Partition and Postmemory in the Work of Kriti Arora and Sharlene Bamboat

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Abstract

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This thesis examines personal memory and inter- and transgenerational transmission, employing postmemory as a key interpretative lens to analyze the media work of New Delhi-based artist Kriti Arora's five-minute silent film *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* (2005) and Toronto-based artist Sharlene Bamboat's *And Memory* (tentative title, 2011–in-progress). These artworks explore family histories associated with the artists' great-grandfathers before and after the 1947 partitioning of the Indian subcontinent. This thesis argues that Arora and Bamboat's artworks employ postmemorial aesthetics that speak to the complexity of navigating between the traumatic histories that the artists inherited and their own lived experiences, which are occupied by the transmitted knowledge. Furthermore, these autobiographical works substantially bring instances of historical trauma into the present to comment on how it continues to affect individuals generationally removed. In addition to Arora and Bamboat, over the last sixteen years, a number of artists such as Indian artist Nalini Malani, Pakistani artist Rashid Rana and Toronto-based artist Sarindar Dhaliwal, all of whom grew up during and after decolonization and nation-building, have negotiated the effects of Partition within their personal histories and have made artworks that focus on historical trauma and cultural memory relating to Partition, as well as the contemporary realities of Indo-Pakistani hostilities. This thesis contributes to emerging research on the effects that Partition has had and continues to have on the practices of contemporary artists of South Asian descent.

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Introduction

This thesis investigates the ways in which family histories relating to the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent are transmitted in and across generations. Specifically, it analyzes the media work of New Delhi-based artist Kriti Arora's black-and-white silent film titled *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* (5 min; 2005) and Toronto-based artist Sharlene Bamboat's *And Memory* (tentative title, 2011, in progress).[1] Both works convey family histories associated with the Partition and reveal the artists' processes of confronting their inherited pasts. The dawn of independent India and Pakistan became a reality on August 14 and 15, 1947, when the two regions were separated.[2] These dates also marked the end of the British Raj (1858-1947) and the beginning of decolonization on the Indian subcontinent. In order for Indian Muslims to have their own nation in Pakistan, India was partitioned within the framework of the border scheme known as the Radcliffe Award, which cut into the states of Punjab and Bengal.[3] Muslims migrated towards the west part

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[1] Kriti Arora completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture from MS University Baroda in India in 1995. She studied in the United States, pursuing film and photography, and she received her Masters from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in 1999. Arora spends her time between France and New Delhi. "Kriti Arora artist profile," Palette Art Gallery, accessed February 6, 2013, http://www.paletteartgallery.com/ artistbiography.asp? artistid= 149; Kriti Arora, Skype interview with the author, December 3, 2013. Bamboat immigrated to Canada in 1996. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Film Studies from Brock University and her Master of Arts in Cinema and Media Studies from York University in 2009. Her artistic practice involves media and performance works, which often touch upon issues concerning nation, race, ethnicity, gender and desire. "About," Sharlene Bamboat, accessed February 7, 2013, http://www.sharlenebamboat.com/mainsite.html; Sharlene Bamboat, email message to author, March 7, 2012. Bamboat is currently the Artistic Director of the South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC), a non-profit artist-run centre in Toronto that is the only one in Canada dedicated to the progress and presentation of contemporary visual art by South Asian artists.

[2] Partition as a strategy has been used in Ireland, Germany, Palestine, Cyprus, Vietnam and Korea.

[3] It was in 1940 when the Muslim League of India said openly that a separate state for Muslims needed to be established. Subsequently, where Pakistan was to emerge was based on where there was a Muslim majority. In June of 1947 the British announced that India was to be partitioned. The decision regarding where the land would be demarcated was made two days after India and Pakistan gained independence from the British. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2. According to Historians Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal "The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan form the subject of fierce but lively historical debate.

of Punjab (which became West Pakistan) and East Bengal (which became East Pakistan), while Hindus and Sikhs travelled in the opposite directions.[4] Partition constituted the largest mass migration in human history—never before or since have so many people switched homes and countries so quickly. According to postcolonial studies scholars Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia, academics "agree that the Partition displaced and uprooted more than 12 million people. However the experience of these displaced persons was not homogeneous but differentiated by class, caste, gender, occupation, family connections, time and region."[5] The implications of Partition have affected countless lives on the Indian subcontinent in myriad ways, and Indo-Pakistani relations have been fraught with animosity since the event's genesis. Partition has left a legacy that affects many individuals, families and communities in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora. This thesis is intended to contribute to emerging research on the effects that Partition has on the practices of today's contemporary artists of South Asian descent.

My impetus for this thesis lies in my own family history of intergenerational transmission of the Partition. Of Indian descent, I learned of stories about the event through my father who immigrated to Canada in 1972.[6] He and his family are from Patiala, a city in the Indian state of Punjab, and they are of the Sikh faith. My paternal grandparents' generation primarily witnessed the horrifying atrocities that followed the

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Various theories have been invoked to explain why, in the process of dismantling their Raj, the British partitioned India along ostensibly religious lines." The authors go on to say that, "[o]fficial histories of Pakistan have in the main subscribed to the 'two nation' theory, according to which Indian Muslims were always a distinctive and separate community that had resisted assimilation into their Indian environment." Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 137.

[4] For a map of the Indian subcontinent showing the Radcliffe Line, see Appendix A.

[5] Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia, "Introduction," in *Partitioned Lives: Narrative of Home, Displacement and Resettlement*, ed. Angali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia (India: Dorling Kindersley Pvt. Ltd., 2008), xv.

[6] Canada has large Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi populations composed of individuals who either experienced Partition first-hand or are the descendants of those who experienced it.

1947 Partition, whereby Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, divided along religious lines, engaged in mass killings, slaughtering each other and raping and pillaging.[7] My grandfather, a police officer, did not take part in these pogroms but they personally affected him through the murder of his best friend, a lawyer and Muslim. This friend did not want to migrate to Pakistan and leave his home, even though scores of Muslims were being slaughtered.[8] Fearing for his friend's life, my grandfather offered his home to him. His friend, however, refused the offer, skeptical that anyone would want to kill him when he had done nothing wrong. My father was born a year after Partition and never had a chance to meet his father's best friend. He remembers his father crying over his comrade's death whenever he reminisced about their friendship. During and after the pogroms, many children became orphans. My aunt—my father's oldest sister—was one of many orphaned Muslim children whom families took home and raised as their own. I do not know the exact extent to which my family was affected by Partition, but what has been told to me of our relationship to its history has led me to examine its implications. I

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[7] "Where before there had been long histories of communities relating to each other in multiple cross-cutting ways, partition creates two binary blocs, now opposed in terms of single national or ethnic identities. In the binarism of partition, political identity is fused with religious identification[.]" John Docker, "The Two-State Solution and Partition: World History Perspectives on Palestine and India," *Holy Land Studies*, 9:2 (2010): 154. The slaughter of people divided along religious lines was at times the deciding factor that led individuals to leave their homes and become refugees. Feminist scholar Urvashi Butalia points out that the newly established government "had not anticipated that the fear and uncertainty created by the drawing of borders based on head counts of religious identity—so many Muslims,—so many Hindus—would force people to flee to what they considered 'safer' places where they would be surrounded by their own kind." Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 3.

[8] Surprisingly, pogroms were not a scenario officials were prepared for, although killings based on religion were occurring up to a year before the division of India took place. The modes of transportation employed by people included buses and trains, but predominantly the refugees travelled by foot in processions which at times stretched for miles. On their journeys and in the refugee camps, many people died from malnutrition and contagious diseases; thousands of families were divided, and their homes and crops were destroyed. Ibid. Historian Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar notes that, "in the Indian subcontinent, the figure of the refugee was marked by religious community, and that these people were considered as forming two distinct and opposed sets of refugees, had enormous implications for the entire rubric of refugee rehabilitation and its relationship to the making of the Indo-Pak divide." Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 8.

am particularly interested in how artworks by Arora and Bamboat are able to provide insights into the personal histories of the event.

Feminist scholar Urvashi Butalia, in her ground-breaking book, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (2000), claims that there are significant gaps in what has been written about the Partition, because the atrocities are mainly discussed in terms of political developments while the "human dimensions of this history" are often ignored.[9] In other words, the personal accounts of people who lived through the experience have been largely omitted despite the fact that they serve as important acts of remembrance in their own right. It is important to acknowledge that not only families who experienced and witnessed the event have their own personal stories, but also many of these individuals shared their stories with their children and grandchildren. The effects of Partition are thus far reaching as they shape the lived experience of the generation that witnessed the event and the generations that followed. The transmission of these personal, painful accounts of Partition attests to its continued impact over sixty years after the historical event. South Asian studies scholar Prabhjot Parmar further contends that Partition issues have been insufficiently explored: "Considering the cataclysmic nature of the event and despite some powerful literary works, [Partition] has not received due attention in the socio-cultural discourse."[10] Indeed, Partition is a subject of South Asian history that needs constant interrogation, as this allows for a deeper understanding of its correlation with current issues on the Indian subcontinent as well as its effects on the South Asian diaspora.

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[9] Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, 6.
[10] Ibid. Prabhjot Parmar, "Trains of Death: Representations of the Railways in Films on the Partition of India," in *27 Down: New Departures in Indian Railway Studies*, ed. Ian J. Kerr (New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2007), 73.

This thesis examines personal memory and inter- and transgenerational transmission using postmemory as a key interpretative lens in Kriti Arora's *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* and Sharlene Bamboat's *And Memory*.[11] These artworks explore the family histories of the artists' great-grandfathers before and after the 1947 partitioning of the Indian subcontinent. The artists, however, approach their own lived experiences, which reveal family memories in different ways. Beyond merely referencing the past, I argue that these autobiographical works, through postmemory, bring substantial instances of historical trauma into the present to comment on how this continues to affect individuals generationally removed.

Bamboat investigates conceptions of remembering and the ways in which inherited traumatic memories are transmitted through moving images, body art and storytelling. The primary memory that she examines is her great-grandfather's suicide in Karachi, Pakistan in 1949. This event in her family's history was rarely discussed among family members.[12] Bamboat has been actively working on *And Memory* since 2009, and she has no end date in sight. She is open to "allow[ing] something unforeseen to happen,"[13] as she continues the project. Because this project is about her lived experience and her relationship to her family's history, I suggest that she has to negotiate a great deal in the process of completing this work because she is simultaneously working through the process, which is a multidimensional undertaking and an art form in its own right. In

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[11] I call *And Memory* a moving image project because at the moment it primarily consists of compiled video and Super 8 footage and Bamboat has not decided what the presentation format will be. See Appendix B.
[12] Sharlene Bamboat, "And Memory" (Toronto Arts Council grant proposal, 2011), 1. Bamboat's family, who are Parsi, did not migrate during Partition. Furthermore, Parsis along with other minority religious groups in India and Pakistan, such as Christians and Buddhists, to name only two, did not for the most part migrate, nor were they known to have been involved in communal violence. Sharlene Bamboat, interview with author, April 8, 2013.
[13] Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham, eds. "Introduction: Tracking the Art of the Project: History, Theory, Practice," *The Art of the Project: Project and Experiments in Modern French Culture* (New York: Berhahm Books, 2005), 1.

addition to consulting scholarly texts, I conducted primary research for this thesis, which involved conducting interviews with Bamboat.[14] Moreover, my position as a researcher of *And Memory* involves myself as someone who has documented this as a work-in-progress, not as an unfinished piece. For this reason, I consider my method of investigation to be a form of archiving. Lastly, this thesis may serve as documentation for Bamboat when she eventually completes *And Memory*.

In contrast to Bamboat's focus on the inheritance of traumatic knowledge, Arora's film is imbued with a reimagining of past memories. She silently explores images as rhythmic studies of light and movement, while reflecting on the history of her great-grandfather (a cloth merchant) and her family's experience during Partition, when they left their home in Pakistan and migrated to India.[15] According to Butalia, "collections of memories, individual and collective, familial and historical, are what make up the reality of Partition. They illuminate what one might call the 'underside of its history.'"[16] Through an in-depth critical analysis of *THIS or THAT?* and *And Memory*, I consider the ways in which Arora and Bamboat, as artists, access family memories associated with the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent, exposing the reality of the catastrophic event and its aftermath through intergenerational acts of transfer.

In her book *The Generation of Postmemory: Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012), cultural theorist Marianne Hirsch notes that she came to postmemory "on the basis of [her] own 'autobiographical readings'" of works relating to the Holocaust by

[14] For an excerpt of one of the interviews I conducted with Bamboat, see Appendix B.
[15] Jane Kim, ed., *Monitor 2: Contemporary South Asian Short Film and Video* (Toronto: South Asian Visual Arts Collective, 2006).
[16] Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*, 8.

second-generation writers and visual artists.[17] Through reading and viewing their works, as well as through her discussions with survivors of the Holocaust, it became apparent to Hirsch that they shared certain qualities and symptoms that made them a "postgeneration."[18] Hirsch defines postmemory as a relationship "that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories and images and behaviors among which they grew up."[19] Individuals who feel a connection to traumatic historical occurrences that came before them actuate their remembrance of such histories through their present-day lived experience. According to Hirsh, postmemory "[i]s a structure of inter-and transgenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience;" "it is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but… at a generational remove."[20] This, I propose, is the situation the two artists whose work I explore in this thesis.

To borrow Hirsch's term, Arora and Bamboat are both part of a "postgeneration." Although they are three generations removed from the event, they were exposed to traumatic knowledge associated with Partition and its aftereffects by means of their family histories. For instance, Arora was profoundly affected by her family's personal histories of before and after Partition, which she grew up hearing about. These included the exodus from their ancestral homeland in the state of Kashmir. Bamboat, on the other hand, did not learn of her maternal great-grandfather's suicide until 2006; he jumped to his death two years after the Partition. Bamboat has a lifelong fear of heights and has learned that many members of her family's maternal side share the same fear. The artist

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[17] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 4.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, 5.
[20] Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29:1 (2008): 106.

believes this acrophobia (fear of heights) is related to her great-grandfather's suicide. Furthermore, she learned additional details about her great-grandfather's life in 2008 through a recorded interview she had with her great aunt, i.e. his daughter. Ultimately, both Bamboat and Arora use postmemory to negotiate their inherited histories in their respective works. Hirsh posits that postmemorial work by artists has characterized "aesthetic shapes that convey the mixture of ambivalence and desire, mourning and recollection, presence and absence…"[21] I argue that Arora and Bamboat's artworks employ postmemorial aesthetics that speak to the complexity of navigating between the traumatic histories they inherited and their own lived experiences, which are occupied by the transmitted knowledge.

In his article "Trauma, Absence, Loss," historian Dominick LaCapra investigates the coming to "terms with trauma as well as the crucial role post-traumatic testimonies provide."[22] He notes that historical trauma "is specific and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject-position associated with it."[23] This stipulation is important, as Arora did not experience the Partition directly, nor did Bamboat directly experience her great-grandfather's suicide. Although both artists investigate inherited familial histories pervaded by traumatic knowledge connected to the division of British India, this does not mean that they are traumatized. According to Hirsch, "… postmemory is *not* an *identity* position but a *generational* structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation."[24] This is a significant distinction, as individuals may interpret inherited memories of a traumatic past as inherited trauma and interpret their position as that of

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[21] Marianne Hirsch, "Postmemories in Exile," *Poetics Today* 17:4 (1996): 659.
[22] Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry 25* (1999): 722.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Hirsh, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 35.

victims. I suggest throughout this thesis that the two artists are not merely investigating how their families were affected by historical trauma through postmemory. Rather, during this process they also examine the ways in which these histories were transferred to them, by synthesizing their own lived experiences with memories they have inherited.

This thesis is divided into four sections. Section One points out the ways in which contemporary South Asian artists such as Nalini Malani (India), Rashid Rana (Pakistan) and Sarindar Dhaliwal (Toronto) are investigating facets of Partition and current issues associated with it, and how they are thus developing a visual vocabulary that reflects relationships involving historical trauma, cultural memory and identity politics. I point out that most of these artists are generationally removed from the Partition, yet they explore its effects. Here, postmemorial aesthetics are examined in artworks by American media artists Daniel Eisenberg and Rea Tajiri, who have also worked through inherited traumatic memories in their art practices. Section Two examines Arora's film *THIS or THAT?* through the lens of postmemory and explores the film in relation to series of photographs, paintings and sculptures that evolved from the artist's experience of visiting Jammu and Kashmir, her ancestral homeland. Based on a recent interview I conducted with the artist concerning her family's history of migration and her art practice, I provide a close reading of her oeuvre that speaks to autobiography, intergenerational inheritance and displacement. Section Three provides a critical analysis of Bamboat's ongoing project *And Memory,* discussing what the artist has compiled to date, the autobiographical nature of the work and how this project references the Partition and its aftereffects. It goes into greater depth as to how Bamboat investigates the linkages between her acrophobia, her great-grandfather's suicide and the consequences that resulted from her

family's keeping this a secret. Lastly, by closely examining the project, I situate Hirsch's concept of postmemory in dialogue with psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's theory of the transgenerational phantom.

The effect of Partition has been the focus of investigation of literary works, films and visual art, and is also the main concern of this study. However, the historiography of Partition is still in development. "We still need therefore in years to come," South Asian studies scholar Suvir Kaul affirms, "a systematic, multifaceted exploration of what we might call 'Partition Issues,' for they define not only our past but, in crucial ways, our collective future."[25] "Partition Issues," is a significant subject of exploration because Partition also marked the genesis of independent India and Pakistan, and these issues are still linked to the contemporary cultures, politics and identities of both countries.[26] Butalia notes that many scholars have developed thorough archives comprised of personal accounts, photographs, newspapers, letters, memoirs and books that represent devastating traumatic events, such as the Holocaust. In the case of Partition, the archive is relatively small, even though visual representations survive in many archived newspapers and magazines.[27] The public memorialization of Partition is virtually nonexistent, while there are museums and memorials dedicated to the Holocaust in Europe, North America and Israel, and in Cambodia the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum commemorates the victims of the genocidal violence perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime.[28] The critic and independent curator Murtaza Vali points out that the absence of a memorial within

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[25] Suvir Kaul, ed., "Introduction," *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 4.
[26] Jennifer Yusin, "The Silence of Partition: Borders, Trauma, and Partition History," *Social Semiotics* 19:4 (2009): 453.
[27] Butalia, *Other Side of Silence,* 286-287.
[28] Ibid., 287.

the Indian subcontinent to commemorate Partition is due to the complexity of the event, which is tainted with massive violence perpetrated by citizens, as opposed to a political regime. Vali writes: "First there was no clear distinction between perpetrator and victim, both 'sides' raped and killed and were raped and killed; guilt and victimhood were hopelessly intertwined across newly formed borders."[29] The author further contends that the violence was widespread throughout the geographical space of the subcontinent, which demonstrates how vast the traumatic event of the Partition was. A single memorial is therefore insufficient when one takes into account the immense impact Partition had on those affected, and one can perhaps understand why a memorial does not exist.[30] However, presently in India, a Partition museum called the Museum of Peace is under construction in Amritsar, Punjab, at the Attari-Wagah border between India and Pakistan. It is expected to open in 2014. [31] Some of the material and visual culture to be presented in the museum includes maps, artefacts, diaries, archival footage, transcripts of oral testimonies and tickets from the infamous trains that went between India and Pakistan, transporting refugees and the dead from one side to the other.[32] The impetus behind the establishment of the Peace Museum is to not only provide a visual account of the

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[29] Murtaza Vali, "Proposals for a Memorial to Partition," in *Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space*, eds. Iftikar Dadi and Hammad Nasar (London: Green Cardamom, 2012), 117.
[30] Ibid.
[31] For more details regarding the inspiration of the Museum of Peace, see Yudhvir Rana, "Coming: Peace museum along India-Pakistan Border, accessed Nov. 24, 2013, *The Times of India*, April 26, 2013, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-26/india/38842623_1_peace-museum-holocaust-museum-punjab.
[32] Anindya Raychaudhuri, "Demanding the impossible: Exploring the possibilities of a national Partition museum in India," *Social Semiotics* 22: 2 (2012): 173-186. The museum is funded by an NGO in Chandigarh, Punjab, India called the Society for Information and Media Studies.

atmosphere of Partition but also to foster peace between India and Pakistan and celebrate the shared Punjabi culture on both sides of the border.[33]

Encouraging peace is what artists and activists have been achieving by working beyond their countries' political strife and striving to create cultural ties with one another.[34] For instance, in 1997, fifty years after Partition, the *Mappings* exhibition presented by the Eicher Gallery in New Delhi featured artworks by Indian and Pakistani artists in order to bring about a sharing of critical ideas across the borders. Interestingly, many South Asian artists who are generationally removed from Partition are exploring its aftereffects. I focus on this phenomenon in the upcoming pages.

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[33] "A Memorial to the Partition of India," Museum of Peace, accessed June 18, 2012, http://www.museumofpeace.com/display_scheme.php. When the independence of India from the British Empire and the birth of Pakistan came into fruition, both countries were rife with hostility and had been at war with each other on four occasions over the previously independent state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir was a Princely state during the British Raj; as such, it was ruled by a Maharajah. The Maharajah had to decide after Partition whether to cede Kashmir to India or Pakistan. Muslims predominantly populated the area, and it would have made sense for Kashmir to be ceded to Pakistan. Yet, the king was Hindu, and he wanted to stay neutral and possibly govern independently. However, a pro-Pakistan rebellion took place and the Maharajah asked India for assistance and consequently ceded the state to India. As such, in 1947-48 they battled one another; in 1965 and 1999, wars were fought over the same land. Peter Calvocoressi, *World Politics Since 1945* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2009), 432. There have been conflicts that have also occurred outside Kashmir. For instance, in 2001 there were attacks on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi by Pakistani militants trained in Kashmir, which resulted in the Indian government ordering an extensive mobilization of its forces. Gurhakpal Singh and Ian Talbot, *The Partition of India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 169. The most recent incident occurred in 2008, in India's largest city, Mumbai, when terrorist attacks rocked the city. In light of these most recent events, India has proclaimed that Pakistan sponsors terrorism, especially in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. India and Pakistan have a strained relationship; nevertheless, there is a peace process in the works: trade routes are open between the countries, and citizens from both sides of the divide travel across the border. However, the governments only allow short visits.

[34] Hammad Nasar, "Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space," in Dadi and Nasar, 9.

Section One: The Emergence of a "Post-Partition" Generation: Generational Structures of Transmission

In this section, I go into greater depth about postmemory as a generational structure with its own set of aesthetics, arguing that postmemory can be read as a generational position within a spectrum of transmission.[35] This section also elucidates how the artists Nalini Malani, Rashid Rana and Sarindar Dhaliwal explore sociopolitical histories of post-independence India and Pakistan's postcolonial situation. Furthermore, I proffer that Arora and Bamboat access similar histories, however, from an autobiographical vantage point, whereby they perform their own particular postmemories. Their memories were inter- and transgenerationally transferred to them through their family's own lived experience of the Partition and its consequences. The artists employ these memories and explore them through their art making.

Indeed, artworks that address Partition and its legacy provide an avenue for discussing topics that are still considered sensitive by many – a significant undertaking given that this area of exploration is still in its infancy. According to Hammad Nasar, who curated the 2012 exhibition, *Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space*, it has only been since the fiftieth anniversary of Partition (August 15, 1997) that more visual art has been created to explore the event.[36] Nasar further points out what scholars such as Butalia have asserted: there is still much to be addressed and acknowledged concerning

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[35] It should be noted that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the complex history of Partition in detail. I am more concerned with the intergenerational transfer of memories through family histories that has kept the event active.

[36] Ibid. The exhibition *Lines of Control*, which had its premiere in the U.S. at Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in 2012, showcased media works, installations, sculptures, prints and photography by thirty-three international artists and groups (including Rashid Rana and Nalini Malani) that investigate the complexities of the formation of new nation states whereby territories are divided and borders carved out. Ellen Avril, "Foreword," in Dadi and Nasar, 7.

Partition. Artist and art historian Iftikhar Dadi notes that a number of South Asian artists are of a generation that did not witness Partition or Bangladesh's 1971 accession to independence, but are "now beginning to grapple with the latent complexity of Partition's effects, which extends from grand nationalist, geopolitical, and identitarian agendas into the most personal and intimate aspects of the self."[37] The history of Partition has left an imprint on the South Asian psyche, as its residual effects are still apparent. Dadi further contends: "The experience then, is not only individual, or belonging only to those who witnessed it directly, but extends its effects collectively to society in strange ways and works insidiously across generations."[38] In this way, he elucidates the ways in which memories of Partition transcend generational experience, for they make up a collective history that involves multiple threads.

In their article "Communities of Memory and the Problem of Transmission," cultural historian Michael Pickering and media studies scholar Emily Keightley discuss the relationship between generational positions and memory. They assert: "Generation as a subject position, a consciousness and a domain of social action is doubly relational as it involves vertical relations through time with what came before us and what may come after, and a horizontal relation in time with others who share our historical location."[39] Pickering and Keightley's hypothesis regarding horizontal and vertical generational planes as applied to Partition memories is premised on how the historical trauma associated with the event was a collective trauma that had lasting effects on populations

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[37] Iftikhar Dadi, "Partition and Contemporary Art," in Dadi and Nasar, 19.
[38] Ibid., 19. In her investigation of "generation" as a symbolic form, Sigrid Weigel notes "… the counting of generations begins with the second one, only after the second and third generations have appeared can a first be identified, and often it is implicitly understood as such without expressly gaining the name 'first generation.'" Sigrid Weigel, "'Generation' as Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945," *The Germanic Review* 77:4 (2002): 265.
[39] Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, "Communities of Memory and the Problem of Transmission," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16:1 (2013): 117.

on both sides of the divide. Even in areas of India that were not divided or did not witness the communal violence, people were aware of the upheaval via the media and word of mouth. As such, their relation to Partition is horizontal. Furthermore, the second and third generations are also exposed to the collective history of Partition (despite the lack of memorials) through, for example, the media and schooling. Vertical relations, on the other hand, are akin to familial modes of transmission. In other words, those who experienced Partition first-hand can pass down their memories to their descendants. Consequently, artists who are two are three generations removed are looking to their own family's experience during Partition (vertical relations) or to the collective history of Partition (horizontal relations).

Hirsch similarly sees postmemory as doubly relational. As mentioned previously, she argues that postmemory "is not an identity position but a generational structure." Thus, postmemory, as a generational position, is relational and works both vertically and horizontally; Hirsh refers to these axes as respectively "familial" and "affiliative."[40] She further posits that there is "the difference between an intergenerational vertical identification of child/parent occurring within the family and the intragenerational horizontal identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to other contemporaries."[41] However, though not explicitly suggested by Hirsch, postmemory can be read as a generational position within a spectrum of transmission. For example, she postulates that, "affliative postmemory is thus no more than an extension of the loosened

[40] Hirsh, *Generation of Postmemory*, 36.
[41] Ibid.

familial structured occasioned by war and persecution."[42] In other words, instances of historical and collective trauma affect multiple generations both directly and indirectly.

Other scholars have also used postmemory as an interpretative framework. For instance, film studies scholar Tina Wasserman discusses artworks by American media artists Daniel Eisenberg and Rea Tajiri in relation to trauma, history and memory, and within the context of family histories that were formed around "historical traumatic events."[43] Wasserman posits that Eisenberg's experimental film *Cooperation of Parts* (1987) and Tajiri's video essay *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991) visually articulate historical trauma and intergenerational transmission, revealing their complexities, as both artists grew up with the narratives of their parents' traumatic experiences of, respectively, the Holocaust and the Japanese internment in the United States.

Furthermore, these works convey the relationship between the memories of a previous generation and those of the present one, and note how personal remembrance is forged through intergenerational memory. [44] As I stated above, Eisenberg grew up with the narratives of his parents' traumatic experiences of the Holocaust. In his film, he visits European locations linked to his parents' lived history, and he creates a "tension […] between sound and image generat[ing] an uncertainty about the past."[45] For instance, he shoots from the rooftop of building facades and from windows, and Wasserman describes his camera work as agitated, while the accompaniment of "his evocative voice-over

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Tina Wasserman, "Constructing the Image of Postmemory," in *The Image and the Witness: Trauma Memory and Visual Culture*, eds., Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (London and NewYork: Wallflower Press, 2007), 159.
[44] Ibid., 160.
[45] Ibid., 163.

narration suggests that something is there, that these sites are still saturated with the past and weighted with terrible history."[46] One can conclude, therefore, that the artist's identity has been shaped "by traumatic experiences that can be neither understood nor recreated."[47]

Artists on the Indian subcontinent and in the diaspora are responding to traumatic histories, such as that of the Partition, which either came before them or happened during their lifetimes. In India, for example, Partition has parallels with other acts of violence perpetrated against religious communities. For example, after the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, India (1992) by Hindu militants, anti-Muslim riots spread around India (1992-1993), and in 2002 pogroms were committed against Muslims in Gujarat. Artists are responding to these instances of barbarism, committed during their own lifetimes, in their artworks and are commenting on how these horrific cases open up the wounds of Partition even though there is a generational remove.[48]

Writing on Partition, Prabhjot Parmar investigates the ways in which the event has affected not only the lived experience of the generation that witnessed it but also the generations that followed, "even in diaspora,"[49] and the influence of the event within the arts. She examines Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* (1998) and Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel *What the Body Remembers* (1999) and their engagement with the Partition as artists who did not experience the event first-hand but who grew up hearing stories about it. Parmar argues:

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 161.
[48] Nasar, 10. Nalani Malani is an example of an artist who has made artworks that investigate communal violence committed in India.
[49] Prabhjot Parmar, "'Moving Forward Though Still Facing Back:' Partition and the South Asian Diaspora in Canada," in Roy and Bhatia, 195.

> Exercising what Hirsch […] calls "postmemory," the second or third generation in diaspora are trying to forge a connection with the experiences of the witnesses and survivors, and in so doing, are negotiating aspects of history while expressing their understanding of Partition and the accompanying violence, displacement, loss, and homelessness.[50]

Parmar elucidates the ways in which the history of Partition is not exclusive to the Indian subcontinent and its subjects, as the memories are transferred generationally through familial and affiliative postmemory, and are thus accessible in mediated forms and retrieved in diaspora. In what follows, I will look at South Asian artists in India, Pakistan and Canada, including Arora and Bamboat, and the ways in which their artworks engage with Partition and its legacy on the Indian subcontinent and how it reveals their generational identity.

Explorations of Partition and its Legacy by Contemporary South Asian Artists

Over the last sixteen years, a number of South Asian artists (including Arora and Bamboat) who grew up during and after decolonization and nation-building on the Indian subcontinent, have negotiated the effects of Partition within their personal histories and art practices. Artists Malani, Rana and Dhaliwal (to name but a few) have made artworks that focus on historical trauma and cultural memory relating to Partition, as well as the contemporary realities of Indo-Pakistani hostilities. [51]

Indian artist Nalini Malani has explored Partition and its ramifications since 1997. Malani's childhood was transformed by Partition; she was born in Karachi in 1946,

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[50] Ibid., 206.

[51] Art historian Mieke Bal describes cultural memory as signifying memory understood "as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or a social one" (vii). She goes on to note that "cultural memory, for better or for worse, links the past to the present and the future" (vii). Mieke Bal, "Introduction," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), vii-xvii.

before it became part of Pakistan. Her family was among the many who migrated to Mumbai, India, where she has spent most her life and is currently based.[52] Her ground-breaking work, the five-channel video installation *Mother India: Transaction in the Construction of Pain* (2005), addresses violence perpetrated against women during times of political strife and, in particular, the abuse that women suffered during the partitioning of India (fig. 1).[53] In this installation, Malani not only brings to the present the gendered violence that was perpetrated during the making of the newly independent nations, but also addresses a facet of historical trauma that Butalia describes as the "underside" of Partition's history. Cultural studies scholar Alessandra Marino describes the installation as a mélange of "narratives crossing media and genres, where fragments and separated frames follow and are superimposed on one another... Through quick, obscure or flashing images, history as a whole is dismembered and a recollection of the events following the Partition arises from individual stories."[54] The non-linear narrative that is constructed by the superimposing of images creates a critical language of images that foreground a traumatic past and the relational aspects of history and memory.

The "Mother India" in the title of the work pointedly references both Katherine Mayo's notorious book *Mother India* (1927) and the film *Mother India* (1957) by Bollywood director Mehboob Khan. Following its release, Mayo's book was condemned by many because of its influence on the passing of the Child Marriage Restraint Act of

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[52]Malani is an internationally known multimedia artist. She examines ideas surrounding gender such as women's roles, identity, migration and political violence. Walsh Gallery. "Nalani Malani: Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." Accessed February 5, 2013. http://www.walshgallery.com/nalini-malani-mother-india-transactions-in-the-construction-of-pain/

[53] Ibid. Malani notes that this installation was inspired by sociologist Veena Das's essay "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." Nalani Malani, "Video," accessed February 5, 2013, http://www.nalinimalani.com/video/motherindia.htm

[54] Alesandra Marino, "Dismembering and Re-membering Mother India: Women's Trauma, Partition, and the Indian Nation," *Feminist Media Studies* 10:2 (2010): 241.

1929, as well as "for its narrow focus and overt generalization," which were seen as "a defense of the British colonial rule in India and a critique of the Hindu culture allowing marriage and motherhood for girls under the age of 14."[55] With this in mind, Malani creates an interplay between absence and presence, as the heroine of the film appears and reappears on screen and mixes with other frames. The protagonist, Radha, is shown with her head lowered, revealing her protective, motherly convictions. Malani's film offers a critique of the ways in which independent India and its patriarchal authorities have metaphorically represented the agony of women as an allegory for its struggle for independence. The artist has foregrounded the continuation of exploitive actions against women's bodies and the blurring of colonial and national structures.[56]

Mother India is comprised of video snippets and a series of audio recordings, the combination of which activates a temporal account of suffering. For instance, screaming and nonsensical utterances are included in the video, allowing it to investigate the language of the pain experienced by women—this is exemplified by the images of a mouth occupying the screen.[57] In the article "Dismembering and Re-membering Mother India: Women's Trauma, Partition, and the Indian Nation," Marino provides a transcription of the voiceover in *Mother India*:

> First she asks: "Do I have two eyes, one nose, one mouth? Where are two eyes, one nose, one mouth?" Then adds: "Two eyes, one nose, one mouth and my bellies, I have two bellies and one has death in there." Women's language draws the outlines of a fragmented map of pain that rebels against the male voice of politics affirming: "Once the nation has back their women our pride will be restored." In response to the weaving Indian flags filling the screens a woman screams: "I am dying at the border of a new nation carrying a bloody rag as my flag." In the end, images of death

[55] Ibid., 241-242.
[56] Ibid., 242.
[57] Ibid.

and ceremonies of mourning coexist with ruins and falling houses. [58]

As Marino's transcription suggests, the viewer is confronted with a relational discourse composed of powerful images of national iconography and fragmented narratives of corporeal and traumatic experience, which leads to entropy. Malani's *Mother India* not only unveils the horrendous treatment women were subjected to during Partition, as well as the government's patriarchal presence and complicity, but also reveals the historical trauma that is Partition and the memory of its presence. *Mother India* critiques the role of the patriarchal Indian nation state, its so-called secularism and its connection to the history of women who suffered the burden of Partition. Malani complicates the national narrative by making its contradictions visible.

Similar to Malani, Pakistani Artist Rashid Rana incorporates cinematic images and national iconography in his photographic work, *All Eyes Skyward During the Annual Parade* (2004).[59] These works by Malani and Rana investigate the interstices between cultural memory, nation-building, national identity and Indian and Pakistani cinema. *All Eyes Skyward* was composed in such a way that a "life-size image of a crowd is mirrored, reflecting back upon itself at a 90-degree angle…It is immersive at close range but must ideally be viewed first from a distance and then as the viewer draws closer, the image shifts from monumental to miniature scale."[60] The title exemplifies what is taking place in the image: crowds of people are seated on bleachers looking up towards the sky (fig. 2). They are at a National Day Parade in Pakistan; some of the audience members are holding flags while others are pointing skywards. The spectators are witnessing what

[58] Ibid., 242-243.
[59] Born in Lahore Pakistan in 1968, Rana is currently an associate professor at the School of Visual Arts at the Beacon house National University, Lahore. "Artist Biographies," in Dadi and Nasar, 230.
[60] Nada Raza, "Rashid Rana," in Dadi and Nasar, 198.

may be an event where a military display is prevalent—illustrating the military/industrial complex, as there would most likely be tanks, missiles and air force pilots providing the required fly-by of planes.[61] When viewing the installation from nearby (fig. 3), the popular protagonists and "heroines of Indian cinema emerge from tiny frames, portrayed in digital stills culled from popular films of the 1980s. In the context of post-partition India-Pakistan politics, the subtext reveals an ironic take on didactic attempts of the state apparatus to control popular culture."[62] The suppression of Indian cinema in Pakistan can be attributed to post-Partition hostilities between India and Pakistan, including the three wars the countries have fought against each other. Interestingly, some of the actors featured in the frames, such as Raj Kapoor, were popular before Partition and are veteran actors in Indian cinema. These film stars and their films were adored in pre-Partition India. Therefore, aspects of Indian cinema can be read as a shared history between the Indian population and those who migrated to Pakistan. During the military rule of resident General Zia-ul-Haq (1978-1988), Pakistani cinema was subjected to strict rules. For instance, there were limitations on the inclusion of content that might have been seen to compromise religion, that may have seemed indecent or immoral, or in opposition to, or threatening to, the authority of Pakistan as an independent nation. Over the course of a decade, as a result of these restraints on creative talent, the recognition of Bollywood and Hollywood cinema expanded with the growth of local cinema in Lahore and Peshawar, as well as the home video market.[63] Secretly, many Pakistanis immersed themselves in Indian cinema through the acquisition of smuggled VHS tapes; therefore, a commodity-

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] [Razia Sadik], Chronology," In *Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, ed. Salima Hashmi (New York: Asia Society, 2009), 143.

based relationship between the two hostile countries was underway.[64]

In interpreting *All Eyes Skyward*, curator Nada Raza notes that, "[t]he moment that Rashid has fixed, transformed, and reflected back onto itself is one that suggests rapture and submission, with all faces raised toward a higher power."[65] She goes on to posit that the installation reflects "a generation in Pakistan that was exposed to the dogma of the military state, which defined India as the enemy from which they had liberated the nation, from whom the state had to be defended, thus justifying both the military's inordinate share of the national economy and its presence in domestic politics."[66] Overall, the installation presents a dichotomy between the citizens and the parade, celebrating a patriotic event while underneath the patriotism there is a concealed admiration of Indian cinema. This clash is not obvious when one looks at the work from a distance; it is only when you move closer that you notice the contrast. Do Pakistanis view India as the enemy? Due to the placement of Rana's work, the mirror images meet at the corner where two walls meet, making the corner the centre of the composition. I read this corner as a partition or boundary within the work that adds to the duality of the images of Pakistani citizens and the cinematic images—a blurring between Pakistan and India reminiscent in my mind's eye of the Attari-Wagah border between India and Pakistan, where each day there is a border ceremony and nationalistic sentiments on both sides of the border are fueled. Cultural memory is at play in this work as Rana alludes to the continued adoration of Indian cinema in Pakistan, while at the same time pointing to the incessant formality of national parades. The coupling of these ideas brings the past into the present, as well as

[64] Nada Raza, "Rashid Rana," in Dadi and Nasar, 198.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

implying the future relevance of these ideas.[67] In *All Eyes Skyward,* Rana exposes a facet of how his generation grew up with the aftereffects of Partition, including the three phases of military rule Pakistan underwent, and reveals the political climate that he lives within, which is fraught with hostilities between his home country and India.

Toronto-based artist Sarindar Dhaliwal, like Rana, is of a generation that grew up with the legacy of Partition. Her artworks often touch upon issues concerning dislocation that are associated with diasporic subjectivity, and that are rooted in her experience of living on three different continents.[68] Dhaliwal's chromo print, titled *the cartographer's mistake: the Radcliffe Line* (2012), comprised of a digital image of the map of the Indian subcontinent created with marigolds, suggests this dislocation (fig. 4).[69] The marigolds are colour-coded: yellow marigolds make up Pakistan, two-tone marigolds of orange and yellow identify India, and red marigolds make up Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). The title of the work alludes to Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the British lawyer who determined where the borders that divide India and Pakistan would be established. Dhaliwal's employment of marigolds can be read as a critical statement; in India, the marigold is an auspicious flower, usually utilized at various religious and nonreligious ceremonies, including weddings. One can read the marigolds in Dhaliwal's print as representative of the ways in which Partition marked India's and Pakistan's independence, which for these nations was arguably an auspicious occasion—the marriage between the British and the

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Dhaliwal was born in Punjab, India, in 1953.When she was three years old, her family moved to South Hall in England, commonly called "the capital of Punjabi Britain." When she was fifteen, she and her family emigrated to a small rural Ontario town near Carleton Place, southwest of Ottawa. Illi-Maria Tamplin, "Identity Transfers," Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, The Canadian Art Database, accessed December 4, 2010, http://ccca.nearts.yorku.ca/c/writing/d/dhaliwal/dha002t.html.

[69] Nives Hadjin, "Sarindar Dhaliwal Rewrites the Past at A Space," *Canadian Art*, accessed May 24, 2013, http://www.canadianart.ca/see-it/2013/02/01/sarindar-dhaliwal-the-cartographers-mistake/. This work was part of Dhaliwal's solo exhibition *The Cartographer's Mistake: Southall and Other Places,* from January 18, 2013 to February 23, 2013 at A Space Gallery in Toronto.

Indian subcontinent went through a long-awaited divorce. But was the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent auspicious? So many lives were lost and numerous people displaced. Did the cartographer make a mistake? He surely left a permanent scar on the Indian subcontinent. These are the sorts of questions that I think of when viewing this work. Marigolds are also utilized in funerals, so one can read the flowers as Dhaliwal's way of paying her respects to the memory of those who lost their lives during the long Partition.

Indeed, the artist reveals cultural negotiations with both Indian and English cultures. *The cartographer's mistake: the Radcliffe Line* is part a larger body of work by Dhaliwal that explores her lived experience, which is rooted in the phenomena of diaspora, relocation, memory and displacement, while other central issues she addresses include childhood, cultural identity and hybridity. When looking at *the cartographer's mistake* in light of her oeuvre as a whole, she appears to be imagining and re-imagining personal histories that were impacted by Partition, although she did not experience the event directly. Moreover, Dhaliwal addresses memories from her past as part of a process of moving forward, and the memories are of events that shaped her identity. In her process of interrogating them, she investigates new possibilities for addressing the movements of cultures.

Turning now to the artists who are the central subject of this thesis, Kriti Arora and Sharlene Bamboat, like Dhaliwal, produce artworks that are based on their own lived experiences and that highlight the repercussions of Partition; however, their works reveal family memories more clearly. Their upbringings included hearing stories about the event; they inherited stories from family members, and they live with the memories they received second-hand. The pages that follow explore Arora and Bamboat's negotiations

with their inherited histories and lived experience. These stories had a considerable influence on their personal lives as well as on their highly personal art practices.

Arora grew up with Partition in ways that shaped her entry into the world. Her primary exposure to the effects of Partition on the Indian subcontinent was via her family history, as members from both sides of her family migrated to India. For instance, her maternal grandmother travelled by train with refugees fleeing Kashmir; apparently, the train she boarded made frequent stops at night, and she did not know if she would arrive in India alive.[70] Hearing about her grandparent's lives before and during the event has had a great influence on Arora, compelling her to visit her ancestral home in order to connect with the geographical space she learned about through her family's lived experiences. This has allowed her to see with her own eyes how different or similar it is to the stories she grew up hearing:

> Traveling to Jammu and Kashmir, Lahore and the North West Frontier Provinces in Pakistan helped me understand my family roots. I learnt about their cultural traditions and also understood the political environment from which they came. Most of these places have, in the last years, witnessed great political upheaval. Close members of my family have fought in the three wars between India and Pakistan.[71]

By visiting her family's ancestral homeland, Arora was able to gain a better sense of the geopolitics that have affected the region of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Pakistan. Her visit offered her a new understanding of her family's history, affected by the aftermath of Partition, which is shrouded in a political landscape encompassing Indo-Pakistani hostilities and the constant reminder of the borders that divide both countries, as well as

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[70] Arora recalls spending a lot of time with her maternal grandparents, and they spoke on many occasions about their home in Pakistan; they were among the many Hindus and Sikhs who, because of Partition, were forced to migrate and leave their home in what became Pakistan, in order to move to India to find a safe place to live. Arora, Skype interview, December 3, 2013.

[71] Kriti Arora, "Images from Delhi, Jammu, Lahore, Kargil the North: Muttan, Srinagar, North West Frontier," *India Habitat Centre Quarterly of the Visual Arts* 1:4 (2006): 2-3.

the military presence that polices these borders.[72] Visiting the places where her family partook in the collective history of the region helped Arora come to terms with her own inherited family traditions (which she came to through her grandparents, who were living in exile) and to connect them in some ways to where her family's roots originate. In her postmemorial film *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?,* Arora specifically focused on her maternal family's history around the time of the Partition. She simultaneously paid homage to her great-grandfather, the cloth merchant (who gave up the occupation when he migrated to India) and interwove archival black-and-white footage of a train full of Partition refugees, symbolizing the process by which her grandmother made it to India, and all from the vantage point of the present. The next section of this thesis goes into greater detail as to how her oeuvre reflects her lived experience and how her family's history was influenced by the partitioning of India and its repercussions, as revealed by Arora's interest in memory, displacement and her preoccupation with the areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

Now to turn to Bamboat, who is a member of the Pakistani and Parsi diaspora.[73] Parsis played a significant role in the building of pre- and post-partition Karachi, located in what is now Pakistan.[74] For instance, Parsis were largely involved in Karachi's

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[72] From the spring of 1999 until the end of July, a conflict between both countries occurred across the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir. Pakistan "attempt[ed] to infiltrate regular troops from Northern Light Infantry and Kashmir insurgents across a 150-kilometre stretch of the LOC at three points in Batalik, Dras and Kargil[.]"Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 114.

[73] Bamboat, March 7, 2012. Parsis practice the religion of Zoroastrianism. According to theology scholar Jon R. Hinnells, the Zoroastrian religion was formed "in the sixth century BCE when the Achaemenids established a large empire stretching from North India to Anatolia, Israel and Egypt. Officials and tradesmen travelled throughout the empire…Another turning point was the escape into exile of the Zoroastrians, oppressed under Islamic rule in their Iranian homeland, who settled in north-west India in the tenth century CE, thus establishing the Parsi (or Persian) community." John R. Hinnells, "The Modern Zoroastrian Diaspora," in *Migration: The Asian Experience*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Rosemary Foot (New York: St, Martin's Press, 1994) 56.

[74] Maki Dhunjibhoy, *Minorities in Pakistan* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1964), 42.

shipping industry as well as in the import and export of trade goods.[75] It is important to note the changes Karachi (capital of Pakistan since 1947) and the province of Sindh (located in West Pakistan) underwent during the process of Partition, in order to gain a sense of what individuals were experiencing, including Bamboat's family, who chose to stay in Karachi. [76] When news was circulating that India was to be divided, the people of Karachi did not support separation. However, after the final decision regarding Partition was announced, many affluent businessmen in the province of Sindh withdrew funds from the banks and transferred them to other regions in India.[77] After Pakistan was established, the province of Sindh did not experience the communal tensions that gripped other parts of the subcontinent; the majority of refugees made their way to Karachi and the surrounding area by railway and ship.[78] However, communal violence had erupted by January of 1948, resulting in an increase in non-Muslims leaving Karachi for India.[79]

The changing landscape of post-Partition Karachi took a toll on Bamboat's great-grandfather's mental health.[80] The reasons behind his suicide are associated with his handling of business during the time of Partition, when the socioeconomic infrastructure in Karachi was in shambles and many families were leaving the city. [81] In 1949, he jumped to his death from atop the building housing the family business, called

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Hinnells, "The Modern Zoroastrian," 58. Islamabad became the capital of Pakistan in the 1960s.
[77] Sarah Ansari, *Life After Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh: 1947-1962* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.
[78] Ibid., 52. Consequently, by September of 1947, when the onslaught of refugees and news of rioting in New Delhi reached Karachi, resentment was building and resulted in a number of deaths, as well as the establishing of a curfew. Refugee camps were established in Karachi for the 10, 000 refugees, but by September those in power halted the influx of refugees to quell any possibility of more violence erupting. Ibid., 53, 57.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Sharlene Bamboat, [And Memory], with Anita, 2012, Waveform Audio File.
[81] Ansari, *Life After Partition*, 57.

Nusserwanji and Co.[82] By 1991, the building, by then vacant, was put up for sale and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture purchased it before the plans for its demolition could be finalized. The building was then moved brick by brick to Clifton, an area in Karachi.[83]

It was not until 2006 that Bamboat learned about her great-grandfather's suicide; by 2009, she had begun to brainstorm for a moving image project that revolved around her learning of the suicide, focusing specifically on how her great-grandfather jumped to his death and her own fear of heights. As she began discussing this project with family members, she gradually learned that many of her family members shared the same phobia. Bamboat envisions her project *And Memory* as examining what I would call transgenerational trauma transmission associated with her great-grandfather's suicide, and she intends to investigate her family's history, as well as the larger political conditions surrounding his death, including the considerable role played by Partition.[84] The artist's process thus far involves compiling moving images, having a tattoo derived from an archival photograph of the Indus Valley School of Art inscribed on her body and, finally, the creation of an audio recording of a voice-over actor narrating a script based on an interview she conducted with her great aunt—the daughter of her great-grandfather. Section Four goes into greater depth about the work Bamboat has compiled thus far for

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[82] Ibid., "Nusserwanjee Building (Relocation) Project," Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, accessed May 9, 2013, http://www.indusvalley.edu.pk/nusserwanjeehistory.html. Parsis were involved in the governing of Karachi. For example, Jamshed Nusserwanji Mehta, a relative of Bamboat, was a businessman, philanthropist and the first mayor of Karachi. His mayoralty, which lasted from 1933-1934, was pivotal to the establishment of banks, hospitals, schools and colleges. Mehta was born to a prominent business family that owned and operated many factories and established a firm called Nusserwanji and Co, which Mehta was a partner in and ran after his father passed away. Dhunjibhoy, *Minorities in Pakistan*, 43; "Builder of Modern Karachi."Anees Gazda, "In memoriam: Jamshed Nusserwanji: The builder of modern Karachi," Dawn.com, August 7, 2011, accessed May 9, 2013, http://dawn.com/2011/08/07/in-memoriam-jamshed-nusserwanji-the-builder-of-modern-karachi/; Bamboat, April 8, 2013

[83] Bamboat, "And Memory," 1.

[84] Ibid.

And Memory and analyzes this work through the lens of postmemory and Abraham and Torok's theory of the transgenerational phantom.

Malani, Rana and Dhaliwal, as well as Bamboat and Arora, grew up in newly fashioned nation-states, navigating histories that were altered by colossal changes. In their works, they grapple with the intricacies of historical and contemporary issues concerning memory, trauma and lived experience in relation to Partition—even in the diaspora, which is the case for Dhaliwal, Arora and Bamboat. These artists, as well as others who investigate Partition, share their inheritance of a postcolonial collective history. They approach the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent in different ways as they explore various memories associated with it. Historian Jay Winter provides a definition of how the performance of memory represents gestures that speak to Malani, Rana, Dhaliwal, Arora and Bamboat's engagement with memory in their artworks: "The performance of memory is a set of acts, some embodied in speech, others in movement and gestures, others in art, others still in bodily form. The performative act rehearses and recharges the emotion which gave the initial memory or story imbedded in it its sticking power, its resistance to erasure or oblivion."[85] The performances of memory in these artists' work (to borrow from Winter) "rehearse and recharge the emotion" associated with the particular historical moment that they are acknowledging. For instance, Malani, Rana and Dhaliwal access a collective sociopolitical history pertaining to the independence of India and Pakistan, and the postcolonial situation in these two nations. Arora and Bamboat access a similar history; however, they focus on performing their own memories

[85] Jay Winter, "The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, Frank Van Vree and Jay Winter (Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 12.

in particular, which were inter- and transgenerationally transmitted to them through their families' own lived experience of the Partition and its aftereffects. These are among the subjects dealt with in Arora and Bamboat's work; as such, *THIS or THAT?* and *And Memory* are considered autobiographical works of art.

Autobiography studies scholars Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith note that the specification of the name of an artist in works of art, as well as the artist being taken as subject, are indicative of self-portraiture and autobiography. Furthermore, works of art by women in the last century have tended to be self-representational and employed art making methods, such as performance, that reference their own bodies, lived experience and memory.[86] According to Watson and Smith, "these autobiographical acts situate the body in some kind of material surround that functions as a theater of embodied self-representation… Often, however, the likeness of the artist may be nowhere visible although the imprint of autobiographical subjectivity is registered in matter or light."[87] *THIS or THAT?* and *And Memory* are self-representational works of art in which autobiographical subjectivity is at the fore. In these works, the artists investigate family histories from their perspective, including how they learned of these histories, while simultaneously exploring memory and their own lived experience. In the sections that follow, I argue that Bamboat and Arora deploy both a visual and non-visual vocabulary that traverses intergenerational memories pertaining to Partition and their own lived experience.

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[86] Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, "Introduction: Mapping Women's Self-Representation at Visual/Textual Interfaces," in *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, eds. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 5.
[87] Ibid.

Section Two: Postmemory and Displacement in the Oeuvre of Kriti Arora

This section focuses on Arora's film *THIS or THAT?* and situates it within her larger body of work, which investigates the region of Jammu and Kashmir, her ancestral homeland. These works—which include paintings, photographs, sculptures and videos—reflect issues surrounding migration, displacement, family history and lived experience, and their relationship to the legacy of Partition as well as to Indo-Pakistani hostilities. I argue that these works contain autobiographical elements as well as familial accounts that reveal a handing down of traumatic knowledge and histories of migration, and are thus aligned with the theory of postmemory.

Arora began exploring ideas surrounding borders, migration, Partition and its aftermath following a visit in 2004 to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where her maternal ancestors resided before Partition. She revisited this region of India and Pakistan in her work not only to connect with an area that her family inhabited but also to understand its current political situation as an area ravaged by conflict, at times resulting in displacement.[88] According to Arora, in 2004, when she was driving to Chutumail with her mother, in the Kargil District located in Jammu and Kashmir, where the most recent war between India and Pakistan was fought, when, at the high mountain pass called Zoji La they came upon men whom they thought were either militants or from the army. As they drove closer, they figured out that the men were road builders from the state of

[88] "Kriti Arora artist profile," Palette Art Gallery, accessed February 6, 2013, http://www.paletteartgallery.com/ artistbiography.asp? artistid= 149

Bihar.[89] Arora goes on to say that she noticed how the men were, "covered in tar working at high altitude surrounded by a barren landscape [which] was such a striking image that [she] felt compelled to capture their emotions…"[90] She notes that the road builders are relevant in terms of post-Partition history because they are there to rebuild roads, thereby acting metaphorically as symbols of post-conflict regeneration.[91] The body of work that evolved from her experience in her ancestral home and her engagement with the Bihari road builders consists of a film (*Tar*, 2007), a painting series *Road Builders,* 2007), a sculpture series (*Tar Man*, 2008), and various photographs of the Bihari road builders working with tar (*Road Builder*, 2008) (fig. 8).[92] These works are not overtly political, and perhaps Arora does not emphasize the current political situation that is evident in the region because of the difficulties of finding an appropriate means through which the post-Partition realities can be represented. Instead they present her personal perspective on the region, alluding to the repercussions of Partition for contemporary India, such as displacement.

Arora describes her photography as investigating historical and contemporaneous histories of migration, including Partition:

> I consider my photography a tool that helps me identify the multi-cultural identities of a generation that has been separated from its original roots as part of the entire phenomenon of displacement. […] I have been documenting and creating images from the regions where my grandparents and great grandparents always lived…The underlying theme in my work is to document people who have been displaced not out of their own choice, but due to various factors – political, social, war, genocide, geographical, in search of work or wealth. Some of it is

[89] Ibid.; In 1999, "the Pakistani military, with the acquiescence of [the Prime Minister], Nawaz Sharif, planned a military operation in Kashmir designed to revive the Kashmir issue on the international agenda and possibly jump-start the flagging insurgency." Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 115.
[90] "Kriti Arora artist profile."
[91] Ibid.
[92] Arora has previously shown this body of work in her 2008 solo exhibition *Tar: Photographs, Sculptures and Installations* at the Rob Dean Art Gallery in London as well as showing individual pieces at various other international venues.

> forced displacement; some of it is out of choice. My grandparents were part of forced migration when they had to leave their home in Pakistan and move to India in search of a safe haven.[93]

I would like to extend Arora's elucidation of her photography practice to her *Road Builder* series more broadly. In these works, she interwove her memories of her ancestral homeland, which is associated with her maternal family's lived experience before and during Partition, with contemporary conditions in India, such as the ongoing phenomenon of displacement. Arora brought to highlight the situation of Bihari migrant workers who travel to Jammu and Kashmir to work seasonally fixing the roads. Perhaps their displacement was out of choice, but the labour they provide is important to India, as they maintain the roads that connect to the borders between India, Pakistan and China. As revealed, Arora's artwork from 2005-2009 discloses her personal history, intertwined with social and political histories, as an act of understanding her ancestral homeland.

The five-minute-long-film *THIS or THAT?,* produced after Arora's visit to Jammu and Kashmir, specifically references her family's lived experience, as it is a silent commemoration of her great-grandfather. In the narrative text that begins the film, Arora mentions how she grew up hearing stories about the lives of her grandparents and great-grandparents in what is now part of Pakistan.[94] Black-and-white archival Partition footage follows of a passenger train overflowing with people, shot from a distance (fig. 5). The landscape in the background is made up of fields and trees; there is no indication regarding where the train is headed. The footage of the train reappears regularly throughout the film, emphasizing the transitional nature of the Partition event, and many of these people did, in fact, travel on very overcrowded trains. Arora notes that a train

[93] Arora, "Images from Delhi, Jammu, Lahore, Kargil the North: Muttan, Srinagar, North West Frontier," 2.
[94] See Appendix B for the full narrative text in the film.

was the mode of transportation her grandmother utilized when she made her way to India from Kashmir.[95] While not expressly related to the film, according to Parmar, in her essay "Trains of Death: Representations of the Railways in Films on the Partition of India," those who travelled by train witnessed some of the worst violence that took place during and after Partition, as train massacres were prevalent and at times they transported the bodies of those killed on both sides of the divide." [96] However, in this film the focus seems to be more on living individuals; the footage is very grainy, but one female passenger can be seen holding onto the side of the train, with her other hand dangling white fabric in the wind.

This figure of the female passenger can be read as symbolically related to Arora's grandmother who, as stated above, ventured to India by train; and to Arora, who appears repeatedly in the film as the other main point of focus (besides the train footage), emphasizing lineage. Arora stands draped in white cloth before a wall on which light is projected. She moves in a rhythmic fashion, mimicking the shape of a cone with the cloth draped over her (fig. 6). She also waves the white fabric up and down in a ritualistic manner. Furthermore, this footage is briefly superimposed onto footage of what appears to be Arora piecing something together in what looks like an artist's studio space. The rhythmical movements of the fabric seem to refer to the train's rhythmic motion, while the cloth to Arora's great-grandfather's occupation as a cloth merchant. The footage of the studio space is self-referential as it points to Arora's occupation as an artist. Arora appears to embody the train's rhythms and her great-grandfather's occupation, drawing

[95] Arora, Skype interview with author.
[96] Parmar, "Trains of Death," 72.

them together.[97] As Watson and Smith have commented, "situated in a specific time and place, the autobiographical subject is in dialogue with her own processes and archives of memory. The past is not a static repository of experience but always engaged from a present moment, itself ever-changing."[98] Working with the archived memory of her great-grandfather and grandmother, and entering into a dialogue with it through the art making process, Arora as an autobiographical subject explores her constantly changing experience of remembering Partition from the present.

While Arora's film clearly refers to her family's experience of Partition, it also suggests a larger historical context. For instance, in the narrative text that accompanies the film she states: "And the land was red with rage and yet the fire of life grew. The form of the subcontinent continues to pulsate with energy."[99] This statement is conveyed visually in the concluding scene of *THIS or THAT*, in which a number of especially bright, circular lights shine on Arora, who is no longer covered by cloth. These lights seem to explode like fireworks as the hue of the film turns a reddish colour, which could refer to the actual historical context of Partition (fig. 7). While fireworks were used to celebrate the end of British rule, the blood of many people was also spilled. The act of mourning can also relate to how Arora is dressed in white, as white is often worn during funerals in India. During Partition times, there was arguably more cause for mourning than for celebration.

THIS or THAT? is a postmemorial work of art, and Marianne Hirsh provides a definition of postmemorial work that clearly speaks to the film:

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[97] The film is at times sped up to mimic the speed of the train.
[98] Watson and Smith, "Introduction," 9.
[99] Kriti Arora, *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* 2005. Veoh, 5:02. Posted by "raghavsalooja," 2008, http://www.veoh.com/watch/v14701621cMRbG4je.

> Postmemorial work, I want to suggest […] strives to reactivate and re-embody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression. In these ways, less directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory that can persist even after all participants and even their familial descendants are gone.[100]

Although Arora did not experience Partition directly, *THIS or THAT?* expresses a negotiation between her own lived experience and her great-grandparents' and grandparents' experiences of Partition. Arora's family's experience of having to leave their home had a profound impact on them. Her grandmother shared this history with Arora when she was a child. As a "less directly affected participant," Arora is now sharing her family's history in turn, which is part of creating a larger "cultural memorial structure" with the artwork's viewers. Furthermore, the film is steeped in postmemorial "aesthetic expression." For instance, as mentioned previously in this thesis, postmemorial works of art take on aesthetic forms that reveal the combination "of ambivalence and desire, mourning and recollection, presence and absence…"[101] *THIS or THAT?* simultaneously conveys recollections of Arora's maternal family's traumatic experience during Partition, her desire to connect with the homeland her family left behind and her great-grandfather's former occupation as a cloth merchant. Furthermore, the film points to how Arora's identity has been shaped by the migration of her family; her mimicking of the train's rhythmic motion can be read as her striving to connect with her grandmother and the passengers on the train. She is affected by her postmemory of Partition (symbolized by the train) via her great-grandfather (symbolized by the cloth) who experienced it first hand, and conveys how this persists as the memory of an absent memory. What is interesting, however, is the silence that surrounds this footage of

[100] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 33.
[101] Hirsch, "Postmemories in Exile," 659.

movements that would have created sound. The film has no soundtrack, so while we view the train on the screen we do not hear it. This sensory deprivation implies the absence of this event from the contemporary moment while recognizing its continued presence.

In his book *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, film and media scholar Hamid Naficy investigates recurrent characteristics that find their place in cinematic productions made by many filmmakers and videographers from diverse cultural backgrounds, many of whom emigrated to the West for various reasons. The author asserts that, "although there is nothing common about exile and diaspora, deterritorialized peoples and their films" have shared characteristics that need to be brought to the fore, and he goes on to term works that do this "accented cinema."[102] I would like to extend Naficy's notion of accented cinema to the film *THIS or THAT?,* even though Arora is not an exilic filmmaker *per se*; however, her film is about members of her family who lived portions of their lives in undivided India, and after Partition had to migrate. Therefore, one can say that her family is living in exile. Its memories of life before exile inspired Arora to make her film.[103]

Naficy points out that diasporic and exilic filmmakers draw on "transitional and transnational places and spaces" such as borders, and "vehicles of mobility" such as trains, as significant sites for their investigations of identity. Arora's incorporation of the train into her film brings to the fore identities in flux. For instance, the footage of the train in *THIS or THAT?* reappears more than once in the film, and the movement of the train in two directions can be read as representing India and Pakistan as the two final destinations, as well as mobility and migration. What happens to the identities of the

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[102] Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-4.
[103] Ibid.

passengers? This is left open to the viewer.[104] The presence of the train as well as the title of the film, *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?,* allude to the arbitrariness of the borders between India and Pakistan and the ways in which the borders affected the identities of Pakistanis and Indians during the time of Partition. However, the title also succinctly describes how Arora synthesizes the stories she grew up hearing from her grandparents about the senselessness of a divided subcontinent. For instance, she remembers her grandparents talking about how Kashmiris would call Kashmir a no man's land—as it is in neither India nor Pakistan. Moreover, the train on which her grandmother travelled to India made frequent stops in the middle of nowhere.[105] Thus, the train in the film travels through an indistinguishable landscape that is meant to refer to India or Pakistan or neither, an in-between space. Furthermore, the title of Arora's film indirectly calls attention to the iconography of the cone with regards to the Partition; this shape is part of the artist's personal iconographical system whereby she represents the Partition as a temple or a mosque, respectively Hindus in India and Muslims in Pakistan. The cone shape embodied in the film can be read as suggesting the ways in which the borders were carved out based on religious lines, to make the countries distinct from one another. However, when shaped like cones, temples and mosques are indistinguishable from one another. Additionally, the cone can be seen as representing the tents that refugees on both

[104] Ibid., 5. When Arora was working on her master's thesis (*This or That?* is part of that body of work), she went in search of archival footage shot during Partition, and she came across the footage of the train filled with passengers. The footage brought her back to the memory of her grandmother, who boarded a train to India. Arora notes, "There were many trains that left, but she would have been on one of these trains." Arora, Skype interview with author.

[105] Ibid. According to Arora, she found the satirical short story *Toba Tek Singh* by Pakistani writer Saadat Hasan Manto inspiring, for it points to the implications of a no-man's-land due to Partition. See Saadat Hasan Manto, *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto*, ed. and trans, Khalid Hasan (USA: Penguin Global, 2008).

sides of the divide sought shelter in during the time of Partition.[106] *THIS or THAT?* intermingles Arora's various postmemories of Partition, addressing her family's experiences and collective occurrences as well. Whereas Arora examines Partition from the perspective of someone whose family migrated during Partition, in *And Memory*, Bamboat investigates the aftermath of Partition and its relationship to her maternal family who remained in Pakistan during Partition.

[106] Ibid.

Section Three: Family Memories, Postmemory and Transgenerational Transmission: *And Memory*, Bamboat's Work-in-Progress

I learned about Bamboat's project *And Memory* at a film screening called *DiasporAsie* that was held at the artist-run centre La Centrale on November 5, 2011, in Montreal, Quebec. Bamboat was part of a panel discussion on Asian diasporic filmmaking, and she discussed her art practice and described her works-in-progress. When she began to discuss *And Memory*, and the themes she was exploring, such as family history, personal memory, trauma, transgenerational transmission and Partition, I decided that night to write about the project for my thesis.

After the event, I approached Bamboat and expressed my interest in *And Memory*. She told me that it was in progress and that she was not sure when it would be completed. The situation did not pose a problem for me, and for the past three years we have been in correspondence. We have had multiple interviews pertaining to her work, so in this regard I am involved in the project as someone who has documented instances of the process. Bamboat is interested in archiving her personal histories. For instance, she considers it urgent to document aspects of her life in writing, so she can have traces of her own lived experience as opposed to relying on the memories that her friends and family have of her. Her process of documenting her memories has allowed her to amass her own archive of lived experience.[107] My thesis may act as an archive for Bamboat when she eventually completes *And Memory*.[108] This section gives an account of the work Bamboat has compiled thus far for her project, and shows how she views her art

[107] Ibid.
[108] Bamboat, interview with the author.

making process. I argue that inter- and transgenerational transmission have influenced this project and that the postmemory of her great-grandfather's suicide is related to Bamboat's acrophobia. I investigate these linkages through the lens of psychoanalysis and borrow from Abraham and Toroks's conception of the transgenerational phantom, as well as from Hirsh's concept of postmemory. I interpret the phantom as Bamboat inheriting her fear of heights through the suicide of her great-grandfather, which has interconnections with her family's silence about his death. This section also analyzes Bamboat's tattoo of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture; I read the artist having her skin inked not only as a memorial to her great-grandfather but as a means to exorcise the silence in which his death had been shrouded.

Bamboat is interested in creating artworks that revolve around notions of both memory and history. Since 2009, she has been working with ideas surrounding her family and cultural history. Her 2009 mini documentary *Tapestry*, for example, "depict[s] the fragmentation of identity in Parsi culture"[109] and shows a fertility ceremony for a Parsi wedding. *Tapestry* highlights traditions that are passed down through the family but that may be forgotten, especially as a result of migration. Bamboat's current moving image project, *And Memory*, also grapples with family history. In a grant proposal submitted to the Toronto Arts Council, Bamboat explains her conceptualization of *And Memory*: while rummaging through a storage locker at SAVAC, she discovered a photograph of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture under construction. The building was formerly known as the Nusserwanji Building, in Karachi, Pakistan (fig. 9). As stated above, Bamboat's maternal great-grandfather committed suicide by leaping from the top

[109] *Tapestry*. 2009. Vimeo, 5:30. Posted by "Sharlene Bamboat," 2009. http://vimeo.com/7608827.

of this building in 1949. Her discovery of the photograph triggered a memory of her fear of heights and of her learning about her great-grandfather's suicide through a relative in 2006; she became convinced that the occurrences were linked.[110] Furthermore, *And Memory* was derived from her interest in investigating her and her family's fear of heights. She thought about questions such as: "Where does it stem from? How does it affect us? Why does it affect us? How do we know this subconsciously because no one ever talked about this?"[111] These questions formed the nexus of the early stages of her project.

In 2011, while starting to work on the project, Bamboat applied for a Toronto Arts Council grant for funding. She is relieved that she did not receive the grant because, if she had, there would have been a specific time frame within which to complete *And Memory*. Without the funding, she is able to work on the project for as long as she feels is necessary.[112] The grant proposal, however, puts into writing some of the issues that Bamboat is negotiating in this project. It has functioned as somewhat of a blueprint for the project, and it is part of the documentation that surrounds this work-in-progress.[113] French literature scholars Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham, in their introduction to *The Art of the Project: Project and Experiments in Modern French Culture,* note that "[t]he outcome of the project, its final product (if any) may be less important than the procedures that enable it to get underway. The project is frequently a lure, a device designed not to achieve a particular end, but to allow something unforeseen to

[110] Bamboat, "And Memory," 2
[111] Bamboat, interview with the author.
[112] Bamboat notes that a great deal has changed since the initial idea for *And Memory* came to her. For example, she had originally planned a three-channel film installation. Bamboat, "And Memory," 2
[113] Bamboat, interview with the author.

happen."[114] Bamboat recognizes her process as gathering and compiling information and, at the moment, her project does not have an end date in sight. By giving herself no particular deadline to complete the project by, she gives herself the opportunity "to allow something unforeseen to happen."[115] Bamboat notes that the project changes as she changes and that "the process is also part of the project itself."[116]

As Bamboat continues to work on this project, she views the process as a gathering of information. This collected information, as of April 2013, consists of unedited footage of Bamboat having the photograph she found of the Indus Valley School tattooed on her skin by a professional tattoo artist, while she tells the artist the story of how she learned about her great-grandfather's suicide (fig. 10); the filming and audio recording of a voice-over narrative performed by an actor of a recorded conversation she had with her great aunt—her great-grandfather's daughter—in 2008; Super 8 footage consisting of tight shots focused on a man's body and feet, and her own body and feet, filmed from her rooftop in Toronto and representing Bamboat retracing her great-grandfather's last footsteps; and footage of Karachi street scenes and the Indus Valley school that she filmed during her last visit to Pakistan.[117] She feels that the project will be primarily made up of film and video. To her, "it is the one constant that hasn't changed… it will be a moving image work regardless of how many channels it will take."[118] She is certain of her continued use of film and video because, for now, she does

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[114] Gratton and Sheringham, "Introduction,"1.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Bamboat, interview with the author.
[117] Before her trip to Pakistan in the winter of 2013, she had acquired some footage of Karachi that she asked her cousin to film with his cell phone; however the video is of poor quality. Sharlene Bamboat, email interview with the author, Jan. 30, 2013. Bamboat has compiled close to an hour and a half of footage. Sharlene Bamboat, email interview with the author, March 4, 2014.
[118] Bamboat, interview with the author.

not "think [she] can describe anything in any other way."[119] Part of the process of the work is her discovering histories about her family that were not apparent to her until later in life. For example, she learned about some aspects of her family's history through her great aunt and recorded the latter's narrative.

The recording of that narrative took place in 2008 in Pakistan, without any particular intention except to document Bamboat's family's history. When Bamboat listened to the recording three years later, she saw how it added an interesting layer to her project. In the recording, her great aunt reminisces about her relationship with her father and her life leading up to his suicide. She also discusses Karachi's changing landscape after the Partition. After carefully considering this recording, Bamboat felt uncomfortable using her great aunt's voice, even though she had consented to the recording. As a result, she transcribed the interview, wrote a script and hired a voice actor who, by chance, was an older South Asian woman who happened to be Parsi.[120] Bamboat's decision to use a voice actor as opposed to the original recording in a way protects the identity of her great aunt, yet the interview remains as documentation of their family history.

In the audio recording, the voice actor, with her aged voice, begins reading Bamboat's great aunt's story, stating that she was born in 1929 and was married at a young age. She recounts in fact that she was engaged on Pakistan's independence day, which was August 14, 1947. She further notes that her husband was living and working in Bombay, India, and that the "Partition did not affect us Parsis."[121] I interpret that she feels that this is the case because her husband spent his holidays in Karachi visiting his

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[119] Ibid.
[120] Also, the original recording was badly recorded, and for technical reasons she did not want to use it. Ibid.
[121] Sharlene Bamboat, [And Memory], with Anita, 2012, Waveform Audio File.

family, and when she was married she stayed in Bombay and would visit her family in Karachi; thus they had no problems travelling across the borders.[122] Throughout the audio recording, the narrative revolves around Bamboat's great aunt's childhood reminiscences about feeling very loved by her family and popular amongst her friends. She calls herself a tomboy as she enjoyed playing cricket, and she remembers how her father did not restrict his eleven children from participating in sports. She also praises her parents, stating: "I think I could never have more wonderful parents. My mama and papa were so modern in their outlook so tolerant and so understanding. We were encouraged to do anything and everything."[123] In the recording there are subtle occurrences that remind the listener that the recorded narrative is not a replica of the actual interview between Bamboat and her great aunt. Furthermore, it reveals aspects of the recording process. For instance, it is evident that the actor is reading from a script, as one can hear her pause and the sound of her turning pages. It is also obvious that questions asked during the original interview were omitted in the script. In the original narrative, Bamboat's great aunt asks to be reminded of the questions being asked.[124]

Towards the end of the recording, the narrative focuses on the events that led up to her father's death. She reveals that her father committed suicide and explains some of the factors that she believes drove him to it. She remembers that, around the time of Pakistan's independence, she overheard her parents talking about the family business and how an uncle that worked with her dad asked him to participate in some risky business dealings involving a family that had migrated to India. She recounts that her father was feeling worried about this precarious business dealing that he was undertaking, and over

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

time it took a toll on his mental health.[125] She discloses that her father left a note saying, "I tried to explain to uncle […] that I am not able to carry the strain of the responsibility. I don't want anybody to be blamed," so in that tone he had written that letter."[126] She goes on to say that "he jumped from the Nusserwanji Building down. You know the Nusserwanji Building, no? It's the Indus Art School now. In those days it was his office building. This was 1949…"[127] She recalls her father's suicide as being very sad; he did a great deal for others, which was hard for him to cope with, and this led to a nervous breakdown. The recording ends with the statement: "I don't know about this mental illness, in those days we didn't talk about these things, you know. It is all private family business… I think that's enough. You don't need to discuss and document every little part of our family history, some things are better left unsaid."[128] Bamboat's great aunt's narrative reveals a life that revolves around family relationships but it also brings to light a traumatic past.

The recorded narrative (in its reworked form for *And Memory*) can be read as an account of a chapter in Bamboat's family history documented via her great aunt. Moreover, her familial narrative, as Bamboat describes it, "also contextualizes that story in the history and effects of Partition on the residents of Karachi, as well as the historical and political changes that have happened to the city of Karachi itself." When Bamboat's great aunt expresses that the Parsis were not affected by Partition, she does not associate her father's death with the division of nations; but in fact his death is connected to post-Partition events in Karachi, as his risky business dealings reveal. Again, although Parsis

[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

did not necessarily migrate during Partition, they were still witnesses to the instability of the socio-economic infrastructure of the time and to the historical trauma that affected both nations. The autobiographical retelling of Bamboat's great aunt's lived experience (by a voice actor), as part of the artist's gathering of information for *And Memory*, temporally connects her family's past with the present through the intergenerational inheritance of memory within her family.[129] The closing statements in the narrative reveal Bamboat's great aunt's hesitance in sharing a family history that should, in her opinion, remain private or unspoken. Bamboat's great-grandfather's suicide was an unspoken family secret that Bamboat learned about only two years prior to her interview with her great aunt.

According to psychoanalysts Abraham and Torok, silence involves its own theory. For instance, silence in its many guises may disturb the lives of families, social groups, individuals and nations—it may very well encompass "the untold or unsayable secret, the feeling unfelt, the pain denied, the unspeakable and concealed shame of families, [… and] the collective disregard for painful historical realities."[130] The death of Bamboat's great-grandfather was a shock to the family, as her great aunt reveals in her personal narrative and by otherwise leaving this traumatic circumstance unspoken of—his death and the trauma are relegated to the past. Even when she discusses her father's death fifty-nine years later, she is still reluctant to speak of it. Bamboat's investigation of her family's history and her great-grandfather's suicide in particular help exorcise this family secret. Furthermore, I suggest that since she is generationally removed from the historical event, she feels more comfortable dealing with the trauma and confronting the

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[129] Bamboat, "And Memory," 3.
[130] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed., and trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 21.

silence. In *And Memory*, she is negotiating historical family events that reveal trauma while constructing and representing the present.

Bamboat's fear of heights can be read as a postmemory of her maternal family's unspoken memories of her great-grandfather's suicide. Hirsch suggests the "visual figurations of trauma and transmission […] can, however partially and imperfectly, be transferred across subjects and generations."[131] Moreover, Bamboat's acrophobia is possibly an instance of transgenerational trauma transmission linked to the secret of her great-grandfather's death. The concept of the transgenerational phantom, as described by Abraham and Torok, is associated with how "some people inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives."[132] They go on to explain that, "the phantom concerns itself with the unwitting reception of a secret which was someone else's psychic burden" and the phantom represents the interpersonal and transgenerational consequences of silence."[133] Abraham and Torok's notion of the phantom can be interpreted as revealing the burden that unspoken memories present to both individuals who carry the memories as well as to those who carry the actual memory's absence via the silence surrounding the said memories.[134] When Bamboat started talking about *And Memory* and her fear of heights to her maternal family, many relatives revealed to her that they were afraid of heights as well. She feels that it is not just a coincidence that there are other members in her family with acrophobia.[135] Thus I argue that Abraham and Torok's concept of the

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[131] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 80.
[132] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel,* 166.
[133] Ibid., 168.
[134] A recent scientific study on mice demonstrated that parental fears could be transgenerationally inherited. In other words, it has been proven scientifically that psychic trauma such as phobias can be passed through generations, at least in mice. See Brian G. Dias and Kerry J. Ressler, "Parental Olfactory Experience Influences Behavior and Neural Structures in Subsequent Generations," *Nature Neuroscience*, 17:1(2014): 89-96.
[135] Bamboat, interview with the author.

phantom has resonances with Hirsch's notion of postmemory because Bamboat's exploration of her arcrophobia is an instance of postmemory: she confronts her inheritance of the transgenerational phantom by inscribing her skin with an image that encapsulates her inherited past and current lived experience.

Indeed, *And Memory,* via storytelling and body art, interconnects Bamboat's fear of heights and the transgenarational trauma associated with her great-grandfather's suicide. Significantly, Bamboat filmed the process of her being tattooed, and during the session, she tells the tattoo artist the story of learning about her great-grandfather's suicide. Smith and Watson describe the interconnectedness between performance and autobiographical storytelling thus: "In effect, autobiographical telling is performative; it enacts the 'self' that it claims has given rise to an 'I.' And that 'I" is neither unified nor stable—it is fragmented, provisional, multiple, in process."[136] Bamboat's documenting of the tattooing process, while simultaneously giving the tattoo artist an autobiographical narration, points to some of the symbolism underlying her desire to mark her skin with the specific image she has chosen. Additionally, one can read her receiving a permanent form of body art as a performance.[137] Furthermore, the recording of the tattoo process, besides being a part of a work of art, can also be seen as an act of archiving a memorable event that represents a personal journey within her lived experience. Lastly, Bamboat is revealing an aspect of herself to the tattoo artist that speaks to family connection and the strength of inter- and transgenerational inheritance.

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[136] Watson and Smith, "Introduction," 9.

[137] Bamboat is very aware that the process of *And Memory* is not only about her; it also involves her family, as it is a shared family history she is revealing. For instance, in February 2013, she gave a talk at the Indus Valley School about the project, and some of her cousins were present in the room. She informed her cousins beforehand that she would be talking about family history pertaining to the suicide of their great-grandfather, so that they would be prepared. Bamboat, interview with the author.

Bamboat's inscribed skin can be understood as a visible symbol of reclaimed family history that was once silenced and her postmemory of her great-grandfather's suicide. Interestingly, not only does the transmission of intergenerational traumatic memories affect her psychologically, but she expresses this effect in physical terms. Bamboat's tattoo marks a passage in her life, and the autobiographical story she recounted to the tattoo artist articulates what her inscribed body represents and the historical memory it is attached to (fig. 11). Historian Jane Caplan explains the temporal nature of tattooed skin:

> It is understood that the tattoo often marks a journey, whether this is geographical or autobiographical: it marks a life-stage, an elected or acquired identity, the moment of distinction between a "before" and an "after." Nevertheless, the tattoo is still caught in its specific oppositional history; it carries a freight of contrariety and uncertainty that not only cannot be discarded at will, but that is integral to its meaning and uses.[138]

Bamboat has historical knowledge marked on her skin as a continuous performance of an embodied expression of memory; the tattoo not only inscribes the coincidental occurrences she associates with the photograph, such as her great-grandfather's suicide coupled with her acrophobia; but it is also an iconographic image (the building once belonged to her ancestors) and a form of identification. Furthermore, her tattoo depicts the Indus Valley School under construction, which represents how the structure once known as the Nusserwanji Building, a part of Bamboat's family history, has been repurposed; however, the historicity of the site still holds the memories of its former manifestation. Moreover, the tattoo is unfinished; there is still the possibility of its (in)completion, which alludes to the future and a broader history.

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[138] Jane Caplan, "'Indelible Memories': The Tattooed Body as Theatre of Memory," in Tilmans, Van Vree and Winter, 137.

Bamboat's tattoo, even in its unfinished state, is nevertheless the only point of permanence in the project *And Memory* to date. Philosophically, Bamboat feels she cannot finish it until the project is complete.[139] Therefore, *And Memory* is a long-term process and thus to call it a "project" would be accurate. As Gratton and Sheringham point out, the expression "…'project' strongly suggests a sequence of actions that is relatively long-term, drawn out over time. Correspondingly, an 'art' of the project might suggest engagement in a process that not only takes time but offers creative ways of using, experiencing, structuring and reappropriating time, and exploring the effects of time [.]"[140] The incompleteness of Bamboat's tattoo similarly helps her to explore temporality. Since this project is about her lived experience and her relationship to her family's history, there is a great deal that she has to negotiate in the process of completing the work, as she is simultaneously working through the process, which is a complex undertaking and an art in its own right.

The synthesis of memory and history, coinciding with the past and the present lived experience of Bamboat and her family, is at the heart of her cathartic *And Memory.* As Winter posits, "the key point is that the effort to recapture the past in such trans-national times is almost always framed in an act of memory which takes on the contours of history. Where memory stops and history starts is almost impossible to say."[141] In Bamboat's process of making *And Memory*, she recaptures moments of family history concerning her great-grandfather's suicide, moments that were passed over in silence for numerous years, and accesses her great aunt's memories as well as her own; these occurrences blurs the line between history and memory. At the same time, *And Memory*

[139] Bamboat, interview with the author.
[140] Gratton and Sheringham, "Introduction," 17-18.
[141] Winter, 21.

speaks to the impact of historical trauma even across generational distance, for it reveals the aftermath of Partition, such as how the collapse of the socio-economic infrastructure in Karachi affected Bamboat's family. Finally, the artist's negotiations with her inherited memories initiate a dialogue about Partition that works across generations. As I have shown, Bamboat asserts physical presence in *And Memory* by having a tattoo that makes the silence around her great-grandfather's death public, whereas in *THIS or THAT?* Arora has created a sense of recollection about her family's experience around the time of Partition. What results are two different but complementary forms of investigating inter- and transgenerational transmission as related to family histories affected by the Partition.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that, as members of a post-Partition generation, artists Kriti Arora and Sharlene Bamboat have investigated aspects of the event despite the fact that they grew up in very different contexts. This results in their taking very different approaches. Arora and Bamboat are interested in making deep connections to previous generations' remembrances of Partition, since they do not possess the actual experience associated with their inherited memories, and their postmemories are expressed creatively. Their postmemorial artworks bring instances of historical trauma into the present, commenting on how Partition continues to affect individuals even generations after the initial event took place. The critical analysis of the artworks *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* and *And Memory* presented in this thesis focuses on the ways in which inter- and transgenerational acts of transfer, vis-à-vis the interpretive lens of postmemory, bring to light the artists' families' experiences during and after Partition, as well as their own ways of working through these inherited memories from a present vantage point.

As I intimated earlier in the thesis, Hirsch developed the framework of postmemory as an interpretive lens to investigate inherited memories of traumatic knowledge when she was exploring her own family's histories pertaining to the Holocaust, transferred to her from her parents. Postmemory can be used to understand other histories of violence as well as histories of decolonization, and this thesis has demonstrated the ways in which postmemory is beneficial to the development of an understanding of inter- and transgenerational transmission and historical trauma related to the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent. However, in examining alternative histories, it

is important to stress that these histories are incomparable and postmemory needs to be interrogated so that it does not become all encompassing.

In the history of the decolonization of the Indian subcontinent, Partition remains an open wound, as it has resonances with contemporary acts of communal violence and displacement that have occurred in India and Pakistan. The colonial baggage that the British left behind when they divided India lingers in the antagonism between Pakistan and India, which is evident in the policing of their borders and the dispute over Kashmir. Fortunately, individuals on both sides of the divide, including artists, are building intercultural bridges and not allowing their countries' strife get in the way of their making connections. They recognize that at one time they had a shared history. A visual and nonvisual culture of interrogation and commemoration is under development with regards to the Partition. For instance, oral history projects in India, Pakistan and the diaspora are recording the histories of life before and after Partition, and as such, generation-specific experiences are being shared with descendants.

Artists of South Asian descent, including Bamboat and Arora, are creating dialogue (across generations) within their art practices, where they explore how postmemory, related to the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, has affected their home countries and their families, and continues to affect them. They are bringing formerly silenced histories to light in an effort to move forward. These are integral steps toward ensuring family histories pertaining to the birth of India and Pakistan do not remain the "underside" of the historiography of the Partition.

Figures

Fig. 1: Nalini Malani. Still from *Mother India: Transaction in the Construction of Pain*. 2002. Video Installation, 5 projections, 5 ½ minutes.

Fig. 2: Rashid Rana. Still from *All Eyes Skyward During the Annual Parade.* 2004. C-print and Diasec.

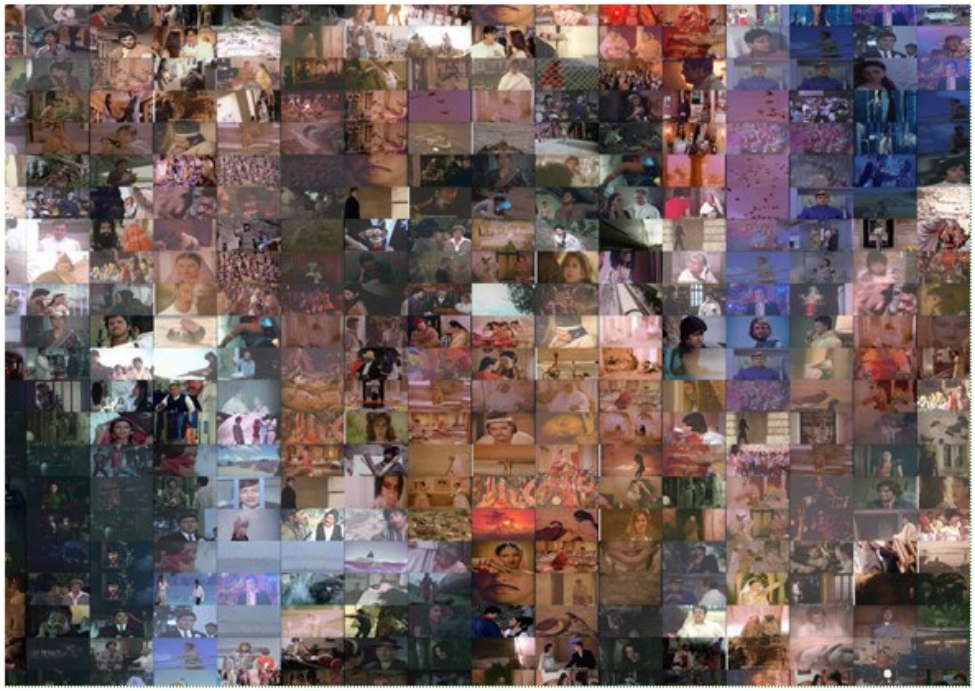


Fig. 3: Rashid Rana. Still from *All Eyes Skyward During the Annual Parade.* 2004. (detail) C-print and Diasec.

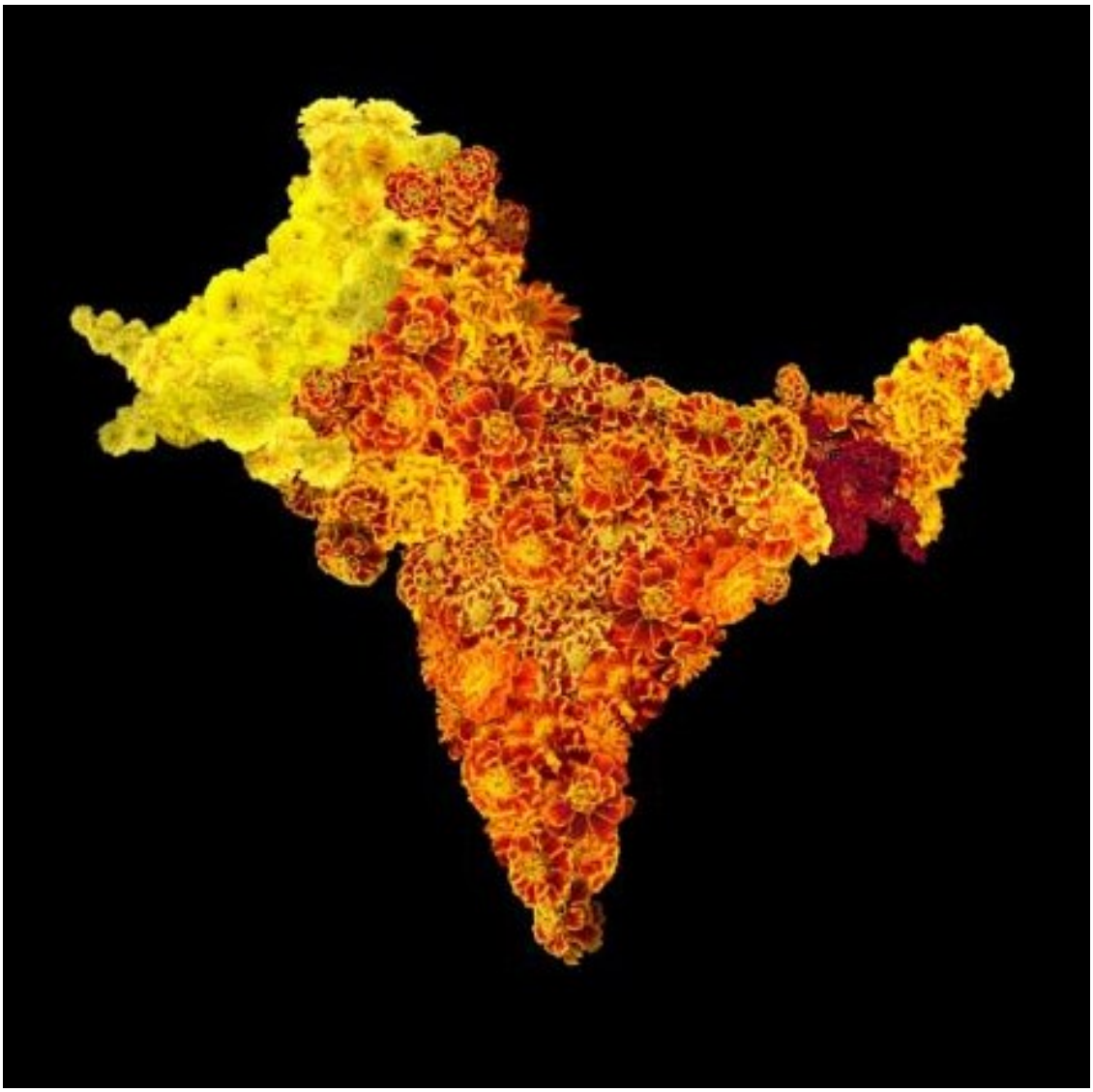


Fig. 4: Sarindar Dhaliwal. Still from *the cartographer's mistake: the Radcliffe Line.* 2012. Chromira Print.

Fig. 5: Kriti Arora. Still from *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?*. 2005. Silent, Black and White, 16mm film, 5:02 minutes.

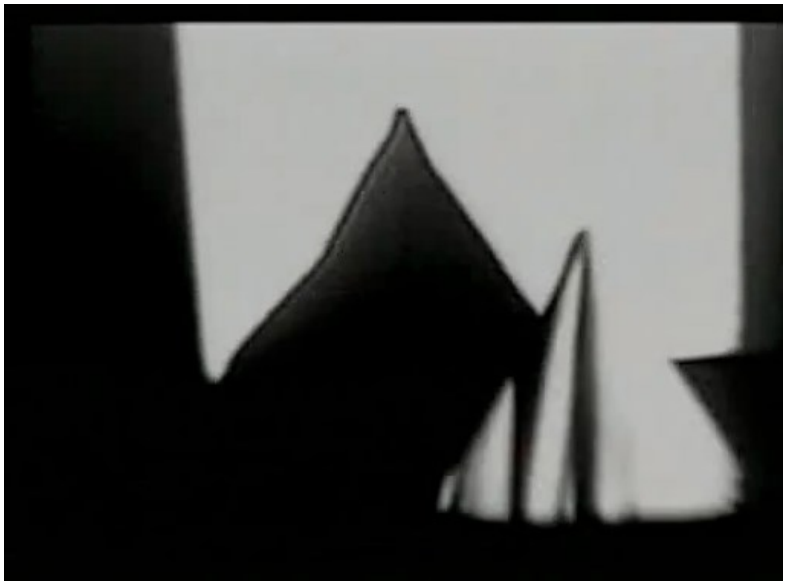


Fig. 6 Kriti Arora. Still from *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?*. 2005. Silent, Black and White, 16mm film, 5:02 minutes.

Fig. 7: Kriti Arora. Still from *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* 2005. Silent, Black and White, 16mm film, 5:02 minutes.

Fig. 8: Kriti Arora. Still from *Road Builder I.* 2008, Digital C Type Print.

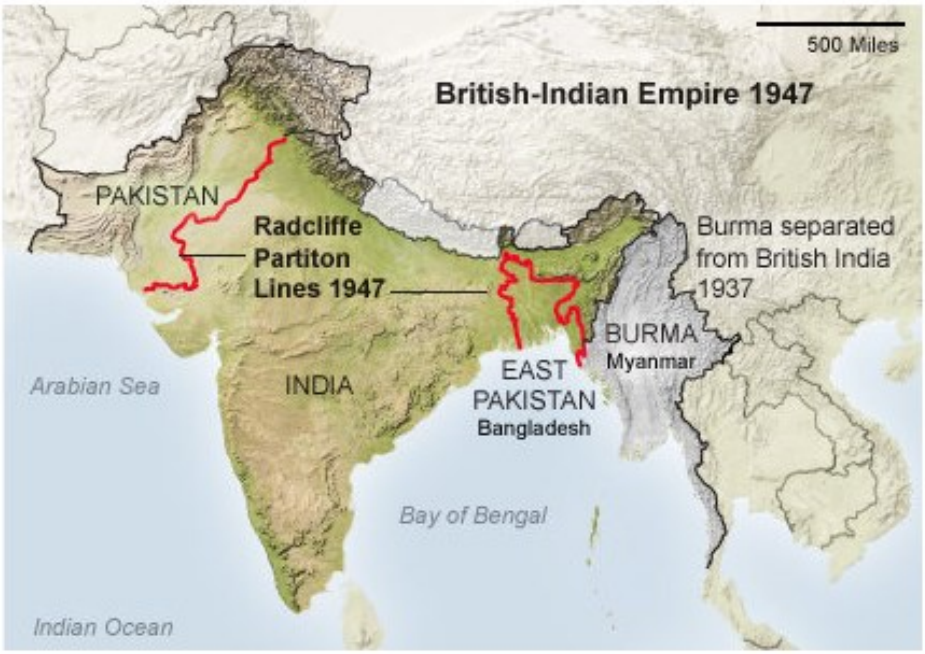
Fig. 9. Photographer Unknown. Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Collection of the South Asian Visual Art Centre (SAVAC) Archive, Circa 1992. Black and White Photograph, Courtesy of Sharlene Bamboat.

Fig. 10: Sharlene Bamboat. *And Memory* documentation. 2013, Jpeg. Courtesy of the Artist

Fig. 11: Sharlene Bamboat. *And Memory* documentation. 2013, Jpeg. Courtesy of the Artist

Appendix A

The following map is of the Indian subcontinent and shows the Radcliffe Lines that were demarcated as the borders between India and Pakistan.



Joe Burgess/The New York Times

A civil war between India and Pakistan took place in 1971, through which East Pakistan gained its independence, resulting in the formation of Bangladesh.

Appendix B

The film *THIS or THAT or Neither?* begins with this scrolling narrative text that gives some context to Kriti Arora's family's experience during the Partition:

> The train leaves and we leave on it. As a child, my nani would tell my brother and me stories about how her family and she left home because of partition. Millions of people on both sides of the border had been forced, overnight, to abandon their homes. In 1947, the British left India divided. Hindus fled Pakistan, Muslims fled India. My great grandparents, nana and nani were forced to leave Pakistan. Northern India's post independence history has been determined by the epochal geographic partitioning of a country, into two countries; India and Pakistan. It was the largest migration of people in the history of civilization. My great-grandfather was cloth merchant. Every morning, he would ritualistically display his cloth to his customers. After spending a great deal of my time alone working in my studio, I find travelling to the regions where my maternal and paternal, grandparents, great grandparents resided both invigorating and inspiring. And the land was red with rage and yet the fire of life grew. The form of the subcontinent continues to pulsate with energy.

Appendix C

The following pages are excerpts of a transcription of an interview with Sharlene Bamboat on April 8, 2013.

Sharlene Bamboat: So you are not a collaborator but you will ask me questions and also perhaps in the future let's say five years down the road and I actually decide I'm going to make this entire thing happen, I will probably revisit your thesis as an archive of my process and see, and see it. And go, ya, I remember this idea. This was not a bad one let me roll with that.

Rajee Jejisher Gill: You planted your own seeds. […]

SB: I think it is a nice relationship to have someone a documenter archiver it's almost like you are my paparazzi and my diary, simultaneously.

RJ: What have you completed so far?

SB: Ok well, what have I completed so far? I'm thinking of it as compiling pieces of information. So I've been gathering; I've been gathering for. […] Officially I have been using the word gathering for almost a year now. But if I think about the initial inkling of the idea, it was 2009 when I first moved to the UK it was probably Sept. or Oct. 2009 and then it took me, it took me to this point where I've been gathering and compiling. So what I have so far are a bunch of footage that is not edited it's very raw. I have a lot of it is rooted in Toronto I have super 8 footage; I have digital footage, I have audio recordings as well. I got that actor to do; she is an older voice actor. An older South Asian woman who is also Parsi, actually by chance it just happened what was interesting was that she understood the inflections in the ways in which old Parsi women speak, in this almost … colonial way but with very bad Urdu. She was speaking in English mixed with Gujarati. She can speak Gujarati in the ways in which Parsi's speak […] and that was important because it is such a small fact and no one… who is not perhaps Parsi would understand it. It was nice to have some sort of […] a semblance of you know was present. I have an audio recording of her and video footage of the audio recording itself. One part of the project was that in 2008, which was one of the last times I was in Pakistan, my cousin and I sat together with my great aunt my grandmother's sister who was the daughter of the man that this project sort of revolves around. She sat with us in a very shitty recorder we asked her a lot of questions about family. I have an hour-long recording session of her speaking into this little tiny digital recorder. The problem is, for many reasons I did not want to use that recording on a very technical level, it was really, badly recorded and it was hard to understand; it took it to a friend of mine who is an audio engineer, who I have worked with quite closely on other projects, and she said that it was really, really, rough; you can clean it up only to a certain degree; and so, that was one aspect, and another one was that I also felt this tremendous like guilt using her voice even though she consented to being recorded; but its not… at the end of the day it doesn't really come down to like well, you said it was okay in 2008, and so I'm going to use it now in 2012 even though you've expressed concern about it now. So there's all this

anxiety about using her voice in this way, so what I did was I transcribed the interview that my cousin and I did with her and made it a script then hired this woman to read the script in a recording studio, where we recorded it professionally. It was so funny because at one point; we were in a studio, it was sound proof and it was summer it was last summer [2012] that I did this; it was very hot in there and there was at one point when the actor started talking about the death of her character's father, and how he jumped, there was this weird wind sound that just appeared on the recording; it was very strange; it was totally silent in the room, okay; and I was sitting in the room it was myself, there was four of us in the room; one video documenter, one audio person, the actor and myself, and when she said " yeah, you know, then he just jumped off the building" or something to that effect and there was this whooooooooosh like wind tunnel that whirlwind kind of sound and after she left the audio engineer was like you have to listen to this, and she played it back for me and she was like isn't that weird? I was like oh wow, this is too much; it is so interesting to think about the ghost of the past and to think about it as these ghosts. Again, so much of my practice is based on these things where the universe just aligns itself. I actually say that the universe has aligned its self, therefore, I will do this, this way because I feel that I got a sign, you know.

And with the project in particular, there was a lot of that just from the very start. There was a lot of that that it seemed like that was being pushed, it was guided in a certain way; and so I like to take that into consideration; and I think that with this project a lot of the process, the process is also apart of the project itself; like the process of me discovering these things; a process of me negotiating things about my life, my history my past, my family, you know. Then also a process of the film itself, and a big chunk of it is the fact that the no image factor; and this was when I was sitting Toronto and I trying to get people in Pakistan film for me because I couldn't afford to go because I didn't get this grant, and I couldn't afford to actually go there and film so what I did was I contacted the Art school there, Indus, right and I contacted someone that I knew there and I said can you hook me up with students who know that I can't pay them for this but I will give them a reference if they ever need a Toronto hook up ; you know I work at SAVAC, and I know so many people so if the need that I am very happy to reciprocate in this way, and so she put me in touch with three students and it circulated through the entire department . I had three students who said yes we're going to shoot if for you and then one after another something happened and they backed out. I gave very specific details of what I wanted, what areas of town I wanted, very specific things of that nature and then it just failed, and then I was like okay this is interesting and then my cousin who lives there: I was like can you on your way to work or if you are out anywhere, can you just take footage on your phone and send it to me? So he did a couple on his blackberry but it was raw and so rough and, so I was like this isn't the best but at this point it was one of those desperate measures because I wanted to finish it by a certain point. That was when I had an end in sight, so it kept failing, so wasn't it interesting that I was unable to capture an image? Then I was thinking about this no image. And what it means to be able to not capture an image. But then also I know, but I can't reference entirely; but I know there were a bunch of artists I think in the 70s that did a lot of work with the lack of image. And so I was thinking that this was something to explore; make a note of it shuffle it in the back of your head and revisit it. Now I have an image, some image because I was there and made the image happen, to a degree, also.

RJ: Was that film and Super 8?

SB: No

RJ: So it was digital?

SB: Carrying the film it had to be stored in the fridge; it was just too much, so I just borrowed a friends consumer digital camera. And shot lots of street scenes, tons of street scenes then I went to the school, and I filmed at the school, but not that much, but I also hate shooting. I just don't like shooting. It is kind of funny to say as someone who is completely based in moving image work, you know.

RJ: In your grant proposal you said you would recreate the jump?

SB: Yeah I did; I shot that on super 8, and that I could probably send to you. At some point in the not so distant future, it's just rough and I wouldn't want you to show it.

RJ: I'm going to need some sort of image in my thesis you know... I wouldn't show anybody, but if there was a way to get a still or just an aspect of it so that I'm describing it or maybe we can work around something that is easy for you that we can have some kind of image that I talk about a still or something from documentation that I see so that when I explain it, it gives this idea to the reader.

SB: Okay, let me think about it because the only thing that is actually permanent now is the tattoo on my arm, and that is the only mode of permanence in this entire project but it is also not finished. I don't think it will finish; I won't finish it; I won't let her even though the tattoo artist is itching to complete it; I was like no, and now it has become this philosophically I can't finish it, until the project is done. So that in its self is also a work in progress.

[…]

RJ: I remember you were saying in my email, you were thinking of maybe even talking to family members about their experience with your [great-grandfather], did you do more of that recording of talking to family?

SB: No, I didn't record anymore interviews, and I don't think I will because I don't think I wanted to be that; I don't want it to go in that way; because it's not also of course it is about them, but it is almost not about documenting the real; I am chasing these ghosts; I'm chasing this past, but how does that connect to me here and now?

RJ: This is almost interesting that you are distancing your family from it; it is about your family…

SB: But at the end of the day it is about me.

RJ: Exactly, it is this postmemory. How you've heard about this and how it has affected you that it is kind of a part of you now and it's in your memory; they were there. But it's yours it's how you process what you've learned.

SB: Yes, to a degree, I also don't want to like shun my responsibility as this member of this very large collective family. Because it is also there history, and I was very aware of that when I did an artist talk at the school at Indus Valley when I was in Karachi, and so I talked about this project and a lot of my cousins were present in the room, when I was doing this artist talk. And so I had to give them a bit of a heads up and a lot of them I've already spoke about it with them some of them I was like: I just have to tell you that this is what I'm going to be talking about just so that you know they wouldn't be so shocked that I am airing this dirty laundry… to the world what as also interesting was that I was in the location, talking to these people whose history also is not just mine, you know; and so, as much as it is about me it is also not about me; it's also nice to know that you are connected to something so much bigger. Do you know what I mean?
Because when you say it is about you it also shuns your responsibility because this is so much a documentaryish project where's the ethics in that?

RJ: When you were having the tattoo done and were telling the story, and you were referencing your family in that right? How you learned about the tattoo, so I guess they are included

SB: They cannot be not included they are just there inherently because we all share this same bloodline; this is my great-grandfather, but this is also their great-grandfather. And it is also their "trauma," and they are for the most part afraid of heights. I keep returning to it; I keep forgetting it and then I return to it and that was the root of this project; is that we are like it sort of came to me when everyone was like yeah, I'm also afraid of heights.

RJ: Was heights ever really talked about in your family?

SB: No, no, it was never a thing, you know. And then I started talking about this project and then they were like, you know I'm also afraid of heights and this is like second cousins and third cousins, uncles, aunts, -- various people. It might just be I'm not making any sort of big scientific claim on this, whatsoever; it's just that at some point to me this is where the universe part comes in again, is that I don't know about coincidence, if 10 people say: I feel this way also. Maybe coincidence is a word that we should be using; essentially, that was the basis for this project. This was the basis for the beginnings of this; that it is not just coincidence, that we are all afraid of heights, where does this stem from? How does it affect us? Why does it affect us? How do we know this subconsciously because no one ever talked about this? Only now I am talking about this and people are coming out with their little secrets, and another interesting things is that people are coming out with there not everyone but lots of people are coming out with there discussions and issues around mental health. Which is very much a huge big plump onto this, which I am very much aware of exposing talking about how to talk about it should I talk about it?

RJ: I hadn't thought about it, boom, mental health, duh?

SB: Exactly, sometimes those very obvious things are those things we overlook.

[…]

RJ: I always think that it is interesting that the building is now an art school.

SB: Of course it's an art school, coincidence, coincidence universe aligning itself.

RJ: Before that, did you just know the building as the building that your great grand uncle built?

[…]

SB: The history of the building is so interesting. In that they actually reconstructed it. It was a triangular building; of course there was add-ons. If you look at the front of the building this is the façade. It is almost like transporting yourself back in time but in a very different location which is kind of what I am doing, right. Transporting myself back in time from a very different location from here in time as well. It's so dense; this is the thing. I think this project is so dense that I get completely overwhelmed with it. Then I'm like I'll put it away. The procrastination is because it's so dense and how to negotiate it.

RJ: I think those taking those breaks is the synthesizing figuring out.

SB: It [project] changes as I change; as my mind set changes, I am becoming more aware or less aware of certain things, whatever you know, which is also nice. We can say that about any art piece. But this one doesn't seem like it is very in the moment; some things are more immediate [in her art practice]; this one is probably the longest thing to date, that I have ever, I never spend this much time on anything, in my life. I probably think this will be the longest thing I ever do. I don't see it being completed anytime soon. And the more I talk about it, I'm like it's still so interesting; it's still so relevant; how do I visualize this, and how do I show all these things I'm talking to you about in this way? How do I show it on a screen?

RJ: So when you do show it, will you put it as 2009 to?.

SB: I know, but I also don't work in a linear fashion. I work in experimental film and video art, how to show that? How to encompass that, yet while trying to stay true to all the things and all the stories and all the histories that I want to do without it being, it would be so much easier if it was a straight up documentary wouldn't it?

RJ: This work is so temporal it oscillates it makes sense. Are you bringing anything archival from that time, is that something that you've been thinking about or is it the archival aspect is almost just that photograph that you discovered?

SB: Yeah, but it just sits on my arm that acts as the archive. I actually don't know. I haven't thought about bringing archival footage into it because I don't know where I would get the footage from and I'm not interested in that.

RJ: What about having something about the Nusserwanji building in its actual location?

RJ: Didactic?

SB: Yeah, to a certain degree, I think that's too much so, but I don't know.

RJ: Have you visited the location where the building used to be?

SB: No, I haven't; it's in an old part of Karachi that I wouldn't even know where to begin; I'm sure my grandmother could tell me, but I think the landscape has also changed, so much that I wouldn't know where to begin. But maybe the next time I go, that it's actually not a bad idea to go the place where it once stood and just look at it and see what's up and maybe document.

RJ: Your grant proposal, do you feel in a way, it was planting the seed but it's not really about following it anymore it's almost just like saying: okay I just said this in here maybe I'll do it or not.

SB: Look how much has changed since then. Even the format, at one point it was like three-channels three minutes super 8, and now I'm like I don't know, and I'm actually kind of glad that I didn't get that grant because if I had to finish it, I wouldn't be here thinking about these other things. I would just be focusing on that. And so it allowed me to focus my ideas and my thoughts in an initial way and so it acts as a blueprint for something.

RJ: I was just curious to ask you some questions about Partition if that's okay? Because your family stayed in Pakistan

SB: As far as I know, and what I've read and been told, that Parsis were not really affected by Partition in that we did not have to move anywhere my family could stay in Karachi physically unaffected by this. Obviously, national trauma, but on a very day-to-day basis their lives were not touched by any of this. Also the wife of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was a Parsi as well. I don't know, Parsis always say that this is why Parsis were sort of revered and accepted because his wife was a Parsi. But I don't know about that.

[…]

RJ: Did you have any family in India who stayed?

SB: […] This is only one side of my family. Even my dad's side and my mom's other side as far as I know there are some family in India now, but mostly everybody has been in Karachi forever and around Karachi for many, many, many generations.

[…]

RJ: Do find that you have somewhat of a preoccupation with the idea of trauma and memory and do think that just came together with *And Memory* and when you saw the photograph?

SB: No, no, no. I've always worked with memory and history and trauma, maybe not so much in such a heavy-handed way, you know. Memory and history have always been very important to me in very based levels in that I always worry that I will lose my memory. So I feel the need to like write down things so that I have traces of my life, present that I have recorded not that I have just traces on my family and friends; I think that also stems from the fact that I saw my grandmother go through the early stages of dementia to Alzheimer's how that kind of rots the brain and general anxiety being produced around that. Memory has always been interesting to me same with history, looking and relooking and reimagining as much as I try to stray away from it, I'm always pulled back into it, which I feel like it is meant to be. […]

RJ: What are some of your thoughts about the autobiographical nature of *And Memory*?

SB: I feel like it makes sense that I would do autobiography because I feel like even though a lot of my work is not just about me, I said that it starts from one place to other broader issues and this does the same; perhaps to give it more legitimacy or maybe to ease anxiety, I feel that I can only talk about myself in this way. But I think in some point artist always do autobiography; artists do self-portraits; it is always an examination of the self, and maybe this is my self-portrait, to a degree.

RJ: This perhaps is a ridiculous question, but what would be perhaps the ideal presentation format for *And Memory*?

SB: I think it has to be film. I think that it is the one constant that hasn't changed, which I'm just going to roll with. It will be a moving image work, regardless of how many channels it takes; I'm pretty sure, for now; because I don't think I can describe anything in any other way, so yeah. […]

SB: Leave it at 2011, but also I noticed in the thing can you just keep it as "working title"? when you write *And Memory*, write working title. Because you know that most likely will change; I also don't know how I feel about the title any more, I liked it at one point, but I don't care for it anymore. Just leave it open, you know.

[…]

RJ: I remember in the grant proposal you were thinking of filming these places where your great aunt talks about in the recording that you have; did you visit those places?

SB: Well, I think some I came across but I didn't actively say I have to go here I have to go there.

RJ: What places did you choose to film?

SB: Just very random, it was actually very random nothing calculated about it; except when I went to Indus, and I said I wanted to film from here and there. Also, because I couldn't walk around; first of all, there was very limited walking; when there was walking happening, I couldn't walk around with a camera; that is stupid; that is asking to be robbed. So there was limits to what I could and could not shoot, so a lot of it was like I said, from the inside of moving cars; I had to cover the camera to make it look as like conspicuous as possible. […]

RJ: How did you feel [] in the Indus Valley School? Were you kind of recreating the jump?

SB: No, not at the school. The jump was recreated in 2011 in summer with two friends of mine on the roof of my house in Toronto. I had really tight shots to not show the landscape it was focused on the body of this man and his feet then my body and my feet; but also it was funny there was three of us on the roof, and all of us were afraid of heights. It was shooting down; we had to hold each other… I was like this is so unsafe. No, I don't want to shoot any recreation at Indus; I think I am trying to make this movie as least as less didactic as possible. I also don't want to do a recreation or documentary style.

[…]

SB: [about the recreation of the jump] that was when I thought I wanted to recreate the jump two years ago. It was also test footage we didn't shoot it the best but I just wanted to see how it would look. So I have it.

RJ: It's kind of interesting to think of it, it becomes when it is in this grant proposal it always seems that it is more didactic then it becomes less and less as you make it.

SB: I think it is because you have to be more didactic when you're writing the grants to get the money. I think a lot about this project is that I can't, I don't want to be tied to what I say in the grant because what I say in the grant a lot of the times is different than what I'm actually going to do, but I think that is the nature of writing the grants. You kind of have to give them what they want so you can have the money to make what you want. Even this project I don't want it to be tied to that much money even though, of course I need money to make it. And I have needed money to make it. But if I say I'm going to do blah, and I do this, then if I was recording on the grant, I would have to do blah. Then you're sort of boxed into it. So again, I said I'm glad that I didn't get it

because I wouldn't be here looking at it in this way or I would have made something for the sake of making it.

RJ: When you were saying that you were transcribing your aunt's recording, was the original language she spoke in was Gujarati?

SB: English and Gujarati.

RJ: We talked about how Partition plays a definitive role in this work because of how your the circumstances behind your great-grandfather's suicide had a lot to do with business but that is something that might be in *And Memory* or are you still deciding?

SB: I don't know if I will have it. It is there, I don't know if I'll actually, I don't know how I will discuss it, but it is definitely a thing.

RJ: And your great aunt talks about Partition?

SB: She has one line where she says that Partition did not affect the Parsis.

RJ: In the tattoo you tell [the tattoo artist] how you found out about it?

SB: Yeah, that is more about my revealing it is sort of like a coming out process. I just talk about that.

[…]

RJ: The grant [proposal] came as you discovered the photograph?

SB: I started writing the grant while with the beginning part; I was like I'm going to apply for this grant and I'm going to see what will come of it. And then while I was researching and writing, I found this photo… The photo did not come into the initial effect until July 2011 and then I was like oh here, is another component, oh here is another component then I remembered I had those recordings oh there's a third component and then everything just sort of ... I started with this afraid of heights and looking at blood memory a contentious term. That's the original idea; like I said I was in the UK at the time.

[…]

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