

Train to Pakistan 2007

Decolonization, Partition, and Identity in the Transnational Public Sphere

What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans,
and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is
wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy
name of liberty and democracy?

—M. K. GANDHI¹

The task of a critique of violence may be summarized as
that of expounding its relation to law and justice.

—WALTER BENJAMIN²

If the humanities have a future as cultural criticism,
and cultural criticism has a task at the present moment,
it is no doubt to return us to the human where we do
not expect to find it, in its frailty and at the limits of its
capacity to make sense.

—JUDITH BUTLER³

On March 21, 2000, in the war-torn state of Kashmir in India, Islamic militants massacred thirty-five Sikh men from the village of Chitti Singhpora. It was Holi, the festival of colors. Militants with bright Holi colors on their faces wore Indian military uniforms, arrived in the village, told the villagers they were from the army, and dragged the Sikh men out of their houses on the pretext of an “identification parade.” All the Sikh men, young and old, were lined up against two walls in the village, and then shot to death. Since the targeting and subsequent exodus of Hindu Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir, this was the first time the Sikh community was targeted and brutally massacred.

This incident immediately evoked the British Partition of India in 1947: As one newspaper headline remarked, “Ghosts of Partition Return to Haunt

Sikhs.” Many of the Sikhs in the villages in Jammu and Kashmir were migrants from Pakistan, who had been displaced during the Partition, due to large-scale ethnic violence between Muslims, on one hand, and Hindus and Sikhs on the other. The killing of the male members of the family also evoked Partition: Once again, it left so many women without any traditional male support. Several women, young and old, were now faced with utter poverty, bereft of the breadwinners in the family. The Sikhs constitute only 2 percent of the population in the valley (around 80,000), and this massacre—in what has largely been a Hindu–Muslim conflict in Kashmir—filled the Sikh survivors with terror. Kashmiri Sikhs were forced to contemplate an exodus similar to that of the Kashmiri Hindu Pandits over the past decade. For many, this was a double displacement due to ethnic violence—once in 1947 and again, fifty-three years later, in 2000.

This event is exemplary in many ways. Caught up in the midst of writing a cultural account of post-1947 South Asian nationality, I understood with indelible force and clarity how the 1947 Partition continues to haunt contemporary life in India. This is true not only for discourses that debate the place of religion in India but also for the historical interpretation of justice and minority belonging, and for the tension-ridden struggle over the production of secular national culture in the subcontinent. After all, in this instance the militants chose not Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Buddhists, Tibetans, or other minorities in Kashmir as targets: They targeted Sikhs—Sikh *men*, as if re-iterating the violence of 1947. Furthermore, the narrativization of this massacre in public culture made visible how it is to Partition that we often turn, even today, as an evocative repository of the meanings, metaphors, and conceptions of contemporary ethnic belonging in South Asia. Even though the massacre repeated the similar and more recent ethnic violence in North India against Sikhs in November 1984, which followed the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, it was through the 1947 Partition that the massacre in Kashmir was historicized and politicized in middle-class public culture. Like the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya (Northern India), which was attacked and vandalized in 1992 by Hindu nationalists who believe it is the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram; like the ensuing Hindu–Muslim ethnic violence, which spread across India in December 1992; and like the series of riots and state-supported mob violence against Muslims, which occurred in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002 in the city of Godhra, this attack on Sikhs in Kashmir represents a crisis that refracts the ethnicization of territory and national belonging that marks the checkered history of secularism in the subcontinent.

Cut to 2007. On February 19 2007, the Samjhauta Express, a bi-weekly train running between India and Pakistan, became the target of a devastating

bomb explosion that left sixty-seven dead and scores wounded. The Lahore-bound train was routed by the explosion in Panipat, about 100 km from the capital Delhi. In an ironic twist, the two antagonistic nations became united in their grief, as out of the sixty-eight dead, only eleven bodies were identified: four Indian, seven Pakistani. Running between Amritsar in India and Lahore in Pakistan, the Samjhauta Express is the oldest train link between India and Pakistan. As such, it represents a fragile move towards peace as its passengers travel back and forth between the two nation-states to be briefly united with family members across the border, families that were forever fragmented when the British partitioned the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Among the passengers were Pakistanis who had come to India to visit relatives, Indians who were going to Attari in Pakistan to attend a wedding, and Sikh pilgrims for whom key religious places ended up on the other side of the national border drawn by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. Generally, the train's passengers tend to be mainly poor and lower-middle-class Muslims from families divided by the India-Pakistan border, but also Pakistani and Indian Hindus, and over a million passengers are estimated to have used this train since it began. The attack happened on the eve of the start of peace talks to be held between India and Pakistan, and days before the fifth anniversary of a fire on a train carrying Hindu pilgrims that killed fifty-nine people in Godhra in Gujarat and led to ethnic riots across India in which around 2,500 people died, most of them Muslims. Immediately following the terrorist attack, the symbolic import of it was clear: The national Hindi news channel Sahara Samay ran headlines like "Aman par Chot" (A Wound to Peace), "Insaniyat Ki Maut" (The Death of Humanism), and "Samjhauta Ke Dushman" (The Enemies of Friendship). On February 19 and 20, 2007, newspapers around the globe narrated the event differently: *The Hindustan Times* story was entitled "66 Killed as Samjhauta Express Becomes Terror Target"; *The Hindu's* report was "Evoking Horrors of Partition—and hopes of a peaceful future"; *Dawn* in Pakistan ran a story "President Musharraf Says Train Blast Won't Stop Peace Process" on February 21, 2007. The elite consensus was that this was an effort to derail the Indo-Pakistan peace process, even as popular media representations of these blasts in both India and Pakistan yoked together the memory of 1947, the discourses of peace and humanism, and the rhetorics about terror and "terrorism" that increasingly permeate current discourses about political violence across the world.

It is obvious that contradictions mark the violent complexities of these varied national scenes. Described as "the first crack in Kashmir's equivalent of the Berlin Wall, the first fissure in south Asia's iron curtain since the 1947 partition divided British India into two nation-states," Indo-Pak cooperation recently made possible on April 7, 2005 the first bus journey since

1947 across the national borders, or Line of Control (LOC) that divides the Indian state of Kashmir, and united many families and friends.⁴ Yet, as David Ludden has noted, while Hindu nationalist political parties garnered relatively few votes prior to 1980, since 1980 in India, “killing classified as ‘communal’ increased rapidly and so did the Muslim body count.”⁵ Cut to the United States. The U.S. State Department reported a 25 percent increase in “terrorist incidents” worldwide in 2006, while the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) suggested that terrorist attacks around the world resulted in 20,498 deaths. While violence in Iraq accounted for 45 percent of the overall attacks, the next highest concentration of terrorist incidents was in South Asia, including Islamic militants’ attacks in Kashmir.⁶ At the same time, the BBC noted that the Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Seva Sangh (RSS), founded in 1925, today is the largest voluntary organization in the world. The chief proponent of anti-minority activities in India, the RSS today has 25,000 branches in India and over sixty branches abroad in thirty-four different countries. In part, it is in this contradictory legacy of ethnicized geopolitical conflict that the Partition of India in 1947 by the decolonizing British endures.

This book is about the relation between culture and violence in the modern world. In particular, through a focus on South Asia, it examines the relation between contemporary ethnic and gendered violence, and the questions about belonging that haunt nations and nationalisms today. In an increasingly globalized world, the widespread problem of ethnic violence and its attendant displacement of peoples have gained prominence, if not center stage, in academic scholarship and public policy, generating new and urgent consideration primarily in the social sciences. In 1947—the moment with which this inquiry begins—and today, the issues of ethnicity and belonging violently haunt the life of nations across the world, be they postcolonial nation spaces like India, or world powers like the United States. Ethnicity, often used interchangeably with race, religion, and culture, has become an increasingly intensified site of identification—in what seems to be an apparently contradictory development, as globalization and transnational flows transform the remotest cultural forms on the planet. In spite of the globalizing spread of modernity, and of its avowed values of secularism, humanism, and individualism, how is it that people continue to invest and re-invest intensely in ethnic and raced identities? Why does ethnic violence, always experienced by men and women differently, continue to become a prominent part of political life across the world?

In order to understand the workings of ethnicity, gender, and violence through the specific case of India, I take as my point of departure the event of “1947”—the simultaneous decolonization and partition of India into two

countries: India and Pakistan. This book examines South Asian ethnic violence and related mass migration in and after 1947, through its representation in postcolonial Indian, and more broadly, global South Asian literature and cultures. This inquiry, then, is necessarily transnational: It articulates accounts of violence and refugee experience from South Asia as well as its diasporas in the U.K. and North America. My interdisciplinary exploration proffers that the 1947 Partition experience of gendered violence and displacement critically shapes the contemporary ethnic nationalisms that prevail in transnational South Asian political life today. The Partition constitutes a field of transformation and a discourse that became the condition of possibility for the gendered ethnicization of citizenship and belonging in postcolonial South Asia. It also created the framework for the recent resurgence of gendered, ethnic nationalism in India and the Indian diaspora.

In other words, if there is a singular moment in the history of South Asia and Britain that had a profound and lasting effect on the politics and societies of many of the nations that make up contemporary South Asia, it is the 1947 Partition. The decolonization of India in 1947 was accompanied by its partition into two nations, India and Pakistan. Partition granted independence to a supposedly Hindu India as a secular democracy, and created a new nation, Pakistan, to be predominantly populated by Muslims. After August 6, 1946, ethnic riots involving Hindus and Sikhs against Muslims escalated all over the subcontinent. This escalation of violence, combined with pressure from Hindu and Sikh communalist groups in Bengal and Punjab, led the Congress Party (the secularist party which had emerged dominant in the anti-colonial struggle) to finally accept the partition of the subcontinent demanded by the Muslim League (which had managed to gain majoritarian Muslim support). In June 1947, Congress President Kripalani informed Viceroy Mountbatten: "Rather than have a battle we shall let them have their Pakistan, provided you will allow the Punjab and Bengal to be partitioned in a fair manner."⁷ The British Prime Minister Attlee had famously announced in the Commons on February 20, 1947 that June 1948 was to be the deadline for decolonization; he also appointed India's last Viceroy Lord Mountbatten. In an ill-fated move in March 1947, Mountbatten determined that the date of Indian independence was to be moved ahead, from June 1948 to August 1947. Shortly thereafter, it was also decided to partition India.

Thus, even as 1947 marked the freedom of the South Asian population from British rule and the emergence of India as an independent and secular nation, it also marked India's simultaneous partition into two different nations, India and Pakistan. Over a span of three months, Sir Cyril Radcliffe drew borderlines on the map of India that split up the regions of Punjab and

Bengal into two nations: India flanked on both sides by the nation of East and West Pakistan. Pakistan was born at midnight on August 14, 1947, a day before India. As the location of the territorial division was announced, whole villages were forced to migrate and relocate themselves (depending on whether they were Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim) in territories that were in the process of being marked as India or Pakistan, in what was, as Sumit Sarkar has aptly noted, the world's biggest mass migration in less than nine months.⁸ It is a remarkable fact that the exact location of the borderline was announced by radio on August 16, 1947, *after* the two nation-states had been declared independent. Lord Mountbatten did not want the announcement of the borderlines to interfere with the independence celebrations, and so decided to postpone the radio announcement until afterword. As a result, the nation-states formally came into being as political entities before their citizens knew what their territorial frontiers were. Incredible confusion, mayhem, and violence followed, because many people did not know whether their villages were now in Pakistan or India, and did not know in which direction they were to migrate.

What made this simultaneous partition and independence a singular event thus was the large-scale ethnic violence and mass migration that accompanied it. In the nine months between August 1947 and the spring of the following year, by unofficial counts, at least sixteen million people—Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims—were forced to flee their homes and became refugees; at least two million were killed in ethnic violence.⁹ Many of these refugees eventually migrated to the U.K. and the United States. As the borders were drawn and sporadic news traveled of the lines which marked one village Pakistani and another Indian, huge populations were “exchanged” according to their religious affiliations. The bulk of this migration and consequent violence occurred in Punjab in the west, while the division of Bengal in the east remained relatively less violent. Whole villages proceeded on foot or by bullock-cart, with their meager belongings, to areas where their ‘co-religionists’ were; groups of men from the antagonistic communities (Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs) massacred and looted villages, and also abducted, raped, and mutilated women, men, and children; families were separated and lost; thousands of people were forcibly converted; and a dominant trope of Partition’s exemplary violence is the image of trains arriving from each country laden with the slaughtered bodies of refugees who had tried to get across to the other side. A singular aspect of this violence was the large-scale abduction of over 150,000 women by men often, but not always, from a different community. In the end, millions were left, to borrow a phrase from Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*, “with no home but in memory.”¹⁰ Freedom was accompanied by traumatic loss, nations gained through homes lost forever for millions.

The scale and nature of violence that India's partition involved thus makes it one of the most violent events in the history of modern nation-formation.

Seen largely as an aberration in modern Indian history, this Partition is little memorialized by the state or by those affected by it. Urvashi Butalia has noted the silence on Partition in *The Other Side of Silence*: "In India, there is no institutional memory of Partition: the State has not seen fit to construct any memorials, to mark any particular places—as has been done, say, in the case of holocaust memorials or memorials for the Vietnam war."¹¹ After 1965, the Indian Partition—especially its violence—largely disappeared from discussion in the Indian public sphere; apart from a few films and novels, it was relegated to the past that was, from the perspective of the Indian state. It is best forgotten to maintain harmonious ethnic relations within the nation.¹² Popularly perceived as irreconcilable with India's history of peaceful, non-violent anti-colonial struggle that Gandhi led, it suggested its very failure. Moreover, because responsibility for the violence lay with all the constituencies involved—British, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs—Partition has ultimately been disavowed historically as an aberration, a moment of "insanity" in an otherwise remarkable story of non-violently achieved freedom from British oppression.

In addition, state ideology about the Partition in the early national period represented it as both inevitable and in the past, and the need to preserve law and order and peaceful inter-community relations was cited by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as early as 1948 (and has continued to be cited by the state in the postcolonial period) as the grounds for censoring published and filmic accounts of Partition violence. These were seen to incite communal conflict. Even in his momentous speech on the eve of independence, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru elides the magnitude of the traumatic violence and mass displacements that pervaded that time for tens of millions of South Asians:

Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now. . . . We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good [or] ill fortune alike.¹³

Nehru's reference to the "pains of labour" can be read as an indirect reference to the trauma of Partition; it problematically naturalizes the ethnic violence

and forced migration experienced by so many South Asians as inevitable labor pains of a feminized nation giving birth to “freedom.” Moreover, by describing the violence and displacement in August 1947 as a “memory” and a “past” that is “over,” Nehru minimizes their magnitude and elides state responsibility for the imminence and continuity of violence and migrations that endured well into at least 1949. Similarly erasing the epic scale of this dispossession, the then Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel once described the Partition as “the disturbances after Independence Day.”¹⁴ In a speech in January 1948, he further argued, “I can tell you that if we had not accepted Partition, India would have broken into bits.”¹⁵ This naturalizing state discourse about the trauma of Partition as unavoidable for the attainment of postcolonial nationhood, combined with state concern about internal order and unity, and the emergence of new secessionist movements (linguistic and regional) in different parts of the country, both erases the responsibility of the British in engendering Partition, and grounds the Indian state’s failure to remember the Partition experience. The words of Rajendra Prasad, the first president of India, evince this official state discourse. In his introduction to a collection of Mahatma Gandhi’s essays, he asserts:

It is remarkable how by his honest and fearless advocacy of communal unity he has enraged many of the Muslims and a negligible few among the Hindus. . . . This is the long and tragic history of Mahatma Gandhi’s attempts to establish Hindu-Muslim unity which ended with the establishment of Pakistan on the one side and his supreme sacrifice on the other. The problem has, however, not been solved inspite of the creation of Pakistan. We have still some 40 millions of Muslims in this country, spread all over the vast area of what is called India today.¹⁶

Like Nehru, Prasad reproduces the naturalizing ideological assumptions about Partition and the making of India. In spite of India’s constitutional commitment to secular democracy, his words signal the incipient ethnicization of Indian citizenship as “Hindu,” whereby the Indian Muslim becomes an anomaly by her very presence in the nation-state. Eliding the imminence and enormous complexity of the ongoing mass migrations and refugees’ problems, Prasad’s writings indicate the state’s ambivalence towards the minoritized Muslim citizen-subject in India as a “problem.” This conception of Muslim (un)belonging in India reappears in the nineties in Hindu nationalist political discourse, and it foreshadows the contemporary violent contestations around ethnicized citizenship that garner popular support in Hindu middle-class India and its diasporas. For example, Partition as a dis-

course is frequently mobilized in the Bharatiya Janata Party's political rhetoric. In 1997, *The Economic Times* carried a report, "Partition Still Remains a Curse," in which it quoted the then Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President L. K. Advani suggesting that Partition effects contemporary ethnic violence in India: "'If the idea was to avert the recurrence of communal riots in the country, then the propagators of the two-nation theory had miserably failed in their effort,' he said."¹⁷ Further, conflicts around regional and language struggles emerged in and dominated through the late sixties and seventies; the new postcolonial Indian state's focus on addressing these divisive and often violent politics may have contributed to the official and public elision of Partition and its memorialization. This question of memorializing Partition can be raised with respect to the British machinery as well; an account of the administrative failure to ensure a peaceful transfer of power, and of British complicity in fomenting the ethnic politics of Partition and the uncontrolled unfolding of ethnic violence, are part of the story of Partition's erasure. Partition violence was typically narrated in British circles, and especially in the British press, by invoking Orientalist ideologies: as evidence of the inherent lack of civilization of Indians, and of the necessity of a benevolent British colonialism.

Accompanying the official Indian erasure of the violence of Partition has been the historiographical lacuna on the moment until recently. Despite the magnitude of violence that characterized the duality of independence from British colonial rule and partition into two nation-states for the Indian subcontinent in 1947, few scholars have studied the role of this essentially constitutive ethnic and gendered violence in colonial and postcolonial history. As Gyan Pandey has acknowledged, "[i]n much of the historiography of Partition, the history of violence has scarcely begun to be addressed."¹⁸ Indeed, Urvashi Butalia has asked, "Why had the history of Partition been so incomplete, so silent on the experiences of the thousands of people it affected? Was this just historiographical neglect or something deeper: a fear, on the part of some historians, of reopening a trauma so profound, so riven with pain and guilt, that they were reluctant to approach it?"¹⁹ Seeking to explain this silence, Purnima Mankekar has suggested that "[p]erhaps the modernist language of social science and its myth of detached objectivity render the horrors of Partition difficult to analyze."²⁰ For an event that has been the single most defining moment for the social and political relations that mark modern national life in most of South Asia, it has received scant scrutiny until recently, when subaltern studies historians, feminists and translators began to initiate numerous transnational conversations about what happened, how and why. Early work on colonial and postcolonial history and the Partition primarily documented the consolidation of empire and

the concluding Indo-British political negotiations that led up to Partition and formal decolonization; these accounts largely end at the transfer of power that occurred in 1947.²¹ The protagonists of these historiographical narratives are largely the male, nationalist elite—namely, Nehru, Gandhi, and Jinnah; of these, the studies of Partition often focus on the regional—rather than urban or national—impact of this violence and displacement in the partitioned states of Punjab and Bengal.²² Historical and political science scholarship on postcolonial India often begins in 1947 with a brief mention of the Partition and its unfortunate violence, moving on to the socialist direction of Nehruvian policies, the Five Year Plans, and the regional politics of post-1947 India.²³ In this approach, where the story of Indian history either ends at or begins in 1947, the dramatic transition that was “1947” itself is largely elided. It is this field of transition and transformation, and the forms of its persistent appearance and material effects in the global present, that this book hopes to illuminate.

In contrast to the earlier elision of Partition’s ethnic violence and displacement, recent revisionist work that has returned to the scene of the Partition has primarily taken two directions. In one, the translation into English of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and Bengali literature about the Partition experience has resulted in a range of new novels and edited collections of short stories and poetry becoming available for those interested in the Partition, most notably through the valuable work of Mushirul Hasan and Alok Bhalla.²⁴ In the second direction, feminist and subaltern studies research has focused on recording the oral testimonies of Partition survivors and witnesses (much like those of Holocaust survivors) and making audible the silences in the histories and memories of Partition, especially for women and ethnic minorities in India. In particular, pioneering work in anthropology, history, and feminist historiography by Veena Das, Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, and Gyan Pandey, among others, has investigated women’s and refugees’ experiences of the violence in 1947; they have mapped out the complex forms of agency at work in women’s negotiation of memory, nationality, and state ideology and functioning in the aftermath of Partition.²⁵ Through a detailed exploration of accounts of events in and around 1947, Gyan Pandey has identified the limitations of official history and “the enduring concern with unity in Indian historiography” that has led to the dominant erasure of the events of Partition.²⁶ In the current pre-occupation with memory, translation, and testimony, however, the large body of literary and cultural texts about Partition is often seen, at best, as supplementary evidence of experience. Moreover, what remains unanswered is: What happens to the formation of ethnic/religious identity and its gendering—Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh—in 1947 for South Asians? How are ideas of

national citizenship and narratives about belonging collectively created and contested in such moments of violence and mass migration? How does the public, cultural negotiation of violence and displacement, in various media, shape and impact current ethnic nationalisms, which are transnational in their support and reach thanks to globalization? Going beyond a humanist condemnation of violence and violent migrations, how do we understand its working, its meanings, and its effects in the modern nation? After all, “1947,” which ushered independence, freedom, and nationhood in South Asia, still reverberates today across the subcontinent. Its effects are starkly visible in the Indo-Pak conflict over Kashmir, terrorism in Kashmir and elsewhere in India, and in the resurgence of bloody Hindu–Muslim ethnic politics in the subcontinent which have now become a routine part of daily news.

In her ethnography of Indian television, Purnima Mankekar has argued that “[f]or those of us committed to feminist and secularist praxis, however, perhaps the time has come to use our revisionist histories to interrogate (nationalist) History. . . . [W]e need to confront contending narratives of the past in order to analyze the configurations of power that led to the violence surrounding Partition and continue to result in the violence ravaging the postcolonial polity.”²⁷ Pandey has similarly observed, “There are numerous ways in which the life and conditions of India and Pakistan, and perhaps Bangladesh too, have been obviously remade by that violence and the curious memory-history we have of it.”²⁸ To understand the diverse and complex legacies of the Partition for contemporary life, we must re-examine the cultural and political transformation that the 1947 Partition was. In order to explore the preceding questions, to bridge the gap between the political history and oral testimony, *Violent Belongings* takes up varied media representations of gendered violence and displacement in the postcolonial public sphere. In the process, it hopes to show how Indians and, more recently, South Asians in the diaspora, fashion belongings, perform citizenship, and survive nationalisms.

The Postcolonial Public Sphere

The public sphere is the site where struggles are decided by other means than war.

—Negt and Kluge²⁹

Social theory after Habermas has begun to re-examine the relation between various local, political and social affiliations and the nationally framed bourgeois public sphere. If Habermas posited the disintegration of the public sphere which brought citizen-subjects face-to-face in the articulation of community following the shift to cultural consumption made possible by

the new technologies of mass media,³⁰ Negt and Kluge revisit Habermas' formulation towards a new theory of public life in an age of mass media and Internet technologies. Moving away from the critique of mass culture articulated by the Frankfurt School, Negt and Kluge identify the existence of a proletarian public sphere which has emancipatory and utopian possibilities, and which is distinct from the exclusionary classical liberal and hegemonic bourgeois public sphere. This proletarian public sphere consists of counterpublics—alternative publics formed by working-class subjects creatively reappropriating, resisting, and refashioning their horizons of experience in an oppositional relation to the limits and exclusions of the classical hegemonic and the industrial-technological public spheres. They argue: “[W]e believe that what is at issue here is not a variant of the bourgeois public sphere, but rather an entirely separate conceptualization of the overall social context, which has been established in history but not included within the parameters of the term public sphere.”³¹ Although, as Miriam Hansen has pointed out, they end up reinscribing the idealization of female subjectivity as maternal and familial in their formulation of a feminine, “maternal mode of production,” Negt and Kluge nonetheless offer a useful way of conceptualizing the processes of the formation of contingent, alternative publics or collectivities that harness the potential of mass-mediated technologies.³² Their analysis recognizes the multiple, competing counter-publics that exist in a sometimes collusive and sometimes critical relation to the hegemonic bourgeois public; these counter-publics are saturated with everyday experiences and fantasy of citizen-subjects who participate in the social collective process, create relationality between everyday life and politics, and counter the alienation and fragmentation of social life. It enables us to reconceptualize the public sphere as a process and a *context* of social experience imbricated in relations of power, rather than an arena of rational consensus—as an unstable mixture of different types of publicity, as a modern hybrid site of discursive contestation, as a mode of organization grounded in material structures which enables translation among diverse publics.

Rita Felski reworks Negt and Kluge's theorization of the plurality of the proletarian public sphere towards a feminist politics of critique. She suggests that, “[u]nlike the bourgeois public sphere, then, the feminist public sphere does not claim a representative universality but rather offers a critique of cultural values from the standpoint of women as a marginalized group within society. In this sense it constitutes a *partial* or counterpublic sphere.”³³ While Negt and Kluge's Marxist formulation takes as the horizon of transformation the social relations of production, then, following Felski, I want to suggest that it can be usefully engaged for postcolonial feminist struggles. While there is much scholarship focused on public spheres in American and

European contexts, there has been no book-length investigation of what I call “postcolonial public spheres.” As such, this book appropriates Negt and Kluge’s theorization of publicity to describe the complex network of “postcolonial publics”—hegemonic and alternative—that mark South Asian cultural life; these postcolonial publics are now inherently diasporic and transnational given the reach of mass media, and they illuminate how minor (as used by Deleuze and Guattari) subjects critically negotiate the violent legacies of empire and the oppressions of postcolonial nationalisms.

Recently, Dietrich Reetz has analyzed the role of Islamic organizations in negotiating and contesting the dominant public sphere in pre-1947 India, to explore the historical shape of their contemporary role in ethnic politics.³⁴ Francesca Orsini has also uncovered the emergence of a nationalist Hindi literary public sphere in North India in the early twentieth century, in which literary associations and schools consolidated a new national, anti-colonial, political consciousness.³⁵ In contrast to such religious or linguistic foci, this book intentionally draws upon cultural representations in multiple languages, including English, that appear across urban India. I use the concept of the postcolonial public sphere to refer to those processes in a formerly colonized, democratic society by which postcolonial subjects articulate a new framework and discourse for their everyday experience, motivations, actions, and fantasies in decolonization. Excluded from the hegemonic narratives of neo-colonial power of raced global capitalism in the West and native nationalisms in ethnic South Asia, the minor postcolonial subject fashions an oppositional relation to dominant political and cultural ideas through this postcolonial public sphere. This postcolonial public sphere is not always subaltern, or always oppositional; rather, through various media like newspapers, magazines, literature, film and the Internet, it enables minor subjects to contest, re-imagine and resist the conditions of their oppression. These can be of the “proletarian” or working class that Negt and Kluge focus on, but also, I suggest, of caste, colonialism, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and disability. The discourses uncovered here—in the bourgeois nationalist public sphere, the industrial sphere of production marked by institutions of journalism and cinema, and what I call the counter-public of the “postcolonial public sphere”—reveal the official rhetorics as well as what Foucault has called “subjugated knowledges”³⁶ about ethnicity and minor citizenship, gender and belonging in postcolonial India and its diasporas. As such, they also illuminate how ethnicized and gendered subjects navigate the processes of governmentality, which, Foucault shows, participate in the subjectification of people—as refugees and minor citizens—in the postcolonial state. The minor subject, Homi Bhabha has brilliantly reminded us, is “always a partially denationalized political subject”; the narratives I consider evince this

liminality to nationality, which emerges from an intimacy with imperial and nation-state violence, that marks the postcolonial Partition migrant's experience in both India and Pakistan.³⁷

In the Indian context, several historians and cultural critics have analyzed how the Indian nation is represented in popular literature, drama, and other public media; the formations of literary nationalisms particularly in Bengali and Hindi have received considerable attention, revealing in the process the gender, caste, and class exclusions of nationalist discourse in colonial and newly independent India.³⁸ As Benedict Anderson emphasizes, print media (novels, journals, and newspapers) become key technical means for representing the modern nation, and so for both contesting colonialism and constituting national consciousness. These media texts create a public sphere that mediates between the state and civil society, and they generate mass reading publics that form a collective *cultural* imagined community—the nation.³⁹ In addition to literature and the institutions of the press, film technology emerged as a powerful and popular means of representing the nation in the fifties in the early national period in India (due to mass illiteracy, among other factors). If, in the colonial period, colonial governmentality politically controlled modern institutions like the press, and marked the racialized limitations of the indigenous public spheres, then in postcolonial urban India, despite their institutional censorship by the postcolonial Nehruvian state, print media and film emerged as powerful forces that bridged public and private, elite and minor, local and national, in the mediation of civil society and citizenship.⁴⁰ As such, these cultural texts (like literature and film) both registered the impact of Partition on everyday life in urban India not recorded by official histories and mediated and shaped collective memory and survivors' oral testimonies being gathered today, through their stories about national history. Moreover, in the Indian context, it is hard to separate early national literary and film culture, simply because many films about Partition are based on novels; many Indian writers also wrote or directed Hindi film scripts; they worked in multiple languages, including English and Hindi. For example, writers like Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughtai, and Rajinder Singh Bedi often used their film work to support their literary endeavors; and at yet other times, they thought that the mass appeal and reach of film made it an ideal medium to disseminate positive social values and progressive political messages to the illiterate masses. Rather than focusing exclusively on either literature or film, then, it became imperative to examine South Asian literature and film in conversation, as commodities and cultural texts with different narrative conventions that inhabit and transform inter-articulated urban public spheres, constitute postcolonial counter-publics, and illuminate the cultural imagination of subjectivity and community in postcolonial

national modernity. Hence, this account would be incomplete if it considered only one or the other; to tell the story about violence and belongings that I want to tell, literature and film have to be examined together, as a part of the transnational publics in which the middle class meditated issues of gender, ethnicity, migration, and nationality.

This book thus tracks the formation of transnational South Asian public spheres by taking up the Partition as both historical event and what Foucault has called “discursive formation.” In the process, it connects the ascendancy of ethnic identities and ethnic violence in 1947 South Asia with contemporary diasporic discourses in South Asian American and British Asian communities about ethnicity, gender, and racial discrimination. Foucault has reminded us that genealogy, which is necessarily “disordered and fragmentary,” is “the reactivation of local knowledges—of minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them—in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of uncovering and gathering together of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power.”⁴¹ In part, then, this project is genealogical: One of the arguments of the book is that the cultural scenes and texts examined here, some discontinuous and others marginal, reveal how Partition enabled the cultural ethnicization and gendering of belonging in the nation in India and Pakistan; this cultural ethnicization and gendering of belonging in turn became articulated with the ambivalent ethnicization of citizenship by the Indian state, and became the condition of possibility for the contemporary, popular Hindu nationalist minoritization of non-Hindus—especially Muslims—in India.

Modern Migrations: Representing Refugees, Citizenship, and Rights

While revisionist studies of Partition have focused on the experience and narration of violence, the experience of Partition refugees’ migration has received relatively less attention. Today, it is estimated that large-scale movements of voluntary and forced migrants have uprooted more than 190 million people worldwide. Correspondingly, there has been increased scholarly and policy attention to the complexities of these migrations, caused by varied reasons ranging from economic opportunity or ethnic violence to social and political persecution. Economic globalization and the end of the Cold War have led to the steady rise in cross-border flows since 1990, when there were an estimated 120 million migrants. Experts warn that the twenty-first century is likely to continue to see large-scale movements of people, both voluntary and forced. The top ten receiving countries include the United States, India, France, Germany, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Australia, the United

Kingdom, Kazakhstan, and Poland; these ten accounted for 55 percent of all international migrants in 1990, and they continue to host large immigrant populations. The impact of this movement on the transformation of processes of creating cultural and ethnic community, the invention of diasporas and imagined nations, necessitates going beyond the focus on the borders and boundaries of nation-states which contain migrants, to examine the links among different “areas” or “regions” which send and receive flows of people. Rather than focusing on particular nation-states, Arjun Appadurai and Saskia Sassen have recently theorized the effects of the transnational movement of people and commodities given globalization.⁴² In the light of the resurgence of a transnationally linked ethnic violence since the 1960s in India, and the international rise of violence and “terrorism” in both Western and decolonized nations in the twentieth century, the re-examination of ethnic violence and its generation of temporary and permanent migrations of both individuals as well as communities is imperative. Furthermore, the construction of categories and communities like “citizenship,” “refugees,” and “nation” needs to be reconceived in a less regional and more transnational context—in the case of India, in relation to both the history of Partition and the largely post-1950 history of global migration. In this, the different experience of women and children has attracted substantial attention, as women now make up 47.5 percent of all international migrants. Recent research on refugees and human rights by Jacqueline Bhabha and Liisa Malkki, among others, illuminates the social and juridical processes by which migrants become refugees, and makes visible refugees’ gendered experiences in forging new relations of diaspora, assimilation, and belonging.⁴³

In addition, internal displacement within nation-states comprises a significant part of the world’s migrations, yet receives less attention given its confinement within a particular nation-state’s borders. Since the end of the Cold War, increasing numbers of people have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, and systematic violations of human rights: witness the Biharis in Bangladesh who migrated there 1947 but are still not granted citizenship, or the Kashmiri Hindus languishing in camps in India for over a decade now. Whereas refugees crossing national borders benefit from an established system of international protection and assistance, those who are displaced internally suffer from an absence of legal or institutional bases for their protection and assistance from the international community.⁴⁴ Examining the historical transformations that led to the production of large numbers of people as refugees in the twentieth century, Hannah Arendt argues that “[m]uch more stubborn in fact and much more far-reaching in consequence has been statelessness, the newest mass phenomenon in contemporary history, and the existence of an ever-growing new people

comprised of stateless persons, the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics.”⁴⁵ Arendt illuminates how the lack of powerful institutions and nation-states willing and able to guarantee what were once believed to be inalienable human rights—the Rights of Man—has led to the contemporary condition where the loss of citizenship itself constitutes a loss of all rights, and of one’s humanity and personhood: “The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion—formulas which were designed to solve problems within given communities—but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever.”⁴⁶ I take this insight about the modern overlapping of the loss of belonging with the loss of human rights to the particularity of Partition migrations, to track how the Partition refugee—officially constructed as ethnic citizen by India if she was Hindu or Sikh, and by Pakistan if she was Muslim—was negotiated in the cultural representation of community, state practices of rehabilitation and rights, and political discourse about national belonging. The discourse around the liminal Partition refugee in postcolonial South Asia illuminates the increasing political and cultural ethnicization of national belonging that today generates Hindu–Muslim ethnic violence in India. Here, Victor Turner’s theorization of liminality and transitional beings is relevant: “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.”⁴⁷ He suggests that such “transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere in terms of any recognized cultural topography.”⁴⁸ Insofar as Partition refugees were migrants who were simultaneously hailed as citizens in transit by the postcolonial states of India and Pakistan in 1947, their juridical and existential liminality illuminates the shape of incipient belongings in the new postcolonial states.

In her study of Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Liisa Malkki has pointed out the structural absence of the refugee in the study of nationalism, and problematized the humanistic universalization of the figure of the refugee that generates “the discursive externalization of the refugee from the national.”⁴⁹ In the process, she has argued, “the homogenizing, humanitarian images of refugees work to obscure their actual sociopolitical circumstances—erasing the specific, historical, local politics of particular refugees, and retreating instead to the depoliticizing, dehistoricizing register of a more abstract and universal suffering.”⁵⁰ Keeping this in mind, I re-examine here the discourse about Partition migrants in 1947, who were both refugees and citizens, depending on ethnicity and gender. To counter the homogenizing abstraction and erasure of Partition refugees’ suffering, the chapters that follow uncover the heterogeneous, multi-layered, and discontinuous local experiences, as

well as the popular media representation of Partition migrants. The case of these gendered and ethnicized Partition refugees—in their simultaneous marginality to postcolonial Indian history even in the sheer epic scale of their migrations—becomes a useful site from which we can explore what Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has called “the overlaps and pulls between the concepts and practices of citizenship-as-rights and citizenship-as-national identity (and, even, as compulsory residency) in the case of the subaltern gendered subject.”⁵¹ It is my argument that the crisis of Partition violence and its refugees critically informs contemporary, dominant conceptions of ethnic agency, and subaltern citizenship in India and its diasporas. In other words, I propose that the public and cultural negotiation of ethnic, gender, and state violence and displacement illuminates how political identities like “Indian,” “Muslim,” “Sikh,” “Hindu,” “refugee,” “citizen” etc., are both created and contested, locally and abroad, in and after 1947. The national emergence and cultural interrogation of these categories thus reveals to us the forms of subaltern agency and politics imaginatively mobilized in the postcolonial public sphere.

In South Asia, two nations were created in 1947 on the basis of Hindu–Muslim ethnic difference and fears of Muslim minoritization after independence. Although India is constitutionally secular, the Indian Ministry of Rehabilitation Reports until 1954 expressly state that only non-Muslim refugees are to be aided by the government. This puts into a troubling frame the ambivalent place of Jewish and Muslim refugees within the new nation-state given the ethnicization of refugee rights, even as Indian cities like Bombay had earlier been welcoming refuges for Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust who were denied entry in other European countries and the United States. Moreover, the status of Hindu refugees coming to India from Pakistan (and of Muslim refugees in Pakistan) was unique because they were not placeless like most refugees: The state’s official rhetoric offered them both national identity and a place—a new nation—to come to. Thus, they were simultaneously citizens and refugees; yet, fifty years later, as the Sharanarathi [Refuge] Action Committee reported, post-Partition refugees from Pakistan in Kashmir continue to be denied citizenship rights in the name of Kashmir’s “permanent residents,” even as its Hindu residents fleeing ethnic violence are denied refugee status by the state. These complex forms of dispossession make it imperative to rethink the narration of the past in terms of refugee experience, the writing of subaltern histories of violence and displacement, as well as the very production of the immigrant as “refugee” and/or “citizen” in the scene of the nation-state.

Furthermore, this complex and contradictory history of the present raises important questions for rethinking the role of refugees and violence

in the cultural landscape of the nation in the twenty-first century: What kinds of new knowledge about modern citizenship and displacements can be gleaned from the refugee, the survivor, and the migrant? How do they enable us to rearticulate the political vocabularies of citizenship, human rights, and personhood in national geographies, especially given the contemporary “War on Terror” and the racialization of religion in the “West”? Exploring the relation between historiographic narratives and cultural ones, this book proffers a genealogy of the emergence of gendered ethnicity as a category and technology that critically shapes citizenship and belonging in postcolonial democratic life. In doing so, I foreground the problems and politics of representing violence—be it war, domestic, or collective—and its role in the production of public memory, the consolidation of state power, and the writing of national culture.

Recasting Gender: Masculinity, Intimacy, and National Coupledness

This book takes as its point of departure the popular translation of “gender” as “woman” in the study of gender and nationalism, in which the norms of masculinity often come to bear an implicit givenness. In the conversation about how women as raced and ethnicized subjects often come to represent both the colonized landscape and the nation (“the motherland”) in colonial and nationalist discourse, as many critics from Sangeeta Ray to Anne McClintock and Partha Chatterjee have valuably illuminated, this book intervenes with attention to the role of men as gendered subjects, and to the production of sexuality and intimacy in the postcolonial public sphere discourses about belonging and nationality.⁵² In her critique of law and the postcolonial state, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has recently elaborated the complex dispossessions engendered by the contemporary inter-articulation of differences of ethnicity, class, and age in women’s experience of citizenship in the postcolonial Indian state.⁵³ By tracking the imbrication of gender and ethnicity in the literary figuring of the nation, Sangeeta Ray has usefully demonstrated that “the discursive construction of the Indian nation by both nationalists and imperialists was often inseparable from their idealization of a Hindu India epitomized in a particular Hindu female figure.”⁵⁴ This book explores the postcolonial shape of this feminization of the nation; it turns to the representation of male and female experiences of violence and displacement, and the cultural fashioning of intimacy and coupledness to uncover the transnational imagining of belonging and citizenship in its hegemonic as well as counter-public forms. This marginalized issue of the colonial and

postcolonial production of masculinities has recently attracted attention from scholars like Mrinalini Sinha, Rosalind O'Hanlon, Sikata Banerjee and Sanjay Srivastava.⁵⁵ Contributing to this emergent postcolonial engagement with masculinity studies, one of the claims of this book is that like the female body, male bodies also become symbols of decolonized and postcolonial nationality—albeit in different, often heteronormative ways. Moreover, it shows that both men and women, depending on whether they are ethnically Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, become differently ideal citizens or troubling bodies in the new Indian nation. This ethnicized subjectification is of course recast in the Euro-American diaspora through its encounter with the minoritizing practices of racialization that dominate Euro-American subject formation.

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner have problematized how “community is imagined through scenes of intimacy, coupling and kinship”⁵⁶ in the rhetorics of citizenship in heteronormative, official U.S. national culture; they point out that “[i]ntimate life is the endlessly cited *elsewhere* of political public discourse, a promised haven that distracts citizens from the unequal conditions of their political and economic lives.”⁵⁷ Taking up this issue of intimacy, Laura Kipnis critiques the imperatives of modern American coupledness. She proposes that “[r]omance is . . . a socially sanctioned zone for wishing and desiring, and a repository for excess. Mobilized as it is by unconscious fantasy, it is potentially a profoundly antisocial form as well—when unharnessed from the project of social reproduction.”⁵⁸ What happens when we re-examine postcolonial normative intimacies in the Partition discourse produced in the postcolonial public sphere? How is the imagining of national belonging tied to particular, heteronormative constructions of ethnic and secular intimacy and coupledness? Berlant describes heteronormative culture as “a public culture, juridical, economic, and aesthetic, organized for the promotion of a world-saturating heterosexuality.”⁵⁹ In addition to the troping of ethnic masculinity in particular ways, this book’s analysis of gender examines how discourses of intimate relations and inter-ethnic romantic coupledness are deployed to constitute political relations that involve the historical production of secular Indian nationality under siege. As such, the dominant and the counter-public public sphere and their media forms become critical sites for the gendering consolidation and critique of the postcolonial nation in the context of partitioned South Asia.

Narrating the National Through the Transnational

In part, then, this book is about how diverse identities—for men and women; locals, migrants, and refugees; Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs; and Jews, Indians, and Pakistanis—are collectively created and contested, through various

media, in postcolonial India and ethnic America. *Violent Belongings* brings to light the rich, contradictory, collusive, and productive relation between the literature and culture of South Asian public spheres that dealt with Partition, on one hand, and the emergent public discourses of national identity and belonging that shape the memories of survivors being interviewed today. Linking together newspaper reports and literature, the political writings of Gandhi and Nehru with films, this book hopes to offer a new account of how gender and ethnicity have come to determine who belonged, and how, in the Indian nation. It is my contention that the silence that many historians claim marked the event of Partition in public memory was not as prolific as they proffer; indeed, I argue that the early national narration of Partition around and after 1947, as well as today, is a rich and valuable archive of the discontinuous processes by which certain discourses about ethnicity, gender, and citizenship came to become dominant—and indeed defining (if also much-debated)—rhetorics for postcolonial South Asian nationality.

Towards this aim, the chapters that follow take up transnational South Asian literature and culture primarily from 1947 onwards—spanning the Indian subcontinent as well as the diaspora in the U.K. and United States. They explore how post-1947 literature, film and journalism represent violence, migration and the nation; the book as a whole argues that these representations challenge our contemporary historical and political explanations about the relationship between ethnicity, gender and nation in the postcolonial world. In the preface to their edited volume *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt have acknowledged that we are now “in a ‘transnational’ moment, increasingly aware of the ways in which local and national narratives, in literature and elsewhere, cannot be conceived apart from a radically new sense of our shared human histories and our growing global interdependence. To think transnationally about literature, history, and culture requires a study of the evolution of hybrid identities within nation-states and diasporic identities across national boundaries. How best to understand these global matrices is a source of intense debate and urgency.”⁶⁰ *Violent Belongings* takes up this urgent challenge and historicizes the contemporary and transnational politics of Hindu nationalism through the cultural history of the 1947 Partition. In the process, it links the scene of decolonized Indian national belonging with South Asian American and British Asian histories of gendering and racialization in the diaspora.

This book thus sets out to demonstrate that the cultural and political narration of Partition violence is critical to understanding the contemporary salience of ethnicity in South Asian national and transnational life, especially in the resurgence of gendered Hindu–Muslim ethnic violence post-1980. Indeed, as Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal have suggested about the RSS- and

BJP-driven destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992, "Partition seems to be the demon the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Hindus are trying to exorcise by felling a mosque and erecting Ram's temple in its place."⁶¹ Contrary to the view that the violence of 1947 was a unique aberration, this book shows that it was a formative moment that consolidated particular narratives about citizenship, belonging, and gendered ethnicity in postcolonial India. Furthermore, gender difference articulated this patriarchal conception of ethnic citizenship in important ways: Citizenship for the female refugee/migrant was presumed, politically, to be determined by the voices and religion of their families of origin. This rhetoric of women as property of family and ethnic community, then, articulated the realization of political subjectivity and citizenship for women in complex and often disempowering modes. Simultaneously, the chapters pay particular attention to the role of normative intimacies, inter-ethnic coupledness, and ethnic masculinities in the cultural construction of the nation and the discursive critique of nationalism, as well as the historical and anthropological silence around the gendered violence done to male bodies.

Postcolonial Critique and U.S. Ethnic Studies

This book engages postcolonial studies with ethnic American studies and South Asian area studies, and connects the humanistic study of the postcolonial public sphere with recent historical and anthropological work on violence, displacement and oral testimony. It connects the apparently disjunct scenes of the increased salience of ethnicity in India, the racialization of South Asian immigrants in the West and the renewal of ethnic investments in transnational public spheres of the Indian diaspora. For the story I want to tell about the relationship between the rise of ethnic nationalisms in South Asia, the history and legacy of the Partition, and the discriminatory experiences of minoritized South Asian immigrants in the U.K. and United States, an engagement of postcolonial studies of India and U.S. ethnic studies is critical. Henry Schwarz has already argued in a different context for the need to interrogate "the imaginary divide between postcolonial and other ethnic studies in the U.S.," towards challenging dominant rhetorics of American exceptionalism in the academy and outside.⁶² Similarly, Rajini Srikanth cautions against simplistic generalizations that might pit U.S. ethnic studies and postcolonial critique against each other; she also reminds us that "the forces of global capital, the forces of global labor distribution, and the multiracial and multi-ethnic communities that have been created in different parts of the world are the undeniable effects of colonialism."⁶³ Thus, Srikanth argues for the necessity to situate the struggles of racialized subjects in relationship to

the histories of European colonialism and to present-day American imperialist involvement in global affairs—increasing as its “War on Terror” continues to territorialize the globe in new ways. Speaking to the racialization of religion and attendant discriminatory discourses about Muslims in the United States, Robert Stam and Ella Shohat have remarked, “The shrinking of civil liberties in the post 9/11 period was first tried out on Americans with Muslim names or of Muslim religious background.”⁶⁴ In the Indian context, caste-ist and religion-based cultural minoritization is not only pervasive, but also is a site of discursive disenfranchisement and material violence. As Partha Chatterjee has argued in his indictment of contemporary India, “[t]he continuance of a distinct cultural ‘problem’ of the minorities is an index of the failure of the Indian nation to effectively include within its body the whole of the demographic mass that it claims to represent.”⁶⁵

The new history of global migration also makes imperative an engagement of ethnic American studies and postcolonial studies that recognizes the transnational circulation of people and products that both inhabits and constitutes national communities and their everyday life. Research on international migration reveals that around 190 million people currently reside in a country other than where they were born, thus doubling the number of international migrants in twenty-five years, while there are 24.5 million internally displaced persons in the world.⁶⁶ According to a 2003 report of *National Geographic*, at least 35 million people in the world—more than the entire population of Canada—have been forced to become refugees and are either temporarily or permanently exiled from their homes. Approximately half of them are women and children.⁶⁷ That the question of citizenship and its signification of belonging is an urgent issue today ever more than before—today, one in every thirty-five human beings in the world is a migrant—is evident in the varied attempts to theorize a comfortable mode of living with complex affiliations that has marked recent postcolonial cultural studies, from Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “cosmopolitan patriotism” to Aihwa Ong’s “flexible citizenship,” Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah’s “cosmopolitical,” Benedict Anderson’s “long-distance nationalism,” and James Clifford’s non-nostalgic “discrepant cosmopolitanisms.”⁶⁸ Of course, the national and the transnational are often mutually constitutive, rather than exclusionary forms; for example, the popular anti-Muslim Hindu nationalist organization the RSS in India has, for a couple of decades now, garnered substantial economic and ideological support for its political activities in India from the Hindu diasporas in the United States and the U.K. First established in 1925 as an anti-colonial organization, the RSS rose to power in the sixties and seventies and helped constitute one of India’s most powerful political parties, the BJP, as well as the VHP—the World Hindu Council—specifically set

up to mobilize support to build a temple on a sixteenth-century mosque site in Ayodhya, North India. Today, the RSS has over 25,000 branches in the world, becoming the largest voluntary organization in the world. It aims to transform India from a secular country into a Hindu nation; towards this, it has regularly been inciting anti-Muslim violence and anti-Christian violence across India, leaving thousands dead and displaced.

In his article on this new, transnational Hinduism, Benedict Anderson has called this long-distance nationalism “a rapidly spreading phenomenon whereby well-off immigrants to the rich, advanced countries (and their children) are becoming key sources of money, guns, and extremist propaganda in their distant, putative countries of origin—in perfect safety and without any form of accountability.”⁶⁹ Others, like Sucheta Mazumdar, have also pointed out that many Indian immigrants in the United States are also aggressive supporters of political Hinduism. Mazumdar uncovers how the VHP (World Hindu Congress) and its affiliate organizations in the United States provide community services to immigrants such as youth and summer camps, formulate plans for building a university in America, and fund Hindu student councils on over sixty college campuses. Further, she observes, “most recent immigrants are devout Hindus, turning patios and bedrooms into Hindu shrines and prayer rooms, starting Hindu versions of Bible studies and Sunday schools, sponsoring priests for functions at home, rushing to temples to witness miracles, and helping build temples. About 200 temples have already been built, and another 1,000 are in various stages of planning and construction.”⁷⁰ Several South Asian American immigrants have donated extensive funds to Hindu ideological causes both in the United States and in India, pointing to the renewal of ethnic investments in transnational Hinduism in the context of racialization and minoritization as Asians in the West: “The class insecurities of an immigrant bourgeoisie in fact foment a more aggressive definition of Hinduism as culture, religion, heritage, and tradition; even loyalty to the ‘motherland’ becomes linked in this definition of identity and family.”⁷¹ So the question this book also grapples with is: What can we glean from uncovering how the hegemony as well as subversion of the (ethno)nationalist is produced transnationally? How can this transnational perspective enhance our understanding and dealing with the problematics of gendered ethno-racial identities and nationalist violence that dominate the globalization of culture?

Genealogy, Culture, Nation

I have two general aims, then, to summarize, in writing this book. My first aim is to excavate the transition and transformation in cultural meanings and

effects wrought by Partition and decolonization, violence, and displacement. This cultural story of the role of violence and refugees in shaping national histories has largely been marginalized in the focus on oral testimony or elite history in Indian historiography in general, and early Partition historiography as well. Given the official account of refugees' seamless assimilation into Indian national life, it is imperative to tell this story about violence, refugees and postcolonial citizenship if we are to create a space for Partition migrants' own particular history. My second aim is to track the genealogy of contemporary languages of ethnic nationalism and belonging in South Asian communities—in India, as well as in diasporas in the U.K. and North America. In other words, I will show how the origins of the complex and always contested transnational discourses of a resurgent Hindu nationalism, the politics of terrorism and “security” in India and its diasporas, can be traced in part to the modes by which the cultural and political negotiation of Partition violence institutes and consolidates hegemonic, if contradictory, ways of determining citizenship based on gendered ethnicity.

Among the several broad areas of emphasis in the book are the feminist critiques of nationalism, the representation of masculine citizenship and ethnic/secular coupledness, refugee and immigrant experience, the South Asian diaspora in North America, urban public culture, and the increasing transnationality of what I call the postcolonial public sphere. The early chapters of the book focus on the rich and hitherto little known cultural history of Partition: I examine the representation of the partition experience in literature, cinema, and journalism in order to track how Partition functions as a discursive formation. Through this exploration, I show how partition becomes both an iconic event as well as battleground for the competing construction of national belonging, community, and gender in South Asian public spheres post-1947. How gender difference and sexuality shape this varied story about belongings is enunciated by tracking the differential production of rhetorics about the feminized nation “Mother India,” which are accompanied by surprising constructions of the heterosexual Sikh male refugee as ideal citizen and national victim. The later chapters explore questions about historicity, modernity, and the Partition: How do the cultural and political narratives of belonging produced during Partition inform the contemporary resurgence of ethnic nationalist politics—what Gayatri Spivak has named “the failure of decolonization in India”—in South Asia?⁷² How does the re-historicization of Partition as a cultural field enable us to interrogate contemporary equations of gendered ethnicity and citizenship? Given the importance ascribed to ethnic identity globally, including in the U.S. national context after the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, how do we understand the growing apparent salience and power of ethnicity as a loca-

tion of identity, in a world that is increasingly globalized? After all, the questions about ethnicity, gender, and nation that generated the Indian Partition are troubling questions that have not yet been resolved, in India or elsewhere. They remain, to haunt us, across the globe—in the Israel–Palestine issue, in the Middle East, in Ireland, Indonesia and South East Asia, in Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan—making it increasingly clear that it is a problem that will not go away easily. The dominance of ethnicity in various postcolonial parts of the world as a central mode of identity is as much a colonial legacy as it is a modern mode of identification.

Violent Belongings is an effort to understand the cultural, imaginative working of gendered ethnicity in the modern and late modern world. It is my hypothesis that in this age of migration—local, national and transnational—gendered ethnicity has become increasingly important for the articulation of identity and community. In other words, the modernization of the world, even if it has led to the proliferation of plural, alternative modernities, has also led to the simultaneously growing power of ethnicity in the formation of gendered identities and communities—local, regional, national and now, transnational. Since ethnicity, as a category, and the processes of constructing religious or ethnic difference are not about to go away, and in fact have become progressively more powerful in global discourses of identity—both individual and collective—it is imperative that we re-examine the cultural and political production of ethnicized belongings, and how it is articulated with norms of gender and sexuality within and across cultural and national contexts. Through such a re-examination, we can perhaps invigorate and revitalize the utopian potentialities invested in our conceptions of human rights and secular democracy, even as we challenge, following Gandhi, the violence done in their name.

In his meditation on the effects of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 on global politics, Homi Bhabha has valuably suggested that we defamiliarize “democracy” as a hegemonic value term circulating in both policy and public-sphere discourses about Islamic communities, terror, war, and Euro-American politics. He argues that “[i]f we attempt to de-realize democracy, by defamiliarizing its history and its political project, we recognize not its failure but its frailty, its fraying edges or limits that impose their will of inclusion and exclusion on those who are considered—on the grounds of their race, culture, gender or class—unworthy of the democratic process.” Bhabha urges that “[i]n these dire times of global intransigence and war, we recognize what a fragile thing democracy is, how fraught with limitations and contradictions; and yet it is in that fragility, rather than in failure, that its creative potential for coping with the trials of the new century lies.”⁷³ It is such a revisionary, sideways re-examination of gendered ethnicities—the categories

that we take for granted in the institutions of Indian democracy, and indeed, American democracy as well—that this book also hopes to enact. In engaging the subaltern, the minor, the refugee toward the critique of the failures of the colonial state and the postcolonial state, this book works towards provincializing the postcolonial nation and, appropriating Dipesh Chakrabarty's words, ends with provincializing Euro-America.⁷⁴

This book does not claim to be the definitive study of the violent transition to postcoloniality that is named Partition. It does not offer a comprehensive account of the literature and film about Partition in various Indian languages—English, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, and Bengali. It does not cover the vastly different experience of independence in the southern part of India that, for the most part, escaped the violent upheavals witnessed in the North—both west and east. In that sense, it is necessarily a partial story about the political, historical, and cultural transitions marked by “1947” in India; a story about how its cultural representation in various media both illuminates and memorializes in specific ways the experience of violence and displacement in new national cultures. I also remain aware of the difficulties in speaking of the different Indian and Pakistani stories, and certainly do not intend to claim an identity between “India” and “South Asia.” While my study does pay more attention to the Indian nation-state post-1947, I intentionally resist the confining frame of national borders and articulate the experience of the two nations—India and Pakistan—together. Since the entire subcontinent was called India prior to its division in 1947, and since I do not claim to adequately attend to the literature of what is now Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), I hope to remain aware of the inadequacies of deploying such terms when speaking about a moment of transition and flux. This book also intentionally moves away from the tendency in scholarship to focus on regionalism—and on the regions of India most directly impacted, namely, Bengal or Punjab. Instead, I have traced a transnational story of the 1947 Partition—as event, metaphor and memory, to borrow Shahid Amin's words—and mapped how that story can illuminate for us the complex and contemporary, ambivalent and antagonistic articulation of national belonging in our globalized and diasporic worlds.⁷⁵

The chapters that follow track key issues—gender, ethnicity, citizenship—as they play on the Partition scene. In particular, Chapter 2 explores the representation of partition by focusing on the cultural articulation of masculinity and ideal masculine citizenship in South Asian literature about partition and nation-formation, from the subcontinent and the diaspora. Examining a range of literary texts, I show how the representation of violence done to male bodies played a critical, symbolic role in the production of nationalist sentiment in the public imagination. This chapter thus points

to the fissures between history and literature, in bringing to light how violence to the sexual male body remains elided in the contemporary historical investigation of gender and nationalism, even as literary and popular cultural texts deploy it to articulate a secular political critique of nationalist politics. In particular, I show how the postcolonial nation-state's sustained economic exploitation and political disenfranchisement of the Indian Sikh male and the Indian Muslim male is engendered through popular stereotypes of hyper-masculinity and feminization, respectively, that exemplify what David Eng has called "the technology of gendering . . . centrally linked to processes" of ethnic-racial formation and sexualization.⁷⁶

Chapter 3 tracks the representation of women's experience of Partition violence and displacement in literature, political documents, and oral histories. During and immediately following 1947, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh women in India suffered both sexualized ethnic violence, as well as state violence. Large numbers of women were kidnapped by rival communities, often across the India/Pakistan borders, forcibly converted, raped, bought and sold, mutilated, and in many cases, married by their abductors. In the early fifties, as per an agreement between the governments of India and Pakistan, these women were tracked down and forcibly repatriated by the two states, largely to families that no longer accepted them due to their rape, which is seen as "dishonor." I explore how this violence against women is narrated, addressed and critiqued in the postcolonial public sphere in literature and political discourse, both then and now. In the process, I argue that postcolonial feminist criticism today needs to go beyond the ideological critiques of gendered violence articulated in recent feminist writings, to challenge and undo the very language of "honor" and "dishonor" that marks our critiques.

Chapter 4 takes up the cultural representation of migration, displacement, and refugees in the postcolonial public sphere in major Indian cities like Bombay. Examining literature and popular cinema, as well as British administrative records, newspapers and film magazines, I show how the Partition migrations not only transformed urban culture and industry in the Indian city-space like Bombay, but also produced hitherto unprecedented narratives of cultural belonging and citizenship in the public sphere. Here, I uncover the fragmentary and ambivalent narration of refugee experience in public and political discourse, to argue that it was around the figure of the refugee that debates about citizenship and about the place of ethnicity and gender in determining nationality coalesced in the early national period in India. Thus, the minor subject, the itinerant, stateless migrant became critical to the shape and form of early national discourse in South Asia, as well as its critique.

Chapter 5 deals with the representation of the Partition, Pakistan and ethnic citizenship in contemporary Hindi cinema. It focuses on how con-

temporary Bollywood films represent Partition—in period films, as well as films about war and inter-ethnic coupledness. In so doing, they attempt to melodramatically reconfigure contemporary questions about Indo-Pakistan geopolitical war and peace, the relation between ethnicity and citizenship in national culture, and to memorialize women's experience during Partition in transnational public spheres. Through an analysis of recent films like Chandraprakash Dwivedi's *Pinjar*, Farah Khan's *Main Hoon Na*, Farhan Akhtar's *Lakshya* and Yash Chopra's *Veer Zaara*, this chapter explores the futures of ethnicity and patriotism and uncovers the contemporary mappings of heteronormative coupledness and geo-political peace in these globally circulating texts of the hegemonic public sphere.

Chapter 6 argues that it is postcolonial literary and cultural production by diasporic South Asians in the U.K. and United States that returns to raise questions that link the 1947 Partition with stories about secularism, contemporary ethnic and racial violence, and post-September 11 belonging in South Asian American lives—from India to Bangladesh to the United States. The narratives taken up here, like Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar, the Clown* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies*, connect the 1947 partition to other global scenes of violence; in doing so, they inscribe politicized transnational affiliation, provincialize America, and critique state terror. In the process, these transnational stories provincialize the nation form. They carve out a non-national humanistic account that measures the distance between history and memory, between the politics of contemporary ethnic nationalisms and racialized patriotism in places as diverse as India, Sri Lanka, and the United States.

Foucault reminds us that genealogy “does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things.” Instead, he argues that to do a genealogy is “to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversal—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us.” This, he suggests, leads us to the recognition that truth “does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but in the exteriority of accidents.”⁷⁷ In this book, I have attempted to take up this task to locate some of the textures and accidents, fragmentary accounts and “forgotten things” that made up what we call Partition, in order to interrogate the increasing violence and dispossessions—ethnic, national, racial, gendered—of contemporary South Asian life for its minor subjects. By engaging transnational scenes and diverse aesthetic texts of violence and migration, I propose that the emergence and ascendancy of gendered ethnicity as a dominant technology of identity, citizenship, and belonging is not

only a feature of Indian history, or indeed of South Asian and postcolonial histories, but of national modernities across the world. The humanistic exploration of violence internationally—its representation, naming, remembrance, and reproduction—is essential if we are to uncover the sites and strategies to challenge the discourses that engender it, and that it engenders.

Finally, it is my hope that this book will make visible the urgency of understanding the inter-articulation of art and history, and the centrality of the literature and film of the postcolonial public sphere in writing the relation between postcolonial history and memory. Aesthetic texts like literature and film enable us to interrogate the narratives of dominant cultural memory; they are representations of everyday life that often mark the limits of historicist and social scientific accounts of historical experience. Dipesh Chakrabarty has noted about “the new histories of the Partition” that their “exploration of history and memory shows that only a capacity for a humanist critique can create the ethical moment in our narratives and offer, not a guarantee against the prejudice that kills, but an antidote with which to fight it.”⁷⁸ Questions of history and memory are now strongly in play in contemporary India and the diaspora (particularly in North America), such that literary and cultural histories are themselves part of a political struggle over the meaning of nationality, cultural identity, and freedom. I have been interested in locating how literature and film constitute a counter-memory and an archive for measuring the discontinuity between hegemonic ideologies of nationalism and their often violent, gendered embodiment in everyday life. By mapping the articulation of national violence in different registers and in a transnational form in the public sphere, this book reexamines the terms and transformation of national life and citizenship through internal and international migration. In this critical project, our aesthetic and cultural texts open up a new space for rethinking the ethical and political articulation of the democratic, the human and the humane in the public sphere, civil society, and international history.

Violent Belongings began as an effort to trace “the political economy of memory”⁷⁹ and to understand the senseless losses of those who have endured, inhabited and survived ethnic violence and displacement both in contemporary South Asia and in the Indian subcontinent of 1947. I hope that the struggle to write these histories and memories into the present will contribute, in some measure, to a new understanding of their enduring legacies. Inspired by the stories of my grandfather, who was from Karachi, now in Pakistan, who was never able to return there after Partition, this book is also a desire to understand how Karachi came to be an ideal, fabled city in my imagination and his.