Chapter II

Borders, Bodies and Dismemberment
In this chapter, to address the questions of gendered violence, I will analyze the ideological underpinning of woman’s body and its cultural as well as political implications in the discourses of the nation during the division of the subcontinent into two nation states. I will explore the implications of ruptures and loss suffered by women and in terms of dislocations or displacements in Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers*. In doing so I will keep the female body at the centre of discussion as it is engaged in the negotiation of borders that are psychological, cultural as well as political. I will also bring out the different nuances of border crossing and show the complex interplay of changing border and changing identities.

The novel *What the Body Remembers*, it will also be apparent, has great capacity for intervening in the masculinist nationalist discourse and historiography via the belated remembering and retelling of the collective trauma of Partition through the body as a means of such remembrance. That is why body, and particularly woman’s body, assumes centrality in thematic and formal terms.

It is common knowledge that in the post-Cartesian period and throughout the Enlightenment, which set off body against mind and valorized the later, built up a discourse that body was all that a woman possessed. Woman’s self was a site of appetite, desire and lust; one that menstruated; reared another body within its own; gave birth, and lactated. Because female body was troublesome, and an entity that
was unpredictable and even disruptive, it was to be put under surveillance and
tamed. In the words of Swati Ghosh:

Relating body with femininity rendered men the autonomy for the
more valorized cerebral work and to satisfy their needs through
access over woman’s body and services. Thus a vulnerability
posited in the anatomical differences of the female body came to
serve as the basis for women’s subordination. (124)

This being so, the normality and usefulness of docile female body was
understood as being constructed and disciplined within the materiality of
knowledge/power (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”), which was
manifested within the collaborative surveillance of Capital and patriarchy (Bordo).
Feminist theories, therefore, invoke the body as a discursive construction that is in
fact rooted in its corporeality. Similarly, women writers, taking radical positions
with regard to female bodies, politicize its corporeality and produce an oppositional
discursivity of body. This has happened in tandem with the emphasis put by
feminist theories on the lived experience of the body mediated by the context in
which it was related, the critical interest it served and so on (Butler, Bodies That
Matter; Grosz). What has come to the fore is that corporeality is not an abstract
category but materialization in terms of differential sexuality, social responsibilities
and ethical norms. Female corporeality can be deployed against the inscriptions of
masculine culture on the feminine, writing sexual difference in multiple forms of
female embodiment, interrogating the dominant discourses produced by
patriarchy—be they on the nation or community. Violence on female body, or
Gendered violence becomes a theme in the writings of female body produced by women.

Gendered violence figures prominently in the Partition narratives—whether historical or fictional—instantiated variously by incidents of the slashing of women's wombs, those of rape and abduction, mass suicides of women, etc. The aftermath of the events of violence like the efforts to recapture and repatriate the abducted women across the border, the refusal of many families to accept the "dishonored" women back into the community and family, and the refusal of many women to return home when given the choice in fear of being rejected also entailed more complicated forms of coercion and violence to which women were subjected by their own families and communities. The patriarchal forces inherent in family and community forced women to undergo emotional and psychic ruptures even after suffering and surviving physical violence. Though violence was perpetrated on female body in a major way during the Partition and bloody conflicts between communal forces were played out on it, the public documents and official histories of both India and Pakistan occluded it. Therefore voices of the women and other hapless victims of the Partition have been recuperated in fiction and a corporeal dimension to their memories of trauma and suffering has also been highlighted.

This is the reason why Butalia metaphorically titles one of the chapters of The Other Side of Silence as "History is a Woman's Body," showing how history was played out on women's bodies during the Partition and how women became passive, suffering subjects of history—and hence subaltern bodies, I believe—without being able to claim recognition of their suffering and even 'martyrdom.'

For her part, Veena Das also observes:
Widespread violence against women was witnessed at the time of the Partition of India with more than hundred thousand women having been abducted from each of the two parts of the Punjab alone. . . Not only were women abducted and raped, but slogans like 'Victory to India' and 'Long Live Pakistan' were said to have been painfully inscribed on the private parts of women. Although a Fact Finding Organisation was set up to enquire into these atrocities, the findings of the organisation were never made public. I have argued elsewhere that the bodies of women became political signs, territories on which the political programmes of the rioting communities of men were inscribed. ("Sexual Violence" 2411)

From these accounts it becomes apparent that woman's body became the site of communal violence that became a necessary—although sordid—side-show of the nations coming into being with much fanfare. But still worse, it remained unacknowledged by nationalist history. The painful corporeal truths of women rooted in suffering, displacement and rupture, which could have put the entire story of the independence of the two nations in entirely different complexion, were occluded from the narrations of the nation. Hence, perhaps, the cultural importance of What the Body Remembers, aside from its inherent literary merit. For this reason, too, women's body is the focus of my dissertation, owing to relatively meager attention paid to corporeality of woman in the genre of Partition literature, particularly with regard to the question: What happens to female bodies that face violence as its 'marked' targets? While trying to deal with this question within the problematic of the gendered national imaginary of Mother India, I confront a still
larger question: What happens in the realm of cultural politics and what meanings can we extrapolate when the body of woman is mapped as nation? What are the larger implications of the sexual violation and dismemberment of woman’s body within the symbolism of woman as nation with reference to *What the Body Remembers*? I have already explored the question in part while discussing the allegorical dimensions of the text in Chapter I, and I will focus on the locations and movements of female bodies within and across borders towards the later part of this chapter.

The Partition is seen by Baldwin in a new perspective: it is not just a terrible episode of violence inflicted by men on women’s body, but also the logical conclusion of patriarchy projecting through woman’s body its greed for power, aggressiveness and vainglory onto the national imaginary and legitimating these through the self-serving myth of *izzat* or honour of the *quom*. Towards the end of the narrative amidst the violence and bloodshed of partition we come across Roop listening to Satya’s voice in her mind that tells her, “We are alone, though a crowd of our quom might mill about us, little sister. Always each woman is alone . . . Men etch their anger upon woman-skin, swallow their pride dissolved in women’s blood” (492).

It is quite apparent that the community that suppresses its women invests in the bodies of its women collective honour of all its members. It is in terms of woman’s body that national pride gets defined. It is so because in a patriarchal kinship structure, a woman’s status in the household is determined by her ability to produce male issue for her husband’s lineage. Her procreative capacity to
biologically produce men is thus appropriated and valorized by the society and the nation. Sylvia Walby and Jill McCalla Vickers in their gender-sensitive reconsiderations of nationalism claim that the traditional politics of reproduction has two focal points: "the battle of the cradle," in which women are viewed as biological producers, and "the battle of the nursery," in which they are targeted as social producers (Vickers 485). In both categories women's autonomy and freedom of choice is limited and aligned to national patriarchal interests. One cannot but agree with V. Spike Peterson's view that "the battle of the cradle is about regulating under what conditions, when, how many, and whose children women will bear" while "the battle of the nursery" focuses upon the social role of women and "involves the ideological reproduction of group members" ("Gendered Nationalism" 43). Vickers views the battle of the cradle as a battle over women's sexual reproduction and the battle of the nursery as a battle over identities and loyalties (483). Her identity revolves around the wife/mother roles beyond which no individuality needs to be established or recognized. Beyond the immediate context of family her identity, which is rooted in her body, is inflected by the moral and symbolic economy of the community and nation, and troped as mother-nation, the symbol of the nation's sanctity and honour.

The greatest irony that Baldwin points out to us is that woman being the worst victim of nationalist ideology becomes the sanctimonious icon of nationhood. Being the most adored embodiment of borders as motherland, she herself becomes a victim of sexual and homicidal violence, and her corporeal borders are violated when political borders are re-drawn, communal borders divide humanity, and above all the social borders created by patriarchy in Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities
to regulate male and female bodies and their libidinal as well as moral economies face the worst form of their inner contradictions.

Indian culture is deeply informed with the myths that motherhood is best realized when dedicated to the cause of the nation as veerapasabini (begetter of heroes); wifehood is accomplished when used as the source of strength of the heroic husband, or sacrificed in honour of the deceased husband as sati; womanhood is best idealized as shakti and birangona in the fields of battles to vindicate, paradoxically, the patriarchal causes and such ideals are thought to be patriarchal woman’s inevitable destiny and happiness can come only through it. Indeed, all these myths enunciated in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas have congealed into the Indian cultural imagination the icon of nation as mother land. In this iconic framework of imagination women’s bodies have been represented as maps of the country. The spatial connection drawn between the female body and the territorial landmass symbolizes women as the nation. Rabindranath Tagore’s famous song, ‘Amar Shonar Bangla’ or ‘My Golden Bengal’ uses this template of representation as the landscape of Bengal transforms into different parts of the female body. The mother’s face, her smile, the ends of her sari all become diffused in the visualization of the nation as the female entity assumes a maternal role. In Chapter I, the ideological framework of the iconization of nation as mother within nationalist discourse has already been discussed. At this moment I wish to make an additional point that conventional notions of nationalism are rooted in patriarchy and gender hierarchy. In Spike Peterson’s words:

Nationalism is gendered in terms of how the naturalization of domination (‘us’ at the expense of ‘them’) depends upon the prior
naturalization of men/masculinity over women/femininity. In this sense, taking domination as natural obscures its historical context and disables our knowledge of and attempts to transform hierarchical relations. ("Sexing Political Identities" 44)

The "Mother India" trope used in Indian nationalist rhetoric also served to interpellate men to marshal civic-as-filial loyalty, and to cast secessionist (Pakistani) nationalism as matricidal betrayal. Examining the rhetoric of one newspaper, Butalia indicts the equation of "manhood and nationalism" and the imagined "purity of Mother India, the motherland which gave birth to the Hindu race," offering a striking example: "One issue of the Organizer (August 14, 1947) [Pakistan’s Independence Day] had a front page 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" (Other Side of Silence 186). When Baldwin re-uses this trope of India as ravaged body subject to male violence ("Seventy-three days to cut a land in three, West Pakistan, India, and East Pakistan, like cutting arms from a body"(439)), she ends up reaffirming this logic which, incidentally, also serves to idealize motherhood as a prescriptive norm of femininity for female citizens.

The individual mother figure therefore bears the heavy weight of a much diffused ideology which indicates society’s expectation of her. Motherhood is far from the liberatory and enriching experience it should be. The concept being very much under male control, motherhood operates strictly within the marital framework and is not autonomous. The mother can give birth but cannot give her child a social identity. She is the ‘soil’ into which man ‘sows’ his seed, and therefore can claim the child as his (that’s why Roop always refers to her male
offspring as *his* son). Baldwin examines ways in which the representation of motherhood as national allegory has constricted women’s social, economic, and political roles in different geographic and historical contexts. She also shows how this cultural use of the mother-figure can provide alternative models of women’s lives as mothers and non-mothers.

It is Roop and Satya’s role as mother and non-mother which primarily determines their status in Sardarji’s household. Roop is married off as a second wife to Sardarji, who has taken her into his home for the sole purpose of producing male heirs—his first spouse, Satya, having failed to deliver. The two wives’ conflicts over securing power in the household make up the remainder of the plot. Each tries to become indispensable to Sardarji—Roop seduces him with her beauty, and Satya with her sharp mind; each fulfils separate but equal functions as their husband demands. Gradually it is motherhood which determines their status in the family.

The gendering of India in *Mother* figure and gendered violence performed on women’s bodies in the name of nation and religion, to me, amounts the same as the former is but a figurative representation of the latter. The abstract appropriation of women’s bodies through nationalist rhetoric is inseparable from the material appropriation of women’s bodies by Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities. The moment of India’s partition and Pakistan’s formation is marked by and marked on the mutilated, dismembered, wounded bodies, rendering the bodies meaningful not only as the material effects of the political partition, but also as metaphor for the increasingly divided community. Literally, it witnesses the culmination of the growing tension among communities which has already been discussed in earlier part of this chapter.
The image of nation as woman, whether as mother, virgin, goddess or victim is widespread not only in the masculinist nationalist narrative but also in women’s writings in which the objectification of woman in nationalist imagery is, however, fraught with many ideological problems from a feminist point of view. First of all, iconization of woman even at the hands of the women writers de-historicizes and essentializes woman, reducing her to the selfsame stereotypes that constitute the sexist patriarchal discourse. Menon and Bhasin rightly point out, “the trope-of-nation as woman further secures male-male arrangements and an all male history” (109). Baldwin’s well-intentioned replication of that symbolism seeks emotively to arouse moral indignation about violence against women, but in replaying the trope it then questions—although paradoxically consolidates—the gender assumptions of that symbolism. But she seems to be aware of this ambivalence unlike Jyotirmoyee Devi.

In Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning*, Sutara, the survivor of the riots and the Bengal Partition, strikes Amulyababu, her brother’s father-in-law as “the bloody symbol of the mother figure we call our country” (38) when she comes to his house in Calcutta to suffer social exclusion, and is subsequently sent off to a hostel run by Christian missionaries. Amulyababu, a retired deputy magistrate, is liberal minded and sympathetic towards the sufferings of Sutara, but effete and powerless against the patriarchal hegemony of social ostracism of which the girl is a victim. Although as a teacher of History Sutara is stated to be “in a better position to evaluate the past” (68), her corporeal imagination bearing a burden of universal cultural memory negates her individuality and unique historicity, since it expands to include myth and history in a single sweep and binds her body to the women of all
ages. Such universalism and mythification of body do not radicalize corporeality. The novel seems to insist on a happy resolution of Sutara’s problem, and it inheres in the possibility of her marriage with Promode, the only other man who appreciates the corporeal imagination of Sutara and understands the overwhelmingly enormous mythical dimensions of her corporeality. Therefore the logic of events leads towards not only the promise of a happy marriage but also the very transcendence of corporeality:

Her body, which had been weighed down with all the heaviness of the earth, suddenly lifted, and she felt light as air. (emphasis mine 133)

As the novel ends with the above lines what is clearly negated is the radical politics of female corporeality because of the over-iconization of female body as Draupadi, Sita, Amba and Mary Magdalene in mythical terms. This type of mythical figuration climaxing in nation-mother trope consolidates conventional symbolism of female subjugation. Baldwin, however, avoids this pitfall by choosing to foreground the contradiction between the symbolism of nation as mother on the one hand, which is inherent in patriarchal discourse of nation, and the corporeal victimization of woman in the history of nation formation on the other hand. Additionally, she persists in the oppositional discourse of female body to the very end of the novel by historicizing rather than transcending it. Only superficially, the closing lines of the main narrative of What the Body Remembers—leaving aside the epilogue—resemble those of The River Churning:

Fear lifts, rises above the gulmohar trees.
Leaves Roop *light*, translucent as sky. (emphasis mine *WTR* 536)

The flight from body/earth to air/sky and freedom, and lightness as relief from the burden of earthliness and fear are presumably the desired ends of the narrative in both novels. But the crucial difference between them is that in Baldwin’s novel Roop gathers the nerve to tell Sardarji what she hid from him all the time: the deafness of one ear she suffers from, a corporeal disability and also a metaphor of insensitivity and passivity that the narrative alludes to in many places. Owning up one’s corporeal failings requires a basic commitment to the imperatives of body, which Roop shows admirably. Also, corporeality is evidenced by the Epilogue, which, bearing the time reference of 1965, enacts the re-birth of Satya the archetypal woman. Although a signifier of women of all ages who have suffered bodily pain and emptiness of life, the trope of Satya has no transcendental implications, for she returns from silence into a body-consciousness of hospital and find a voice that screams in protest:

*This life begins with a mid-wife bearded but turbanless . . . Lights above me shine painfully white, the walls are white, the sheets are white, strange textures . . . Medicinal scents assault my nose as I am severed from the womb . . .*

*Smack! On my small naked bottom. I kick, I kick!*

*Aaaaaiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiieeeeeeee! (WTR 537)*

Her voice that boldly pronounces the universal pain and suffering of women is embodied and it is located in “New Delhi, Divided India, 1965.” Indeed, the time-place markers underscore the historical realism of woman’s body and the specificity
of bodily experience. These, therefore, reinforce the truth value of the statement that “Men have not changed” (WTR 538), and dismiss the triumphant claims of progress and advancement that history/his-story has made since the time of Hegel. This is the protest of body, the counter-discourse of corporeality, against the oppressive regimen of patriarchal honour and social regimentation to which it is subjected, and above all the fear which the docile female body learns to harbor.

During and after the Partition women’s bodies became objects whose value lay in their meanings, or in their potential as inscriptive sites for communicating material, symbolic and political significance. The cultural and sexual notion and myths of ‘shame’ and ‘honour’ vested in female body, together with the allied symbols of ‘pollution’ and ‘purity’, which have traditionally structured patriarchal Indian society in its confrontation with marauders and aggressors in history, assumed new forms and practices of violence to re-inscribe the borders of female body that were co-extensive with those of the community and the nation. In this connection, I feel it necessary to quote Jasodhara Bagchi’s from her introduction to Jyotirmayee Devi’s The River Churning:

Moral regulation or, rather, a hypocritical obsession with women’s sexual purity, marks the patriarchal foundation of the hegemonic class in India. A woman’s body is a pawn even in the game of nation building. (xxvi-xxvii)

The partition riots of 1946-47 and the destabilization of community alliances that these entailed treated women’s bodies as a site for the performance of identity. The ‘purity’ of Hindu and Sikh women became a political prerequisite for
their belonging in the new nation. In the communal violence surrounding Partition, Hindu and Sikh women sometimes committed suicide or were murdered by kinsmen, and these acts—designed to frustrate the enemy’s endeavor to dishonor the nation by violating its women—were lauded as self sacrifice. Partition violence positioned women as objects of possession and vehicles of communication of belligerence and reprisal between opposed groups of men. In *What the Body Remembers*, “Papaji [Roop’s father] thinks that for good-good women, death should be preferable to dishonour” (*WTR* 521). The masculinist anxiety of dishonor makes him impose loads of social restrictions to regulate Roop’s body. The same anxiety drives him to kill his daughter-in-law Kusum so that her body would not be violated by the Muslims. Unaware of his father’s action, when Jeevan returns to his father’s home amidst the riots of partition and discovers the body of his wife Kusum that has been dismembered, rearranged and placed beneath a white sheet, he understands a new meaning of ‘remembering’ as the re-membering or the arrangement of limbs, “. . . Why were her legs not bloody? To cut a woman apart without first raping—a waste, surely. Rape is one man’s message to another: ‘I took your pawn. Your move . . .’” (*WTR* 511). The ripping out of Kusum’s womb which had borne his three sons is in itself an eloquent message of war against the Sikh quom, and Jeevan understands it perfectly.

The ripping of the womb of Kusum, though an individual case in itself, is a synecdoche of aggression upon the whole Sikh community. Since the womb has been despoiled, no Sikh warriors can be born from it to protect the quom. This is the message that Jeevan understands very well. Whether it is Papaji’s dismemberment of Kusum’s body, or the literal re-membering of her body minus her uterus by the
enemies, or Jeevan’s reception of it as “one man’s message to another,” all the acts indicate the female body as an inscribable surface through which communal identity and honor can be either preserved or outraged. Deprived of Kusum’s voice, her body becomes a medium for messages of war and communal hatred.

Jeevan’s extraordinary restraint in going about the arrangement of her funeral pyre, I believe, is a calculated front of stoic courage and manliness shown to the enemies that had better be careful enough not to cross the limits of tolerance. And yet, “it must be ignored, so that no Sikh man shows weakness or fear” (WTR 512). Thus the pledge that Jeevan and men like him in extreme conditions took was not to protect the women, but to ‘ignore’ such act of atrocity on their women so that their manly ‘courage’ and the message of their threat to the enemy in their aggrieved silence remained intact.

If a quom and its patriarchal infrastructure ensure their honour and safety by regulating the sexuality of their women and appropriating female reproductivity, then every male child born to a woman is construed the future protector of the quom and a source of pride, whereas a girl child is a liability, a cause for the anxiety of the quom’s honour. Indeed, as the history of the subcontinent testifies, the two nations pitted against each other rancorously staked their claims to honour through the corporeality of their women, with the upshot that violence on women reproduced itself working through so explosive an ideology as national honour. For attaining honour and maintaining its violence was as much required by one nation to disgrace the other as to preempt reprisal by its enemy in similar symbolic terms. In other words, fear always lay on the other side of aggressiveness and violence on and of body was what that woman feared most.
Body being very important for a woman, from childhood Roop is taught to guard her body and fear “that lurer of lust from the eyes of unrelated men” (128). The natural care-free life of childhood is denied to her. She cannot move about on the terrace like boys, or pull her legs up to the waist level like her brother. Gujri, the maid-servant, who in many ways acts as her guardian, would remonstrate with her about these instances of unfeminine behaviour: “Get down immediately! What will people say, boy’s things happening in a girl’s body . . . people will say you are too ziddi, understand?” (WTR 109).

That her body needs to be protected from dishonor is to be patriarchally guaranteed through the love and concern of the father. Indeed, the stronger the love of the men for the honour of the bodies of their women, greater is the possibility of violence to be inflicted on their bodies as a corrective for the dishonor of rape, which may befall them as a misfortune. Roop feared for herself more than the other girls did because her father Bhai Bachan Singh’s love for her was stronger than any father’s for his daughter. He was the headman of the village, and on his daughter’s honour depended the honour of the entire village. Thus, the whole idea of honour is predicated upon the man’s anxiety of both maintenance and loss of sexual purity of his womenfolk, and the woman’s anxiety of rape, which may even interfere with the anticipation of sexual pleasure. It is little surprising that Roop learns to fear sexual pleasure even in marriage. “Sardarji thinks she yearns for that uncontrollable instant of pleasure, for he laughs afterwards, ‘you village girls’, bringing a hot flush of shame to Roop’s cheeks, reviving her fear of her own body” (WTR 238).
Since fear of one's body is a result of a whole productive and regulatory process of patriarchal social order, we need to discuss at some length the social engineering and regimentation, to which body is subjected. In *What the Body Remembers*, she explores different ways in which body of woman is gazed at, regulated, coded, guarded, violated and interpreted culturally as well as politically. Given the fact that female sexuality has been patriarchally presumed and defined as the source of male sexual pleasure, all cultures across ages and regions have invested in woman's body erotic and aesthetic value, and rendered it as a natural object of men's sensual gratification within a libidinal economy that men have controlled. Women too have been co-opted into the male libidinal economy to regulate one another almost in the same way the Foucauldian subject inscribes its subject position in relations of power to another and binds itself to another in the panopticon, the technology of discipline (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"; *History of Sexuality*). Although Foucault limits the technologies of discipline to the bio-power of the state, it can nevertheless be extended to the community, which also deploys an array of social technologies of myths and values of tradition to contain the body and sexuality of woman and define as well as regulate feminine social behaviour on the basis of public morality. Home and domesticity are the powerful ideological scaffoldings of traditional femininity which the patriarchal community builds and maintains. Women are co-opted into such scaffoldings and become the wardens of one another in the social panopticon. They themselves serve to reinforce the patriarchal system of incarceration within family and marriage. The novel instantiates several ways the women like Nani, Revati Bhua, Lajo Bhua, Madani, Gujri and Kusum regulating the body and mind of
Roop and thus enabling the formation of her gendered identity in compliance of the prescriptions and proscriptions of the community.

In Chapter I of the novel, Satya jealously examines the features of Roop, the co-wife whom her husband has newly married to bear him children. Roop's "Pothwari skin, smooth as a new apricot beckoning from the limb of a tall tree" \( (WTR\ 15) \); her long hair, because it has few split ends, betrays the fact that it must have been cut at least once, so she is a new Sikh, and her high cheekbones are evidence of inherited Afghan blood \( (WTR\ 16) \). She goes on to examine different parts of Roop's anatomy such as her teeth, tongue, brow, feet, neck, earlobes and also the jewellery like the kantha necklace, earrings of three tiered Burmese rubies and diamonds, gold panjebs, gold bangles, etc. Satya's scrutinizing gaze is an exercise of patriarchal power over Roop's body that is vested in her, since she is Sardarji's first wife. As a patriarchal surrogate she assesses Roop's body and jewellery in terms of its erotic, procreative and material investments. On the other hand, her gaze is freighted with feelings of jealousy, hostility and also condescension vis-à-vis Roop, because she too is basically a woman and barren at that. Her own subject position within the power relations is as precarious as that of a rival for the Sardarji's affection. Thus, from the beginning Roop's position strikes us as ambiguous, and the operation of the patriarchal relations of power seems quite complicated. The patriarchal power relations become all the more complicated within the colonial social structure as English education brings about cultural division of the two women into a two-tiered structure within the bigamous marital arrangement. English education, it is well known, proliferated complex forms of social divisions as the English-educated native male elite, complicit with the white
ruling classes, distanced themselves from the common hoi polloi, and used English as a marker of their cultural superiority. At home, too, they encouraged their women folk to learn English in order to come at par with the European ladies and maintain their respectability as memsahibs. The cultural history of late 19th century colonial India shows that the Bengali *bhadralok* and the indigenous elite elsewhere westernized themselves to reinforce their feudal social base, and all their agenda and discourses of woman’s education (English education in particular) and emancipation—which was an important component of the Indian cultural renaissance and eventually anti-colonial struggle—largely served to underscore their role as the saviours of their women folk. Women of socially upper classes in colonial India began to look upon their husbands as their saviours, for providing them the opportunities for reading and writing in English. Co-opted into patriarchy, as the agent of its power and as a patriarchal surrogate, Satya desires that Roop must learn to speak the “git-mit, git-mit” English, sit on chairs like an English woman (*WTR* 20), although she herself knew no English.

Colonial acculturation through English is only secondary to the social formation of female body. But what is of primary importance is how is female body valued in one’s culture, what its status is vis-à-vis those of men, how it is culturally coded and contained and so on. And above all, most important issue is how a woman is co-opted into the existing social system of bigamy to watch over and regulate the body of another woman.

Early on, the narrator observes:
In the Sind-Sagar doab, that land that lies between the Indus and its sister river, the Jhelum, where women are raised to bend like saplings with every wind that speaks with a voice of authority, Satya found no woman pliant enough for her husband. (*WTR* 20)

From the brief account given above what faintly emerges is the theoretical point that through the discourse of honour, domesticity, community and nation, and through gendered sexual and cultural practices of purity the meanings of body are created as well as reproduced. The mother does not merely produce the girl baby’s body, she also produces the conditions of the cultural constructions of the body and reproduces thus the grounds of the self-same conditions of the meaning of a girl’s body. As Malson and Swann explain how “the ‘female’ body, the supposed natural basis upon which (natural or socially constructed) femininities have been predicated, is thus elucidated as a discursively constructed ‘regulatory ideal’ of a hetero-patriarchal, reproduction-oriented cultural imperative” (195). Roop, for example, has just not been raised to behave as a girl at the corporeal level and to fit into the discursively produced regulatory mechanism of sexuality and reproduction, she also must ascertain the continuous reproduction of the mechanism that regulates gender differentiation which is the corner stone of the heterosexually structured patriarchy. She must make sure as a mother that her baby girl Pavan and the baby boy grow up into their ‘normal’ biologically differentiated gendered selves:

If her child sees like a girl and like a boy, there is something wrong with her. If there is something wrong with her, there is something wrong with Roop. With that body that made her, shaped her. And
there could also be something wrong with Timcu. And then, if something is wrong with Timcu, Sardarji will be very angry indeed

... And then she’ll be sent home. And then? (WTR 271-272)

The passage is structured in terms of a perverse logic that points to the precarious fate of a married woman who can be victimized when things go wrong with the bodies of her children. In this vicious chain of events, should they come to such a pass, the scapegoat is the body of woman that is believed to suffer from procreative malfunctions and therefore condemnable.

In her influential essay “A Sikh Canadian View of Partition: Shauna Singh Baldwin’s What the Body Remembers” (2003), Mary Conde elaborately discusses the specific ways in which Roop’s body is subjected to the rules of the family and society. The bodies of men and women are differentiated, structured, coded and controlled. They are to be read, understood, invoked in memory, and deployed to resist inimical discourses and practices. Conde cites references from the novel where the narrator says Roop must not only read her own body, but also that of her child and husband. She must not just learn to read her baby’s little body, as a wife she should also learn to understand what the twitch of a muscle of her husband, the lift of an eyebrow of his, the curl of his moustache, the flick of his wrist mean. On becoming Sardarji’s wife, she must learn all his rules about her own body: that she must not wear a bindi on her forehead, vermillion powder in the parting of her hair, or a nose ring, and that she must clean her teeth with toothpaste and toothbrush (Conde 149). In other words, compliance with the existing domestic code of duties and obligations of mother and wife must be done through the body so that it
acquires the domestic identities and values and gets related to the community in which it is located.

The community acquires its distinctiveness from the customs, manners and rituals that people belonging to it follow largely in conformity with their religious faith. Like all religious faiths that enjoin upon the bodies their codes of social observances to claim them and mark them off as their own and unique, the Sikh religion has a code for body. The Sikhs are distinguished by their observance of the five Ks—keeping the hair long, wear it under a turban, change a cotton *kachcha* everyday, wear sandalwood kanga, steel *kara* and *kirpan*. The Sikhs were able to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘the others.’ These distinctions were inscribed through a complex cultural repertoire made up of rituals, codes of conduct, mythical narratives and a whole new set of classificatory regulations regarding the purity, cultural acceptability and legitimacy of the body. Any contravention of the code automatically disqualifies the body as illegitimate, impure and even threatful. Papaji warns Jeevan to beware of the “suddhi” of the Arya Samajist which has also its basis in ritual purification of body to bring back the converts to Hindu fold (*WTR* 58).

A woman like Roop has a dual code to observe—code of the religion and code for being a woman. She learns to internalize and conform to the cultural code of ghar and bahir division, which was reconfigured in the national imaginary to invest in woman the purity, authenticity and values of tradition, and all other markers of cultural nationalism as discussed in the previous chapter. She internalizes the cultural pressure of conformity to social norms and learns to
reconcile herself to her *kismat* (*WTR* 228) and self-fashions herself Sita, imprisoned “in her man-inscribed circle” and “watch the world beyond its threshold” (*WTR* 229). She is like Sita, the exemplar of womanly virtues like tolerance, compliance, honour and sacrifice. As shown in the previous chapter, this archetypal signifier in terms of which Satya designates herself and interprets her status has already been freighted with meaning of injustice done to woman. Added to it are the suggestive meanings of this word one comes across in the rhetoric of the Partition: dishonor that the nation had to suffer on account of the abduction and pollution of its women at the hands of the enemies.¹ All these accretions of meaning around Sita help Baldwin weave into one narrative the social and political history of woman in the subcontinent.

Although the power-structures code and regulate the bodily life of persons, it is not always that they suffer their fate passively. Howsoever oppressive the power-structures may be, there are possibilities of resistance that the subjects offer. *What the Body Remembers* examines the marginalized body not only as a site of the inscription of woman’s subjectivity, an agency for the articulation of an independent voice, but also a locus of resistance and as a site of pleasure as well as negotiation of power. I have already stated that Baldwin holds onto the historicity of body and refuses to transcend it. Roop acknowledges her own corporeality and acquires agency and volition for ethical choice of protest through nudity against violence, which is clearly antithetical to what Lajjo would do.

Lajwanti (Lajo for short), in Rajinder Singh Bedi’s short-story “Lajwanti”, returns home to her husband from across Wagha border, receives an ambivalent
treatment from him, suspected of having lost chastity and purity by her Muslim abductor. She is not touched ever after her retrieval by the husband as though she were someone else’s left-over, and therefore, she is condemned to live a life of ignominy and misery. This testifies to the hypocrisy of patriarchal social order with regard to female sexuality and feminine virtues that can be accommodated within the community easily. The violence involved here in the act of the rehabilitation of abducted women is covert and it has a crippling effect on the psyche of the rehabilitated woman who has already been ravaged in body and mind. The male sexual politics not only pushes woman out of libidinal economy, pronouncing her as ‘divine,’ but also it denies woman the agency to define for herself the body she possesses. When Lajo wants to speak out to her husband what she had passed through, it is a desire on her part to come to terms with herself and reclaim a part of her life into the order of quotidian time by aligning the present with the past. But this desire remains unfulfilled when Sunder Lal stops her, saying, “Lets forget the past; you did not commit any sin. What is evil is the social system which refuses to give an honoured place to virtuous women like you. That doesn’t harm you, it only harms the society.” The narrator remarks:

Lajwanti’s secret remained locked in her breast. She looked at her own body which had, since the partition, become the body of a goddess. It no longer belonged to her . . . Lajo took to gazing at herself in the mirror. Arid in the end she could no longer recognise the Lajo she had known. She had been rehabilitated but not accepted. (135)
Lajo remains condemned to a corporeal life without possibilities of agency and independence of defining herself. What she suffers is the fate of being reduced to a metaphor of ‘Lajwanti’ (the shy grass) in the existing symbolic economy of patriarchal culture, being forced to misrepresent her body as fragile, demure and weak. But Baldwin’s novel shows that the possibility of radicalism and protest lies in owning up one’s corporeal consciousness, the critical knowledge of one’s victimhood and a sense of historicity. Roop and Satya realize this possibility in their respective ways.

Indeed, as is Satya’s case, she understands painfully how much doomed she can be with a woman’s body that bears no child to the husband. This reinforces her consciousness of the centrality of the body in the scheme of social and cultural values. She pays attention to her own body, and this can be read as recognition of her subjectivity. Recognition of the importance of body has understandably been a central concept of self-knowledge and decisive action in the works of many women writers. In Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*, when the Professor pressed a letter into Virmati’s hand she thought “now he hardly needed letters to attach her to him. She was his for life, whether he ever married her or not. Her body was marked by him, she could never look elsewhere, never entertain another choice” (163). In Mahasweta Devi’s *Mother of 1084*, and short stories, namely “Doulati”, “Draupadi”, “Bayen” and “Breast Giver”, to cite a few, the centrality of body as a site of resistance is all too obvious. For her part, Satya, the barren woman, inhabiting a liminal position in patriarchy, is both the victim of patriarchy as well as its agent. She understands her precarious position of having been neglected and abandoned thus:
I am not wife, for my husband has abandoned me. I am not widow, for he still lives. I am not mother, for the son he gave me is taken away, I am not sister, for I have no brother. With no father, I am but daughter of my Bebeji. And so I am no one. (WTR 360)

Faced with this terrible fate of having no identity based on social-relations, she discovers that her own body is a prison. She begins to wonder why this body was given to her, “body that imprisons her,” one that does not know how to die. She has a “body,” and yet she is “no-body” (WTR 360). She, therefore, chooses to escape the prison house of body through death. She carries out her resolve voiced early in the book, to make her death matter (unlike her father’s death).

Baldwin implies that Satya’s suicide is part of a history of the demonstration of Indian women’s power through self-sacrifice that includes the women who became Satis—a connection confirmed by Sardarji’s fantasy that he would mourn Satya’s death by building a “samadhi . . . like the lotus-shaped ones in Lahore, commemorating the suttee deaths of four of Maharaj Ranjit Singh’s wives” (WTR 392). What the Oxford returned Sardarji enacts is the ambivalent masculinist attitude inherent with regard to Sati in the official discourses of the Colonial State and the ambiguities of indigenous middle class men in dealing with it in the context of their negotiation between tradition and modernity. Even though the woman becoming Sati was at the center of the discussion, she inhabited the center not as a human subject invested with notions of personal dignity and subjectivity, or even as a “realistic” suffering body, but as “woman as tradition.” It is this tradition located literally on the body of the woman that was being debated over by the several
parties: the British authority, the indigenous reformists led by Raja Rammohan Roy, and the Hindu orthodoxy.²

Like Satya’s death, the deaths of Kusum and innumerable women like her, who were sacrificed in the name of honour, can be read as instances of the Sati death. But the irony of this reinterpretation of Sati lies in the way the subaltern consciousness underlying self-killing undermines the superimposed patriarchal value of the self-sacrificing virtuous woman and her devotion to the husband. This act is one of one’s own choice, and a radical corporeal act³. Since the raped female body within the existing libidinal economy of male desire is denied the status of desirability and dignity, the inevitability of this violence on her body leaves a woman with the radical “choice” of committing suicide so that she can be accommodated within the narrative of the nation as legitimate and pure, although dead, citizen. In What the Body Remembers, Satya kills herself in protest against the patriarchal order, and her voice in the form of radical consciousness whispers to Roop the subversive meaning of self-killing and murder of women during the Partition of the subcontinent that needs to be remembered in the nationalist history:

Why does a woman choose to die?

A shadow woman whispers in Roop’s ear, ‘Sometimes we choose to die because it is the only way to be heard and seen, little sister’.

(WTR 526)

The self-killing in question is thus a patently radical act to counter all forms of honour-killing that the patriarchal society legitimated for upholding the honour of the community. Even when death of the female protagonist is not suicidal, it still
carries a lot of radical potential if it occurs as an event in an oppressive society and polity. One is reminded of Sujata’s death in Mahasweta Devi’s *Mother of 1084*. She dies from a burst appendix, and this incident, though downplayed by her husband as nothing more than a biological misfortune, assumes in the narrative enormous radical potential. Since she is a mother who shores up the memories of Brati, her Naxalite son through her body in the face of a calculated amnesia of the family, society and the state, she foregrounds her own death as a gesture of protest.

As for Roop, her mode of protest is something else. She does not dare to violate the code for body prescribed by the patriarchal society for most part of the novel unlike Noor of Baldwin’s novel *The Tiger Claw* and Virmati of *Difficult Daughters*. However, towards the end, after witnessing the atrocities on women’s body during the Partition, she rebels. Roop’s subjectivity, which has been stymied inside her heavily oppressed body, bursts out in rebellion, and she parades naked on the railway platform in the aftermath of the Partition. This is as bold and radical a gesture comparable to Draupadi’s in Mahaswata Devi’s eponymous story when she challenges the masculinist oppression of the State power to parade her naked body that has been raped and battered before the Senanayaka in the police station.

Now I shall move on to the issue of border and border crossing in *What the Body Remembers* as corollaries of the socio-culturally regulated bodies of women within communities and nations not simply because that they came to clashes following the dismemberment of the subcontinent but because the bodies were defined and classified in terms of their belonging to specific locations and their affiliations of class, ethnicity and nationality. Even within the bigamous marriage,
which operates as the social matrix, in the novel, borders between Satya and Roop get defined and re-defined as they come to terms with each other through acrimony and some kind of reconciliation. As regards the acrimony and hostility, Baldwin herself made a pertinent observation in an online interview which throws some light on the social borders that regulated the conduct of women in the family and community:

If Satya had not treated Roop as a surrogate mother and if she had been, as many first wives were said to be, able to accept a younger woman with no hesitation, Roop would have felt much more secure. But Satya can’t accept Roop—there’s a class distinction between them and Satya doesn’t like adulteration of the high-up with the low”—her problem is always that she wants things pure, in their proper slots, compartments. Moreover, Satya’s love for Sardarji is exclusive and possessive, an aberration for her times, when love was not expected in nor believed essential to marriage. (Interview with Rich Rennicks)

From Satya’s point of view, Roop is an upstart and some kind of a maverick to disturb the social slots and compartments that secure to her the privileges of the first wife. But at the same time she is as much a victim of the boundaries that close off from her procreative wifehood, maternal domesticity and all the glory and bliss associated with them as Roop, who is stymied by her sexuality and procreative power to accept the position of the mother, bound to the husband and children. Both women cannot cross the borders of gender to claim for themselves the power and privileges men enjoy as their right. In other words, certain pre-existing borders
within patriarchy regulating classification of class and gender remain deeply entrenched, non-negotiable and sacrosanct. These give rise to complications when these are crisscrossed by new borders dividing humans into religious communities and ultimately nations.

While the social and cultural borders insist on belongingness of the people in specific slots in identitarian terms, the new divisions cutting across them in unexpected ways unsettle the previous social cartography and the structures of belongingness and affiliations. These give rise to political map of newly drawn borders that are crossed many times over, marked by events amounting to displacement, dismemberment and rupture of bodies. One set of arrangements contradicts another. Sardarji, for example, works out a survey map for the Bhakra dam project, paying little attention to the displacement which people will suffer on account of this project of technological modernization of colonial India. On the other hand, he is terribly agitated while getting to know the political line to be drawn between India and Pakistan will take away his haveli in Rawalpindi to the other side. Maps, or the blueprints of artificial human settlements as envisaged by Radcliffe line in pursuance of specific economic and political agendas, are essentially indifferent to human wishes and sufferings. Maps locating people in the politically demarcated locations are products of official decisions or administrative diktats imposed on the people by forces of the State that are larger than them and more powerful. But hardly do they represent the wishes of people. In this context the narrator says:

Maps lie, for their colours can show nothing of what a man feels when he says 'I come home.' They say nothing of the distance a man
will ride to avoid passing through areas inhabited by another’s caste or quom, or the direction a man turns when he bows his head to pray.

Maps lie, their scrupulous lines diminishing height to hair’s breadth, contracting realms of the material to fit in the mind. Maps lie, the artful cartographer separating earth from sea with a simple line that refuses to tell that one does not end where the other begins, but continues, undergirding the sea.

They are an aesthetic achievement, that’s all. (WTR 436)

The narrator’s remark that “one does not end where the other begins, but continues, undergirding the sea” speaks of the overlapping of identities and difficulties involved in the neat division of border. The mapping of border during partition ignores the ties that stretch out across the borders. It eliminates memory and feeling and inscribes divisions that obscure continuities of social ties and emotional affiliations.

Nevertheless since borders mark locations and dislocations of bodies, we have to consider mapping as essentially the process of spatialization of power relations and negotiations which Foucault has theorized in his “Space, Knowledge, Power” (1991). Maps involve division of and regulation of political, social, communal and gendered space, in terms of which bodies are located, differentiated, dislocated, re-located and re-differentiated. Maps, constituted by grids of demarcating lines, create protocols of inclusion and exclusion of bodies and fashion templates of belongingness and also ‘othering’. But the grids of demarcation in the cultural and political space (not in the Euclidean pure space) are in fact contingent
and negotiable, although violently asserted as natural and non-negotiable by governments, military juntas (whether in Somalia, or in Kosovo, or elsewhere in the world), patriarchs, religious leaders and ideologues who build and guard their respective cartographies of bodies and their economies—be they sexual and moral in the context of the community, the polity and the nation. In this context Baldwin records a correlation between geo borders in the public sphere and the borders of the body in the domain of the private in her novel through the metaphor of woman as nation. She employs not only the metaphor of woman as nation, but also another familiar metaphor of nation as mother/mother as nation in the novel. She does so not in deference to the patriarchal ideology underpinning the iconization of woman as nation in the nationalist discourse, but quite ironically to question the selfsame ideology and open up its contradictions and ethical limits.

What is interesting is that the displacement and mass movement of people across political borders of India and Pakistan (West as well as East) during the Partition were both consequences and the constitutive causes of the political and religious borders between nation-states. Further, the rape and violence perpetrated on female bodies, or honour-killing of women by their kinsmen, or abduction of the women of one community by the men of another community that amounted to the violation of the borders of female bodies and the borders of communal space of these bodies served to reinforce these borders rather than erase them.

Baldwin’s novel treats border, partition and dismemberment in their extensive sense encompassing the Partition fiction also as diasporic narrative, particularly as regards the trauma of relocation and homesickness for the place left
behind. As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, Rosemary Marangoly George's article "(Extra)Ordinary Violence: National Literatures, Diasporic Aesthetics, and the Politics of Gender in South Asian Partition Fiction" reads some selective partition texts as diasporic narrative. She remarks:

[. . .] reading this fictional genre [Partition fiction] through a gendered and culturally embedded lens reveals that the idiom of diaspora is appropriate not just because of the movement of populations that ensued after Partition but because of diaspora's resonance as metaphor. In these fictional texts, themes that are habitually identified with diasporic aesthetics—the articulation of loss, homesickness, trauma, travel, the longing for return—are not large-scale expressions of the angst of a people who have indeed left their home country en masse in tragic circumstances; rather, such tropes operate on a metaphoric level to articulate the gendered trauma of Partition on individual lives. (135-36)

As borders are struck to split mother India's body into India and Pakistan, and the outbreak of religious and ethnic genocide follows upon the Independence, racial harmony crosses into racial murderousness—which translates into sexual atrocity specially on women. On both sides of the border while villages are plundered and burnt, women are mutilated and sexually tortured, and trains of migrants crossing in opposite directions arrive full of dismembered bodies and gory sacks containing female sexual organs. Baldwin registers an account of horror of violence on and violation of bodies trying to cross the border through Roop's witnessing the event. She talks of women losing their children's hands, children
losing their parents, young girls being whisked away over men’s broad shoulders, kicking and crying (495-96). She sees the ghastly “death train” (which is almost an iconic image of the Partition)—each carriage of which, “like so many others before it, comes smeared with blood, windows smashed. The silence of the slaughtered rises, palpable and accusing . . .” (WBR 495). Like the train passing through Mano Majra in Khuswant Singh’s _Train to Pakistan_, the train witnessed by Roop shows the Partition literally as an experience of dismemberment, of the violent breaking of bodies and of community, and psychologically as an experience of mental and emotional trauma that is similarly fragmenting at an internal level. Roop hears of men making martyrs of women and children (497). Baldwin secures the construction of a gendered national allegory by representing the violence on women’s body mainly through Kusum’s fate. What is achieved through the dismembered body of Kusum in _What the Body Remembers_ is realized through a Hindu servant woman’s (Ayah’s) ravaged body in _Cracking India_. Sidhwa said that her aim was to show that women suffer the most from political upheavals, and that “Victories are celebrated on the bodies of women . . . when women are attacked, it is not they _per se_ who are targets but the men to whom they belong” (Bhalla, _Partition Diologues_ 233).

I want to suggest that whether it is massive displacement, abduction, or rape, or battles that never reach the headlines, India and Pakistan participate in the gendered mapping of women’s bodies as symbolic of countries’ and communities’ body politic. After the Partition, the passage of the Inter-Dominion Treaty of December 6, 1947, the Central Recovery Operation, and the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Ordinance Act No. LXV of 1949 set off a massive
rescue, recovery, and rehabilitation Indo-Pakistan campaign that was enacted in often violent ways. The recovery operation lasted until 1956, “with 22,000 Muslims women recovered from India and 8,000 Hindu and Sikh women recovered from Pakistan” (Butalia, Other Side of Silence 163). The lives of women who were homeless or rejected have not been included in these estimates. Nor do these numbers tell the stories such as police participation with abductors to prevent the recovery of women. An interrogation of the Partition, thus, shows the mutually constitutive acts of mapping bodies and borders.

Moreover, the recovery and restoration project to ‘return’ women to their ‘own’ home/countries forcibly which was a second uprooting for the women, sent them on a journey fraught with pain, guilt, shame and rejection. The oral history projects (of Butalia, Bhasin, Menon and others) demonstrate how the ‘recovery’ operation was framed by both India and Pakistan and how through this, women suffered a second trauma inflicted by their ‘own’ state, community and family. A Sutara would tell the tale of thousands of partition victim women who were unacceptable in their own families. As I have already discussed, Sutara in Jyotirmoyee Devi’s The River Churning was violated by the enemies and suffered social rejection by her own community. During the Partition, abducted by members of the ‘enemy’ community, yet ‘recovered’ by the state of which they were considered citizens, women were forced to leave behind the ‘post-abduction’ children with their fathers, who in many instances were the perpetrators of violence. Some killed the children as Chandini Kaur did in Shauna Singh Baldwin’s short story “Family Ties” in English Lessons in the hope of being accepted by the family. The treatment of women’s bodies and the meanings assigned to them, both
during the riots and in the recovery operations, make literal the nationalist rhetorical
move of locating national definitions and national virtue in women’s bodies.
Women’s bodies during and after the Partition became objects, whose value lay in
their meanings, or in their potential as inscriptive sites for communicating material,
symbolic and political significance.

The Partition, Baldwin shows, did not just occur in 1947, but it has occurred
in multiple level of human existence. Though the story focuses on the story of
marriage of Satya and Roop to Sardarji, it initiates a series of divisions and
dislocations both in private and public sphere which disrupts the idea of home and
identity. The division of Sardarji’s household brings about a series of dislocation in
both Satya’s and Roop’s individual existence. Roop’s displacement starts in the
novel with her marriage as she leaves her ‘home’ at Pari Darvaza and finds her
home at Sardarji’s in Rawalpindi. She changes home as Sardarji is posted at
different places. At the time of the Partition she crosses the newly drawn border to
find her home in India. Satya’s dislocation is more subtle and complicated as she
crosses the border of body to take another birth both in the Prologue and the
Epilogue of the novel. For both Roop and Satya, the meaning of “home” is a
constantly evolving one.

What is remarkable about the migrancy of Roop and Satya, or of any other
woman for that matter, is that it is often forced, either by people or circumstances,
still it is unquestioned and taken for granted. A woman is considered \textit{paraya dhan}
or property of others (of the in-laws) in a father’s house till her marriage. For
women, this transfer from natal to “marital” home through abduction at the time of
the Partition was often presented as an intensification of the usual patriarchal discourse about women as property which was forcibly acquired by the enemies. What was worse was that women of the other community were passed from hand to hand and also being sold. The idea of woman as property also governed the recovery operation. As woman was the property of the nation, there was an attempt to bring back the women to their respective communities and nations that claimed ownership of them. Movement, displacement, the attendant trauma of leaving of her natal home as a result of marriage and homesickness which are the conditions of traditional social life in rural India have all been reworked into the story of Partition by Baldwin on the basis of the logic that the latter event, despite its political dimensions, seems to be the outcome of an oppressive patriarchal society and the system of bigamy. Therefore the event of Partition entailing enforced migration, sudden displacement and psychic rupture that women went through is not extraneous but integral to the social condition of women’s existence in Punjab. For this understanding of women’s position and their transferability as something natural and given, I am indebted to Rosemary Marangoly George, who theorizes on women’s diasporic existence within marriage and in times of social turmoil. George makes a very insightful and thought provoking remark in her reading of Jamila Hashmi’s story “Banished”:

A close reading of the story, however, reveals that there are no reversals here—just stark parallels drawn between the experiences of everyday life for women both in patriarchal societies and in times of social turmoil. (148)
George makes a reading of “Banished” (1998), written by the Pakistani woman writer Jamila Hashmi (1929–88). Hashmi’s story gives us the first-person narrative of a young upper-class Muslim woman who, at the time of the Partition riots, has been abducted from her home in an unnamed city in India by a Sikh farmer of Sangraon in Punjab on the Indian side. She becomes “wife” to her abductor, but as nameless Bahu she makes her most scathing critique of everyday acts of patriarchal control and exchange of women in the following lines with mordant irony:

And besides, every girl must one day leave her parental home to join her in-laws. Well, maybe Bhaiya and Bhai [a reference to her two brothers] weren’t present at my wedding—so what? Hadn’t Gurpal rolled out a carpet of corpses for me? Painted the road red with blood? Provided an illumination by burning down city after city? Didn’t people celebrate my wedding as they stampeded, screaming and crying? It was a wedding alright. Only the customs were new: celebration by fire, smoke, and blood”. (qtd. in Marangoly George 149).

The above quote gives us an idea of the enormity of violence on women during partition and the psychological impact it registers on their mind. What the story seems to suggest is a palimpsest of the experience of trauma of the Partition superimposed on that of marriage, since both involve displacement of woman, psychic rupture, crossing of borders, sexual violence on the disempowered body of woman. It also suggests the wide ramifications of female body and the borders
spatializing it, containing it, regulating it in an uninterrupted axis stretching from family to community to nation. Baldwin’s novel, given its allegorical turn of narrative, also operates along this axis. That is why a closer look at her Partition story reveals a complex interrogation of home and homeland as overlapping sites for violence against the female body. The dismemberment of woman’s body also modulates into and adds resonance to the dismemberment of the nation.

I will discuss partition through the violated body as a wounding not only of the individual “self,” but of the self in relation to those collective forms of belonging that tie individuals to communities. Images of wounded bodies, registering a trauma both physical and psychic, work at a metaphorical level to construct a collective trauma. I will talk about memory of this collective trauma in chapter III. If body as a site of violence is the focus in this chapter, the next chapter will concentrate on body as a site of memory. It will deal with remembering and re-membering the body and how it helps in creating a resistance consciousness.
Notes

1. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin cite the impassioned speech of an MP on December 1949 at the Constituent Assembly, who was exhorting the Indian government to bring back thousands of Hindu women from Pakistan:

   We all know our history, of what happened in the time of Shri Ram when Sita was abducted . . . As descendants of Ram we have to bring back every Sita that is alive. (Menon and Bhasin 68)


3. We may recall Spivak showing us in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that the subalterns are acutely conscious of the moral power of the body that is derived from its pains, humiliation and destruction. They know how to use this corporeal power to re-inscribe history and re-write the social text of Sati, like Bhubaneswari Bhaduri did in choosing to kill herself while she was menstruating.

4. I need not labour the obvious truth that at least in the traditional societies of Indian subcontinent, female body within the institution of marriage is no worthier than a chattel, whose value is assessed in terms of the dowry it brings along or the number of male children it can bear. High premium is put on the ideology of chastity and purity of woman that masks the shameful truth of the patriarchal fear and anxiety of female sexuality and the justification for containment of woman’s body within certain rigidly defined social and moral borders. Denied the
opportunity to realize her sexual freedom and the pleasures of body within companionate relationship with husband, which is available only in limited measures in the relatively modern bourgeois society, traditional woman continues to remain a passive object of the sexual gratification of her husband, or can at times be the victim of rape and domestic violence of male members within the extended family with whom women of the family collude. Stories and novels written on the themes of the sexual and emotional problems suffered by married women under oppressive patriarchy are indeed innumerable and cannot be listed on a comprehensive scale. However, in her collection of short stories titled *The Quilt and Other Stories*, Ismat Chugtai portrays the limited options available to women, whether single or married, under an oppressive patriarchy. In these stories the options available to women are that either the characters are dissatisfied by the lack of fulfillment available to them within marriage, or they suffer communal criticism because of their unwillingness or inability to conform to the traditional standards. In either case, Chugtai dismantles the notion that marriage, the institution society prepares women to expect is the culmination of a woman’s life. See Ismat Chugtai’s *The Quilt and Other Stories*. Trans. Tahira Naqvi and Sayeeda Hamid. River-Dale- on Hudson, NY: Meadow Press, 1994.

For her part, Taslima Nasreen in her stories “Aparpokkho” and “Shodh,” addresses how her assertion of female desire outside of the marital bond validates female sexuality in a society which is based on the systematic regulation of female sexuality through religion and other socio-cultural mechanisms. See Sayeeda Khatun, “A Site of Subaltern Articulation: The Ecstatic Female Body in the

<http://www.genders.org/g30/g30_khatun.html>.