of Kusum's life, Baldwin employs Roop's thoughts to interrupt the fable that her father wants to enshrine, and her cynicism is apparent when he declares how the gods helped him to decapitate Kusum cleanly with a single blow: "one stroke? Just one stroke" (WBR 521). Roop will not credit the idea that her sister-in-law's meek acceptance of her fate can only be ascribed to her virtuousness, and views Kusum’s inability to protest as stemming from her inculcation with the norms of Sikh society.

Continuing patterns of violence in the history of the subcontinent in the aftermath of Partition speak of enduring trauma, betraying a wound that has never quite healed. The dark and horrible events surrounding Partition have left their marks on subsequent histories of the subcontinent and in the psyche of later generations. The Partition, in this sense, can be read as cultural trauma whose effects have leaked “beyond the immediate moment, both vertically, affecting the children of survivors, as well as laterally, spreading across groups to include those of its members who themselves have not been affected physically.” Writers have often depicted this enduring trauma and inter-generational transference or transmission of the past. The traumatic physical and psychological aspect of the Partition and its continued legacy of horror are explored in this last section.

The continuing trauma of violence and dislocation is a theme that finds expression in Amitav Ghosh’s novel The Shadow Lines and Siddhartha Deb’s novel The Point of Return. Tridib’s death in The Shadow Lines in the riots of 1964 is the central event in the narrative and it triggers the memory of the narrator in composing the family drama. The narrator carried the trauma of Tridib's violent death for all the years before the final redemption in London. In Tridib’s death, we get a glimpse of the terrible physical form that communal hatred takes. The communal riot was not a freak event but the result of something deep-seated in the psyche of the
people of the sub-continent, the seeds of which were planted in the Partition. The narrator comes to the realization that the past lives in the present and that the present is shaped by the past or, as the novelist puts it, “the past is concurrent with the present” (TSL 31). The boundaries between the past and present are revealed to be illusory like the boundaries that divide countries and places.

Most obviously, for a great many people the holocaust of the Partition was traumatic in the original sense of the Greek word trauma: an injury inflicted on the body. But this injury goes beyond the corporeal. While dealing with an event as terrible as the Partition, we need to bear in mind the psychoanalytic sense of trauma as “the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self and the world”.84 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “wound” as “a hurt caused by the laceration or separation of the tissues of the body by a hard or sharp instrument” and a “psychic injury, esp. one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed”.85 This OED definition asserts the relationship between physical injury and psychological response in addressing the legacy of historical calamity and the utility of medical analogies in understanding processes of collective memory. Second, it highlights the relationship between emotional hurt, the repression of memory, and the psychic costs of that repression. It emphasizes the tendency to deny or bury one’s traumatic past and suggests that such efforts, however psychologically understandable, are doomed to fail. The original injury, even if sustained long ago, thus “remains unhealed”. Almost all the novels dealing with the Partition reveal this trauma—both as a physical and psychological wound, but none so exclusively as Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines and Siddhartha Deb’s novel The Point of Return.

Priya Kumar considers The Shadow Lines as a testimony of loss and memory since the text compels us to concede “the past-in-presentness of partition as a history that is not done with, that refuses to be past”.86 Due to a long silence within and without with respect to the individual and communal crisis of 1964, it takes the narrator “fifteen years to discover” that there was a connection between his “nightmare bus ride back from school and the events that befell Tridib and others in Dhaka” (TSL 214). The narrator wonders at his stupidity for finding the truth only after such a long time.

The legacy of the Partition is still strong because the sub-continent is still under the sway of the kind of nationalism that is underpinned by a glorification of violence and bloodshed and
killing of foreign bodies in the larger interest of the nation. In Ghosh’s novel, the grandmother epitomizes this concept of nationalism. We see such ideas expressed in her laudatory comments on England’s long history of “war and bloodshed”:

It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lived there has earned his right to be there with blood; with their brother’s blood and their father’s blood and their son’s blood. They know they’re a nation because they have drawn their borders with blood...War is their religion. That’s what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is what you have to do for India, don’t you see? (TSL 77–78)

Her desire to see an India united by blood is underpinned by a hysterical sense of insecurity and potential danger. And it is this hysterical aspect of her nationalism that comes to the fore during India’s war with China in 1962, when, in a fit of frenzy, she declares “we have to kill them before they kill us” (TSL237). Ghosh shows how this aggressive nationalism and the deep-seated communal hatred make for the continued fear and trauma in the subcontinent.

Deb’s novel The Point of Return can be read as a trauma narrative that speaks of continued legacy of violence and Partition which takes destructive corporeal as well as psychological forms. In The Point of Return Deb memorializes the traumatic experience of migrancy, displacement and the exilic condition of a cultural minority and the terror faced by them in the wake of growing sub-nationalist aspirations and militant ethnic assertion. The northeastern region has seen so much terror and violence, and experienced dislocation alienation, loss of home, migrancy, that entire ways of life and social and political existence have been traumatized. Deb is a writer who seems to understand the trauma felt by the people and society of this region. He himself was a victim of ethnic violence and has experienced its trauma.

The story is about the Dam family which came to India during the Partition of the subcontinent, but has never been integrated into the national system. The Dam family has always lived under the fear and menace of being assaulted by the local tribal people among whom they have lived since 1947, and where Dr. Dam has worked for his whole life. Things became hostile
as the state was again breaking up and new boundaries were drawn again which separated Assam from the town which was their home. People like Dr. Dam and his family displaced and uprooted by the Partition of '47 never had a stable certain “home” in the new country to which they came in search of a new life.

It is during this time of drawing new boundaries in the state of Assam that Dr. Dam and Babu had to endure racism and unprovoked assault from the tribal people, in the very town which had been their home until then. Dr. Dam becomes paralyzed for life in one such attack. He always carried the trauma of menace and violence inside him and one night he describes a night of terror to his son, thus transferring that trauma to the next generation to carry. During the high time of paranoia of this redrawing of state boundaries, and tribal students’ movements, there were widespread killings, strikes, assaults, forcing the non-tribals, especially the Bengalis, “...to read the landscape of our everyday lives in terms of new lexicon of outrage and fear sweeping through the town....dividing people into insiders and outsiders, laying down the rules of existence” (TPOR 175-176).

The combination of physical violation with physical dislocation during partition means that not just the body, but also “the body’s place in the world”, became a site of trauma. Veena Das aptly comments that “consequent to this violence in which the most interior aspects of life were the most intruded upon, fleeing to another alien space led to a division of the self and the world according to a logic that made the self radically fugitive and the world radically fragmented”. Novels on Partition powerfully testify how men and women alike shared this fragmented and fugitive post-partition reality, just as men and women alike were subjected to communal violence.

In Ghosh’s novel The Shadow Lines we see how the traumatic memories of the place left behind after Partition influence the world-view of the characters, especially of the grandmother. Images and memories of lost home in Dhaka continue to haunt her which she transfers on to the narrator; and it is in Dhaka again, to where she goes to reclaim a part of her past life, that Tridib loses his life to the mob. In Deb’s novel The Point of Return also we see the traumatic condition of the bodies in relation to the place which they inhabit.

Babu for whom the town was the only place he could call “home” which he ever knew and loved became a place of utter bewilderment, fear and menace during this time of paranoia and hostility. The violence inflicted on the bodies of the migrants and non-tribals by the local
people is occasioned because of the contested issue of the place and the cartography of the place. The social and ontological ruptures affected by traumatic events gives his narration a tint of nostalgia as well as the realization of irreversible loss. That place itself can be a site of trauma for bodies inhabiting it is explored in Deb’s other novel Surface (2005). As in The Point of Return, in Surface also, place or landscape evokes a sense of menace, fear and trauma for the characters. This novel is an account of the hard, uncertain way of life on the India-Myanmar frontier under the constant shadow of ethnic militia, impoverishment, and territorial violence—all of which have subverted the whole notion of citizenship, and encouraged corruption and discontent.

In Surface, the narrator, who is a journalist from mainland India unlike the narrator in The Point of Return, journeys into this hinterland in search of a story that proves elusive as the place where nothing is what it seems to be. He goes through the region and traces the insecurity and agonies of life in a place lacerated by unrelenting conflict and violence. Both Cathy Caruth and Geoffrey Hartman interrogate the relationship between trauma and landscape, reminding us that landscape always highlights matters of not only how we see but also from what vantage point we see.

Drawing on Hartman’s theory on the relation of place and trauma, Ann Whitehead says that the process of viewing a landscape is therefore one of careful construction, through which the indifferent or unaccommodating space of a site or environment is transformed into a place, which draws the viewer into its territory. Crucial to this task of conversion is the viewer’s location of a proper position or perspective, from which to gain access to the landscape. On encountering a particular site, the viewer must find her bearings in relation to it, in order to fulfill the demands of landscape. In Surface, the narrator is from mainland India and the way he looks at the landscapes around him betrays his preconceptions and metropolitan bias towards the Northeast. He is confused, bewildered at times and always feels some kind of menace lurking around him throughout his journey in the wild, mountained regions. We see epistemological impasse on the part of the narrator, an outsider, who cannot comprehend the place/space, both social and material, in which he finds himself.

Images of corporeal violence, wounding, killing, mayhem, madness are found abundantly in Surface—all of which imply the violent, rootless socio-political life of this region which has remained alienated from mainland India. Euan Sutherland’s narrative, a fictional memoir of a colonial newspaper editor, incorporated by Deb in the novel, where we have the story of Jim,
gives us insights into one of the most decisive and gruesome and least documented battles of the 2nd World War fought in the Northeast between the Japanese and the Allied Forces. The descriptions of the traumatized, wounded, rotten bodies in this section testify to the horrible history of violence and chaos. It also provides us materials to speculate the relation between historical trauma and place.

During the violent battles with the Japanese in the mountains and jungles of the Northeast, Jim becomes aware of his true self and the monsters that everybody carries within them, and that the boundary between civilization and barbarianism can get blurred quite easily in that wild place. He carries a terrible secret within him, the knowledge of his inner monstrosity, and the memory of his barbaric act is evoked every time he remembers that wild place where he lost his reason. This traumatic memory, the belatedness or haunting return of that event and memory of that place drives him almost to the verge of madness, and to keep his sanity intact, Jim starts translating the letters and poems found on the dead Japanese soldiers, whose trauma he could share and empathise with.

The shocking experiences of those war months in the Northeast made Jim distasteful of the ideals of order, discipline, and the civilizing mission that the British Empire avowedly stood for. Later Jim tells Sutherland: “How orderly everything is in your second city of the empire. Wonderfully arranged, all straight lines and precise rules and stiff spines, and how all that becomes a big lie when you move to the edge of the empire and run loose in the jungle with guns and knives”.92 It is just a thin red line that divides civilization from the wilderness, as Sutherland says, “The best of men could go mad in such a place as you were in”.93 Jim ultimately commits suicide overwhelmed by the traumatic memories in the jungles of the Northeast. But before he dies, he urges Sutherland to take care of the translations of the letters of the dead Japanese soldiers which he felt would act as testimonies to the trauma that they had all gone through.

There are other instances in the novel where place or landscape is depicted as traumatic and overwhelmed with the burden of historical memory and sense of loss and fracture. Throughout his journey, the narrator encounters people and societies traumatized by terrorism, impoverishment, militarization and bitterness and seething anger and discontent. Landscape becomes a site of cultural and historical haunting, the surface on which trauma has been imprinted and in which the evidence of a terrible, violent past, as well as the continuing violence of the postcolonial present have been concealed.
Cathy Caruth points out, “the traumatized person...carries an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history they cannot entirely possess”. Dr. Dam and his family carried this chaos of History and his son Babu carried it, too. Babu carries the inherited sense of loss and confusion born out of historical displacement. Babu finally learns to join his own pain to that of others, till his own being flows into and reclaims the horrific history he cannot turn away from. Swallowing the unfolding history of the subcontinent, its arbitrary notion of a homogenous nation and territorial violence Babu becomes a teller of tales. Kali Tal suggests in Worlds of Hurt (1996) that there is a “universal drive to testify”, “to bear the tale”.

In his own words, Babu returns as a “...teller of tales, the inept archaeologist of memories” (TPOR 186).

Trauma of physical and psychological wounding and violence have remained inscribed in the bodies and memories of people who have lived through those events. The novels of Partition show that testimony need not always be produced only by the survivor herself/himself who has lived through and survived extreme forms of mutating bodily violence but also by the later generations who continue to live under the burden of traumatic memories and fear passed onto them. These novels show that traumatic memories that may be passed on generationally, and resist closure through their very replication.

To Dori Laub’s assertion about Holocaust survivors, “there is in each survivor an imperative need to tell and thus to come know one’s story,” we can draw the parallel with Babu’s narrative mission. He says that the migrant is not as cut off as they might appear, especially the migrant who is also a writer. It is through the act of recalling and narrating his hometown in the novel that he says, “I truly become my place. I am my own hometown” (TPOR 154). The Point of Return as a piece of Trauma fiction displays the twin imperatives to both represent the event in all of its traumatic specificity as well as to evoke the dislocation, distortion, and alienation of the lived experience of trauma. The imperative to tell the traumatic story, to “bear the tale” is evident in The Shadow Lines as the narrator searches for the lost connections, the traces of forgotten, unspeakable history.

The narrator portrays a series of political incidents in Calcutta and Dhaka simultaneously to bring out the enormity of the central tragedy in his narration. It started with the disappearance of Mu-i-Mubarak, the hair of the Prophet Mohammed, from Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir in 1963 and its recovery in 1964. In one of the riots in Khulna, a small town in the distant east wing
of Pakistan, a demonstration turned violent on the 4th of January 1964. This demonstration is “branded in [the narrator’s] memory” (TSL 222) because it is in this demonstration that Tridib lost his life. While recollecting an individual’s sacrifice and his community’s struggle with senseless political and national barriers, the narrator states:

Every word I write about those events of 1964 is the product of a struggle with silence. It is a struggle I am destined to lose—have already lost—for even after all these years I do not know where within me, in which corner of my world, this silence lies. All I know of it is what it is not. It is not, for example, the silence of an imperfect memory. Nor is it a silence enforced by a ruthless state—nothing like that: no barbed wire, no check-points to tell me where its boundaries lie (TSL 213).

The narrator has a twin motive in narrating from the sources of memory: first, to communicate the lurking political turmoil beneath the tender veneer of his childhood years in post-partition India; and secondly, to save his memories from slipping into the realm of forgetting. These struggles of the characters to remember against the forces of forgetting are very much a corporeal function.

Postcolonial narrative, like trauma narrative, tend to reclaim agency both by remembering belatedly, and by trying to heal, to undo that trauma by recalling in a public venue—but in the mode of the personal—the violence of nation formation. Both insist on the importance of remembering the forgotten, unhomely, and marginalized people and their histories. In dealing with or witnessing trauma and violence, both physical and psychological these novels emerge as sites of historical reparations and reconciliations.

As we have seen, the writers under the present study invest their narratives with the corporeal specificities of the violence and chaos inflicted by history. Bodies, Sara Ahmed writes, are capable of remembering “histories, even when we forget them”. The way the body is figured differs between genres of writing and across different historical periods. Recent theoretical understanding of the body has made it possible to conceive of the body as a site of historical investigation which in turn can flesh out and shed new light on many seemingly disembodied historical processes.

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What finally emerges is the truth that the body is inevitably a signifying body, and hence a site on and through which we can construct a specific account of the colonial and postcolonial experience and politics of embodiment, including questions of oppression and resistance, disease, violence, consumption, sexuality and gender, whether treated realistically or allegorically. The body and corporeality become a powerful trope for reading the postcolonial Indian nation or its history. The excessive, carnivalesque bodies signify the teeming plurality and the fluidity of Indian identity which remain, like the bodies of Saleem, Mik, and Sanjay, uncontained and uncontainable in fixed form. The brutality of an authoritarian state and unrelenting pressure and chaos of history get inscribed in the cracking, disintegrating, sick, distorted bodies of the characters. The politics of othering and exclusivity of an increasingly xenophobic state create marginal people whose unhomely, uncertain lives are mirrored in paralyzed, diseased, neglected bodies.

Reading bodies and the violation and wounding of bodies gains significance when we come to the embodied politics of gendered violence. The corporeal aspects of these texts are instructive for scholars seeking to write a long durée history of the relationship between gender and state formation. Here we get a disturbing reminder of how states expressed honour and authority through women's bodies. Some of the texts under the present study, especially the novels dealing with Partition present diverse insights into the manifold ways in which women's bodies as sites of symbolic capital and honour are both regulated and violated. They also speak to contemporary debates on questions of women's agency and subjectivity in contexts of gendered violence. In "Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative" (1992) Elleke Boehmer says, "when national histories are revealed as stochastic, divided, painful, the body, too, is exposed as fissured, reduced".98 Reading the bodily or corporeal specificities of the novels with regard to the history and the state of the nation help us see the truth of this statement.
Notes and References


4. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 322.


28. Mee 146.

30. Ankhi Mukherjee 58.
31. Kane 99.
35. Sara Upstone, 166.
37. Bakhtin, Rabelais 317.
42. Bakhtin, Rabelais 320.
43. Bakhtin, Rabelais 317.
44. Bakhtin, Rabelais 338.
45. Bakhtin, Rabelais 91.
46. Bakhtin, Rabelais 175.
47. Bakhtin, Rabelais 327, 331.

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54. Challakere, Ibid.

55. See Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (London: Pluto, 2008) and The Wretched of the Earth(New York: Grove Press, 1963).


58. Perhaps the best example of this is the so-called “Hottentot Venus,” whose enlarged labia and buttocks, circulated in the freak shows of Victorian England, marked her as savagely sensuous and measurably different from the English angel in the house.


66. Alexander and Mohanty, xxxi.

67. For a detailed analysis of the issues of disability, gender and nation in Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day*, see Cindy LaCom’s “Revising the Subject: Disability as ‘Third Dimension’ in Clear Light of Day and You Have Come Back”.


78. Bapsi Sidhwa, *The Ice-Candy Man* (London: Heinemann, 1988), 134. All subsequent quotations are incorporated in the text under the title IM followed by the page number in parenthesis.

79. Kushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1956) 176. All subsequent quotations are incorporated in the text under the title TP followed by the page number in parenthesis.


85. dictionary.oed.com/.


87. Ananya J. Kabir, 179.


92. Surface 108.

93. Surface 109.


