

Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971 and Modern South Asia. By Ananya Jahanara Kabir. (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013. 255 pp. ISBN: 978-81-88965-77-9).

Academically approached and discussed has been the reterritorialization and secession of the South Asian subcontinent. Orientalists have, from multidisciplinary arenas, debated the motivation and resulting consequences of Partition. In the same vein, Ananya Jahanara Kabir provides the reader an analysis that is not only postcolonial and transreligious but also bio-cartographic and psychosomatic. Memory and trauma studies have been recently considered at the vanguard of cultural studies thanks to the remarkable work of scholars such as Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, Nayanika Mookherje's "Aesthetics, Affect, and the Bangladesh War Crimes Tribunal" or Monica J. Casper's *Critical Trauma Studies* among others. Needless to say, this innovative territory offers postcolonial studies new readings that claim consideration. Thus, and owing mainly to Kabir's interocular narration, *Partition's Post-Amnesias* takes the reader to an ekphrastic journey through the [hi]story of the Indo-Pak territory and its resulting nostalgic narratives.

This manual is deftly grouped into a precursory introduction, followed by two theoretically condensed main chapters and its succeeding conclusions. The first section entitled "Between 1947 and 1971," recounts the intergenerational memories and collective traumas of a pre-liberalised and post-regionalised India. These consequent traumas, the author indicates, will eventually culminate into the categorical mutilation of a community's cohesive identity and, by extension, prompt new ways of understanding Pakistani oneness. In the following subchapter "The Phantom Map", Kabir explores the decolonisation of Pakistan along with the neo-colonisation of a cartographically trapped West Pakistan over its eastern faction. The [hi] story of former East Pakistan, Bangladesh, was 'palimpsestally' memorialised and, most importantly, deliberately translated through the eyes of its domineering neighbours. This being the case,

we might conclude that the Bengali narrative is permeated by this amnesic and peripheralised disposition. This 1971 post-amnesic generation has consequently found itself facing the necessity of rescuing these post-memory narratives vitiated by silences and forgetfulness.

Unlike East Pakistan noiseless and hermetic enlightenment, argues Kabir in "Terracota Memories," West Pakistan is singularised by its continental openness. This pre-Islamic nation has worked as transitional meeting-point for a varied number of cultures: ranging from pre-Aryans to Buddhist including Greek. Through the symbol of the Terracota, the author laconically draws two converging lines between this multiculturally primitive and 'mythified' archeology and reinterpreted artisanal capitalism. It is nevertheless during this section when I find Jahanara Kabir's auxiliary contributions to be periphrastically redundant, if not too personal. Just to raise an objection, some of the literary examples provided by the author are so extensively illustrated that she accidentally blurs the storyline. I however sympathise with some of the postulated representations for they exquisitely support the author's final hypothesis when she sheds some light on the syncretic and jeopardising contiguity between these two yet irreconcilable generations.

In the second part, "Deep Topographies," I personally find captivating how Kabir's archaeological analysis introduces both ancient and contemporary arts as an articulating mechanism in the formation of Pakistani and Bangladeshi identities. This superb revision aims, in this first "Terracota Memories" section, to diagnose the preeminent intergenerational and geopolitical reasons for this pre-Islamic inheritance sepulture. On the one hand, the resulting loopholes of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamist, autocratic regime and, on the other the orientalist post-9/11 vision of the Western over Muslim countries —when not a constant, improper comparison with a Talibanised neighbouring Afghanistan. Kabir indeed demands significant attention towards this cocooned Pakistani *deiknyomenian* geo-body. It becomes clear from this chapter that post-1947/1971 amnesias are not merely interpreted in line with archaeogeographic evidences. On



the contrary, these traumas are, as previously stated, very much connected with a visual and sometimes fetishised artistic past that, in terms of identity appropriation, becomes anachronic and voyeuristically colonial. As a matter of fact, it is in the last chapter, “The Enchanted Delta,” when the author concludes that these un-/shared cultural signifiers, along with domestic and personal segregation (religion, politics, marriages...), catalysed the unhomely state of South-Asian people confined between either literal or metaphorical trenches. The unhomed has therefore taken advantage of these archaeogeographical inconsistencies to deliberately recreate new intercultural identities based on this fluctuating and in-between condition.

All in all and as far I am concerned, Jahanara Kabir’s attempt to compile innovative narratives on the post-Partition debate succeeds in numerous ways. As previously said, I do not

commune—although it might be easily mended by restructuring the preceding ideas— with some of the literary examples she presents before the readers’ eyes. This text however offers new harvested territories on Trauma Studies with multiple compelling hypotheses. As evidenced in this review, I am fascinated by the role of arts – and its consequent conglomerates – in the broken cartography of the subcontinent and its resulting execution on identity configuration. Finally, I personally, as both reader and scholar, appreciate these personal aromas one might directly smell from her private narration. This book, needless to say, is not only academically designed but aims to heal the post-1947/1971 yet bleeding past.

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