Woman in Decolonization: The National and Textual Politics of Rape in Saadat Hasan Manto and Mahasweta Devi

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In two recent essays, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak articulates the negative link between nation(alism) and gender thus:

> Women can be ventriloquists, but they have an immense *historical* potential of *not* being (allowed to remain) nationalists; of knowing, in their gendering, that nation and identity are commodities in the strictest sense: something made for [(neo)colonial] exchange. And that they are the medium of that exchange.

and,

> [I]n a critique of metropolitan culture, the event of political independence can be automatically assumed to stand in-between colony and decolonization as an unexamined good that operates a reversal. But ... there is always a space [– that of the subproletariat or the subaltern –] that cannot share in the energy of this reversal.... [E]ven within this space, the woman's body is the last instance, it is elsewhere.[1]

My article locates itself at the cusp of these third-world feminist, post-structuralist observations of Spivak to uncover the portrayal of the "displaced space" of the modern South Asian woman in selected short fiction by the Urdu Pakistani writer Saadat Hasan Manto and the Bengali Indian writer Mahasweta Devi.[2] Focussing on Manto's stories "Colder than Ice" ("*Thanda Gosht*," literally translated as "Cold Meat") (1949) and "The Return" ("*Khol Do*," literally "Open Up") (1950) and Mahasweta's "Dhowli" (1979) and "The Funeral Wailer" ("*Rudali*") (1979), I specifically investigate the contrastive function of female rape in the two authors: as a metaphor of the nation-as-despoiled woman in Manto and as literal physical and sexual violation in post-Independence India in Mahasweta. Such a

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comparative reading also underlines the contrapuntal significance of the discourse of sexual violence in the two pairs of stories as it points up the sensationalization and reification of female victimization in Manto on the one hand and the emphasis on female self-fashioning and agency in Mahasweta on the other.

The Gendered Rape of the National "Body"

Born in Samrala in Punjab in 1912, Manto, a Muslim, lived in Amritsar until 1936, when he moved to Bombay to write for films. In 1948, soon after India's partition, he emigrated to Pakistan where he died in 1955. The author of more than 200 stories and dozens of essays and plays, he is best known for his partition stories in which he attempts to answer the following questions:

> Now that we were free, had subjection ceased to exist? Who would be our slaves? When we were colonial subjects, we could dream of freedom, but now that we were free, what would our dreams be? Were we even free?. . . . India was free. Pakistan was free. . . . But man was a slave in both countries, of prejudice, of religious fanaticism, of bestiality, of cruelty.[3]

As the above quotation demonstrates, even as he problematizes Indian and Pakistani "freedom", Manto subsumes the politics of gender under the mantle of a singular, masculinized discourse of post-Independence slavery-in-nationalism. Not only that, but his critics, both approbatory and disapprobatory, also neglect to examine Manto's subscription to a patriarchal nation-based politics as evidenced by his construction of the raped and silent woman-as-signifier of "man's" enslavement to "prejudice, religious fanaticism, bestiality, cruelty". For example, such scholars as Leslie Fleming and Khalid Hasan focus on the formal characteristics of Manto's stories to praise him for his "powerful", "moving", and "masterful portrait[s]" "expressing the human pain of partition", for writing with "detachment and passion", "deep irony and humanism" about the communal holocaust, in short for creating "great literature"; while many of his most vociferous critics from amongst the Progressive Writers Movement denounce his work as obscene and cynical.[4] But even as the latter condemn Manto for being "perversely" "preoccupied with the world of the socially wronged and sexually exploited woman",[5] they fail to investigate the androcentrism underlying his construction of the sexually oppressed – and hence, according to Manto, silenced and virtually erased – woman as a cultural signifier of the politico-social violations of partition in his overwhelmingly "male" narratives.[6] As a stand-in for the macropolitical rape of the "body" of India and Pakistan, the raped woman is written into the patriarchal national narrative not to thematize her own suffering but merely to signify the

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(generalized) horrors of partition. Thus, in being constructed as the object of sexual violence, the female victim is assaulted not only as body but also, and perhaps more importantly, as subject, for, as Rajeswari Sunder Rajan notes in her study of gender and postcolonial culture:

> [p]aradoxically, at the same time that she becomes an existential cypher the raped woman also turns into a symbolic cause. She becomes the representative of her social group, the very embodiment of its collective identity.... The woman's newly recognized identity – which may be more properly described as her function in an economy of sexual propriety and property – becomes an emotional war-cry and the prelude to the virtual disappearance of the concerns of the woman herself.[7]

As Manto says in another context in his essay "*Safed Jhut*" ("White Lie"), "I am a man who ... writes because he has something to say. Whatever I see, the way and the angle I see it from, I present it to others in that very way and angle."[8] It is this "way and angle" of Manto's "seeing" of woman's "essential" vulnerability and silence that underlies what Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver define generally as the "ambivalence" of male texts of female rape that elide the scene of violence. Yet such an elision also marks the poststructural "subversive presence" or "gap" that provides us "a space to speak of women's violation and subjectivity".[9] Additionally, while it is undeniable that women are raped, tortured, and murdered during communal conflict and war, to represent them only as the targets of physical violence is to deny them agency, roles of resistance, and their very voices. While during periods of ethnic/national conflict, gender too often becomes a "symbolic marker ... separating 'self' from 'other'", as Barbara Einhorn correctly points out, wherein "women's bodies become the symbolic and actual stage upon which conflict is acted out", to represent women only in national-metaphoric terms is to neglect the "real consequences" of nationalism for women and to fail to ask that most significant question, "How can women subvert these [national] processes ... [and] reject the unitary identity imposed on them by others, defending the possibility of self-identification in terms of multiple identities?"[10]

"Colder than Ice"

Manto's much discussed story "Colder than Ice" is the retrospective deathbed narrative of a Sikh man, Ishar Singh. As he lies dying of a fatal stab wound made by his jealous mistress Kalwant Kaur, he recounts his role in the material, sexual, and human atrocities of partition: following eight days of looting Muslim shops and homes, he murders six male members of a Muslim family and abducts the sole female of the household; only after he rapes her does he realize that she is dead, "a heap of cold flesh", a

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realization that leads to his impotence. And at the narrative's end, having told his chilling tale, he is himself near death, "colder than ice" (p. 124).

Now regarded as one of Manto's technical masterpieces, "Colder than Ice" was, however, denounced for "obscenity" by many of his contemporaries, a charge which Manto answers thus:

> The story seemingly revolves around one aspect of sexual psychology, but, in fact, in it an extremely subtle message is given to man, that, even at the last limits of cruelty and violence, of barbarity and bestiality, he still does not lose his humanity! If Ishar Singh had completely lost his humanity, the touch of the dead woman would not have affected him so violently as to strip him of his manhood.[11]

My reading of "Colder than Ice" critiques Manto's masculinist fictive and interpretive stance in which he not only casts the dead woman as the bodily site upon which the "cruelty, barbarity and bestiality" of nationalist discourse is emplotted but also positions her as the vehicle for Ishar Singh's new-found and (ostensibly) praiseworthy "humanity". In this male narrative of the nation, the raped woman is denied a name, a voice, subjectivity, even life. Entrapped in this patriarchal story of partition, she is represented only as a permanently silent, sexualized body, a "thing" that Ishar Singh "hides from" Kalwant Kaur, a "mouthful of luscious fruit" that he – using the language of power and conquest – "decide[s] to trump right away", a "dead body . . . a heap of cold flesh" (pp. 123–4).

Even Kalwant Kaur, cast as the dead woman's sexual adversary, and a seemingly strong female character who is painfully alive at the narrative's end, remains secondary to the "male" plot of partition politics. The growth of Ishar Singh's "humanity", a symbol of a "universal" hope amidst the horrors of 1947, remains the crux of the story, whereas Kalwant Kaur supports his development both sexually and textually. Cast in sexually overdetermined imagery – described by the (masculinist) narrator as "a big woman with generous hips, fleshy thighs and unusually high breasts", a "flirt" and a "coquette", a woman who "boil[s] with passion like a kettle on high fire" (pp. 119–22) – Kalwant Kaur not only reenacts stereotypical male typologies of the Punjabi Sikh woman, but she is also depicted as the "cause" of Ishar Singh's murderous appetite for the Muslim woman – "Ishar Sian, you gorge yourself on Kalwant Kaur every day . . . how about a mouthful of this luscious fruit", says Ishar Singh (p. 124) – and thus sets in motion his (paradoxical) ascent to "humanity". In addition, her narrative function as impetus and audience for Ishar Singh's confessional story – "Jani, what's wrong?" she asks (p. 120), thereby prompting his cathartic account – further marks her as a rhetorical ploy in the male nationalist and cultural plot.

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"The Return"

Similarly, Manto's story "The Return" is a third person, male-focussed account, this time of a Muslim man, Sirajuddin's attempts to find his seventeen-year-old daughter, Sakina, from whom he has become separated following an attack on their Lahore-bound train. The eight men he recruits to cross the border into India after partition and find his daughter end up abducting and gang-raping her, as the chilling end of the narrative reveals. Coming upon Sakina's unconscious body, Sirajuddin thinks his prayers have been answered, but as the attendant doctor asks him to "open up" the window, the now semi-conscious Sakina "groped for the cord which kept her *shalwar* tied round her waist. With painful slowness, she unfastened it, pulled the garment down and opened her thighs" (p. 38).[12]

Generally, the story has been praised as one that plumbs the "human pain of partition" and "explores with a remarkable combination of anger, sarcasm and tenderness the effects of the violence and dislocation of its victims", or criticized for "its intention to shock the reader [through Sakina's rape] rather than to generate sympathy for Siraj-ud-din" and thus for its failure to "provide a deeply felt, realistic, or universalized version of the Partition experience".[13] In both cases, we once more find the critics falling in line behind Manto, privileging and valorizing his masculine critiques of the nascent project of Indian and Pakistani nationalist modernity and neglecting to investigate his reliance upon representations of sexual violence against women to forward his nation-based criticism.

My reading of "The Return" responds to Higgins and Silver's challenge to "listen to . . . [those] who do *not* speak . . . [to] recuperate what has too often been left out: the physical violation" of women.[14] Like the dead woman in "Colder than Ice", Sakina is positioned as a silent and absent presence in much of the narrative. She is cast as "essentially" vulnerable on the basis of her sexuality: Sirajuddin describes her as "fair, very pretty. . . . About seventeen. Big eyes, black hair, a mole on the left cheek", thereby arousing her would-be rescuers' desire for her body; while the Manto-like narrator notes that "it was obvious that she was ill-at-ease without her *dupatta* [veil], trying nervously to cover her breasts with her arms" (pp. 36, 37). Sexualized thus, her repeated rape signified at the narrative's end for its shock value, Sakina too is reduced to a metaphor of the horrors of partition, her story of violation curtailed and exploited so that the story of the nation can be enunciated.[15]

Even as he denounces the macrocosmic corruptions of the new nations of Pakistan and India, Manto thus remains complicit with patriarchal cultural as well as textual structures. And even as he champions the role of the writer as social critic – as distinguished from that of social reformer – he remains rooted within a masculine sexual sphere, a proponent of a male-

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gendered social realist stance in literature, as he ironically reveals in the metaphor of female undress that he adopts in an address to a college audience: "I am not seditious. I do not want to stir up people's ideas and feelings. If I take off the blouse of culture and society, then it is naked. I do not try to put clothes back on, because that is not my job".[16]

"Crossing the Sexual Differential:" Female Subjectivity and Agency

In his book *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Partha Chatterjee articulates the symbiotic relationship of elite and subaltern, constitutional and populist or communitarian Indian national politics, and concludes that "[n]ow the task is to trace in their mutually conditioned historicities the specific forms that have appeared, on the one hand, in the domain defined by the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity, and on the other, in the numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project".[17] Whereas Saadat Hasan Manto can be regarded as engaging with the corruptions inherent in "the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity", Mahasweta Devi can be seen as focussing on the "fragmented resistance" mounted by low-caste women and disenfranchized tribals generally to the dominant, Brahminic discourse of Indian nationalism.

In contrast to Manto and his masculinist narrativization of the Indian and Pakistani nations stands Mahasweta, fiction writer, investigative journalist, editor of a "people's" magazine, and social activist, who foregrounds a resistant, feminist politics-in-decolonization, as exemplified in her stories "Dhowli" and "The Funeral Wailer", which overturns Manto's metaphoric casting of the raped woman as a stand-in for a corrupt nationality. Born in 1926, Mahasweta moved in the 1940's from East to West Bengal, where she has lived and worked amongst the disenfranchized tribal and outcaste communities, writing particularly about how tribal low-caste women are exploited in post-independence India. Products of a tribal culture in which women hold a place of honour, rape is virtually unknown and considered a grave crime, the system of bride-price rather than dowry is sanctioned, and widow remarriage is customary, low-caste women are raped and brutalized by dominant Hindus in an India that denies them the basic rights of citizenship. As Mahasweta points out, "They are Indians who belong to the rest of India. Mainstream India had better recognize that. Pay them the honour that they deserve. Pay them the respect that they deserve."[18] And give them the constitutional rights of fair representation and protection from crime which are theirs by birth, one might add. For among the more heinous corruptions arising from caste-linked, communal, patriarchal Indian national politics is the frequently unpunished – and, in fact, too often abetted – violence done to low-caste women.

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Abducted and prostituted to repay their fathers' or husbands' loans from upper-caste money-lenders, sold for purposes of rape, such women are, in Mahasweta's words, "just merchandise, commodities".[19]

But, even as she claims a national currency for some of her female characters – for example, Stanadayini, a mother-by-hire, is described by her as a "parable of India after decolonization", and the case of Douloti, a bonded prostitute who dies of venereal disease, is exemplified as "true for the rest of India. . . . [Douloti's] bleeding, rotting carcass covers the entire Indian peninsula"[20] – even as she underlines the generalized significance of her characters, Mahasweta focuses on the very real sufferings and fortitude of individual women so that rape in her stories resists being read merely as an allegory of national politics. Thus, as Spivak points out, in Mahasweta's story "Douloti the Bountiful", the "*Aufhebung* of colony into nation is undone by the figuration of the woman's body before the affective coding of sexuality", so that "such a globalization of douloti, dissolving even the proper name, is not an overcoming of the gendered body".[21] In writing the feminine sexual difference of rape into her stories, therefore, Mahasweta reinscribes a subjectivity and agency for the mute, metaphorized female victim of androcentric fictions such as Manto's. As Spivak notes in her commentary on another of Mahasweta's stories, "Draupadi" (1978), "It is when [Mahasweta's female protagonist] crosses the sexual differential into the field of what could *only happen to a woman* that she emerges as the most powerful 'subject,' . . . whom the author can describe as a terrifying superobject . . . in the . . . section of the story . . . of lunar flux and sexual difference, she is in a place where she will finally act *for* herself".[22]

"Dhowli"

"Dhowli" tells the story of a young outcaste Dusad widow's sexual liaison with her Brahman landlord's son. Yet here the rape of "the Dhowlis of the world" by high-caste men is initially figured as love, and Misrilal proposes marriage to Dhowli, convinced that their union will be "all right by the government rules". But, as Dhowli retorts, "The laws are not for people like us".[23] The remainder of the narrative presents an extended commentary on the disenfranchizement of the low-caste woman, her powerless position unchanged in post-independence India. Abandoned by her lover, Dhowli also becomes an outcaste among her own people precisely because her "rape" is no literal rape, because "she gave herself to him of her own accord, out of love" (p. 193). Reduced to prostitution in order to support her young son, her ageing mother, and herself, Dhowli is eventually driven out of the village because she has brought "dishonor" to the Brahmans by allowing the "entrance that was once used by a lion" to be "used by the pigs and the sewer rats" (p. 203).

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But even though the narrative's end disperses Dhowli into the figure of all exploited low-caste women – "Has nature then accepted the disgracing of the Dhowlis as a matter of course?" asks the narrator (p. 205) – even though the narrative represents Dhowli as a collective metaphor of the subaltern woman's powerlessness in the modern Indian nation, the majority of the story traces Dhowli, the individual woman's attempts to survive. Overturning conventional desire-based male representations of the nation-as-chaste-woman as well as of the mythical love that underwrites the Hindu national imaginary, Dhowli proposes rape, recognized and compensated as such, as a preferred script for the low-caste woman in modern India.[24] Subverting the secular-national notion of intercaste "love", she retorts to Misrilal, "I spit on your love"; "[i]f you had raped me, then I would have received a tenth of an acre as compensation. You are not a man" (p. 199). Resisting the impulse to locate herself in the position of victim, she also actively rejects the option of aborting her baby, electing to raise her son even in the face of extreme material deprivation. Finally, challenging traditional sexual morality, which regards chastity as a woman's most cherished possession, she chooses to live as a prostitute rather than to die because of her sexual "dishonor". "At first I wanted to [kill myself]," she confesses to Misrilal; "[t]hen I thought, why should I die? You'll marry, run your shop, go to the cinema with your wife, and I'll be the one to die. Why?" (p. 204).

Dhowli's interrogative "Why?" signals more than merely her rhetorical question addressed to Misrilal: it is directed as well at the dominant reader, undercutting his/her complicity in the caste-based, gendered ideology of the "Hindu" nation, India, and pointing up Mahasweta's subversion of such ideology at the level of narrative strategy as well as of content. Incisive, insistent, ironic questions dot Mahasweta's story, forcing the reader to abandon a position of aesthetic distance and to confront the material specificity of Dhowli's oppression. "What does she think? An untouchable, Dusad girl can make a Brahman give her home and food?" asks one villager; "[h]ave they left untouched any young girl of the Dusads, the Dhobis, the Ganjus of the village?" queries another (pp. 186, 187). And to the Brahman "patriarch", Hanuman Misra's questions, "Why can't he [Misrilal] come to his home, his own village? For fear of a Dusad girl? What can she do?" (p. 197), Mahasweta replies with counter-questions framed by Dhowli, as well as those posed by the narrator to the reader: "Why did you destroy me like this?" asks Dhowli of Misrilal; whereas the reader's distanced spectatorship is shattered by a barrage of rhetorical questions in mid-narrative – "When he [Misrilal] comes back to the village after his wedding [to a high-caste woman], will he be moved to pity on seeing his boy? Will he give a bit of land to help his child live?" – as well as at the narrative's end – "Has nature then accepted the disgracing of the Dhowlis as a matter of course? Has nature too gotten used to the Dhowlis

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being branded as whores and forced to leave home? Or is it that even the earth and the sky and the trees, the nature that was not made by the Misras, have now become their private property?" (pp. 197, 198, 205).

It is not only through such trenchant questions that Mahasweta points up the material basis of sexual violence; she also translates sexual into textual difference in several other ways: by creating a low-caste, raped/ "loved" woman as the eponymous subject of the narrative; by maintaining the narrative focus on Dhowli; by explicitly rendering the "love" scene between Dhowli and Misrilal at the centre of the story in order to trace its devastating effect upon Dhowli in the remainder of the narrative; by sketching in some detail the scenes of rape/prostitution that she has to endure following her abandonment by Misrilal; and by punctuating the action with feminist commentary on Dhowli's survival and resistance as much as on her exploitation. And it is by paying close attention to such narrative strategies as well as to the content of Mahasweta's stories that the reader can complement the author's feminist appropriation of narrative means with a resistant mode of reading.[25]

"The Funeral Wailer"

As Dhowli leaves Tahad for Ranchi to set herself up an an urban prostitute, she muses, albeit somewhat sardonically, that "now she is going to be a whore by occupation. She is going to be one of many whores, a member of a part of society. Isn't the society more powerful than the individual?" (p. 205). As if in earnest answer to this question, Mahasweta's "The Funeral Wailer" offers an account of Sanichari, the Ganju woman's organizing of prostitutes as funeral wailers. Raped and reduced by Rajput landlords and creditors to market-place prostitutes, these tribal and low-caste women are offered a means of material sustenance as well as resistance by Sanichari's funeral wailing business. Convinced that "the most important criterion distinguishing virtue from sin was whether it helped put food in hungry stomachs",[26] Sanichari unites the prostitutes not on the basis of their shared oppression but in more resistant ideological fashion, as she proposes a specifically feminist mode of action, reliant upon the collective strength of the women's group:

> "Gambhir Singh is dying. Cry for him, and take money for crying. Nothing to be embarrassed about. Don't miss your chance to rub salt in their face and take whatever revenge you can. Let's go now. Each will get five rupees and rice, and clothing on the day of the kiriya [funeral]."
>
> There was excitement and scrambling around her. The younger whores came up to her and asked what about them. Sanichari said that they could come too.... Everybody was curiously happy and excited....
>
> Gambhir Singh's nephew and all the others assembled there were stunned

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> to see the battalion arrive with Sanichari. The account keeper hissed at her, "Brought the entire randitoli [band of prostitutes] along? Nearly a hundred of them!"
>
> "Why not?" she asked loudly for all to hear. "Didn't the malik [master] want the wailing at his funeral to be so spectacular that it would become a legend? How can a legend be made with some ten wailers? Get out of our way now; let us start our work. The malik now belongs to us." (p. 228)

It is significant that, after having been "owned" by the Rajputs for over two hundred years – a history of oppression recounted at some length by the character Dulan in "The Funeral Wailer" – in Mahasweta's story the tribals and untouchables of Tohri revolt not through armed uprising or electoral ballot but through the "domestic" organization of women as funeral wailers. As Sanichari leads her group to countless *kiriyas*, she displays an unprecedented resolve; convinced that "transferring some of [the] money [of the wealthy] to those like [herself] was not at all a bad thing", she bargains hard for her group, and.her "clients generally had no choice but to accept [her] terms" (p. 219). But while the funeral wailing business is materially important as it becomes a "career" for Sanichari as well as her friend Bikhni, her most notable accomplishment is that she transforms "whores [who] were not a caste apart . . . [but] only women whom the landlords and creditors had used and discarded" into women who knowingly "take whatever revenge [they] can" against the *maliks* (pp. 219, 222, 228). It is thus that Sanichari can truly claim on behalf of her whole community, "The malik now belongs to us" (p. 228).

Displacing the economy of socially-sanctioned rape violence against prostitutes with the gendered labour power of funeral wailers, Mahasweta disrupts as well the male idealization of the female body as a sexualized and privatized object. And as she sunders the nationalist ideological construct of "India" as the chaste, asexual, goddess-mother through her realistic representation of the rape and exploitation as well as resistance of individual women, she also employs a narrative strategy that challenges patriarchal textual models that reify female victimization and reduce the violated woman to a symbolical cause. As Rajeswari Sunder Rajan says in another context of the Tamil writer Anuradha Ramanan, Mahasweta "reconstitutes . . . the female subject of rape" in a feminist textual space in numerous ways:

> by representing the raped woman as one who becomes a subject *through* rape rather than merely one subjected to its violation; by structuring a post-rape narrative that traces her strategies of survival instead of a rape-centred narrative that privileges chastity and leads inexorably to "trials" to establish it; by locating the raped woman in structures of oppression other than heterosexual "romantic" relationships; by literalizing instead of mystifying the representation of rape; and, finally, by counting the cost of rape

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for its victims in terms more complex than the extinction of female selfhood in death or silence.[27]

In addition, naming her female characters – bonded labourers, mistresses, prostitutes, widows – whether Dhowli, Sanichari, Bikhni, Motia, Gulbadan, Rupa, Budhni, Somri, or Gangu; announcing their tribal and caste affiliation, whether Dusad, Dhobi, or Ganju; giving them a voice and establishing them as narrative focalizers; in short, writing their lives in meticulous detail in all their circumscriptions and subversions, as well as living and working with them, Mahasweta creates the bases for political action on behalf of and by such women.

Thus, while Manto metaphorizes the violence of rape to mark the crisis of the nationalisms of Pakistan and India, thereby erasing female subjectivity, Mahasweta writes the violated female body back not only into the literary but also into the politico-cultural text. Breaking out of the desire/guilt narrative bind of the conventional rape narrative, what Terry Eagleton regards as the unrepresentability of rape, of the "pleasure of mastery and possession over the 'passive' text in reading" and of "narrative's very trajectory, its movement towards closure which traverses the feminine as object, obstacle, or space",[28] Mahasweta has fashioned resilient female selfhood in her stories. Furthermore, she has organized tribal women; advocated marches on government offices to protest oppression; helped establish schools, primary health care facilities, and small-scale industries in rural areas; and written investigative journalistic pieces to expose exploitation. So it is that even as we look to Mahasweta for her writing of a subjectivity for the raped/violated woman, for displacing the feminized, metaphorized nation with the sympathetic stories of resistant, individual female citizens of the nation, even as we examine the feminist theoretical position of her texts, we do so with an eye to her materialist, activist engagement with tribal women; even as we raise questions of her woman-centred poetics, we look beyond textuality to the politico-cultural realm, beyond "the library" to "the street".[29]

NOTES

1 Spivak, "Acting Bits/Identity Talk", *Critical Inquiry*, 18, 4 (1992), 803; and "Woman in Difference: Mahasweta Devi's 'Douloti the Bountiful", *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, eds. Andrew Parker *et al.*, New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 97–8. Other key works dealing with the symbolical construction of (female) gender in nationalist discourse include Anne McClintock, *et al.*, *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997; Parker *et al.*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam, and the State*, Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1991; Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, eds., *Woman, Nation, State*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989; and Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1986.

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2 I have chosen to analyse works by a Pakistani and an Indian writer in an examination of nation and rape in South Asian literary discourse because it is quite clear that the history of twentieth-century subcontinental nationalism cannot be studied without reference to the intertwined histories of India and Pakistan (and more latterly Bangladesh). Three additional reasons inform my choice of authors: first, the very concept of modern nationhood was bequeathed by the British colonizers to both India and Pakistan simultaneously; second, both of Manto's stories under discussion deal with partition, an event shared equally by India and Pakistan, the violence of which begot the latter country and changed the contours of the former's map forever; and third, Mahasweta originally hails from East Bengal, which, at the time of partition, became part of Pakistan – East Pakistan – and in 1972, following a revolution aided by India, became the independent nation of Bangladesh.

Further, although a consideration of the politics and methodology of the translations of Manto's and Mahasweta's works from Urdu and Bengali into English respectively is beyond the scope of this article, I point the reader to the following pertinent works that deal with translations of Mahasweta's works, with comparative literature and translations of Indian languages, and with translation studies generally: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface" and "Afterword", in Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps: Three Stories*, New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. xxiii–xxx, 197–205; and *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, New York: Routledge, 1993; Amiya Dev, *The Idea of Comparative Literature in India*, Calcutta: Papyrus, 1984; Sisir Kumar Das and Amiya Dev, eds., *Comparative Literature: Theory and Practice*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989; K. Ayyappa Paniker, *Spotlight on Comparative Indian Literature*, Calcutta: Papyrus, 1992; Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History, and Culture*, London: Pinter, 1990; Andre Lefevere, *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*, New York: Modern Language Association, 1992; and Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, eds., *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

3 Manto, *Kingdom's End and Other Stories*, trans. Khalid Hasan, London: Verso, 1987, p. 6. All subsequent references to Manto's stories are to this edition and are cited in the text.

4 Fleming, "Riots and Refugees: The Post-Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto", *Journal of South Asian Literature* 13, 1–4 (1977–8), 106; and Hasan, "Introduction", Manto, *op. cit.*, p. 8. While Manto was himself associated with the Progressive Writers Movement between 1934 and 1936, he was ousted by the other members for his "reactionary" views. As Mahnaz Ispahani points out, while the literary Left initially embraced Manto for his realistic and politically engaged writing, it cast him out for being "obsessed with the abnormal and obscene" and for "only reflect[ing] what he saw" rather than working for the amelioration of economic and social ills. "Saadat Hasan Manto", *Grand Street* 7, 4 (1988), 190.

5 Ahmed Ali, quoted in Leslie Fleming, *Another Lonely Voice: Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1985, p. 29.

6 In more recent times, a critic like Mahnaz Ispahani has faulted Manto for depicting physically and psychologically scarred women, who are "almost always victims" and whose "fate" is linked to their "sexual vulnerability". Yet even Ispahani, as if to rescue Manto from himself, concludes only that while "Manto's prose is obsessed with women", Manto the writer and Manto the man were

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ideological opposites with respect to their views on gender. Whereas Manto the writer wrote about women who had been sexually humiliated, seduced, dominated, raped, made pregnant, abandoned, prostituted, or murdered, Ispahani contends, Manto the man was "conservative, almost reactionary in his personal views about education for women, about their presence among men in society" (*op. cit.*, 186, 187).

7 Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 72.

8 Quoted in Fleming, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 32.

9 In Part 2 of their book, entitled "The Rhetoric of Elision", Higgins and Silver collect essays that "focus on how rape can be read in its absence". They hold that the elision of the scene of violence in male texts about rape "ironically both emphasizes the origins of the violence and suggests the possibility of making it visible again. In addition, [such] texts reveal, however unconsciously, the ambivalence of the male author caught up in representations of masculinity and subjectivity that he may question, but that he ultimately leaves in place." Higgins and Silver, eds., *Rape and Representation*, New York: Columbia UP, 1991, pp. 5, 6.

10 Einhorn, "Introduction", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 19, 1–2 (1996), 2.

11 Fleming, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 77; quoted in Fleming, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

12 Likening Manto to Guy de Maupassant, Mahnaz Ispahani points to his "almost journalistic naturalism . . . epiphanous passages about alienation and sexual violence, . . . [and] blighted endings" (*op. cit.*, 184), once more neglecting to investigate the burden on women of such "naturalism", "sexual violence", "alienation" and "blighted endings".

13 Fleming, "Riots and Refugees", p. 105; and Fleming, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 80.

14 "Rereading rape" in this fashion involves "more than listening to silences", Higgins and Silver point out; "it requires restoring rape to the literal, to the body: restoring, that is, the violence – the physical, sexual violation. The insistence on taking rape literally often necessitates a conscious critical act of reading the violence and the sexuality back into texts where it has been deflected, either by the text itself or by the critics: where it has been turned into a metaphor or a symbol or represented rhetorically as titillation, persuasion, ravishment, seduction, or desire. . . ." Higgins and Silver, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

15 Like Higgins and Silver's emphasis on the subversive gap in male texts of rape, Laura Tanner stresses the reader's responsibility to counter the "seductive power of representation" by "*seeing into* violence" and "uncovering not just the vulnerability of the victim or the observer but the very power dynamics upon which the violator's force depends". "The power of the reader to resist . . . the 'force' of the text often parallels, in the representation of intimate violence, the power of the reader to resist complicity – either through passive viewing or unconscious participation – in the act of violation represented therein," she concludes. *Intimate Violence: Reading Rape and Torture in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994, pp. 10, 15–16.

16 Quoted in Fleming, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 33.

17 Chatterjee, *The National and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993, p. 13.

18 Mahasweta, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

19 Mahasweta, *op. cit.*, p. xx. In this context, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan points out

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that in India the vast majority of reported female rape cases are "instances of what we might call institutional rape, rape perpetrated by members of repressive state forces like the police or the army, or groups like landlords, upon helpless women of the oppressed classes, often when the women are in custody in police cells or bound by contracts of bonded labour.... Therefore rape as a phenomenon in contemporary India is more properly understood as the expression of (male) violence – sanctioned by various modes of social power – rather than of sexual desire", Rajan, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

20 Quoted in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 244; and *Imaginary Maps*, p. xx.

21 Spivak, "Woman in Difference", pp. 112–13.

22 Spivak, "Draupadi: Translator's Foreword", *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 268–9.

23 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhowli", *Of Women, Outcastes, Peasants, and Rebels: A Selection of Bengali Short Stories*, ed. and trans. Kalpana Bardhan, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 191–2. All subsequent references to this story are to this edition and are cited in the text. In a related comment, Mahasweta notes chillingly in a conversation, "Decolonization has not reached the poor ... what we need is mass-based public opinion formation, pressure on the government, vigilance ... when a woman is raped, the entire judiciary system is against the woman" (*Imaginary Maps*, p. xx).

24 Writing about the gendered circumscription of women within Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee points out that "the inverted ideological form of the relation of power between the sexes: the adulation of woman as goddess or as mother ... served to emphasize with all the force of mythological inspiration what had in any case become a dominant characteristic of femininity in the new construct of 'woman' standing as a sign for 'nation,' namely, the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity, and so on ..." (*op. cit.*, pp. 130–31). Gayatri Spivak takes this point further, asserting that "the ideological construct 'India' is too deeply informed by the goddess-infested reverse sexism of the Hindu majority. As long as there is this hegemonic cultural self-representation of India as a goddess-mother (dissimulating the possibility that this mother is a slave), she will collapse under the burden of the immense expectations that such a self-representation permits" (*In Other Worlds*, p. 244). It is well to remember too that such legendary mythological figures as Sita, Draupadi and Ahilya, heroines of enduring "love" stories, while they are revered as symbols of *pativrata*, husband-worship, can also be seen as ideological examples of the gendered oppressions of Hindu orthodoxy, as the *dalit* writer Hira Bansode compellingly establishes in her poem entitled "Slave":

Where Sita entered the fire to prove her fidelity
Where Ahilya was turned to stone because of Indra's lust
Where Draupadi was fractured to serve five husbands
In that country a woman is still a slave....
An Anthology of Dalit Literature (Poems), eds. Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot, New Delhi: Gyan, 1992, p. 31.

For additional information on the myths of Sita, Draupadi and Ahilya, see Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths: A Sourcebook*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

25 Key works that investigate feminist narrative theories and practices include Abel, *op. cit.*; Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative*

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Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986; Molly Hite, *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989; Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*, New York: Routledge, 1989; and Paulina Palmer, *Contemporary Women's Fiction: Narrative Practice and Feminist Theory*, Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1989.

26 Mahasweta Devi, "The Funeral Wailer", Bardhan, *op. cit.*, p. 228. All subsequent references to this story are to this edition and are cited in the text.

27 Rajan, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–7.

28 Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982; Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982; William Beatty Warner, "Reading Rape: Marxist-Feminist Figurations of the Literal", *diacritics* 13, 4 (1983), 12–32; and Adrienne Rich, "Contemporary Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", *The "Signs" Reader: Women, Gender and Scholarship*, eds. Elizabeth Abel and Emily K. Abel, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 139–68. All quoted in Rajan, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

29 Gayatri Chakravory Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 1.

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