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Imaginary Maps presents three stories from noted Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi in conjunction with readings of these tales by famed cultural and literary critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Weaving history, myth and current political realities, these stories explore troubling motifs in contemporary Indian life through the figures and narratives of indigenous tribes in India. At once delicate and violent, Devi's stories map the experiences of the "tribals" and tribal life under decolonization. In "The Hunt," "Douloti the Bountiful" and the deftly wrought allegory of tribal agony "Pterodactyl, Pirtha, and Puran Sahay," Ms. Devi links the specific fate of tribals in India to that of

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marginalized peoples everywhere. Gayatri Spivak's readings of these stories connect the necessary "power lines" within them, not only between local and international structures of power (patriarchy, nationalisms, late capitalism), but also to the university.

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Weaving history, myth and current political realities, these three collected stories by renowned Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi, lead us subtly through contemporary Indian life.

Among the foremost feminist critics to have emerged to international eminence over the last fifteen years, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has relentlessly challenged the high ground of established theoretical discourse in literary and cultural studies. Although her rigorous reading of various authors has often rendered her work difficult terrain for those unfamiliar with poststructuralism, this collection makes significant strides in explicating Spivak's complicated theories of reading.

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This cluster of short fiction has a common motif: the breast. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out in her introduction, the breast is far more than a symbol in these stories. It becomes the means of a harsh indictment of an exploitative social system. In *Draupadi*, the protagonist Dopdi Mejhen is a tribal revolutionary who, arrested and gang-raped in custody, turns the terrible wounds of her breasts into a counter-offensive. In *Breast-Giver*, a woman who becomes a professional wet-nurse to support her family dies of painful breast cancer, betrayed alike by the breasts that for years became her chief identity and the dozens of sons she suckled. In *Behind the Bodice*, migrant labourer Gangor's statuesque breasts excite the attention of ace photographer Upin Puri, triggering off a train of violence that ends in tragedy. Mahasweta Devi is one of India's foremost writers. Her powerful fiction has won her recognition in the form of the Sahitya Akademi (1979), Jnanpith (1996) and Ramon Magsaysay (1996) awards, amongst several other literary honours. She was also awarded the Padmasree in 1986, the title of Officier del Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres (2003) and the Nonino Prize (2005) for her activist work among dispossessed tribal communities. Translator, critic and scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities, Columbia University, introduces this cycle of breast stories with thought-provoking essays which probe the texts of the stories, opening them up to a complex of interpretation and meaning.

Written in 1980, this novel by prize-winning Indian writer Mahasweta Devi, translated and introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is remarkable for the way in which it touches on vital issues that have in subsequent decades grown into matters of urgent social concern.

Written by one of India's foremost novelists, and translated by an eminent cultural and critical theorist. Ranges over decades in the life of Chotti – the central character – in which India moves from colonial rule to independence, and then to the unrest of the 1970s. Traces the changes, some forced, some welcome, in the daily lives of a

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marginalized rural community. Raises questions about the place of the tribal on the map of national identity, land rights and human rights, the 'museumization' of 'ethnic' cultures, and the justifications of violent resistance as the last resort of a desperate people. Represents enlightening reading for students and scholars of postcolonial literature and postcolonial studies.

With the ancient epic Mahabharat as her source, and the battle of Kurukshetra as a central motif, Mahasweta Devi weaves three stories in which we visit unexpected alleys and by-lanes of the traditional epic saga, and look at events from the eyes of women marginalized, dispossessed, dalit. Their eyes condemn the wanton waste and inhumanity of war. This Kurukshetra is not the legendary Dharmayuddha of the popular imagination but rather a cold-blooded power game sacrificing countless human lives. How do the women s quarters of the palace, a colourless place of shadowy widowhood, appear to five peasant women whose lives are no less shattered by the Kurukshetra massacre, but who are used to dealing with trauma in a more robust manner? How does their outlook on life and survival influence the young pregnant princess who is abruptly plunged into the half-life of uppercaste widowhood? How does a lower caste serving woman, who was brought in to service king Dhritarashtra when his queen was with child, view her half-royal offspring and his decision to perform the last rites for a father who never acknowledged him as a son? How does an ageing Kunti, living out her last years in the forest, come to terms with her guilt over her unacknowledged son, Karna? And, having finally voiced her shame aloud, how then does she face up to a crime she has not even remembered: the murder of a family of nishad forest dwellers? These tales, brewed in the imagination of a master story-teller, make us look at the Mahabharata with new eyes, insisting as they do on the inclusion, within the master narrative, of the fates and viewpoints of those previously unrepresented therein: women and the underclass. MAHASWETA DEVI is one of India s foremost writers. Her powerful, satiric fiction has won her recognition in the

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form of the Sahitya Akademi (1979), Jnanpith (1996) and Ramon Magsaysay (1996) awards, the title of Officier del Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres (2003) and the Nonino Prize (2005), amongst several other literary honours. She was also awarded the Padmasree in 1986, for her activist work amongst dispossessed tribal communities. ANJUM KATYAL is as an editor who has also translated several plays and short stories.

This charming, expansive novel set in the sixteenth-century medieval Bengal draws on the life of the great medieval poet Kabikankan Mukundaram Chakrabarti, whose epic poem Abhayamangal, better known as Chandimangal, records the socio-political history of the time. In the section of this epic called Byadhkhanda the Book of the Hunter he describes the lives of hunter tribes, the Shabars, who lived in the forest and its environs. Mahasweta Devi explores the cultural values of the Shabars and how they cope with the slow erosion of their way of life as more and more forest land gets cleared to make way for settlements. She uses the lives of two couples, the brahman Mukundaram and his wife, and the young Shabars, Phuli and Kalya, to capture the contrasting socio-cultural norms of rural society of the time. Mahasweta Devi acknowledges her debt to Mukundaram, who wrote about men and women, gods and goddesses. The hunter tribes refusal to cultivate and settle down, as described by him, is true of surviving forest tribes today. The villages and rivers mentioned by him still exist. Mahasweta Devi is one of India s foremost writers. Her powerful fiction has won her recognition in the form of the Sahitya Akademi (1979), Jnanpith (1996) and Ramon Magsaysay (1996) awards, the title of Officier del Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres (2003) and the Nonino Prize (2005) amongst several other literary honours. She was also awarded the Padmasree in 1986, for her activist work among dispossessed tribal communities. Sagaree Sengupta is translator based in the USA. She translates from Bengali, Hindi and Urdu. She has collaborated on this translation with her mother, Mandira Sengupta, an artist who maintains an active interest in her native

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Bengali. The two of them earlier translated *The Queen of Jhansi* in this series.

Rudali is a powerful short story written by Mahasweta Devi. Revolving around the life of Sanichari, a poor lowcaste village woman, it is an acidly ironic tale of exploitation and struggle, and above all, of survival. In 1992 it was adapted into a play by Usha Ganguli, a leading theatre director of Calcutta, and instantly became one of the most acclaimed productions of its time. In both incarnations of Rudali, it has been a woman who has wrought and rewrought this text which revolves around the life of a woman; and each version of Rudali can be read as an important feminist text for contemporary India. Both the short story and the play, are included in this volume, along with an introductory essay that studies how and why the versions are different and what the changes signify, leading to an analysis of how the metamorphosis of Rudali allows us to address the simultaneity and asymmetry of feminist positions in this country today. Anjum Katyal, who has translated and introduced the texts in this volume, is a writer and an editor based in Calcutta. Mahasweta Devi is one of India's foremost writers. Her powerful fiction has won her recognition in the form of the Sahitya Akademi (1979), Jnanpith (1996) and Ramon Magsaysay (1996) awards, the title of Officier del Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres (2003) and the Nonino Prize (2005) amongst several other literary honours. She was also awarded the Padmasree in 1986, for her activist work among dispossessed tribal communities.

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