

# Mapping Affective Geographies of the Indian Subcontinent: A Textual Materialist Reading of Pritika Chowdhry's Partition Anti-Memorial Project (2007-22)

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## Abstract

One of the foremost objectives of feminist political geography includes the exposure of the violence inherent in the making of political boundaries, the repercussions of which are often, undeniably gendered. While cartography thus assumes the high role of being an objective, scientifically grounded practice that provides a visual, two-dimensional relief of spatial terrain, the interrogation of the dominant discourses that majorly influence the cartographic process hardly finds a mention in everyday conversations. Of late, however, there has been a surge in appropriating the cartographic practice in artistic and literary works to pose questions and subvert the authority of maps, both political and local, imagining newer ways of configuring and occupying space. Pritika Chowdhry's Partition Anti-Memorial Project (2007-22) of the Partition of India is one such striking example of such an appropriation that attempts at a radical mapping of the affective geography of the Indian subcontinent by emphasising the textuality of the political map, which thus opens it to interrogation, and activates possible routes of subversion. Undertaking a textual materialist reading of the exhibition, one sees that Chowdhry accomplishes her objectives in two ways: First, by the employment of intertextuality through the citation of South Asian literary works activating and making visible unexpected circuits of meaning-making; second, by utilising the map itself as a substrate along with the use or allusion to other corporeal, bodily objects or extensions such as skin, hair, pig guts and fabric, on which she plays out different counter-geographies of confronting spatiality. This paper argues that in thus highlighting the textuality of the map using a materialist approach, Chowdhry carves an affective feminist geography which does away with the notion of the map as an intellectual "closed" textual product of the mind alone, subverting its monopoly of assumed governance and regulation of our bodies in space.

**Keywords:** maps, feminist geography, partition studies, textual materialism, affect theory