

Shankar's talent lies in telling a good story. As a storyteller he is witty, satirical (without being bitter), and possesses an eye for detail. His intricate descriptions of the sights and sounds of Madras and South Indian life reminds one of another great chronicler of southern Indian life, R. K. Narayan. From the ubiquitous coffee stalls to the beaches of Mahabalipuram, Shankar recreates Madras as one who has lived and breathed that city. The novelist also is very sensitive to spoken language, and this is apparent in the bilingual puns he uses. For instance, he names a Lilliputian region as Faraanaser, which captures a Tamilian's pronunciation of a question often asked in Tamil of people who own imported things. Another example of the bilingual pun is the name Vaasal for the coastal town from which Visweswaran escapes. The name sounds like "vassal" which describes its status within Lilliput but in Tamil the word also means "threshold" which is obviously a wonderful name for a town on the border. Sometimes the novel becomes heavy handed in its use of puns, as in the naming of Visweswaran's teacher, Edu Kator. This notwithstanding, *A Map of Where I Live* is an intelligent debut novel, which makes one look forward to this talented writer's next work.

NALINI IYER



Alok Bhalla, ed. *Stories About the Partition of India*. 3 Vols. 1994. New Delhi: Indus Paperback, 1997. Pp. xxxiii, 730. Rs. 195.

This collection of over sixty short stories has been translated from Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Panjabi, Malayalam, Dogri, Marathi, and Sindhi. Two of them were originally written in English. The largest number is from Urdu and this is because Urdu was the medium of migrants from Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. Hindi and Bengali understandably constitute the second largest group. The translations by Bhalla and his team are of a uniformly high quality. Exact idiomatic equivalents have been used for the turns of phrase in the original. While fiction about the Partition has been written in several Indian languages, no individual reader in fact has an access to all of it. This collection presents this holocaust from many different angles as it affected the minorities in the different regions.

The book was originally published in 1994. Its reprinting in the fiftieth year of India-Pakistan Independence is a grim reminder of the price we had to pay for it. Unfortunately, the embers of 1947 have not been put out yet. At the slightest pretext, they can be made to burst into fire once again.

There has been no sense of collective guilt in India or Pakistan over the horrors of 1947, as there was in Germany over Auschwitz or Belzen. Both sides feel that the provocation came from the other side. Some of the stories rehearse the most outrageous incidents. The effect

on the readers, perhaps not unintended in some instances, is to incite the spirit of revenge. Gulam Abbas's story, for example, wallows in details of obscenities committed by the Hindus on innocent, peace-loving Muslims. Nothing could have been further from the editor's intention, but the writer's intention is, it seems, to fan the flames of communalism in readers.

The most touching stories are about abandoned children, who were adopted on the other side of the border by childless parents. The children had to be returned to their real parents, much against the wishes of their adopted parents and sometimes against the wishes of the children themselves. To this group belong the stories by Ahmed Nadim Qasmi, Gurmukh Singh Musafir, Vishnu Prabhakar, Bhisham Sahni, and Ved Rahi.

While stories of abandoned children are pathetic, stories of abducted women are tragic. They are either unable or unwilling to return to their families because they have been subjected to unmentionable outrages. To cross the border would be to accept undeserved shame. Jamila Hashmi, L. Antharjanam, Kulwant Singh Virk, and Rajinder Singh Bedi have contributed variations on this theme. Bedi's story "Lajwanti" stands out as a revelation of the treachery in the heart of man. Its protagonist campaigns for the rehabilitation of abducted women but when confronted with his own wife he is embarrassed rather than relieved by her return. Ramlal's story gives a comic twist to this theme. "A Visitor from Pakistan" is about a husband who turns up from across the border to claim his wife, who has remarried because she had lost all hope of his return.

The theme of Partition does not necessarily bring out the best specimens of narrative art in every writer. Vatsayan, one of the great names in Hindi fiction, portrays an improbable picture of how the two communities lived in complete harmony with each other until mob frenzy was let loose in 1947. Syed Walliullah, Intizar Hussain, Salil Choudhary, Bandopadhyay, and others make the same assumption. The editor, as a Gandhian, professes the ideology that underlies this assumption. To the reviewer, however, Yashpal's "Holy War" seems more probable. The communal propaganda of the two years preceding the Partition could not have spread as a raging epidemic if the virus had not been there in the first place. Ismet Chaghtai is able to assert the unshakable sanity of her heroine partly because of her narrative skill and partly because Mewar was not as inflammable as Lahore or Calcutta.

At least two stories exhibit experimental narrative techniques, which serve to shift the focus from the theme of human bestiality in the stories to their virtuosity of narration. Intizar Hussain's "An Unwritten Epic" and Masood Ashar's "A Very Old Story" are examples of such experiments.

But if the reader of these sixty odd stories wishes to single out the most memorable of them, there cannot be any two opinions about the

fact that Saddat Hasan Manto's stories leave the most indelible impression on one's mind. Nobody who reads "Toba Tek Singh," "Cold Meat," or "Open It" can ever forget them. Writers evidently can use their mastery of the narrative art to cross the frontiers of art. "Cold Meat" and "Open It" expose human nature so ruthlessly that the truth becomes unbearable (the reviewer is reminded of the mock trial of Goneril and Regan in *King Lear*). Mohan Rakesh's "The Owner of Rubble" and Samaresh Basu's "Adab" are more bearable because they stop short of stripping humans of human nature completely.

Pitiable as the condition of all refugees is (one is reminded of the migrants from Kashmir these days), the fate of the Bihari Muslims is in some ways the saddest. They fled from the Hindu fanatics to East Bengal only to find that they were unwanted after the Mukti Bahini stirred up hatred against them. The stories of Umm-e-Ummara and Ibrahim Jalees show how they ended up in the slums of Karachi, to be raped or killed. Amrit Rai's "Filth" gives a comic dimension to the theme. The tact with which he exposes the veneer of respectability of four despicable middle class railway passengers without actually writing pornography is commendable.

Altogether the editor and the team of translators (Bhalla himself being both in most of the pieces) deserves to be congratulated on the success of this venture that provides such fresh perspectives on the horrors of Partition.

RAJ K. KAUL



Bishnupriya Ghosh and Brinda Bose, eds. *Interventions: Feminist Dialogues on Third World Women's Literature and Film*. New York: Garland, 1997. Pp. xxxviii, 253. \$60.00.

*Interventions: Feminist Dialogues on Third World Women's Literature and Film* is a part of the "Gender, Culture, and Global Politics" series, edited by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and it is inspired by Mohanty's call to arms in *Under Western Eyes* (1991). Mohanty contends that any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of "Third World feminisms" must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critiques of hegemonic "Western" feminisms, and the formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies. The first project is one of deconstructing and dismantling, the second, one of building and constructing. The long introduction clearly, if somewhat didactically, lays down the ways in which this volume critiques feminism while diversifying feminism as a discipline. Two simple yet effective ways in which this diversification-cum-critique is effected is through the heterogeneous geographic coverage (the twelve essays cover Ghana, India, Bangla-