ISSN 2319-5339 IISUniv.J.A. Vol.8(1), 39-52 (2019)

Negotiating Animal-Human Spatial Relations in and around the Partition, in *Bridge Across the Rivers*

Richa Joshi Pandey

Abstract

The Partition of India and Pakistan was an event that involved unprecedented violence. The personal narratives and stories around the partition and its aftermath are compelling in the scope and nature of the violence that they entailed. The current paper explores a few short stories from an anthology entitled *Bridge Across the Rivers* whose subtitle 'Partition memories from the two Punjabs' frames the set of short stories that are situated on either side of the border with a view to examine animal-human spatial relations and their import on how we come to occupy the spaces and places that we do. Written by those who were forced to flee their homes and move to the new countries India and Pakistan, these tales entail the trauma of territorial uprootedness and the death of loved ones and the individual's relationality with the old and new lands which is environmentally embedded. The current paper also examines this foundational link between people and places in terms of environmental tropes that abound in these deeply personal stories of loss and alienation. In the face of dehumanizing violence, rendering dumb animals and disabled humans, the animal-human binary as well as the problem of language is also re-examined. The paper also addresses the failure of representative speech. New binaries may require to be generated that completely undercut and break away from the hegemonic and normative character of the previous ones.

Keywords : Animal; Animalized other; Binary; Environment; Violence

The Partition of India and Pakistan was an event that involved unprecedented violence. The personal narratives and stories around the partition and its aftermath are compelling in the scope and nature of the violence that they entailed. This has prompted the study of various tropes and subject positions with respect to mininarratives around the momentous historical event called the Partition of India and Pakistan. The victim and the perpetrator of violence, the martyr and the seeker of revenge have narrativized their own stories (Pandey, *Weekly* 2037). Stories of triumph and trauma inform and interrogate each other and add to the rich archival

imaginary around the Partition and its aftermath. The current paper explores a few short stories from an anthology entitled *Bridge Across the Rivers*, whose subtitle 'Partition memories from the two Punjabs', frames the set of short stories that are situated on either side of the border with a view to examine animal-human spatial relations and their import on how we come to occupy the spaces and places that we do. Written by those who were forced to flee their homes and move to the new countries India and Pakistan, these tales entail the trauma of territorial uprootedness and the death of loved ones and the individual's relationality with the old and new lands as environmentally embedded. The current paper also examines this foundational link between people and places in terms of environmental tropes that abound in these deeply personal stories of loss and alienation.

In "Community and Violence: Recalling Partition" Gyan Pandey writes, "Violence marks the limits of the community, that is to say, violence can occur only at or beyond that limit" (Pandey, *Weekly* 2037). Yet this violence is constituted metaphysically as "cultural amnesia" (Pandey, *RV* 23) and must necessarily be simultaneously owned and disowned. Whether it is a personal act of violence as well as one involving the experience of violence, it involves trauma and needs to be constantly re-located in the past as a temporal snapshot. Yet contemporary history and politics keeps harking back to this past—either with nostalgia or with a violent 'othering'. This simultaneous owning and disowning of acts of violence is present as an interlude in the history of the subcontinent—a space in time which facilitates the transition of two different modes of being, however surreal, and is tainted with inexplicable violence. This interlude also denotes the schism between promise and performance, and—as has been discussed by many theorists—between the triumphalism of nationalism on one hand and the vagaries of (dis)connect, (up)rootedness, nostalgia as well as the defeatism associated with the nation as it exists today, on the other.

This interlude is necessary as it enables the citizen to negotiate not only the irrationality of experience of the violence of partition under the banner of national and regional history in its moment of creation, but also in what is carried over from a de-territorialized dialogic lived space —often manifest in the quotidian, for example in survivors' testimonies about the things (like the Quran Sharif or the Guru Granth Sahib) they brought with them when they crossed over to the new 'home'. So, while the crossing over on to the new land has been done and the trauma of all that has been left behind is a permanent void and a state, it also entails a hope and a promise despite the new land unable to emotionally reclaim what has physically been lost. Thus, within the lived space of this shared experience, fragile memories ferry across these old worlds as archive and remind us how we contain

within us vast and unimaginable futures and that every single life perpetuates the endless transmutation of life.

The charting of the territorial border was sudden and precarious as this momentous history-in-the-making had sociological, environmental and anthropological dimensions. In other words, the violence of history, and its memory thereof, accompanied and manifested in sociological, environmental and individual spaces, involving both the individual and his intimate community, that were perplexing because they were precise and situated on the one hand as well as indeterminate, lasting and bearing the mark of a collective hysteria on the other.

On the Indian side of Punjab, Partition led to a large and violent uprooting of populations from relatively urban and modernized rural settings to comparatively less developed rural settings. Following independence, both India and Pakistan, governed by radically different political imperatives and policy approaches, experienced a surge of industrialization and urbanization. With respect to Urban Resettlement, the first planning commission report said:

The problem of urban resettlement has been one of great complexity, chiefly because of the essential differences in the economic pattern of the incoming and outgoing population. This difference has been the more marked in the case of displaced persons from West Pakistan. While the Muslim migrant from the Punjab, PEPSU, Delhi, etc., was often a labourer or an artisan, with a comparatively low standard of life, the incoming non-Muslim was frequently an industrialist, a businessman, a petty shopkeeper or one belonging to the white-collar professions and used to much better conditions of living.

This change in the 'conditions of living' on either side of the border was not on economic terms alone. Large scale movement during the Partition, followed closely by rapid urbanisation, abrogated traditional social networks which were situated around metaphors like 'sanjha chulha'—a community kitchen with a sociological resonance that is based on extension, correlation and affinity that partakes of and extends the scope of the family—more importantly so, the family projected onto the village community. Such an enforced movement that violates communities and their social, cultural and territorial roots, alters significantly the self-conscious relation between the individual and his/her environment. Severed from one's own fields and the sweetness of its produce, the individual's memories always situated around a deeply personal environmental schema, are fragmented forever.

Stressing upon the narrative importance of re-constituting history and politics, Rhadstone and Shwartz suggest that, "In the afterlife of collectively

experienced catastrophes … the medium of memory has seemed to offer the possibility not only that an element of selfhood can be reconstituted, but also that a public, political language can be fashioned in which these experiences, and others like them, can be communicated to others" (3). Re-constitution is significant as it follows dismemberment and rupture and whether self-hood is a possibility or no, is a heuristic question after all.

The current paper addresses the violence of Partition, rooted in the environment as a reference point for national and nationalized identities, in terms of its relation to the lived reality of human existence. What was severed was not just land and property, but a whole lived space and a community. What remains are not just the fragmentary memories of this lived space rooted in its environmental tropes, but the traumatic memory of that inalienable part of the self which cannot be disjointed from the specifics of individual trauma to be conflated into a purely nationalized mythic of what Benedict Anderson calls "imagined communities", marked by borders that mark the entry of the human against the animalized non-human other.

The paper also examines the construction of essentializing and divisive categories of human and the animal as well as the non-human animal and the issue of animality as it situates and amplifies the condition of nationalized human exceptionalism. The issue of negotiating human-animal relations involves a re-conceptualization and reconfiguration of spaces and places as well as our relation to them. This forms the ethical basis of our continued preoccupation and disavowal of an irrational and irredeemable violence against the non-human animalized other.

If violence lies at the heart of Partition, it is important to address questions that relate to its irrationality. Is it important to locate the specifics of violence, even as it assumes a mythic presence in a people's collective memory as well as in contemporary national and regional politics and thus runs the risk of essentializing identities as violent? Is the ontology of borders closely allied to the ontology of violence? How does violence create categories of human, animal and animalized others? In the drawing of borders, does violence have both spatial and temporal presence? What constitutes a sufficient response to the way we experience violence?

Memories of the Partition, as textual traces of the past, are fragmentary, anecdotal and imaginative, even as they are couched in the compact literary medium of the short story. The short story becomes the site where the irrationality and inexplicability of violence operates as textual traces, that become clearly located and recognizable in individuals, places and things. Characters resonate and develop not only through the events of a lifetime but around those that follow through subsequent generations. The quotidian lived reality of existence continues to coalesce and congeal around the

territorial international 'border', leading to an unusual flexibility of the narrative of nationhood and borders. The continued resonance and accessibility of the bulk of these stories as characters mimic and dissolve through either side of the border, with the border itself determining one's own identity, imparts a mythic relevance to the border itself. The border becomes the identifying mark of the subcontinent. It prompts the telling of a past life, which reflects the situation of the present.

However, with the accretion of stories around the partition and its aftermath, the border is itself subject to complex and various kinds of scrutiny in the face of national destiny. The national border is supposed to contain the human and it must do so by operating as a spatial metaphor that conditions the possibility of creation of dehumanised subjectivities that are recurrently (re)produced around animalizing processes. Yet, which human would claim responsibility for animalizing other(s)? How does the human who fought alongside another of his own kind against the white beast, while himself being 'named' as the beast of burden, justify the violent repetition of the naming process? Thus, in the simultaneous re-iteration and questioning of the individual's nationalized identity located around the border, the border becomes occluded as the aporia that must be necessarily and inevitably be negotiated.

Human agency around the construction of a national border cannot be undermined. The new self has to be re-fashioned in the face of a schism between the individual and his/her relation with the new environment. This is more significant because pre-partition undivided India was largely agrarian. It was more locally rooted and less globally mobile. With the drawing of the national 'border', the newly nationalized individual undertook the sharp tracing of contours of the self, wherein he (a gendered subject) derived, sustained and amplified his power by exerting control over women (by acting as the protector of women—advocating their sacrificial killing in the name of the masculinized ritual of nation-building and the family-community-nation's honour), the non-human animal and the environment. They were sons of the soil meant to aggressively protect their turf against the 'other'.

The process of othering was a necessary and radical act meant to provide continuous and systematic sanction to the self in times of precarity. The moral compromise enjoined upon the sharp tracing of the borders of the 'self' against the other, mimicked the tracing of territorial borders. In other words, this 'other', was so self-consciously intimate that the process of violent othering required a derivative ethic. The exorcism of the 'other' from within the self, had to be done in the name of another entity in order to take away the guilt of murder and make it ethically acceptable, however partially.

This naturalized the prioritization of the nationalized self over the non-nationalized other (on the other side of one's own national 'border') by guaranteeing full transcendence to the human self. This act of 'othering' requires the creation of categories as the human and the non-human animal and, in this regard, may be read as a repeat of the racist and animalizing ideologies of imperialism.

Armstrong discusses the various theoretical bases of the human-animal paradigm "… the most potent and durable intellectual paradigms produced by European cultures at the height of their imperialist arrogance owe simultaneous debts to the colonial and animal worlds" (414). Speaking of human agency, in terms of the capacity to affect the environment and history, Armstrong writes that "human-animal geographers have made productive use of Actor Network Theory that, rather than limiting its attention to the conscious, rational choices made by human individuals, considers agency as an effect generated in multiple and unpredictable ways from a network of interactions between human, animal, and environmental actors" (415).

The stories of Partition also gesture toward new ways of conceptualizing animal-human relations. The territorialisation of identity also generates a parallel debate about animal-human spatial relations—reconceptualizing and reconstructing such relations and offering deconstructive readings of our relations to our environment. Multi-disciplinary studies in animal geographies, by theorists like Philo and Wilbert, explore the relations between people and animals by exploring new ways of conceptualising animal-human spatial relations.

Derrida, in his detailed and deconstructive work on Animal Studies, deliberates on the material and symbolic violence we do to animals. Derrida's work *The Animal That Therefore I Am* explores a range of western philosophers from Aristotle to Descartes, Levinas, Kant, Heidegger and Lacan, who define the 'human' versus the 'animal' broadly theorizing that the former alone possesses *logos* or speech.

Drawing on Jacques Derrida and Georges Bataille, Cary Wolfe discusses the import of 'speciesism' or the discourse of species, that privileges and naturally prioritizes the human species (and their interests) over all other species, in terms of its impact on animals and those that are animalized:

which relies upon the tacit acceptance … that the full transcendence of the "human" requires the sacrifice of the "animal" and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in a "non-criminal putting to death" (as Derrida puts it) not only of animals, but other humans as well, by marking them as animal. ("Old Orders" 39)

Thus, for Wolfe, violence toward the animal and animalized others is justified as part of a wider humanist discourse, "available for some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of *whatever* species—or gender, or race, or class or sexual difference" (*AR* 8).

Explaining Derrida's discussion on the material and symbolic violence we do to animals, Julie Matthews infers that the:

question of the animal serves as an address to the violent materialities and imaginaries of geography itself. . . It brings questions of responsibility and ethics into historical and locational contexts and requires an understanding of how we come to be in this condition; how it disorders and calls all our actions into question; and how we might differently occupy spaces and places. Derrida's work raises the question of what constitutes a "sufficient response" to our assault on animal life, human life, the world and our diminishing capacity to imagine things other. (126)

In "One's own country", a short story that constantly harks back to the fields that have been left behind, Barkat Bibi remembers the sweetness of the corn, radishes, carrots and water of the country that she has been severed from. "'Take it away, it is tasteless! Oh Bashiran bibi, what lovely corn we had in our own country! This corn!' She flung out her arm in disgust" (Jain 145). Barkat Bibi and Bashiran have experienced first-hand the moment of rupture, of the impossibility of feeling the sweetness of taste in the crop that the new land produces. Their memories are environmentally coded in the touch, taste, smell and feel of the only land they can re-call as theirs, for all else is 'tasteless'. The loss is permanent and irrevocable and entails a death-in-life situation capable of drawing life away as it is lived in the present.

Which is one's own country, after all is a question that has no easy answers in the language register of a new nation (as a transcendental signifier) accompanied by its own *logos*. The transcendental constant of a new nation is a re-politicized and reconfigured 'imagined space' that oppressively and violently fails to factor in the old web of interconnections between an individual and his/her immediate environment, which leads to a schism between the individual's interior and exterior lives. The psychic economy offered through the medium of the short story enables a space for a re-negotiation of the complex and inchoate shards of memory and desire in Barkat Bibi's story of a continuing trauma that is impossible to mitigate.

The author writes, "The corncobs roasting in the ashes crackled. The smoke from the cowdung cakes choked their throats. Her mind reflected her anguish" (147). The shards of Barkat Bibi's nostalgia for her lost home are accompanied by the pain of the killing of her whole family. In response to

the young and ambitious Nazir Ahmed's (preparing for his class twelve exam) constant refrain about "who killed your (Barkat Bibi's) whole family… The killer was definitely *a* Singh" (emphasis added, 146), Barkat Bibi vehemently disapproves (and exonerates from the charge of animality) the names of specific individuals like Karnail Singh and Kaptan Singh, and remarks. "Yes, Nazir Ahmed! But that Singh had no name" (146).

While Karnail Singh and Kaptan Singh are full human figures, characterized by empathy, rationality and capable of spontaneous and unrestricted human-human dialogue, Bibi specifically locates 'that' Singh in terms of a demonstrative pronoun purely in terms of the violence he demonstrates. 'That' Singh is separated from her (physically, emotionally and metaphysically) in space and time. On the other hand, the vehemence in Nazir Ahmad's current re-iteration of 'a' Singh as murderer, metonymically identifies all Singhs as murderers or wild, un-empathetic, illiterate beings capable of doling out irrational (in form and extent) violence—an animal as a generic category separate from his own human aspirational self. Ahmad's words, in fact, suggest the possibility of an escalation of violence (absent in Bibi's words) in the face an unmitigated trauma of the past that continues to possess the present.

"Khabal—Perennial Grass" is the story of an unnamed woman in Pakistan. The fact that she is unnamed, gestures towards stories of women on either side of the border. "Humiliated and trampled" (56), she has been abducted, forcibly converted, married and/or raped. However. even for her all is not lost. She hopes to find her sister-in-law and even in the delirium of fever, begs the narrator, a Liason Officer in the Indian Government, to locate her and unite the two. The narrator is reminded of the *Khabal* or the fresh green grass that sprouts naturally and perenially in this region. The old Jat had remarked "When we till the land, do we leave it (khabal) there? We pull it out, root by root, and throw it away. But, ten days later, you will find it sprouting in the field…" (53)

On either side of the border, the pulling out of *Khabal* generates the same emotional and ethical responses culturally. The violent subjugation of nature justified in terms of an abstract space subject to human instrumentalism is mapped on here to a phallic space that justifies mistreatment and violence towards women, particularly women of the other country/religion, as non-human animalized others.

The despair is universal and environmental metaphors confirm the environmental embeddedness of our contextualized relations and intersubjective encounters within animal-human spatial relations. Such an environmental contextualization brings to bear on how we (re)inhabit and

reoccupy spaces and places. In "Khabal-Perennial Grass" the water in the new residents' canals is red and unfit for the performance of *wuzoos* (52), which is an ablution performed as a religious rite by Muslims, involving the washing of hands, feet and the face and indicating purity before God. Praying, notions of purity and cleanliness are human attributes while killing and murder are indicative of barbarism only an animal is capable of. However, who are the ones that have committed the barbarism, who are the ones to have been killed and who are in fact capable of purity are questions that easily risk the inversion of the human-animal binary. So, the 'red' canals full of corpses and mutilated bodies of those who have been 'non-criminally put to death' are environmentally coded reminders of internal contradictions about animality and complicate the limits of the animal-human binary.

In "The Homecoming", Mehtab Din has undertaken a perilous and arduous journey with his friend Sant Singh and family. Sant Singh's daughter Bachno is just about the age of Mehtab's own daughter Tajo, whom he has left in the village since she was an infant. He grows very fond of Bachno and promises her that once they reach their own country, he would introduce her to Tajo and they would be friends. Both Sant Singh and Mehtab as well as their families are filled with optimism since they are meant to be finally free from the white man—their common enemy. However, in a tragically ironic turn of events, Sant Singh and his family are attacked by a mob of Muslim rioters. The attack is fatal, but Bachno, profusely bleeding, is still alive. Mehtab, sensing that his friend may be in danger, goes to his rescue. Just as he is about to save the orphaned Bachno, for "in this land of death … he would not let her die, never", he is stabbed at the back by the remorseless rioters who attack Mehtab, a Muslim himself, simply because he tries to save Bachno. The dying Bachno, is attacked once again by the rioters who shout out "Kill this snake also" (39). Not long ago, when Mehtab had taken refuge in the gurudwara with Sant Singh's family, a few Sikhs had cornered him saying that a "Mussalman is like a snake" (35). In both cases, the reptilian metaphors, suggesting 'human' distrust and disgust with the 'animal', are culturally striking. The mythic end to the story fills the silence of history—idiomatic of a rough-shorn ritualistic and beastly death orgy. The story ends with the loud siren calling for a curfew analogised "like the howling of the village dogs before a death" (40). Thus, 'this' land with its reptilian and beastly preoccupation threatens the integrity of the human projection of the nation-state as an 'imagined community' and Mehtab's revulsion with '*this* land of death' may be read as the imaginative failure of the nation as one's own land.

Similar to Derrida, for Agamben too, politics has always been concerned with the care and control of biological life. Bare life is the life of *Homo sacer*,

who is the epitome of extreme marginality in being that "which may be killed yet not sacrificed" (Agamben 12). Agamben theorizes that "Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern State … does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life" (11). This power of the sovereign to subject other species to a 'state of exception' is, in fact, a 'non-criminal putting to death' of the one who is rendered analogous to the *Homo sacer*. As Agamben puts it "the sovereign decision on the exception is the originary juridico-political structure on the basis of which what is included in the juridical order and what is excluded from it acquire their meaning" (19).

In "Black Waters, Dark Well", two young and innocent lovers, Gurbaksh and Balli, jump into a well and commit suicide. The well, a leitmotif in the story, is an important symbol of rural life where the village communities draw water. It is a symbol of life, sustenance, cultural collectivism, power, and human potential for technology. It is also a symbol for discrimination, violence, suicide, ignominy, contagion and death. As the violence of warring religious factions looms large in the backdrop of the nation's partition, the two young lovers are overwhelmed by the immediate fury of violence that surrounds them. A logic of domination and territorial control overdetermines the rivalry between two families that cannot see eye to eye and the fallout of it is borne by the innocent love that is crushed before it can bloom. The trauma of death, however, refuses to pass. The suicide committed in the name of family honour, is a result of the sovereign's biopolitical recourse to the 'state of exception' where Balli and Gurbaksh are rendered in a state analogous to bare-life and have no juridico-political recourse. This is an example where the rhetoric of nationhood becomes co-terminous with patriarchy (in its preservation of the family name and honour) and elides over the danger of two marginalized individuals being reduced to bare life. In Derridean terms, Balli and Gurbaksh—as animalized others—are 'non-criminally put to death'.

In "One's Own Country" too, Nek Begum, like several other women during the partition, commits suicide by jumping into the well. The men folk instruct them to do so in order to save their own honour and that of their families. As gendered and animalized others, women are subject to gang rapes, forced marriages and suicidal killings. These acts are justified as 'acts of exception' with the conflation of the woman as a species and as the other 'that may be killed and yet not sacrificed'.

"Without a Homeland" is a story narrated by a young editor who finds it difficult to secure accommodation in a big city. After a number of failed attempts, an elderly professor agrees to rent a room to him. Having lost his home in Pakistan, he wants freedom not from the British colonizers, but

from those who colonize thought in the name of borders and nations. When confronted by the narrator, he bursts out saying, "Your country! Is it your country? You who have to go around wagging your tail like wretched dog to rent a room!" (Jain 90). The dog analogy is significant because it bears the mark of impatience and disgust culturally located around a wretched and abandoned stray, who doesn't belong and whose life is an empty signifier.

In the last short story of the anthology "The Ointment", Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs have lived as a community through years of goodwill and peaceful co-existence. However, in the run up to the partition, as terror pervades the Muslims residing in a village which is on the Indian side of the border, Dhanna's marauding gang is out on a rampage to loot, rape and kill. He bursts out saying, "Who informed these Mussalas? If I get hold of the traitor, I swear by the Guru. I'll kill him like a *dog*!" (emphasis added; 167). At the same time, the writer trans-codes the animal imagery of the dog with the sexualized imagery of Meherban's dead daughter's breasts, justifying the violence that the simultaneously animalized and gendered/sexualized other is subjected to. Moreover, the fact that Dhanna's "eyes flicker(ed) over her breasts" (167), is in turn, a reversal of animality because of the scavenging animal that Dhanna is.

The complex web of violence undercuts the identity of the 'Indian' and the 'Pakistani'. The two categories involve a mutual animalizing of the other in order to sharply define the human self. Calling each other a 'dog', as discussed earlier in this paper, for example, is an act that involves a stripping the human off the other or dehumanising the other. This presupposes the abject animalization that the fully human may subject the animalized other to.

As the various characters in the stories from this anthology depict, there are no easy or clear answers to questions of belongingness and denial. In the face of dehumanizing violence rendering dumb animals and disabled humans, the animal-human binary as well as the problem of language needs to be re-examined.

Derrida deconstructs the human-animal binary in the light of the work of thinkers like Agamben. Concluding from Derrida, Loe stresses the need to "pluralize ontologies, taking up what is outside of official consciousness, what is not only difficult to articulate but inarticulable… theorizing extralinguistic rhetorics, rhetorics of relation and sensation" (42).

The crudely reductive categories of 'Indian/Pakistani', 'Hindu/Muslim' prompt a need to 'pluralize ontologies, take up what is outside of official consciousness, what is not only difficult to articulate but inarticulable'. Language entails performative symbols that are inserted into the rhetoric of

speech where representative speech fails. New binaries may be generated that completely undercut and break away from the hegemonic and normative character of the previous ones.

In "The Ointment", after the Muslims' exodus from Nauru Nangal, Jats and Brahmins from the other side of the border have settled in and their cultural codes, dress, mannerisms and language are "strange and alien" to the old inhabitants. The masjid which has been transformed from a gurudwara by ceremonially installing the Guru Granth Sahib continues to be called "Masjidwala Gurudwara" (Jain 168). This is a failure of language in representational terms, but this is also the triumph of relationality and the always already hybrid self that is necessarily pluralized and indeterminate.

"Of One Community" is a short story about two families, one Hindu and the other Muslim. Both have suffered the trauma of violence during the partition and now, years later, the unutterable stress of the trauma still persists. The writer, Mr. Sarna and his neighbour suffer from similar bouts of restlessness and despair. "We have the same illness … because we belong to one community… the cruel and the meek. Our two families belong to the community of the meek" (73). The border creates the binary of Hindu (majority)-India versus Muslim-Pakistan, where, mutually speaking, the other, on either side of the binary, is not only adversarial but is also designated as the impure, unnatural, animalized and less than human other. Both sides of these binaries have aggressed and national borders have been created around the practice of animality and the violent animalizing of the other. However, 'pluralized ontologies' like cruel/meek, involve a radical re-working of the reductive binaries based around borders. They do not essentialize identities but disperse and proliferate them outside of the 'official consciousness' of human and animal categories that involve naming practices that are violent in the way that they imaginatively represent other people and places, constantly working to amplify the gap between the human and the animal as generic categories. The only possible binary here is that of the victim, who is meek and the aggressor, who is cruel. The position of the meek is a morally prioritized position—however lacking in its suggestion of the virility claimed by a son of the soil—compared to the cruel, that is morally lacking and simultaneously capable of great strength and brute force in its ability to inflict grievous violence. Here, the creative resurgence of the meek does not require the border as a reference point at all. The terms 'meek' and 'cruel' cannot be easily fitted around the human-animal divide with a reference to nationalized-religious identities. In, fact in this dispersal of humanity and animality, there is a parallel reference to individual 'responsibility' in our ethical relationship to other places and people.

To conclude, Partition and its aftermath requires a re-examination of the violence commonly located around political and territorial borders. Studies in human-animal geography may help re-look at questions of identity that define and sustain the animal and animalized other for the constant and renewed production of the human. Language and its radical re-working offer an insight into the deconstructive readings of binary and normative categories of the self and other. This is especially important, because though singularly unprecedented in the history of the sub-continent, the Partition of India and Pakistan continues not only to have contemporary political resonance but also have a mythic relevance for the people of the subcontinent and their lived reality of existence.

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