

Birth of Nations: Representing the Partition of India in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India**

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Abstract

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is an “originary trauma” in which the former British India is arbitrarily and forcefully divided. Many writers of South Asian descent are constantly looking backward at this traumatic experience to explore the relationship between violence and the myth of nation-building. Writing Partition narratives, in a sense, is almost like a compulsory act of “rememory” for the generations of South Asian peoples who have either personally experienced Partition or heard about it through family lore and legends. In this paper, I focus on exploring the connections between violence and the construction of nation-states, with a special emphasis on the artistic reconstruction of personal encounters with violence as represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991).

Keywords: Partition, Violence, Bapsi Sidhwa, *Cracking India*

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How do we know Partition except through the many ways in which it is transmitted to us, in its many representations: political, social, historical, testimonial, literary, documentary, even communal. We know it through national and family mythologies, through collective and individual memory. Partition, almost uniquely, is the one event in our recent history in which familial recall and its encoding are a significant factor in any general reconstruction of it. In a sense, it is the collective memory of thousands of displaced families on both sides of the border that have imbued a rather innocent word—partition—with its dreadful meaning: a people violently displaced, a country divided. Partition: a metaphor for irreparable loss.

Ritu Menon, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*

How do we know Partition, or any other violent event that constitutes history, indeed, except perhaps as “a metaphor for irreparable loss” (xi; emphases original)? Let me start with an anecdote from my personal encounter with the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. On August 15, 2007, I was enjoying my third visit to the Taj Mahal when I noticed that many Indian people on the compound were wearing colorful badges featuring gold, saffron and green. That particular day was in fact the sixtieth anniversary of India's Independence. The badge was created by the Agra Development Authority to celebrate the national birthday. That night in my hotel room, I watched *Earth*, a 1997 film adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (1991) directed by the Indian Canadian filmmaker Depta Mehta. Of course this was not my first viewing of the film; I have taught and written papers about it. The circumstances surrounding this particular viewing, however, revealed another aspect of the film. It was the sharp contrast between the celebratory mood in the ancient capital of the Mogul Empire and the cruelties and betrayals as presented in the film that struck me as uncanny and prompted me to rethink the tremendous cost of nation-building.

Salman Rushdie describes the moment of India's and Pakistan's birth in *Midnight's Children* by punctuating the euphoric speech delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru with vivid images of burning and birthing:

And in all the cities all the towns all the villages the little dia-lamps burn on the window-sills porches verandahs, while trains burn in the Punjab, with the green

flames of blistering paint and the glaring saffron of fired fuel, like the biggest dias in the world.

And the city of Lahore, too, is burning....

The monster in the streets has begun to roar, while in Delhi a wiry man is saying, "...at the stroke of midnight hour, while the world sleeps, India awakens to life and freedom..." And beneath the roar of the monster there are two more yells, cries, bellows, the howls of children arriving in the world, their unavailing protests mingling with the din of independence which hangs saffron-and-green in the night sky.... (134)

In this scene, Rushdie creates a montage of burning dias, indigenous earthen lamps, along with burning trains and cities, thereby connecting familiar features of everyday life with the violent destruction associated with 1947 Partition. Saffron and green, the colors from India's national flag, are evoked to illustrate the violence of riots taking place at the time of Partition; concrete geographical markers, such as the province of Punjab and the city of Lahore, are deployed to demarcate the formation of the new national border. The twin births of the two children, delivered at the very moment India and Pakistan come into being and who are doomed to destroy each other, send an ominous signal about the future of the new nations. Furthermore, the fact that the two babies in Rushdie's novel are switched at birth symbolically comments on the lack of clear demarcation in terms of national identities for India and Pakistan.

Indeed, the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is an "originary trauma" in which the former British India is arbitrarily and forcefully divided. Rushdie is only one of the many writers of South Asian descent who are constantly looking backward at this traumatic experience to explore the relationship between violence and the myth of nation-building. Writing Partition narratives, in a sense, is almost like a compulsory act of "rememory" for the generations of South Asian peoples who have either personally experienced Partition or heard about it through family lore and legends. Such writing is, as Ananya Jahanara Kabir observes, "a self-imposed authorial task of negotiating between traumatic recall and narrative commemoration, and between different kinds of memory that inhabit and fragment not only nations and communities but also the subjectivities of the individuals who comprise these large identity-groups" (177-78). In

this paper, I focus on exploring the connections between violence and the construction of nation-states, with a special emphasis on the artistic reconstruction of personal encounters with violence as represented in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*.

A brief account of the historical development of Partition is in order. The "Two-Nation Theory," the conceptual basis of the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims propounded by the Muslim reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) in the nineteenth century, was first formally introduced in Allama Iqbal's presidential address to the Muslim League on December 29, 1930. A decade later, Muhammad Ali Jinnah delivered another presidential address to the All India Muslim League in Lahore in which he hammered at the pressing need for a separate Muslim nation: "The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures....To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built for the government of such a state." Jinnah's speech officially marked the beginning of what Gyanendra Pandey terms the first partition of the subcontinent, which was followed by the second partition when the Indian National Congress countered with a call for "a total partition" (31), and the third and actual partition of the land in 1947 (42). In the partition of 1947, "[t]he Muslim majority regions of Punjab and Bengal were divided, with west Punjab and east Bengal forming West and East Pakistan and India sandwiched in the middle" (Kabir 178).¹ Pandey specifically draws our attention to the remarkable fact that the whole process took "a mere seven years—between the first formal articulation of the demand for a separate state for Muslims of the subcontinent and the establishment of Pakistan. The boundaries between the two new states were not officially known until two days *after* they had formally become independent" (2). The Radcliffe Line, or the border line decided on by the Border Commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, was not published until August 17, 1947, and the Commission spent only five weeks before reaching the final decision.

Pandey's historical reconstruction of Partition rightly emphasizes the hastiness of the planning and belatedness of the official announcement of decided boundaries. Thus,

¹ In 1971 East Pakistan claimed its independence and became Bangladesh.

in *Cracking India*, the work of the Commission is compared to that of a careless card game:

the Radcliffe Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan. Pathankot to India.

I am a Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that. (150)

It is the adult author behind the voice of the child narrator, Lenny, who delivers the sarcastic comment. Lenny's change of national identity coincides with her eighth birthday, though she is more concerned about her neglected birthday than anything else. Sidhwa and her readers, however, understand that such careless games of political maneuvering cost human lives. The raw statistics of Partition give us an idea of the toll that the Commission's hastiness and belatedness took on the subcontinent. According to Urvashi Butalia, "roughly ten to twelve million people are said to have moved, within the space of a few months, between the new, truncated India and the newly-created Pakistan. Between 500,000 to one million people are believed to have died, hundreds of thousands of children lost and abandoned, between 75,000 to 100,000 women raped and abducted" (208). The two nations continue to fight with each other even after more than six decades of separation. The 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, for instance, signal the enduring, violent aftermath of Partition. As Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin rightly comment on the lasting impact of Partition, "The Partition of India in 1947 was an undeclared civil war, and since then we have had disputed borders in every country of South Asia. The religion-based division of the country anticipated many of the questions that trouble us now across the subcontinent: ethnicity, communalism, the rise of religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism. Sharply, but poignantly, Partition posed the question of 'belonging' in a way that polarized choice and allegiance, aggravating old, and new, antagonisms" (21). The way Lenny puzzles over her sudden national "belonging" as a Pakistani belies the validity of the arbitrary division of the subcontinent based on an imaginary geographical boundary.

Among the numerous literary representations of Partition, I choose to analyze Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, published as *Ice Candy Man* in India, because the novel offers a unique perspective on Partition; it is narrated through the point of view of a girl from the Parsee community, an ethnic and religious minority but one with considerable

financial and class privileges under the rule of the British Raj. As noted in the novel (26), there were two hundred Parsees in Lahore around the time of Partition. The majority of Partition literature, as Menon and Bhasin point out, was created soon after the actual division of the subcontinent and written in Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi (7). While the three major religious groups—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—voice their “despair or anger and profound unhappiness” (Menon and Bhasin 7) in their own languages, minor groups such as the Parsee remain silent. *Cracking India*, on the other hand, is not only “the first Pakistani novel in English to deal with this tumultuous period of subcontinental history, [it] is also the sole account of Parsi involvement—which was, in essence, an uninvolved amongst the Lahore Parsis—in the freedom movements of both India and a yet unborn Pakistan” (Mann 72).² That *Cracking India* is written in English helps the circulation of Partition narratives and allows readers who lack linguistic knowledge of the many languages of the Indian subcontinent to have a better understanding of a very important part of contemporary world history. Sidhwa, a Parsee writer who was born during the British Raj, became Pakistani after Partition and now resides in the United States, occupies a unique position that allows her to practice a particular kind of “border feminism” in writing the novel (Hai 411).³ The Partition of 1947 is fictionally re-narrated in order to construct a

² In the novel Sidhwa uses the milk and sugar legend to describe the survival strategy of this minority community: when they arrived at the coast of India in the seventh century, the leader of the Parsee community promised the Indian Grand *Vazir* that the Zarathushtis “refugees would get absorbed into his country like the sugar in the milk....And with their decency and industry sweeten the lives of his subjects” (47). Colonel Bharucha, the president of the Parsee community in Lahore in the novel, clearly articulates the code of noninvolvement for the community: “Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land”; and “[a]s long as we do not interfere we have nothing to fear! As long as we respect the customs of our rulers—as we always have—we’ll be all right! Ahura Mazda has looked after us for thirteen hundred years: he will look after us for another thirteen hundred” (48). Sidhwa’s writing, on the other hand, represents how the Parsee community has been affected psychologically through Lenny’s perspective.

³ Ambreen Hai insightfully theorizes the “border position” of Sidhwa as a Parsee author of Partition: “she belongs to the minority Parsee or Zoroastrian community....This community is historically diasporic (exiled from Persia since the seventh century), ethnically distinct, and founded upon an ancient religious tradition independent of both Judeo-Christian-Islamic monotheism and Hinduism. Thus it could be said that while Sidhwa has had different constraints imposed on her than have most middle-class Muslim women, she is enabled by her positioning to

discursive site in which one may reexamine the unthinkable violence and atrocity. Lenny, the eight-year-old, first-person narrator, serves as an eyewitness to the national and personal traumatic experiences of Partition, the most traumatic of which, one may argue, is the novel's depiction of Lenny's loss of innocence as the violence begins.

In fact, the very title of the novel indicates an enactment of violence, the unnatural separation of a geopolitical entity through external forces. Through Lenny's naive questions, Sidhwa interrogates the idea of separating the subcontinent:

There is much disturbing talk. India is to going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" (101)

With her limited knowledge of politics, the child can only voice her separation anxiety through her personal cognition of geography; in her mind, the integrity of her house and her close relationship with her godmother are imminently threatened. This juxtaposition of the personal with the national exemplifies the allegorical forces at work in the novel. However, this is not an unqualified example of Jameson's infamous theory of "national allegory" because the novel stresses the perspectives of women and children. In her review of the critical discussions of third world literatures and national allegories, Sangeeta Ray insightfully points out that there is

a curious absence of gender as a category of analysis but also an ignorance of the ways in which an analysis of the narratives of third world women and

craft a unique critical lens: addressing (English-speaking) audiences within Pakistan and India and in the 'West' an 'insider' to Pakistan by nationality and historical experience, but an 'outsider' to the Hindu-/Muslim divide; at once seeking to represent a minority (Parsees) *and* the national aggregate. Sidhwa thus faces the tricky position of having at once to justify speaking for—and to—the nation, and to build a critique of the Muslim nationalism that includes non-Muslims as citizens but in fact grants them only second-class status" (387 emphasis original). Hai, however, is very critical of the novel for scapegoating the Ayah and making the Hindu maid into "a casualty of the self-positioning as feminist of Sidhwa's narrator/narrative, that seeks to cross borders without considering the other border lines it draws" (415).

women writers may prove useful in the disruption of a self-deluding complacency that often accompanies readings of overt or covert nationalist (read ‘primarily heterosexual male’) narratives—interpretations that tend to establish an allegorical correspondence between the psychic crisis of the male protagonist and the sociopolitical crisis of the modern nation-state. (129-30)

Reading *Cracking India* as an allegory of nation-building complicates the critical discussions mentioned above, notably the absent gender category, in that Sidhwa’s portrayals of the violence of Partition are represented mainly through the traumatized bodies of women and children as narrated by a young girl.

Sidhwa has carefully orchestrated a narrative balance in her representations of inter-group violence, and she avoids being judgmental about any of the religious groups. The abduction of Shanta, Lenny’s Hindu Ayah or family helper, and the horrors witnessed by the Muslim orphan, Ranna, stand out as two examples of religious violence in the text. Whereas the abducted and persecuted body of Ayah draws most of the critical attention, I would argue that the curious insertion of a male child’s eye-witness account—Ranna’s story—into the novelistic center is equally significant. Ayah’s tragedy speaks for the collective suffering of female victims during Partition. As feminist critics have repeatedly pointed out, oftentimes women are targeted victims in wars because male offenders have constructed a symbolic battlefield over the conquered female bodies. To Ananya Jahanara Kabir, for instance, “[w]omen were raped and mutilated during the mayhem of partition because their female bodies provided a ‘space over which the competitive games of men were played out’” (179). The abduction and subsequent forced prostitution of the Hindu Ayah by the Muslim mob exemplify such a symbolic warfare played out on the female body.

Both Sidhwa’s descriptions of the loss of Ayah and the wandering of Ranna are saturated with painfully realistic accounts as well as symbolic connotations. It is in Ranna’s story, however, that the physical details of the violence and atrocity of Partition are most vividly portrayed. To think about children in addition to gender in the re-theorization of national allegory is important because the young, along with women, are usually deprived of voices when it comes to national politics. Furthermore, children usually suffer most because of their inability to protect themselves. Although the girl

narrator of *Cracking India* is well protected, there are numerous children who are “lost”—lost to their families and communities—because of Partition. The third-person narrative of “Ranna’s Story,” inserted into the middle of the novel, is clearly an attempt to speak for these lost and traumatized children. Moreover, Ranna’s narrative provides a testimony of what Lenny cannot possibly have witnessed because of their class differences and communal identities, a distinction that further complicates the use of child perspective in the novel.

“Ranna’s Story” stands out not only because it is the only section of the novel that is presented through a third-person point of view, but also because it presents graphic details of the genocidal violence of the Partition riots. His narrative is a deliberate move away from the limited perspective of Lenny’s protected Parsee household and into scenes of bloodshed and atrocity. Sidhwa carefully uses repetition—especially Lenny’s repeated visits to the Punjabi village of Pir Pindo and her encounters with the village boy—to present the story of Ranna, and by extension the story of all village children living along the border of the new nations created during Partition. Lenny comes across Ranna on her first visit to Pir Pindo, the home of the family cook, Iman Din. This excursion outside the urban space of Lahore grants the crippled Lenny (as well as the reader) a glimpse into the villager life of the pre-Partition India, and the emphasis is clearly on the peaceful and utopian coexistence of Muslims and Sikhs in the same neighborhood. When a worried Iman Din warns the villagers about potential troubles, he is contradicted by the reader and keeper of the Sikh scripture, who predicts solidarity across racial and religious lines:

“Brother,” the Sikh *granthi* says when the tumult subsides, “our villages come from the same racial stock, Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?” (64)

The Sikh’s argument is echoed by the Muslim village headman, the *chaudhry*, who uses a similar line of reasoning:

“The city folks can afford to fight...we can’t. We are dependent on each other: bound by our toil; by Mandi prices set by the Banyas—they are our common enemy—those city Hindus. To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh?” (64)

By indicting the Hindu merchants of the urban areas—or capitalist economy—as their

common enemy and thereby consolidating their own sense of community, a false sense of harmony is created as the villagers feel secure and isolated from the political turmoil around them.

Still, the very argument of pitting the city merchant class against the village peasants reveals the existence of a binary logic that would eventually lead to mass inter-group confrontations and violence. Hence, on her second visit to Pir Pindo a year later, Lenny notices that the relationship between the Sikhs and the Muslims is already strained. In fact, before the visit a bewildered Lenny has already been initiated into the knowledge of “religious differences” by the changes in people around her, especially the group of Ayah’s admirers comprised of men from various religious groups: “It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu” (101). The Muslim villagers of Pir Pindo who fail to understand these “differences” have virtually signed their own death warrants when they refuse to leave their ancestral land and relocate to the newly founded Pakistan.

The most horrifying representation of the violence associated with Partition in the novel comes from Ranna’s story of genocidal massacres. When Lenny sees Ranna the third time, he is orphaned and bears “the improbable wound on the back of his shaved head,”—“a grisly scar like a brutally gouged and premature bald spot” (206). The trope of “the improbable wound” is highly important. It is a wound that is at once somatic and psychological and, in a sense, it serves as a synecdoche of the traumas of Partition. The “improbability” of the wound not only refers to the incredible extent to which Ranna has been wounded, but also subtly alludes to the broken promises of solidarity voiced by village elders. What is even more “improbable” is the narrative description of “the attack on Pir Pindo” or the story of the annihilation of Ranna’s family:

Ranna saw his uncles beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords, dragging them out as a sprinkling of Hindus, darting about at the fringes, their faces vaguely familiar, pointed out and identified the Mussulmans by name. He felt a

blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door on a tangled pile of unrecognizable bodies. Someone fell on him, drenching him in blood. (213)

In other words, the “improbability” signals the inability of both the narrator and reader to register the shockingly vivid details of the massacre and the betrayal by the Sikh “brothers.”

Later the “improbable” violence is uncannily repeated again shortly after the seriously wounded Ranna miraculously manages to escape to his uncle’s village. And even after narrowly escaping the second massacre, Ranna continues to bear witness to the “improbable” atrocities as he roams around the burning city of Amritsar:

No one minded the semi-naked specter as he looked in doors with his knowing, wide-set peasant eyes as men copulated with wailing children—old and young women. He saw a naked woman, her light Kashmiri skin bruised with purple splotches and cuts, hanging head down from a ceiling fan. And looked on with a child’s boundless acceptance and curiosity as jeering men set her long hair on fire. He saw babies, snatched from their mothers, smashed against walls and their bowling mothers brutally raped and killed. (218-19)

Through Ranna’s “knowing” eyes, Sidhwa relentlessly depicts the rapes and murders of women and children during the Partition riots. Educated by violence and atrocity, the wandering waif is charged with the burden of witnessing the enactment of the perverse logic of the improbable. We readers also become the involuntary co-witnesses of the scenes from this earthly hell, representations of what Slavoj Žižek terms the visible “subjective violence” (1). One may wish to ask: what exactly is the meaning of all this improbable violence?

One possible approach to an answer leads back to the nationalist agenda and the rationalization of violence as a necessary sacrifice for nation-building. Literary critic Surir Kaul observes that there are two dominant metaphors in thinking about Partition. The first one is similar to Rushdie’s deployment of the birthing image, that of “birth pangs of two new nations” through which “the lives of the children of violence have

been shaped” (6); the second one is to think of Partition in a ritualistic sense and regard it as a necessary act of sacrifice. The rationale behind the formation of the second metaphor is rooted in South Asian cultural specificity. According to Kaul,

all nations are founded in blood and that porous boundaries are sealed only through violence; sacrificial blood-letting, that is, is necessary for the making of strong nation-states. The vocabulary of martyrdom (*shahidi*) is an important feature of such understanding, and for good reason: senseless deaths are recuperated, those who were killed, however randomly, are seen to have died for a cause, the guilt of those who survived (or who participated in violence) is assuaged. In this vision, the nation, or the *quam* (community) demands its *shaheeds*, and is strengthened by them. (7)

The rationale behind the second metaphor is rooted in South Asian cultural specificity. Looking backwards on the history of Partition, it is usually the women and children of the community who become the *shaheeds*, or martyrs. I would argue that in the case of Partition, it is precisely the influence of such metaphoric impulses in the name of national interests and nation-building that initiates the process of what Adam Morton terms “violentization” and leads to genocidal violence and improbable atrocity (36).⁴ Otherwise, how can we explain the acts of evil—the scenarios in which we witness the failure and erosion of the barriers against atrocity—as described in *Cracking India*?⁵

I want to conclude with another encounter of Partition violence recorded through a child’s perspective. Amartya Sen, the 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences, recalls his first encounter with murder in the pre-Partition Dhaka of 1944 in his *Identity*

⁴ In *On Evil*, Morton observes that people have both peaceful and violent modes, “with the peaceful mode as the norm and a transition to violence that can be triggered by various factors” (35). This “transition to violence” constitutes the process of violentization.

⁵ Morton argues for “the barrier theory of evil” in contemplating the meaning of evil. He believes that as human beings we have “inbuilt barriers against harm” through which we filter our actions (55). According to Morton, “A person’s act is evil when it results from a strategy or learned procedure which allows that person’s deliberations over the choice of actions not to be inhibited by barriers against considering or humiliating others that ought to have been in place” (57; emphases original).

and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny. From the details that he provides, we understand that sixty years later, the shock of witnessing the death of a victim of religious violence is still very much alive in the mind of the aged Sen. He repeatedly refers to the victim's name, Kadar Mia, to give an individual identity to this Muslim day laborer murdered by Hindu mobs while trying to find some work to support his family. Sen's recounting also underscores that it is the poorest members of a community who are most likely to become victims of riot violence. Still, Sen confesses, "For a bewildered child, the violence of identity was extraordinarily hard to grasp. It is not particularly easy even for a still bewildered elderly adult" (173). The "still bewildered elderly adult," however, does formulate his theory about the source of violence as originating in an illusion of a singular identity. Sen insightfully argues that what is behind contemporary global confrontation is in fact a dominant "'solitarist' approach to human identity" based on "the odd presumption that the people of the world can be uniquely categorized according to some *singular and overarching* system of partitioning" (xii; emphasis original) such as religion and culture. Our hope for world peace and harmony, Sen contends, rests on "the plurality of our identities, which cut across each other and work against sharp divisions around one single hardened line of vehement division that allegedly cannot be resisted" (16). Consider the fact that every day at the border exits between India and Pakistan, the daily retreat ceremony is choreographed as a symbolic performance of nationalist patriotism and displays of military valor to be consumed by locals and tourists alike. Consider also the endless border disputes, such as the one in the northern region of Kashmir reportedly behind the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, and calls for more independent homelands for different religious groups, such as Khalistan for the Sikhs. Clearly the reproduction of a singular identity will only lead to more bloodshed and unrest. Resisting the illusion of a destined singularity based upon a solitary categorization becomes highly important if we want to prevent the process of violentization that inevitably will lead to religious and/or racial atrocity. Bapsi Sidhwa once responded to a query about the overall purpose of *Cracking India* by stating that the novel is "[t]o function as a recording of a particular history, hoping that one might learn lessons from that history." Indeed, in this age of global violence and atrocity, we need to pause and take stock of the lessons we have learned from history and literature

if we are to envision a way out of the entrapment of categorical singularity and the inevitable, violent destruction of humanity.

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國家的誕生：席德華的《分裂印度》 中印巴分裂之再現研究

馮品佳*

摘 要

1949 年的印巴分裂是南亞大陸建構後殖民獨立國家過程中的「原初的創傷」，許多南亞裔的創作者也不斷回顧這一段創傷經驗，試圖由不同的角度了解這個影響深遠的暴力事件與建國神話之間的複雜關係。對於幾個世代的南亞裔作家而言，不論是重現親身經歷或是重組家族傳說，創作者在書寫印巴分裂時有如強制性地重新記憶此一巨大創傷。本論文則聚焦研究巴基斯坦祆教後裔作家席德華 1991 年出版的自傳性小說《分裂印度》如何從弱勢族裔女性的觀點省思暴力與建國之間的關聯。

關鍵詞：印巴分裂、暴力、席德華、《分裂印度》

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