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Manto, God, Premchand and Some Other Storytellers

Harish Trivedi

One of the best known things about Saadat Hasan Manto (1912–1955) is the epitaph he composed for himself on 18 August 1954, exactly five months before he died at the age of forty-two on 18 January 1955. It ran (in Urdu, of course): 'Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto. With him lie buried all the arts and mysteries of short story writing. Under tons of earth he lies, wondering if he is a greater short story writer than God.'[1]

This sensationally grand and high-rhetorical statement is not to be read literally, of course, but rather as the *maqta* (the concluding couplet) of a *ghazal,* in which Urdu poets have traditionally been sanctioned the poetic license of extolling themselves and their works to the high heavens. And this was effectively the *maqta,* the last tall tale, of Manto's life.

The Uniqueness of Manto

On the occasion of the birth-centenary of Manto, his self-composed epitaph may serve as a point of departure for a reassessment of Manto in two different ways: firstly, by prompting us to ask precisely what was valuable and distinguished about Manto as a writer; and secondly, by invoking comparisons with some other writers to see *not* who among them Manto was greater than and who might possibly be thought greater than Manto, but to see how Manto and those other writers were similar or dissimilar. Manto himself invoked God (or, more precisely, 'Khuda') for a supreme comparison, but as the Complete Short Stories of God are not yet available in print, we may have to rest content with comparing Manto merely with other humans, especially with some fiction writers in Urdu and Hindi who were his contemporaries, at least in the broad chronological sense that their lives partially overlapped with his.

Before proceeding to do that, however, it may be apt to remind ourselves just where Manto's uniqueness as a writer of fiction lies. It lies above all, perhaps, in the way he creates an imaginative world of his own as soon as he begins telling a story. He weaves a web, he casts a spell, so that right from the first paragraph, we know that we are in a world which is distinctly his. He achieves this impression partly through the deployment of a certain kind of narratorial tone which is both jauntily oblique and directly matter-of-fact at the same time. He does it even more through an almost surreal intensity of physical observation and description of detail. What distinguishes him above all else as a writer, it may be argued, is this special ambience that he effort-

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lessly seems to create, through an acuteness of sensory perception and representation that goes beyond simple realism.

The primary sensory component here is, of course, the visual, as for example in Manto's acute and elaborate description of the prostitute 'Saugandhi' sleeping in the dingy little room, which too is described in minute and apt detail, that serves as her home as well as work-place, in the short story 'Hatak' ('Insult').[2] But beyond the visual, Manto also brings into play time and again two other kinds of sensory perceptions, the tactile and the olfactory. The sense of touch is most famously evoked perhaps in 'Thanda Gosht' (literally, 'Cold Meat'; 'Colder than Ice', in one English translation), in which a man tries to rape a woman who turns out to be already dead.[3] Another such story with a less horrific outcome is 'Swaraj ke Liye' (literally, 'For the Sake of Freedom'; 'The Price of Freedom', in an English translation), in which a married couple have taken a vow to keep celibate until freedom is achieved, and when they touch or hold each other meanwhile, the flesh of their spouse feels to each of them like cold and slippery rubber.[4] (Of this story, more below.) But perhaps Manto's masterpiece in this regard is the short story 'Boo' (literally, 'Smell'; but in the context, perhaps 'Odour' or even 'Stink') in which the visual, the tactile and above all the olfactory, all come together. At the beginning of this story, the hero has a chance sexual encounter with a *ghatin*, a stinking fisherwoman, and when he later gets married to a fair and perfumed upper-class woman and lies in bed with her, he finds that he is unable to rouse himself sexually and perform in the absence of that kind of unadorned primitive odour.[5]

Each of these stories has one thing in common, that the naked human flesh, in a potentially sexual situation, is in them often more repellant than attractive; it is hardly even flesh, for in one case, it is described as 'meat' and in another as 'rubber'. Manto, in his short life, was tried half a dozen separate times in a court of law on charges of obscenity and acquitted each time, possibly because his prosecutors assumed that a potentially obscene situation must be an actually obscene one. They could not have been more mistaken. For the naked female flesh as a rule arouses not conscupience in Manto but rather its very opposite, disgust – both in its common and current sense of revulsion and also in its etymological sense of dis-taste, i.e., something that puts one off engagement and enjoyment.

Manto is perhaps a writer without a parallel in this regard, in that he marshalls a whole battery of sensory stimuli, not in order to arouse sexual desire, but so as to douse and extinguish it. The sensuous in him, even in its most resourceful synaesthetic configuration, leads not to desire and consummation but to disgust and dismal failure, and in the case of many poor prostitutes that he almost obsessively depicts in story after story, even to downright degradation. Nor does Manto appeal to the reader's sympathy or pity for such situations; he remains objectively detached and even disinterested. Further, as Manto's 'progressive' contemporaries alleged, he does not

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show any radical inclination to plead for a change or reform in society, or to present some utopian vision. On the contrary, he seems content to deploy his art to show things as they are, but as we may not be able to see them without his illuminating artistic mediation. It has been suggested by one eminent commentator on Manto's work, G.C. Narang, that '*mamta* and *karuna* ... flow through the emotional space of Manto's narrative',[6] especially in stories such as 'Babu Gopinath' and 'Janaki', but if that is the case, such affection and compassion must be quite muted and subterranean.

The observations above relate to the texture of Manto's texts. As for the plot and structure of his short stories, Manto again presents us with a paradox. For an artist with such an acute eye for the little but significant detail, he seems to deal at the level of plot in the kind of generalities and broad effects such as one may associate with lesser writers. In his strategies of plotting and also mode of characterisation, he seems often careless and deficient, or at least slapdash. Some of his stories are hardly more than sketches, so that they seem 'fragmentary and discontinuous', while many others are so strongly plotted that the characters in them often lack psychological depth simply because they are made utterly subservient to the exigencies of the plot. Besides, such stories are perhaps a little too well plotted in a predetermined manner, so that they often come to such implausible coincidental climaxes that we have reason to feel that we have been tricked. Manto seems so keen to end several of his stories with a dramatic and unsuspected reversal of readerly expectation that he introduces a twist in the tale so strong that it fairly strangulates the story.

Flagrant examples of this kind of a crude culminating effect are stories such as 'Ek Zahida Ek Fahisha', in which an apparently highly respectable *burqa*-clad young woman turns out in fact to be a prostitute, for no better reason than the author's whim; this is one of those stories of Manto which are all plot and no psychology, and even the better known 'Kali Shalwar', which begins one way and then drifts waywardly into quite another direction, only to come to an end by showing that a man gives each of two prostitutes an *Eid* gift which he has swindled out of the other woman. Manto was well-read enough to know that there are two different ways in which the necessarily economical genre of the short story may be brought to an ending: with a bang or with a whisper. The former was the mode of popular masters like Maupassant and O. Henry, the latter that of Chekhov and the modernists who followed in his wake such as Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. And though Manto had, as a literary apprentice, translated two plays and one short story by Chekhov,[7] it was instead the O. Henry model that he chose to adhere to. He may possibly have been influenced in often going for a strong and dramatic ending by the example of the structure of the *ghazal*, in which every alternate line adheres to a rhyme – for what is coincidence if not a kind of rhyme of events, which produces the same effect of a decisive closure with a bang.

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But Manto also employed another kind of strong and, in a positive sense, (melo)dramatic ending, which is exemplified in some of his best short stories, e.g., in 'The Dog of Titwal' and 'Toba Tek Singh', in each of which there occurs at the end a tragic death. Except that in such successful stories, such a conclusion is built up to logically and when death occurs, it appears to have been inevitable. And Manto could have argued in his justification for constructing such a plot that his great competitor as a narrator, God, too often favoured such sudden but plausible terminal endings – as indeed in the case of the life-story of a creation of His called Manto.

Comparing Manto

As indicated above, an exercise in 'comparing' Manto with some of his contemporary writers may be most usefully conducted not so much to determine who is 'the greater' of them (though that might have been Manto's own preferred agenda, as in the epitaph!), but so as to juxtapose them and read each of them in the light of the other, for the purpose of relating them to each other in meaningful ways. To mutually illuminate rather than to be judgmental is the true aim of a 'comparative' study (as the much misunderstood discipline of Comparative Literature seeks to propagate it), and also of course to remind ourselves that no writer, however private or individualistic or singular in talent, exists in solitary splendour.

For Manto as a writer of fiction in Urdu, an inescapable figure looming large on the horizon must have been Premchand (1880–1936), who was thirty-two years old when Manto was born, had already published four novels and about fifty short stories, and was to go on to be acclaimed as the greatest writer of fiction in both Urdu and Hindi before he passed away in 1936. Manto was already writing and publishing by then, and in fact brought out his first collection of short stories, *Atish Pare*, that very year.[8] However, Manto shows no discernible appreciation of Premchand, nor does he betray any kind of continuity of theme or style with him. There is clearly not only a generation gap between the two writers, but also, the very ground of literary creation has meanwhile shifted, especially in Urdu, a language in which the newly founded Progressive Writers' Movement (PWM) had a major impact. While Premchand has been appropriated for the PWM as its mascot on the strength of a complex speech which is more often invoked than actually read, Manto was throughout his career buffeted by the winds and waves of this ideological movement which at first acclaimed him as a champion of its cause, and then vilified and denounced him as a renegade, sometimes citing the same short stories to support both sides of the case, such as 'Boo'.[9]

To think of Premchand and Manto together, then, is to think of two eras – chronologically adjacent, but politically and aesthetically radically different. Premchand took Urdu fiction out of its still persistent, fanciful Middle East locations and 'decadent' themes to the harsh realism of rural deprivation and suffering, while Manto, still adhering to the urbanism and urbanity

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of Urdu (for there is hardly any rural reality in Urdu literature and culture), raised the stakes by depicting, probably for the first time in all of Indian literature, the underbelly of a great metropolis, Bombay. Premchand wrote, in a mode that he himself called 'idealistic realism', of the illiterate village peasants; Manto, in that surrealist modernist mode of Bombay Noir.

Such thematic and stylistic contrast is only underlined by the fact that Premchand and Manto also happened to have a few things in common. Long before Manto took up his obsessive theme, already familiar in Urdu fiction from works such as *Umrao Jan Ada*, of depicting the lives of prostitutes but from his own deglamourising perspective, Premchand had in his first major novel, written first in Urdu under the title *Bazar-e-Husn* but published first in Hindi under the vastly different title, *Seva-Sadan* (1919), depicted the process through which a housewife may be beguiled into becoming a prostitute, how the proposed relocation of 'courtesan's quarter' from the heart of the city to a remote margin becomes a long-running issue of impassioned debate among city councillors, and how, in Premchand's ideal-reformist vision, the fallen woman must redeem herself in the end and then dedicate herself to a life of selfless social service.[10] Altogether, two more different ways of depicting the same class or segment of society could hardly be found than exemplified by Premchand's characterisation of prostitutes and Manto's.

In another apparent resemblance with Manto, Premchand too travelled to Bombay to write for Hindi films. He stayed there for about a year, from May 1934 to April 1935, and then left in disgust at the vulgarity and cynical commercialism of the Hindi film world.[11] In contrast, Manto arrived in Bombay to write for Hindi films only a few years later, in 1942, and happily made a lucrative career for himself there until he chose to leave for Pakistan in 1948.[12] Manto seemed happily well integrated into the film world of Bombay, judging by his own high-spirited account in his memoirs collected in the volume *Meena Bazar*,[13] or judging even by a bristly account by a competitive fellow-writer, Upendra Nath Ashk, in which Manto comes across as a robustly outspoken and yet subservient and ingratiating enough employee of the film moghuls of the times such as Shashadhar Mukherjee of Filmistan. Ashk recounts an amusing little incident, for example, in which Manto once recited to Mukherjee some verses by Ghalib, who was his favourite Urdu poet, and Ashk some verses by Mahadevi Verma, a romantic-mystical Hindi poet then at the peak of her powers and fame, and the philistine Mukherjee then produced the knee-jerk Bengali response that neither Hindi nor Urdu had a poet of the genius of Rabindranath Tagore![14]

An Urdu writer whose career trajectory closely paralleled Manto's was Krishan Chander (1914–1977), who was two years younger than Manto and lived for two decades longer. He too was an early Progressive but unlike Manto, he retained the favour of the Progressive establishment and was indeed used sometimes as a politically correct scourge with which to beat Manto, as for example by the influential ideologue Ali SardarJafri.[15] That

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apart, he too was a writer for Hindi films, and he too wrote some notable Partition stories. Indeed, for originality of conceptualisation, his 'Peshawar Express' may be thought comparable to Manto's masterpiece 'Toba Tek Singh'. While Manto's story focusses on an exchange of madmen between India and Pakistan along communal lines,Krishan Chander uses for the protagonist of his short story the train named in the title, and in a master-stroke, it is the train which narrates in the first person the story of its long, blood-stained journey from Peshawar to Bombay, with the killers and the killed abruptly swapping places as the train crosses the newly drawn border between Pakistan and India.

> On arriving in Atari, the Hindu refugees saw so many Muslim corpses that the cockles of their hearts were warmed. We had now reached the border of independent India, for how else could we have witnessed such an enchanting scene. And when I arrived at the Amritsar railway station, the jubilant shouts of the Sikhs shook both the earth and the sky.[16]

Manto's reputation as the arch chronicler of Partition is put in a wider perspective similarly when we look at the works of a couple of contemporary Hindi writers. Yashpal (1903–1976) was in his youth an armed revolutionary against British rule, was arrested and jailed from 1932 to 1938, and on release turned to communism and to literary writing. His magnum opus is a two-volume novel on Partition, *Jhootha Sach* (1958, 1960; literally, *The False Truth*; translated into English as *This is Not That Dawn*), which begins a few months before Partition, in May 1947, in a *gali-biradari* (same-street community) in the locality Shah Alami Darwaza in Lahore, shows its mainly Hindu cast of characters suffer in various ways and be displaced into several locations in India including Ludhiana, Delhi and Lucknow, and then steadily pick up the pieces of their fractured lives again in their new country, which is for them not their *vatan* (homeland) but *desh* (nation).The novel is nothing if not epic in scope and tenor, the events in it are all precisely located in time and space, and it is narrated in a flat tone and unadorned style which serves only to underline the horror of the whole truth. In each of these respects, Yashpal's great Partition novel stands in stark contrast to 'the charged theatricality' of Manto's short stories on the theme. The 'impersonal cold-bloodedness' of an act like rape in a Partition setting is a common theme in both Manto and Yashpal, but it is Yashpal's wide lens which also shows us that even as a man drags a strange woman into his hut and rapes her, his wife sits outside the door cursing him to hell.[17]

Mohan Rakesh (1925–1972) too, like Manto, died young, and though he is not thought of as mainly a Partition writer (for he was a novelist, short-story writer and playwright who wrote on a wide range of themes drawn from classical as well as contemporary India), he has at least one short story which may be classed among the best ever written on Partition. This is titled 'Malbe

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ka Malik' ('His Heap of Rubble'), and describes the brief return, just for a day, of an old Muslim man, Ghani-*miyan*, from Lahore to the lane he used to live in seven-and-a-half years ago in Amritsar. During Partition, while Ghani himself was in Lahore, his son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren were all killed in their own home in this lane, and Ghani now comes wishing to cast a nostalgic look at his old house, only to find that too reduced to rubble. As he slowly walks down the lane, he sees the familiar strong man of the lane, Rakkha the Wrestler, stops to ask him how it all happened, and all his old neighbours hold their breath behind their shuttered windows as Ghani and Rakkha have a desultory conversation, affectionate as before on old Ghani's part, strained on Rakkha's, and then Ghani blesses Rakkha as of old, and goes back to Lahore – still not knowing that it was Rakkha who had killed his family. It's all quiet in the lane again, and a dog goes and again sits atop the rubble that was Ghani's home. As it happened, some twenty years ago, I was invited to translate into English both this story by Rakesh and Manto's 'Toba Tek Singh',[18] and I have wondered ever since which I like more.[19]

This glimpse of the works of some other contemporary writers on the common theme of Partition will serve, hopefully, to highlight the distinction of Manto's own literary achievement and the uniqueness of both his style and his vision, as highlighted in an earlier section of this essay. Having read other writers who too have written in their own different ways on broadly the same theme, we are the better equipped to appreciate both Manto and them. Manto's favourite poet Ghalib has a *maqta* in which he says:

> *Rekhte ke tumhi ustaad nahin ho Ghalib,*
> *Kahte hain agle zamane men koi Meer bhi tha.*
> (Ghalib, you are not the only master of Urdu poetry,
> They say there was in the past a poet called Meer.)

This couplet by Ghalib enhances the stature of Meer because Ghalib acknowledges that stature, but it also raises Ghalib's own stature because he makes such an acknowledgement. Similarly, besides those two supreme storytellers, Manto and God, there happen to be some other storytellers as well, and to read them alongside Manto enhances Manto's stature as well perhaps as their stature.

Manto, Partition and Pakistan

Just as Manto often introduced a twist or a trick in the life-stories of his characters, God gave Manto's own life a major twist when He created Pakistan. It could be said that it split Manto's life in two, and through that split we got a glimpse of an apparent contradiction in him. Not only in 'Toba Tek Singh' but in all that he was ever to write on the subject, he represented the division of the country on communal grounds as madness. And yet, when Pakistan was created, he was mad enough himself to migrate there. With his

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mind and heart he seemed to be totally against Partition, but with his feet he voted for it. The reasons he himself gave for taking this momentous step were far from adequate, and so elusively expressed as to seem evasive.

Most notably, in his memoir of his dear friend, the actor Ashok Kumar, he describes in one paragraph how Ashok Kumar once drove them both safely past a Muslim wedding procession by which he, Manto, had felt far more threatened than Ashok Kumar did, going down a by-lane. In the following paragraph he goes on to speak of his trenchant criticism of a script by a fellow writer, Nazir Ajmeri, after which Nazir complained of Manto's conduct to other members of the film company. And the next thing Manto says is that he then decided that there was no way out for him in India (*aage rasta nahin milega*) and he therefore took a by-lane *(baju ki gali)*, or a narrow diversion, to Pakistan.[20] If this were a short story, it would be thought incoherent; as it purports to be a factual account of the circumstances in which Manto took one of the most crucial decisions of his life, it must be judged to be an attempt not at explanation but rather at obfuscation.[21]

Manto's decision in favour of going to Pakistan may seem the more surprising for he had always had a wholly unbiased and clear-eyed, and indeed a bold and robustly challenging, view of Hindus and Muslims and the relationship between them, and was always the very opposite of a Muslim partisan. For example, in his story 'Do Qaumen', he depicts a love relationship between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman, Mukhtar and Sharada, and when Mukhtar suggests that they may get married after she converts and becomes a Musalman, she is at first left speechless and then says, 'Why don't you become a Hindu?' Mukhtar laughs and insists that it is she who must become a Musalman: '... In any case, Islam is the best of all religions. What kind of religion is Hinduism! They drink cow's urine. They worship idols. I mean, it may be all very well in its own way, but it can't stand up to Islam.' She turns pale, jumps out of the bed, and says: 'Go away! Just go now. Yes, our Hindu religion is very bad. And you Musalmans are very good.' She then goes into another room and locks herself in. The story concludes: 'Mukhtar went away clutching his Islam to his heart.'[22]

The author of an ironical passage like this certainly could not himself have gone off to Pakistan clutching his Islam to his heart, whatever other unstated and unknown reasons may have prompted him to do so. In any case, Manto's migration had major material consequences for him. As a direct outcome of the relocation, he no longer had his well-paid job and never really found another. He was cut off from old friends and colleagues, and also from his other métier, of script-writing for films. In the lack of a regular means of livelihood, he was obliged to live like a hack and to 'write more and more, with less and less attention to craft'.[23] Often he wrote against payment already received, or, in his last years when he had become an alcoholic, just so as to earn enough money for his next bottle of liquor. He went

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into depression and even in his writing showed symptoms not only of bravado and self-directed irony, but even some self-loathing:

> I write stories because like an alcoholic I am addicted to them. ... I don't write stories; the fact of the matter is that the stories write me. ... (When I can't write anything) I feel drained and defeated and go away and lie down like a barren woman. ... I feel particularly frustrated, for I have been paid already for my unwritten story. ... (When I do begin writing,) my mind is empty but my pocket is full. From this point of view, I see myself not as a writer of stories but as a pick-pocket, who picks his own pocket and turns over the proceeds to you. Could there be a bigger fool in the world![24]

This is still good writing, of course, and one only wishes we had a lot more of it. It would obviously be counter-factual, fanciful and fallacious to entertain the idea even hypothetically that had Manto not gone to Pakistan he might have lived longer, and written more and better. But it may nevertheless be acknowledged that Manto was in some ways disappointed in and with Pakistan; the move did not turn out as well for him as he might have expected. As Leslie Flemming, who remains perhaps the best biographer of Manto so far, put it: 'there was no milk and honey for Manto in Pakistan'.[25]

Manto's disillusioned look at Pakistan included an account of migrants to Pakistan whose only motive for coming over was to make money out of any new opportunity: for example, in the satirical short story 'Shaheed-saaz', (literally 'Martyr-maker'; translated as 'Doing God's Work') in which a migrant exploits for his gain even the religious fervour for martyrhood in the cause of the newly created country. In a recent assessment, Manto has been described as 'The Seer of Pakistan', i.e., as a person who could already foresee the failure of Pakistan as a State and as an open society.[26] He was perhaps also a victim of Pakistan and in a sense a martyr to Pakistan who, in the concluding image of his best known piece of fiction, himself like his mad hero Toba Tek Singh, fell athwart India and Pakistan in a desolate strip of 'no man's land'[27] which was neither here nor there. That was, of course, God's conclusion to Manto's own life-story – and it could be argued that God had, at least in a metaphorical sense, borrowed this ending from Manto.

Notes

1 Quoted in the 'Introduction' to Saadat Hasan Manto, *Kingdom's End and Other Stories*, translated by Khalid Hasan, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, p. 10.

2 Leslie A. Flemming and Tahira Naqvi, *Another Lonely Voice: The Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto*, Vanguard, Lahore, reprint, 1985, pp. 242–60. The name of the heroine is spelt as 'Saugandhi' here in Naqvi's translation, but as the rather more meaningful 'Sugandhi' in two Hindi/Devanagari editions, in *Manto ki Sheshtha Kahaniyan*, edited by Devendra Issar, Indraprastha Prakashan, Delhi, 1991, pp. 43–60, and *Manto ki Chuninda Kahaniyan*, edited by Gangaprasad Sharma, fifth edition, Manoj Publications, Delhi, 2010, pp. 221–39.

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3 Manto, *Kingdom's End and Other Stories*, translated by Hasan, pp. 119–24.
4 'The Price of Freedom', ibid., pp. 57–74.
5 Not translated by either Khalid Hasan or Tahira Naqvi – as being too distasteful? Included in both the Hindi selections cited above: in *Manto ki Sheshtha Kahaniyan*, edited by Issar, pp. 173–78, and *Manto ki Chuninda Kahaniyan*, edited by Sharma, pp. 40–45.
6 G.C. Narang, 'Manto Reconsidered', in *Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto*, edited by Alok Bhalla, Indian Insitute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997, p. 12.
7 For details, see Flemming and Naqvi, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 36.
8 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
9 See ibid., pp. 27–30.
10 A translation of the Urdu version of this novel is available as *Courtesans' Quarter*, translated by Amina Azfar, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2003.
11 See Amrit Rai, *Premchand: A Life*, translated by Harish Trivedi, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 313–28.
12 See Flemming and Naqvi, *Another Lonely Voice*, pp. 15–17.
13 Saadat Hasan Manto, *Meena Bazar*, first Hindi edition, 1962; reprint, Rajkamal, New Delhi, 1997.
14 Upendra Nath Ashk, *Filmi Duniya ki Jhalkiyan* (*Glimpses of the Film World*), Vol. I, Neelabh Prakashan, Allahabad, reprint, 2002, p. 113.
15 Quoted in Flemming and Naqvi, *Another Lonely Voice*, pp. 28–29. In contrast, the Marxist writer Amrit Rai found Krishan Chander lacking in propagating revolutionary solidarity and as being basically a romantic, in his introduction to a collection of Krishan Chander's short stories of which Rai himself was the publisher! See Amrit Rai, in Krishan Chander, *Ham Vahshi Hain* (*We are Savages*), Hans Prakashan, Allahabad, 1993, pp. 13, 16.
16 Krishan Chander, 'Peshawar Express', in *Ham Vahshi Hain*, p. 25. My translation.
17 Harish Trivedi, 'Introduction', in Yashpal, *This is Not That Dawn*, translated by Anand, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2010, pp. xx–xxi.
18 Both translations published in *Breakthrough: Modern Hindi and Urdu Short Stories*, edited by Sukrita Paul Kumar, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1993, pp. 213–22 (Manto), and 223–36 (Rakesh).
19 For long I thought I was the only person in the wide world to entertain such (blasphemous?) doubt, until I recently heard the Hindi poet and activist Asad Zaidi say in passing that the only Partition story by another author he thought comparable to Manto's stories was this one by Rakesh, 'Malbe ka Malik'. (Zaidi, in the course of his talk at the conference on Manto, organised by Sahmat in collaboration with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, on 29 September 2012. I had presented a version of this paper at that conference earlier the same day in a session at which Zaidi was not present, so this was indeed a happy coincidence of judgment.)
20 Manto, 'Ashok Kumar', in his *Meena Bazaar*, pp. 45–47.
21 Incidentally, in the concluding session of the conference referred to above, the question whether it is legitimate to ask why Manto decided to go to Pakistan generated a heated discussion. Among other interlocutors, Asad Zaidi said it was a private matter which we had no business to pry into, I said it might have remained a private matter and not been such a worthwhile or significant question to ask had Manto not written some of his best fiction about Partition and Pakistan, and Neelabh said that we had every right to ask this question because Manto had been a flag-bearer of the values we all cherished (*hamara haq banta hai puchhne ka, kyonki Manto hamare alam-bardar the*).
22 Manto, 'Do Qaumen' ('Two Communities/Peoples'), in *Manto ki Shrestha*

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Kahaniyan, pp. 101–02. My translation. (Not translated by Khalid Hasan or Tahira Naqvi.)

23 Flemming and Naqvi, *Another Lonely Voice*, p.18.

24 Manto, 'Main Afsane Kyonkar Likhta Hoon' ('Why Do I Write Stories'), in *Manto ki Chuninda Kahaniyan*, pp. 4–5. My translation.

25 Flemming and Naqvi, *Another Lonely Voice*, p. 17.

26 Ali Sethi, 'The Seer of Pakistan', http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2012/08/the-seer-of-pakistan.html.

27 Incidentally, the phrase 'no man's land', as translated by me from the last sentence of 'Toba Tek Singh' (p. 220), is alternatively translated by Khalid Hasan as 'a bit of earth which had no name' (p. 18), and by Tahira Naqvi as 'a stretch of land which had no name' (p. 288).

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