

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.

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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-

desh, Pakistan, the Caribbean, Nicaragua, Egypt, Argentina, and other parts of Latin America; the contributors are mostly from the US, but not exclusively so; one teaches in Puerto Rico, another in India) and through the editors' brave decision to provide a forum for young academics rather than star scholars.

Ghosh and Bose present an elaborate discussion of preferred terminology (transnational versus First World-Third World, configurations versus formation, gendered interventions versus gender significations), but the most interesting part of their agenda is their desire to resist oversimplification of Third World women not just by First and Third World patriarchal discourse but also by otherwise committed First World feminists. Amal Amireh in her essay comes out very forcefully against the unprofessional yet systematic reduction of the underprivileged Arab woman by Accad, Zenie-Ziegler, and Badran for easy consumption by the West. However, this essay would have been even stronger if she had moved on from her critique to exemplary citations either from her own work or that of other scholars—that is, the “dismantling” that Mohanty called for is superbly done; what is not so evident is the rebuilding and reconstruction of Egyptian feminist discourse. The essays of Elizabeth Willey on Ghana's Ama Ata Aidoo and Pilar Moyano on Nicaraguan poet Gioconda Belli do both dismantling and reconstruction, dealing as they do with women writers who critique male visions of nation building.

This sensitivity to an appositional stance would have been welcome in Nupur Chaudhuri's piece on the writings of Santa Devi and Sita Devi, two Bengali women of letters at the time of India's independence movement. While this essay provides valuable archival material on the two sisters' ironic dismantling of the great male dream of Indian independence and an examination of the limited freedom that was extended to even upperclass Bengali women (they had a right to education and suffrage but not to a profession or to a choice of a life partner) it takes as a premise Partha Chatterjee's view of the Bengali middle-class's notion of its own “inner, essential, identity of the East,” a spiritual identity which colonialism could not tarnish, whereas Bengali women may have had a less idealistic, more down-to-earth point-of-view. Sita and Santa's writings certainly express a concern for economic and other purely material disadvantages. Chaudhuri could also analysed the irony inherent in the names of these two women—Devi is the Bengali word for goddess, raising spectres of the angel in the house stereotype.

Susan Koshy's essay on Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* on the other hand does full justice to the author's acerbity and disgust in the autobiographical account of the self-absorption and arrogance lurking beneath Suleri's father's dreams of a new nation, Pakistan, and the unrecorded price the women in his family pay for his utopian ideals—dislocation, expulsion, disempowerment. Suleri's story becomes a mi-

crocosm of the often gender-exclusive great narratives of nationhood and freedom.

Ghosh's essay too focuses on the lone, outspoken female voice, in this case Taslima Nasrin, against Bangladesh's double standards regarding politics, religion, and gender. The old debate between art for art's sake and art as propaganda rears its head as Ghosh scathingly dismisses those critics who merely speak of Nasrin's literary shortcomings (she is supposed to have less verbal legerdemain than Rushdie, another writer under fatwa) without taking into account her political agenda or her position of powerlessness. Ghosh's essay is exemplary in its inclusion of a male feminist, the documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, and its problematization of the writer's own stance of an Indian, Hindu writer, educated in the Third World and settled in the first.

Ghosh's co-editor Bose in her essay on Indian women's cinema sets up expectations of the Lacanian male gaze being supplanted or counteracted by a gaze of mutuality, but this does not seem to happen in any of the directors she discusses, Chadha, Nair, Parmar, and Sen. Ultimately, Sen's eponymous protagonist, Paroma, is as much a victim of Sen's camera lens as of the erotic designs of the travelling photographer—it is difficult to forget the close-up of Paroma's lips sucking on fish bones. Ultimately, to both director and lover, Paroma is an object of sexual desire.

Admirable as this collection is, an even stronger attack on hegemonic feminist discourses would have been welcome. Why should a mainly First World readership be assumed by the editors? Why should the work of Indian feminists like Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, who brought out *Women Writing in India* (1993) an anthology going as far back as 600 BC, or the work of the editors Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita of the Indian feminist journal *Manushi* appear not at all or only in footnotes? This too in a collection where all the essayists exhaustively cite feminist essays and books written in the West, almost always by Western authors.

SHORMISHTHA PANJA



Octavio Paz. *In Light Of India*. Trans. Eliot Weinberger. London: Harvill Press; New York: Harcourt, 1997. Pp. 209. \$22.00, \$12.00 pb.

Octavio Paz's account of India is refreshingly different. *In Light of India*, instead of reflecting personal idiosyncrasies, as books from visitors to India are wont to do, offers a very sensitive exploration of the country, unveiling its rich, layered mosaic of ancient and modern traditions. Paz's narrative, which begins with his first posting in India in 1951, marks a shift in his life as a practising poet and attaché in Paris. His deep involvement in the political, literary, philosophical, and artis-