

Rewriting Partition: Gender, Memory and Trauma in Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*

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Abstract

The Partition of India in 1947 was one of the most catastrophic historical events that has subsequently impacted generations and will keep on influencing the posterity as well. Vazira Zamindar has coined a term 'Long Partition' to explain the lasting impression of this devastating event. Diasporas and Partition share a unique and symbiotic relationship. Partition triggered migration and further dislocations and can thus be held partly responsible for creating Diasporas abroad. Diaspora and Partition literature thus hinge on the dialectics of memory.

The Partition of India generated a boom of a vibrant, sensitive, and poignant body of literature. The first and the second waves of Partition novels continued roughly until the '80s, but Partition manages to capture the literary imagination of writers even now. Contemporary Partition novels like *Ice Candy Man* (1992), *Looking Through Glass* (1995), *What the Body Remembers* (1999), *A Life Long Ago* (2012), *An Unrestored Woman* (2016), and *The Night Diary* (2018) are its brilliant examples.

Shauna Singh Baldwin is a major novelist of the Indian Diaspora who calls herself a Diaspora dispersed by Partition. Her novel *What the Body Remembers* was published in 1999 but it was relaunched as a twentieth-anniversary edition in 2019 and is dedicated to her grandmother. The latter had personally experienced Partition and narrated its hoary details to Shauna Singh, and had inspired her to write the novel. *What the Body Remembers* is a partition novel revolving around Roop, Satya, and Sardarji. Considering questions of Partition's post-amnesia, memory, trauma, and Feminist historiography, my article calls for a renewed understanding of *What the Body Remembers* from the perspective mentioned above. Trauma it indeed was and memory was its matrix.

Keywords: Partition, diaspora, memory, post-amnesia, trauma, feminist historiography

I recently read a newspaper article in [The Times of India](#) dated June 6, 2022 entitled 'First Partition Remembrance marked in U.S, India'. This article stated that the 1947-Partition archive observed June 3 as the First Partition Remembrance Day in India and Berkeley. This archive had proclaimed June 3 (the day of the Mountbatten Plan that led to the creation of Pakistan) as the annual 'Partition Remembrance Day' to commemorate the

world's largest mass refugee crisis that unfolded during India's Independence in 1947. It further states that "despite its immense scale and historical significance, Partition had hardly been recognised globally by the official governing bodies." Gurneet Singh Bhalla, U.S.-based Trust's founder, further adds that the "city of Berkeley has century-old ties with India and its independence movement in the early 20th century..... It is our hope that cities across the world, in South Asia especially, begin taking note of this deeply impactful period and recognising it in history." What I found striking about the article is how it imperceptibly links Partition to Indian Diaspora and the act of remembering. This article foregrounds the significance of remembering a bitter but significant historical reality. This historical event is remembered on the foreign turf of Berkeley, and its historical linkage to the Diaspora brings to the surface the co-relation between Partition and Diaspora or dispersal. The Partition of India in 1947 is one of the most catastrophic historical events that has subsequently impacted generations and will continue to influence posterity as well. Vazira Zamindar has coined the term 'Long Partition' to explain the lasting impact of this devastating event. Diasporas and Partition share a unique symbiotic relationship. Thousands of families left India because of Partition, and it will not be wrong to say that the Partition triggered migration and further dislocations and can thus be held partly responsible for creating Diasporas abroad. Both Diaspora Literature and Partition literature hinge on the dialectics of memory.

The Partition of India generated a boom of an energetic, vibrant, sensitive, and poignant body of literature. The first and the second waves of Partition novels continued roughly until the '80s, but Partition continues to inspire the literary imagination of writers even today. Contemporary Partition novels such as Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1992), Mukul Kesavan's *Looking Through Glass* (1995), Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* (1999), Sunanda Sikdar's *A Life Long Ago* (2012), Shobha Rao's *An Unrestored Woman* (2016), and Veera Hiranandani's *The Night Diary* (2018) are its brilliant examples of it. Shauna Singh Baldwin is a prominent novelist of the Indian Diaspora who calls herself a Diaspora dispersed by Partition. She has lived as a minority in different Post-Colonial democracies, making her sensitive to minority problems. Her latest work, *Reluctant Rebellions*, a compilation of 15 speeches and essays, reflects her flair for ideologies interrogating and her crusading zeal for the silenced. Her 2006 prize-winning short story collection *We Are Not in Pakistan* studies cultural contrasts. She considers it her prime duty as a writer to study life and establish the commonalities even in human differences. Her first published work *English Lessons and Other Stories* and *What the Body Remembers* shows her emotional, familial relationship with the 1947 Partition. Growing up with Partition made her realize that "remembering partition would make history more whole." Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* was published in 1999. However, it was relaunched as a twentieth-anniversary edition in 2019 and is dedicated to her grandmother. The latter had personally experienced Partition and had narrated the hoary and gory details of Partition to Shauna Singh and had also inspired her to write the novel. While speaking in a Symposium on the topic "De- Othering the Other" Shauna Singh links Partition to her childhood memories: "If not for Partition of 1947, my mother's family would still be living in Rawalpindi or Lahore.....Like many others I'm aware of but ungrateful for this fact of history. My nana and nani believed they were exiled from Pindi and Lahore for just a few weeks. Like the rest of the millions displaced by the dismemberment of India, they never expected to live out their lives in Delhi. For them, permanent exile was not only from

place, but from their deepest childhood memories.” *What The Body Remembers* is a partition novel revolving around Roop, Satya, and Sardarji. The first part of the novel deals with the domestic turmoil in the life of Roop, who is married to Sardarji, an elderly rich man already married to Satya. Roop becomes his second wife to give him an heir. Being a submissive and docile young girl, Roop has no option but to compromise with Satya’s dominating personality. Along with it, the novel is a Partition-novel that delineates the pre-partition developments and the post-Partition sectarian violence as what Manohar Malgaonkar calls “a fellow traveller of freedom”. (Malgaonkar 365)

The Partition of India in 1947 is not just an isolated event but an event that will find resonance in future literature too. Partition is a process that has great relevance in all contemporary events. Partition violence seems to be replicated now and then. One needs to have a humane sensitivity to understand it. It can find a resemblance in the 9/11 avenged crimes where innumerable Sikhs were killed just because their beards were similar to those of the Afghans. In an interview, Shauna Singh speaks on the relevance of Partition in contemporary times: "In winter 1997, India and Pakistan exploded nuclear devices. A year later, soldiers battled one another and the Himalayan cold in Kargil. Partition violence erupted, re-enacted down to the mutilation of soldiers' bodies; 1947 seemed to be dormant in collective memory, corroding from within, assigning collective guilt for every individual crime.....When the sense of exclusion from the majority community rises, women's bodies/reproductive capabilities in a minority community become a medium of messages between their men. In November 2001, rumors flew, accelerated by the net, that Sikh girls were targets of conversion by Muslim men in the UK. The situation rapidly escalated, with both sides assuming their women to be brainless possessions. Purism reverberated again, just as in Partition. The real concerns were economic – as usual, and they rose after the feeling of exclusion from the majority community after Sept 11. Even British mainstream reporters did not think to interview a single Sikh woman to ask if she planned to convert based on the persuasion of a single Muslim man. After a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, state-sponsored fundamentalist Hindus in Gujarat state in democratic India deemed Muslims collectively responsible, and in Jan 2002, they killed more than 2000 and made 200,000 people homeless refugees in their own country. As in Partition, the targeted minority du jour could not call on the state to intervene to protect them. The state was pretending it did not know. All the minority could do was bear it, survive and/or find somewhere to live till the next time they become targets for the fears of majority. These events had effects on globalization, the development of nations and the software boom. They were flashpoints where the past bled into the future.” (Patchsea)

What the Body Remembers is a Partition novel with a difference as it does not just focus on the Partition itself but also on the build-up before Partition. It covers the turbulent years between 1937 and 1947. On being questioned as to why Diaspora writers have not attempted a Partition novel, she believes that her writing seems to rise from a sense that something is missing, a subject, a story or an area that has received too little attention and *What the Body Remembers* rose from that same dissatisfaction. She strongly feels that the Partition of India in 1947 into India, East Pakistan and West Pakistan has received very little academic attention. Shauna Singh belongs to the 'hinge generation,' a term used by Eva Hoffman to talk about the second generation who grew up with the stories of horror and trauma and internalized the past just as it “reverberates through the minds and lives of subsequent generation”. (Greenberg, 103) Being a 'hinge generation'

is significant as it serves as an essential linkage between the Partition survivors who experienced the heinous tragedy. The 'hinge generation' is aversive to the stories, facts, and memories handed down, and this aversion and resistance manifest in the form of revisionist historiography. Literature based on this revisionist historiography is a profoundly personal and generational rebellion. Based on personal and familial experiences, such a literature protests against silence and indoctrinates forgetting. Going against the Nationalist-triumphal historiography, Baldwin indulges in revising the Partition story and fills in the gaps by reconstructing a story, in which the Feminist and the Sikh points of view can be accommodated. Shauna Singh's novel comprises multidimensional memories, enabling a more sensitive understanding of partitioned lives. It demonstrates the complexity of Partition by showcasing its consequences. It is a brilliant example of how the memories of Partition circulate across generations and then, later on, find bold expression in the form of a novel.

Gaps in telling the Partition story have made the scholar in Shauna Singh to reconstruct a story in which subjectivities like the feminist and Sikh point of view can be accommodated. Nationalist historiography related to Partition has always been masculine. It is for the first time that Partition is viewed through a woman's eyes. The novel begins as a Pre- Partition novel and unfolds the domestic conflict of Roop and Satya. Roop is a young, docile, and submissive girl who acts as a puppet in the hands of the dominating Satya. This temperament of Roop may add an interesting angle to the storyline, but one realizes one more purpose only towards the end of the novel. Roop emerges as an enraged demoness anguished by the atrocities unleashed against her during the unfateful Partition. Seema Malik, in her article entitled "Body as Object: A Reading of Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*", posits: "The woman novelist adopts the strategy of a conforming surface narrative that conceals a hidden plot of subversive female rage." (196). Through this device and deliberation plot manipulations, Baldwin foregrounds the aim of her enterprise: she voices Roop's inner thoughts at critical junctures to view Partition from a woman's point of view. Roop becomes a mouthpiece of Baldwin and articulates the woman's consciousness at the top of her voice. Roop travels to Delhi by car with her children and witnesses how women were humiliated and tortured. Huma, her childhood friend, is abducted by a group of turbaned Sikhs and taken away in front of her own eyes, and she could not help her. Her only defense mechanism is her fatalism that "every woman has her own kismet" and "each woman is alone". Jorimon, her maid travelling with her to Delhi, is manhandled and assaulted by men just because she answered them back. Roop's bravado saves Jorimon, and those men ask her to be grateful for letting her go this time. Exasperated by all this, she cries out with pain and says, "so much shame, so little izzat for girls and women." (Baldwin 498). She is saturated with pain and cannot bear it anymore; her "blood simmers to boil in her veins." She is fed up with seeing the vulnerability of the female body and man's fascination with this sexual object that she wants to rob the female body of its shame. She wishes "every man, woman and child should just once in this lifetime, see a woman's body without shame. See her as no man's possession, see her, and not from the corners of your eyes." (498). Her rage reaches its zenith when the coy Roop takes off her clothes and "walks through the hushing crowd wearing nothing but her mama's sapphire ring." She screams, "See me, I am human though I am only a woman. See me, I did what women are for. See me not as a vessel, a plaything, a fantasy, a maidservant, an ornament, but as Vaheguru made me." (Baldwin 498) Women's bodies

“were singled out as privileged sites of violence” as the people equated sanctity of nation with that of a woman. Jill Didur, in his book *Unsettling Partition* agrees when he posits: “When the trope of the citizen is tracked through the story of partition, it becomes apparent that events have a particular gendered character; the economy of meaning within the elite, patriarchal, and racist national imaginaires circulating at the time conflated the sacredness of the nation with the sacredness of Woman, making women both an object of protection and target of violence –both physical and discursive –in the struggle for independence.”(Didur, 7) In this quotation, Didur also talks about women being an object of protection, but in the frenzied tragic phase, women got only violence even in the name of protection. Roop’s father kills Kusum with his kirpan because he could not “endure even the possibility that some Muslim might put his hands upon her” he had been “hearing that the seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women’s wombs.” (Baldwin 520) Mahatma Gandhi in his speech at a prayer meeting valorized such killings: “I have heard that many women did not want to lose their honour and chose to die. Many men killed their own wives. I think that is really great because I know that such things make India brave. After all, life and death is a transitory game. Whoever might have died are dead and gone; but at least they have gone with courage. They have not sold away their honour. Not that their lives were dear to them, but they felt it was better to die with courage rather than be forcibly converted to Islam by the Muslims and allow them to assault their bodies. When I hear all these things, I dance with joy that there are such brave women in India.” (qtd in Didur 202) Roop is deeply pained and interprets this incident as a generic event symbolic of story of all women who had been sacrificed. She says, “Papaji’s story cannot be so very different from other men who see their women from the corners of their eyes, who know their women only as bearers of blood, to do what women are for. She knows this story, knows it like some long-forgotten undeciphered dream.” (Baldwin 520) This tragic incident is a product of memory and the extensive research and interviews that Shauna Singh had conducted. She uses the facts of this unrecovered tragic incident, mentioned in many books, interviews, and archives, to add to the human dimension of Partition. She uses an informed and discursive reading of an event to philosophize about remembering and telling Kusum’s story. She refuses to tell the story and prays to ‘Vaheguru to ‘send Kusum back to this family in her next life!’ so that she can tell her story herself, remember this death herself.’ She is reluctant to use male language to narrate the tale to her sons ‘when they learn to see as men see’. (522) Roop disrupts the narrative by questioning and mulling over the insignificance of women. She surmises that had Kusum been asked, she would have desired to live but could not say ‘Nahinji’ since she never learned to say no. Shauna Singh interrogates and rewrites the Partition narrative using the critical axes of sexuality and gender and posits the paradigm of woman as victim. It is well worth closing this analysis with what Seema Malik in her article says: “Baldwin shows how at the moment of the birth of the two nation states in place of one colonial state, the bodies of innumerable women were brought under the control of the patriarchs of both the communities to complete the grand act of vivisection. Women's sexuality occupied a special place in the enactment of violence during Partition. Women's bodies were the 'site' on which the hyper-masculine revenge drama of mutual humiliation was enacted. Their bodies were the tabula on which men imprinted their bestiality. (Malik 200)

Baldwin attacks the majoritarian underpinnings and recovers the marginal voices during the Partition. On the one hand, she places women at the novel's center and revises the

triumphal national historiography; on the other hand, she attempts a re-reading from the Sikh perspective. She was always conscious that a trace of more than 4 million Sikhs who once lived in Pakistan had vanished because of the events of Partition, which is also viewed as a kind of ethnic cleansing. Moreover, Partition contributed to the intra-community rifts that were simmering during the Partition, which exploded in to communal violence later on. Nicola Mooney in her article "Of Love, Martyrdom and (In)Subordination: Sikh Experiences of Partition in the Films Shaheed-e-Mohabbat, Gaban and Prem Katha" opines: "Partition contributes to differences of history and identity in India. Butalia has observed that pasts and presents intersect and merge in Partition novels, evidenced particularly among Sikhs by the telescoping of accounts of 1984 and 1947(3)..... Sikhs are highly aware of the slights and traumas of their history. For many Sikhs, construction and affiliation with the Indian national identity seem scarcely possible. (Mooney,28). Shauna Singh uses her experiences as a Sikh and those of her community, and pens the first Sikh Feminist Partition novel. She says in an interview that "the story came from my experiences as an ESL teacher, at first for people in my community. It was about being a Sikh in the late 80's when Sikh men in Punjab were automatically labelled terrorists and targeted by the Indian police..." (Scalia) Baldwin, therefore, foregrounds the Sikh perspective to ameliorate the community that was deeply hurt. She uses the *Kissa* of Puran Bhagat from Guru Granth Sahib to talk about the marginalized Sikh Community. In chapter 33 of the novel Sardarji's Sikh blood boils when he discovers the indifference of Rai Alam Khan, an ICS officer, towards his 'quom'. He worries that "his entire Sikh quom ... will be guests at the mercy of their Muslim hosts if Pakistan is created in Punjab province." Sikhs' resentment is not entirely baseless because the Partition of India didn't take cognizance of the immense contribution that Sikhs had made for the independence of India and their efforts are returned by clinching the land which witnessed the genesis and growth of their religion. India was for the Hindus and Pakistan for the Muslims. Sikhs were seething with rage on being discriminated against and thrown out like an outsider and not getting the 'blue strip in the flag of India". Baldwin drags in Bhagat Singh's sacrifice which went unacknowledged as the leaders of the nation turned a deaf ear to his death sentence. In chapter 24, the author mentions how the Sikhs were angry because Mahatama Gandhi had criticised a Sardar (udham Singh) who had murdered General Dwyer for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Roop's husband expresses the prejudice against Sikhs by saying that "if the assassin had not been a Sikh,... Mahatama Gandhi might not have seen those bullets as insanity."(Baldwin 298)

Shauna Singh uses memory to chart the history with a magnified focus on the contribution of the Sikhs to it. There are countless references to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Indian National Army, Rise of the Muslim League, Salt March, and Non-Cooperation movement. She writes a collective history of Sikhs and traces the origin, growth, and development of Sikhism from Guru Nanak's sainthood to Guru Gobind's warriorhood. She valorizes the tenets of Sikhism and its fundamental essence. In chapter 40, Roop comes across a hawker boy named Zorawar, the "name of the Tenth Guru's youngest son, Martyred by the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, bricked up alive and breathing in the wall with his brother in full sight of his mother." He preferred to die than accept conversion to Islam. Zorawar had lost his father and was eager to work as a hawker for his mother, who lived in a refugee camp. Praising him, she links his resilience with the spirit of the quom and says: "My people, Punjabi Sikhs, will survive; this Zorawar's

spirit is in them. They will not beg, they will not die, they will work and build their lives again.” (Baldwin 500) The entire novel is strewn with copious references to fact - filled stories of a Sikh ruler like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sikh martyrs, Akali Dal and demand of a separate state Sikhistan or Khalistan. She attempts a collective Sikh history and familiarises the readers with the Sikh way of life, the Sikh beliefs, the relevance of the five K'S and the Guru Granth Sahib, and the sanctity of the Akhand Path. Corroborating Shauna Singh's inclination towards Sikhs, Harween Mann, in her article entitled “Fulfilling Her “Duty to her Quom”:The Punjabi-Sikh Ethos of Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*” opines: “In foregrounding a minority Sikh perspective, in telling their stories, both collective and individual, heroic and ordinary, *What the Body Remembers* reveals its thoroughgoing revisionism of Indian national history in multiple ways.”(Mann 104) Shauna Singh is a Sikh herself and is proud of the Sikh culture, and her celebration of Sikh identity should not be misconstrued as a rigid parochial Sikh. She is fascinated with the assimilative nature of Nanak's religious philosophy. In talking about Sikhs and the silenced women, she evinces her penchant for the marginalized and oppressed voices which were missing in the dominant Partition narratives.

Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel is a product of memorialization and how the novelist remembers Partition from the lens of her grandmother's memory. The author is the inheritor of the scattered and fascinating history that her grandmother narrated to her. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, in her book *Partition's Post-Amnesias*, coins the term Post – amnesia by moving away from the term Post-memory; she defines it as “a symptomatic return to explorations of places lost to the immediate post-1947 through a combination of psychological and political imperatives.” She posits in the chapter “Politics of memory: poetics of place”, “I am, however, of a generation that wants to know more and on my own terms. For me, Faridpur, furnishes a classic site of ‘postmemory’, although I fumble with an adequate name for my relationship with ‘places of memory’ like Karachi and Dhaka, where my extended family once lived and, in the case of Dhaka, continue to live: ‘para-memorial’?”(3)Ananya Jhanara Kabir further says that “partition's post amnesias braid the politics of memory with the poetics of place.” (Kabir 26). The novel *What the Body Remembers* celebrates the 'places of memory'. The text begins with a map of undivided pre- Partition Punjab. The map of undivided India and pre-partition Punjab takes us down the memory lane and makes us nostalgic. This map makes us realize that the Partition of India did not just change the cartography of India but also changed a way of life that prevailed in pre-partition time. Tangible losses like houses, villages, and cities led to intangible losses like home, faith, and culture. Intangible losses cannot be bequeathed to the second-generation descendants, but tangible things can be easily shared through stories and tales. They get bits and pieces and a brief sketch of the harrowing scenario, which they try to put together and create a vivid picture. Shauna Singh got names of villages and cities and, with the help of research and visits to such places, managed to carve out a vivid picture of places as if she had lived and experienced those places. I read a review of Baldwin's novel, ' Rescuing Punjab from the mists of memory,' and agree that this is what Shauna Singh does by presenting a vivid picture of Pre-Partition Punjab. Each chapter of the novel begins with the names of places like Rawalpindi, Pari Darwaza, Khanewal, Lahore, and Delhi. The novelist has portrayed Pari Darwaza in the most idyllic manner. She gives a very utopian description of the village in Chapter 2. Pari Darwaza is a “small village of mud and brick scooped from the soil; he finds few Hindus there to call his name; those who once did were driven south or

converted, generations ago, from Hinduism to Islam. Instead, in Pari Darwaza, he finds Sikhs celebrating harvest festivals and the anniversary days of their ten Gurus' lives and Muslims who mark the passage of the day by the muezzin's call to prayer. Other villages in Punjab have Hindus living side by side with Muslims, but Pari Darwaza belongs to a Sikh, and every farmer here occupies and tills the land around the crumbling village walls at Sardarji's pleasure." (33) Pari Darwaza is used as a barometer to gauge the rising communalism and the socio-political changes in urban India. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs co-exist peacefully in the village. Roop and Huma share a wonderful friendship and spend time with each other. However, the village also shows the impact of the religious and political differences. The magnitude of Partition is measured by how it affects a remote, peaceful village like Pari Darwaza. In chapter 41, Roop's brother, Jeevan comments, "We had begun to think Pari Darwaza would be spared the chaos.... Power has shifted so many times before, from raja to Mughal, from Mughal to Mughal, from Maharaja to English man.....So Independence Day came and went and we were still alive, still living –Muslim, Sikhs and Hindus together, all of us waiting for the rains."(Baldwin 516) Roop's father has the same confidence that there could not be any disturbance in our village..... soon the village was aglow, surrounded by torches...." (Baldwin 517) Baldwin has chosen cities like Rawalpindi, Khanewal and Lahore as the locales of her story. All these cities figure in the 1947 Partition Archives and are a part of the narratives of innumerable Partition survivors. Khanewal, like Pari Darwaza, was also popular for its communal harmony.

1947 Partition of India is undoubtedly a cultural trauma that has shaken human existence. It is an event that will continue to impact all subsequent global violence. Partition has remained fixed and arrested for the hinge generation or the second generation survivors of Partition. Shauna Singh Baldwin has made a commendable creative attempt to recover the hidden layers of Partition in her novel *What the Body Remembers*. She wrote this novel with the belief that the act of remembering the past can bring back the past and even obliterate it. Remembering is selecting a few memories over others. Partition gave different kinds of memories. For a few, it was rewarding and sweet, exposing them to religious diversity and showcasing the magnanimity of human nature, whereas, for a few, it was a harrowing tragedy that robbed them of their land and people. Challenging the sanitized version of history, Baldwin indulges in remembering Partition to make history more whole. Looking at the gaps and areas of silence in culture and history, the author tries to probe the dominant historiography. *What the Body Remembers* makes us realize that women's history is as important as men's. Roop, the central protagonist, makes a plea for viewing women as human beings and not as a vessel or a body. Experiencing violence at every juncture of Partition, a woman realizes that she is alone in her struggle for human dignity. The novel's Epilogue ends with the painful realization and the tacit message of women "I have come so far, I have borne so much pain and emptiness! But men have not yet changed."(Baldwin 538). Baldwin brings Sikhs to the center of the narrative by articulating their anger and resentment against the government. Sikhs, the children of two great faiths, were sidelined during the freedom struggle and, while the nation's fate was being decided. However, the author has portrayed a resilient and vibrant community with the spirit to re-build itself despite all odds. Wallowing in Partition's post-amnesia, the novelist indulges in a celebration of the places of memory. Shauna Singh thus rescues the cartography of Punjab from the mists of memory by romanticizing utopian villages and their culture. The Twentieth-

anniversary relaunch of *What the Body Remembers* has triggered the third wave of Partition novels. It is not a straightforward novel but a humanist Partition narrative that steadily keeps the periphery in the center by dislodging the nationalist-triumphal patriarchal historiography. It may be a worthwhile exercise to compare and contrast *What the Body Remembers* with Nanak Singh's 1948 Punjabi novel *Khooṁ de Sohile* translated into English by Navdeep Suri nearly after 75 years as *Hymns in Blood* (1922) from a variety of angles.

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