Mapping the South Asian feminist resistance narrative : from the body to real spaces

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**NANYANG
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SINGAPORE

**MAPPING THE SOUTH ASIAN FEMINIST RESIS-
TANCE NARRATIVE: FROM THE BODY TO REAL
SPACES**

**NATASHA RAJ
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES**

2021

**MAPPING THE SOUTH ASIAN FEMINIST
RESISTANCE NARRATIVE: FROM THE
BODY TO REAL SPACES**

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A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Tech-
nological University in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of Master
of Arts

2021

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SUMMARY

This thesis navigates the process through which narratives of gendered violence written by women can come to be narratives of resistance to the treatment of the female body in South Asia. It focusses on two texts by South Asian female writers that span over two decades - *What the Body Remembers* (1999) by Shauna Singh Baldwin, and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by Arundhati Roy. These texts are placed in conversation with one another while drawing heavily upon Rosi Braidotti's theories of female subjectivity and posthumanism, as well as Foucauldian approaches to the female body and heterotopia. In doing so, this thesis traces a cartography of thought by establishing a discourse of female subjectivity that begins with an understanding of how the South Asian female is embodied, and concludes with an exploration of how heterotopic spaces function as sites of alterity, thereby playing a pivotal role in the process of meaningful subject-making for those marginalised and oppressed by South Asian patriarchy.

Chapter One

1.1. Mapping The South Asian Feminist Resistance Narrative: From the Body to Real Spaces

This thesis explores how narratives of gendered violence written by women function as narratives of resistance to the politicisation of the South Asian female body. I will be focussing on two texts by South Asian female writers that span over two decades - *What the Body Remembers* (1999) by Shauna Singh Baldwin, and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by Arundhati Roy. I have placed these texts in dialogue with one another because they establish a discourse of female subjectivity that begins from a navigation of embodiment and ends with an exploration of how real spaces can function as sites for the sustainment of female subjectivity.

I intend to situate both texts within the context of the South Asian feminist “resistance narrative” to situate the position of the South Asian female subject, which both mirrors and leads into the carving out concrete spaces of alterity that exist as active sites of resistance and community for those who do not conform to South Asian patriarchy.

This thesis will therefore be divided into three main sections. The first section will focus on *What the Body Remembers* (hereafter *Body*) because it extensively traces the trajectory of how women can take the agency to configure their own subjectivity within South Asian patriarchal oppression. In particular, I will be focussing on how the text addresses female disability and disfigurement, with particular emphasis on how this influences relationships between women. Reading a pattern of narratives of disability and disfigurement within the context of the history of gendered violence enacted upon women’s bodies in India indicates a textual inheritance of trauma through the use of disability to narratively reenact violated female bodies. For example, the brutality that women were subject to during the 1947 Partition of India included “mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia...amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping, of course; killing foetuses” (Menon and Bhasin, 43, qtd. in Misri).

It is first necessary to clarify that I will not be analysing these female bodies using a critical framework derived from Disability Studies. This is because this thesis is situated within the context of the violated female body produced by a history of gendered violence. I therefore intend to focus on

the historical and political aspect of the violated female body, which I will be approaching using Rosi Braidotti's theory of teratology because this applies itself better to the specific posthuman and political/historical position that this thesis takes. Ultimately, the argument that I am making is that the spectre of the violated and disfigured female body is embedded in the *historical* female consciousness of South Asia, and these texts reenact this through narratives of disfigured and disabled female bodies. I will be referring to these specific *textual* bodies when I use the terms "disfigured" or "disabled", and not the reality of disabled and disfigured women in South Asia. Kim Q. Hall posits that:

Feminist disability studies, like the gendered disabled body, is more than a sum of its parts. Just as disability studies shows how disability is irreducible to bodily impairment, feminist theory shows how gender is irreducible to biological sex...As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson observes...feminist disability studies reimagines disability (2005, 1557). And, I would assert, it also reimagines gender." (Hall 1)

Naturally, feminist disability studies centres its discussion around reimagining the subjectivity of the female subject who lives with disability. This perspective is reinforced by Hall when she argues, "[w]ithin feminist disability studies, exploring conceptual and lived connections between gender and disability helps to make visible the historical and ongoing interrelationship between all forms of oppression" (Hall 4). This thesis, however, concerns itself with using the repressed and disfigured female bodies which recur in both narratives as a metaphor for the oppression of the female self within South Asian patriarchy. In this sense, while I do not seek to exclude women with disabilities from its discussion, I instead seek to use such disfigurement as a means of reimagining and positioning a more general South Asian female subject (whether she is intersex, hijra, heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied or with disability). Ultimately, as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues, "[f]eminist disability studies wants to unsettle tired stereotypes about people with disabilities. It seeks to challenge our dominant assumptions about living with a disability. It situates the disability experience in the context of rights and exclusions" (Garland-Thomson 1). It therefore would not do feminist disability studies justice to use it in this thesis, which concerns itself with the concepts of posthumanism, heterotopia and narratives of resistance because disability and disfigurement is treated as a metaphor for the wider position of women within South Asian patriarchy.

In Susan Stanford Friedman's "The Return of the Repressed in Women's Narrative", she posits, "[r]eading women's narrative as the 'return of the repressed,' I want to suggest, means reading psycho-politically - seeing women's writing as an insistent record, a web, a palimpsest, a rune, a disguise - of what has not or cannot be spoken directly because of the external and internalised censors of patriarchal social order" (Friedman 142). This is significant when read within the context of a recurring pattern of disabled and disfigured female characters in narratives of Partition and gendered violence written by South Asian women, such as in the texts that I will be addressing. It reflects a sense of anxiety, unease, and unresolved trauma surrounding the treatment of female bodies during periods of communal violence. Building off Friedman's point of women's writing as a "record" which cannot be "spoken directly", I therefore argue that the violated female bodies of gendered communal violence manifest themselves narratively through disabled and disfigured female characters who function as a means of echoing and enacting the countless violated female bodies of South Asian history.

This will then lead into a framework that both deconstructs and extensively explores the process of positioning the female self within patriarchy, focussing upon the Foucauldian notion of autopoiesis (self-production), and how this ties into the process of engendering femininity, biological or otherwise, which functions as a means of resistance to South Asian patriarchy. Having extensively laid out the process through which narratives can engage with and construct female subjectivity, I will then move into an exploration of the space within which such engagement can occur. This is because South Asian patriarchy remains an unsuitable medium within which female subjectivity can be sustained because women and their bodies are persistently and historically reduced to symbolic sites of cultural inscription and honour, regulated by violence. Essentially, "the identity of a community" within the patriarchal landscape of South Asia "is constructed on the bodies of women" (Kannabiran 32). This means that a woman's body represents "the symbolic space of the nation" and, therefore, is "a political artefact, produced through acts of violence" (Menon 46). It is therefore imperative that women are able to engage with and exist within active sites of alterity that do not conform to these rules of patriarchy so that their resistance and positioning of themselves can be sustained and viable.

It should be noted that when this thesis refers to the general term ‘South Asian culture’, it is this specific oppressively patriarchal aspect of it that is being referred to.

As a result, it is only necessary that such spaces of alterity must exist, both as a site of resistance, and so that communities can exist outside of deeply ingrained South Asian patriarchy. On this note, my section on *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (hereafter *Happiness*) will explore how resistance narratives take the step towards the construction of Foucauldian heterotopic sites of alterity that function as sustainable spaces within which the subjectivity of women and those who do not conform to South Asian patriarchy is both valid and can be constructed. I chose to focus on the Foucauldian ‘heterotopia’ specifically because it is defined as an existing space that is ‘other’ to the one that it resides within. This emphasis on ‘otherness’ provides a nuanced perspective on the function of such a space because it allows for both a juxtaposition with the mainstream patriarchal space of South Asia, as well as a configuration of its own ‘otherness’ along its own terms, as it is a site of absolute alterity, as opposed to ‘other’ to something. This would therefore provide some perspective on how women writers in the region can and do project heterotopic communities, not merely as spaces that exist in the narrative imagination, but as spaces that could potentially exist, which I will focus my final section of this thesis on. This thesis therefore addresses how women can resist South Asian patriarchy through narrative, with particular emphasis on tracing the cartography of thought that leads the process of female self-production into the process of producing sustainable heterotopic sites that exist alongside (and outside) patriarchy as a means of presenting alternative spaces of living that account for female subjectivity and agency.

1.2. Approaches: Resistance Narratives, Docility & Posthumanism

I will first establish the necessary critical frameworks that I will be using, beginning with a breakdown of my approach to the concept of the very notion of a ‘Resistance Narrative’, which will function as a point of return over the course of this thesis. This will be done with reference to Arundhati Roy’s approach to resistance narratives, which she addresses both implicitly and explicitly in her nonfiction. I have pieced together her perspective on such narratives over the course of several of her political essays collected in the anthology, *My Seditious Heart* (hereafter *Heart*). This thesis will adapt Roy’s perspective and apply it to evaluating and approaching *feminist* resistance narratives. Fol-

lowing this, I will briefly conceptualise Michel Foucault's "docile bodies" in his text, *Discipline and Punish* to inform an understanding of how the South Asian female body is configured both culturally and narratively. Finally, I will provide an extensive outline of Rosi Braidotti's rhizomatic approach to posthumanism, which lays the foundation for my project's critical approach and stance. Essentially, this thesis intends to conclude on a note that interrogates the function, evolution and direction of feminist "resistance narratives" in an increasingly posthuman culture.

'Resistance Narratives': Fiction as Feminist Praxis

Since the release of her first novel, *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy has made a name for herself as an anti-imperialist political activist with a prolific body of work. She has written over forty political essays in response to global imperialism, patriarchy, nationalism, and capitalism, among many other issues, which have been anthologised in the collection of essays, *My Seditious Heart*. As she spent over two decades writing back to South Asian imperialism as a form of resistance, I therefore intend to use her approach and rationale behind the very act of writing as resistance to lay the groundwork for this project's understanding of and approach to the resistance narrative. Her prodigious amount of work in constructing resistance narratives demonstrates an extent of faith in its success in doing that which it is expected to achieve - 'resist'. With this in mind, I pieced together three key aspects of Roy's approach to and perspective on the resistance narrative, which is contained within several of her essays collected in the aforementioned anthology, which I have then put together in this section. I will be explaining Roy's approach in the terms that she uses, in relation to general oppressive structures of power. However, it is necessary to clarify that this thesis will specifically be addressing South Asian patriarchy as the main power structure that these narratives resist.

First and foremost, as a writer, Roy suggests that she engages in the act of resistance writing because it is the means through which she is able to express herself. In her foreword, she posits, "I wrote because it became easier to do that than to put up with the angry, persistent hum of my own silence." (Roy, *Heart* 1) Writing in response to injustice therefore becomes a means of self-expression. This perspective is also reflected in her essay, "The End of Imagination", where she confides, "[s]ometimes I need to write to think" (Roy, *Heart* 9). These two ideas work in tandem to present how the politicised resistance narrative, on a personal level, functions quite simply as a means for the

writer to personally engage with and respond to issues that they hold important, or that they have a visceral reaction to - such as Roy's "angry persistent hum". This is, of course, the most simplistic layer to the resistance narrative's function. However, I argue that this does not make it any less important because it demonstrates the human impulse to resist and respond to dominant and oppressive power structures in a manner that engages with the self and the act of 'writing the self'. She is, after all, deploying her own anger and vitriol in the writing process. Since this thesis intends to trace the trajectory and effectiveness of the 'resistance narrative' and how it has evolved as we transition into a more posthuman world, this base level impulse is of pertinent relevance to the first text that I am analysing, *Body*. This is because it demonstrates the impulsive and instinctive aspect of the resistance narrative, i.e. the point of resistance within a narrative before it has actually been deliberately mobilised as a means of dissent. In my section on *Body*, I will be delving further into this idea of writing the self, or 'autopoiesis', using both Foucault's ideas and Braidotti's arguments on Posthumanism and Nomadic Subjectivity.

Secondly, Roy argues that writing is an ethical responsibility for the writer who bears witness to power structures that oppress. She argues, "[t]he trouble is that once you see it, you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out. there's no innocence. Either way, you're accountable" (Roy, *Heart* 109). This is a crucial aspect of the resistance narrative - it puts forth the potentially controversial notion that to stay silent in the face of oppression is to be on the side of the oppressor. Essentially, then, Roy's argument here is that, firstly, the writer who bears witness and has a voice must speak up to voice injustices - she argues that it is the moral duty of the writer. In doing so, it becomes clear that a resistance narrative must take sides by virtue of its very nature. She asserts her points, and adds on to it, interrogating, "is it mandatory for a writer to be ambiguous about everything?...Isn't it true, or at least theoretically possible, that there are times in the life of a people or nation when the political climate demand that we - even the most sophisticated of us - take sides?" (Roy, *Heart* 112). She places bearing witness together with taking a side and making a stance against oppressive power structures, ultimately arguing that resistance writing is the moral duty of the writer - "writing", she says. "just happens to be the most effective thing I can do" (Roy, *Heart* 119). Roy even provides an example of such complicity in an alto-

gether different essay, “Democracy: Who is She When She’s at Home?”. Here, she addresses the 2002 Gujarat Riots, where Muslims were the target of nationalistic Hindu violence. She argues, “the state is criminally culpable. And the state acts in the name of its citizens. So, as a citizen, I am forced to acknowledge that I am somehow made complicit in the Gujarat pogrom” (Roy, *Heart* 164). It is therefore morally conscionable that the writer with a voice, who is rendered complicit either as a citizen, or as a witness, bring such injustice “into the realm of common understanding” (Roy, *Heart* 124). On this note, this second point outlines how the resistance narrative takes on a deliberate edge, where it is equipped with the means through which the writer is both able to “take [a] side” and engage the reader in the act of also bearing witness to such injustice, so as to spread the moral responsibility that comes with awareness. In doing so, the resistance narrative’s function has moved beyond the personal and to a level that indicates an engagement with political praxis because it bears the intent of engaging with and mobilising the reader to action. As I move into my analysis of both texts, it will be evident how each text engages differently with this aspect of the resistance narrative - *Body* does so on a far more implicit level than *Happiness*.

The final aspect that I will be addressing over the course of this thesis is how the resistance narrative is, directly, writing as a form of political praxis, which is closely related to the previous point. In her essay, “Come September”, Roy directly addresses the relationship between writing and structures of power, with particular focus on fiction. She suggests:

Fiction and non-fiction are only different techniques of storytelling...The theme of much of what I write, fiction as well as non-fiction, is the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless, circular conflict they’re engaged in...my writing is not really about nations and histories, it’s about power. About the paranoia and ruthlessness of power. About the physics of power. I believe that the accumulation of vast unfettered power by a state of a country, a corporation or an institution...regardless of ideology, results in excesses such as the ones I will recount here. (Roy, *Heart* 187)

When we strip the resistance narrative down to its bare function - a mode of resistance to power, it becomes evident that when it is deliberately engaged with and mobilised by the writer, it functions as the process through which power structures are exposed and the oppression that they en-

gage with is forced into the public consciousness. In an example of this, Roy addresses Empire - “[w]e may not have stopped it in its tracks - yet - but we have stripped it down. We have made it drop its mask...Empire may well go to war but its out in the open now - too ugly to behold its own reflection.” (Roy, *Heart* 225) Roy also expresses this compulsion to resist and express dissent, the very compulsion to mobilise and engage with dissent towards political structures on a large scale, when she advocates for “a new kind of politics. Not the politics of governance, but the politics of resistance. The politics of opposition. The politics of forcing accountability.” (Roy, *Heart* 124). This delineates the very function and purpose of the resistance narrative, as an inscription of the “politics of resistance”, which is crucial to the very notion of a politics of resistance because it accounts for the recording of this resistance, both for the purpose of exposure and spreading awareness, and for the purpose of bearing witness to and accounting for the existence of dissent and resistance to the structures of power that are responsible for oppression.

“Docile Bodies”: The Expectation of Female Docility in South Asian Phallocentric Culture

At this point, it is necessary to hone in on South Asian patriarchy as the specific power structure that this thesis focusses on, with specific reference to Michel Foucault’s concept of “docile bodies”, as it informs an understanding of how the female body relates to patriarchy. Foucault establishes the notion of “docile bodies” in *Discipline and Punish*, where he posits that “[a] body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 136). In effect, the “docile body” is also that which can be moulded and shaped according to the expectation and requirement of the system of power that is acting upon it. As Foucault puts it, the “docile body” is “something that can be made; out of a formless clay”, and is both “pliable” and can be “manipulated, shaped, trained” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135-6). These characteristics of the “docile body” are reflected in the position and expectation of the female body in South Asian patriarchy.

V.G. Julia Rajan’s work on violence and body image among South Asian women observes how “[t]he theoretical beliefs of patriarchy are *manifested physically in the community through the medium of the female body*. The regulated masculine control of women’s bodies (and therefore women’s sexuality) allows for the production of consistent moral norms that support the code of

shame and honour underscoring South Asian traditions” (Rajan 95, emphasis my own). In doing so, Rajan demonstrates how the female body is positioned in South Asian society such that it remains an open and malleable entity that is utterly receptive to patriarchal expectations and requirements of it. She then elaborates:

[b]ecause these beliefs have been associated with South Asian traditions over the centuries, they have gained a symbolic moral significance and credibility that renders them proper and customary. Hence, the subjugation of women, through truly a social process, has attained the representation as being correct and normal in the traditional framework of South Asian society. (Rajan 95)

Ultimately, then, the relationship between patriarchy and the female body has been legitimised as ‘tradition’, which means that the South Asian female body is institutionally required to be the “medium” through which patriarchy is practised and enacts itself.

I want to draw particular attention to Foucault’s use of the term “used” with reference to the “docile body”. When reading this within the overtly oppressive patriarchal structure in South Asia, it is evident that this notion of being “used”, i.e. the female body’s usability, is what underscores its *worth* as a “docile body”. This is because a female body that can be “*used*” is both the product *and* enabler of gendered violence. In other words, the function of “usability” is such that a fully “docile body” can be used, and therefore violated/controlled/owned in its entirety.

Significantly, however, disabled and disfigured female bodies that cannot “fully” function also cannot be completely disciplined or controlled by the demands of South Asian patriarchy and its expectations of women. For example, *Body*’s protagonist, Roop, is deaf in one ear. When she is first diagnosed as a child, her father asks, “‘Who will take you now?’ ... ‘What rich man will marry a girl with one ear?’” (Baldwin 72). Her disabled body’s worth is therefore immediately measured in terms of her place within the patriarchal order that necessitates she get married and become someone’s wife. Upon her eventual marriage, Roop reflects, “*What is the use of having even one ear if not to obey? ... Because Roop cannot listen and obey like other women, she also has trouble remembering*”. (Baldwin 189). It is therefore necessary for a wife to have two hearing ears because it means she will be fully attuned to her husband - her body and its functionality is not for her. Since Roop only has one work-

ing ear, her body cannot be fully manipulated (used) for the purpose of perpetrating the dominant patriarchal order that requires the absolute obedience of wives because such a body cannot be entirely “docile” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135).

Elizabeth Grosz posits that “[f]or Foucault, the body is penetrated by networks and regimes of power-knowledge that actively mark and produce it as such: the body seems to be passive raw data manipulated and utilised by various systems of social and self-constitution” (Grosz 122).

It is therefore significant that this thesis analyses narratives that feature female protagonists with some variation of disability or disfigurement, because this ultimately disrupts the body’s “docility”. As a result, the body can no longer be “mark[ed] and produce[d]” in its entirety, thereby potentially restricting the control and access of existing power structures, specifically phallocentrism, to the female body. And it is then arguable that, paradoxically perhaps, disability or disfigurement actually aids in the articulation of a space for developing counter-hegemonic agency.

Posthumanism: Navigating South Asian Female Subjectivity

I will first clarify my intention behind choosing posthumanism as the critical lens through which I intend to evaluate resistance narratives. Firstly, the type of resistance narrative that I am analysing expresses dissent towards South Asian patriarchy and phallocentrism. Returning to the previous section, it is important to recognise that the South Asian female subject’s relationship to patriarchy is mediated through her body, which is the conduit through which she performs the docility that is expected of her. The function of the *feminist* resistance narrative, therefore, is to both express dissent and deconstruct this paradigm so as to effectively resist it. In order to do so, I argue that the resistance narrative must explore and present a different way of configuring the female body and female subjectivity outside of patriarchy.

In her essay, “Posthuman Critical Theory” Rosi Braidotti argues that “the posthuman predicament enforces the necessity to think again and to think harder about the status of human subjectivity and the ethical relations, norms and values that may be worthy of the complexity of our times” (Braidotti, “Posthuman Critical Theory” 13). When considering the status and position of women within the context of gendered violence in South Asian patriarchal history, I therefore decided that an approach that re-imagines and re-centers female subjectivity (or lack thereof) would be a valu-

able means through which the resistance narrative should broach the historically and narratively disabled female subject. As Braidotti frequently asserts in her body of work, “the term ‘human’ is not a neutral term but rather a hierarchical one that indexes access to privileges and entitlements” (Braidotti, “Posthuman Critical Theory” 15). She then expands, “[c]lass, race, gender and sexual orientations, age and able-bodiedness are more than ever significant markers of human ‘normality’. They are key factors in framing the notion of and policing access to something we may call ‘humanity’ (Braidotti, “Posthuman Critical Theory” 24). I therefore argue that the privileged subject status of ‘human’ is one conditionally rewarded to specific women in South Asian society, depending upon factors such as religion, class/caste, and her deference to phallogocentric culture.

Braidotti lays out her posthuman approach as one which “combines Foucauldian genealogies with feminist politics of location to provide embodied and embedded accounts of the multilayered and complex relations of power that structure our ‘being human’” (Braidotti, “Posthuman Critical Theory” 15). Her rhizomatic approach, derived from Deleuzian philosophy, creates the necessary space for nuance and exceptions when approaching broad and contentious subjects such as the South Asian female body. Braidotti’s subject is in a constant state of change. In *Metamorphosis: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (hereafter *Metamorphosis*) she posits that her “starting-point” is “not to know who we are, but rather what, at last, we want to become, how to represent mutations, changes and transformations, rather than Being in its classical modes” (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 2). If the human subject is already understood to “[B]e” ontologically unstable because “change” is an understood condition of active “[B]eing”, what more of the South Asian female subject whose very status as “human” is volatile at best and unacknowledged at worst? The subjectivity of the multiply ontologically unstable female is further complicated by the introduction of disability to these narratives. I therefore argue that Braidotti’s approach to the posthuman and the representation of the subject as “in permanent process of transition, hybridisation and nomadization”, which are “in-between states and stages” that “defy the established modes of theoretical representation” (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 2) is especially relevant to the multiplied instability of the narratively disabled South Asian woman’s position. The looseness of positionality and subjectivity in Braidotti’s approach creates the necessary space for the resistance narrative to navigate the unstable, narratively disabled South Asian female.

Kumkum Sangari advocates for a “more sensitive feminist historiography, a reinfection of culture that can keep radical alternatives open for an integrative political praxis” (Sangari 1999).

Braidotti's critical approach to posthumanism necessitates such cartography of thought. She posits that:

[t]he first critical parameter...is the rejection of ‘closed systems of thought’, which already pre-empt the conclusion of what a transition to a posthuman world may look like. I do not think we are justified in taking the posthuman as an intrinsically liberatory or progressive category, nor can we embrace the equation between the ‘posthuman’ and post-power/gender/race/class positions, without taking into account enduring power differentials. (Braidotti, “Posthuman Critical Theory” 17)

Accounting for power structures is therefore central when approaching posthumanism from a feminist and South Asian perspective.

As Md. Monirul Islam contends, “the precise problem with the decentring of man in posthumanism” is, “when some people have not been considered and treated as humans, posthumanism serves as an alibi for further denial of humanity to these same people” (Islam 122). This underscores a central concern of postcolonial studies with regards to posthumanism. It essentially returns to the notion of the category and status of “human” as one that indexes power, and that is controlled and decided by prevailing power structures. Significantly, however, Braidotti’s critical approach to posthumanism resists the notion of a “conclusion of what a transition to a posthuman world may look like”. I contend that this provides the blueprint to navigating posthumanism within the South Asian and feminist context. It places the critical and theoretical focus on the notion of “being” and “progress”. Essentially, it allows a re-navigation and reconstruction of what having subject status means to the postcolonial female Other by deconstructing, undermining and potentially eradicating the notion of human as a precursor to being a subject. Braidotti’s approach does not presume that to be Posthuman is to be *beyond* human - it merely necessitates a reconfiguration of the very notion of “human”, allowing for a new and valid form of subjectivity. The resistance to “conclusions” allows for new critical freedom. Islam suggests that “[t]he emphasis” in posthumanism “is on achieving freedom of thought (from the constraints imposed by humanistic discourses) and *freedom from the limita-*

tions of the body” (Islam 118). “[T]he limitations of the body” is particularly relevant to the South Asian female because of the constraints and policing of her body imposed by phallogentric culture that claims ownership of her body. As Pal Ahluwalia succinctly urges, “[i]t is important to consider whether to be Posthumanist entails a renunciation of the human or that it means an escape from the very confines and constraints of a universal subject” (Ahluwalia 135).

Braidotti’s approach evidently works in line with Ahluwalia’s latter notion of posthumanism, wherein it entails a reconfiguration, restructuring and, ultimately, eradication of a “universal” human subject. In order to both resist “universalization” and establish a dialogue with the notion of “human” as an “index to power”, it is therefore necessary to adopt a critical approach that accounts for nuance and exception when navigating posthumanism from a postcolonial and feminist perspective. With this in mind, it is imperative to consistently return to Islam’s concluding point that while “[c]ritical posthumanism may be a way forward for post-colonial studies, especially, Rosi Braidotti’s version of ‘critical post-humanism.’”, “[i]f the human subaltern cannot speak in the postcolonial world, the possibility of them being heard in the posthuman world becomes a distant cry; with the removal of the category of the human from the discursive space, even the possibility of speaking about the human subaltern is foreclosed” (Islam 128). This reconciles with Arundhati Roy’s previous argument pertaining to resistance narratives. She argues that the resistance narrative must emerge because it is the ethical responsibility of the witness to the oppression of power structures to speak out and expose them. Based on this understanding, the resistance narrative provides a response to this limitation of posthumanism because it functions as the means through which oppression is exposed and political praxis is enacted in writing.

Having established the posthuman perspective from which I intend to approach these resistance narratives, I will hone in Rosi Braidotti’s theoretical perspective on Teratology, which is derived from her work on posthumanism, as the means through which I will broach disability and disfigurement. In *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (hereafter *Nomadic Subjects*), Braidotti defines the discourse of monsters as “the history and philosophy of the biological sciences, and their relation to difference and to different bodies. *Monsters are human beings who are born with congenital malformations of their bodily organism. They also repre-*

sent the in between, the mixed, the ambivalent” (Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* 77, emphasis my own).

This therefore provides some context to the aspect of monstrosity that I am addressing. It creates a criterion to understanding monstrosity as both a “malformation” of the body, and concerning the “in between”. The monstrous is therefore simultaneously disfigured and an occupant of a liminal identity. Braidotti’s argument that “the monstrous as a borderline figure blurs the boundaries between hierarchically established distinctions...In other words, the monstrous triggers the recognition of a sense of multiplicity contained within the same entity” (Braidotti, *M:TMT* 204) is of particular relevance when read within the context of motherhood and maternity. In delving into the liminality of the monstrous identity, Braidotti’s analysis indicates that monstrosity opens up the potential for multiple possibilities within a singular because of how it plays with preconceived notions of the self, particularly in this instance, the *female* self. Since bodily disability and disfigurement are subsumed under this category of “*malformations*”, I argue that the porous liminality of the monstrous identity of the mother translates to a fear of the inheritance of monstrosity. If motherhood is irrevocably already connected to female monstrosity, and the mothers in the texts that I will analyse possess the monstrous trait of being “malformed” in some aspect, then this points to a doubling of the anxiety surrounding the notion of daughters inheriting the monstrous identities of their mothers. This is because monstrosity blurs lines, including the boundary between self and other, and opens up potential for multiplicity within singularities (such as maternal reproduction). Braidotti therefore posits that:

[t]his problem with boundaries and differentiation is at the core of the mother-daughter question...Any daughter, that is, any woman, has a self that is not completely individuated but rather is constitutively connected to another woman - her mother...Who is the monster? The mother or the self? Or does the monstrosity lie in the undecidability of what goes on in between?...The monstrous feminine is precisely the signpost of that structural and highly significant difficulty. (Braidotti, *M:TMT* 205)

Therefore, the complexities of inheritance, monstrosity, disability, and mother-daughter relationships manifests itself textually in the problematic mother-daughter dyads in both texts, wherein the transgressive, “monstrous” and un-“docile” body of the mother is inherited by the daughter. Ultimately, then, the following chapter will outline the paradigm of motherhood, monstrosity, inheritance,

and the (re)production of un-“docile” bodies through maternity. In doing so, it interrogates the potential for this paradigm to function as a narrative mode of resistance to South Asian patriarchy, which demands that female bodies be “docile” and disciplined.

Chapter Two

2.1. *What the Body Remembers: From Monstrosity to Female Heredity*

Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* is a feminist resistance narrative set in Punjab between 1928 to 1947, marking the tensions leading up to, as well as the event of Partition itself. *Body*’s narrative is inherently tied to a discourse of resistance because it is a “feminist historical narrative” that “*contests* both the relative global silencing of sub-continental Partition history and the patriarchalism of colonial and Indian nationalist ideology” (Mann 99-100). Shauna Singh Baldwin herself characterises her novel as “a very feminist book if you define feminism as the radical notion that a woman is a person with human rights, including the right “to own her body”” (Baldwin, qtd. in Mann 107). Her comments here are deceptively simple. Over the course of the narrative, she unravels the patriarchal ownership of women’s “docile” bodies and gives agency, and the right to position one’s own subject-hood to her female protagonists, Roop and Satya. My chapter on *Body* traces this very process of female subject-making in resistance narratives through the metafictional process of “autopoiesis”, which I will further explain in subsequent chapters. To briefly outline my chapter on *Body*, then, my first section will focus on Roop’s disability, which I situate using Foucault’s “docile bodies”. Doing so will set up how women’s bodies are perceived and regulated in South Asian patriarchy. The next section will then address biological maternal reproduction and the unease, anxiety, and patriarchal presence that is inseparable from the mother/daughter relationship. This will be done within the context of the inheritance of the un-docile female monstrous body. Doing so will outline both the process and limitations of narratives of mother/daughter relations as a means of resisting patriarchal expectations of docility. My final section will then move into the process of the autonomous positioning of the female self outside of patriarchy, which is facilitated by the metafictional process of autopoiesis. This explores how maternity and monstrosity work as conduits to engender how women can relate to one another in a manner that moves past the surface and towards a new sort of female hereditariness. Through this, *Body* provides an in-depth outline of the process of the resistance narra-

tive that was established in the previous section - the resistance narrative as an expression of the self, or, autopoiesis.

2.2. Positioning the South Asian Female Subject

Body is swift to establish the premise for the position of women in society, particularly in relation to her sexuality and reproductive capability; “[a] man is pleased...but...a woman is merely cracked open for seeding like the earth before the force of the plough. If she is fertile, good for the farmer, if not, bad for her” (Baldwin 8). Two aspects of this are particularly significant. Firstly, the violence enacted in “cracked open” and “force of the plough” immediately establishes the act of sexual intercourse and subsequent reproduction as a brutal and painful experience for women. Metaphorically, she is reduced to the grounds upon which a farmer “ploughs”, invoking the image of woman as passive property that is to be violently acted upon by men for the sake of reproduction. In other words, the woman is expected to be a “docile body” to be “used” for the sake of the perpetuation of the patriarchy through sexual subjugation and reproduction. Secondly, it is particularly striking that the text does not note her fertility as potentially “good” for her. Her experience with maternity and reproduction is such that if she is infertile, it is “bad for her”, and if she is fertile, then “good for the farmer”, i.e. the man. Notably, this metaphor of the female body as earth to be “plough[ed]” is a recurring one in South Asian society. As Kumkum Roy suggests, “the womb is equated with the field, in which men sow seed” (Roy 17). This coheres with the notion of women as “docile bodies”, because it indicates a passivity and lack of agency to the extent that women are perceived as divorced from the very reproductive process - she is not able to perceive it as “good”.

This deliberate emphasis on the lack of pleasure women derive from sexual intimacy and the disassociation of women from reproduction is reflective of Braidotti’s analysis of teratology and motherhood. She posits, “[o]n the destructive powers of the pregnant woman’s imagination...The pregnant woman literally has the capacity to undo the father’s signature and uncreate life... ‘when the woman looks’ with desire, trouble is never too far off...the lethal gaze of the desiring female expresses a general fear and mistrust of female desire and subjectivity in phallocentric culture” (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 203). Therefore, one of the reasons women are deliberately culturally dissociated from the notion of sexual “pleasure” in Baldwin’s narrative is to reject her capacity for “desire” as a

means of protecting “phallogentric culture”. Women cannot be perceived as desiring subjects because desire functions as a precursor to power and authority, which must always reside in patriarchy and not the female body. Frida Beckman points out, “desire precedes power but can be blocked and regulated by pleasure. If pleasure can block desire and desire precedes power, the logical conclusion would be that pleasure can regulate power” (Beckman 19). Essentially, then, pleasure controls desire, which precedes power. This framework simplifies an understanding of the fear of female sexuality and the denial of sexual pleasure and desire to women. Simply put, the desiring female subject poses a threat to the prevailing patriarchal order. This therefore establishes how female sexuality, maternity, and autonomy are configured in the narrative.

The ideal female in *Body* is a “good-good sweet-sweet girl” (Baldwin 75). This epithet is frequently invoked by those older than Roop in order to persuade her to behave appropriately when she is being particularly stubborn. Since Roop’s “malformation”, her partial deafness, is symbolic of her stubbornness, her inability to live up to being a “good-good sweet-sweet” girl is narratively linked to this. Firstly, the very rhetoric employed in “good-good sweet-sweet” is significant because the repetition renders the turn of phrase childlike and patronising. As Roop continues to model her femininity on living up to being “good-good sweet-sweet”, the very phrasing serves to infantilize her the older she gets. This reinforces the cultural reductiveness and underestimation of women - all she is required and expected to be is contained within the childlike epithet.

Building off this, on the notion of deafness and listening, Roop’s father, who is the text’s central patriarchal figure before Roop gets married, asserts, “[t]here should be no difference” (Baldwin 39) between listening and obeying. This therefore sets up how Roop’s deafness will be situated and treated within the narrative - since she cannot fully listen, she can never be fully obedient. On the day that seven-year-old Roop’s father takes her to the hospital and she is diagnosed as deaf in one ear, he makes her promise him to tell no one of her deafness. That same day, Roop runs off on her own and is harshly disciplined by both her older sister and her father, when they are reunited. The narrative then reflects, “Roop was going to forget to remember her *bachan* (promise) to Papaji and was going to tell Jeevan and Madani [her older brother and sister] about her bad ear, but if they don’t want her to speak, she’ll just keep her *bachan*, pretend she’s listening and obeying like a good-good sweet-sweet

girl with two working ears and who will ever know the difference?” (Baldwin 75). The deliberate nature of “forget[ing] to remember” emphasises both her wilfulness and her autonomy. Furthermore, it is childish and oxymoronic rhetoric that reinforces Roop’s stubbornness as her nature because it calls to attention the fact that she is a child making the transgressive decision to break a promise to her father. It is also significant how on the very day that Roop’s “malformation” is discovered, the narrative immediately draws a connection between her deafness and her inability to be a “good-good sweet-sweet girl”. Since Roop does not have “two working ears”, she will always only be “pretend[ing] that she is “listening and obeying”. Her malformation stops her from genuinely being able to perform the required and expected behaviour of “docile” and obedient women. This is particularly significant within the context of the narrative’s development towards this notion of being “good-good sweet-sweet”.

When Roop becomes Sardarji’s second wife and he asks her to give her baby girl, Pavan, to Satya, his first wife, the narrative reflects, “Roop could fail this test because she isn’t good-good sweet-sweet as Sita; she isn’t generous enough to let Satya have this child” (Baldwin 167). Here, Baldwin conflates being “good-good sweet-sweet” with Sita, the central female figure of the *Ramayana* epic. In Rajeswari Sunder Rajan’s “Is the Hindu Goddess a Feminist?”, she considers the role of mythological figures such as Sita, noting how she forms the basis of “prevalent models of female meekness, subordination and obedience” (Sunder Rajan 35). Rajan then posits how mythological figures such as Sita are often “invoked as explicit role-models in the socialisation of girls” (Sunder Rajan 35). V.G. Julie Rajan reflects a similar perspective when she suggests, “[t]hrough the figure of Sita, the Ramayana forges powerful junctures between women’s proper sexual behaviour, their silence, and representation of ideal beauty” (Rajan 100). Considering Sita as the paragon of feminine virtue and the model of the ideal woman, then, the fact that Roop will never be “good-good sweet-sweet” like Sita essentially means that she will never be able to be the ideal woman that phallocentric culture expects and requires her to be.

Situating “good-good sweet-sweet” within the critical perspective of the “docile body”, it is evident that, Roop’s potential to be “docile” is impeded by her partial deafness. Roop herself reflects, “*Papaji* forgets I am not like other good-good sweet Punjabi girls. I have one bad ear that does not

listen. So sometimes, it cannot obey” (Baldwin 267). Both the narrative and Roop blame her disobedience and stubbornness on her ear that cannot hear - as Roop reflects, it is not that *she* “cannot obey”, but “*it*”, i.e. her ear, which controls her body and her actions because it represents more than itself - it represents her “monstrosity” and capacity to transgress. Using Braidotti’s discourse of teratology, it is the “monstrous” in Roop, her malformation, that ultimately bears the function of preventing Roop from conforming and being a true “good-good sweet-sweet” girl. I argue that the narrative therefore uses Roop’s very body as a means of defence against phallogentric culture. It is the disobedience ingrained in Roop through her corporeal “malformation” that allows her to be more than a “docile” female body. In this sense, then, the narrative has equipped the female body, the very site of oppression through gendered violence and patriarchal proprietorship, with monstrosity through “malformation” as a means of resisting phallogentric requirements and expectations of women (docility).

2.3. Maternity Within The Patriarchal Space

Having established this, then, Roop’s “double-monstrosity” as both a mother and figure of maternity, and as an individual with a bodily “malformation” must be acknowledged in tandem so as to comprehensively explore the anxiety surrounding mother-daughter relationships and alternative forms of female heredity. The text’s trajectory of female inheritance begins with Roop’s mother, whose beauty Roop is said to have inherited. It is also worth noting that Roop’s mother dies while giving birth when Roop herself is a child. When Roop eventually has a daughter of her own, Pavan, they are kept apart because Roop is coerced by *Sardarji* into giving Pavan to Satya, his first wife who cannot conceive.

Eventually, when Pavan is returned to her as a toddler, Roop realises that there is something wrong with her eyes; “Pavan turns her head to the right, her eyes sidle left and she smiles happily” (Baldwin 228). She therefore only looks out of the corner of her eyes. Firstly, the “monstrous” malformation of her body is clearly likened to and derived from Roop’s own “monstrosity”. The narrative reflects, “If there is something wrong with her, there is something wrong with Roop. With the body that made her, shaped her” (Baldwin 229). This recalls Braidotti’s argument on the anxiety surrounding maternity and perceptions of the pregnant woman as monstrous, where she reflects on “the destructive powers of the pregnant woman”, who “has the capacity to undo the father’s

signature” (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 203). The narrative reflects this same perspective - the onus is doubly on Roop, because not only did she birth Pavan, she did so as a “malformed” and “monstrous” body. As previously established, Braidotti also highlights the liminality and “borderline” nature of the monstrous body, which “triggers the recognition of a sense of multiplicity contained within the same entity” (Braidotti *M:TMT* 204). While this opens up the potential for the monstrous maternal body, who contains within herself the potential to create monstrosity within her multiplicity, it also creates a space for potential transgressions. This therefore poses a threat to the ordered, binaric structuring of phallogentric culture that plainly defines “what women are good for” (Baldwin 33).

Early in the narrative, the text establishes how men see “their women” “from the corner of each eye” (Baldwin 43). This is repeatedly asserted in the narrative, such as when Roop concurs, thinking, “men only see women from the corner of their eyes...like horses’ eyes: they do not see what lies directly before them” (Baldwin 47), and, “Jeevan has inherited his eyes from *Papaji*. Like all men, he sees like a horse, blind to things that lie directly before him” (66). Pavan’s “malformation” is therefore a variation on this, and, most significantly as Roop realises, “without turning her head, Pavan sees Roop the way men see their women, from the corners of their eyes” (Baldwin 229). The narrative recalls what was said to Roop as a child because of her own stubbornness, “*boy’s things happening in a girl’s body*” (Baldwin 230). This comparison persists, as Roop tries to resolve Pavan’s “malformation”, “[b]ut still this boy-thing keeps happening in Pavan’s girl-body” (Baldwin 231). The monstrosity that Pavan has inherited from Roop and its connection to the lack of “docility” which is demanded by phallogentricism is highlighted when the narrative acknowledges Roop’s desperation to “fix” Pavan’s eyes “[b]efore she becomes like Roop, a woman with too much ambition, too many expectations - a woman who gives trouble to men” (Baldwin 231). Furthermore, Roop’s rhetoric mirrors her own father’s when he finds out about her partial deafness and worries about who will marry his daughter, when she questions, “[w]ho will ever marry Pavan with such eyes? No one must think her daughter imperfect” (Baldwin 229).

It is particularly significant that Roop realises Pavan is able to “see like a girl” when they “both look in the mirror at the same time and find each other” (Baldwin 229). Firstly, the symbolism of Roop and Pavan “find[ing] each other” through the mirror closely recalls the how “[t]he daughter is

characteristically identified by the mother as her continuation or double” (Reventós 286). Pavan and Roop quite literally are only able to directly relate to each other when they reflect, or “double”, one another. This reinforces the notion of inheritance and the closeness in identification between Pavan and Roop, asserting how Pavan is Roop’s “continuation” or double through the inheritance of monstrosity. Furthermore, Pavan’s capacity to “see like a girl”, Roop deduces, means “[s]he must be born equally boy and girl in this life” (Baldwin 231) which recalls and reinforces the liminality of the monstrous identity.

Ultimately, then, the text attempts to situate Roop and Pavan’s dynamic beyond South Asian patriarchy through the use of monstrosity, which functions as a means of bringing them together through female heredity. It gives both mother and daughter ground upon which they are able to relate with and understand one another as “reflections”. However, I argue that the effectiveness of this is extremely limited because Roop and Pavan still must navigate their relationship through the overarching and all-encompassing context of patriarchy and patriarchal spaces. This is most overt when Roop tries to ‘correct’ Pavan’s way of seeing by slapping her:

She draws back the hand closest to the ear that does not hear and she closes her eyes and slaps Pavan, little Pavan, not yet two and just come back to her...

Like *Nani’s* (grandma’s) cuff to her head. “Ay, learn what women are for!” Like Revati Bhua’s slap for wearing Mama’s sapphire ring, like so many *dhaaps* that women need every so often for-their-own-good...

A dam has risen in a moment...A lake of fear that will stretch and lengthen between Roop and little Pavan, the way it does with any woman who enlightens her daughter early, for-her-own-good. (Baldwin 231-2)

This demonstrates how Roop must mediate her relationship with and treatment of her daughter through patriarchal expectations of the docility of women, which disrupts the mother-daughter dyad. The narrative’s invocation of an echoing and resounding “*dhaap*”, or slap, that mother-figures inflict upon daughters, points to how it is the duty of mothers and mother-figures to discipline and regulate the behaviour of their daughters, so that they assimilate and perform the docility expected and required by them. Through the process of coming into the identity of a mother within South

Asian patriarchy, then, mother-figures tend to become complicit in regulating the bodies of the women who come after them and perpetuate the cycle of patriarchal oppression and policing of female bodies. As Roop said to Pavan when she was forced to give her away, “[a]bove all, give no trouble” (Baldwin 182). Significantly, this was her own father’s parting words to her as she left his home to move into *Sardarji’s*. Roop’s *Papaji* is one of two central patriarchal figures in the text, the other being *Sardarji*. Therefore, her repeating this line to her own daughter suggests at the continued and cyclical inheritance of patriarchal means of regulating the behaviour of daughters. Purshottam Agarwal argues that “[i]n all patriarchal world-views, more than anything else, it is the woman who symbolises the honour of family and community” (Agarwal 38). Here, she offers insight into how and why it falls upon the mother-figure to regulate her daughter’s femininity and body so that her daughter, who represents the family’s honour, assimilates and is not rejected by patriarchal society. Doing so would ensure that her daughter is accepted in South Asian culture.

Mother and daughter are therefore incapable of forging a relationship outside of patriarchy because it underscores their very means of relating to one another - while they see one another as reflections, this is mediated through the patriarchal lens that necessitates women perceive themselves as docile bodies, or at the very least, bodies that are meant to be docile. Therefore, while Pavan is, indeed, Roop’s double, she is her double in a body that is *meant* to be docile but is not. By virtue of patriarchy’s ubiquity in the private space between mother and daughter, Roop lacks the space, privacy and sheer possibility to navigate her own subjecthood as a mother. After all, this exchange between mother and daughter takes place in *Sardarji’s* house, the narrative’s central patriarchal figure. Therefore, while they might share the space for transgression that monstrosity creates, which the narrative reminds us of when Roop raises her hand “closest to the ear that does not hear” to strike Pavan’s own monstrosity out of her, the crux of the issue is that Roop’s fear for her daughter is a matter of survival which therefore takes precedence. By invoking Roop’s own disability in that moment, the narrative seems to hint at what could have been, should Roop not have needed to regulate her daughter’s behaviour. Instead, the behaviour of mother figures towards their daughters in South Asian culture is always mediated through the patriarchal notion of “for-her-own-good”, which translates to the behaviour that ensures that their daughters “give no trouble”, because the worst thing for a woman to do

is to transgress the expectation that she be docile. Ultimately, then, this indicates how the mother/daughter space is not a female-centric one because it operates within patriarchy. While Roop and Pavan hint at the possibility for transcending this through their shared monstrosity, they ultimately fall short because it is impossible for them to navigate their relationship beyond patriarchy, which manifests itself physically from the beginning of their relationship through the paternal figure of *Sardarji*, who forces a divide between them by coercing Roop into giving Pavan to Satya. I will return to a more extensive evaluation of the function of spaces, specifically utopic and heterotopic in resistance narratives after this next section, which explores a different kind of female heredity as a more viable means of navigating “resistance”.

2.4. ‘Constructing the Self’ as a Means of Resistance: Gesturing Towards a New Feminist Heredity

In this final section on *Body*, I delve into an analysis of the development of the relationship between Roop and Satya. Aged forty-two and Sardarji’s first wife, Satya is the infertile foil to Roop’s abundant and youthful fecundity. Her relationship to her body as an infertile woman is problematized in the text, as “her body betrayed her every moon-month with its bleeding” (Baldwin 6). She is therefore dissociated from her body, which she perceives as beyond her control in its barrenness. It therefore “betrays” her, indicating how she is in a constant state of internal conflict that persists in tandem with her menstrual cycle. In this section, I explore an alternative kind of female heredity that is mediated through the act of “autopoiesis”, or creating the self, which gives women the agency to engage in the subject-making process from beyond the limits of patriarchy. In doing so, I present this as a metafictional means through which woman writers can effectively engage in resistance writing.

During a scene early in the novel following the maternal death of Roop’s mother where the women of the village are gathered in mourning, Roop’s grandmother laments, “[w]hat is a woman without children?” The women then respond “[n]othing”, “[n]o one” in “one voice” (Baldwin 36). This underscores the perception that South Asian society has of childless women such as Satya. Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia suggest, “if they (women) are imbued with false consciousness then... they are complicit with a movement that will ultimately constrain themselves as women... history is replete with examples of women’s movements that foreground issues other than or even antithetical to

women's interests" (Sarkar and Butalia 4). It is particularly noteworthy, therefore, that a group of women intone this because it indicates how women in the narrative tend to exist in a state of false consciousness with regards to their position and "functionality" as women. This contributes to how they relate to themselves and one another in the narrative. If the category "human" is an "index to power", as Braidotti posits, then Satya occupies a distinctly disempowered position, because she has internalised her place as "nothing" and "no one". She therefore occupies an inherently conflicted position because she cannot reconcile her humanity with the position denied to her by virtue of her infertility.

The narrative reflects this when she "rage[s] to *Sardarji*", "I want, not for you, but for me, for myself. Because though *I have failed to do what we women are for*, I am still here, still your wife, still Satya" (Baldwin 296, emphasis my own). There is therefore an irreconcilability between her identification of herself as "woman"/"human", and the socially imposed identity that denies her access to either of these positions that she is made to internalise as a result of her infertility. She therefore qualifies herself - although cognisant of her "failure" as a woman, she asserts herself as "still [his] wife" and "still Satya". Over the course of their marriage, Satya attempts to earn her "right to share his bed" (Baldwin 8) by taking charge of his estate. When she first meets Roop, she thinks, "[l]ook at me, she wants to tell her. Barren, *but still useful*; she manages *Sardarji*'s whole estate" (Baldwin 6). It is therefore evident that Satya perceives of fertility in terms of usefulness - she attempts to compensate for her inability to produce children by being useful to him and managing his estate and accounts. The notion of "usability" returns to Foucault's "docility". Satya shrewdly understands that she cannot be a "docile" woman in patriarchal terms because she will never be able to do "what...women are for" (32), and therefore attempts to be "docile" in a different manner, however futilely.

It is noteworthy that Satya fully realises this "failure" and comes into her socially imposed identity as "nothing" after she is abandoned by *Sardarji*, who leaves Satya in Rawalpindi and moves to Lahore with Roop and their two biological children, Pavan and Timcu. Prior to this, he had given both children to Satya to raise at different points in the narrative, and then taken them back from her because of pressure from Roop, their biological mother. Satya therefore sees herself as their mother,

and when Sardarji takes Timcu back, she tells him, “*I am your son’s mother; you gave me your son to raise. When you take your Timcu away you take away my very izzat! (honour)*” (Baldwin 291).

At the very moment of her decision to take her life, she had just been informed via a telegram from Sardarji that Roop is pregnant with their third child. In a narratively cyclical moment, she reflects:

I am not wife, for my husband has abandoned me. I am not widow, for he still lives. I am not mother, for the son he gave me is taken away, I am not sister, for I have no brother.

With no father, I am but daughter of my *Bebeji*.

And so I am no one. (Baldwin 308)

At this point, Satya makes the decision to end her life, proclaiming, “Know this, *Sardarji*, she (Roop) can call forth life, but I-I can call forth Death. Know this!” (Baldwin 308) Realising that she will never be able to compete with Roop’s fertility, Satya decides to “release herself” and truly become “no body” through death, which she sees as a plane upon which “[s]he does not have to be trapped in matter”. Her flesh will “burn away”, and “[w]ater, blood, bone, fat, sinew will go, go to the realm where no woman is old, where all women are beautiful, no matter how useless, where woman is a second sun, not sunlight, where she is a second moon, not moonlight” (Baldwin 309).

In light of Satya’s decision that her current existence is no longer worth living, a decision which she will follow through with, it is necessary to elaborate on the critical approach that I will be adapting to explore her suicide as an act of taking control of her narrative and repositioning her subjectivity, with regard both to herself and to Roop’s monstrous body. It must be noted that Satya repeatedly asserts and then reasserts this as a “choice, her own choice” and “her will, her own free will” (Baldwin 309). I will therefore be adapting Braidotti’s Posthumanist theory of Nomadic Ethics from her text, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (hereafter *Transpositions*), to approach Satya’s suicide from the perspective of her taking the agency to situate her subjectivity. I will be specifically focussing on the chapter, “Transcendence: Transposing Death”. It is important to emphasise that this analysis does not entail the advocacy for the death of specific types of women, narrative or otherwise, which can be damaging in itself. Reading Satya’s death through Braidotti’s lens of nomadology is on a strictly narratively symbolic level with the purpose of navigating how the narrative subjectivity

of women can be opened up, reconfigured, and understood from a posthuman perspective that accounts for their ontological instability and allows them the agency to configure the female self on their own terms. This is particularly the case because Baldwin uses the concept of reincarnation to explore death in terms of process and cyclicity, as opposed to death as finitude. In this context, death is not seen as the penultimate moment upon which the individual ceases to exist, and this coheres with how Braidotti configures death and suicide in her text. Braidotti posits that death:

is not the teleological destination of life...As an individual occurrence it will come in the form of the physical extinction of the body, but as event, in the sense of the awareness of finitude, of the interrupted flow of my being-there, death has already taken place. (Braidotti, Transpositions 210)

This then means that “[d]eath frees us into life”, and life according to this, “is beyond pleasure and pain - it is a process of becoming, of stretching the boundaries of endurance.” Satya’s suicide therefore functions on a narrative level as a means to navigate her subjectivity on her own terms, outside of her socially imposed identity as “nothing”. As can be seen from Satya’s consistent internal conflict, her fundamental issue is that she sees herself as the human subject which she deserves to be. However, she is denied access to this position and forced to exist as “nothing”. As a result of this inherent tension between the ontology of her existence on a social versus personal level, it is at the point of her decision to die that she realises that she exists in a state *beyond* the “single sorrow” of “barrenness”. She exists as neglected and in a state where Sardarji remains “indifferent” to her, where indifference is the active being towards that which constitutes “nothing”. Essentially, Sardarji’s indifference towards her invalidates her position as “human” by validating her identity as “nothing”.

Approaching Sardarji’s indifference towards Satya as a barren woman along the terms of trauma theory shows how Satya’s experience relative to her barren body is one of inherent and undeniable trauma. In the years that Sardarji was looking for a second wife to bear him children, “fear had tied Satya’s hands and feet, pinned her body to the bed...Satya had almost reverted to the old custom of *purdah*” (Baldwin 8). *Purdah* refers to the custom of screening and concealing women from the eyes of the public, particularly men. Significantly, it is a custom that Satya “had once decried in Muslim women around her” (Baldwin 8). Satya’s decision to revert to *Purdah* is therefore not one borne

of tradition or belief, considering that she had previously denounced it. Instead, the act of extensively concealing herself indicates a deeply embedded shame surrounding her body, to the extent that she could not bear being physically perceived. This coheres with her thought process as she decides to commit suicide, where she begs to know, “[w]hy was this body given to her, body that imprisons her? Why does it linger when *all that is left here is shame?*” (Baldwin 308).

On trauma, then, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub contend that “[t]he absence of an empathetic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognise their realness, annihilates the story” (Laub and Felman 68) Since Satya’s narrative trajectory has been “annihilated” by *Sardarji’s* indifference, then, suicide becomes her means to take control of her position in the narrative by reconstructing her subjecthood through the process of “becoming”, such that it is no longer intrinsically tied to her traumatised (barren) body. From Satya’s perspective, her body is implicated in her experience with trauma as an infertile woman. Braidotti posits:

In the feminist framework, the primary site of location is the body. The subject is not an abstract entity, but rather a material embodied one. The body is not a natural thing; on the contrary, it is a culturally coded socialised entity. Far from being an essentialistic notion, it is the site of intersection between the biological, the social, and the linguistic, that is, of language as the fundamental symbolic system of a culture” (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 238).

This forms the basis for understanding Satya’s relationship to her body. It would be far too reductive to simply argue that she should approach her body from the perspective of a woman reclaiming it, despite the oppression it faces in its barrenness. This discounts the manner in which her body is, in itself, encoded and embedded in the discourse that oppresses it. By this, I mean that it is both the source of Satya’s shame and “failure” as a woman, and the means through which she feels this very way. As a result, her body and its significance must be deconstructed in order for her to reimagine her subjecthood not because it is a body that has been rejected by society, but because it is a body that has become implicated in the very oppression that she faces. It has therefore become part of the problem, as it is part of the society that rejects and oppresses the barren female body, while simultaneously being a barren female body. This therefore points to a need for Satya to dissociate her-

self from the body that simultaneously traumatises her and is the cause for her trauma, so as to reconcile her subjectivity. Deconstructing and rejecting the patriarchal configuration of the female docile body is, after all, a fundamental purpose of the feminist resistance narrative in South Asia.

Most significantly, Satya's act of suicide does not bring her narrative to a close because of the process of reincarnation. Satya's death is therefore *not* the death of her narrative because she continues to exist, both as a "formless" entity *and* through Roop. I will also be returning to an analysis of the relationship between Satya post-death and Roop's monstrous body later in this chapter. However, it is necessary to first explore Satya's death in relation to herself to truly understand the process of subject-making in relation to the death of the female body. Following Satya's death, the narrative contains a chapter dedicated to Satya's existence in a purgatorial state, awaiting reincarnation. As a result of this cyclicity and the sheer openness to potential and possibilities that reincarnation entails, Braidotti's reading of death is especially relevant, particularly suicide, as "part and parcel of [life's] generative cycles...the empty shape of all possible time as perpetual becoming that can become actualised in the present, but it flows back to past and future. It is virtual in that it has the generative capacity to engender the actual. Consequently, death is...the affirmation of multiplicity and not of one-sidedness" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 235).

Braidotti's rhetoric here mirrors the purgatorial state ascribed to Satya upon her death, narrated from her first-person perspective:

I am formless.

I am where there is no night, no day, no within, no without, no above, no below, no

Indian, no English, no Sikh, no Hindu, no Muslim.

I occupy nothing.

No thing or body occupies me.

Cured and free of body, I am no longer woman.

I am not man.

But I am...

Here I wait to roll the dice again, wait for a time when just being can bring izzat in return, when a woman shall be allowed to choose her owner, when a woman will not be owned,

when love will be enough payment for marriage, children or no children, just because my shakti takes shape and walks the world again. (Baldwin 347)

Firstly, I want to draw attention to how this purgatorial space that Satya occupies could also be defined along the terms of a 'Utopia' by Foucauldian standards, particularly relative to heterotopias. Foucault argues that Utopias represent "fundamentally unreal spaces" that cannot exist in "real place[s]". This is an important notion that I will return to in the subsequent chapter on *Happiness*, because this Utopic purgatorial space becomes a point of comparison with the heterotopic spaces in *Happiness*, which forms the basis of my conceptualisation of the latter as an effective resistance narrative.

Three aspects of this are noteworthy because of their dialogism with Braidotti's arguments. Firstly, death has freed Satya from the constraints of linear time. Here, she exists as an *a priori* entity that has transcended gender, race and time. This functions as a means for her to rewrite and reconstruct herself beyond the constraints of time that limits the living body. Secondly, the absolute potential for any type of multiplicity as a subject far beyond the limited and resolute "nothing" imposed upon her barren body is made available in the metaphorical act of "roll[ing] the dice". This act in itself represents options, permutations and potential for change, newness and difference. This type of self-reconstruction and re-situating was never available to her in life because of the constraints upon and limits of her body. Finally, Braidotti suggests that suicide is "the act of suppressing one's failing body" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 234). I argue that Satya perceived her suicide, within the regenerative cycle of reincarnation, along similar lines because in her purgatorial state, she sees herself as "cured and free of body". In order to conceive of her freedom from her body as linked to being "cured", Satya must have perceived her barren body as one that was "failing", which is in line with Braidotti's rhetoric. To put it simply, then, suicide was the decision Satya made after coming to terms with her body as a "failing" one because, in a cyclical moment, it has "failed to do what...women are for".

In order to fully explore the nuances of autopoiesis in subject-making, suicide and reincarnation must be perceived along the terms of metafictionality and the text's intradiegetic shift to Satya's first-person perspective during the chapters concerned with her reincarnation and purgatorial

state. I argue that this is metafictional on the part of the narrative, as opposed to simply a shift in focalisation, because Satya's use of the first-person pronoun is used specifically within the context of delineating the contours of her personal selfhood. As she is not addressing anyone within the narrative itself, it can be deduced that she is directly engaging with an unknown listener, i.e. *reader*. This points to a textual self-consciousness that is absent in the text's extradiagetic narration, drawing deliberate attention to the fictional quality of the narrative, with particular focus on Satya as a fictional and *constructed* self. Braidotti suggests that conceiving of suicide as one taking the agency to reject a certain type of life or existence and reconstructing their subjectivity on their own terms is a form of "autopoiesis", i.e. self-creation or production. Deriving this from the "'practices of the self' which Foucault wrote extensively about", Braidotti suggest that autopoiesis in this sense "involve[s] constructing one's subjectivity without the reference to and hence the support of an essentialistic vision of human nature" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 250). This closely recalls Roy's first point about resistance narratives - that they are, at their core, a means for the writer to express themselves, i.e. to write themselves, as far as their expression of their self expresses dissent towards, or deconstructs, the system of power they are resisting. Since *Body* is Baldwin's expression of dissent towards South Asian patriarchy, then, it is significant that this aspect of "resistance" runs through the text on a metafictional level, which informs its most crucial aspect of resistance and dissent. It is through the metafictional act of writing, or creating the self, that both Satya and Roop engage in, that they are able to, from an empowered position, re-imagine and re-situate their own subjecthood outside of South Asian patriarchy, which comes through using both Braidotti's theories of Nomadology and Teratology. This metafictional undercurrent of the text brings the notion of resistance as a form of self expression and construction to the centre, which is particularly poignant in the South Asian feminist context because the female self, as a docile body, has long since been the product of silencing, oppression and manipulation. Ultimately, it points to how the act of resisting the powers which oppress works in tandem with the construction of a new means of positioning the self as one which resists patriarchy, as opposed to one which is oppressed by it. Through the act of resisting, the female self not only expresses dissent, but also deconstructs and reconstructs her own subjectivity along new and autonomous terms.

As Braidotti argues, for Foucault, “the self is constructed through concrete and material practices of accountability for one’s self and one’s position. In the classical mode of philosophical self-reflexivity, these tend to be practises of narration and writing.” (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 250). I want to therefore draw attention to the narrative’s turn towards metafictionality when Satya is in “purgatory”. Most significantly, the narrative shifts into Satya’s autodiegetic first-person perspective, which indicates a conscious effort to demonstrate Satya engaging in the dynamic act of the narrative production of herself. In this two-page chapter, Satya invokes the first-person subject, “I”, 39 times, and the first-person assertion of her position, “I am”, 8 times. In a narrative that is otherwise told from the perspective of an omniscient third-person narrator, this shift into a repeated assertion of self-ness through autodiegesis is particularly jarring. It draws undeniable focus to Satya’s selfhood and the active and dynamic role that she plays as the producer of her self-ness in the narrative now that she can, since she inhabits an *a priori* state of being. “Resisting Women” by Zakia Pathak and Saswati Sengupta highlights how the “[f]irst person narrative taken with the interior monologue is a favoured genre and form of writing for women. It offers the opportunity for expression to those historically excluded from public discourse. It sanctions discontinuity, freeing speech from demands of conceptualisation and systemisation based on rational discourse.” In reference to the diary form, then, Pathak and Sengupta go on to posit that “[b]ecause the diary is spontaneous, it visibilises ‘provided subjectivities’. Because it is private and not accountable to authority, it can indulge a resisting, transgressive self” (Pathak and Sengupta 273). Although not in the diary form, Satya’s first-person narrative possesses an intimacy and interiority, particularly within the context of an extract from a narrative that is told mostly in the third-person, that lends it similar qualities. This coheres with my arguments concerning autodiagesis and the role it plays in the process of the self engaging in its own process of subject-making. This form and action that Satya engages in therefore creates the space for her to eventually situate herself as a woman who is also a “resisting” self, because she is able to reject the identity imposed upon her by phallogentrism .

When Satya makes the decision to end her life, she longs to “close the book of this life in which she has been incapable of writing” (Baldwin 310). This narratively self-reflexive moment indicates an implicit consciousness of Satya’s inability to “write” herself in this life, i.e. to engage in

meaningful self production. On this note, it is therefore significant that her narrative trajectory does not ultimately end with her death. Her chapter in “purgatory” is a hopeful one. On a narratively symbolic level, it demonstrates how women with bodies like Satya are able to come to a place where they can continue “writing” themselves through the sheer multiplicity and potentiality of possessing an *a priori* form that does not confine them to a life in which they are “incapable of writing”. By engaging in autopoiesis upon death, then, the narrative indicates, at the very least, a step towards returning Satya’s subjectivity to her because it allows her to engage in the process of situating herself outside of a body that refuses to be docile despite the demands of phallogentrism.

In death, Braidotti posits, “[t]he truth of what has been the case, the subject, cannot be lost. The past remains steadfast and self-assured and is thus the true object of becoming” (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 238). Interestingly, as Satya asserts several times over the course of the narrative, including after her death, “Sat” means “the truth”, which she “was named for”, and which she is finally able to approach upon death (Baldwin 347).

Shifting the focus to Roop, it is in this state, as Satya confronts “truths”, that she thinks of Roop; “And Roop - I have amends to make to Roop, for my anger and actions, for the way I used her, made her join me in my pain” (Baldwin 348). Here, she has overcome her posturing of Roop, where she always perceived her as a “temptress” (Baldwin 308) and “cheap and vulgar” (Baldwin 296), relative to herself, and recognised the need to “make amends” to her.

Roop is there the moment Satya (physically) dies, and both women encounter an exchange of energy:

And in that breath, Satya joins the virulence of her unremitting anger to Roop’s hope. For the one long moment that Roop feels the smoulder of Satya’s anger the open wound of Satya’s humiliation passes past flesh, past bone, past breath. For that moment, Satya’s desires flame within Roop, and her times and Roop’s grasp hands, dance forward, the balance between Word and Silence restored for just one instant.

No! Roop drags her thoughts back to her self. Forget this!

But because Roop felt that one, single moment, that single solitary empathetic moment, Satya will live on in Roop, the way every older woman who uses a younger

one is reincarnated in a betrayed young woman's body. *Sister and sister they will truly be, the way they could never be while Satya was alive. Roop will be Satya's vessel, bearing Satya's anger, pride and ambition forward from this minute. She will contain her, woman within woman, hold her within. Like the Gurus, they might be one spirit, different bodies...* (Baldwin 325)

The moment of Satya's death therefore catalyses the connection between her and Roop, as their means of relating to one another can finally occur on a level beyond their respective roles as Sardarji's wives. Having overcome self-referentiality through death, Satya is able to perceive Roop outside of their dynamic with one another, which is mediated through patriarchy. Returning to the initial configuration of the monstrous body that this thesis uses, "the monstrous figure as a borderline figure blurs the boundaries between hierarchically established distinctions... In other words, the monstrous triggers the recognition of a sense of multiplicity contained within the same entity" (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 204). This is crucial because it provides the basis for how Roop and Satya are able to relate to one another after Satya's death. Roop comes to frequently embody Satya, often without even realising until after she has acted "as Satya would have done" (Baldwin 374). In other words, then, Roop holds the potential to contain and live with the "multiplicity" of both herself and Satya within the entity of her monstrous body.

The uniqueness of Satya and Roop's relationship with one another as rival wives of Sardarji who were expected to love each other as "sisters", and who were both victim to patriarchal standards in their own ways is significant in understanding their dynamic and the value of their new manner of dialogism with one another through Satya's death. As Harveen Mann posits, "[i]t is only when Satya dies - through tuberculosis deliberately contracted as a way to save face as the barren and discarded elder wife - that she and Roop are reconciled as "sisters" with Roop "re-membering" Satya's "body" in her own, sounding like her, acting like her, becoming Badi Sardarniji, the role Satya has evacuated" (Mann 101).

K Satchidanandan suggests:

The specificity of the female imagination and the inscription of the female body in language have been recognised by the Marxist feminists who stress oppression as well as the psycho

analytic ones who emphasise suppression, even though *it will be too simple to imagine that women's experience is directly available in women's texts since language is not such a transparent medium*. (Satchidanandan 7, emphasis my own)

Existing beyond text, beyond the “inscription of the female body”, then, persists Roop’s body. By this, I mean that the posthuman monstrous female body has come to exist as something more dynamic than a symbol and site of inscription for gendered violence in South Asia. While she has surfaced as a result of such violence in terms of “narrative disability”, as argued in an earlier section, she is also mobilised by it. It is through Satya’s death, which though self-inflicted, is undeniably tied to a culture of gendered violence, that Roop comes to emulate the best parts of her, particularly her “anger, pride and ambition”. In death, as Satya has acknowledged her redemptive need to make amends to Roop, she comes to function as something of a “guardian” figure that guides Roop as she navigates the increasingly complex and dangerous world of India during the time of Partition. I will be tracing this development in Roop and Satya’s relationship from two angles. Firstly, I will be addressing how Roop comes to emulate Satya in her mannerisms and rhetoric, along with how this ties in with Satya’s new role as a guardian of sorts to Roop from the “shadows”. Based upon this, I will then address how the relationship between both women evolved through this form of female heredity because Roop, too, engages in autopoeisis as a means of re-positioning herself and her subjectivity relative to, and in dialogue with Satya.

Satya continues to exist in Roop’s life from the peripherals as a “shadow” (Baldwin 327) being of sorts that is a constant guiding presence to her. This is, of course, a complete reversal of their relationship when she was alive, where Roop was her rival and positioned as her diametric opposite, the “temptress” second wife, compared to Satya, Sardarji’s steadfast first wife. Satya’s role as this “guiding shadow” takes on a far more pertinent role later in the narrative, as Roop and her children travel with their servants from Lahore to Delhi during Partition. Travelling during this period is extremely dangerous, as the country is rife with communal fighting between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and women are particularly vulnerable to gendered violence. Their car breaks down, and one of their servants leaves them stranded for hours as he leaves to find water, which they need to start the car and continue their journey. As Roop sits in the car with her young children and her servants, Jori-

mon and Narain Singh, a voice “screams”, “[t]ake cover! Muslim hooligans are coming!”. At this pivotal moment, “[a] strident voice uncoils itself from the shadows, shrill, defiant, unbowed - and it says to Roop clearly: *Don’t die - Sardarji still needs you. Don’t die like this, like a dog smeared on a dirt road. If you die, let death have meaning, let it be for a reason...Live, survive!*” Evidently, this is Satya offering Roop support and guidance from the shadows. This moves Roop to take action, as she instructs Narain Singh, “Take the gun and the children. We’re going to hide behind the sugar cane.” Pavan then “turns to look at Roop as if she has never seen her mother before” (Baldwin 418).

I want to first highlight how this moment of firm assertiveness is extremely uncharacteristic for Roop, who typically adopts a more indirect and coy means of expressing herself. Secondly, I want to draw attention to Satya’s form as a “shadow”. In a dramatically ironic moment, the narrative has revealed that Satya occupies an *a priori* “formlessness” on the purgatorial plane. This manifests itself around Roop, in the realm of the living, as a “shadow”. I want to consider this “shadow” within the dynamic of Pavan as Roop’s “reflection”. Satya, who assumes her role as “*Bhainji*” to Roop in death, occupies the position of shadow to Roop. In this sense, “shadow” comes to represent a precursor in more than one way - Satya is seen as both Roop’s elder, and sets an example and guides Roop. This complements Pavan, who is set up to become Roop’s reflection and double as her daughter, as has been established. In this sense, then, the dyad between Roop and Pavan has extended to make space for a new kind of female heredity that does not necessitate biology. Instead, the narrative offers a reading of a new kind of “limitless” generational convergence and cooperation between women, facilitated by Satya’s posthuman “formless” body as conduit. Her subjectivity as a woman situated outside of patriarchy, because she has constructed herself to be thus, has allowed her to be a bridge that connects Roop and Pavan. Although Roop remains unable to directly engage with Pavan, Satya has become a conduit through which Roop is able to set an effective example for her daughter, because Satya’s new formlessness rejects the expectation to be a “docile body”, and she deeply connected herself to Roop because she decided to make amends to her in this manner. Returning to the first section of this thesis, then, if narratives by women inherit generational trauma because women write within a tradition of gendered violence, this offers a response. It suggests how women can create their own

kind of heredity that allows them to relate to one another on a level beyond the limitations of patriarchy.

The narrative comes full circle here because when Roop first stepped into Satya's home as Sardarji's 16-year-old second wife, Satya thinks of her childish naivety with disdain. She reflects, "Mani Mai said Roop has no mother - that must be why she is so trusting. A mother would have taught her to beware of other women, especially first wives" (Baldwin 14). In a moment of beautiful irony, Satya's narrative trajectory led her to become that very female source of guidance to Roop that she had initially scorned her for lacking, and which the narrative itself had lacked up until this point. On this note, I want to draw explicit attention to Pavan in this scene. Unlike her brothers, it is she who "turns to look at Roop as if she has never seen her mother before". In this moment, she recognises that, in acting to save their lives, Roop is behaving in a manner out of character. Pavan's consciousness in this moment is imperative because it shows how women relate to and guide one another, beyond language, and through example. Satya's ability to communicate to Roop from the shadows has, ultimately, also allowed her to communicate *through* Roop and *to* Pavan as well, demonstrating the importance of needing to assert one's self and take control when the situation demands it. This shadow/reflection dynamic underscores the importance of Satya and Roop engaging in the mutual dynamism of relating to one another to engage in a re-fashioning of their "selves" through one another, and shows how this act bears an influence that reaches beyond both women.

Having established the connection between Roop and Satya, I want to now outline Roop's active agency in taking part in the mutual act of coming together that both women engage in. As has been previously seen, Satya engaged in the dynamic act and process of autopoiesis as a means of self-reproduction. Roop, too, engages in autopoiesis through some of the text's metafictional moments after Satya's death. As she sits in on her children's English lessons, Miss Barlow tells her, "write your story". Roop then reflects, "[b]ut her hand can only remember how to write about Sardarji, and it wants to tell the world only that *Satya was beautiful as a rani*. She writes: "When a bird is released, the first song it sings is of the beauty of the cage it has lived in, and the birds that were in the cage with it." (332). As Roop engages in the consciously metafictional act of writing within the narrative, I want to unpack the words she writes. Firstly, the connection between autopoiesis and Satya is undeni-

able because Roop's immediate thoughts as she thinks of writing are of Satya. The words she actually puts down in writing, however, are far more allegorical, as is characteristic of Roop and her indirect way of expressing herself. However, it is rather evident that in her allegory of birds in a cage, she continues to refer to Satya and herself, implicitly or otherwise. Roop and Satya were both in the same "cage" as Sardarji's wives. It is particularly interesting, therefore, that Roop suggests that at the first chance of freedom, the bird sings "of...the birds that were in the cage with it". It shows an immediate connection and point of relation that she establishes in her first autopoietic act after Satya's death. It also shows her writing Satya into her very act of re-producing her subjectivity, indicating how she makes the necessary space for Satya from within her monstrous body.

Satya ultimately becomes implicated in monstrosity by virtue of her connection to Roop because it is the space that monstrosity creates that allows for Roop and Satya to come together in a "hybridity" that gives them the agency to re-position themselves. It is worth noting that, "[a]s a link between the sacred and the abject, the feminine is paradoxical in its monstrosity" (Braidotti 202). Satya is associated with the abject in her process of dying, which begins when she deliberately contracts Tuberculosis through the exchange of saliva, an abject bodily fluid (Kristeva 69). As she lays dying in a ward that smells of "disinfectant and death", she is reduced to "shrunk bones [that] roll within her kameez". When she dies moments later, she is, of course, a corpse, which "is the utmost of abjection" (Kristeva 4). I draw attention to the association of Satya with abjection through death because this becomes another conduit through which she is able to connect herself to Roop and reconfigure her own feminine subjectivity. As a corpse, she is abject, but as she joins herself with Roop, who "will be [her] vessel", she is also divine, "[like] the Gurus". Returning to the initially established framework of monstrosity, then, this shows how Satya, now an extension of Roop's monstrous body, has come to occupy the space of monstrosity and that which it entails. In this sense, then, monstrosity, has become weaponised in the narrative in its relationship to femininity. It is *through* the posthuman monstrous woman that other women, such as Satya, who are perceived as "nothing" in South Asian society, are able to gain representation, subjectivity and engage in meaningful self-production. The posthuman monstrous woman is able to transcend the limits of gender and the body, and is both encoded in the narrative through narrative disability, and re-coded through the dynamism of the subject

position that she occupies. She exists as the ultimate and quintessential subject in progress, the most valuable type of feminine positionality to represent because of its sheer potential to mobilisation. In Braidotti's lecture "Posthuman: All too Human", she maps out the term "positionality", which refers to the ability to hold ground and both speak and exist as an ontological subject from a position that has been carved out by the agency granted to the individual as a posthuman monstrous woman. It therefore grants posthuman female subjects the ability to be radically empirical in themselves and their experiences - there is not a universal female experience for the South Asian female subject, but rather access to the ability to choose their own position, which allows them the ground to speak from wherever they choose.

Braidotti advocates for this type of positionality because of "perspectivism", where "different bodies know different things", and the "body is embrained and the brain is embodied" (Braidotti 2017). This multiplicity is of particular importance to a subject as ontologically unstable as the South Asian female subject, who has various other intersections to account for her identity, from able-bodiedness, to caste, to skin colour, to gender identity. In these resistance narratives that seek to reconstruct a new kind of female subjectivity that is situated outside of patriarchy, then, it is imperative that they have the space for an understanding of the South Asian female body as a site of multiplied and radically empirical experience. This acknowledgement and space created would allow for a consistently positive possibility of reinvention through autopoiesis, that does not disregard, but rather takes into account, the various intersects of identity. On this note, it is also necessary to acknowledge this because while Satya occupies the position of a barren woman, she is also privileged to be of a high social class and to have a considerable amount of wealth. Roop, while of a lower social standing, can be said to be similarly privileged once she marries *Sardarji*. My analysis of *Body* is therefore limited to a specific type of class-privileged cis woman, and I will therefore delve into alternative configurations of South Asian womanhood and positionality in my section on *Happiness*.

As I move into my conclusion of this final section on *Body*, I want to address why the act of self-production/creation as an act that is so imperative to resistance in the first place, particularly for South Asian women. Simply put, and as I have previously mentioned, the key is in that movement,

the call to action, and then the step of engaging in that very action. This relates closely to Arundhati Roy's position that the resistance narrative can, and often does, function as a means of expressing the self, which entails its own sort of active "resistance".

Body ends with Satya's reincarnation in 1965, in divided India, which indicates the extent of apparent change that has happened in the nation, since she died before Partition. She is born, once again female, and she reflects, in the narrative's final line; "my body remembers without benefit of words, that men who do not welcome girl-babies, will not treasure me as I grow to woman...I have come so far, I have borne so much pain and emptiness! But men have not yet changed" (Baldwin 471). This clearly demarcates the limit to the process of claiming and establishing the female self as a subject - she cannot fully and truly exist within a space that demands female docility to phallocentrism, no matter how extensive the interior process of autopoiesis plays in her understanding of her self as a subject. As soon as she leaves the liminal purgatorial site of alterity and re-enters South Asian society, she is once again placed in a position where she must acquiesce to patriarchy. This therefore demonstrates the absolute necessity for a sustained site of alterity where those who do not conform to South Asian phallocentrism can enter and remain. The process of self-production is therefore only sustainable when such a space is available. This therefore leads into the next section of this thesis, which focusses on *Happiness* and engages with the process of constructing such spaces.

I conclude this section on *Body* by returning to Pathak and Sengupta's arguments in "Resisting Women"; "[w]e do not claim that the resisting woman is the authentic female subject...Rather, we have argued that *resistance is discursively produced, not lodged in a self*. At any moment, as we have shown, *there are a number of discourses and subject positions available to women*" (Pathak and Sengupta 285, emphasis my own).

2.5. Conclusions: Locating Resistance in Real Spaces Outside of Patriarchy

Braidotti suggests that "[f]or feminist theory the only consistent way of making general theoretical points is to be aware that one is actually located somewhere specific" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* 238)

In order to do so Braidotti's rather simple suggestion that "[f]or feminist theory the only consistent way of making general theoretical points is to be aware that one is actually located somewhere specific" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* 238). In my reading, I therefore locate this thesis in the understanding that a woman's body can be configured in posthuman terms in South Asian literature, which I established in this project's section on theoretical approaches. Doing so creates the space for these narratives to play a more conscious role in shaping their portrayals of women, particularly how women relate to one another. This would allow for a more deliberate construction of the South Asian female as a progressive (in-progress) subject who plays an active role in the shaping of herself. While, socially speaking, this continues to be a problematic endeavour, through the application of posthuman theory, these women are able to engage with the process of creating and constituting themselves, for themselves. It ultimately "locates" them *outside* of South Asian phallocentricism, which, as Satya acknowledges towards the end of the text, is one in which "men have not yet changed.

Chapter Three

3.1. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness: Resistance Through Heterotopic Sites of Alterity

The purpose of my analysis of *Body* is to outline the intricacies of the narrative process through which women can situate their own subjectivity and engage in meaningful production of themselves within a culture that denies them access to this. *Happiness* is then placed in dialogue with this very process by situating itself both within and without this culture of oppression, thereby delineating the process through which such spaces of alterity can and must exist in order for this to be a prolonged and sustainable practice for women and those who live on the margins of patriarchy. This chapter on *Happiness* will therefore focus upon three key aspects. Firstly, it will map Anjum's, the novel's protagonist's, subjecthood as a monstrous and un-docile body. As a Hijra who was born inter-sex but identifies as female, Anjum's positioning of herself relative to society is imperative in approaching the process of carving out active sites of alterity that validate *being* in ways that run counter to patriarchal expectations. I will also be navigating how Anjum approaches non-biological motherhood, both through her monstrous and un-docile body and within the heterotopic spaces she occupies

that run counter to Roop's biological motherhood that was enacted within distinctly patriarchal spaces.

I will be analysing these sites of alterity through Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia', which I will provide a critical reading of subsequently. Specifically, I will be looking into the *haveli* that the Hijras in the narrative live in, named "Khwabgah - the House of Dreams" (Roy 19), which Anjum moves to when she is fifteen years old. However, this is not the focal heterotopic site in the narrative. After finding herself a victim in the 2002 Gujarat Riots, Anjum moves out of the *haveli* and begins to build her own space of alterity in a graveyard. This graveyard, which she eventually builds into a home and funeral parlour which she names *Jannat (Paradise) Guest House* is the central heterotopic site of posthuman alterity that I will be focussing upon. It creates the necessary space for alternative identities and selves that take the agency given to them by virtue of occupying a heterotopic space and use it to engage in the construction of themselves simultaneously outside of patriarchy, but inside South Asian culture. In effect, this heterotopic site manages to function as a means of removing South Asian culture from phallocentrism.

To begin my reading of *Happiness*, it is first necessary to provide an extensive framework of my approach to the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia. In *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* (hereafter *Heterotopias*), Foucault defines them relative to 'utopias', where the latter represents "fundamentally unreal spaces" that cannot exist in "real place[s]" (Foucault, *Heterotopias* 3). After all, etymologically, 'utopia' translates from Greek to mean 'no place'. In contrast to this is Foucault's heterotopia, which translates to 'other place'. Most importantly, heterotopias "have the curious property of being in *relation with all the other sites* but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect." (Foucault, *Heterotopias* 3) When applying this to *Happiness*, I will be focussing on this 'relation' because it is particularly significant that heterotopias are not simply alternative sites that run parallel to the outside world. Instead, they bear a nuanced relationship to society, where they are both *within* and outside of that which they exist in relation to.

This notion of 'designate, mirror, or reflect' is also consistent with the posthuman 'rejection of 'closed systems of thought'', to return to Braidotti. Gayle L. Fornataro posits:

Increasing the range of choice and exercising the least amount of external control over subjectivity are the goals of heterotopia. It does not attempt to abolish conflict or contradiction with the hope of ensuring harmony, but allows conflict to be a productive, critical force in culture. It is much more suited to a variety of modes of human subjectivity than utopian models which try to manipulate subjectivity into a singularity based upon the masculine. (Fornataro iv, emphasis my own)

The heterotopia, as the literal ‘other place’, is therefore a place of potential, change, and resolute resistance to finite conclusions and definitions, which makes it the ideal site of alterity to engage in the construction of the self. Not only is it a space that allows for subjectivity, it is also a space in which multiplicity in subjectivity is opened up to sheer limitlessness simply because it is a place of “otherness”, where “other” is designated as anything outside of patriarchal norms. The heterotopic space in *Happiness*, as a community of people marginalised by patriarchy, also offers a means of approaching counter-subjectivities to patriarchy from a communal perspective, which will then eventually inform this project’s reading of resistance narratives.

3.2. Anjum: On Being, Intersexuality and Womanhood

Anjum is a day-old baby when she is first identified as a Hijra by her mother, who “discovered nestling underneath his boy-parts, a small, unformed, but undoubtedly girl-part... Yes of course she knew there was a word for him - Hijra” (Roy, *Happiness* 8). Her mother then begs the question, “[w]as it possible to live outside language? Naturally, this question did not address itself to her in words, or as a single lucid sentence. It addressed itself to her as a soundless, embryonic howl” (Roy, *Happiness* 8). Although as Anjum grows older, she begins to identify as both female and Hijra, it is significant that she is already categorised and labelled as Hijra from birth. After all, Anjum’s existence represents an epistemological disruption of the patriarchal gender binary. For the purpose of clarity, I will refer to Anjum by her preferred female pronouns, although the narrative alternates between male and female pronouns when referring to her.

Having extensively addressed the theory behind Braidotti’s concept of teratology in previous sections, I will simply be returning to this argument of hers to demonstrate how Anjum’s intersex Hijra body aligns with it:

Monsters demonstrate a “hybridity and categorical incompleteness”, which “display[s] alternatively effects of excess or staggering omissions”, and the “fusion and fission of body parts...blurs significant distinctions, such as ... male-female” (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 202).

Anjum’s body is therefore undeniably characterised as monstrous and decidedly un-docile, because it both does not and cannot perform the expectations of femininity within patriarchal heteronormativity. Instead of focussing on Anjum’s ‘monstrosity’ in this sense, which is immediately apparent, I will be delving further into how patriarchy, as a prevailing power structure, attempts to regulate and police her body as a result of her ‘monstrosity’.

Her exclusion from the patriarchal social order is cemented when her parents take her to the doctor for gender reassignment surgery. Upon examining Anjum, who was then named Aftab, the doctor finds that “he was not, medically speaking, a Hijra - a female trapped in a male body - although for practical purposes that word could be used. Aftab...was a rare example of a Hermaphrodite” (Roy, *Happiness* 17). Anjum’s existence beyond the patriarchal social order is therefore sealed here. Although she would take the agency to claim the term Hijra, and identify as female in the years to come, her identity as ‘Hijra’ is already authoritatively imposed upon her. The doctor’s dismissive tone in which he pins the label “Hijra” on Anjum for “practical purposes” is particularly indicative of the patriarchal rejection of any identity that does not sit comfortably within categories.

Vinay Lal observes how ‘Hijra’ encompasses “eunuchs...homosexuals, bisexuals, hermaphrodites...gynemimetics; and as if *this multiplicity of term* were not enough, they are also referred to as a people who are intersexed, emasculated, impotent, transgendered, castrated, effeminate, or somehow sexually anomalous or dysfunctional” (119 Lal). It is worth noting that ‘Hijra’ in South Asian society therefore functions as an umbrella term that encapsulates sexual and gendered ‘outliers’. That there is a term prescribed to those who fall under that category indicates the extent of South Asia’s patriarchal preoccupation with categorising gender and, by extension, gender roles.

This recalls the question Anjum’s mother’s first asks, “[w]as it possible to live outside language?”. If to exist within language means to be “known”, then the term ‘Hijra’ functions as a means of labelling and ‘knowing’ such gendered and sexual outliers. However, that it possesses a “multiplicity of term” indicates that those who are subsumed under the ‘Hijra’ label cannot and will not ever be

entirely “known” within patriarchy because it is impossible to prescribe specificity to a term that represents multiplicity. I use the term “known” here within the context of Foucault’s position that power is produced and regulated by knowledge (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 12). To “know” something, in this sense, therefore indicates possessing an extent of power over it. Essentially then, the patriarchal institution of power attempts to ‘know’ gendered and sexual ‘anomalies’ by naming and categorising them as ‘Hijra’. As Vinay Lal contends, “we are constrained by the categories that have been reified in modern knowledge systems”, and as a result, “[i]t is through the axes of male and female, Hindu and Muslim, and myth and history that we have sought to assimilate the hijras to our worldview”(Lal 121). In Alex Tickell’s essay, “Writing the Necropolis: Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*”, he points to the “fictional subjects” that “reflect [Roy’s] long-standing interest in forms of hybridity and figure her commitment to what we might call the radical postcolonial politics of ‘unclassifiability’” (Tickell 102). It is precisely this ‘unclassifiability’ that renders Anjum’s presence within South Asian society both threatening and an act of radical resistance.

Anjum’s doctor then tells her desperate parents that he would “recommend a surgeon who would seal the girl-part, sew it up”, a procedure which Anjum would eventually reverse as an adult. However, he warns them, “there would be ‘hijra tendencies’ that were unlikely to ever go away” (Roy *Happiness* 17). The doctor, in a distinctly empowered position relative to Anjum’s parents, functions as a representation of the oppressive systems of power that Foucault refers to, specifically patriarchy in this context. His warning here therefore demonstrates how phallocentrism would never allow Anjum to claim access to either gender within the binary because she is a threat to it. Therefore, although the doctor offers the ‘solution’ of ‘sealing’ her ‘girl-part’ so that she can live as a man, he is quick to disclaim that this surgery would not make her a ‘man’ in the way that other men are because she would still have ‘Hijra tendencies’. This is indicative of anxiety concerning sexuality and gender that is “anomalous”. It points to the patriarchal impulse towards an essentialist perspective on gender which is uncomfortable with the possibility of someone who is categorised as ‘Hijra’ passing as male. Since the doctor occupies a position of power, particularly relative to Anjum’s desperate parents, it is also telling that he advises them to have the surgery while maintaining that Anjum might still have ‘Hijra tendencies’. This reveals how patriarchy attempts to regulate sexual and gendered ‘anomalies’,

where power structures categorise her within the gender binary so as to “know” her, but mark her as an outlier through expecting “tendencies” of her to affirm a means of identifying, and therefore ‘knowing’, that she is an “other”.

On gender reassignment surgery, Vinay Lal also observes, “[h]owever incontrovertible the evidence before a physician that an infant has some combination of male and female reproductive and sexual features, an irrevocable gender assignment is made as soon as possible after birth: this is what Foucault, adverting to other institutional practices, termed “normalization”” (Lal 120). There is therefore a patriarchal power process at play, regulated and perpetuated by both cultural norms and the medical institution, where intersex individuals are subject to both an attempt to “know” them, and an often coercive process of surgically “normalizing” their bodies. Foucault argues that “normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 184). To ‘measure’ and ‘determine’ point to how the process of normalisation can function in tandem with ‘knowing’. In Anjum’s instance, therefore, ‘normalization’ through surgery homogenises her body, while labelling her ‘hijra’ and identifying her ‘tendencies’ ensures that she remains “known” within patriarchal epistemology.

Recalling this project’s theoretical framework, “[a] body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 136). In the gendered sense, Anjum’s body cannot be “used” the way that a female body with female reproductive organs can be used. Recalling the section on *Body* and the absolute imperativeness that a woman’s ability to biologically reproduce plays in her access to the subject position of “human”, and in her identity and validity as a woman, it is clear that Anjum’s body is not and cannot be docile within patriarchy. Furthermore, the patriarchal anxiety surrounding the inability to “know” Anjum adds to her lack of docility, because it implies that her body also cannot be “subjected”. She cannot be subjected to patriarchal systems of language and thought that organise gender, and so she exists outside of the category of the “docile body”. Anjum’s body is therefore also a posthuman one, in accordance with this project’s theorisation of the posthuman. Succinctly put, the ontological instability of Anjum’s ability to simply “be” because she exists outside of the patriarchal ordering of language opens her position, relative to her subjectivity, up to endless possibility and multiplicity. This is the theoretical key through which she becomes

the figure who creates and pioneers a space of alterity that becomes a community for those excluded from patriarchal power structures.

I have outlined the process through which Anjum was identified as an ‘outlier’ of the patriarchal gender binary because this precedes her own personal process of identity formation which takes shape when she leaves home to live in a *haveli* with other Hijras. In doing so, I want to make clear, without undermining Anjum’s own agency and authority in the process of her personal identity formation, that she was already categorised as sexually anomalous by patriarchal power structures.

3.3. From Positioning Private Subjectivity to Carving Out Communal Posthuman Spaces for the Resistant

At fifteen years old, Anjum moves into a *haveli* occupied by the Hijras in Shahjahanabad, her neighbourhood, called “the *Khwabgah* - the House of Dreams” (Roy, *Happiness* 19). Before being permitted to move in, she would sit outside “the blue doorway” of the *haveli*, which was “the only place in his world where he felt the air made way for him” (Roy, *Happiness* 19). The *Khwabgah*’s “blue doorway” is symbolic of a liminal space between the banality of everyday life that reduces her identity, and a heterotopic space of multiplicity and limitlessness that the *Khwabgah* represents to Anjum. This sense of belonging is made evident in the personification of “the air mak[ing] way for him” as she sits outside the “blue doorway”, which indicates the *haveli* as a space that actively engages both with Anjum and the sites around it. Returning to Foucault’s heterotopia, then, the “blue doorway” is the *haveli*’s point of “relation with all the other sites”.

When Anjum finally moves in, past the “blue doorway”, “as though he were walking through the gates of Paradise” (Roy, *Happiness* 20), it is described as simultaneously decrepit and wonderful:

The blue door opened on to a paved, high-walled courtyard with a handpump in one corner and a Pomegranate tree in the other. There were two rooms set behind a deep verandah with fluted columns. The roof of one of the rooms had caved in and its walls had crumbled into a heap of rubble...One of the cupboards had a dim, full-length mirror mounted on the door. In another corner there was a beaten-up old dressing table. A chipped and broken chandelier with only one working bulb and a long-stemmed, dark brown fan hung from the high ceil

ing. (Roy, *Happiness* 20)

The Khwabgah is therefore a heterotopia that embodies simultaneity and multiplicity within itself, which represents the nuances of the relationship it bears both to the neighbourhood within which it runs parallel to, and to Anjum. This multiplicity is evident in how it contains within itself both the ornateness of “a deep verandah with fluted columns” and “heap[s] of rubble”, “[a] chipped and broken chandelier” that only half works, and “a Pomegranate tree”. These aspects of the Khwabgah point to an asynchrony that represents the otherness and alterity that it exemplifies so as to “designate, mirror, or reflect” the world it resides within.

With regards to the historical significance of the haveli, Geetanjali Singh Chanda argues that “housing patterns [such as the haveli] insist on the need for a “womenspace” as they continue to explore the isolation and silencing of women built into heterosexual homes” (Chanda 177). She also mentions that “within the haveli... [t]he womanly rituals of domesticity, undertaken to propitiate patriarchal deities of father, brother, and son, were carried out in segregated, specifically women-only spaces” (Chanda 177). In other words, Chanda’s research reveals that the haveli historically functions as a space that is mapped upon a typically heteronormative construct, designed to further delineate and demarcate specific gender roles. Based upon this premise, the Khwabgah appropriates the space of the haveli and overturns its historical nature by producing a non-conformist space where gender roles are blurred. As the communal home for hijras, the binary system of gendered roles purported by havelis is subverted, thus creating a realm of possibility where the hijras are able to transcend a system that is typically fixated upon heteronormativity. After all, its name, “House of Dreams”, undermines the grounded and structured gendered binary system that havelis typically presuppose.

Significantly, Anjum comes to exemplify and embody the asynchrony that characterises the Khwabgah. Since it is in the Khwabgah that Anjum first engages in autopoiesis, constructing her self and image as a hijra, this points to the relation the individual has with the place within which they engage in the act of self-creation. While figures such as Satya and Roop engaged in autopoiesis on a far more metafictional level, Anjum’s construction of herself relies heavily on the manner in which she aestheticises her representation as a hijra woman. The distinction between ‘woman’ and ‘hijra woman’ is necessary, because Anjum both is, and represents herself to be, the latter.

As Anjum's male body develops during puberty, before she moves into the Khwabgah, it is presented as inherently and violently conflicted:

His body had suddenly begun to wage war on him. He grew tall and muscular. And hairy. In a panic he tried to remove the hair on his face and body with Burnol - burn ointment that made dark patches on his skin...He developed an Adam's apple that bobbed up and down. He longed to tear it out of his throat. Next came the unkindest betrayal of all - the thing that he could do nothing about. His voice broke. A deep, powerful man's voice appeared in place of his sweet, high voice. He was repelled by it and scared himself each time he spoke. (Roy, *Happiness* 24)

Anjum's is defamiliarised from her body as she experiences gender dysphoria caused by her body developing in ways outside of her control. Her body becomes an entity of its own that "wage[s] war" and "betray[s]" her. This manifests itself in a rage and violence that turns inward. I want to draw attention to Anjum's helplessness and lack of agency here as she experiences this dissonance between her gender identity and physical body. Her desperation is almost animalistic in the way she "long[ed] to tear" her Adam's apple out, and her fear of her own voice points to the extent of defamiliarization from her body she experiences as a result of this dissonance.

Building off this, it is especially significant that she ultimately takes back control of her body, to an extent, when she moves into the Khwabgah. She reflects the simultaneity and multiplicity of the Khwabgah, where it frames her own Hijra identity. She no longer expresses hatred, anger and violence that she turns inwards and upon herself as a result of her dysphoria. Instead, she adorns herself beautifully with "sequin[s]", "gossamer", "glass bangles", "dangling earrings", "kohl and blue eyeshadow" and "glossy-red lipstick", and is both "sex[y]" and "intriguing, handsome" (Roy, *Happiness* 26). Just as the heterotopia reflects and sheds insight on the world within which it resides and reflects, Anjum too comes to do the same: "Those looks combined with her steadfast commitment to an exaggerated, outrageous kind of femininity made the real, biological women in the neighbourhood - even those who did not wear full burqas - look cloudy and dispersed" (Roy, *Happiness* 26).

Her interpretation of femininity that she expresses herself with is incongruent with the rest of the women in the neighbourhood, much like the Khwabgah with its "blue door" that exists both

alongside and within Shahjahanabad. Just as the heterotopia reflects and sheds light because it is both an inter- and intra- space, Anjum's expression of femininity exposes the "real, biological women" as "cloudy and dispersed". This is noteworthy because it demonstrates the relationship Anjum has with the space within which she interprets and creates her self. She emulates the heterotopia that provides the necessary space for her to engage in meaningful self-creation and positioning, demonstrating its absolute imperativeness to the sustainability of this process, as well as the manner in which it actively influences her process of identity formation.

This extends beyond the type of femininity Anjum emulates and manifests itself on an innate, bodily level as a result of her botched gender reassignment surgery. As a young adult, Anjum goes to a different doctor, Dr Mukhtar, to reverse the surgery that had been performed on her as a child:

Dr Mukhtar's vagina, however, turned out to be a scam... Although the 'tendencies' that Dr Nabi had cautioned her father about remained, Dr Mukhtar's pills did un-deepen her voice. But it restricted its resonance, coarsened its timbre and gave it a peculiar, rasping quality, which sometimes sounded like two voices quarrelling with each other instead of one. It frightened other people, but it did not frighten its owner in the way her God-given one had. Nor did it please her. (Roy, *Happiness* 28-9)

Anjum therefore both mirrors and carries within herself a duality and lack of synchrony. While the narrative once again invokes the authority of institutions of power in regulating and 'knowing' sexually anomalous bodies, both through coercive surgeries and the prescription of 'tendencies' it does so while reminding us of Anjum's own agency. As a resident of the Khwabgah, she is no longer a young child subject to the will of her parents. She makes the decision to go for the surgery, and while she pays the price of never being able to orgasm again, this scene is a pertinent reversal of the previous surgery. While the narrative maintains its position on the coercive nature of patriarchal power institutions on bodies like Anjum, it asserts Anjum's agency while doing so. This demonstrates the freedom to construct herself by virtue of her occupancy of a heterotopia, while asserting that once she steps out of the heterotopic space and into such structures of power, she is once again oppressed by patriarchal requirements and expectations of her body.

Significantly, this botched surgery marks Anjum as having a “patched-together body”, which recalls Braidotti’s theory of monstrosity and invokes the notion of disability and disfigurement, which runs as an undercurrent through both texts that this thesis addresses. This both my argument that the spectre of the South Asian woman who falls victim to institutionalised, structural gendered violence persists within literature written by South Asian women, made manifest through disabled and disfigured women characters as a result of unresolved and persistent gendered trauma that is both inherited and present. When reading this within the context of such overtly resistant narratives, however, this begs the question of why monstrosity and disfigurement are prerequisites to resistant women. I argue that my extensive reading of Anjum’s monstrous body, particularly the struggle that patriarchy has to “know” and pin it down within the parameters of patriarchal language allows it to be resistant. It cannot be understood or perceived within the limits of patriarchy, and so it can resist. This points to a moment of circularity, where it is precisely the gendered violence experienced by women, and the inheritance of its lasting effects, that allows women to be resistant. In this sense, their disfigurement is effectively weaponised and used as a means of empowering women, thereby reclaiming the disfigured female body from patriarchy.

The imagery of Anjum’s “patched-together body” encapsulates the aspect of her being Hijra that is incompatible with the rest of South Asian patriarchy, which prescribes a binary to gender. As a Hijra, Anjum’s body *is* “patched-together”, and the *Khwabgah* allows and embraces this quality of hers because it both houses and reflects her. This notion of a “patched-together body” is most evidently and closely related to the monstrous body, to return to Braidotti. Anjum’s Hijra body is a physical manifestation of Braidotti’s theorisation of the “hybridity and categorical incompleteness” of monsters, which “display[s] alternatively effects of excess or staggering omissions”, and the “fusion and fission of body parts...blurs significant distinctions, such as ... male-female” (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 202).

Perhaps most significantly for Anjum, it is while residing in the *Khwabgah* that she becomes a mother. She first encounters her adopted daughter, Zainab, as a young child abandoned and crying on the steps of a mosque. Anjum offers her finger to Zainab to hold, and when she takes it, “that causal gesture of trust” “set[s] off” “a storm” in Anjum. “The warring factions inside Anjum fell silent. Her

body felt like a generous host instead of a battlefield. Was it like dying, or being born? Anjum couldn't decide. In her imagination it had the fullness, the sense of entirety, of one of the two" (Roy, *Happiness* 30). Eventually realising Zainab has been abandoned, Anjum brings her home to the Khwabgah and raises her. Significantly, as Anjum's first contact with Zainab and motherhood triggers a sense of fulfilment and "fullness" within herself, "[t]he Khwabgah was in a better condition than it had been for years. The broken room had been renovated...Anjum slept with Zainab on a mattress on the floor, her long body curled protectively around the little girl like a city wall" (Roy, *Happiness* 32).

Firstly, this is indicative of how the *Khwabgah*, as a heterotopic space, interacts with and reflects Anjum's own state of being. As she experiences fulfilment as a result of being a mother, the Khwabgah seems to repair itself. After all, it is not specified who takes the initiative to renovate the broken room, adding to the sense that the heterotopic space is personified and possesses a dynamic relationship with Anjum, where it fixes itself to reflect Anjum's own personal sense of fulfilment as a result of motherhood. Motherhood is regarded as inherently complex and not necessarily tied to biology in the narrative, which is reflective of the conclusions drawn about motherhood from *Body*. Tragically, as a result of her trauma during the Gujarat Riots, Zainab moves out of the room she shares with Anjum, proclaiming "'Mummy's never happy'" (Roy, *Happiness* 57). Anjum is "heartbroken", and this is the point which she moves out of the *Khwabgah* and to the graveyard. Anjum's identity is therefore intrinsically tied to her motherhood, just as it is to the space she inhabits. Since the *Khwabgah* is no longer reflective of her identity, having been rejected by her young daughter, Anjum makes the innate decision to move out. After all, while she lives in the graveyard and speaks to her friend, a young man named Saddam Hussein, she tells him, in tears, "I was born to be a mother" (Roy, *Happiness* 83). Anjum eventually does become a mother again, both by eventually reconciling with Zainab, and by adopting another abandoned baby girl. Ultimately, then, this is indicative of a resistance towards essentialist ideas that tie motherhood to biology. Instead, motherhood is presented as an innate characteristic or quality that does not require reproductive capabilities. Just like Satya, a barren woman, Anjum too is a mother because both texts, as narratives that resist patriarchal expectations, posit that motherhood goes far beyond biological engendering and towards a female heredity that al-

lows women to be subjects in their own right outside of patriarchy, which Anjum makes sure of by creating the necessary space of alterity for this to occur.

3.4. Trauma is the Intersection Between History and the Body

Anjum moves out of the Khwabgah after getting caught up in the 2002 Gujarat Riots, where the Muslim community was the target of excessive and deadly violence by Hindu nationalists. She gets attacked in the riots because Zainab falls sick, and she undertakes a pilgrimage to Ahmedabad in Gujarat to seek blessings. During this journey, the riots break out, and Roy effectively blurs the lines between national history and fiction, inserting her protagonist into the very real violence that occurred. I return to Roy's own arguments and perspective in her anthology of essays, *My Seditious Heart*, to frame this project's perspective on both non-fiction and the Gujarat Riots because this allows me to most accurately navigate Anjum's place in this aspect of South Asian history, and to explore the 'resistance narrative' aspect of the text.

For some brief context, Hindu nationalists "emphasize that...India is essentially a Hindu nation and consequently a Hindu "ethos" must shape its political culture, law, and social life", and they engage in "the violent suppression of non-Hindu (especially Muslim) populations" (Sreenivas 173). A "Hindu "ethos" in this nationalistic, extremist sense means upholding perspectives on caste and patriarchy that marginalise and exclude minority groups, from Hijras to *Dalits* (Untouchables), and tribal communities, all of whom eventually end up seeking refuge and communality in Anjum's Jannat Guest House. Arundhati Roy expounds upon this in her titular essay, "My Seditious Heart", when she posits:

Hindu nationalism...has set itself the task of making myriad castes, communities, tribes, religions, and ethnic groups submerge their identities and line up behind the[ir] banner...Of late, [they] ha[ve] deliberately began to conflate nationalism with Hindu nationalism. [They use] the terms interchangeably, as though they mean the same thing. (Roy, *Heart* 799)

To quote Roy's own statistical evidence on the extent of violence in Gujarat:

[o]fficially, the number of dead is eight hundred. Independent reports put the figure as high as two thousand. More than 150,000 people, driven from their homes, now live in refugee camps. Women were stripped, gang-raped; parents were bludgeoned to death in front of

their children. Two hundred and forty dargahs and one hundred and eighty masjids were destroy. (Roy, *Heart* 161)

In Roy's narrative, Anjum is violently attacked during the riots, and spends two months in the men's section of a refugee camp before being located and returned home to the Khwabgah. It is necessary to delve into the specifics of the trauma that Anjum experiences in Gujarat because it demonstrates how national history, particularly gendered communal violence, provides the backdrop of trauma, violence and exclusion that pushes the marginalised individual to remove themselves from prevailing power structures and create safe spaces of alterity and resistance to state violence. Roy posits that "every independent report says the pogrom against the Muslim community in Gujarat - billed by the government as a spontaneous 'reaction' - has at best been conducted under the benign gaze of the state and, at worst, with active state collusion. Either way, the state is criminally culpable" (Roy, *Heart* 164). Understanding Roy's perspective on the Gujarat Riots that she uses as a historical backdrop for a pivotal turning point in the arc of her protagonist, a Muslim Hijra, allows us to more holistically understand the power structures that form the basis of South Asian society which traumatised Anjum, and which she rejects by moving into the graveyard. After all, Roy posits that "[t]he theme of much of what I write, fiction as well as non-fiction, is the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless, circular conflict they're engaged in" (Roy, *Heart* 187). Returning to this project's conceptualisation of the "resistance narrative", it becomes clear that Roy's portrayal of the Gujarat Riots here are in line with her argument that it is the moral responsibility of the witness with a voice to expose oppressive power structures.

Building off this notion of "power", it is important to explore Anjum's survival during the deadly riots from the perspective of the intersection of her identity as both a Muslim and a Hijra. Both of these are "minority" identity markers in patriarchal, majority-Hindu India. While Anjum's identity as a Muslim results in her being the target of violence, interestingly, her Hijra identity saves her from death and excessive violence because Hijras are associated with luck and blessings. "At what are traditionally held to be the two most auspicious moments in an adult person's life, namely, marriage and the birth of a male child, Hijras come into their own as persons possessed of the power of conferring blessings and, complementarily, inflicting curses." (Lal 123). Lal then contends that Hijras "provide a

mirror image of this scenario: while themselves impotent, they confer the blessings of fertility on others”, potentially because “their very “lack” makes them the most desirable witnesses to truths that they can only know vicariously” (Lal 123-4). Most evidently, referring to Hijras as “mirror image[s]” to heteronormative traditions such as marriage and childbirth is linguistically reminiscent of heterotopias, once again drawing upon the association between the two.

However, I want to highlight the role that Anjum’s Hijra identity has in the type of trauma inflicted upon her by Hindu nationalists. When she is accosted by a “cortège of saffron men with saffron smiles who pursued her with infants impaled on their saffron tridents”(Roy 61), they humiliate and insult her for being a Hijra, proclaiming “*Ai Hai! Saali Randi Hijra! Sister-fucking Whore Hijra. Sister-fucking Muslim Whore Hijra.*” (Roy, *Happiness* 62) Notice the escalation in identity markers as they insult her, from “Whore Hijra” to “Muslim Whore Hijra”. This clearly establishes the intersections of her identity for which she is targeted and attacked by the majority Hindu nationalists, who represent the power imposed by South Asian Hindu patriarchy, where “power” has been identified by Roy herself as the “theme of much [that she] write[s]”. Most significantly, however, while it is her Hijra identity that initially singles her out, it is also that which saves her from death. The Hindu nationalists refrain from murdering her because “killing Hijras brings bad luck”:

So they stood over her and made her chant their slogans.

Bharat Mata Ki Jai! Vande Mataram!

She did. Weeping, shaking, humiliated beyond her worst nightmare.

Victory to Mother India! Salute the Mother!

They left her alive. Un-killed. Un-hurt. Neither folded nor unfolded. She alone. So that they might be blended with good fortune.

Butcher’s Luck.

That’s all she was. And the longer she lived, the more good luck she brought them.

She tried to un-know that little detail as she rattled through her private fort. But she failed. She knew very well that she knew very well that she knew very well. (Roy,

MOUH 62-3)

This is a pivotal moment in Anjum's narrative trajectory as it frames her personal undoing as a result of trauma. The diction used in this passage is particularly noteworthy because it marks Anjum as an outlier and anomaly, even in the type of violence and trauma inflicted upon her. While Hindu nationalists who targeted Muslims in Gujarat "folded the men and unfolded the women" (Roy, *Happiness* 61), "[s]he alone" was "[n]either folded nor unfolded" because she is a Hijra. Roy therefore juxtaposes the intense solitariness of Anjum's Hijra identity with "good fortune" because the very notion "Butcher's Luck" is dehumanizing. It is therefore paradoxical and difficult to reconcile that Anjum's Hijra identity, which reduces her to an animal experiencing "Butcher's Luck" is that which saves her from excessive violence. This effectively demonstrates the complexities of the intersections of Anjum's identity within South Asian patriarchy which point towards her exclusion and lack of belonging.

Anjum's own self-ness and personal identity, which she had spent years carefully constructing in the *Khwabgah*, have no bearing on the crowd's collective decision to allow her to live. This demonstrates how Anjum's actual self remains irrelevant and insignificant in the power structures that form the basis of South Asian society. All that matters is the symbolic significance of her Hijra identity. This moment therefore cements Anjum's final exclusion from mainstream South Asian society. It solidifies that such sexual and gendered anomalies cannot and do not belong in such mainstream spaces, from society's perspective, pointing to the need for her to construct her own personal space of alterity to protect and defend her personal identity as Anjum herself, not as a Hijra. This is therefore a pivotal moment for Anjum as it catalyses her self-imposed isolation, which eventually leads into the construction of a sprawling space of alterity where many socially anomalous outliers who do not belong to South Asian patriarchalism are able to call home and engage in their own process of identity formation that accounts for them as humanised individuals, unlike how Anjum is regarded in the riots. During the attack, Anjum's loses the ability to coherently articulate herself, and the narrative is reduced to the compulsively repeated "she knew very well that she knew very well...". This loss of ability to express herself is directly connected to the crowd's absolute and definitive invalidation of Anjum's personal identity outside of her Hijra-ness, thereby emulating both the deconstruction of her self and her inability to be heard, in the face of such demonstrations of power.

Finally, the parallels between both *Happiness* and *Body*, where both texts use moments of national history rife with chaos, bloodshed, and communal violence as pivotal turning points in the narrative trajectories of its marginalised protagonists, are worth noting. These moments in South Asian history are particularly significant because the excessive nature of the violence and torture inflicted by opposing sides coheres with the perspective that the people who are ‘other’ are absolutely dehumanised. It is through the lens of the ‘other’ as no longer human that such excessive violence is legitimised. More significantly in this context, however, is the gendered slant that the violence takes. In Gujarat, Roy puts forth that “Muslim women were especially targeted. They were stripped, and gang-raped before being burned alive” (Roy, *Heart* 222). Rather alarmingly, this recalls evidence that this thesis cites in an earlier section regarding the violence that women suffered during Partition; “stripping; parading naked;...knifing open the womb; raping, of course” (Menon and Bhasin 43, qtd. in Misri). I point to the similarities in historical backdrops, specifically with regards to gendered violence, because this indicates the circularity of how patriarchy as a power structure persists in South Asia, from Partition in 1947 to the Gujarat Riots 50 years later. Although half a decade has passed, South Asian society persists in its exercise of communal, nationalistic violence with an extra level of brutality reserved for women and those who deviate from sexual and gendered norms, such as Anjum. In Urvashi Butalia’s *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, she addresses the 1984 anti-Sikh riots following Indira Gandhi’s assassination: “the killing and maiming of thousands of Sikhs in Delhi, the violent upheaval and dislocation of their lives which recalled Partition with such clarity” (Butalia 23). I highlight Butalia here to illustrate how this specific type of communal violence consistently recurs across Indian history. The 1947 Partition and the Gujarat Riots are but examples in the nation’s long and bloody history.

In this moment, Satya’s words in the conclusion of *Body* resound; “I have come so far...But men have not yet changed” (Baldwin 471). The passage of time therefore remains inconsequential to the way in which women are perceived and treated in patriarchy. Violence against women remains contained within the chronology of South Asia, which ultimately then gestures towards the need to configure an alternative, more effective means of resisting the contemporary mistreatment of women. This therefore leads into the next section of this thesis, which maps out how sustainable heterotopias

can and should exist within South Asia for those of marginalised identities to simultaneously resist, passively or actively, and consciously engage with themselves and one another within a safe, non-violent space that validates their right to exist.

3.5. Jannat Guest House: Using Sites of Alterity to Establish Community and Heredity Outside of Patriarchy

The text follows a nonlinear narrative, thereby formally resisting linear chronology in South Asia for various narrative and thematic reasons, including the aforementioned. Its opening chapter begins with Anjum already residing in the graveyard. However, at this point, she still resides in it alone, and it has yet to develop into what it will be by the end of the narrative. In this state, “[s]he lived in the graveyard like a tree...she conferred with the ghosts of vultures that loomed in her high branches. She felt the gentle grip of their talons like an ache in an amputated limb. She gathered they weren’t altogether unhappy at having excused themselves and exited from the story.” (Roy, *Happiness* 3)

Anjum is therefore presented as a spectre that haunts the graveyard. She acquaints herself with the “ghosts of vultures”, where the latter is symbolic of the notion of being multiply removed from society. Vultures are associated both with death and decay, and are symbolic of the passage between life and death, or the spiritual and physical world. This closely recalls the utopic purgatorial state that Satya existed within upon her death. However, significantly, Anjum’s space is grounded in the real world, while Satya’s remained metaphysical. Anjum therefore occupies a far more liminal space than Satya, straddling both worlds by virtue of being in a heterotopia, which is both within and without the world it inhabits. Roy frequently invokes irony to point towards the liminality of Anjum’s position in the narrative. When she is attacked during the riots, the Hindu nationalists cry out, “Only one place for the Mussalman! The Graveyard or Pakistan!”. Shortly after, Anjum “feign[s] death” to avoid the mob, and the narrative describes her as a “counterfeit corpse of a counterfeit woman” (Roy, *Happiness* 62). These moments ironically point to the position Anjum occupies in the graveyard as a liminal spectre-figure. She does end up in the graveyard, and she is a “counterfeit corpse” by virtue of being a living person living in it. Significantly, her position as a “counterfeit corpse” is tied to her Hijra identity as a “counterfeit woman”, at least from society’s perspective. Anjum’s act of exiling her-

self to the Graveyard is, initially, her coming into her socially imposed role as the Muslim who belongs in the graveyard, and the Hijra who is a “counterfeit woman”. In the initial months of her residence in the graveyard, she is “a ravaged, feral spectre, out-haunting every resident djinn and spirit” (Roy, *Happiness* 62).

Significantly, Roy invokes the monstrous when describing Anjum’s appearance in these initial months in the graveyard:

She stopped grooming herself, stopped dyeing her hair. It grew dead white from the roots, and suddenly, halfway down her head, turned jet black, making her look, well...*striped*. Facial hair, which she had once dreaded more than almost anything else, appeared on her chin and cheeks like a glimmer of frost...One of her front teeth, stained dark red from chewing paan, grew loose in her gums. When she spoke or smiled, which she did rarely, it moved up and down terrifyingly, like a harmonium key playing a tune of its own. (Roy, *Happiness* 63)

Anjum comes to physically embody the duality associated both with being a Hijra and with monstrosity, where she appears “striped”. The notion of being “striped” also implies a sense of the animalistic to her countenance. Meanwhile, the facial hair points towards the liminal aspects of her gender presentation, and her stained loose tooth contribute to the sense of the monstrous surrounding her appearance. Bearing in mind Braidotti’s theory of teratology, which was addressed extensively in previous sections, Anjum’s prevalent monstrosity here paves the space and potential for her to engage with herself and grow because it allows her to encompass the multiplicity that monstrosity is so closely associated with. This extends to the space she inhabits because, narratively speaking, as has been previously shown, Anjum and the space she occupies bear a nuanced relationship, whereby they both reflect and inform one another. Monstrosity therefore creates the space for the change, development, and resistance that takes place over the course of the narrative because of the multiplicity and endless possibility it creates.

As Anjum “[begins] to groom herself again”, the graveyard too “scaled up”. “She put in a sandstone roof supported on iron girders, which gave her a terrace on which, in the winter, she would put out a plastic chair and dry her hair and sun her chapped, scaly shins while she surveyed the do-

minion of the dead.” Most significantly, along with these developments, Zainab, “now well on her way to becoming a young lady, began to visit her again” (Roy, *Happiness* 66-7). This effectively demonstrates the relationship Anjum has both to the space she occupies and motherhood. Furthermore, the improvements to the heterotopic space are far more deliberate than in the Khwabgah. There, it remains unspecified who was responsible for renovating it. However, here, Roy deliberately invokes the pronoun “she” to elucidate Anjum’s hand and responsibility in constructing the lived heterotopic space. For example, Roy asserts of Anjum, “*she* left the exterior wall rough and unfinished”, “*she* put in a sandstone roof”, and “[f]or her doors and windows *she* chose a pale pistachio green” (Roy, *Happiness* 67). All of this points to Anjum’s role in taking the agency to construct her own space of alterity.

Before delving into the narrative aspect of Jannat Guest House, it is first necessary to return to Foucault’s configuration of Heterotopias to accurately characterise the specific type of heterotopia the graveyard represents. Foucault presents the ‘heterotopia of compensation’ as one which “create[s] a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (Foucault, *Heterotopias* 8). Within this context, “our” refers to South Asian mainstream society and patriarchy. Relative to this, Jannat Guest House comes to function as a heterotopia of compensation because it sets the example of a ‘real space’ for marginalised groups and allows them to engage in meaningful self and community production in a manner that they were previously denied. After all “a cemetery is a space for emplacing the placeless” (Johnson 4). While not necessarily characterised as “perfect”, the extent of care and effort that goes into the construction of Jannat Guest House to make it a communal home for such outsiders is undeniably “meticulous” and “well arranged”. Furthermore, the notion of ‘compensation’ is particularly apt in this context because Jannat Guest House does indeed function as a space which compensates for the lack thereof of space within mainstream patriarchy for these marginalised groups.

By the end of the novel, Jannat Guest House contains within itself a school, a zoo, a vegetable garden, and a swimming pool among other amenities. It provides a sense of community and home to the socially marginalised, such as children from poor families who receive an education there, to drug addicts who tend to the garden as a form of therapy. It is therefore a self-sustaining mi-

crocasm. To quote the narrative, “[s]o all in all, with a People’s Pool, a People’s Zoo and a People’s School, things were going well in the old graveyard. The same, however, could not be said of the *Duniya*” (Roy, *Happiness* 400). The repeated emphasis on “People’s” in this line highlights that which is of central importance in the graveyard - the people, i.e. the community. Furthermore, ‘*Duniya*’ translates from both Hindi and Urdu to mean the world. In creating a distinction between the old graveyard and the *Duniya*, then, the narrative implies how it operates and exists alongside the rest of the world, but not quite within it. As Tickell argues, “the cemetery of the Jannat Guest House is a space of both literal and figurative exclusion: a zone where those who are not accepted or welcomed in wider society can find a kind of sanctuary” (Tickell 109).

Most significantly, it becomes clear by the end of the novel that “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness” that Roy’s title references is Jannat Guest House. After all, it is in one of the novel’s final chapters, named after its own title, that Roy provides a description of the community that has flourished in the graveyard. Bearing this in mind, Jannat Guest House becomes a reclaiming of space and power for these marginalised communities. Roy’s use of “Ministry” here invokes the patriarchal, authoritative power structures that the text resists, while “Utmost Happiness” is an ironic and tongue-in-cheek play on the traditionally restrictive power structures in South Asia that have been the source of misery for those who do not strictly conform to traditional South Asian patriarchy. In this sense, then, Roy very deliberately subverts the power structures that her narrative resists to reclaim power through the heterotopic narrative space she constructs.

I conclude this final section on *Happiness* with a closer look at aspects of the community and space that Jannat Guest House has developed into to demonstrate the role that such spaces of alterity can play in resistant oppressive power structures. This will be derived from the aforementioned chapter, titled “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness”, in reference to Jannat Guest House. Zainab and Saddam fall in love and get married at the Guest House, which bears significant symbolic significance. Firstly, “Saddam’s first, unspoken declaration of love had been to allow Zainab to flirtatiously paint his fingernails and toenails scarlet, both of them giggling all the while. He did not remove the nail polish until it chipped off by itself” (Roy, *Happiness* 399). While an apparently innocuous and innocent act, this has overarching significance in a narrative that depicts the strict ordinance of patri-

archy and gender roles. Saddam getting his nails painted, a traditionally female means of expression, therefore demonstrates how the graveyard functions as a transgressive space for expressions of the self. This is galvanised when Zainab and Saddam eventually get married. Since the source of Anjum's initial grief and trauma was the Gujarat Riots, which were the result of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, the marriage between her daughter, a Muslim, and Saddam, who is an untouchable Hindu, represents reconciliation and a sense of the narrative coming full circle. It is particularly significant that Saddam himself is a member of a severely oppressed class of Hindus as a *Chamaar*, because his union with Zainab is therefore an empowering one that takes place on an even footing, with neither individual in a position of privilege over the other.

Finally, the symbolic significance of Anjum's second adopted daughter, Miss Udaya Jebeen, must be addressed to garner a full picture of the space that Jannat Guest House represents. Miss Udaya Jebeen was born to Revathy, a Maoist freedom fighter who falls pregnant after being raped and tortured by the police. She abandons Miss Udaya Jebeen at a protest site in Delhi and returns home to commit suicide. Tilo, a young woman finds the baby there and kidnaps her. Eventually, Tilo and Miss Udaya Jebeen move into Jannat Guest House, where Tilo teaches in the school and co-parents the baby with Anjum. Miss Udaya Jebeen therefore represents the continuation of the type of community that has been fostered in Jannat. As the next generation, she quite literally paints the heterotopic space of alterity as one which is self-sustaining and founded on the notions of female heredity that were introduced in *Body*. After all, as the narrative highlights, her name means sunrise, thereby symbolising the sense of hope and positivity inherent in the community that has been formed by Anjum. Miss Udaya Jebeen is referred to as "she of the six fathers and three mothers (who were stitched together by threads of light)" (Roy, *Happiness* 427), thereby pointing to the undeniable sense of community inherent in her upbringing and identity. Doing so deconstructs the biological necessity of maternity that is inherent in the identity of women in South Asia, where their bodies are expected to be docile and used for reproducing children. The fact that this mode of maternity is a revolutionary one that resists patriarchy as a power structure is cemented in the nature of Miss Udaya Jebeen's biological parentage and the legacy she inherits. Miss Jebeen is, quite literally, "the physical outcome of rape used as a weapon against Maoist women" (Tickell 106), born out of an excessive, brutal violation of

her female body. However, the narrative resists and reclaims the suffering her mother went through by ensuring her legacy, and the cause she died for, was not in vain. Miss Jebeen is taught by those raising her “to clench her fist and say a final ‘Lal Salaam’ to her mother” at Revathy’s funeral. In South Asia, “lal salaam” refers to the red salute, which is a greeting among communists. There is therefore revolution and resistance encoded in the salute, which points to how Miss Udaya Jebeen’s existence and the manner in which she is being raised is an inherently revolutionary and resistant one. Most importantly, however, the resistance that she is symbolic of is a hopeful one. The closing lines of the text read:

things would turn out all right in the end.

They would, because they had to.

Because Miss Jebeen, Miss Udaya Jebeen, was come. (Roy 438)

Concluding on a note of hope that is tied to Miss Udaya Jebeen demonstrates the feasibility and effectiveness of resistance through the construction of spaces of alterity, where marginalised groups are able to develop and engage in the production, not just of themselves, but of their own communities on an inter-generational level.

3.6. Conclusions: From Resistance Narratives to Real Sites of Alterity for The Marginalised

I conclude my section on *Happiness* by returning to Roy’s position on resistance narratives. In her essay, “Confronting Empire”, she argues, “[w]e may not have stopped it in its tracks - yet - but we have stripped it down. We have made it drop its mask...Empire may well go to war but it’s out in the open now - too ugly to behold its own reflection” (Roy, *Heart* 225). This demonstrates Roy’s perspective on the overarching way in which resistance works - exposure. *Happiness* confronts patriarchy in the same manner by “strip[ping] it down” and laying it bare, thematically and through characters who were victimised by South Asian patriarchy and phallocentricism. Roy’s use of heterotopic real spaces that run congruent to mainstream society is imperative in exposing patriarchy for its oppression, cruelty and violence. The space of alterity Anjum creates demonstrates how it is indeed possible and feasible for those who were rejected by society for being “nothing”, “no one”, and “anomalies” to engage in meaningful self-production that extends into the cultivation of safe communities for themselves and those like them. Through the use of heterotopic spaces, Roy demonstrates how

resistance can move beyond the narrative and into real spaces through praxis. The narrative concludes with Anjum taking Miss Udaya Jebeen out on a midnight stroll through the grounds. As she does, “[s]he looked back at Jannat Guest House with a sense of contentment and accomplishment” (Roy, *Happiness* 437). Although a fairly innocuous sentence in such a rhetorically lush narrative, it is indeed a weighty one. It demonstrates Anjum, a Hijra who was socially outcast, who went through attempts to ‘normalise’ her body through coercive surgery, who survived violent trauma during the 2002 Gujarat Riots, looking back upon the community and space that she built from nothing. The narrative comes full circle from the first chapter, allowing for a moment to truly appreciate the extent of reformation and community that Anjum created.

Chapter Four

4.1. Conclusions: Final Thoughts

Ultimately, this thesis sought to interrogate two central questions.

1. How can posthuman theory be used to configure the manner in which the South Asian female should be positioned and embodied?
2. How can this then be applied to feminist praxis, with specific reference to resistance narratives and real spaces of alterity for oppressed communities?

In endeavouring to answer these questions, this thesis has set up a discourse on female subjectivity, heredity and resistance. This was done by using *Body* to first approach the South Asian female subject from a posthuman lens, thereby opening her subjectivity up to multiplicity. In doing so, an exploration of South Asian maternity was established to navigate new forms of female heredity and community that do not necessitate biological reproduction, and instead rely on autopoiesis. This was used as a starting point to navigate nonbiological motherhood in *Happiness*, with particular reference to Anjum, a Hijra and therefore perceived as ‘sexually anomalous’ by patriarchy. Through Anjum’s experiences with motherhood and trauma, this thesis then moved into an analysis of how the process of autopoiesis can be sustained beyond the self and manifest within heterotopic sites outside of patriarchy, where communities can be sustained and developed in sites of alterity. I have therefore placed these texts in dialogue with one another because they establish a discourse of South Asian female subjectivity that begins from a navigation of embodiment and ends with an exploration of how real spa-

ces can function as sites for the sustainment of female subjectivity. This discourse traces resistance as a movement that begins with the narrative body and moves towards the real. It moves beyond reclaiming the female body and gestures towards how women and the oppressed can own and occupy space that runs counter to patriarchy, forming a community that is not subject to patriarchal power structures, and that resists them by virtue of simply existing. I conclude this thesis with Arundhati Roy's position on the role of fiction in resisting institutions of power. While she refers to empire here, this applies wholly to South Asian patriarchy as well:

Our strategy should be not only to confront empire but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness - *and our ability to tell our own stories*. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. (Roy, *Heart* 226)

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