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These journals, as they gradually reach a wider public, will contribute most effectively to the universal world literature we hope for; we repeat however that there can be no question of the nations thinking alike, the aim is simply that they shall grow aware of one another, understand each other, and even where they may not be able to love, may at least tolerate one another.

GOETHE

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concept of *mosaku* (imitation), an early theoretical position adopted by Kurahashi both to showcase the language created (as opposed to the originality of the story) and to counter suggestions of plagiarism by her early critics.

The translator, Sakaki Atsuko, has provided the reader with a concise introduction to Kurahashi and her works that not only furnishes basic biographical information but also introduces the stories, explaining their inclusion in this anthology and their points of similarity and divergence in relation to the larger picture of Kurahashi's styles and motifs. Appended to this introduction is a bibliography of other Kurahashi works available in English translation, a welcome convenience.

The collection is superior and reads smoothly, although there are occasional points that jar: an inexplicable rendering of a classical literary title, typos and inconsistent transliteration, nonstandard appellations, and the odd anachronism. Despite these minor flaws, Sakaki has assembled an engagingly representative sample of Kurahashi's short stories that eloquently demonstrate why she has received numerous literary awards in addition to two nominations for the prestigious Akutagawa Prize. Japanese literature, women's writing, fantastic fiction—the stories of Kurahashi Yumiko should be enthusiastically received by teachers of all of these, as well as by those who simply enjoy a provocative story.

Erik R. Lofgren
Bucknell University

Korea

Hwang Sun-wŏn. *The Descendants of Cain*. Suh Ji-moon, Julie Pickering, trs. Armonk, N.Y. / London. Sharpe/UNESCO. 1997. ix + 182 pages. \$52.95 (\$19.95 paper). ISBN 0-7656-0136-2 (0137-0 paper).

Hwang Sun-wŏn's novel *Ka'in ūi Huye*, completed in May of 1954, is an evocation of the post-World War II North Korean reality and the social and political changes wrought under the Russian communist dominance. It combines elements of satire along with convincing dialogue, vivid characterization, and explanatory footnotes which help the foreign reader. Particularly valuable are the notes on Tan'gun, on Korean speech forms, and on Korean rooms. The translators sense what a Western English-speaking reader might need to know and have produced a faithful and readable version, one which makes use of an unaffectedly colloquial American English style.

The Russian presence is noteworthy. We find reference to Soviet Russia as "fatherland of the proletariat" and to Stalin as "benefactor and liberator of the downtrodden," learn of the need for scientists to help the nation overcome backwardness and become a truly advanced country like the Soviet Union, read about the placement of barbed wire and oil drums between houses as protection against Russian soldiers, and take note of the portraits of Stalin placed over the gates of houses. Elsewhere we hear of a Japanese woman, new to the profession of prostitution, striking a price with a Russian soldier, a large-breasted Russian woman soldier directing traffic, ubiquitous portraits of Soviet leaders decorating a public fountain, and a Russian soldier wearing four watches, all with the

correct time. We learn that the Russian word *harasho* or *harasyo* means "good" or "beautiful," read of Russian troublemaking after a spree of Japanese looting and killing, and hear of a Korean killed in a brawl with a Russian soldier.

Occasionally a character will express the idea that liberation is not an unmixed blessing. For example, old Ko states, in reply to an outburst from a party operative asking if he has anything against democratic reform: "I don't understand what any of this means." Later on, after the suicide of Grandma Bullye, who hanged herself from a beam in her house, old Ko says: "What is there to live for? Nothing but trouble these days."

The most admirable person in Hwang's novel is a woman, Ch'oe's wife Ojaknyŏ, who lives with the protagonist of the novel, Pak Hun. She has genuine presence of mind in putting out grass fires by rolling on the ground until they are all extinguished. She commonsensically confronts a party official who reads a resolution against Pak Hun, saying, "Why did you write such lies?" and "I don't need to be liberated. Go back to your homes! All of you!"

Suh Ji-moon and Julie Pickering's translation effectively puts into English this important and absorbing novel, with its vivid portrayal of North Korea some thirty-four years ago. Even if the historical basis may not beckon to all readers, the author's insights into human nature and Korean culture will fascinate.

Edgar C. Knowlton Jr.
University of Hawai'i, Manoa

Mauritius

Lindsey Collen. *Getting Rid of It*. London. Granta. 1997. 215 pages. £9.99. ISBN 1-86207-079-2.

Getting Rid of It is Lindsey Collen's fourth novel. It was preceded by *Misyon Garson* (1996), *The Rape of Sita* (1993; see *WLT* 69:4, p. 856), and *There Is a Tide* (1990). *Rape* threw Collen into the international limelight when it became the object of an unenforced Mauritian government ban, and was later awarded the 1994 Commonwealth Writers Prize for fiction from Africa.

The appearance of *Getting Rid of It* pushes aside the controversy around Collen's decision to use a protagonist named Sita in a work of fiction and brings into focus her real strength: lyrical and poignant writing about individuals struggling to go about the business of living beneath the oppressive and stifling weight of unjust social, political, and religious systems. Of special interest to Collen is the maleness of these systems, where men oppress and fail to understand the realities of life and life-giving, love and lovemaking: "Men don't know where all the miscarriages and abortions go."

Collen's frequent references to what she evidently believes are injustices in Mauritius (and elsewhere) have led some critics to accuse her of being nothing more than a polemical writer (regrettably fueled by Granta's own publicity release). Collen ripostes here: "These days, when you write a story, you have to be so careful. People . . . feel attacked. . . . They don't know if you're just telling a story or somehow taking advantage of them. They wish you

hadn't chosen to write it like that. As if you had the choice." *Getting Rid of It* is about choice, the choice of a woman to "get rid of it" (in the novel the fetus is miscarried), freely to love a man, to love a woman, and to take her life into her own hands without having, literally, to take her own life.

As with Collen's other novels, the narrative here is frequently interrupted by the "storyteller." Indeed, if Collen is anything, she is a storyteller, one steeped in the oral and in the need to give voice. To do so, she turns to Mauritian myth and folklore and to the English literary heritage. Collen, like other Mauritian writers not writing in French (D. Virahsawmy, Y. Ghanty), often appeals to Shakespeare. The three female protagonists of *Getting Rid of It* are likened to *Macbeth's* witches: "There's trouble written on their bodies now. Double double toil and trouble"; "What brings you two here? Thunder, lightning or is it rain?" This does not so much establish a correspondence as appeal to the reader's familiarity with another "story."

The use of Shakespeare, and indeed of English, by Mauritian writers has yet to be satisfactorily investigated. It is certainly connected to the question of audience in a country far more at ease with literary French than literary English. Critics might thus wonder (especially as *Getting Rid of It* was published in England) whether anglophone Mauritian writing is not in fact "still in a state of preliterature" (see Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, 1989). I think not, and the credit is almost single-handedly due to Lindsey Collen.

Shawkat M. Toorawa
University of Mauritius

Pakistan

Shuja Nawaz. *Journeys*. Karachi. Oxford University Press. 1998. xv + 55 pages. \$15. ISBN 0-19-577839-1.

Journeys is a collection of forty-one poems by a poet who is an expatriate in more senses than one. First and most obvious, Shuja Nawaz, who is a Pakistani, lives with his family in the USA, in one of the suburbs of Washington, D.C. Second, as a writer in English, he is exiled from his mother tongue(s), Punjabi, Urdu, or, more specifically, Pothowari, the language of his youth. Then, as someone who works for the IMF, Nawaz makes a living in a manner rather unrelated to his poetic gift and vocation. In other words, leaving home implies not just losing the familiar landscape of one's childhood, with all its well-loved sights, sounds, and smells, not only leaving behind one's language and culture, but also outgrowing, in an irreversible way, the world of one's ancestors. As the poem "After the Dam" shows, the mile-broad river which his father challenged him to cross is, alas, only a little stream when Nawaz grows old enough to try his manhood. Finally, there is in Nawaz's poetry a recurring resistance to the dominant currents of Western civilization. Articulated through the personae of underdogs like Porus, Hannibal, and Barbarossa, this defiance of power underlies Nawaz's own alienation in modern-day, metropolitan America. This angst finds its expression in a poem like "Ozymandias II," in which Nawaz seems to locate the vanity of human achievements in the streets of New York City. A

sense of displacement thus runs right through these poems; wherever one journeys in this collection, "The sadness is still there," as the concluding line of "Birthday Poem" says.

This sadness caused by dislocation is not, however, always debilitating. It results in an ongoing struggle by the poet to make a sensible map of his numerous journeys. As the ambitious title poem "Journeys" suggests: "We spurn the fruit that hangs low / upon the abundant branch. Heights / and distance hold our eye. The land / that yields too easy a metaphor / deserves no poem to celebrate it. / There must be a continuous quest, a paring away of the commonplace, / a search for everies in the mountains of the mind." If these lines might be regarded as Nawaz's poetic credo, then he succeeds rather well in this collection, despite his own exacting standards. There is scarcely a false note in the entire volume. Each line, each image, is carefully chiseled to perfection. Memorable phrases and metaphors are strewn liberally through the verses. Roads twisted as lies, girls pouring their secret dreams into earthen pitchers, farmers winding their horsehair histories on hand-held spinning wheels, dried dung cakes climbing up walls, a peepal tree shedding its leaves like a lazy pensioner discarding clothes, spread-eagle streams vanishing into sandy flesh—and many, many more such "day-old stone[s]" become "diamonds" in Nawaz's poetry.

After much nostalgia and keening sorrow, the collection does end with some lines of quiet acceptance. Once again, the poet's sense of belonging is voiced through his bond with the Virginia landscape, "these oldest hills / hazy blue on a fading confederate sky," which of course evoke memories of "mounts and fields / across Seven Seas, almost beyond recall." The last poem, significantly entitled "Home," is about all the memories which the poet and his family have garnered so lovingly in their new home. Here they will "dream new dreams" as they "draw and fill and tint / each page in this, the album" of their lives.

Makarand Paranjape
Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi

Singapore

Catherine Lim. *The Bondmaid*. New York. Overlook. 1997. 384 pages. \$24.95. ISBN 0-87951-790-5.

The prologue to Catherine Lim's novel *The Bondmaid* recounts a 1992 newspaper story of a temple destroyed in a mysterious fire that clears the way for a petrochemical plant in a Singapore seemingly obsessed with financial progress. With such a preface, a reader might expect Lim, a prominent Singapore novelist and short-story writer, to examine the economic and social pressures of life in multiethnic Singapore that have figured in her earlier books of short stories such as *Little Ironies* (1978) and *Or Else: The Lightning God and Other Stories* (1980). Lim's novel, however, takes up another theme that has recurred in her recent fiction: the oppression of women.

The Bondmaid follows the life of Han, a four-year-old Chinese girl sold by her impoverished mother into servi-