

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This thesis investigates the problem of representing the Partition of India in 1947. It investigates the representation of the Partition in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (1988), and Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* (1999) from the perspective of subaltern theory of the Subaltern Studies Group. Through this investigation of the silence of the subaltern, we thereby obtain a chance to see alternative versions of the Partition and to re-think representations of this key moment in the history of India.

The Subaltern Studies project, inaugurated in the early 1980s by a group of Indian historians, was a project concerned with the historiography, or the writing of history, of colonial India. This group of Indian historians, known as the Subaltern Studies collective, began this project due to a dissatisfaction with the way nationalist historiography interpreted the freedom moment of India. The members of the Subaltern Studies collective found it problematic that, in nationalist historiography, only Independence and the elite leaders were celebrated whereas the Partition and the subaltern were paid little attention. They considered the history of the Partition to be essential in Indian history and questioned nationalist historiography from a perspective that focused more on the subaltern. The aim of the Subaltern Studies project was to revise nationalist historiography and recuperate the voice of the subaltern in history.

Ranajit Guha adopted and extended the concept of the subaltern from Antonio Gramsci in discussing the historiography of colonial India. In "On

Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” (1982), the inaugural essay of the *Subaltern Studies* series, Guha renders in a note a definition of the subaltern, which he uses as synonymously with people. On the other hand, the term “elite,” Guha explains, refers to the dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous. The dominant foreign groups included all the non-Indians who were in power over Indians or made profits from Indians, such as “British officials of the colonial state,” “foreign industrialists, merchants, financiers, planters, landlords and missionaries” (7).

Against the idea that the subaltern class is inferior, Ranajit Guha explicates in the eighth point of “On Some Aspects” that the domain of subaltern politics is the long-existing parallel of the domain of elite politics. The domain of subaltern politics has a long history which can be traced back to the pre-colonial period and, unlike the traditional elite politics, which has been destroyed by the invasion of the colonial rule, yet the domain of subaltern politics has survived different regimes and the British Raj. Guha considers the domain of subaltern politics “autonomous,” for it “neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter” ( 3).

The co-existence of the politics of the elite and that of the subaltern reveals the inadequacy of elite historiography. This phenomenon, Guha declares, “was the index of an important historical truth, that is, the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation” (5). Due to this failure, the Subaltern Studies project was initiated and attempted to be “the study of this historical failure of the nation to come to its own” and to investigate “this failure which constitute[s] the central problematic of the historiography of colonial India” (6) so as to amend the elite historiography and recuperate the

history belonging to the subaltern. What the Subaltern Studies project offers is “an alternative mode of thematization. The purpose of this thematization is to displace the question of power; it is the study of power, of what structurally distinguishes the politics of the elite from that of the subaltern to form a relationship of the dominant and the subordinated between them. The question of power is hence displaced from the attention of a binary frame and functions to illuminate rather than hide the character of that politics.

After the Subaltern Studies Group established itself, there has emerged new perspectives rethinking the Subaltern Studies project. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concepts are the most important and insightful in this context. By asking the question: “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” she doubts if the subaltern actually has his/her own consciousness to speak for him/herself. Moreover, she submits the term “gendered subaltern” to underline her emphasis on the long-ignored figure—women. In the last parts of “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1986), Spivak advocates an emphasis on noticing and investigating the “gendered subaltern”—women. Spivak puts forward the problems of the absence of the history of women’s involvement in insurgency in the elite historiography and the neglect of attention to the female subaltern in the Subaltern Studies project. This observation has uncovered the particularly serious marginalization of women, as Spivak writes in her famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988): “Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. [...] If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (287). Spivak specifies the predicament of women as

victimized by the double-oppression of not only the class system but also patriarchy.

As already mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Subaltern Studies collective's serious debates about the history writing of the Independence and Partition of India resulted from their dissatisfaction with the elite's interpretation of the moment of decolonization. In 1947, India gained its independence from British colonization and, at the same time, the serious communal conflicts among the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs led to the Partition of India and Pakistan. In the written historical narrative of this "moment of rupture" (Pandey, *Remembering* 1), the Subaltern Studies collective has noted that the focus of historiography has been mainly on the celebration of the Independence of India and the contribution of the elite leaders in the establishing of the nation; the violence of the Partition, together with its accompanied outcomes such as mass migration, refugeeism, and rehabilitation, has been rarely mentioned.

In his essay "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today" (1992), Gyanendra Pandey, one of the founding members of the Subaltern Studies collective, has investigated the problem of the writing of violence in history, specifically in the history of sectarian violence in India. Pandey observes: "historical discourse has been able to capture and re-present the moment of violence only with great difficulty" ("In Defense" 27). Pandey puts forward two problems concerning the writing of history of violence: "The history of violence has been treated in the historiography of modern India as aberration and as absence" ("In Defense" 27). He argues that, in this discourse, violence is considered something outside

normality and should not appear in Indian history; violence is commonly interpreted as “a distorted form, an exceptional moment, not the ‘real’ history of India at all” (“In Defense” 27).

In discussing the historiography of violence, Pandey in particular emphasizes the problems in representing the Partition of 1947 and the violence it generated in India. First, he opposes the simple separation between “the Partition” and “violence” in nationalist historiography. He claims, in the survivors’ view, “Partition *was* violence” (*Remembering* 3). The Partition and its violence is the sundering that caused the beginnings of two new nations rather than merely a political rearrangement. Pandey describes the absence of the violence of the Partition in nationalist historiography as an “erasure of memory” (“In Defense” 31). However, this problem does not appear only in the historiographical aspect. According to Pandey, there are few works of literature or films portraying the Partition; and, even if the Partition is represented, the focus of these works is usually confined to some areas such as “the strife-torn areas of Punjab and its environs” (“In Defense” 32). Pandey says: “As in history writing, so in films and fiction, Indian intellectuals have tended to celebrate the story of the Independence struggle rather than dwell on the agonies of Partition” (“In Defense” 31-32).

If the agonies of Partition can be expressed by numbers, we can note the following statistical evidence presented by Urvashi Butalia in her book *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (2000): Estimates of the dead vary from 200,000 (the contemporary British figures) to two million (a later Indian estimate) but that somewhere around a million people died is now widely accepted. As always there was widespread sexual savagery: about

75,000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religious different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion). (3) Such astounding events, nevertheless, are given little room in the written history of India. In nationalist historiography, it is the elite leaders that play crucial roles fighting for the new identity of the nation rather than the people sacrificed in the violence of the Partition. In nationalist historiography, it is Independence that is the great moment worth celebrating.

In response to such a representation of the history of the Partition, Pandey writes: “Partition is indeed a minor motif in this story. There is no room either, given the way in which the historiographical agenda has been drawn up, for any discussion of the trauma or meaning of sectarian violence” (“Prose” 212). In his essay “The Prose of Otherness” (1994), Pandey states that the history of the Partition in nationalist historiography is “an Other history” (213). The violence in this “Other history” has been commonly treated as being “extraordinary” in nature and has been excluded from the everyday experience and represented “in the likeness of a natural disaster” (Pandey, “In Defense” 33). Nationalist historiography in India, for example, marks the violence of the Partition as “an accident” or “a ‘mistake’” (Pandey, “In Defense” 33).

Pandey, by contrast, argues that the Partition and its violence are *meaningful*. They mark “the termination of one regime and the inauguration of two new ones,” telling us about “the procedures of nationhood, history and particular forms of sociality” (Pandey, *Remembering* 1). In the process of the struggle for nationalization, “violence too becomes a language that constitutes—and reconstitutes—the subject” (*Remembering* 4). The violence

of the Partition is “a language shared by Pakistanis and Indians” (*Remembering* 4) to re-shape the new nations of their own. After the Partition, people of the two new communities have had to adapt themselves to new settings and have had to re-make their new histories and memories. Their identities have been redefined. The purpose of Pandey’s investigation of representing the Partition is to recuperate the history of the Partition as “a renegotiation and a re-ordering, as the resolution of some old oppositions and the construction of new ones” (*Remembering* 17). More importantly, Pandey endeavors to recover the voices of the silenced people—the subaltern groups—in Indian history and make them involved in the process of making the nation.

In the next chapter, this thesis will analyze the representation of the Partition in two cultural texts: the Pakistani novelist Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Cracking India* (1991) and the Indian-born Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta’s film *Earth* (1999), a film version of *Cracking India*. The analysis draws upon Pandey’s theories to analyze the representation of the Partition in Sidhwa’s novel *Cracking India*: how she deals with the violence of the Partition through the eyes of an eight-year-old child and what effects might be brought about from such a point of view. The violence of the Partition, in this novel, is represented directly in front of us, no longer hidden as it is in the historiography that focuses only on Independence and the political leaders. The killing, looting, and arson—the violence—are closely interwoven with the process, the struggle of the people, to gain new identities of the two new countries, India and Pakistan. The analysis also discusses Deepa Mehta’s film *Earth*. Mehta transforms Sidhwa’s literary narration into an impressive vision, incarnating the violence that nationalist historiography has long concealed. The shocking scene representing the train carrying a number of murdered people conveys to the audience another facet of the Partition.

## Chapter 2

### Representation of the Partition in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Deepa Mehta's *Earth*

In her novel *Cracking India*, Sidhwa represents the Partition through a young girl's narration about what she experiences before, during, and after the Partition. She narrates the changes among the people around her and her witnessing of the violence that occurs during the Partition. Through Sidhwa's representation, we perceive the Partition in a way that differs greatly from that represented in nationalist historiography. Sidhwa represents the painful and bloody side of the Partition; in contrast, nationalist historiography mentions little of the suffering of people in the Partition. Sidhwa represents Lenny's "everyday" experience of the Partition—the increasing conflicts among friends, the change of people, and the violence. By virtue of *Cracking India*, we are able to re-read and re-think the history of the Partition.

In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa employs Lenny—a Parsee girl who turns eight in 1947—as the narrator to depict her experience of the Partition. This point of view can be analyzed in three respects: the narrator as a child, as a Parsee, and as a witness. When asked about a decision to use such a narrator, Sidhwa explains in an interview with Julie Rajan: "As a child, you lack prejudices—the hatred and biases you learn as you grow up" (par. 5). Lenny's innocence is observed in her question when she knows the coming division of India: "India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is?" (Sidhwa 101). Her innocence suggests her immaturity due to her age. What is more, it suggests her

distancing from the mental pain and terror while perceiving the violence. In addition to the handling of a young narrator,

Sidhwa's manipulation of Lenny as a Parsee is also noticeable. Being a Parsee—which means not a Hindu, not a Muslim, or not a Sikh—“ruptures the Hindu/Muslim binarism” (Hai 389), insisting on an ethnic neutrality and also helps to build an alternative point of view when reading the violence of the Partition. Witnessing the communal violence, this Parsee narrator remains neutral among her friends from different religions. This enables the reader not to attribute the guilt to any certain group. The narrator as a child and a member of a minority group leads us to a more neutral and less emotional stance to view the violence of the Partition.

Moreover, even though she is not a victim who receives bodily violence directly, Lenny as a witness also tells her traumatic experience that the Partition brings her. In her essay “The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity” (2000), Veena Das investigates the impact of witnessing during the Partition. She emphasizes “the importance of finding ways to speak about the experience of witnessing” during the Partition, arguing that “if one's way of being-with-others was brutally injured, then the past enters the present not necessarily as traumatic memory but as poisonous knowledge” (221). Because of her disclosure of the hiding place of the Hindu ayah, who is called “Ayah” throughout the novel, Lenny's intimate relationship with Ayah is irrecoverably and “brutally injured,” as in Das's words. Lenny's sense of guilt after her betraying Ayah is detected in her lines: “For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth-infected thing between my fingers and try to wrench it out:

but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks me with rigorous scourings from my prickling toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding. I'm so conscious of its unwelcome presence at all times that it swells uncomfortably in my mouth and gags and chokes me. (Sidhwa 196) Words like "vile" or "unwelcome presence" indicate Lenny's regret and self-blame. Her description of her tongue "gagging" and "choking" her implies her torment for what she has done. This narrative reveals the fact that, by virtue of witnessing the abduction of Ayah, Lenny transforms her position from one marked by distance from the violence into one in which she herself suffers. And in this process, she has gradually formed her subjectivity. From being an innocent child to the witness of the violence, Lenny has awakened to the impact that the Partition has brought. And from this point of view, we have deeper understanding of the Partition.

*Cracking India* narrates how the Partition has changed Lenny's life and the people around her. Sidhwa represents these in the "everyday" form. She narrativizes Lenny's everyday experience into the novel. Jill Didur, in her essay "Fragments of Imagination: Re-thinking the Literary in Historiography through Narratives of India's Partition" (1997), points out the importance of the everyday experience. She writes: historiographers [who work on writing the history of Indian Partition] have redirected their attention towards explorations of "the particular" rather than "the general" in an effort to disrupt the state's universalizing and hegemonic historical narratives. To this end, historiographers have turned to literary texts and their representations of what has been called 'the everyday.' (par. 1) Focusing on the details, Sidhwa's

novel portrays the day-by-day transformation of people, their relationship with each other, and their life with the approach of the Partition.

Through Lenny's eyes, Sidhwa represents the switch from the pre-Independence harmony to the gradual visibility of religious difference. In Chapter 7 of Sidhwa's novel, the violence has not yet outburst; there are only rumors. When Imam Din, the cook in Lenny's family, goes back to his home village to show his concern toward the coming of the Partition and the possible violence that may befall the village, the villager to whom he talks expresses an easy manner about Imam Din's worry. While talking, the villager "slowly strokes his thick, up-twirled moustache," saying: "all that [the violence] is in the cities, [...]. It won't affect our lives" (Sidhwa 64). After Imam Din's objection to the villager's assumption and his further explaining and describing the violence that has happened in the towns, the other villagers, who are either Sikh or Muslim, make their protest. A Sikh proclaims: "Brother, [...] our village come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (64). Another villager speaks: "If needs be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!" (65). People, at this period, still maintain their brotherhood toward their neighbors of different religions and believe that the Partition will not affect their relationship.

However, the tensions among people gradually surface. In Chapter 11 of Sidhwa's novel, Lenny states: "My perception of people has changed. I still see through to their hearts and minds, but their exteriors superimpose a new set of distracting impression" (103). In Chapter 12, she states: "I've noticed a lot of hushed talk recently" (110). This uneasy mood is felt not only by Lenny

but also by others, including Ranna, who is Imam Din's great-grandson in Punjab and a friend of Lenny's. In Chapter 12, when Ranna and Lenny play in the fair, Ranna senses the chill spread by the presence of strangers, their unexpected faces harsh and cold. A Sikh youth whom Ranna has met a few times, and who has always been kind, pretends not to notice Ranna. Other men, who would normally smile at Ranna, slide their eyes past. (115)

While depicting characters undergoing unexpected changes and communal conflicts, Sidhwa also offers a representation of "official versions" of the Partition. The violence of the Partition represented by the government has been different from the violence that people actually confronted. In this novel, there is little portrayal of the nationalist leaders and the government. People can only hear their voices or commands through the radio. However, they usually find the situation described by the elite leaders or the government to be very different from what people really perceive in life. For example, when Lenny and the others gather and listen to the radio, the Congress and Muslim League announce that people should not "heed mischievous rumors" and the Muslims can just "remain where they are" (Sidhwa 117). Lenny's subsequent narration ironically switches to the news of the attacks on Muslim village. Another example; the narration goes: "The radio announces through the crackling: 'There have been reports of trouble in Gurdaspur. The situation is reported to be under control'" (158). After hearing this, the gardener soon retorts to the official statement, saying: "Which means there is uncontrollable butchering going on in Gurdaspur" (158).

The body is indispensable in the representation of the Partition; it is the object which primarily receives the suffering. It is the location from which the

narrative of the violence begins. For instance, when Lenny and Himat Ali find the gunny-sack of Masseur's body on the road, the depiction of the body starts:

The sack slowly topples over and Masseur spills out. He was lying on one side, the upper part of his velvet body bare, a brown and white checked lungi knotted on his hips, and his feet in the sack. I never knew Masseur was so fair inside, creamy, and his arms smooth and distended with muscles and his forearms lined with pale brown hair. A wide wedge of flesh was neatly hacked to further trim his slender waist, and his spine, in a velvet trough, dipped into his lungi. (Sidhwa 185)

Masseur's body is the starting point of the narrative. Even though he is dead, his body continues to tell the story and produce meaning; "they look at him as if he is not a person. He isn't. He has been reduced to a body. A thing" (186). Masseur's body is the embodiment of the violence. In the Partition, the body is taken as the medium of violence to demonstrate power. In Chapter 16 of Sidhwa's novel, in the demonstration of the Sikh mobs, a child is poked by and hung on a spear, "waved like a flag" (144). A flag is one of the most common symbols that we use to represent a group. Lifted high in the air, the flag demonstrates the power of the group. This frightening scene of a child being turned into a "flag" expresses something more than meaningless cruelty. Her body is utilized to become the display, through which it manifests the power of the Sikhs and their fervor for the re-ordering of communities.

Bodily mutilation is commonly seen in the violence of the Partition. The performance is usually illustrated to render the shocking effect and thus to

reinforce the power imposed on the victims and spectators. After seeing this dreadful event, Lenny returns home and performs the same action on her doll—she pulls the legs of a doll apart. She is frightened by the result, crying, and her brother is confused and infuriated by Lenny’s “pointless brutality” (148). Lenny’s action is a response to the mutilation of the man; however, rather than a simply psychological effect of being scared, it is a preconception endowed in her mind about the partition of the nation. Being a child, she does not understand the mutilation is the exemplification of the people’s furious call for the partition and independence. The mutilation of the body echoes the disintegration of the colonial regime; the man’s mutilated body is sacrificed and politicized. The action of dismembering the man foresees the separation of India and Pakistan in the future and the bodies that the violence of the separation will claim.

The train loaded with bodies is the most severe and well-known violence that happened during the Partition. Sidhwa narrativizes this event into her novel. In Chapter 18, Ice-candy-man comes to announce the terrible news to the group of his friends: “A train from Gurdaspur has just come in. [...] Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim” (159). The victims are killed and left in the train on purpose. Not disposed where they are killed, the bodies of the victims are transported by the train to bring messages. The bodies are silently lying there, displaying the torture they bear due to their identities of different religions and communities. They are murdered and brought to “communicate,” conveying the power of another group. They are “speaking” bodies, telling what has happened and the message they take. The

train thus is the message carrier, and the dead bodies visualize the intention of the perpetrators.

The extreme form of community violence is killing, yet there are other forms of violence in the Partition. While they do not kill, they cause permanent changes or trauma to the victims. The one I am going to discuss is the violence displayed on the body being circumcised. When the Muslim mobs come to Lenny's house to find out and catch if there is any Hindu or Sikh, they question the gardener Himat Ali, who, before the Partition and his conversion into Muslim, is known as "Hari." They ask him to recite the Koran and expose his circumcised penis to the crowd so as to prove that he is already "a proper Muslim" (192). After the guarantee by the barber who himself circumcises the gardener and the gardener's reciting the Koran with a Hindu intonation, the mobs let the gardener pass. The circumcision, "an engraving of 'being Muslim' upon the body" (Deepak Mehta 98), functions to achieve "a unity between the spiritual and the corporeal" (80). Through the circumcision, the gardener's body is "willed and represented so that it enters the domestic group and the community of Islam at the same time" (80). The pain and the endurance of the circumcision is the evidence to make believed that one has not only strong willingness and faith but obedience to the system which circumcises him. In the gardener's case, there is a force behind the ritual, that is, the force of regulating. This regulating force substitutes "a collective body" of the male Muslims for "the individual body" of the gardener (Deepak Mehta 80). The circumcised penis works as the permit, and the loss of the body is what takes the gardener to enter into the new community. For the gardener, his circumcised body is like a transition, a mark of self-denial of being a Hindu

and the acceptance of building new identity for being a Muslim. With the conversion, both his name and his body have been changed. To him, this change, especially the change of his body, is irretrievable. Lionnet's term, "ritualized violence" (133), is borrowed here to indicate the circumcision as a means to demonstrate the dominance of the Muslims over those who convert into Muslim.

Among Lenny's narrations of the different experience that the people have undergone during the Partition, Ranna's survival story is the most impressive and shocking. When Lenny sees him for the second time, Ranna is already the survivor of the assault that takes place in his village by the Sikhs. She can hardly recognize Ranna, for he does not look like the one Lenny used to know before the Partition. Lenny narrates at her first sight of Ranna after his survival: "so painfully thin [...] His limbs are black and brittle; the circular protrusion of his windpipe and ribs so skeletal that I can see the passage of air in his throat and lungs" (Sidhwa 205-06). Ranna's abnormally skinny body discloses his story of the struggle for life during the killing in his village. Instead of running away, Ranna's kin and other villagers decide to stay and defy the Sikhs. They eventually fail. In the Sikhs' attack, Ranna witnesses the entire bloodbath. He sees his father's head cut off. Ranna's kin and villagers are powerlessly forced to suffer the horrible torture and death. Ranna says that he thinks, in the violence, he sees his sister "run stark naked [...] her long hair disheveled, her boyish body bruised, her lips cut" (Sidhwa 213).

After surviving the violence, Ranna appears as the storyteller. He comes to Lenny's house and tells his experience of the Partition. For those who survive after the Partition, they do not begin the kind of storytelling that

merely “claim[s] a representational truth” (Fridman 5). By his memories, a storyteller like Ranna shows us that he has survived—and participated in—through the great moment of rupture. There is a gap between the historians’ history of the Partition and that of the survivors. According to Pandey, this is a gap between “history and memory” (*Remembering* 6). There are two faces of the history of the Partition; they represent “the perceptions of different classes [...] [:] a ‘ruling’ (privileged) class celebrating Independence, and, a ‘refugee’ class unable to do so” (*Remembering* 125). Sidhwa’s novel certainly objects to the version of nationalist historiography—the one belonging to the ruling class.

Like Sidhwa, Mehta’s *Earth*, which is based on Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*, brings the foregrounding of the partition violence onto the screen. In doing so, the film condenses the novel and selectively represents aspects of the narrative Mehta regards as necessary or important to represent to her audience. How would she represent the same event in a different way? And what effects will be produced by the alteration in the film? These questions need unpacking.

Transforming a literary work into the medium of film entails tremendous alterations. Adapting literary works to film is a creative undertaking, but the task requires a kind of selective interpretation, along with the ability to recreate and sustain an established mood. While sticking to Bapsi Sidhwa’s plot, Deepa Mehta not only recreates Sidhwa’s representation but also creates what Sidhwa does not (or is not able to) represent. A striking example is Mehta’s visualization of the bloody train scene. Mehta portrays Ice-candy-man squatting and smoking uneasily on the platform, waiting for

the train that holds his relatives. After his inquiry about the late train, the bulky train slowly approaches behind Ice-candy-man. Ice-candy-man and other people soon react to the coming of the train; the tumult spreads in the crowd. The expectation can be discovered in the close-up of Ice-candy-man's countenance.

However, with a scream arising somewhere from a woman and some other screams that follow immediately, this expectant mood is dramatically transformed into terror after Ice-candy-man learns what is inside the train. At the same time, the background music becomes loud and disturbing, and the hue is dark. When Ice-candy-man gets onto the train, in the darkness, he gradually recognizes that what his fingers dip into is blood and finds all the people inside the train are dead. In Sidhwa's literary account, this scene is not represented directly. Lenny does not present this scene to us; there are only the lines that she hears from Ice-candy-man. Lenny narrates: "A train from Gurdaspur has just come in,' he [Ice-candy-man] announces, panting. 'Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim'" (159). The absence of a direct description of the train scene results from the first-person point of view employed in Sidhwa's novel. Since Lenny is not present on the spot, she is not able to depict the scene that she herself does not see. As readers, we depend upon Ice-candy-man's report about the horrible event as it is mediated through Lenny's point of view.

In addition to the train scene, a second striking example represented in Mehta's film is one of the most important impact of the Partition—the great migration of people. In Sidhwa's novel, this phenomenon is rarely portrayed. We learn about it, for example, in a line that appears in Chapter 20: "wave

upon scruffy wave of Muslim refugees flood Lahore—and the Punjab west of Lahore” (169). In the film, by contrast, Mehta represents the migration through Masseur’s eyes. When Masseur is crossing the street, he stops and is stunned by what is happening in front of him. He sees countless refugees walking in a procession—they are Muslim refugees migrating from India. Some of these people carry cattle or the only property they have kept after abandoning their homes in India. Others hold only their children. Still others are wiping tears on their faces. Their clothes are dirty and worn. Several police officers are shouting with a megaphone and directing this massive group to the refugee camps. Mingled with the sound of babies’ crying, the haunting background music becomes heavier and more perturbing. These refugees are walking without any talk and no one gives a glimpse to Masseur. They all look desperate and emotionless; they seem lifeless. Mehta’s representation of the migration is impressive. In this respect, Mehta’s film represents an aspect of the Partition that has been neglected not only by Sidhwa’s novel but by Indian historians. Sidhwa represents the Partition by telling, while Mehta represents it by showing.

Mehta represents another oppression of Ayah—the oppression from the upper-class Lenny and the women of her family. Sidhwa does not present any mistreatment of Ayah by Lenny or her family. But from a careful examination of the representation of Ayah in Mehta’s film, this oppression is detectable. Mehta has represented it in the contrast between Ayah and Lenny and her mother in the opening scene. In this scene, Ayah has to clear the plate that is deliberately broken by Lenny and is blamed by Lenny’s mother for telling Lenny that India is going to break. When Lenny’s mother enters the room, she

originally attempts to blame Ayah for breaking the plate but is soon appeased after Lenny admits doing it. She then holds Lenny and kisses her, saying: “What’s one plate? Break a hundred.” This scene not only shows Lenny’s mother’s spoiling Lenny but also reveals the power relation between the upper-class mistress and Lenny and the lower-class Ayah. In Mehta’s cinematic arrangement, Lenny’s mother and Lenny are positioned in the front, looking brighter and larger whereas Ayah is positioned in the back, looking more obscure and smaller. Ayah is represented as minor and isolated when juxtaposed with Lenny’s mother cheerfully embracing Lenny.

*Earth* makes real Ayah’s predicament of being multiply oppressed by patriarchy and class. However, Mehta’s film does not represent what happens to Ayah after she is abducted. It represents only “darkness” soon after the abduction of Ayah—the suspension of representation on the screen for about one or two seconds without any sound. After this suspension, the film represents a much older Lenny in the Queen’s Garden with her voice-over saying that she has never seen Ayah again. Then the film ends. By contrast, after Ayah’s abduction, there is still a long narrative in Sidhwa’s novel narrating the Parsee family’s search for Ayah and their efforts to recover her. They learn that she is forced into prostitution and marries Ice-candy-man. Under the intervention of Lenny’s godmother, Ayah gets rid of Ice-candy-man and is sent to Amritsar. Mehta elides the aftermath following the abduction of Ayah represented in the novel. She leaves a “gap”—the gap of what happens to Ayah—to the audience. Mehta’s abrupt and unexpected suspension from representing Ayah and her recovery, in contradistinction to the novel’s

narrative, suggests Mehta's intention to reveal the silencing of Ayah in the novel.

Although based on *Cracking India*, *Earth* produces some differences that are worth emphasizing. It broadens the point of view and, consequently, the representation of the narrative action is no longer limited within Lenny's point of view. *Earth* represents the train scene that we can only "hear" from Ice-candy-man's perspective and the great migration that is not directly represented in Sidhwa's novel.

### Chapter 3

#### Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the representation of the Indian Partition of 1947 in the Subaltern Studies project, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991), and Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1999). In this thesis, I have adopted a standpoint that focuses on the representation of the subaltern to analyze the literary text and its cinematic rendition. Focusing on the subaltern in my analysis, I have drawn on perspectives generated by the Subaltern Studies project, a project which was inaugurated in the early 1980s by a group of Indian historians concerned with the role of the subaltern in the historiography of colonial India. The members of the Subaltern Studies project objected to the representation of the Partition in nationalist historiography, which only celebrated Independence and the contribution of the elite leaders but ignored the violence and the struggle of the subaltern in the Partition. Against such a partial historiography, the aim of the Subaltern Studies project was to revise the history of the Partition in nationalist historiography and to attempt to recover the voice of the subaltern in history.

Resonating with the motif of the Subaltern Studies project, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* represents what has been silenced in the history of the Partition in nationalist historiography. Through the narration of the young girl Lenny, *Cracking India* represents the particular experience of individuals rather than a generalized collective experience. *Cracking India* represents directly the violence generated by the Partition. Besides the violence and arson Lenny has

witnessed, the story of Ranna—the boy who survived the genocide by the Sikhs in his village—is a narrative which appears to re-tell Ranna’s survival story of the Partition. *Cracking India* renders a vivid account of how people receive the violence during the Partition, recognizing the violence as a constitutive part of the process leading to the independence of the two new nations. In this respect, *Cracking India* diverts the attention from the elite leaders and the celebration of Independence to the subaltern and the violence of the Partition. It offers an alternative reading of the history of the Partition and reveals the inadequacy of nationalist historiography to represent the other side of the Partition.

Making Sidhwa’s literary work into a cinematic text, Mehta’s *Earth* grants us a way to see how a cinematic representation can extend our knowledge of the Partition. *Earth* represents not only the struggle of the subaltern and the violence of the Partition but also some events—such as the frightening train scene and the great migration of people—that are not directly represented in *Cracking India*. *Earth*’s embodiment of these events that *Cracking India* does not directly represent is made possible by the unfixed point of view adopted in the film. The perspective in *Earth* is not limited to Lenny alone but is altered from scene to scene. As a result of the employment of an altering point of view, *Earth* reduces Lenny’s influence on the narrative in *Cracking India*. This change in perspective is crucial to the investigation of the representation of Ayah—a figure of the gendered subaltern. *Earth* enables us to observe the oppressions that are imposed on Ayah without being mediated by Lenny’s representation.

In his introduction to the book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), Stuart Hall states: “It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them—how we represent them—that we *give them a meaning*” (3). In the representation of things, we embody the meaning we have learned and internalized toward these things. In our learning of things, at the same time, we get involved in endowing them with “codes” inherent within a culture or a system of thinking. W. J. T. Mitchell observes: “representation [...] can never be completely divorced from political and ideological questions” (15). Accordingly, when we represent things, we represent and reproduce—that is to say, we circulate—the meaning as well as the codes of these things within a certain culture or system of thinking.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak consistently emphasizes that “this question of representation, self-representation, representing others, is a problem” (“Questions” 63). To uncover the discontinuity and limits of representation in a work, Spivak advocates employing the strategy “measuring silences” in reading literary works, archives, or cultural texts. The aim of this strategy is to interpret the “silence”—what is not represented—in a work as a discontinuity of representation and an indication of discursive oppression. Spivak observes that “what it refuses to say” in a work suggests “a collective ideological refusal,” which is useful in diagnosing “the codifying legal practice” (“Can” 286) of a culture or a system of thinking. Through the outlining of the “itinerary of the silencing” (Spivak, “Post-modern” 31) of the subaltern, we can detect the oppression and limits of the representation in a work.

Throughout this thesis, from the introduction of the Subaltern Studies project to the analyses of the representations of the Partition in *Cracking India* and *Earth*, three different representations of the same historic event are offered: the Partition represented in nationalist historiography as it has been discussed by members of the Subaltern Studies collective, the Partition represented in Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, and the Partition represented in Mehta's *Earth*. In these three sites of representation, an investigation of silence helps us to locate problems with the act of representing the Partition. What silence in these three sites reveals is the result of a complex in which the oppressor subordinates the oppressed through a representation of the oppressed as disappearance. Ambreen Hai points out: "the problem lies not in representing silence but in being the agent of silencing in the very mode of representation" (404). The "agent of silencing" is those who are empowered to represent others and those who "clearly control how these others will be seen" (Bahri 205).

My investigation of the representation of the Partition in India is not aimed at providing a final or "authentic" version of the Partition; rather, my thesis has attempted to investigate different sites of representation and, at the same time, to resist a monolithic and generalized construction of the history of the Partition. This critical project remains ongoing. Serving as "the articulation of another subject position arising from a certain experience" of the Partition (Pandey, "In Defense" 47), Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Mehta's *Earth* are the "fragmentary" works that represent the aspects that have been ignored by nationalist historiography. They reveal the limits of the representation of nationalist historiography, "unraveling the necessary entanglement of

history—a disciplined and institutionally regulated form of collective memory” (Chakrabarty 21). Towards the representation of the Partition, Menon and Bhasin state: “Not all the stories we heard were intrinsically different: what is different is how they have been grasped, how remembered; how they have been understood or misunderstood; how each woman assimilated her experience” (19). By investigating and representing the “silence” of the subaltern—male and female as a whole—in history, the Subaltern Studies project, *Cracking India*, and *Earth* serve as reference points for an alternative form of historiography.

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