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In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly (A Review Article)

India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom. Edited by MUSHIRUL HASAN. 2 volumes. New Delhi: Lotus, Roli Books, 1995.

Orphans of the Storm: Stories on the Partition of India. Edited by SAROS COWASJEE and K.S. DUGGAL. New Delhi: UBSPD, 1995.

Stories about the Partition of India. Edited by ALOK BHALLA. 3 volumes. Delhi: Indus, HarperCollins, 1994.

I

This is not that long awaited dawn ...

—Faiz Ahmad Faiz

THE TRANSFER OF POPULATIONS surrounding the Partition of India on August 14–15, 1947 created at least ten million refugees, and resulted in at least one million deaths. This is, perhaps, as much as we can quantify the tragedy. The bounds of the property loss, even if they were known, could not encompass the devastation. The number of persons beaten, maimed, tortured, raped, abducted, exposed to disease and exhaustion, and otherwise physically brutalized remains measureless. The emotional pain of severance from home, family and friendships is by its nature immeasurable. Fifty years have passed and the Partition remains unrequited in the historical experience of the Subcontinent.

This is, in one sense, as it should be, for the truth remains that the Partition unleashed barbarism so cruel, indeed so thorough in its cruelty, and complementary acts of compassion so magnificent—in short a com-

plex of impulses so pernicious, so heroic, so visceral, so human—that they cannot easily be assimilated into normal life. Neither can they be forgotten. And so, ingloriously, the experience of the Partition has been perhaps most clearly assimilated in the perpetuation of communal hostility within both India and Pakistan, for which it serves as the defining moment. The hope for a different assimilation has motivated the recent spate of publications on the literature of the Partition—three major anthologies in the past two years, with others promised for the upcoming anniversary year. These collections attest not only to the resurgence of literary interest in the Partition, and the emergence of Partition writings as a genre in modern South Asian literature in translation, but of a different approach to the event itself: an unbridled reclamation, a direct gaze at ugliness and survival. The hope is that a just remembrance mandates a better future.

The historical benefits of these publications are not for Indians and Pakistanis alone. In wider perspective, the Partition stands as the archetype of what I would call nationalist fratricide, the conflict between people of a common cultural heritage—usually also the common subjects of foreign domination—in competition as “nations” for political control of land and government. (The other principal type of ethnic conflict, nationalist genocide, is characterized by state-sponsored persecution or slaughter of cultural or religious minorities—epitomized by the destruction of the European Jews). Those looking for historical lessons and for the depths of the human impact of current conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, in Chechnya, in Armenia and Azerbaijan, in Kurdistan, in Rwanda and Burundi, in the Sudan and in Israel, have much to gain in a close study of the South Asian Partition.

A decent number, perhaps even a growing number of Pakistani and Indian historians will take exception to my characterization of the Partition as a case of fratricide. In their view, Pakistanis and Indians were not and are not one people, but two—different in their ways of life, in their religious ideals and in their historical destiny—whose separation at the end of colonial rule was right, if regrettable in its execution. If one idea emerges from the body of Partition writings taken as a whole, it is this: Such a view is historically disingenuous, politically opportunistic, apologetic for criminal behavior committed in the name of “destiny,” compatible with resignation in the face of preventable suffering, and a mockery of religious values. Not that the anthologized literature is outwardly polemic—most of it is not—but the majority of it is necessarily politicized. And this is good: the Partition was an event so great in its human consequences that its literature rightly forces us to reckon sides

and to choose. It is, after all, the literature's job to raise the event psychologically and emotionally, to tie us into its complex of choices and pain. So knotted we may learn to discriminate the day when (God willing) fratricide no longer appears a reasonable approach to the fact, indeed the joy of cultural difference.

However unified the literature itself, though, important and even fractious differences remain between the editorial viewpoints of these anthologies. Because these differences are critical in determining the climate of the literature's reception, it is worthwhile to examine them in some detail before turning to evocation and discussion of the texts themselves.

Cowasjee and Duggal's fine collection of stories from Urdu, Hindi and Panjabi emerges as the least editorially weighted of the three. The collection as a whole offers what the stories individually offer: the psychologies of characters in the midst of the events, the drama and pathos of their human impact, trauma in various hues. It offers, plainly, the plainspoken truths of the Partition experience, namely that it was a maze of brutality, loss, jealousy, cupidity, cunning, death by butchery, by rape, by deracination. Cowasjee and Duggal's Introduction is not particularly analytical philosophically or politically. If anything the collection rides editorially on the disgust, disillusionment and horror that were central concerns of the Progressive Writers' movement, the dominant literary school in South Asian literature from the thirties through the forties, and the single greatest literary origin of Partition writing. Both Cowasjee and Duggal were well known Progressive writers—Duggal's work in particular achieving critical acclaim—and it comes as no surprise that their collection should stand as a clear statement of the Progressive perspective on the Partition. In general the collection presents Progressive writing at its best, avoiding the sometimes melodramatic excesses of Progressive sentiment, offering a selection of stories that is nuanced, rich, difficult.

Bhalla has compiled an ambitious anthology, successfully hunting down works from every major and some minor Indian languages, presenting the perspective of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh writers. The anthology is not comprehensive, but does succeed in representing diverse points of view, bringing together some of the best authors and the best stories. Bhalla wants more than this achievement, however. He intends his collection to stand as a categorical indictment of communal hatred, as well as a vindication of his own Gandhian views, and of Gandhi himself. Thus Bhalla offers himself in his Introduction as a committed partisan of the one-people perspective: that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, Pakistanis,

Indians and Bangladeshis, are culturally a single people with different languages, religions and customs. The evidence of this single peoplehood is, in Bhalla's eyes, overwhelming: evident in the deep intermingling of lives, of cultural expression, of ethos in everyday life, in literature, music, architecture, commerce. The violence of the Partition occurred because a single people was torn into separate nations in a spasm of religious hysteria, self-interest, panic, bloodlust, greed.

Bhalla's own focus on the phenomenology of the Partition places him squarely within the Progressive tradition. But where the Progressives simply offer shock and outrage at the failure of civilized behavior, and leave the Partition as an unrequited event, Bhalla offers along with his quotient of shock and outrage a philosophy to redeem both the past and the future. He observes, trenchantly, that cultural chauvinism arises when inclusion and exclusion become the mediating criteria according to which a culture is defined: "[e]ntrapped by the logic of exclusive nationalism, [migrants] learn[ed] too late that neither the community of religion nor the shared idioms of language can offer a secure guarantee of a just society and so become the basis of a firm identity. Religious and linguistic definitions ... succeed only in establishing shifting grounds for the inclusion of some and making all others expendable ... [t]hese definitions ... can be manipulated for the purposes of political power by the unscrupulous" (Introduction, vol. I, p. xxiii). Bhalla's true concern thus is articulating the rudiments of a just society. Bhalla does not get very far in such an articulation, but indicates that achieving a just society demands, at the least, exploding myths of cultural purity, and denuding any self-enchantment that "sublime feelings about our particular faiths alone [could] lead us to social justice" (*ibid.*, p. xiv). Stated positively, social justice proceeds from admitting the selfish error of construing another community as essentially other, from admitting our essential connectedness to one another, and from correct remembrance of our mistakes. Making human connectedness and self-critical memory central to the building of a just society, we fence ourselves off from any suspicion that another community is less worthy of justice, which is to say less holy, than our own. First and foremost, with regard to the Partition, Bhalla implores us to accept "the absurdity of constructing fundamental entities called the Muslims or the Hindus who could easily be separated into nation states" (*ibid.*, p. xix), and that the Partition forced members of both communities "to leave behind a human world ... in return [for] an empty allegory of a religious community" (*ibid.*, p. xxii).

Approaching the Partition as a task of defining social justice is doubt-

less right, and Bhalla deserves commendation. Bhalla begins to stray, however, with the suggestion that religious faith, cultural pride, the essential connectedness of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh life in the Subcontinent, the incomprehensibility of the notion that there was always hatred between the communities in everyday life, should together have been enough to prevent the degeneration into violence during the Partition. “Why did we not, as a people, resist?” Bhalla asks incredulously.

The stories themselves and a basic knowledge of history suggest a number of answers for the violence and the lack of resistance that are perfectly compatible with the one-people approach. First, the political climate of the freedom struggle was violent to begin with. The British government met the Indian nationalist movement with violent repression consistently throughout the freedom struggle, from the Khilafat/Noncooperation activism of 1918–22, through the Noncooperation movement of 1930–34, and the widespread revolts following the arrests of Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and other leaders at the start of the Quit India movement in 1942. In addition there were continuous, if rogue acts of revolutionary terrorism, as well as trade union militancy, communist agitation, and regular outbreaks of communal rioting. The militant voices of Muslim separatism became exceedingly important, as we know, after the 1940 Lahore Resolution, in addition to the voices of Hindu chauvinism in the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, whose message dovetailed with the more moderate voices of the Hindu religious revival that began in the nineteenth century. Add to the political turbulence the economic suffering the country experienced under the British regime—the most obvious example of which was a series of devastating famines causing an estimated thirty million deaths between 1857 and 1947, with three million in 1943 alone—and the result is a condition of extraordinary explosiveness. It is quite possible that no force in the world could have prevented the ignition of such a concentration of social and political discontents. Second, the exchange of populations during the Partition introduced a social vacuum uniquely habitable to thugs and goons. If the aggressions of an organized few are usually enough to frighten the unorganized many in times of stability, they are enough to terrorize in times of social upheaval. Thus, self-protection alone must account for a great deal of the nonresistance. Such self-protection, while perhaps not noble, is also not a vice. Third, there was legitimate confusion over the future of the country given the erratic policy of the British government and the brinkmanship between the Muslim League and the Congress. Likewise there was legitimate confusion over cultural identity, particularly given that tensions

by 1947 had risen to a point where extreme views had managed to win the tacit if not explicit support of moderates. Confusion is eminently permissive of ethical failure. Fourth, the incendiary quality of media coverage only hastened the collapse of good judgment. Finally, some of the violence seems to have arisen situationally, not from deeply held communal prejudice, but from momentary rage. Some acts of retaliatory violence may have proceeded from the error in judgment of people who surrendered to a frenzy of anger, but who were not, at heart, hateful.

All five violence-begetting elements—the ambient political and social violence, the terror of an organized few and the self-protective reaction of the many, political and cultural confusion, inflammatory media reportage, the natural retaliatory impulse in the face of violence—do not in any way contradict the thesis of shared history and essential amity between groups. But Bhalla fails to consider these or other sources of violence when he asks, “Why did we not, as a people, resist?” Rather he asks the question as if the only answer were either that the violence remains essentially inexplicable, or that the Partition shows human nature itself intrinsically weak and depraved. For Bhalla there is apparently no explanation for the violence, short of a nihilistic conclusion about human nature, which Bhalla is loathe to make. Indeed it seems that Bhalla considers himself noble for not making such a conclusion, which the horror of the events would warrant.

In fact Bhalla’s question is rhetorical, and he offers only naïve answers because the question is a sieve into his own agenda: rehabilitating Gandhi as an ethical model and a martyr of the struggle against hatred. Directly following his query about the failure of resistance, Bhalla asks, “Why did we not follow Gandhi, as we had done often before, on his pilgrimage to Noakhali and gather around him at Srirampur to pledge to uphold the peace?” (*ibid.*, p. xiv). The only way Bhalla can ask this question seriously is if Gandhi has himself become a mythical figure of universal unification. The “we” of Bhalla’s question cries for definition: not only did Gandhi not enjoy the uncritical support of the Congress leadership, much of which rejected his Luddite economics and his political strategy (not to mention his personal idiosyncrasies), but his detractors included B.R. Ambedkar, who criticized him for his support of the *varna* system and gender inequalities, and mainstream Muslims who were justifiably suspicious of his trading on Hindu symbolism to rally political support. To make Gandhi into a model universalist is to take him entirely on his own terms, which is a sport for the gullible. I do not think, however, that Bhalla is merely a dupe of the Gandhian myth. Rather I believe that he

himself, while asserting that secularism is the only acceptable political solution to the challenge of multi-culturalism, is sympathetic with Gandhi's personal religious orthodoxy, and with a Hindu religiosity modeled on it. Bhalla says, in effect, that Gandhi represents the pinnacle of Hindu ethical consciousness, which is a pure achievement beyond its political manifestation, and so deserves to be embraced by members of all faiths as a solution compatible with secularism to the problem of communal hatred.

Because I respect that Bhalla offers his opinions sincerely, I hesitate to call them arrogant. But the question remains open whether Gandhi's legacy can be laundered so that Gandhi emerges as a prophet of social inclusiveness acceptable to secularists and to non-Hindus. Trying to make Gandhian Hinduism the true path of ethical universalism, and the natural handmaiden of political secularism is a dicey proposition, if only in the effort to be true to the historical record, as Bhalla insists we must be. Whatever Gandhi's personal religious feelings, his politics were not evident to all parties as the politics of universal love. And even his personal ethics are not universally lovable, at least as Gandhi presents them in his *Autobiography*, where he frequently appears egocentric, rigid, unforgiving and exceedingly authoritarian. That aside, Bhalla's efforts are certainly questionable in the current political climate, in which there is no more guarantee than there was fifty years ago that Gandhi will not be revered narrowly as a Hindu hero rather than as a Hindu universalist. Bhalla risks playing into the hands of those fundamentalists he opposes.

The least that Bhalla owes his readers in the way of Gandhi-therapy is a thorough criticism of the Hindu fundamentalism that glorifies Gandhi. Bhalla's analysis of Hindu fundamentalist history is curiously abrupt, and off the mark. First, the problem is not that Hindu fundamentalist historians falsely construct entities called Hindus and Muslims, as Bhalla claims, but that they distort differences that do exist for the sake of creating enmity. Second, Bhalla fails to consider that not only was Muslim resistance to the Hinduized politics of the Indian National Congress not a betrayal of India, as the Hindu historians claim, but it was a legitimate forum of resistance. That is, if Gandhi's Hindu religiosity formed a legitimate, indeed desirable basis of resistance, then some form of Muslim-centered consciousness must also be admitted. Third, and perhaps most seriously, Bhalla has the temerity to attack current Pakistani historians who justify the violence of the Partition in defense of Pakistan as an historical destiny, without decrying the ways that *hindūtvā* history is currently used to justify the persecution of the Muslim minority in

India—indeed without mentioning the appalling levels of communal violence in the 1990s that such history has abetted. We are left to wonder whether it is merely accidental that Bhalla's Gandhian humanism seems remarkably like Indian nationalism, more concerned with discrediting Pakistani ideology than setting its own house right.

Where Bhalla positions himself as a lone ethical hero trapped in a universe of parochial fiends, and then fails to live up to the self-critical standards he expects of others, Mushirul Hasan emerges as a sober critic who clearly understands the gravity of the ethical failure the Partition played out—without self-righteousness. The clear editorial strength of Hasan's new volumes is his willingness to peer critically into the political tectonics of the Partition from the Muslim perspective, with a courage that delineates precisely who won and who lost with the partition of the country. Hasan has collected two thoughtful, compelling volumes of literary and documentary material from Urdu, Hindi, Panjabi and English, that enable a deep consideration of the social configuration of the Partition, largely but not exclusively from the Muslim perspective. Together with the collection of academic papers he edited in 1993, *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (New Delhi: Oxford), the new volumes will remain a landmark in Partition studies for some time to come.

Hasan's scholarship into the politics that won Pakistan hovers in the background of his project in these volumes, and provides a light on events that the stories themselves generally do not shine, namely the politics of the Muslim League's success, and the political brinksmanship of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Congress leadership, Lord Mountbatten and the British government. Neither Hasan nor his colleagues question that the status of the Muslim minority raised a nearly intractable dilemma in the context of rising Indian nationalist consciousness: such consciousness grew, on the one hand, against the colonial regime, but on the other along the contours of internal cultural differences. Where the colonial status quo involved reducing all groups to minority parties, encouraging them to make their separate peaces with the British regime—gaining privilege, protection, or being ignored—Indian nationalists divided between builders of an integrated, pan-Indian coalition, and builders of a mass majority with pronounced minority exclusion. Hasan describes the Muslim League's three-pronged response, which succeeded in mobilizing the Muslim middle and working classes, and polarizing the overall political climate after the Lahore Resolution. First, the League galvanized the fears of the Urdu-speaking *muhājir* bourgeoisie that they were in direct

competition with and mortally outnumbered by a tightly knit, conspiratorial Hindu *baniyā*-class. Second, it swayed self-seeking local landlords and political henchmen, particularly in the Panjab, by capitalizing on the electoral miscalculations of its opponents (the Congress, the Panjabi Unionist Party), and by secretly promising not to enact land reforms in Muslim controlled areas. Third, it sent *pīrs* together with Aligarh students to canvass the countryside. The *pīrs*, whom the League paid tens of thousands of rupees, convinced large numbers of people that dedication to the Muslim League was a religious duty. The students transformed the League's popular appeal into an anti-Hindu hysteria, drumming up a paranoia that could only be solved by Muslim secession from the rest of India and the creation of a fundamentalist theocracy to save the "endangered" Muslim people.

What Hasan and others call into question is how much Jinnah actually wanted partition. They suggest that Jinnah after 1937 was hemmed in on two sides: by provincial Muslim bosses, particularly in the Panjab, and by the provincial Congress ministries, which sought on the strength of the Congress's showing in the 1937 elections to marginalize Jinnah and the League. The secular, liberal Jinnah, according to the new thinking, was imperfectly committed, even perhaps uncommitted, but in any case far less committed than the Muslim religious right, to the two-nation theory of essential cultural and political differences between Hindus and Muslims, and to the picture of Islam in danger—of, that is, Muslims as hapless victims of communal riots perpetrated by a hostile Hindu majority, of the Muslim salariat in a losing battle with the dominant caste-Hindu salariat, and of Urdu under siege. (Incidentally, he was also far less committed than the Hindu religious right, which viciously attacked not only Muslims but secularists also). In the revisionist perspective, Jinnah did not embrace religious mobilization and the demand for partition because he was wedded to a sovereign Muslim religious homeland, but because he needed to win support for the League in Muslim dominated areas, and to break the Congress' grip on the post-independence central government. In short, Jinnah made a bargaining chip of the spectre of partition in his effort to make a place for himself and the League in a united, free India. Jinnah's India would have been characterized by provincial autonomy, benefiting the League in the Muslim dominated provinces, accompanied by parity between the League and the Congress at a weak center. Additionally, separate Muslim provinces within a united India would facilitate the League's other principal charge, the protection of Indian Muslims where they were in the minority.

For the Congress, the reverse would be true: a partition of the country would certify its control over a strong central government. Such control, Hasan and his corps argue, ultimately proved more important to the Congress than Indian unity. The genius of the Congress strategy was to force Jinnah to wear the black mark of division, putting up a façade of unity while deliberately pushing Jinnah toward his Pakistan. Thus both Nehru's and Gandhi's reactions to the Lahore Resolution were from the beginning calculating. Shortly after the passage of the Resolution, Gandhi, realizing that partition promised fratricide, effectively equated his nonviolence with nonprotection of the innocent, and with a willingness to accept blood as the price of the Congress' leadership:

Unless the rest of India wishes to engage in internal fratricide, the others will have to submit to the Muslim dictation, if the Muslims will resort to it.... The Muslims must have the same right to self-determination that the rest of India has. We are at present a joint family. Any member may claim a division.... As a man of non-violence, I cannot forcibly resist the proposed partition if the Muslims of India really [insist] upon it [*sic*].... My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines.... But that is my belief. I cannot thrust it down the throats of the Muslims who think that they are a different nation.¹

Likewise, on April 15, 1940, Nehru was reported to be

pleased, not because he liked [the Lahore Resolution]—on the contrary he considered it to be the most insane suggestion—but because it very much simplified the problem. They were now able to get rid of the demands about proportionate representation in legislatures, services, cabinets, etc.... [He] asserted that if people wanted such things as suggested by the Muslim League at Lahore ... they and people like him[self] ... could not live together in India.²

¹Asim Roy, "The High Politics of India's Partition: The Revisionist Perspective," in Mushirul Hasan, ed. *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1993), p.125.

²*Ibid.*

So too, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, in the thirty pages of his 1957 memoir, *India Wins Freedom*, disclosed in 1988, points his finger at Nehru's responsibility, and gives the lie to the myth of "the Congress for Unity, the League for Partition":

I warned Jawaharlal [in 1946] that ... if we agreed to Partition ... [t]he verdict would be that India was not divided by the Muslim League but by the Congress.³

Finally, in 1960, Nehru himself made the opprobrious confession: "The truth is that ... the plan for partition offered a way out and we took it."

Jinnah, along with the Congress leadership, accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan in June, 1946, which did not call for partition. The Congress then destroyed the option by refusing to accede to parity with the League in the interim government, or to a compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces. In 1947, Jinnah was willing to accept a united India with a "dominion" of the six provinces. So it was that Jinnah remained obstinate in public and considerably more pliable behind the scenes. The final outcome of negotiations, mandating the dual transfer of power to a bifurcated Pakistan and an Indian state, followed from Congress policy and the British government's acquiescence to it.⁴

Whether the League, the Congress or the British were the most culpable in the high level brinksmanship, the new scholarship makes clear the extraordinary recklessness of the demand for partition, fueling as it did social engines of hatred beyond anyone's control, soliciting communal hatred as the best outlet for the social tensions of the period. The scholarship suggests the following answer to the question of whether Pakistan was an historical destiny: bloodshed was the destiny of the politics of arrogance and deceit. And so like Bhalla, Hasan believes that Hindus and Muslims in the subcontinent formed a single people, sharing a culture in which linguistic, regional and fraternal bonds crossing religious communities were socially foundational, and indeed, in which folk religious worship was frequently a fusion of Hindu and Muslim practice. Who were the losers in the Partition? Without question it was the great majority of common people who had lived side by side for generations,

³*Ibid.*, p.104.

⁴C.f. R.J. Moore, "Jinnah and the Pakistan Demand," in Hasan, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-194.

and had cultivated deep attachments to land, language, friendship and a shared cultural heritage. Hasan writes: “It is undeniable that most people, Hindus and Muslims alike, were largely unconcerned with or indifferent to the newly created geographical entities. Most were caught up in the cross fire of religious hate. Most were driven out of their homes and drifted from one place to another out of fear, panic and a sense of hopelessness. They were indeed hapless victims of a triangular game plan, worked out by the British, the Congress and the League without care or consideration for huge number [*sic*] of people who had no commitment to a Hindu homeland or fascination for an imaginary *dar al-Islam*. They had no destination to reach, no mirage to follow” (vol. I, p. 33). It is only natural that Hasan, like Bhalla, should strive with his collection to fathom “the immediate and the long term impact of Partition on the silent majority, uprooted from home and field and driven by sheer fear of death to seek safety across a line they had neither drawn nor desired” (*ibid.*, p. 27).

II

*Somewhere the wave of the slow night will melt the shore
and somewhere the boat of the heart's grief will anchor ...*

—Faiz Ahmad Faiz

It is well that the high politics of the Partition hang in the background of the majority of the stories themselves, which dwell in the affective experience of the events and their consequences for ordinary people. It is, after all, in drawing forth the ways the Partition *felt*, beyond debate about what caused it and what it caused, that it reaches a universal accessibility, and gets lodged in a broad section of humanity's historical memory.

Across the anthologized material, three central thematic areas emerge: rupture, protest and repair. Though none of the anthologies is thematically arranged, these three motifs taken as a progression form a natural response to the Partition, a continuum from pain to healing. Stories of rupture involve a basic confusion, a groping for sense and sanity amid personal, social and sometimes existential loss. Stories of protest grow fundamentally from anger, and decry human savagery, the vitiation of values, the betrayal of social contract. Stories of repair, finally, remind us of the sparks of ethical conscience that dwell in the human soul, even in the most degraded of times, and of the healing power of positive memory.

Of course, many stories include more than one of these themes.

The three anthologies do differ slightly in their thematic emphases. Cowasjee and Duggal include mainly stories of rupture and protest. Bhalla includes stories of all three types, with perhaps a larger quotient of stories of repair. Hasan's volumes are weighted in favor of stories of protest. It should be said to the credit of all the editors and translators that their selections are, in general, literarily sophisticated as English works. Indeed, in the 136 stories the three anthologies together offer, only one seems to treat the Partition entirely superficially, at the level of its crimes and atrocities, even exploiting them for literary shock value, proffering the easy answer of indignation in the face of the Partition's complexities. This is Krishan Chander's "The Peshawar Express," in which a personified train narrates a putrid journey of murder and woe from Peshawar to Bombay. The story is simplistic and specular in a literal sense: it describes events as a mute passerby might see them. By literarily sophisticated I mean not that the other stories are all successful, but that they are dramatically, emotionally, psychologically or philosophically skilled. Within such skill is a range of success. Many plot-driven works read well, perhaps because they are relatively easy to translate. Of the emotionally driven works, those focusing on anger tend to be more successful than those based in melancholy, which easily becomes facile sentimentality. Alok Bhalla's and Vishwmitter Adil's translation of Ismat Chughtai's "Roots," for example, seems concertedly on the saccharine side. The same can be said for their translation of Gurmukh Singh Musafir's "The Abandoned Child," for Mihir Bhattacharya's translation of "The White Horse," and Bhisham Shahni's own translation of his "Pali." Likewise Faruq Hassan's translation of Qudrat Ullah Shahab's "Ya Khuda," which contains moments of extraordinary pathos, is uneven and at times cloying in its portrayal of its protagonist's wizened numbness. Luckily, nearly all the stories that work primarily as psychological and philosophical studies are decently translated, particularly those of Intizar Husain. The notable exception is Kamleshwar's "How Many Pakistans?" which, despite being included in all three collections, is in none of them quite able to marry the protagonist's directionlessness in the last scene with his knowing tenderness in first.

Hasan's collection raises special concerns because it, unlike the others, treats both fictional and nonfictional writing, combining stories, excerpts from long fiction, poems, oral histories, interviews and memoir material. Hasan's editorial choice to include both types of writing brings us face to face with an essential problem of writing the Partition as the

human experience it was, namely that the overwhelming majority of its events went unrecorded, un verbalized. The writer of historical fiction strives to make particular events resound with the vast catalogue of silent events, to make the writing conjure what can never be fully spoken, and historical fiction thereby validates historical truth precisely in its power to represent. Documentary writing, on the other hand, remains closely attached to particular persons, particular contexts, and achieves a sense of representation only when the person relating the events is especially insightful. When the two genres are combined, what might seem like poetic license in the fiction—for example, in descriptions of violence and criminality—reads true to the personal experiences of the nonfiction. At the same time, the nonfiction, when informed by the fiction, seems to describe not just the particular experience of an individual, but also commonplace experience. As tempting as it might be to privilege fictional investigation for its aesthetic and philosophic richness, Hasan's volumes abundantly bear out that the fiction's power is, if anything, increased when offered together with nonfictional accounts. This is particularly true in the case of oral history, interview and other testimonial texts, which are experiential and nonanalytical, and so are strikingly close in their feeling to much of the short fiction. The juxtaposition draws attention to the different truths different sorts of writing tell—and is one of Hasan's collection's principal achievements.

For those with limited time to study the anthologized material, the following are, I think, the finest pieces.⁵ It is, naturally, impossible here to relate the works in their fullness, or to do justice to the many extraordinary characters and scenes the stories impart.

1. Texts of rupture and loss: Khwaja Ahmad Abbas' "Revenge" (C/D); Lalithambika Antharjanam's "The Mother of Dhirendu Muzumdar" (B2); Badiuzaman's "The Alien" (H1); Samaresh Basu's "Adab" (B3, C/D); Salil Choudhary's "The Dressing Table" (B1); Intizar Husain's "The City of Sorrow" (B2), "A Letter from India" (B1), "The Stairway" (C/D) and "An Unwritten Epic" (B3); Ibrahim Jalees's "A Grave Turned

⁵For the sake of brevity, the anthologies are cited in parentheses as follows: stories in Bhalla's collection are designated by B, followed by the number 1, 2 or 3, indicating the volume; stories in Hasan's collection are designated by H, likewise followed by the number of the volume; stories from Cowasjee and Duggal's collection are designated C/D.

Inside Out" (B2); Kamleshwar's "How Many Pakistans?" (B2, C/D, H1); Saadat Hasan Manto's "Black Margins" (H1; two selections appear in B1 as "Compassion," and "Sorry"), "Cold Meat" (B1), "Mozel" (B2), "The Reunion" (C/D, translated in B2 as "Open It"), "A Tale of 1947" (C/D), "Toba Tek Singh" (B3, C/D) and "Xuda Ki Qasam" (C/D); Mumtaz Mufti's "An Impenetrable Darkness" (H1); Vishnu Prabhakar's "My Native Land" (H1); Mohan Rakesh's "God's Dog" (B2); M.S. Sarna's "Savage Harvest" (C/D); Qudrat Ullah Shahab's "Ya Khuda" (C/D); Krishna Sobti's "Where is my Mother?" (B2, C/D) and "The New Regime" (H1); and Umm-e-Ummara's "More Sinned Against Than Sinning" (B1).

Abbas' "Revenge" is the terse tale of Hari Das, a prominent Panjabi lawyer who has lost his entire family in the massacres: his wife drowned herself, and a bloodthirsty crowd raped and murdered his daughter. Consumed with the desire for revenge, Hari Das becomes fixed on the notion of stabbing a Muslim girl in her naked breasts. Living as a refugee in Delhi, it happens that he receives a sum of money from a rehabilitation fund. He decides to spend it in lavish fulfillment of his violent fantasy. He goes to a brothel and sets his sight on an extraordinarily beautiful Muslim prostitute. He enters into a seductive drama with her, gracing her dance with note after note, until, at the end of the evening, he accompanies her to her bedroom. With his knife in his pocket, and a manic gloss in his eyes, he bolts the door and orders her to undress, piece by piece, under the electric light. When only her brassiere remains, the girl covers her face with her hands and begins to sob. Hari Das raises the knife above her, and grabs at her hands to see the look of terror on her face as he kills her. The girl shrieks. Hari Das intuitively recognizes more than terror in her look—but also fear, hate, a plea for mercy, hopelessness—a look her face had borne before, and the very look he had seen on his own daughter's face. When he snatches away her brassiere, his dagger still poised above her, he can only avert his eyes: "beneath the brassiere where he was going to stab her, there were no breasts...there was nothing—nothing but two horrible round scars." We imagine that Hari Das realizes that revenge only contributes an economy of mutilation, but Abbas leaves open whether such a realization can match the force of tears and shame. Revenge, Abbas suggests, may be a poor response to the pain, but poor because there is no reclaiming such pain. We see that the urge for revenge veils the pain. Abbas in his story lifts the veil, but gives no direction for living with the pain more directly felt.

Perhaps the finest writer of pithy, biting stories, Saadat Hasan Manto, receives considerable attention in these collections. Manto's achievement—and the reason for treating him foremost as writer of rupture—is to place his readers in the heat of depraved, senseless and twisted universes from which he offers, in what is perhaps his own vengeance, no clear escape. We are left only with speed and violence coursing in the blood of his characters, spun off without soothing messages or disclaimers. “Cold Meat” brilliantly traces the thin line between sexual urge and bloodlust, as a jealous woman murders her usually virile lover, who has become impotent after abducting a woman, killing her family and raping her with such lust he fails to notice she too is dead. “Open It” tells the dark story of a refugee who hires a group of self-appointed social workers to find his missing daughter. The men locate her, feed her and—her father discovers in the end—brutally rape her. “Toba Tek Singh” relates with acid humor the story of a lunatic (perhaps any of us who tries to rationalize the Partition, Manto suggests), who in the exchange of asylum inmates between the two countries answers the official queries of which country he belongs to with repeated semi-sensical sputter, only to be left lying in a no man's land between barbed wire fences. In “Black Margins,” Manto strings together a series of gritty vignettes, sometimes fragments of vignettes, of Partition evils. The piece is perhaps not as refined as his other work—which may account for why Hasan includes only twenty-two of the original thirty-two pieces, and why Bhalla includes only two⁶—but reveals the character of the moral hell Manto sees in the Partition. The following segment of the story, titled “Reformed,” recounts a pitiless mob interrogation, in this case by Hindus, of a captive:

“Who are you?”

⁶Bhalla deserves some reproval for his review of Hasan's collection, “Thirsty Spears and the Names of Gods,” which appeared in the *Indian Review of Books*, 16 November–15 December 1995, pp. 2–4 [and is reproduced in the Review Section in the present issue —*Eds.*]. Bhalla attacks Hasan as irresponsible for truncating the text of “Black Margins” without explanation. However, Bhalla in his own collection abridges the text far more drastically than Hasan, and not only fails to give an explanation, but does not even indicate that the two short pieces, which he presents as separate works, are in any way connected. It is not that Bhalla is irresponsible in taking editorial license with Manto's original, but in attacking Hasan's license he shows a janus-face.

“But who are you?”

“Har Har Mahadev! Har Har Mahadev!”

“Har Har Mahadev!”

“What’s the proof?”

“Proof? My name is Dharamchand.”

“But this is no proof.”

“I’m well versed in the four Vedas. Ask me about them.”

“We don’t know about the Vedas. We demand proof.”

“What?”

“Loosen your pyjamas.”

A cry went up when the pyjama was lowered. “Kill him! Kill him!”

“Wait, wait I am one of you. I swear I am one of you.”

“Then what’s all this?”

“The locality I live in is full of enemies. So I was forced to do it—to save my life. This is my only mistake. For the rest I’m just fine.”

“Chop off his mistake!”

The mistake was chopped off. So was Dharamchand. (pp. 95–96)

Where the stories of Manto, as well as Samaresh Basu, Krishna Sobti, Mumtaz Mufti, M.A. Sarna and others offer profound confusion in the form of unrequited violence or madness, Intizar Husain, Umm-e-Ummara, Qudrat Ullah Shahab and others offer it as philosophic and existential crisis, or as boundless meditation on sorrow. Intizar Husain’s “The City of Sorrow” is a disembodied, Beckett-like story of violence sustained and suspended in a memory that not only fails to forgive, but fails even in its fixation to numb. Husain’s brilliant “An Unwritten Epic” begins as the epic novel of a hero murdered internally by the contradictions of the Partition, and then literally murdered—when the work is truncated and continued as the author’s diary entries telling of his difficulties and finally of his decision to abandon writing, in what he considers the inhumanity of life in Pakistan. The story leaves us in a realm in which all efforts to recuperate the tragedy of the Partition through writing have failed: the effort to write the character of a hero capable of transcending the pain, a man who could “fight the wind with a lamp”; the effort to write supposedly only for oneself, diaristically; finally the effort even to write inability. Abandoning writing, the author claims he has “come to his senses.” Husain’s particular genius in this and many of his pieces is to mute and straightjacket us, and at the same time engender a strange feeling of release and completion in perpetual unfulfillment. In this way Husain, in stringing us in confusion along to infinity, perfectly

complements Manto's punching us in the stomach with it.

2. Texts of betrayal and protest: Satinath Bhaduri's "The Champion of the People" (B1); Kartar Singh Duggal's "Kulsum" (B3, C/D); Josh Malihabadi's "My Ordeal as a Citizen of Pakistan" (H2); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's "A Limb Cut Off" (H2); Suraiya Qasim's "Where Did She Belong?" (B2, C/D); Ved Rahi's "Death" (B3); Rahi Masoom Reza's "The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli" (H1); Bhisham Sahni's "The Train Has Reached Amritsar" (B1, translated in H1 as "We Have Arrived in Amritsar"); Gulzar Singh Sandhu's "Gods on Trial" (C/D); Ganda Singh's "A Diary of Partition Days" (H2); Fikr Tauswi's "The Book of Divine Knowledge" (H1); S.H. Vatsyayan "Ajneya"'s "Getting Even" (B1, translated in C/D as "The Avenger") and "The Refuge" (B2, translated in H1 as "The Asylum"); and Yaspal's "A Holy War" (B1).

S.H. Vatsyayan's "The Refuge" relates the onset of terror in an integrated mohalla in Pakistan. Devenderlal's friend, Rafiquddin, promises him protection in the event of violence. The high minded Rafiquddin is motivated not just by friendship, but by the dictates of universal justice: "We will not let you go," he insists, "...[i]t is the duty of the majority to protect the minority.... If we can't protect our neighbors, how can we possibly protect our country? I am sure that the Hindus in Panjab, where they are in the majority, must be thinking and acting in the same way." Devenderlal accepts his friends reassurances, only to see his own house soon looted. As the atmosphere in the city becomes increasingly vicious, a band comes and threatens Rafiquddin for hiding Devenderlal. Rafiquddin has no choice but to move Devenderlal to a small room in the compound of a friend who works as a police clerk. Devenderlal finds himself imprisoned indefinitely in solitary confinement, in the newly "free" Pakistan, his only companion a cat. Time goes by. One day he finds a cryptic note in his food, which turns out to be an act of mercy. He feeds the cat, and the cat dies. Devenderlal gathers his things and jumps over the compound wall into an unknown future, his friendship having been overpowered by the enmity of strangers, and the generosity of other strangers liable at any time to poison him.

Bhisham Sahni's "The Train Has Reached Amritsar" masterfully describes the breakdown of civil amity in a confined public space. Riding in a train through western Panjab east to Amritsar, three jovial Pathans poke fun at a mirthless Hindu. From the train window, passengers see the smoke of burning villages, and panic on the platforms of rural stations. At

one stop, a Hindu family fleeing a mob attempts to board the compartment. One of the Pathans approaches the family, swearing and claiming the compartment is full, then gratuitously kicks the woman of the family in the stomach, sending her screaming to the floor in pain, and begins throwing the family's baggage out of the train. The family tries to recover its baggage, but fails. As the train begins to pull away from the station, the family frantically disembarks, crippled and terrified. The Hindu seethes with anger, abuses the Pathans verbally, and resolves to take revenge. The compartment becomes grim and silent. When the train reaches Amritsar, both the Hindu and the Pathans leave the compartment. The Hindu returns with a metal rod to find that his adversaries have relocated. He roundly abuses the other passengers on the train for letting them "escape." The train leaves the station and soon most of the passengers are sleeping, except the Hindu, who is restless. In the middle of the night, as the train is moving slowly through the countryside with its lights out, there is a banging on the door, and the plea of a refugee who has caught the door handle, his wife running beside the train: "In the name of Allah, open the door! Open the door!... There is a woman with me. She'll be left behind...." The Hindu opens the door. Suddenly his rod flashes and comes down hard on the man's head. The man grimaces in terror at his anonymous assailant, and falls from the footboard in a heap. The babu surveys the compartment, and then flings the rod into the night.

Yaspal's "A Holy War" is likewise a microcosmic study of hatred, this time in a dense, integrated lane in Lahore in 1947. Communal terror has driven all the Muslims from their locale, with the exception of the dyer, Fazzay, who has lived in the lane for forty years, and his son, Nasru. The humble, peaceful Fazzay stays in the confidence that the turmoil is only temporary. Nasru, however, yearns to do what other Muslims of the city are doing: to burn, loot and kill in the "holy war" for the creation of Pakistan. Fazzay scolds him intensely: "Shut up. You stupid son of a pig!.... [D]on't talk nonsense.... This shop was set up by your father. You were born in this room. It's the women of this lane who ... looked after your mother. She ... died in this very room. It is this Gali which has given us shelter and helped us earn our bread. Wait patiently, things will settle down." When Hindus begin to flee the city, Fazzay becomes dependent, while Nasru becomes elated, and gleefully joins in the looting. Troops occupy the city, curfew is imposed, and Fazzay becomes sick with worry. When Nasru returns, the two are confined with one another in their small shop. They fan each other, and quarrel. After a sleepless night,

Nasru opens the door for air, and sees a well known, old Hindu widow of the lane stealing away, wrapped in a bedsheet, carrying her money in a bundle. “Let her go, why should you care?” Fazzay asks. “May Allah protect her.” When Fazzay, staggering on his old legs, finally reaches the bazaar, Nasru has not only caught up with the old woman, but stabbed her and taken her bundle. Trembling with rage, Fazzay drags his son back to their room. Nasru is overjoyed with himself: “Bitch ... the kafir was running away with the stone idol of her God,” he laughs derisively. Fazzay is alternately exhausted and burning with rage. “May a pig—your mother,” he curses. “May you burn in Hell.... The kafir was running away with the stone idol of her God. She should have smashed your head with her stone idol.” The story powerfully telegraphs the pain of the Partition, conveying the impairment of judgment in communal disintegration so rapid it dissolves not only tightly woven communities, but even single families.

Ganda Singh’s “Diary of Partition Days,” a nonfictional narrative, documents the grim toll of the religious hate rhetoric in Panjab from April, 1947, through January, 1948. From personal observations, newspaper accounts and astute political intuition, Singh pieces together the month-to-month political developments with details of the mounting campaign of death, showing how the forces of destruction proceeded with their own momentum, aided by the rancor of political contention. In March, 1947, we see the first Muslim armed offenses in Panjab; in April and May, riots in Amritsar, and then in Lahore, with stabbings of 200 and more at a time. By October the violence has reached epidemic proportions, including, for example, the massacre of 2000 Hindus and Sikhs in a special envoy train by a Muslim mob. By January mobs of greater than 25,000 are roaming Karachi, looting and massacring, with the police standing by the wayside, taking their share. The narrative clearly shows that after April, 1947, if the brutal communal violence in Bihar, Calcutta and Noakhali in 1946 were not enough, no one could mistake the upshot of a religious partition of the country.

Unlike most of the other texts in these collections, “Diary of Partition Days” does leave the impression that one group, in this case the Muslims, was more culpable than other groups in the violence. Other texts with discernible communal allegiances include Shorish Kashmiri’s “Humiliated and Harassed They Left” (H2); Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi’s “Hindu-Muslim Social Relations 1935–47” (H2), both pro-Muslim in their orientation; as well as the collection of League propaganda poems, “It’s Voting Day: Let’s March ... Mukhiaji” (Urdu propaganda poems; H1). Hasan’s

decision to include these texts, particularly the poems, is justified because they provide important documentary material—even their bias proves informative. Whether inclusion of such texts would be justified were they fictional remains an open question. Bhalla strongly disapproves of including communally charged stories, believing that they perpetuate “codes of fraud” by insufficiently describing the communally shared and reciprocal nature of the Partition’s crimes. To prove his point he attacks certain stories in his own volumes, for example Krishna Sobti’s “Where is my Mother?”, the story of a Pathan murderer’s acts of mercy toward an innocent Hindu child who refuses to trust him. Also he makes a point of stating his exclusion of other stories he deems communal, claiming they are poor literature. While he is right to condemn such stories, it is not clear that they should be excluded: as Hasan demonstrates, when properly contextualized they may aid the discriminating reader. Bhalla’s criteria for judging a story communal also demands refinement. First, it is not clear that the literary value of so-called communal stories would improve with demonstrations of the author’s knowledge of history. For example Sobti’s story, in what I would consider a plain and reasonable reading, gains its effectiveness precisely because it is terse. Second, many stories are told largely from the point of view of a single community, and this in itself cannot be considered a communal liability.

3. Outstanding texts of repair and memory: Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’s “A Debt to Pay” (C/D, translated in B2 as “The Death of Sheikh Burhanuddin”); Ashfaq Ahmed’s “The Shepherd” (B2); Lalithambika Antharjanam’s “A Leaf in the Storm” (B1); Rajinder Singh Bedi’s “Lajwanti” (B1, C/D, H1); Ismat Chughtai’s “Roots” (B3); Jamila Hashmi’s “Exile” (B1); Attia Hosain’s “After the Storm” (B2, C/D); Narendranath Mitra’s “The Four-Poster Bed” (B2, translated in C/D as “The Four-Poster”); Mohan Rakesh’s “The Owner of Rubble” (B1, translated in C/D as “The Proprietor of the Debris,” translated in H1 as “Lord of the Rubble”); Ramlal’s “A Visitor from Pakistan” (B1); Kushdeva Singh’s “Love is Stronger than Hate” (H2); and Suresh Vaid and Urvashi Butalia’s “We are Still Theirs” (H2).

Attia Hosain’s “After the Storm” is an exquisitely told vignette of the first meetings between a resettled housewife (or so it seems—the narrator’s gender is not given) and a child servant who lost her family during the riots. Winsomely and innocently the girl cannot help but seed new life—despite the brutality she has witnessed—bringing flowers and

garlands, mixing her responses to questions about the violence she has seen with talk of sweets and bangles. The story avoids sentimentality superbly. We truly feel that we are being led by the child into liminal realms of the human spirit so pure that they survive unspeakable trauma and educate us in the release of our bigotry and grief.

Lalithambika Antharjanam's "A Leaf in the Storm" is likewise a sensitive and powerfully told story of survival. Jyoti arrives pregnant and despondent in a refugee camp, having been betrayed, abducted and raped in her transport across the border. The life inside her, "conceived in. . . inhuman rape and ignorance," tortures her as she watches births and deaths in the camp and grows increasingly bitter at the corruption that put and keeps her there. She is likewise tortured by her own idealism, her ardent, long-cultivated desire for "freedom from slavery for her community, indeed for the whole human race," which has been rudely dashed and has been reticulated back into her very body as the physical pain of her pregnancy. When the child is born she herself is thrust into a profound and spontaneous confrontation with the value of life. Miraculously, almost despite herself, she chooses life, taking the child in her arms, letting her life-blood flow "like fresh milk."

The interviews in Hasan's second volume with Partition survivors, as well as fictional pieces such as Mohan Rakesh's "The Owner of Rubble" and Ismat Chughtai's "Roots," reveal the healing power of memory—which is separate from the justice-producing power of memory. In these texts, memories of a shared communal life, of friendships, of a civilization based on mutuality become not just salve for wounds, but life forces in themselves. Such memory-driven passion emerges in complex ways from "We are Still Theirs," an interview with Amrik Singh originally of Doberan Village near Rawalpindi, which was seriously affected by riots in March, 1947. In long, digressive and somehow still pointed passages, Singh recounts the past and also his conviction, born from his travels through Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s, that great affection still remains at the popular level between citizens of the two countries:

That shop where we were sitting at that time—this is of 1976 that I am speaking—I said to them, now you must be happy. They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Earlier the angrez were rulers, now you have your own rulers. Bhutto Saheb is Prime Minister." He said, "So what? After all, what was there earlier, the same thing." So I asked him what he wanted. He said, "We want many things, but

we won't get them. What we want is to become what we once were, to be together again. But that will not happen ... [T]hese are battles to win power, these people want their kursis here, your people want their kursis there, and we're just caught in between. We really feel that it was best as it was before. If we can become like that again, we'll really be happy, we'll celebrate." They told us, he went on, that our lane was still empty. The village is full of people, but we have not let that lane be settled. You people are still there ... and we keep hoping that one day you will come. We will help you with your work.... There was so much love in their hearts for us...."

If the upshot of the reborn interest in the literature of the Partition is reclamation of the single peoplehood of the Subcontinent, in its shared culture as well as shared violence, then the reclamation proves both a liberation—of the everyday life not imprinted either Hindu or Muslim—and a yoke—the recoupling of the grand narrative of the freedom struggle with the complexities that made freedom an experience of slaughter and inhumanity for many. Of course political debate will continue to penetrate the contributions of the various players—the British government's long-standing policy of sewing political divisiveness and haste in leaving India; the fanaticism of Muslim Leaguers and Hindu fascists who with gross lack of political sagacity ignored the evidence that partition would result in massive death and destruction precisely because of the density of the bicultural fabric; Hindu communalists disguising themselves as Congressmen and preventing the national movement from becoming truly inclusive; moderate *muhājirs* and landlords who allowed themselves to be polarized by extremist propaganda; Gandhi's and Jinnah's inabilities to guide the movements they initiated away from the forces of reactionary communalism; the newly formed Indian and Pakistani governments' failure to guarantee the security of their citizens, including government officials who profited personally from the unrest; all the individuals who killed, raped and looted, whether out of ideological conviction, personal greed, the idiotic aping of others, or retaliation as if for interpolative balance. Such debate will likewise go some distance in sussing out the psychology of the upheaval—what happened in thousands of villages and towns when thugs and extremists entered the question of the common man and woman, "To go or not to go?" and forced a decision that ensured counter-violence on the other side of the border, a vicious cycle of fear and terror.

What political debate will never fully do—and the reason we so badly

need the literature—is defeat the urge to lay blame, which keeps animosity alive. Only the literature truly evokes the suffering of the innocent, whose pain is more universal and ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than political discourse. The literary work on the Partition affirms that the subject of the Partition was first the human being—not the Hindu human being, nor the Muslim, nor the Sikh. In the world of the stories, the experiences of each community distinctly mirror one another, indeed reach out to and clutch at one another. No crime, no despair, no grief in exile belongs uniquely to anyone. On the one hand, then, the stories seem to suggest that secularism puts a fence around the sanctity of life often more effectively than religious devotion—when, that is, secular thinking destroys religious myths of destiny and privilege that justify violence. At the same time they remind us that secular nationalism is not without its own mythology, including justification of foundational violence and violence deemed necessary for national sustenance.

Perhaps we emerge from the literature with a mistrust toward group solidarity of an oppositional bent. If so we must emerge at the same time, paradoxically, with a conviction to oppose such mistrust with trust in the goodness of the human life-urge wherever we find it. Indeed, we emerge from the literature as searchers for such trust. If we find it in the solitary dissidence of even a single person, we feel obliged to offer him or her our companionship. And if we find it stitched into whole communities, we come away not necessarily more pious, but inspired. The literature as a whole seeds pathos for the suffering and inhumanity of the Partition, and related instances of cultural chauvinism, but not merely so. It also sprouts a countervailing protest, a voice of justice that must be the surging of our humanity itself—something greater than our bestiality—within us. In this sense the literature does what religious leaders in each community failed to do: to make communities forces for the affirmation of humanity broadly, and to forge nations—if nations are the destinies of cherished traditions—dedicated to human improvement, dedicated precisely to virtuous conduct with those of different faith. If religious politics worked nefariously in favor of partition, it was because an ecumenical religious politics never developed. We are in a different position than the men and women of August, 1947. Our choices are not limited to exile, death or resignation. If the literature of the Partition can teach that committed people of different faiths serve God far more effectively when they face one another in prayer than when they face their respective temples, we can learn to exercise such a choice. □