

Material Afterlives and the Psychology of Displacement: Trauma, Memory, and Narrative Form in

Remnants of a Separation

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ABSTRACT

The 1947 Partition of India generated not only territorial division, but also enduring psychic dislocation. This paper examines the interrelationship between trauma, memory, and narrative reconstruction in *Remnants of a Separation* by Aanchal Malhotra, arguing that the text reconfigures the archive of Partition through material objects and lived testimony. Rather than privileging state records or official historiography, Malhotra assembles a counter-archive, composed of everyday belongings—utensils, garments, letters, photographs—carried across borders by survivors. The narratives are episodic, layered, and frequently marked by hesitation, silence, and repetition—formal qualities that mirror the fragmented structure of traumatic recall. In foregrounding these fractured testimonies, the book resists linear closure and instead embraces narrative discontinuity as an ethical mode of representation. The novel centers material culture as a narrative catalyst, thereby demonstrating how storytelling becomes a space where the

human psyche attempts coherence without erasing rupture. This paper argues that Malhotra's work expands literary engagement with trauma by situating memory within objects, thereby illuminating how narrative can transform scattered remnants into meaningful, if incomplete, reconstructions of identity.

Keywords: Partition, Trauma studies, Cultural memory, Narrative fragmentation, Diaspora.
