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Lines of Inquiry:

Partition, Historiography and the Art of Zarina Hashmi

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Art History

by

Aparna Megan Kumar

2012

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Lines of Inquiry:

Partition, Historiography and the Art of Zarina Hashmi

by

Aparna Megan Kumar

Master of Arts in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Saloni Mathur, Chair

This paper examines *Dividing Line* (2001), a woodcut print by the contemporary Indian artist Zarina Hashmi, in relation to a history of Partition, the division of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947 that gave rise in part to the Islamic state of Pakistan. An abstracted rendering of the Indo-Pakistani border, *Dividing Line*, as this paper argues, not only presents an important pathway into the discussions around the place of Partition in the overall analysis of modern and contemporary South Asian art, but also raises significant questions around what the artist or the visual arts can uniquely contribute to the writing and understanding of Partition history in the present, a vexed and fragile historical terrain. This paper posits that *Dividing Line* can be understood as a historiographical threshold, a space upon which divergent and marginal histories of Partition converge. I argue, more specifically, that Zarina's use of cartography and her tendency towards abstraction in *Dividing Line* not only exhibits a unique capacity to both

recognize and ‘map’ the tensions and contradictions inherent to the historiography of Partition but also enables an endless dialectic around Partition ‘history’ and ‘memory’ through which fixed understandings of Partition can then be challenged and unsettled in powerful and productive ways.

The thesis of Aparna Megan Kumar is approved.

Burglind Jungmann

Miwon Kwon

Saloni Mathur, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

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## Lines of Inquiry: Partition, Historiography and the Art of Zarina Hashmi

The division of India and creation of Pakistan in August 1947 or Partition, as these events have collectively come to be known, inaugurated a revolutionary transformation of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneous with the British departure of India after centuries of colonial rule, Partition marked the onset of a series of changes—political, social, economic, geographic—that would engulf the region in the 1940s and 1950s. Its implications for the newly independent Indian and Pakistani nation-states were, accordingly, both profound and widespread and exceeded far beyond just the cartographic and political restructuring of the subcontinent that ensued in the years to follow, a restructuring codified perhaps most visibly by the controversial ‘Radcliffe line.’<sup>2</sup> Although nationalist recollections of 1947 often proffer an exultant narrative of Partition, casting the division in terms of the birth of Indian and Pakistani independence, as a critical threshold for the subsequent story and triumph of the Indian and Pakistani nation-states, oral histories of survivors, personal accounts from those deep within the fray of this transitional and tempestuous period resist such conflation. These narratives of Partition, by contrast, speak of a great ‘betrayal,’ a fear and pain unfathomable, a personal and collective trauma.<sup>3</sup> They give voice to the darker ramifications of this process of bifurcation often suppressed, exposing Partition as an arbitrary drawing of borders and boundaries along religious and communal lines,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1947, Pakistan consisted of two separate territories, namely East Pakistan in Bengal and West Pakistan in Punjab. Following the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, these territories were further divided into present-day Bangladesh and Pakistan, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘Radcliffe line’ was the name given to the territorial boundary demarcating India from East and West Pakistan in August 1947. It was named for the British official, Sir Cyril Radcliffe who was appointed by the British Government in July 1947, though he had never been to the subcontinent previously, to determine where exactly the new Indo-Pakistani border should lie in the wake of British colonial rule. The ‘Radcliffe line’ currently separates India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and remains highly contested to this day.

<sup>3</sup> Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence* (Durham: Duke University, 2000) 3-5, 57.

one that unfolded as a ‘bloody and protracted affair,’<sup>4</sup> mutually constitutive with a violence unprecedented, both in magnitude and kind.<sup>5</sup>

Partition, as this paper will argue, stands as a critical point of departure for the analysis of *Dividing Line* (2001) [**Fig. A**], a woodcut print by the contemporary Indian artist Zarina Hashmi or Zarina, as she is known professionally. Though Zarina’s production (including *Dividing Line*) has in recent scholarship been understood more often in global terms, placed in dialogue with the larger discourses of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, Zarina’s artistic practice on the whole remains overwhelmingly enmeshed in this particular experience of political, territorial and social rupture that we know today as Partition. Her works, many of which are woodcuts or etchings printed on handmade paper, like *Dividing Line*, are mired in themes of home and displacement, exile and social fracture and, in this way, tend to bare the marks of her own biography.<sup>6</sup> Born in India in 1937, Zarina came of age with the Indian independence movement, essentially on the precipice of Partition and Indian and Pakistani statehood. Though she was raised in a secular Muslim household, her family would eventually shift to Pakistan in the 1960s, forsaking their home at Aligarh and with it Zarina’s firm identification with the subcontinent.<sup>7</sup> She is, therefore, one of the few artists working today who is both engaging the subject of

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<sup>4</sup> Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation* (Durham: Duke University, 2000) 1.

<sup>5</sup> Though estimates ultimately remain speculative, there is a growing consensus among scholars that Partition violence resulted in the deaths of roughly one million people and the displacement of some 20 million. These figures, to provide a comparative context, are similar only to those of the Second World War in Europe; see, Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007) 6, 211; Vazira Zamindar, *The Long Partition* (New York: Columbia University, 2007) 6, 245; Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001) 2, 45.

<sup>6</sup> The title of the Hammer Museum’s forthcoming retrospective on Zarina’s career, *Paper Like Skin*, also seems to speak powerfully to this intimate correlation between Zarina’s work and biography, in casting her work as an extension of her body.

<sup>7</sup> Ranu Samantrai, ‘Cosmopolitan Cartographies: Art in a Divided World,’ *Meridians* 4.2 (2004) 188.

Partition in her work in significant ways and lived through it, through the process of nationalization, the devastation and great personal loss Partition naturally engendered in the mid-twentieth century. More than just a reflection of her own relationship to this fragile history, however, her work presents an important pathway into discussions around the place of Partition in the overall analysis of modern and contemporary South Asian art and significantly begins to unfurl the relationship of the artist to Partition historiography, which has increasingly emerged as a vexed and uneven terrain since the 1940s, marked by a set of tensions and contradictions not unlike those repeatedly appropriated, made visible or activated within Zarina's own artistic practice. I contend, more specifically, that Zarina's *Dividing Line* raises poignant questions around what the artist or the visual arts can uniquely contribute to the writing of Partition history, to an understanding of Partition in the present.

This paper endeavors to position *Dividing Line* as a historiographical 'threshold,' what Vazira Zamindar has described in her book, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia*, as the space between 'severed histories,' the point at which divergent histories of the subcontinent and marginal histories lost or ignored can be 'sutured' together to constitute something new—whether it be a more complete history of Partition, a new perspective or merely further questions.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, I will posit that Zarina's use of cartography and her tendency towards abstraction in *Dividing Line* not only exhibits a unique capacity to both recognize and 'map' the tensions and contradictions inherent to the historiography of Partition—namely, the

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<sup>8</sup> In her book *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia*, Vazira Zamindar uses the term 'threshold' to describe '1947,' a poignant date in the historiography of the Indian subcontinent after which, she argues, histories of the region as a whole cease to exist or become silent, fractured by the arrival of the nation-state and the subsequent demand for distinct, national histories. She situates her book at this 'threshold' between single histories of the region and distinct histories of the nation to '[suture] severed histories' back together, to in a sense bring them in dialogue with one another to 'show how they were mutually constituted and part of a single history;' see, Zamindar 4.

disparity between nationalist and subaltern accounts of Partition violence, alluded to previously—but also enables the artist to then harness them to new ends. I see in Zarina’s work both an ethics of acceptance, one that powerfully privileges a lack of resolution in its engagement with Partition history, as well as an ethics of resistance, one that constantly resists the ‘drive for a shallow homogenization’ of history and understanding and, instead, struggles visually towards new modes of inquiry into the subject at hand.<sup>9</sup> *Dividing Line*, in this sense, strives neither to reconcile nor resolve necessarily the tensions and contradictions of Partition historiography that it speaks to or invokes visually, but rather attempts to lay them bare, to make them visible on a level plane, to place them in conversation with one another.

This paper will, accordingly, consider Zarina’s artistic practice in relation to Partition historiography and the sets of dilemmas and tensions that have, in turn, taken shape around it. It will highlight Zarina’s evolving use of cartography and abstraction in her practice on the whole in an effort to interrogate the ways *Dividing Line* especially makes visible contending histories of Partition. It will also attempt to place Zarina’s work in dialogue with the current debates unfolding around secularism in South Asia to elucidate the manner in which Zarina further negotiates this historical terrain, arriving with *Dividing Line* at new questions and directions for the historiography of Partition. This paper will conclude with a brief comparison of *Dividing Line* and the ‘Partition-film,’ a new and emerging category of cinematic production in India, Pakistan and the South Asian diaspora. With this, I will contextualize *Dividing Line* against recent criticism of the ‘Partition-film’ in an effort to explore the potential merits of Zarina’s work and the endless dialectic at its center, as well as their implications for the history of Partition in the present.

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<sup>9</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, ‘In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today,’ *Representation* 37, Special Issue: Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories (Winter 1992): 28.

*Part I: Partition Historiography and its Tensions*

Given the violent and traumatic nature of this process of territorial and communal dismemberment, it is perhaps not surprising that Partition has harbored serious implications for the historiography of the subcontinent as well, for the way in which Partition has been both remembered and recorded in public and academic discourse since its initial conception in the 1940s. Indeed, the current historiography of Partition appears to be riddled with several tensions and contradictions that arguably do more to compound the problems of Partition history in the present than they do to resolve them.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the most noticeable of these tensions and the one to which, I will argue, *Dividing Line* most readily responds, is the wide chasm that has consistently separated ‘historians’ histories’ of 1947 from more popular, subaltern accounts, a disparity Gyanendra Pandey has further characterized as that between Partition ‘history’ and ‘memory’.<sup>11</sup> Where Partition ‘history’ has tended to resolve the events of 1947 uncritically in terms of a constitutional arrangement or a line across a map, often relying, as Joya Chatterji has noted, on medical phraseology to eschew the cataclysmic violence of the process of bifurcation in favor of a more ‘clinical’ or ‘surgical’ view of Partition as a single and definitive act, Partition ‘memory’ has tended to do the reverse, emphasizing Partition as violence itself, as an extensive and ‘radical reconstitution of community and history,’ with lasting consequences for life on the subcontinent.<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, it is the nation-state that has perhaps most consistently been made to account for the perpetuation of this tension between Partition ‘history’ and ‘memory.’ In fact,

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<sup>10</sup> Khan 201.

<sup>11</sup> Pandey, *Remembering Partition* 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 7; Joya Chatterji, ‘The Fashioning of the Frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal’s Border Landscape, 1947-52,’ *Modern Asia Studies* 33.1 (Feb 1999): 185-188.

recent and fierce criticism of nationalist historiographies in India and Pakistan have grappled with what seems like a systematic elision of Partition violence in the writing of nationalist histories, bringing to light a kind of rhetoric of silence in Partition historiography, a collective practice of suppression of Partition violence and ‘memory’ committed in the service of the nation.<sup>13</sup> In such accounts of 1947, as Pandey and others have shown, Partition tends not only to be de-historicized or distanced from the general run of Indian and Pakistani history, subordinate to more celebratory narratives of Independence, Partition violence is often configured as an ‘aberration’ or ‘fluke’ in India and Pakistan’s otherwise ‘harmonious’ transition into modern statehood.<sup>14</sup> In other words, it assumes a status or designation of ‘other,’ disregarded as foreign or unnatural to the subcontinent, as having no bearing on Indian and Pakistani societies.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to more recent accounts of Partition that have attempted to reclaim the ‘human dimensions’ of this history as part and parcel of the process of division, Partition violence is effectively tempered if not removed altogether from nationalist, state recollections of Partition, thereby ensuring a sanitized biography of the Indian and Pakistani nation-states, untainted in their ‘moment of arrival.’<sup>16</sup>

These tensions between history and memory, silence and speech, self and other in the historiography of Partition, to name but a few, continue to be exacerbated in unusual ways. The tendency to silence Partition’s very real legacy of violence and trauma appears, for instance, to fully contradict what Bhaskar Sarkar has called in his book *Mourning the Nation* the rise of a

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<sup>13</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, ‘The Prose of Otherness,’ *Subaltern Studies VIII*, David Arnold and David Hardiman, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University, 1994) 190.

<sup>14</sup> Pandey, *Remembering Partition* 3-7; Sarkar 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Butalia 3-20; Pandey, ‘The Prose of Otherness’ 193, 195.

<sup>16</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Post-Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1986) 131.

‘Partition industry’ in India and Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> By reinvigorating the status of Partition in public and academic discourse, this ‘industry’ has produced a heightened attention to Partition history and violence in the present, bringing it to the forefront of a new generation of artists and intellectuals who are, in turn, looking to this critical historical moment in their work, this ‘living history’ as it were, as a way to confront the persistent communal and political unrest on the subcontinent.<sup>18</sup> The peculiar popularity of the ‘Partition-film’ in the last two decades is, on the one hand, largely a product of these developments. Though essentially predicated on representing the ‘unrepresentable’ effects of Partition, the ‘Partition-film’ has gained favor among filmmakers and audiences alike, arguably becoming an important vehicle like Zarina’s *Dividing Line* through which to address and interrogate past and present ramifications of the division.<sup>19</sup> This increased visibility of Partition in public and academic discourse has, on another hand, also resulted in a critical re-thinking of Partition history and violence in more global or comparative terms. Scholars like Jonathan D. Greenberg and Paul Brass have, for example, begun to historicize or embed Partition within the larger global histories of violence and social fracture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>20</sup> This has not only taken to task some of the more ‘a-historical’ understandings of Partition history and violence in nationalist historiographies of Partition, but

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<sup>17</sup> Sarkar 259-260.

<sup>18</sup> Khan 202.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 259-297.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan D. Greenberg, ‘Generations of Memory: Remembering Partition in India/Pakistan and Israel/Palestine,’ *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25.1 (2005): 89-110; Paul Brass, ‘The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in Punjab, 1946-47: Means, Methods, and Purposes’ *Journal of Genocide Research* 5.1 (2003): 71-101.

also the poignant and recurring inclination to interrogate Partition in relation to the Nazi Holocaust of World War II.<sup>21</sup>

*Part II: Cartography, Abstraction and Contradiction as Inquiry*

I begin my analysis of *Dividing Line*, here, at this juncture of tensions and contradictions seemingly irresolvable because it is precisely this ambiguity around Partition and the nature of Partition violence that, I argue, the work ultimately embraces. *Dividing Line*, an intricate woodcut printed in black on handmade Indian paper, has figured prominently within the recent scholarship on Zarina's oeuvre. Powerful and austere in its execution, it has been noted not only for the way in which it builds upon Zarina's unique aesthetic sensibility—minimal, formal, abstract, linear by design—but also for the productive way in which it evolves the larger, global discourses of home and displacement, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism.<sup>22</sup> *Dividing Line* is certainly representative of Zarina's iconic visual language. At first glance, it reads as little more than a black line inscribed across a piece of paper, a minimal rendering that, if anything, appeals to the geometric reticence so intrinsic to Western modernism and so often privileged in Zarina's artistic production on the whole. Upon closer inspection, however, *Dividing Line* also stands as emblematic of Zarina's cartographic turn in the twenty-first century, her vested and prolonged interest in the architectural plan or blueprint, as exemplified in such works as *Father's House 1898-1994* (1994) [**Fig. B**] and *Homes I Made/ A Life in Nine Lines* (1999) [**Fig. C**], having

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<sup>21</sup> For more on this comparison of Partition to the Holocaust, see Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994) 1; Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001): 98-139; Butalia 3-5; Pandey, *Remembering Partition* 15, 45.

<sup>22</sup> See Joyce Brodsky, 'The Imprint of a Transnational Life,' *Weaving Memory* (New Delhi: Bodhi Art, 2007); Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker, *Zarina: Mapping a Life* (Oakland, CA: Mills College Art Museum, 2001); Aamir Mufti, 'Zarina Hashmi and the Arts of Dispossession,' *The Migrant's Time*, Saloni Mathur, ed (Hartford, CT: Yale University, 2011); Ranu Samantrai, 'Cosmopolitan Cartographies: Art in a Divided World,' *Meridians* 4.2 (2004).

expanded to include a broader interest in the map, as a representational form. The black line—abstract yet idiosyncratic—winds snake-like across an otherwise blank canvas, its twisted and writhing curvature a distinctly cartographic gesture. Simultaneously forceful and tenuous in character, the line carves the surface of the print into two disparate sections, recalling the precision and the spatial fragmentation of a map.<sup>23</sup>

Cartography as artistic process has consistently found a place within Zarina's artistic production since the late 1990s, featured in such works as *Delhi* (2000) [Fig. D], *Atlas of My World* (2001) [Fig. E], *...these cities blotted into wilderness* (2003) [Fig. F], *Countries* (2003) and, in turn, *Dividing Line*. The map, as a representational form has, moreover, emerged within these works as a '[matter] of contention' for Zarina, paradoxically recognized as a structural convention *within society*, a collective platform for information, planning, even identity, as well as a constant invention *of society*, the product of numerous and contentious socio-political forces, including political interests, nationalist ideals, colonial assertions, territorial claims and, as Zarina insists, personal experiences or histories.<sup>24</sup> In the case of *Dividing Line*, the print not only stands as 'an occasion to reflect upon the many lines, literal and metaphorical, that divide' the globalized, post-national present in which Zarina repeatedly and consciously locates herself, it also recalls in its cartographic precision the volatile border separating India from Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> It speaks to Zarina's own experience of geo-political fracture during her childhood on the Indian subcontinent and to the profound effects of twentieth-century mapmaking that we understand today as Partition.

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<sup>23</sup> Brodsky; Samantrai 185; Mufti 183.

<sup>24</sup> Milford-Lutzker 14; Mufti 188.

<sup>25</sup> Samantrai 185.

This gesture towards Partition becomes especially apparent in *Dividing Line* when considering the work in relation to Zarina's more expansive project *Atlas of My World* (2001). The latter consists of a series of woodcut prints and is at once a highly stylized exercise in cartography and an 'intimate geography of a life,' an index of the borders and boundaries (including those of North America, Europe, the Middle East and South Asia) that Zarina herself has traversed in her lifetime.<sup>26</sup> Though not an exact copy, the line brought to the fore in the body of *Dividing Line* recalls, more specifically, those illustrated in *Atlas of My World IV* [**Fig. G**], a print within the larger *Atlas* series uniquely devoted to representing the Indian subcontinent as a whole. Rendered in black ink, *Atlas of My World IV* not only echoes the austerity of its counterpart *Dividing Line*, it holds at its center a seemingly more explicit meditation on the Indo-Pakistani border. Indeed, the print shows a landscape constrained within a rectangular frame, carved up and etched out by several thick and incisive contours, one of which is enlarged beyond the immediate limits of the map in a way that suggests a space just beyond it. Often likened to an 'umbilical cord' because of its writhing and twisted character, this line both divides and entangles the forms we know as present-day India and Pakistan. With no clear beginning or end, moreover, it appears enmeshed within the surface of the map and yet somehow suspended above it, bringing to life a powerful uncertainty not unlike that which accompanied Partition and the implementation of the so-called 'Radcliffe line' in 1947.<sup>27</sup>

This geo-political understanding of *Atlas of My World IV* is further corroborated by Zarina's directed and poignant use of Urdu script, a feature noticeably absent in *Dividing Line*. In one sense, the inscriptions of 'Pakistan' and, in the case of India, 'Hindustan,' quite

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 185.

<sup>27</sup> Mufti 183.

powerfully brand the surface of the image with the complexities of national and religious identity.<sup>28</sup> In another, they draw attention to Zarina's fragmented and sketchy articulation of the landscape itself, the calligraphic and curvilinear character of the script left to meld with or extend the visible imperfections of Zarina's carving and printing processes. This is especially the case with 'Pakistan,' where its borders are themselves unclear, wrapped up and interwoven within each other, and the Urdu script is left largely obscured, almost swallowed whole by the sharp and quick splotches of black ink that emanate outward from the print's more authoritative incisions. The inscriptions, in this way, also seem to operate in a manner similar to the 'umbilical cord' itself, calling into question the tenuous and arbitrary nature of the borders and boundaries brought to life within the body of the print and signaling perhaps Zarina's own contention that the Indo-Pakistani border is one that '[does not] really exist.'<sup>29</sup>

The instability of borders, boundaries and nation-states explored by *Atlas of My World* arguably lies at the center of *Dividing Line* as well. Where *Atlas of My World IV* identifies its border by name, reinforcing a geo-political understanding of the lines shown, *Dividing Line* mobilizes a purposeful ambiguity, opening itself up more readily to questions beyond those raised by cartography or geography alone. As Aamir Mufti eloquently contends in his essay 'Zarina Hashmi and the Arts of Dispossession,' *Dividing Line* serves to bring the 'historically and socially dense geography,' evident in *Atlas of My World IV* uniquely 'to the brink of abstraction.'<sup>30</sup> A 'gesture of staggering economy,' it neither indicates what it is dividing—

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<sup>28</sup> Samantrai 177-178.

<sup>29</sup> Milford-Lutzker 13.

<sup>30</sup> Mufti 183.

whether land, space, people, politics, ideology—nor when or by whom it has been created.<sup>31</sup> Absent of explanation and, in turn, a sense of agency or beginning, the print has been understood elsewhere as ‘the arbitrary imposition of difference,’ in an era of rapid globalization.<sup>32</sup>

*Dividing Line* has accordingly been used to locate Zarina’s artistic practice globally, to situate her work as offering a uniquely transnational and secular language, the product of an emerging and discerning voice of a diaspora and exile.<sup>33</sup> In the writings of Mary-Ann Milford Lutzker, for instance, Zarina’s work has been characterized as the map of a transnational existence, one that literally charts the many places Zarina has lived and existed since leaving India in the late 1950s while also highlighting the instability of the concept of home.<sup>34</sup> These themes of ‘home’ and ‘displacement’ have certainly figured prominently within Zarina’s work in subtle and powerful ways; however, they are but a starting point in the analysis of her artistic practice on the whole. Ranu Samantrai in his essay ‘Cosmopolitan Cartographies: Art in a Divided World,’ contends, for example, that ‘Zarina’s practice [also] exemplifies the best potential of cosmopolitanism.’<sup>35</sup> Replete with contradictions, including narrative and technical appeals to both motion and stasis, comfort and constraint, harmony and cacophony, abstraction and specificity, autobiography and appropriation, secularism and spirituality, Zarina’s work, in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 185.

<sup>32</sup> Samantrai 185.

<sup>33</sup> Zarina left India in 1958, only to make the world her home in the coming years. She has lived and worked in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America; she is currently based in New York. I say ‘exile’ here because her relationship with her homeland of India was admittedly complicated when her remaining family shifted to Pakistan in the 1960s, leaving Zarina with essentially no place to return to on the subcontinent that was once hers or a home she identified as such. Though she travels to both India and Pakistan regularly, she has never identified Pakistan as her home/homeland, as her relatives now do; but neither does she feel squarely at home in India, given the loss of her ancestral home at Aligarh; see Mufti 183-185, 189, 193; Samantrai 185-186.

<sup>34</sup> Milford-Lutzker 9-17.

<sup>35</sup> Samantrai 185.

many ways the '[embodiment] of ambiguity and paradox,' for Samantrai, gives way to a tension, an interconnectedness, an awareness of the ways in which people and cultures live, interact, intersect and overlap.<sup>36</sup> *Dividing Line* to Samantrai is not merely a line, guide or map for that matter—it is cause to reflect upon the forces, both local and global, that build, change and destroy lives, communities, societies and nations, more generally.<sup>37</sup>

Aamir Mufti has in one sense followed suit, similarly positioning Zarina's work within a global framework of his own. He begins his analysis of Zarina's practice, for example, by comparing it to that of the Palestinian artist, Mona Hatoum and argues that both artists share a vested interest in exploring themes of exile, displacement and political violence.<sup>38</sup> In another sense, however, Mufti casts Zarina's oeuvre as a unique and important entry point into the global histories of uprooting and social fragmentation increasingly attached to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. More specifically, he argues that Zarina's production marks an 'aesthetic practice concerned with the foundational unlivability of modes of modern life,' and that her tendency towards pre-capitalist forms and abstraction belie a profound global awareness of the instability of modern life and its variations, of the statelessness and the persistent sense of loss that modernity seems to naturally engender in its subjects.<sup>39</sup> Where *Dividing Line* forsakes its 'identitarian logics' in favor of a more profound abstraction, Mufti perceives a catalogue of ravaged spaces, places torn apart by war and mass violence or the modern condition more broadly, as well as, an attempt on part of Zarina to create a unified discourse around the disintegration of the state, as both a physical and identitarian marker. In *Dividing Line*, he sees

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 170, 185.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 185.

<sup>38</sup> Mufti 176.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 180, 183-184.

Zarina's astute recognition of the ways in which emerging patterns of social and political dissolution—the experience of dispossession—have complicated identity formation in the present.<sup>40</sup>

When viewed in relation to Partition, however—the experience of geo-political and social rupture that is at the center of her work—I argue that *Dividing Line*'s subtle cartographic ties to the Indo-Pakistani border, its play with abstraction, its openness and illegibility relative to Zarina's other geographic studies and its embodied contradictions can also be understood apart from these issues of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. What *Dividing Line* offers—knowingly or not—is a productive avenue into the contested nature of Partition historiography itself, into the poignant dialectics, which continue to structure life and community on the Indian subcontinent to this day. Indeed, Zarina's tenuous articulation of the dividing line and the productive opposition that results between cartography, a mode of representation predicated in precision, and abstraction seems to speak powerfully to the 'chasm' or, rather, many 'chasms' at the heart of Partition historiography. In placing cartography in dialogue with abstraction, Zarina arrives at a multivalent form—linear and fractured, definitive and variable, level and profound—ravaged by a tension both internal and external to itself, by a language of contradictions that not only proffers 'ambiguity and paradox' as Samantrai has argued, but also mirrors the conflicted status of Partition in present historiography, which remains decidedly unresolved.<sup>41</sup>

This irresolution in *Dividing Line* is played out further in more biological interpretations of the work, in which the cartographic precision of the line is cast not in geographic or political terms, but as a kind of trauma against the body. Mufti's analysis of *Atlas of My World IV* does, in

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 180.

<sup>41</sup> Samantrai 170, 185.

fact, seem applicable here: the line of *Dividing Line* embodies, in many ways, the gesture of the ‘umbilical cord’ too, its writhing and twisted curvature giving rise to a simultaneous separation and creation of forms.<sup>42</sup> I would extend this a bit further, however, and cast Zarina’s articulation of the line in *Dividing Line* more like a scar on flesh or a deep bodily incision. This is not meant necessarily to place the print in conversation with the surgical metaphors often used to describe Partition in the earlier historiography of the subcontinent, but rather to draw attention to the ways in which the print vigorously complicates the objectivity of cartography with the subjectivity of trauma.<sup>43</sup> It facilitates in its play with abstraction, arguably to a greater extent than does *Atlas of My World IV*, the physical and psychological ramifications of map-making, manifested primarily as violence and pain. The line, though thickly and authoritatively illustrated, radiates again with a subtle imprecision, one that belies Zarina’s intense yet fragmented carving of the woodcut used to create this image in the first place, a gesture of violence in and of itself. This intense, almost obsessive meditation on the line and the area immediately around it extends an uneven impression of an open wound healing, one sutured together in parts, as well as a resistant wound festering, as it were, in a constant state of rupture. Zarina, in effect, appeals to the problematic at the heart of Partition historiography, mapping neither Partition ‘history’ nor Partition ‘memory’ solely but rather the ‘chasm’ that effectively separates the two. By activating a visual dialectic of her own that places cartography in dialogue with trauma, with a violence against both the mind and body, Zarina poignantly brings into question the nature of Partition violence, its conflicted status within Partition historiography, as well as those histories of Partition that proffer a ‘clear-cut’ and definitive view of its impact and ramifications on the subcontinent.

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<sup>42</sup> Mufti 183.

<sup>43</sup> Chatterji 185-188.

*Part III: Secularism and its Discontents*

*Dividing Line*'s relationship to the tension, contradictions and instability of Partition historiography becomes further apparent when considering the place or role of secularism in the work and in Zarina's practice on the whole. Secularism is not only a concept that has been used to describe Zarina's minimal and abstracted visual aesthetic, it is also at the heart of the 'Radcliffe line' itself, and the crises of politics, geography, ideology and identity it inaugurated and codified.<sup>44</sup>

Where proponents of the 'two-nation theory' like Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a figure referred to today as the 'father of Pakistan,' called for the formation of an Islamic state in India predicated on religious identity in the absence of British rule, essentially redefining religion as the primary marker of identity for Muslims in South Asia, proponents of a unified India, like Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru, embraced the subcontinent's religious, cultural and linguistic syncretism and called for a nation, by contrast, based in both democracy and secularism. In effect, to be Indian in the wake of Partition was also theoretically to be 'secular.'<sup>45</sup> It is clear, however, from the onset of Indian and Pakistani independence that the term 'secular' or the concept of 'secularism' more broadly, though in many ways still a rallying point for the Indian nation and Indian national identity, was prone (like Partition historiography itself) to dispute. It can thus be seen as a defining concept for the new, post-colonial Indian nation, as well as a term in the process of continual definition or re-definition as the case may be, one that continues to galvanize debate among scholars of Partition and the subcontinent as a whole. Indeed, a process of creation and destruction, Partition not only marked a point in history

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<sup>44</sup> Mufti 193.

<sup>45</sup> Shyam Benegal, 'Secularism and Popular Indian Cinema,' *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sundar Rajan, eds (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2007): 227.

in which a nation, a society, a people came into being, it simultaneously signified a ‘moment of contest’ in which the conditions of this new nationhood, this new society—including secularism—were brought into question.<sup>46</sup>

Secularism has been roughly defined as a ‘whole range of modern secular worldviews and ideologies which may be consciously held and explicitly elaborated into philosophies of history and normative-ideological state projects, into projects of modernity and cultural programs.’<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere it is described as ‘a critical perspective not against religion but against religious homogenization and institutionalized religious domination.’<sup>48</sup> In practice, the theoretical concept has manifested accordingly taking multiple forms, the product of not one but several historical, political and geographical trajectories. In the West, secularism usually takes the form of a strict dichotomy, one that pits the sacred against the profane and, in so doing, gives way to the more familiar ‘separation of church and state.’ In the United States, secularism, more specifically, takes the form of a ‘constitutional arrangement,’ one grounded in the history of Christendom, as well as the belief that the modern democratic state is neither subordinate to nor derived from an ecclesiastical power.<sup>49</sup> In India, secularism takes on yet another form altogether. In accounting for the syncretic character of the Indian subcontinent and its unique conditions of post-coloniality, secularism in India, according to some scholars, follows a logic of equidistance

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<sup>46</sup> Pandey, *Remembering Partition* 17-18.

<sup>47</sup> Jose Casanova, ‘The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,’ *Rethinking Secularism*, Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011): 55.

<sup>48</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, ‘Rehabilitating Secularism,’ *Rethinking Secularism*, , Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011): 92.

<sup>49</sup> D. E. Smith, ‘India as a Secular State,’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 180.

and nonalignment.<sup>50</sup> In this system, the more traditional ‘separation’ of religious and secular spheres of human activity as seen and understood in the West is often cast as foreign or ‘unnatural’ to Indian society and is consequently forsaken for a model of separation akin (perhaps ironically) to a kind of interdependence of these spheres.<sup>51</sup> Church and state in this model of secularism are not separated, per se; rather, the state is required to maintain an equal distance from each of the churches or religions in existence, to ensure, above all else, a sense of neutrality and toleration within Indian society, rather than a clear cut separation necessarily.

Even this basic account of secularism in India, however, captures but a fraction of the contentious debates swirling around the concept in India today, which seem inseparable from Partition and Partition historiography. On the one hand, scholars like T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy have attached a narrative of failure to secularism in India, casting it as an ‘impossible’ credo of a life on the subcontinent that is, akin to a kind of ‘internal colonialism’ when activated.<sup>52</sup> Separated from what Nandy has classified as ‘religious toleration’, secularism within this discourse is positioned as a subversive statecraft, a political ideology of domination, mobilized as both myth and mask within Indian society, that has proven oddly (and counter-productively) susceptible or welcoming to the onset of religious fundamentalism in the present.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, scholars like Amartya Sen and Rajeev Bhargava have maintained their faith in the theoretical model and its potential implications for societies on the subcontinent, though

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<sup>50</sup> Charles Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism,’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 35-37.

<sup>51</sup> Smith 189.

<sup>52</sup> TN Madan, ‘Secularism in Its Place,’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 298; Ashis Nandy, ‘The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration,’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 342.

<sup>53</sup> Partha Chatterjee, ‘Secularism and Tolerance,’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 345-379; Nandy 321-344.

they admit to its flawed and variable nature. Where Sen, for example, has argued that secularism in India is ‘incomplete,’ underling the need for ‘symmetry’ not separation in government,<sup>54</sup> Bhargava has argued ‘complete secularization is neither possible nor desirable’ for Indian society, that what manifests in India is a new theoretical model, yet to be articulated or fully understood.<sup>55</sup>

Again, what I find significant within Zarina’s artistic production is the way her work (including *Dividing Line*) seems to consistently resonate with these debates, to mirror and accept in her manipulation of abstract forms and simple geometry this inherent sense of variability and contention brought about by Partition. Though her practice has repeatedly been characterized as ‘secular,’ largely in recognition of her Western training, her admiration of Mondrian, Brancusi, and Malevich, as well as her self-definition as the ‘product of secular India,’ in spite of her Muslim upbringing, her practice also belies her negotiation of this terrain, as one fraught with oppositions and contradictions.<sup>56</sup> Zarina has admitted to repeatedly invoking a kind of spirituality within her work, to inviting and activating a mix of religious forms within her artistic practice that complicate her ‘secular’ vocabulary in very interesting ways.<sup>57</sup> This is most evident in *Moon, Earth, Sun and Star* [Fig. H], four prints taken from the larger series *Home is a Foreign Place* (1999) [Fig. I], which appears at first glance to be meditations in basic geometry. And yet, these prints actually confound such simple forms as the circle and square by simultaneously invoking the Buddhist and Hindu mandala, a multivalent form that connotes among other things a ‘sacred

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<sup>54</sup> Amartya Sen, ‘Secularism and Its Discontents,’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 457-458.

<sup>55</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, ‘What is Secularism For?’ *Secularism and its Critics*, Rajeev Bhargava, ed (Delhi: Oxford University, 1998) 489.

<sup>56</sup> Samantrai 188; Mufti 193.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 173.

center'.<sup>58</sup> They, in effect, mix the realms of the secular and the sacred to produce something new, something unique. Interestingly, this tension between the secular and the sacred arguably extends even to the basic tenets of order and symmetry found continuously in Zarina's production. Where scholars like Samantrai have read Zarina's adherence to order and symmetry as either a practice derivative of the Western canon or an attempt on the part of the artist to 'create order in a world so complicated that it borders on chaos,' Zarina has also said that she finds a 'spiritual value,' in such visual attributes and likened them to the spatial experience of a mosque.<sup>59</sup> They arguably also lend to her work, therefore, a sacred harmony, one she finds comforting, protective and possibly essential.

Finbarr B. Flood has effectively taken this analysis one step further in his recent publication, 'Memory in Material and Light.' In it, Flood undertakes, perhaps for the first time, an overtly religious reading of Zarina's recent production, more specifically, those works exhibited in Paris at the Galerie Jaeger Bucher in 2011 under the heading *Noor*. 'Noor,' as Flood writes, is the Persian and Urdu cognate of the Arabic word *Nur*, which connotes, on the one hand, light, 'both profane and spiritual,' as well as 'a range of related processes and qualities such as illumination, insight and enlightenment.'<sup>60</sup> Far from just a lesson in lexicon, however, Flood's analysis of the term 'Noor' in relation to the exhibition also points to what he identifies as a series of 'significant innovations' in Zarina's practice. He argues that 'Noor,' as the title of the exhibition (and, for that matter, the title of some of the works themselves), '[encodes] a series of productive paradoxes and tensions,' in Zarina's work, including that of 'the material and the

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<sup>58</sup> Milford-Lutzker 14.

<sup>59</sup> Samantrai 173-174.

<sup>60</sup> Finbarr B. Flood, 'Memory in Material and Light,' *Zarina Hashmi: Noor* (Paris: Galerie Jager Bucher, 2011) 13.

transcendental,' in other words, the secular and the spiritual.<sup>61</sup> In his discussion of Zarina's *Tasbih (Prayer Beads) IV* (2008) [Fig. J], for example, a sculptural work fashioned from maple wood, gilded with gold leaf and strung with a leather cord, one that evokes, as its name suggests, the prayer beads prevalent in South Asia and parts of the Islamic world, Flood identifies a kind of co-mingling of 'the material and the transcendental,' a tension between the two within the work.<sup>62</sup> He contends that Zarina's 'cracked and fractured' use of gold appeals at once to a sacred and a profane interpretation of the work—its overall gold materiality placing it in dialogue with 'profane commerce,' its uneven gilding and simulation of 'traces of touch,' in turn, recalling a sacred, religious use.<sup>63</sup>

Though I would argue Flood correctly isolates this tension between the secular and the spiritual in Zarina's work, I remain skeptical of what follows in his short essay on her work. Flood displays an unsettling inclination to not only identify such tensions within her work but also to then want to resolve them on the side of the 'transcendental,' a move, I argue, Zarina's work resists. Where, for example, Flood uses this juxtaposition of 'the material and the transcendental' in Zarina's recent production as a way to link her work to a dialectic between light and dark, one that speaks to a realization of 'higher truths,' and a kind of 'poetics' or 'performance' of memory, I argue that the tensions and contradictions in her work reveal her oeuvre, instead, to be a threshold, a critical terrain of negotiation, one that actively resists resolution and relishes in inquiry itself.<sup>64</sup> Works like *Dividing Line*, *Home is a Foreign Place* and *Tasbih IV*, for example, call into question the very meaning of secularism, on the one hand, and

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 13-14.

its inherent variability, on the other. They ask further: what does secular actually mean? What does it entail? Is it variable? What are the conditions of this variability? Does place or time matter when defining such a term? How does transnationalism complicate the secular? Is it possible to be spiritual and secular? And what is the relationship between spirituality and religion?

#### *Part IV: A Cinematic Comparison*

In thinking through *Dividing Line*'s relationship to Partition historiography, it is tempting to draw certain parallels to Indian cinema, specifically to the recent discussions and debates around the rise of the 'Partition-film' as a genre of cinematic production in India, Pakistan and the South Asian diaspora. This is because the 'Partition-film' is also unstable and complex and has become a contested site of historical and ideological negotiation, constitutive of what Bhaskar Sarkar has argued in his book *Mourning the Nation* are 'the deep social contradictions in South Asia.'<sup>65</sup> It is useful, therefore, to detour slightly into the realm of Partition and Indian cinema to elucidate further the unique and productive relationship between Zarina's work and Partition and raise more questions, more possibilities for the analysis of her practice.

Partition has admittedly maintained a persistent relationship with Indian cinema since 1947, even though representing Partition in any kind of direct fashion logically entails the negotiation of a fragile terrain of history and memory, as well as the navigation of a series of 'ethical problems' closely associated with resurrecting images of violence and brutality still fresh in the minds of many South Asian communities.<sup>66</sup> Sarkar has located several allusions (both

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<sup>65</sup> Sarkar 263.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 47; 171.

overt and subtle) to Partition within Indian cinema, as early as, the late 1940s; he contends that cinema became a collective space of mourning for Indian society and, moreover, stands today as an index of Partition's widespread and deep-seeded impact on Indian society and Indian social consciousness.<sup>67</sup> Undoubtedly a reflection of this, the 'Partition-film' has also helped fuel a kind of 'Partition-industry' in India and Pakistan at the turn of the twenty-first century, identifiable as a relatively recent phenomenon related to globalization and religious nationalism in the region in various ways.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, the 'Partition-film' also calls up a history of collective trauma, the crisis of representation prompted by Partition, as well as an awareness of our present socio-political conditions on the Indian subcontinent, its persistent social, political and communal unrest.

Scholars of South Asian cinema have nevertheless hesitated from defining the 'Partition-film' in categorical terms. Comprising such films as *Train to Pakistan* (1997), *Earth* (1998), *Hey Ram* (2000), *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001) and *Pinjar* (2003), the category is formalistically varied or unstable like Partition historiography itself and, therefore, somewhat difficult to pin down. The 'Partition-film' has perhaps most consistently been conceived of as a kind of 'counter-genre' to the more popular Indian 'nationalist-film,' one that privileges themes of breakage and rupture in its narrative as opposed to feelings of compassion, nostalgia and pride.<sup>69</sup> In some cases like Yash Chopra's *Veer-Zaara* (2004), it has taken the form of the 'border-film' enabling its audience, as Aparna Sharma contends in her essay 'My Brother, My Enemy: Crossing the Line of Control through Documentary,' 'to confront the [Indo-Pakistani border] on

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 19-27.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 259-263.

<sup>69</sup> Natasha Master, *Representing the Unrepresentable: The Bollywood Partition Film*, Thesis, Carleton University, 2009 (Ottawa, ON: Heritage Branch, 2009) 5, 37.

human terms, where the memories, angers and losses of the past co-mingle with the inquisitiveness, biases and a frail, rather vulnerable sense of cohesion performed in the present.<sup>70</sup> More often, though, scholars have noted the prevalence of female-narrative agency and identified such themes as forced separation and the deployment of a destructive military or police form, as consistent tropes within the 'Partition-film.' They have recognized, in other words, the visibility the category on the whole tends to give to the violence specifically aimed against women during this period, the trauma of uprooting and migration as well as the overall failure of the state on both sides of the border that resulted in the onset of social chaos and anarchy.<sup>71</sup>

Despite these difficulties scholars have had in defining the genre, recent debates around the nature and impact of the 'Partition-film' as a genre of cinematic production have nevertheless presented a critical engagement with the genre's contribution to present understanding of Partition in public and academic discourse. Where some scholars like Kavita Daiya in her book, *Violent Belongings*, have acknowledged the importance of such films in '[making] visible a comparatively little known history of violence and mass migration in public spheres around the world,' rupturing visually a rhetoric of silence in their own right, others like Sarkar and Daiya have argued that such films are fiercely problematic for Partition historiography, in that they often fall short of their 'revisionist' potential, '[failing] to deepen our understanding' of Partition history and memory.<sup>72</sup> Sarkar contends that the more market-driven films like *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth* and *Hey Ram*, for instance, often fall victim to the very nationalist ideologies they are

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<sup>70</sup> Aparna Sharma, 'My Brother, My Enemy: Crossing the Line of Control Through Documentary,' *Filming the Line of Control*, Meenakshi Bharat, Nirmal Kumar, eds (London: Routledge, 2008) 141.

<sup>71</sup> Master 37-38; Sarkar 263-264.

<sup>72</sup> Kavita Daiya, *Violent Belongings* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2008) 57-63; Sarkar 282.

attempting to critique, to a sensationalism and spectacularization of Partition violence or to its opposite, a dangerous banality inherent to the '[reproduction of] stock dramatic situations with stereotypical characters.'<sup>73</sup> In this sense, if Zarina's work has tended to raise more questions than answers around the nature of Partition violence and the writing of Partition history, Sarkar has noted the reverse tendency in these recent films. He argues they dangerously resolve Partition or reduce it to a 'finite or aberrant episode,' to 'nostalgic invocations of nationalist history' or to an established iconography of riots, trains full of corpses, and forced abduction that effectively 'erase the particularities of 1947,' in favor of a more monolithic understanding of Partition history.<sup>74</sup>

Now, this is not to say that there have not been recent films within the genre of the 'Partition-film' to engage with the legacy of Partition violence in bold and productive ways. Sarkar follows up his relentless critique of *Train to Pakistan*, *Earth* and *Hey Ram* with praise for films like *Naseem* (1995) and *Way Back Home* (2003), an Urdu fictional feature and Bengali documentary, respectively, which he argues stray from cinematic spectacle. According to Sarkar, these films offer, in a manner similar to Zarina in *Dividing Line*, a powerful albeit more subtle entry point into Partition's traumatic past via a critical attention to the 'entanglement of memory and history,' and to the layered, divergent and marginal histories, to the conflicts internal to the self that comprise this period of extended violence and trauma.<sup>75</sup> This to me raises only more questions around the nature of Zarina's practice and suggests, furthermore, that it is perhaps this seemingly endless dialectic that is precisely the central point. What Zarina's *Dividing Line*

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<sup>73</sup> Sarkar 275-282

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 286.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 286-297.

potentially represents is thus a model of critique, an aesthetic mode with which to visually interrogate Partition history and memory that circumnavigates the pitfalls or limits of reductionism.

*Conclusion:*

By taking Partition—what I have characterized as a very powerful and unique process of territorial and social fracture in the twentieth century—as a critical point of departure for the analysis of Zarina’s *Dividing Line*, this paper has, in one sense, endeavored to open a dialogue around the place of Partition in the analysis of modern and contemporary South Asian art, a subject vastly underexplored. In another sense, however, this paper has also attempted to think through and unfurl the artist’s relationship to the historiography of Partition, to raise questions around what the artist or the visual arts can uniquely contribute to the writing of a history of Partition in the present. In this vein, I have considered Zarina’s practice in relation to the many contradictions and tensions at the heart of Partition historiography and have argued that Zarina’s visual language both embraces and responds to this vexed historical terrain. I have asserted, moreover, that Zarina’s use of cartography and abstraction in *Dividing Line* quite powerfully displays a capacity to recognize and accept the disparities separating Partition ‘history’ and ‘memory,’ a dominant chasm in present historiography; that the print, in effect, makes visible contending histories of Partition in a way that attempts neither to reconcile nor resolve them necessarily. I have also contextualized *Dividing Line* in terms of the contentious debates surrounding secularism on the Indian subcontinent in an effort to further elucidate the ways in which Zarina powerfully privileges irresolution in her engagement with Partition history. I have argued, more specifically, that Zarina’s practice can in turn be read as a critical threshold for the

negotiation of this history, situated as it is between the tensions and contradictions that Partition and Partition historiography naturally embody. Finally, in comparing *Dividing Line* to the category of the 'Partition-film,' I have shown how Zarina's practice presents a model of critique, how it invites an endlessly dialectical process that makes visible contradictions through dialogue itself. Her work, I believe, has the capacity to challenge and unsettle fixed understandings of the history of Partition in the most powerful and productive of ways.

## Images

Figure A: Zarina Hashmi, *Dividing Line*, Woodcut printed in black on handmade Indian paper, mounted on Arches Cover white paper, 25.50 x. 19.5 in (sheet size), 17 x 12 in (image size), 2001.

Figure B: Zarina Hashmi, *Father's House 1898-1994*, Etching printed in black on Arches Cover buff paper, 30 x 22 in (sheet size), 22.50 x 15.50 in (image size), 1994.

Figure C: Zarina Hashmi, *Homes I Made/ A Life in Nine Lines*, Portfolio of nine etchings and one cover plate printed in black on Arches Cover white paper, Chine Colle on handmade Nepalese paper, 21.3 x 19 ins (sheet size), 14 x 13 in (plate), 1997.

Figure D: Zarina Hashmi, *Delhi*, Portfolio of three woodcuts printed in black on handmade Nepalese paper, mounted on Arches Cover white paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in (sheet size), 17 x 13 in (image size), 2000.

Figure E: Zarina Hashmi, *Atlas of My World*, Portfolio of six woodcuts with Urdu text printed in black on handmade Indian paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in (sheet size), variable (image size), 2001.

Figure F: Zarina Hashmi, *...these cities blotted into wilderness*, Portfolio of nine woodblock prints and Urdu text on Okawara paper, mounted on Somerset paper, 16 x 14 in (sheet size), variable (image size), 2003.

Figure G: Zarina Hashmi, *Atlas of My World IV*, Woodcut with Urdu text printed in black on handmade Indian paper, 25.5 x 19.5 in (sheet size), 16.75 x. 13.50 in (image size), 2001.

Figure H: Zarina Hashmi, *Earth, Moon, Sun, Stars*, four woodcuts from larger portfolio *Home is a Foreign Place* (1999) with Urdu text printed in black on handmade Indian paper, 16 x 13 in (sheet size), 8 x 6 in (image size), 1999.

Figure I: Zarina Hashmi, *Home is a Foreign Place*, Portfolio of thirty-six woodcuts with Urdu text printed in black on handmade Indian paper, 16 x 13 in (sheet size), 8 x 6 in (image size), 1999.

Figure J: Zarina Hashmi, *Tasbih (Prayer Beads) IV*, Maple wood with gold leaf and leather cord, 249 in long, 1.5 x 0.5 in (each unit), 2008.

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