FICTIONS OF THE POSTCOLONIAL CITY: READING BOMBAY-MUMBAI AS THE 'LOCUS CLASSICUS' OF MODERNITY IN INDIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT AT CANTERBURY

IN THE SUBJECT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Ipshita Ghose

September 2010

Abstract

Fictions of the Postcolonial City studies representations of the city of Bombay-Mumbai as a locus of modernity in urban novels, written by primarily Indian authors writing in English. This thesis documents the prolific literary output that has emerged from the postcolonial city in the aftermath of the Emergency in India, and focuses specifically on the forceful nature of the urban sphere which offers alternative discourses of modernity to the prevalent nationalist version. The spectral presence of a colonial past which shadows many aspects of the city's thriving present is both acknowledged and disturbed in the many works of fiction and theoretical perspectives which I examine. The prominence of Bombay-Mumbai as a hub of commerciality, culture and cosmopolitanism, its eclectic and interpolative blend of traditions and modern practices, its infinitely capacious nature which accommodates an ever-increasing influx of migrants, the provincial politics which has tainted the city's secular repute and fuelled inter-community conflicts, the gendered spaces of the city, and the visual codes which circumscribe the urban sphere, are extensively analyzed in the course of this thesis. I argue that the contemporary city of Bombay-Mumbai has achieved literary prominence in its postcolonial and global stagings of modernity and has superseded both the Indian nation and other major metropolitan centres to form the principal landscape against which this modernity is played out. The writers discussed in this study are Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai, Vikram Chandra, Suketu Mehta, Leslie Forbes, Shashi Deshpande, and Thrity Umrigar.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who supported me during the writing of this thesis, in particular, my parents, my brother, and my husband Akshay, who have unconditionally offered me their love, help and guidance during the three years of the PhD.

I am truly grateful to my supervisor Dr. Alex Padamsee for his insight and direction and for seeing me through every stage of the degree.

Professor Abdulrazak Gurnah, Professor Rod Edmond, Dr. Emma Bainbridge, Professor Donna Landry and Dr. Caroline Rooney have also been unstinting with their support and advice on numerous occasions and have made me feel like an intrinsic part of the academic community at Kent.

The assistance which I have received from the administrative staff in the English Office (Carole, Joan, Gill and Christine), the Overseas Research Scholarships Office, and The Colyer Fergusson Awards has been invaluable to my research and I sincerely thank the University of Kent for providing me with all the resources and a very conducive environment to complete my thesis.

Many thanks to my friends and housemates who have shared some of the most important moments and events in the past three years with me, especially Ewelina, Tara, Ben, Blake, and Meghna. Their constant encouragement and belief in me has been a motivating force that has shaped this thesis and created lasting relationships across cities and time.

My travels between Sheffield, London and Canterbury during the course of the PhD would not have been possible without the National Rail Services, to which I am truly indebted for making swift connections and mostly without delay.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, who always urged me to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.

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Introduction

Moving through modernity

The postcolonial city wilfully contests the historicist discourse of the nation in contemporary readings of Indian modernity. As an enduring space of power and alterity it clamours for revision and recognition, and seeks to undo the ambivalence with which it is regarded in the nationalist imagination. The evolution of the postcolonial city can be mapped not only through temporal registers of history but also through the ever shifting spatial grids which it occupies. Jim Masselos's 'effective city' which is demarcated by an individualistic appropriation of space in the city, and Ashis Nandy's 'unintended city', which sprawls beyond official administrative parameters, are merely instances of the indeterminate yet forceful nature of the modern city.[1] On the one hand, while the Indian city has been imaged and othered in prevalent nationalist narratives in relation to the idealized and sovereign space of the village, recent urban discourses demand a more diversified reading of the city and the structures which sustain it in the light of modernism, late capitalism, globalization, and other similarly extensive and dynamic forces. In the Indian context, these processes have been accelerated by the urgent claims of a rapidly developing world order appraised by Western models of urban growth and development. My thesis titled *Fictions of the Postcolonial City* seeks to examine the project of postcolonial modernity in India by locating its roots, its multiple inhabitations, and future directions in the city of Bombay-Mumbai.

In concordance with Gyan Prakash's theory of the 'urban turn', I attribute the primacy of the city in contemporary postcolonial discourses to its arising out of 'the erosion in the authority of the historicist narrative of Indian modernity and the emergence of a new politics of urban space'.[2] To demonstrate the validity of these claims, I have identified a group of urban authors writing in English, many of whom are originally from Bombay-Mumbai, or have sustained links with the city, and whose fictive reconstructions of the urban environment reflect these shifting historical, social, spatial, and political structures. To organize my study of Bombay-Mumbai between certain pivotal moments in its recent history which have been chronicled

and celebrated in two seminal works of literature, I have sought guidance from Vyjayanthi Rao's essay titled 'Risk and the City', that traces the emergence of the city as a subject of research in contemporary times.[3] The identification of a 'post-colonial moment' in world cultural history at the time of the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), marked the city's literary success amongst international audiences and indelibly etched an urban map onto the genre of Indian writing in English. Almost a quarter of a century later, Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City* (2004) recaptured the global resonances of Rushdie's fiction in spectacularly divergent ways, through a study of contemporary cinema, crime, and communal violence in the city.

Rao points out that 'both works are literary events, which perform the task of locating a particular city on the world map in two historically distinctive moments', interlacing the discourses of the postcolonial and the global to create new and radical definitions of Indian modernity. Rushdie's novel captures the 'rhythms and the flows of the city of his birth' through a brilliantly satirical account of the Emergency in India (1971-75), a period which dispelled some of the euphoria of Independence and offered an alternative to the Nehruvian vision of national modernity within the delimited space of the postcolonial city (*RAC*, p. 2). Mehta's more contemporary text is a study of the violent sectarian riots of 1992-93 (mirroring the Indian Partition riots) that created new ethnic, nomenclatural and civic cartographies in Bombay-Mumbai, and his narrative persuasively draws regional conflicts and cultures into a global arena. These two defining events or moments in the city's modern trajectory establish certain temporal parameters within which fictive representations of Bombay-Mumbai may be examined. In the period between the early 80s and the 90s, the city experienced several other historical changes, including the restructuring and eventual collapse of its dominant textile industry after the failure of a major trade union strike, and the crucial role of the nativist organization Shiv Sena in the city's politics. While the Emergency and the Bombay riots figure most centrally in my readings of selected Indian-English fiction in this thesis, these other events undoubtedly shaped the socio-historical consciousnesses of authors writing about the city at the time. With the earliest novels in this study being published in the 1980s and the most recent ones originating in the new millennium, my thesis maintains a contemporaneity in its focus and endeavour to trace the roots/routes of postcolonial modernity in India.

Postcolonial modernity and the problem of Eurocentricism

'For the moment, let us consider how we have conceived of our modernity' - Partha Chatterjee's injunction to dwell upon the complexities of formulating and articulating a uniquely Indian modernity draws attention to the history of colonialism which is determinedly intertwined with such an endeavour.[4] The twin projects of nationalism and nation-building which occupied the public imaginary for the most part of the twentieth century, were sites of contestation for a distinctive and non-mimetic modernity that was continuously frustrated by the expansive rhetoric of the modern West. The spectral presence of Europe which shadows most dominant accounts of modernity, is both acknowledged and disturbed by postcolonial scholars like Dipesh Chakrabarty, who observes that 'as far as the academic discourse of history is concerned, "Europe" remains the sovereign theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call "Indian", "Chinese", "Kenyan", and so on'.[5] Reading Indian modernity through a specifically urban register, Rajeev Patke relationally notes, that 'any interpretative narrative of Bombay as the urban locus of India's troubled progress into modernity must find itself inextricably linked to the progress of modernity in Europe'.[6] Both Chakrabarty's text and Patke's essay illustrate a dual consciousness which forms the basis of a dialectical and asymmetrical relationship between Europe and India. Although their writings particularize the postcolonial experience to a great extent, we can predictably assume that the theories of nationhood, nationalism, history, modernity and metropolitanism in the Indian context must be characterized, keeping the prevalent European definitions of the same in mind, and establishing a comparative and often unequal association between the two.

Consigned to the role of 'perpetual consumers' of modern processes and institutional forms offered by the West, the postcolonial nation has striven to make heard its specific histories, indigenous modes of production and new subjectivities through both its theoretical and literary catalogues.[7] The instances and considerations of modernity that are articulated in the thesis, are loosely categorized in this introduction within three broad pathways offered to us by Anthony Giddens, namely the institutional, aesthetic, and reflexive forms of modernity and their manifestations within the space of the city.[8] While the first two categories are fairly self-explanatory

and are elaborated upon in later sections of the introduction, reflexive modernity refers to the consciousness of the individual as a purposeful and decision-making agent. The idea of a modern sensibility as being imperative to the workings of a larger socio-political community is reiterated by several scholars like Dipankar Gupta, who positions 'intersubjectivity' and the relations between people as being more centrally implicated in the discourse of Indian modernity when compared to the nation's material and technological indices.[9] Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty brings to the fore the ethical and humane dimensions of modernity, which often elide political theories and institutional conceptions of the nation's development.[10] Explorations of self-reflexivity and agency in the contemporary urban sphere can be found in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 of this thesis, which deal with issues of migrancy, mobility, identity constitution and female intervention. The postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai is the primary landscape that enables the staging and performance of individual subjectivities, and creates a vast spectrum of heterogeneous experiences which resist and displace any totalizing narrative of modernity.

A traditional reading of modernity

It has been rather perceptively observed that 'modernity is easy to inhabit but difficult to define' (*HOM*, xix). While this thesis outlines several habitations of modernity within the urban domain (domestic, social, cultural, visual), it is unable to demarcate the parameters or the scope of such a project. As a theoretical concept and a lived reality, the phenomenon of postcolonial modernity in India is both unprecedented and uncontainable, and perhaps the only defining/limiting factor in my study is its location within the city of Bombay-Mumbai. While I shortly discuss my reasons for centring this particular city in my investigation, it bears upon me to outline some of the more popular, indigenous conceptualizations of modernity that have occupied the national imaginary. The paradoxes of independent India have most frequently been mapped according to a binary understanding of modernity and its stalwart other, tradition. To a large extent, this is a result of the nation's long and violent struggle against colonialism and its civilizing missions, which were enforced through a progressive Westernization of local institutions and attitudes. The urgent need to preserve Indian culture from colonial contamination led to the demarcation and sanctification of certain sites such as the 'home', which figured in nationalist

discourses as a traditional and inviolable space that engaged selectively with an external modernity.[11] The cultivation of familial relations, aesthetic preferences, and linguistic choices within this 'homely' space, has in the past, constituted a certain form of Indian tradition which was opposed to a colonially influenced modernity.

Similarly, the ligature of 'tradition' and 'Indian culture' has also been crucial in defining both colonial and postcolonial modernities, since 'the mobilization of "Indian Culture" was as crucial to the West's construction of its identity in contrast to the Oriental Other, as it was to the reconstructed Orient's attempts to define itself'.[12] The embodiment of Indian culture and tradition in the figuration of woman - as mother, daughter, and beloved - has also contributed significantly to a dichotomous theorization of a shifting, dynamic modernism in relation to a contained and consistent traditionalism. While several postcolonial theorists, feminists and historians have struggled to dismantle the easy binaries that categorical definitions of modernity have created, an interesting perspective is offered to us by social historian Gyanendra Pandey, who locates the discourse of violence as being constitutive of both our modernity and our traditions.[13] This emergence of modernity with violence is demonstrated in Chapter 3 in my reading of sectarian violence in Bombay-Mumbai which underwrites the modern process of identity constitution in an outwardly secular nation, and again in Chapter 5, which examines the unyielding mythological and traditional narratives that circumscribe women in contemporary Indian society. The seemingly frictional yet interpolative sites of modernity and its obverse, tradition, are the focus of Chapter 1 as well which explores the domestic and familial contexts within which they are staged.

Nationalism and the notion of the nation

On the other hand, the staging of institutional forms of modernity as theorized by Giddens was perhaps most prominent in elite nationalist agendas which conceived of and realized the idea of India in the wake of colonialism. Critical accounts mention that 'in India, nationalism was a result of the forces of modernity as well as a reaction to them' and Sunil Khilnani observes how despite its historic traditionalism and grand antiquity, the creation of the independent nation was shaped by the fundamental ideas and agencies of Western modernity – namely, industrialization and economic development, democracy, secularism, nationalism and the nation-state (*IM*,

p. 135).[14] This version of modernity was achieved under an elite leadership, exposed to or educated in the West, who appropriated their own imaginings of a postcolonial state and strategies for its administration through both European and native calendars.

I deliberately use the term 'imaginings' to draw into my definition of the nation an idea which was introduced by European historians in the 1980s and that subsequently found mention in the works of several Indian writers and critics. Benedict Anderson's influential text *Imagined Communities* (1983) provided a conceptual rubric for thinking through the origin and spread of nationalism in Europe, as he demonstrated that nations were imagined into existence, rather than being the natural outcome of determinate social conditions, and were sustained by organized structures such as 'print capitalism'.[15] The idea of the nation as a political construct, an invention, was thus in the process of being established during the early period of writers like Salman Rushdie, and finds expression in *Midnight's Children* (1981) and in his seminal collection of essays, *Imaginary Homelands* (1992). In what may be seen as an echo of Anderson's theory of the abstract nature of nations and community formation, Rushdie describes India as 'a nation which had never previously existed' and was created by a 'phenomenal collective will', giving rise to a 'new myth', a 'collective fiction' and a 'mass fantasy'. In an interview shortly after the publication of *Midnight's Children*, he attributes the creation of this myth to complicity between the colonizers and the colonized – '…its [India's] existence as a political entity was a fiction invented by the British in 1947. Even the British had never ruled over more than 60 per cent of India. But it was a dream that everyone agreed to dream. And now I think there is actually a country called India'.[16]

By drawing attention to the fraught relationship between the nation as an imagined community and the actual political formation of the nation-state, Rushdie articulates the tension which underlies the theorization of postcolonial modernity in India. This has been expressed in the recent works of several postcolonial scholars like Rumina Sethi, who argues that 'although we have a political nation-state, the nation itself is yet to be born' and in Aijaz Ahmad's claims of the Indian nation being a 'terrain of struggle' which contesting forces 'attempt to endow...with specific meanings and attributes'.[17] One infers from their studies that the nation cannot be

ascribed a definitive set of characteristics or qualities, as it is continuously being re-imagined and described in various calendars. In my study of contemporary literary narratives which outline and complicate the idea of the Indian nation/nation-state, it is necessary to acknowledge the inextricable connection between nationalism and print-capitalism as posited by Anderson, which brings into focus the representative currency of certain languages in enunciating national concerns to a global audience. While I shortly discuss the ambiguous nature of English as a medium of writing in India and cite its relevance in contemporary urban contexts, it may be asserted here, that the novel is perhaps the most enabling and capacious literary form to negotiate nationalist tensions and sentiments. As a discursive textual space which adequately captures the public-private binary, the nexus between reality and imagination, and the registers of privilege and marginality which characterize the postcolonial nation, the novel is seen as being a forceful site of contestation for the pluralistic constructions of India and other emergent socio-political forms such as the modern city.

The official or dominant versions of Indian historiography, which chronicled the birth of a unified India and the origins of a distinctively postcolonial modernity, have been revisited through several registers that interrogate the representational value and coherence of the narratives they produced. A few major factors may be identified as directly contributing to India's staggering development in her early postcolonial phases and which collectively served as markers of her modernity at the time. The autonomous nation was under the governance of leaders whose inexperience, ignorance and differing political visions were severely retarding for its upward movement in the global economy, as they had not contended with India's unstable and hierarchical past, not to mention the pressing concerns of poverty, illiteracy and cultural diversity. This uncertain governance was compounded by the nation's relative disadvantage with regard to other Western economies which had already strengthened their position as industrialized and globalized societies. The representational strategies of the ruling government were also questioned by discerning members of the body politic, who drew attention to the elision and exclusion of many marginalized social groups in the articulation of a modern, pan-Indian narrative. Finally, and rather problematically, some vestiges of the colonial tradition were still embedded in the psyche of the people according to this argument and impeded the development of reflexive forms of modernity, which have

previously been identified as being equally important as material, technological or cultural indices of the nation's progress.

Indira Gandhi's Emergency

The ideological unity of the postcolonial state was severely threatened by these unanticipated contingencies, which culminated during the fateful period of the Emergency (1975-77) and further unravelled the garb of modernity that had been fashioned around the principles of social democracy at the time of Independence. The contradictions of Indira Gandhi's twenty-one month period of state-rule were centred within the discourse of Indian institutional modernity; while on the one hand, the flagrant breach of democracy through the suspension of civil rights and liberties was considered the very antithesis of modernity, on the other, the undemocratic welfare reforms and economic policies introduced by the government under Indira Gandhi were critical in reviving the country's failing economy, and have alternatively been viewed as necessary corrective, modern measures. This contentious historical period has been described in both theoretical and literary accounts through a metaphoric fracturing of the diseased body politic. Narratives of the Emergency as being 'a symptom of a virtually terminal illness afflicting the Indian state' or alternatively, as an 'ailment' which is a pathology of its own modernity are prolific in contemporary records of Indian history (OM, HOM, p. xxii). Elleke Boehmer goes on to mention that 'when national histories are revealed as stochastic, divided, painful, where origins are obscure, the body, too, is exposed as fissured, reduced'.[18] With the breakdown of democratic structures in India during this historical period, the notion of the nation became as mutable and fragmented as the symbolic bodies which represented it.[19] Chapter 1 recognizes Vyjayanthi Rao's 'postcolonial moment' as being instituted in the literatures that emerged shortly after this violent period of Indian history, and employs a narrative of schisms to trace the city of Bombay-Mumbai as a focal and emergent space that was brought to prominence during the Emergency.

In defence of the fragment

Clearly then, we are made aware of the fragility that underlined the elitist project of nation-building in India and the vast fissures which emerged in the totalizing

narrative of Indian history. In recent years, the endeavour to articulate 'alternative modernities' within dominant historical accounts of Indian modernity, has been expressed through 'a concern with the forms of difference and discrepancy' which arise in its various stagings or representations and indicate a 'more complex genealogy of the modern'.[20] As Bhabha's injunction to 'Only Historicize' seeks to uncover the hidden histories of the nation's subaltern subjects, we are reminded that the secular capitalist modernity achieved by India 'fail(ed) to represent the passions and perversities of those modernities that have a pre- or post-colonial genealogy' (HOM, p.xi). Similarly, the power of the 'fragmentary and the episodic' is evoked by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his endeavour to acknowledge alternative visions of modern political agency which emerged from the disempowered and neglected sections of Indian society (HOM, p. xii). The condition of 'dominance without hegemony', which has afflicted the modern postcolonial state since its inception, is also emphasized by Partha Chatterjee, who describes the 'numerous fragmented resistances to the normalizing project' of Indian modernity in his seminal text The Nation and its Fragments (1993).[21]

While the attempt to privilege the 'fragment' in the form of marginal groups based on caste, class and gender hierarchies, has been a consistent drive on the part of the Subaltern Studies group, more recent instances of postcolonial fracture have taken the ominous shape of sectarian strife between different communities which constitute the body-politic.[22] The revival of Hindu fundamentalism in the form of religious contestations over land in Ayodhya and bodies in Bombay-Mumbai during the communal riots of 1992-93, has cleaved the national narrative further as the fragment becomes synonymous with identitarian tensions. In this thesis, the persistent concerns of national identification and affiliation appear to be compellingly related to the politics of space, which are crucial in demonstrating the fierce and binding attachments that are created by conceivable physical sites such as the modern city, a fragment of the more elusive Indian nation-state. Raymond William observes with the regard to the concept-metaphor of the nation:

> Nation as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are born into
> relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary
> and 'placeable' bonding is of quite fundamental and natural importance.

Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial.[23]

It is this natural, 'placeable' bonding that I wish to investigate further, the idea that such a bonding in contemporary times is more localized, and in the Indian context, located primarily within the space of the postcolonial city. The city develops place-affinity amongst its inhabitants in a way which the nation can only impose and it is more closely associated with Timothy Brennan's idea of the '*natio*' as 'a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging (*NLF*, p. 45). In the wake of the Emergency during which dominant state structures were threatened, the city of Bombay-Mumbai came to prominence as an alternative and pluralistic arena of postcolonial modernity, which offered new visions and opportunities of reflexivity, identity formation, growth and commerciality.

Bombay-Mumbai and the staging of postcolonial modernity

The crucial question that arises at this juncture is – 'why Bombay?' As I briefly indicated in the abstract to this thesis, Indian cities have been the most powerful and enduring expressions of the nation's development. Consistent with the metaphor of performativity which runs through the introduction, cities in India have figured in colonial, nationalist and postcolonial discourses as a representative stage for the many faces of Indian modernity. Sunil Khilnani has described them as 'symbols of the uneven, hectic and contradictory character of the nation's modern life' which continuously resist narratives of homogeneity and integration (*IOI*, p. 11). It has also been noted that 'the experience of the city renders discourse into debris', thereby drawing attention to the mutable, fragmentary, periodic and discontinuous nature of its modern trajectories.[24] It may be argued that the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) which was the imperial capital of the British Raj until 1911, was an equally vibrant and thriving mercantile centre in the nineteenth century, and has a rich and well documented literary, nationalist and revolutionary heritage. Many eminent postcolonial scholars and writers (Dipesh Chakrabarty, Amitav Ghosh, Partha Chatterjee, Ashis Nandy, amongst others) are native to the contemporary city of Kolkata and situate their experiences of modernity within the 'bajaars', 'golis' and hubs of 'adda' that create urban sites for sociality, literary thought, secular orality, and community culture. Similarly, Lutyens's Delhi, the other prominent centre of imperial

control, might also be considered as a contesting space of Indian modernity on account of its vast administrative structures, its planned axial layout, and the palimpsestic layering of history and culture which even today gives the city a curiously modern yet antiquated character. How then does Bombay-Mumbai figure centrally in the rhetoric of postcolonial modernity in India, when it is positioned against such stalwart sites of urbanism that have prevailed forcefully in the annals of Indian history?

As has been previously mentioned (p. 2), the evolutionary history of Bombay-Mumbai cannot be isolated from the history of the nation which is, in turn, intimately connected to a European master narrative. As a constitutive yet subordinate and relatively ahistorical appendage of the British colonies, the forms and trajectories of modernity in India nonetheless permeated and compromised the colonizer's history (*QOM*, p. xiii). The city of Bombay played an elemental role in facilitating the process of colonial enterprise by serving as a naval entry-point on the west coast into its geographical hinterland (Maharashtra) and also its commercial hinterland (Gujarat). As Rajeev Patke suggests, the city was the focal point of intersection between empire and colony and had begun creating a legacy for itself during the colonial period, which was further consolidated after the nation's independence. Meera Kosambi's research on the colonial city provides a detailed account of the city-mainland relationship, which was constantly redefined by Bombay's progressive commercialization and upstaging of other imperial administrative centres such as Calcutta and Poona. Her essay on 'British Bombay and Marathi Mumbai' is particularly intriguing in its identification of the city's geographical positioning as one of both insularity (as a reclaimed archipelago) and proximity (to the trading centre of Surat), a feature which is significant in establishing the ambivalent relationship it shared with the rest of the country and distinguishing it from other urban sites.[25] With the development of rail and oceanic connections and its monopoly in the field of cotton and textile industries, Bombay's reputation and accessibility as the new commercial capital of India was founded under British rule and steadily gained ground over the years.

Sociological reports on urban patterns in the city do not suggest in any way that it was a closed society or inhospitable to outsiders; in fact, as a thriving port of colonial

trade, it attracted a huge influx of migrants from neighbouring states, who eventually settled down in the city and contributed towards its cosmopolitan and secular environment. Bombay has been described as a 'parasitic exploiter' in Kosambi's analysis of migratory trends in the city, and as a 'bloodsucker lizard' in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), both of which gesture towards its compulsive acquisitiveness in supplementing the existing work force from the outside.[26] And yet, Bombay remained distinct from other Indian cities with its demanding trade ethic and overt commodification, its 'big-city' aura and attractiveness as a promised land of employment and opportunity, its heterogeneous population which presented a wider spectrum of linguistic, racial and religious diversity than any other major metropolis, its miscellany of architectural styles, and the influences of Western modernity which governed many aspects of its public life under the colonial empire. To use another Rushidian idiom that very evocatively captures this characteristic of integrated-isolation which was the city's alone - 'In Bombay, too, all-India met what-was-not-India...what was beautiful in Bombay was that it belonged to nobody and to all.[27]

After Independence, the Nehruvian nationalist dreams of a modern city which was both a historical continuum and a discrete site of development were realized in Bombay, as the city consolidated its colonial status as a financial stronghold in India. Unfettered by bureaucratic concerns of governance which plagued the country's capital, New Delhi, and home to a burgeoning group of entrepreneurs and capitalists, who propelled the indigenous economy forward with their innovativeness, flexibility and dynamism, moving ahead of their peers in Calcutta, Bombay flourished in its early postcolonial phases to become a productive and profitable hub of commerciality. Claude Markovits demonstrates in his comparative report on the city's growth as a business centre during the colonial and early postcolonial period that 'most of the "firsts" in the history of Indian finance and large scale industry originated in Bombay'.[28] While his argument has a national focus and allows Bombay to emerge as a leading centre in the integration of the domestic markets, Nigel Harris illustrates the utopian opportunities and the realistic problems that faced the city's assimilation into international markets in his seminal essay titled 'Bombay in the Global Economy'.[29] During the periods catalogued in both their studies, the city gained pre-eminence within India and became symbolic of its new modernity while surpassing other prominent metropolitan hubs, as hierarchically, its economic

development entered a comparative framework with other global cities across the world.

As a 'commercial display window' into the nation's modern repositories, Bombay has often been described as an intensely visual space that embeds itself in pan-Indian and international imaginaries through its cinematic image – perhaps the most dominant form of urban culture, or in Giddens' terminology, of aesthetic modernity in India.[30] In many instances the city's spectacular skyline and wealthy southern enclaves form the backdrop of filmic action, contributing towards the aura of glamour and affluence with which Bombay is associated. Alternatively, migrant and subaltern experiences are also privileged in post-Independence cinema, which maps the paradoxes of the modern city as a space of promise, penury, cosmopolitanism and communal tension, in a linguistic form (Bambaiyya Hindi) that adequately embodies a pluralistic society. While early films such as *Awaara* (1951) and *Shri* 420 (1955) portrayed the postcolonial anxiety that besieged migrants in the modern city who were exposed to its grand, secular opportunities and cripplingly exploitative structures, contemporary classics such as *Bombay* (1995) and *Satya* (1998) reflect the modern urban climate as being violent, fissured and on the brink of disintegration.

Bombay cinema is a compelling influence on literatures of the city, and Priyamvada Gopal observes the transference of major themes from the scopic to the textual in her chapter titled 'Bombay and the Novel'. Commenting upon the city's tenuous balance between secularity and sectarianism in the aftermath of Independence as chronicled by its cinema, she writes, that 'the modern city enabled encounters across classes, castes, communities, and genders in hitherto unprecedented ways that gestured towards, without necessarily realizing, egalitarian possibilities'. Gopal also describes the visual city as being particularly interesting for Anglophone novelists examining questions of nation and Indianness, as 'at once cosmopolitan and parochial, it appeared to seek, like their own work, to assimilate the "outside" while laying claim to a home "inside" the nation'.[31] The quality of integrated-isolation which I argue is unique to the city of Bombay-Mumbai, is reiterated here by Gopal, and contributes to my ongoing discussion of the postcolonial city as creating crucial links between local politics and global processes. Chapter 5 studies the interconnected discourses of literature, visuality and urbanism

through dominant European models of the same, while discussing the emergent cultural and aesthetic forms that have sustained the idea of Bombay-Mumbai as a locus of modernity in postcolonial times.

Over the past five decades, the expansion of the city has been achieved through the establishment of vast networks and flows of capital, goods, ideas and people, which have further created a 'wedge' between the space of the nation and that of the city. In Appadurai and Holston's theorization of this phenomenon, 'cities have a different relationship to global processes than the visions and policies of their nation-states may admit or endorse', and while this does not obliterate the salience of the nation-state, it sets up a 'politics of a different sorts' and radically negotiates the meaning of citizenships and identities within the urban environment.[32] In the case of Bombay-Mumbai, this was evinced during the riots of 1992-93 which created parochial and xenophobic attitudes within the city, as the capacity of a national citizenship to encapsulate all other loyalties was overridden by local communal conflicts. At the same time, the geographical layout of Bombay has undergone massive restructuring with each phase of urban change – namely, industrialization, capitalism, globalization, mass migration, population explosion, and political insurrections – creating more partitions between the social and spatial landscapes within the city. While these historical phases of change cannot be sequentially located on account of their overlapping and often interchangeable nature, it can definitely be said that 'today, it is difficult to sustain the paradigmatic notion of modern cities as unified formations, securely located within their national borders, with clearly legible politics and society'.[33] I now explore the sprawling topography of the city and its relation to structures and spaces both adjacent to and contained within it, as the spatial politics of Bombay-Mumbai is crucial to the framing of Indian modernity in its literary contexts, as explored in this thesis.

Bombay-Mumbai: between the village and the slum

The socio-evolutionary model within which Indian cities are located is essentially linear, and assumes the city to succeed a rural settlement form. This assumed superseding of the rural by the urban has in some instances been disproved, as in the case of the archaeological remains of the Indus Valley civilization, which revealed that urban centres did exist in the Punjab and Sindh regions of ancient India at a time

when the primary conceptual framework for a settlement was a rural one. The dominant discourse however tilts in favour of the notion that cities are a much more recent development and attributes much of their growth and recognition to the country's colonial heritage, during which presidency towns and colonial cities emerged. The literary evolution of cities from the 1930s until the present time can also be mapped along this linear model to trace the city's dialogic relationship with both the village and the nation-state, from which it emerged to become an autonomous, self-defining space. It has been commonly acknowledged by both writers and critics of Indian literature in English, that the city as described in the early stages of this genre was naturally implicated within a rural-urban binary, with associations of tradition, simplicity, peace and fraternity in the village being opposed to the corruption, violence and individualism which were embedded in the urban social fabric. In this dichotomous structure, the village symbolized a pre-urban society in which the evident difference in physical landscape, economic resources, occupational engagements and social conventions suggested a more 'traditional' form of settlement which was perceived as being diametrically opposite to the modern codes that informed life in the city. Roshan G. Shahani describes this oppositional model which set the tone of early Indian-English novels such as Mulk Raj Anand's *The Untouchable* (1935), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), and Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in the Sieve* (1954).[34]

While debating the context of the 'Indian City', Ranjani Mazumdar observes that in the early narratives of the urban, the 'city constantly acknowledges its rural other', and this is a feature which distinguishes South Asian cities from their Western counterparts.[35] The presence of a large countryside adjacent to most urban centres was very often crucial to their development, as migratory trends reveal that a majority of the labour force in the cities was supplemented by the population from their surrounding villages. The reactionary political climate of the 70s and the 80s saw a dramatic shift in the dialectical relationship between city and village, and Bombay inscribed itself in the literary registers of the time as a self-defining representative space. M. Madhava Prasad extends this observation to the cinematic city by noting that the conventional confrontation of the village and the city in post-Independence cinema saw a sudden change in the 1970s when, 'with the rupturing of the national consensus, the city suddenly re-entered the screen as a self-sufficient space for the

staging of epic conflicts and allegorical narratives, with the village figuring increasingly as no more than a memory fragment, a psychic residue, or as an outside element that threw the otherwise overpowering presence of urban life into some sort of perspective'.[36] This is not to suggest that the conflicted relationship between the city and the countryside was entirely dismissed, but that the urban sphere assumed a centrality of narrative while relegating the rural into the background or engaging with it in new and complex ways. Rushdie's Bom-bom-Bombay in *Midnight's Children* (1981) emphasizes the city as a climactic space of narrative action while its oppositional other takes the form of either the idyllic space of pastoral Kashmir or the slums and ghettos which represent rural community life in the heart of the city. The unnamed island-city by the sea in *A Fine Balance* (1995) by Rohinton Mistry, which fictionalizes the political events of the 1970s more ostensibly occupies the central narrative space in the novel, although in this instance as well there is the presence of both an Arcadian hill-station and a traditional, caste-striated rural settlement.

The shift of the rural from the peripheries of urban centres into the labyrinthine structures of the city itself has been analyzed at great length by leading critical theorist Ashis Nandy in his essay 'The City of the Mind', in which he describes the parasitic encroachment of slum settlements within cities like Bombay-Mumbai as a complex restructuring of the urban-rural divide. According to Nandy, 'the slum mimics the village but its ambition is never to be a village. Its ambition is to conjoin the villager's concept of the city with the city's concept of the village.' The pervasive nature of slum settlements in cities like Bombay-Mumbai has changed the way cities are inscribed on their literary registers; as Nandy observes, they are defined by and are 'shadows of their own slums'.[37] This is most evident in contemporary novels of the city which attempt to represent subaltern experiences by locating their narratives in the cities' slums and ghettos. Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram* (2003) unfolds in a slum colony in a fishing settlement in southern Bombay, while the protagonists of Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* (2006) engage in a thrilling chase across the shanty-towns within the city. In Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (2004), the communal tensions between conflicting ethnic groups result in uprisings within the slum, realizing Nandy's vision of the peripheral anti-city bringing itself to the foreground in the face of riots.

Archives of urban modernity

The sprawling, 'unintended' city of Bombay-Mumbai which is characterized by its shifting landscapes and multiform structure has been a subject of much contemporary research in recent years that details its social and political life with poignancy and acuity. Perhaps the most enduring and richly crafted biography of the city may be found in historian Gillian Tindall's *City of Gold: A Biography of Bombay* (1982), which evokes the modern city as an archaeological landscape that twines centuries of history and culture together in a palimpsestic weave. More recently, the polyphonic voices of the city are reflected in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner's two-volume collection of essays titled *Bombay: A Metaphor of Modern India* (1995) and *Bombay: A Mosaic of Modern Culture* (1997), while a later volume titled *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition* (2003), with significant contributions from Jim Masselos, observes the renaming of the city to be a point of departure while visiting dominant themes of urban life. Rashmi Varma's compelling research on the modern city of Bombay-Mumbai is catalogued in her two expansive essays, 'Provincializing the Global City: From Bombay to Mumbai' (2004) and 'Uncivil Lines: Engendering Citizenship in the Postcolonial City' (1998), while her *The Postcolonial City and its Subjects: London, Nairobi, Bombay* (2010) studies Bombay-Mumbai within a global trajectory of world cities and employs postcolonial cultures, fictions and identities to create a representational and comparative history of the modern city. Located amongst a vast archive of contemporary studies on Bombay-Mumbai, these are some of the seminal texts that permeate my thesis *Fictions of the Postcolonial City*, which employs a primarily literary approach to revisit some of the significant events and themes in the city's recent history.

As a relatively unexplored terrain in studies of Indian-English literature, the city has until recently been shadowed by the dominant site of the nation-state, which functions as an organizing and all-encompassing metaphor in Indian fiction. My thesis disturbs the idea of the nation which is sustained and interrogated most conspicuously by the Indian-English novel, and posits the postcolonial city as a paradigmatic location within which the forces and directions of Indian modernity are played out. In her essay 'Polyphonous Voices in the City', Roshan G. Shahani's observation that 'the last couple of decades have produced important city-centred

writing, much of it set in metropolitan cities like Bombay', draws attention to post-Emergency trends in Indian writing in English, which resist the homogenizing power of the nation-state and privilege alternative spaces of non-conformity and difference that are governed by the forces of ethnic strife, fundamentalism, globalization and mass migrations (*PVC*, p. 100). Priyamavada Gopal's book chapter 'Bombay and the Novel', in her monograph *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History and Narration* (2009), is similarly validating of the city's pre-eminence in postcolonial literary registers, as 'English continues to reign as the language of commerce and professional advancement' and is suitably adaptable and globally receptive to communicate the microcosmic concerns that occupy Indian novelists (*BAAN*, p. 118). Shahani's and Gopal's texts are perhaps closest in form and intent to my own work, and enunciate the pressing claims of the city and its visibilization in contemporary literature through the phenomenon that Gyan Prakash has provocatively called 'the urban turn'.

My thesis also illustrates the pervasive visual discourse within which the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai is inscribed, thereby approaching the dynamic field of Bollywood film studies from a literary perspective. As the cinematic capital of India, Bombay's repute as film-city and an epicentre of contemporary cultural modernity has been extensively documented by Ranjani Mazumdar in her doctoral dissertation titled *Urban Allegories: The City in Bombay Cinema, 1970-2000* (2001), which crucially parallels my own discussions of the city as a central textual landscape. Lalitha Gopalan's succinct and provocative account of the modern classic film *Bombay* (1995) in her eponymous book, also chronicles the city and the film as critical spaces which articulate the experiences of chaos and conflict. Another influential text that foregrounds the city through analyses of its cinema is *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience (2004)*, which presents a wide range of essays analyzing Indian modernity as arising out of the interface between Bombay cinema, globalization and urban life. One observes from these urban studies that while the socio-political, economic and cultural indices of development in Bombay-Mumbai have been extensively documented in its many archives, and much emphasis has been laid on its global status in the wake of the liberalization of the Indian economy, there is a glaring lack of material on the prolific fictional output generated over the

past three decades that has chronicled the city in its various moments and stages of modernity, and which my study addresses.

Trends in Indian Writing in English

The language of this modernity is undoubtedly contentious, as is the status and reception of such literature, both within the country and abroad. As reflexive or intellectual forms of modernity, the vast majority of the texts interrogated in this thesis either belong to, or are closely associated with the thriving category of Indian-English literature which emerges from older concatenations of caste, class, religion, myth, gender, colonialism, nationalism and local histories while also highlighting the modern pathways and trajectories that these fields have taken in recent years. As the language of the colonizer, of privilege and of social mobility in India, English during the pre-liberalization period was invariably placed in a dualistic battle with vernacular languages, with the latter wielding an aura of locality and authenticity which the former desperately sought to achieve. The 'anxiety of Indianness' articulated in an early essay by Meenakshi Mukherjee, was manifested in the works of this older generation of writers (mainly novelists) who employed pan-Indian themes such as 'the national movement, partition of the country, the clash between tradition and modernity, faith and rationality or similar time-worn clichés of east-west confrontation', to relativise the colonial authority of the English language and create a distinctive national space/identity through literature.[38] The novel as the dominant literary form at the time was used as a discursive site to explore the challenges and the competencies of writing in English, and it provided a vast narrative space fully and complexly to interrogate national concerns and perpetuate the idea of a composite India. The works of early writers as varied as G.V. Desani and R.K. Narayan have been extensively documented by critics such as Srinivas Aravamudan and Lakshmi Holstrom and illustrate the immense adaptability of the English language to capture the extravaganza and simple ingenuity of their literary visions.[39] Desani, in particular, has been noted to have profoundly influenced the writings of Salman Rushdie, whose fundamentally urban novels form the starting point of my study. The relation of the era of Emergency to Bombay in his *Midnight's Children* (1981) and the global critical reception of the novel which is part of the marketing success of Bombay as a site of postcolonial modernity, are very relevant to the basic

premise of this thesis which recognizes an 'urban turn' in contemporary Indian-English writings.

In his persuasive essay titled 'After Midnight', Jon Mee writes that 'the 1980s witnessed a second coming for the Indian novel in English. Its messiah seems to have been Salman Rushdie'.[40] The sudden visibility of Indo-English fiction during the 80s has been attributed in several critical accounts to the international success received by Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* after being awarded the Booker Prize in 1981 and the polemical forms of literary imagination that he brought to Indian writing. The strong political allusions to the midnight moment of Independence and to the darkest hour that heralded the period of Emergency in India (1975-77) are chronicled in playful and provocative ways in the novel, which outlines an aesthetic of rupture in the national narrative that had been celebrated and upheld in works of fiction until that point. The theme of corporeal disintegration which pervades *Midnight's Children* is an allegory of the fragmented nation-state that prevailed in the aftermath of the Indira Gandhi's autocracy, and subversively attacks the concept of a unified India. The city is imagined as a space of pluralism and secular tolerance which provides an alternative cohering narrative to the dissolving macro-structures in the wake of the Emergency, and indicates the beginning of a rift between the representative value of the national and the urban, that was mirrored in other novels written at the time.

Rushdie was one of the forerunners of the group of 'contemporary' or 'modern' Indian novelists, who explored the emergent role of the city post-Emergency by focusing on Bombay-Mumbai as a primary landscape in their works. While this was achieved in the first instance by closely interweaving personal narratives and the city's political history, the influences of Bombay's multilingual culture can also be seen in the peculiarities of language employed by some of these authors. Meditating upon the emergence of new and hybrid forms of English during the 1980s, John Mee notes, that 'most often they [contemporary novelists] bring different languages into cosmic collision, testing the limits between them, celebrating India's linguistic diversity, and taking over the English language to meet the requirements of an Indian context' (*JM*, p. 320). Language may be studied as a node of resistance in the works of several modern Indian writers, and Rushdie's 'chutnification' of the English

language in his Bombay novels has laid precedent to others adopting similarly disruptive linguistic strategies in their writings. One notices this particularly in Vikram Chandra's latest novel *Sacred Games* (2006), which is peppered with local words and idioms to communicate the brash and pedestrian language of Bombay's underworld. In a slightly different example, Anita Desai, an author of Indo-Germanic heritage, also uses an unusually stilted combination of English and German in her novel *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), to convey the sense of displacement and rupture experienced by Jewish migrants at the time of the Second World War. In each of these cases, we observe the urgent need to displace, revise and contaminate the formal linguistic structures which circumscribe literary expressions of Indian modernity by authors writing in English.

With the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s, the infusion of global cultures and influences into the city made it a seminal space of integration, innovativeness, interest and inquiry, and displaced the fractured trope of the nation-state from its position of centrality in Indian-English writing. As the commercial capital of India, Bombay-Mumbai's receptivity to the monumental changes brought about by the opening up of its economy is reflected in narratives of the city at the time, which slowly yet steadily incorporated English within their indigenous linguistic mixtures, accepting it as one of the foremost languages of urbanity and literary expression. In a later essay describing the visible ascendency of English in urban India, Meenakshi Mukherjee notes that 'the reconfiguration of the ground realities in politics, in technology, in demography, and above all economics that happened during this time had far reaching consequences in language use. The electronic revolution spread beyond the developed countries encompassing almost the entire globe and English became the vehicle of communication in this new world of connectivity and access to information'.[41] In this contemporary world order, Bombay-Mumbai continued to flourish as a space of postcolonial eminence and achieved international recognition through both its financial and literary registers. The growth of urban fiction from India which also crucially brought the postcolonial city to the fore was fuelled by international marketing and publicity and the presence of a rapidly increasing metropolitan readership in India, a large fraction of which belonged to Bombay-Mumbai.

Diasporic fiction and Bombay-Mumbai between worlds

The cultures of mobility and flow which have prevailed in urban India since the mid 90s, have largely implicated contemporary Indian writing in English within a diasporic discourse, where questions of migration, exile, nostalgia, rootlessness, home, belonging, identity, language and cultural hybridization assume immense significance, both in the lived experiences of expatriate writers and in their thematic handling of these subjects. Memory and remembering are critical to the project of diasporic writing, as they combat dislocation and alienation by building drawbridges between the country of one's exile and the primal home. Cities also function as sites which embody memories of the past that can be recalled in the future, as is observed in my reading of the flaneur/flaneuse, an urban figure that excavates the material city and retrieves it through acts of remembering. While the writers in this thesis who belong to the Indian diaspora are connected to each other by their shared emigrant status and the cross-cultural anxieties and influences which often manifest themselves in their literary endeavours, they are separated by a variety of specifics such as gender, location, political affiliations, writing style and publication fame. As Susheila Nasta perceptively notes, 'whilst the unencumbered figure of the "migrant" has clearly become a fashionable trope in metropolitan postmodern and postcolonial literary studies – a cultural traveller who can easily access and traverse across the national, political and ethnic boundaries of the new millennium – not all literary migrants are in the same boat'.[42]

This is also evident from the similarly frictional yet varying relationships that diasporic authors share with the Western world wherein they are domiciled and which determines to a great extent their intimacy with a distant 'homeland'. In the introduction to his book *Away: The Indian Writer as an Expatriate* (2004), Amitava Kumar notes that 'Indian writers through their writing, repeatedly make their way back to the Indian subcontinent'. This thesis demonstrates the primacy of the postcolonial city in narratives of return and the persistent ways that it manifests itself in the diasporic imaginary.[43] While for novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Europe functioned as a 'springboard' for literary excursions into the Indian subcontinent, her posthumously published novel *Bombay Tiger* (2008) emphasises the city as a pivotal site for negotiating existential concerns of autonomy and personal identity.[44] For

Salman Rushdie, the search for an Indian interiority from the embodied position of 'Western outsider' is constructively resolved by straddling both cultures and through an exploration of the tropes of cultural translation and hybridity. In his fiction, the urban capitals of the West function as necessary counterpoints to modern Indian cities like Bombay-Mumbai, which provides a fertile backdrop for many of his novels. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is a compelling example of the conjunction of the sites of urban modernity, as the narrative reverses the colonial journey into the heart of the capital city of London and examines the displacing effect it has on its Indian migrant-protagonists.

As Rushdie illustrates through the incendiary reversal of centre (metropole) and periphery (postcolonial metropolitan city), the geographical and symbolic resonances of these two positions for diasporic writers cannot be neglected in studies of Indian writing in English. While emigrant authors are implicated within this binary by the fact of their exteriority in relation to the Indian subcontinent, postcolonial writers have further struggled to escape easy categorizations by Eurocentric discourses which position their writings as secondary or marginal to prevailing Western literatures. Bill Ashcroft's founding declaration that literatures of former Asian and African colonies 'emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumption of the imperial centre', articulates the collective sentiment that is voiced in many postcolonial writings in diaspora.[45] The attention to territoriality or space is further articulated through the metaphors of centre and margin within an urban context, as compellingly illustrated in the works of the two women writers that I study in Chapter 4. The social and economic inequities that determine the urban cartographies of the postcolonial city create new and localized formations of the centre-periphery dichotomy (affluent southern sections versus impoverished suburbs) in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Thrity Umrigar and emphasize the divisions of gender and class in the city. One thus observes of contemporary diasporic writers that their experiences of the new or adopted 'homeland' are grounded in and articulated through urban experiences, which enable the conceptualization of and return to an originary country. The nation ceases to function as a primary referential point in their fictions, giving way instead to the discourse of the city which is more apprehensible and accommodating, and

which provides a vast playing ground for writers in diaspora to challenge and overcome the anxieties of their unbelonging.

My visions of the city

While *Fictions of the Postcolonial City* presents a wide spectrum of writers whose narratives locate the contemporary city of Bombay-Mumbai as a modern locus in India, it is by no means comprehensive in either its selection of literature or in the forms and habitations of modernity which it explores. Undoubtedly, the postcolonial city has been explored through various literary forms in other regional languages relevant to the city of Bombay-Mumbai like Hindi and Marathi, although the scope of my project does not enable an inquiry into these texts or a comparative study of any kind. In Chapter 1 of my thesis titled 'Fragmented Fictions', I discuss the spatial logic of the postcolonial city through the interrelated sites of modernity and tradition. The perfomative aspects of both are enacted upon the city-as-stage, which facilitates engagement and interplay between the home and the world, the public and the private, and the nation and its fragments. Institutional forms and spaces of tradition such as the village, the home, the family, and the hierarchical caste and class systems in India are examined in relation to the city of Bombay-Mumbai, which is positioned centrally within the discourse of Indian modernity. The discontinuities which underline this project are portrayed through the metaphor of the fragment that seeks to undo the unity and coherence of the nationalist agenda. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1982), the 'cracking disease' which afflicts several generations of the Sinai family is suggestive of the fractured development of the postcolonial nation and its citizens in the aftermath of Independence. Similarly, the parable of the patchwork quilt which is neatly interwoven into Rohinton Mistry's account of the Emergency and its victims, also demonstrates the plurality, and at times, incommensurability of experiences that make up the modern public consciousness. The symbolic figuring of women as bearers of an undivided national culture is refracted and inverted, in both the texts, through a modern, urban perspective, as the partitioned courtship of Naseem Aziz and Indira Gandhi's disintegrating national vision become instances of postcolonial rupture. Finally, the social fabric of the postcolonial city is seen as embodying these various forms and manifestations of a

conflicted and fragmented modernity, and displaces the nation from its position of pre-eminence in modern discourses.

As a port of bustling commercial activity, the postcolonial city attracts a floating pool of migrant labourers whose acceptance into urban society can be a difficult and fraught process. In the second chapter titled 'Unsettling the Cityzen', I study this uneasy relation in conjunction with narratives of outward migration and expatriation, as both involve the often incomplete transition or 'translation' of modern urban subjects, cultural codes, values, and processes. I use two primary texts to develop my argument – Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) are studies of sojourning, migrant subjects whose transitional dwelling condition and psychological displacement has become endemic to modernizing societies. I revisit ideas of the 'home' that were discussed in the first chapter and correlate them with its various pathologies such as conditions of 'unhomeliness' and 'dislocation'. Both *The Satanic Verses* and *Baumgartner's Bombay* are classic novels of 'translation', etymologically signifying a carrying across of the self into another place and another language. Rushdie's text has an essentially urban sensibility and maps the movement of its characters between the cities of Bombay-Mumbai and London. He identifies the figure of the migrant with that of the city, both of which are imagined differently over time. The struggles of acculturation and the psychological disorientation experienced by his itinerant characters are themes echoed in *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Anita Desai's poignant novel about a German emigrant who suffers from varying degrees of unhomeliness during his exilic dislocation from Berlin. Bombay as his final port of destination is presented as an Orientalist counter-culture which creates strong psycho-spatial ties even amongst its migrant-inhabitants, who alternately experience deep affiliation and estrangement towards their adopted city.

While Desai's novel inscribes Bombay in its colonial and postcolonial stages within a tense political narrative which unfolds in Europe during the Second World War, my next chapter titled 'The Cult of Authenticity' explores local contestations over urban space and signifiers in the contemporary city. The renaming of Bombay to Mumbai in November 1995 fuelled a politics of nomenclature and identitarianism which was chronicled in several literary registers as adversely affecting the city's

secular and cosmopolitan ethic. While many writes bemoaned the nativist and provincial agendas that were responsible for this change (Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry), others considered the effects of a violent urban climate upon the city's postcolonial and global development (Pinki Virani, Jim Masselos, Suketu Mehta). *Bombay* has been described as a ruined metropolis which has almost been destroyed by the corruption, gangsterism and fundamentalist politics that pervade present-day *Mumbai*, and the renaming of civic spaces and landmarks have further created a climate of trauma, unbelonging and disorientation.

The intricacies of naming and identification extend beyond the city to its inhabitants as well, and this chapter explores the various sub-cultures that constitute Bombay's thriving underworld and are sustained by forceful and complex nomenclatural structures. The supplementarity which characterizes both the city, in its geographical and cultural accruals over the years, and also its inhabitants, in their shifting positions within a hierarchical urban social order, is examined through a Derridean perspective, and questions the authoritative value and agency of naming systems. Finally, through a close and detailed reading of Vikram Chandra's provocative essay 'The Cult of Authenticity' and his latest city-novel *Sacred Games* (2006), I interrogate the relationship between naming, identity, and authenticity in contemporary Bombay-Mumbai and study the nuances of caste and class in modern urban society.

As Chapter 3 demonstrates, cities are shaped and divided not only by their territorial boundaries but also by internal differences and inequalities between various social groups. The articulation of social identity and mobility in Chandra's novel is supplemented in the next chapter by a gendered reading of urban spaces, thus drawing attention to the divisive politics of sexual roles and identities. Chapter 4, titled 'Silence, Space and Subalternity', examines and interrogates Indian feminism in its most modern forms and expressions in an endeavour to engage with the secular figuring of women in postcolonial discourses of the nation and the city. The two novels which are investigated in this section are both authored by women; Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1998) and Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us* (2006) are Bombay-based novels which critically portray the regulated and normative roles of women in urban society. Deshpande's text uses the metaphoric space of the

margin as a position of literary emancipation and empowerment, and reverses the traditional binary of centre (dominant) and periphery (marginal) by doing so. The intellectual or reflexive forms of modernity are brought to prominence through a celebration of women's self-representation and writing, which demythologizes the role and perception of women as subservient, sacrificing, and self-effacing subjects. The gendered politics of social spaces are further explored in my reading of Umrigar's novel, which attempts to describe the spatiality and the positionality of the female subject in a city governed by caste and class hierarchies. Bhima, as the disenfranchised and inarticulate subject of Umrigar's tale, is perhaps closest in form to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern woman, who is not heard even as she attempts to speak. Drawing upon the trope of silence and the insidious forms of domestic violence which informed my study of Deshpande's text, *The Space Between Us* is also an incisive comment on the unyielding social narratives that circumscribe women in modern, urban environments.

It has been argued in this introduction that the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai is central to the discursive project of Indian modernity. Caught between rapid commerciality and pervasive corruption, sectarian strife and a fading secular repute, and the internal divisions created by the miscellany of languages, religions, castes and communities that constitute its social environment, Bombay-Mumbai embodies all the contradictions and paradoxes of India's fledgling modernity. While the first four chapters of this thesis outline the various forms and habitations of this modernity, my final chapter titled 'Spectacular City' considers the versatile methods employed by writers in English to communicate their specific visions of the modern city. Undoubtedly, in recent years the representative value of Bombay-Mumbai has arisen from a dominant visual discourse which encapsulates the city. As the film capital of India, Bombay-Mumbai has been archived extensively through its cinema and Bollywood functions as a referential frame for national and global perceptions of the city. Similarly, the artist's canvas is also another emerging and representative medium which captures the intense visuality and palimpsestic quality of the modern city, and Bombay-Mumbai has been the founding ground of one of the most modern institutional art schools, the Progressive Artists Group, in the country.

The nexus of visuality and urbanism is explored in my last chapter in a reading of two novels and a journalistic memoir – Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City* (2004), Leslie Forbes' *Bombay Ice* (1998) and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) are modern literary excursions into the all-encompassing domain of visual culture which significantly affects perceptions and visions of the postcolonial city. While Mehta excavates the lost city of his childhood in his investigative capacity as a modern-day flaneur, Leslie Forbes employs the cinematic conventions of spectacle and excess in her contemporary crime thriller which is based in Bombay-Mumbai. Salman Rushdie's novel, on the other hand, presents the byzantine postcolonial city through the complex and layered vision of an artist, thereby illustrating the curious blend of fantasy and reality that colours aesthetic perceptions of the city. The ruined metropolis in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is Rushdie's elegiac response to the vision of the pluralistic and secular city that he proffers to the reader in *Midnight's Children*, and is confounded by the changing cultural and communal trends in contemporary urban society that reveal the city's Janus-faced modernity.

Chapter 1

Fragmented Fictions: A Spatial Reading of Modernity and Tradition in *Midnight's Children* and *A Fine Balance*

Modern India's political and economic experiences have coincided most dramatically in its cities – symbols of the uneven, hectic and contradictory character of the nation's modern life.

Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*[1]

Perhaps the cultural logic of an Indian city demands the presence of the village. Not merely sleepy Malgudi, but some of the more anguished metropolitan slums in literature, too, are infected or infiltrated by the village.

Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City*[2]

1.1 Beginnings in Bombay: *Midnight's Children*

The city of Bombay which provides a referential map for several works of fiction by Salman Rushdie has frequently been read as a postcolonial space of theoretical ambiguity. In the aftermath of Indian independence, the overarching discourse of the nation gained favour with the public imaginary and was the primary site for the development of a national modernity with its associated ideas of democracy, secularism, social justice, and place-identity. The idea of the city was for the most part 'refracted through the discourse of the nation' and was a socio-spatial landscape which could not quite be assimilated into the temporal march of Indian national history.[3] Salman Rushdie's experiences as a 'Bombaywallah' began during this particularly formative period of India's postcolonial development. Born in 1947 to

Muslim parents in Bombay, his birth was jokingly referred to as a catalytic event which ushered in a new independent era for India.[4] This association was later fictionalized by Rushdie in his epic novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), the opening verses of which ascribe a generative power to its protagonist Saleem Sinai, whose birth is coincident with the midnight moment of India's liberation from colonial rule.[5] Rushdie's narrative however seeks to reconcile the city of his birth with the more prevalent national discourse, by locating his own experiences of modernity (often conveyed through his fictional characters) as being inextricably bound to the urban site.

In Rushdie's fiction, the city of Bombay is a pivotal, microcosmic space which documents the increasingly conflicted development of postcolonial modernity in India through the 'incompatible realities' of life in the city.[6] At times, these realities provide a counter-perspective to the imagined narrative of the nation, which is often portrayed as fragmented and unsustainable in postcolonial writing.[7] A compelling example from the text at hand is the courtship of Naseem Aziz, in which her partitioned body viewed by Aadam through the perforated sheet, symbolizes a disjointed national vision. This image of fragmentation is echoed afterwards by an allegorical disease of bodily disintegration which afflicts both Aadam and his grandson Saleem, thereby suggesting the contingency of grand narratives of the nation. The city of Bombay in Rushdie's fiction is a contesting site for the enactment of postcolonial modernity and is portrayed as a significant social space with distinctive urban codes and cultures. This transition has been characterized by Gyan Prakash as the 'urban turn', and presents 'the opportunity to revise Indian modernity, to bring into view spaces of power and difference, suppressed by the historicist discourse of the nation'.[8] It is also significant in bringing '"newness", the old battle cry of modernity (which often had a noumenal existence for most ordinary citizens in post-Independence India)...into the sensorium of urban life'.[9] The contradictory nature of such a unique and unprecedented modernity is described by Rushdie through his novel vision of Indian urban culture – as being 'full of fakery and gaudiness and superficiality and failed imaginations' and also full of 'high vitality, linguistic verve', and metropolitan exuberance – demonstrated in his vivid representations of Bombay in its many forms in his fiction (*IH*, p. 110).

In *Midnight's Children*, the post-liberation beauty and euphoria of 1950s Bombay is gradually dismantled by the decrees of Emergency rule in India, which are caricatured by Rushdie in the latter sections of the novel. To start at the beginning, however, one must be introduced to the primary narratorial voice in the text, which introduces the conflicting claims of the city and the nation through an allegorical tale of Indian Independence and its aftermath:

> I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time. No, that won't do, there is no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more...On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world (*MC*, p. 9).

The opening paragraphs of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* insistently draw the reader's attention to the spatial and temporal coordinates that are crucial to its protagonist, Saleem Sinai's birth. The city of Bombay can be read as a significant political microcosm, the elusive midnight hour is symbolic of the ambivalence which surrounds both Saleem's birth and the nation's newly acquired independence, and space and time become important tropes through which Rushdie interrogates postcolonial modernity in India as being an extension of its timeless traditions. The moment of Independence and Partition which is described through the allegorical birthing of Saleem Sinai, is at this moment in Rushdie's narrative, a cause of celebration. The poignant description of clock-hands joining in respectful greeting signifies the traditional salutatory gesture that heralds new arrivals. It also highlights the transition from British colonial rule in India to political independence, after which the ticking clock in *Midnight's Children* becomes an ominous measure of the country's postcolonial development. The temporal dynamics of this transition are negotiated by Rushdie through his understanding of 'modernity' and 'tradition' as seemingly converse yet intimately connected concepts in post-Independence India.

1.2 Kinship and the displacement of tradition

As a signifier of certain social ideologies and institutions in India, tradition may be associated with the joint family and by extension the space of the home, the spatial divisions between the village and the city, and also between social identities on the basis of caste, class and gender, all of which have an important thematic function in the novel. In the opening pages of *Midnight's Children*, the arrival of baby Saleem brings the Sinai family and their home on the Methwold Estate to the foreground. The location of the family-home on Malabar Hill in southern Bombay is further revealing of the intricate relationship between space and class in the novel, which is crucial to Saleem's story. To examine the complex narrative of family life and kinship that Rushdie presents to us in *Midnight's Children*, it is essential to revive the Sinai heritage through the story of Aadam Aziz, Saleem's grandfather. Unlike Saleem, who is represented as a quintessentially urban character and rooted in the city of Bombay, Aadam Aziz's homeland is Kashmir, a pastoral space of plenitude and unsullied beauty which provides a contradistinction to the spaces described later in the novel. It is interesting to note the deliberate nomenclatural references invoked by Rushdie, which associate Aadam Aziz with the Biblical and originary figure of Adam within the Garden of Eden. As a fiercely contested terrain during the Partition of India, Kashmir has been idealized by several expatriate writers and poets, who speak of its past in nostalgic and lyrical tones. As the Kashmiri poet M. Kaul reminiscences:

> We go back to the roots
> To replenish the vision and the spirit we have lost,
> To regain our identity and reclaim our history,
> To reset the balance between nature and mind,
> To feel as an element of the universal spacetime.

(Kaul, 1987)[10]

Although Rushdie images Kashmir similarly in *Midnight's Children*, as a timeless land of origins and pristine beauty, Aadam Aziz's return to his homeland is not described in romanticized language. The poetry of Aadam's youth has been suppressed beneath a clinical detachment which befits his position as 'Doctor Sahib'. The man who had returned from Germany with his leather attaché case and an altered vision is now a stranger to the ancient valley with its crystal lakes and

shikharas - he has been touched by the influences of a Western modernity which alienate him from what was once his home. *Midnight's Children* begins in Kashmir; its roots are sown in tradition, in antiquity, represented by the changelessness of Tai the ferryman. Not unlike Charon, the legendary oarsman who untiringly ferried the souls of the dead across the river Styx, Tai signifies permanence, the inviolability of the valley to outsiders and their modern influences. He is the symbolic guardian of the pastoral land and his death in 1947, at the hands of militants who are engaged with the divisive politics of the nation, is an ominous portent. The valley, which was historically isolated as an independent princely state and free from the directives of the Empire, is now open to political infiltration, 'the alien thing', 'the invader', and 'progress' (*MC*, p. 21).

While thus commenting on the incursive nature of postcolonial modernity in India, Rushdie reverts to older novelistic devices of creating a rural-urban binary to develop an understanding of the often conflicting claims of tradition and modernity. Roshan Shahani observes that 'in the years preceding Independence and the euphoric decade that followed, as the young nation was consolidating itself, the need for "Indianness", of tradition, found expression through the valorisation of…the Indian ruralscape.'[11] Although *Midnight's Children* was written in a later period and gained fame as a groundbreaking text of postcolonial times, Rushdie's narrative revives the diminishing literary tradition of creating an oppositional relation between the city and the countryside. The novel recognizes the unceasing presence of the nation's antiquity in the light of the modern ideologies which have invaded its political and economic structures and even the consciousness of its people. Kashmir before Independence is Rushdie's ideal ruralscape, an archive of origins, of tradition and untainted beauty. Kashmiri tradition has been described by Patrick Colm Hogan as 'the complex of habits, beliefs, and attitudes that make up the practical identities of people', and it is this functional construction of tradition that Rushdie posits in opposition to the ideological claims of nationhood and modernity which it encounters.[12]

It is in this utopian space that Aadam meets Naseem, who, veiled in her sheets of modesty, is the epitome of this traditionalism. They are the original lovers of Kashmir; their passion is dictated by the mandates of the patriarchal order

constituted by men like the landowner Abdul Ghani and Tai the boatman. Aadam Aziz's rationalist approach is antithetical to this traditional order – as Rushdie aptly summarizes it, Tai-for-changelessness is pitted against Aadam-for-progress, the first signs of which are manifested through the doctor's unveiling of his bride, Naseem. The female prototype of the 'good Kashmiri girl' is cast against the 'modern Indian woman'; they signify a disparity of ethical convictions and practices which cannot be reconciled in Naseem's conservative world, but are forced to by Aadam's interventions (*MC*, p. 34). Hogan attributes their conflicted relationship to the fact that 'when the representational identities of nationhood and the disruptive practices of colonial culture invade and threaten the practical identities of tradition, they invariably give rise to a reaction, a defensive response on the part of those who live that tradition.'[13] The idea of developing one's identity through the prisms of modernity and/or tradition is furthered in the narrative, as Aadam's decision to leave Kashmir and embrace a life of urbanity in the cities of Amritsar, Agra and Bombay marks the next step in his journey towards a modern selfhood - from Kashmiri-to-Muslim-to-Indian. Tradition is forsaken along with his homeland; the splendours of Kashmir fade into the narrative background and are revived only as dreams (Saleem's visions of the land he had never visited) or as illusions (Hanif's first feature film, *The Lovers of Kashmir*). As the final stanza of Kaul's poem illustrates, the valley of the Shalimar-bagh is now merely an echo of its former glory:

Kashmir always beckons me to a homecoming,

A quivering echo of a distant thunder,

A withered glow on the horizon,

Remnant of a fire kindled a long time ago,

It will remain my tombstone.

Kaul's nostalgia for his homeland is mirrored in Aadam's desire to return to Kashmir, although his homecoming is a tragic one. With the passing of time, he realizes the futility of trying to infuse Western skills into an essentially unyielding Indian society: 'the hegemony of superstition, mumbo-jumbo, and all things magical would never be broken in India' (*MC,* p. 67). While his modern convictions are continually frustrated and slowly disintegrate, his mind too, begins to sink into the clutches of a confused senility. As a victim of the metaphorical 'cracking disease'

which afflicts those involved in the nationalist struggle, Aadam is troubled by an unsettling modernity which is contradictory to the traditional Kashmiri views of identity and belonging that claim him in unexpected ways. Towards the end of his narrative, Aadam is incited by a divine revelation to revisit the religious shrines in his homeland and avenge the death of his son. His vision is a metaphor of the country, fractured by the religious conflicts which are a precursor to the Partition of India. The Hazratbal mosque and the temple of Sankara Acharya are representative of the two opposing factions, the dissenting faiths of Hinduism and Islam. Kashmir is the middle-ground, a land of eternal traditions caught between the modern territorial claims of the two emergent nations, India and Pakistan. It is also Aadam's final resting ground, his tombstone. The reader is compelled to wonder what ultimately draws him homeward – is it truly revenge, or as Kaul poignantly says, 'simply an elemental pull to gravitate to one's origin'?

The ruined dream which was Kashmir is not entirely lost to the Aziz family. It is recreated in film, by Aadam's son Hanif, who inherits not only a sense of his origins, but the characteristic quirks of his father and the boatman, Tai. Hanif is the archetypal migrant figure, who leaves his rural hometown and seeks his fortunes in Bombay, the postcolonial city of dreams and opportunities, and Kashmir's urban other. Bombay has often been called Mayapuri, the city of illusions, and it is through the illusion of cinema, that Hanif reinvents his father's homeland, although with horizons unbounded. The boundaries between a utopian traditionality and an urban modernity are collapsed in Hanif's cinema, as Kashmir is literally displaced into Bombay through its representation on the cinema screen. *The Lovers of Kashmir* is a film underlined by modern aesthetics, and its chief attraction, the 'indirect kiss', marks a progressive approach towards the conventional forms in which on-screen sexuality is represented. Drawn out from within private boudoirs and the modest layers of the veil, the Kashmiri woman is now subjected to the gaze of the audience, as Hanif realizes his father's ideal of the 'modern Indian woman' through cinema. In a continuation of the Biblical imagery employed by Rushdie in the Kashmir sequences of the novel, Hanif's film spectacularizes temptation through a scene in which the heroine sensuously kisses an apple, thereby associating physical desire with the forbidden fruit.

The rather melodramatic end to the film's success is brought about by the fictive figure of the serpent, who takes the form of an 'ineffectual house-manager' announcing the death of Mahatma Gandhi (*MC*, p. 143).[14] This interruption to the modern spectacle assumes a particularly venomous form, as a potential communal conflict threatens to erupt within the space of the cinema, following the news of Gandhi's assassination. The tenuous relations between different religious communities during the post-Partition period in India and especially within the city of Bombay, are highlighted through this incident, which reveals the transient nature of modernity in both its cinematic forms and its Nehruvian promise of an easy secularity. As a catalyst to the plot, *The Lovers of Kashmir* is an augury of the disruptive forms of this very modernity, as Pia Aziz's future indiscretions, both inspired and aided by the making of the movie, lead to her husband's ruin. Hanif's film-making sensibilities are fashioned by the urban influences of Bombay, the city which celebrates the euphoria of Independence with the birth of Saleem Sinai, the inheritor of an imperial mantle as well as his grandfather's legacy.

1.3 Saleem Sinai: urban legacies and the 'homely' city

As we have observed already, *Midnight's Children* opens with a dialogic introduction to its primary narrator and gestures towards the byzantine relationship he shares with his motherland. It also very specifically locates his birth in the city of Bombay, an event which is coincident with the midnight hour of 1947 when India gained her independence. The evolutionary history of the city is intimately linked to its hinterland, both of which are shaped by the influences of an imperial encounter. As the Western gateway to the Indian subcontinent, Bombay's role as a mediator in colonial trade and as the unchallenged economic capital of the independent nation is significant in establishing the city as the meeting ground of diverse cultures and belief systems. In the novel, Bombay is the epicentre of Indian modernity, a commercial city which untiringly trades the archaic for the contemporary, and like Saleem is the 'newest bearer of the ancient face of India which is also eternally young' (*MC*, p. 122). It is home to both Rushdie and his protagonist, whose childhood recollections of the city could have been the author's own. In an interview which appeared in the *Sunday Chronicle Magazine*, Rushdie confesses his landmark novel to be born out of the intent of writing a 'big-city novel', a city of reminiscences and nostalgia. He writes,

'Although half of the novel takes place in Bombay, the other half doesn't. But to my mind it all takes place in Bombay, because Bombay is the spirit of the book. Bombay is an idea as well as a place.'[15] It is here that Saleem discovers his roots and also his lack of them. He is the 'city-boy' who mocks Padma's rusticity and is forever tainted with 'Bombayness', a condition associated with secularity, cosmopolitanism and a strong business ethic (*MC*, p. 310).

Saleem is born into a trading family; his father's ventures into the real-estate and textile businesses account for the family's wealth and privileged positioning along the famed Malabar Hill in the southern part of the city. Buckingham Villa, an imposing mansion and former home to the ex-colonial William Methwold, is the family home of the Sinai's and an imperial legacy. In both national and postcolonial discourses, the home is a traditional construct, often regarded as an inner, spiritual domain which is safeguarded by Indian women, whose function as symbolic guardians of the nation further consolidates this ideology. Partha Chatterjee's theorization of the oppositional spaces of the *ghar* and the *bahir* in the nineteenth century, with the former maintaining its cultural superiority in the face of colonial struggle, is commonly referred to while discussing the significance of the home in Indian nationalist politics.[16] The traditional reinvention of the domestic sphere in a way that selectively empowers women within this immutable space has also been critiqued extensively by other discerning scholars, historians and feminists, who question the construction of gendered roles along the lines of a spatial division.[17]

A particularly compelling reading of the home as a traditional space, and its inversion in contemporary postcolonial contexts is offered by political scientist and feminist critic Nivedita Menon. In her essay provocatively titled 'Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlour', Menon seeks to use various interpretations of feminist political theory to locate tradition and modernity as interpolative sites.[18] Two specific examples from the text are especially interesting in the way they confound easy binaries and present a counter-perspective to Chatterjee's reading of gender, space and social roles in the nineteenth century. The first is a survey of the effects of migration upon two groups of Bangladeshi women garment workers, one of which is situated in Dhaka and the other, in London. The former go to work in a factory, unveiled, while the latter are mostly confined to working from home. Menon delves

into a complex argument which begins by analyzing the paradoxical nature of this arrangement; according to the survey, conditions in Dhaka appear to be more libratory and hence, 'modern', as compared to those of London or the West, which is conventionally posited as the site of modernity. This contradiction has direct bearing upon her notion that 'there continues to exist a way in which critiques of modernity are perceived as set up only from within the site of tradition' and vice versa, a theory which she seeks to deconstruct. What is intriguing about this particular example is a disorientation of the spatial location of tradition and modernity, which is itself created by the imperatives of a modern capitalist society. This blurring of spaces is also demonstrated in Rushdie's novel, which chronicles the economic moments of modernity through the provisional transactions that lead to the sale of the Methwold estate, intended to be 'home' to the Sinai family.

Midnight's Children provides an intriguing challenge to Chatterjee's conceptualisation of the home, as Buckingham Villa contests the nationalist vision of aligning the spiritual domain of the home with the materialistic outer world. The sale of the Methwold Estate is conditional upon two strangely whimsical conditions – 'that the houses be bought complete with every last thing in them, that the entire contents be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer should not take place until midnight on August 15th' (*MC*, p. 95). By thus ensuring the continuance of a colonial legacy through the conditional sale of his estate, William Methwold is able to satisfy his 'lust for allegory' by enacting a personal handover of power to his Indian predecessors (*MC*, p. 96). In this manner, the domestic transaction becomes a part of a larger national discourse, although it is negotiated on imperial terms. The Sinai family-home symbolizes the newly independent nation-state, albeit with its residual influences of British Empire, which result in Amina Sinai feeling alienated within the sanctum of her own house. Rushdie's portrayal of Buckingham Villa therefore cleverly undermines Chatterjee's theorization of gender and space during the nationalist movement, by demonstrating the shift of colonial power relations from the outer material world into the apparently invincible space of the home, after Independence. The Sinais are described thus in their early days of residence at the manor:

...the Estate, Methwold's Estate is changing them. Every evening at six they are out in the gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation of Oxford drawls; and they are learning, about ceiling fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars, and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath (*MC*, p. 99).

The spectral presence of Europe manifests itself with persistent regularity and leads to the Sinais being dictated to by colonial mandates, which are wilfully issued by Methwold in his role as a domestic overseer. His words, 'sab kuch ticktock hai', take on a more sinister meaning, as the Sinai household becomes a space of conformism, of mimicry, and postcolonial anxiety, wherein the invariability and routine of an English lifestyle are imposed upon the residents of the estate (*MC*, p. 97). The trope of temporality is exposed as being double-edged, with the celebration of Saleem's midnight birth being tempered by the ticking clock, which threatens to expose his true identity by revealing the complex ties of kinship that bind him very closely to William Methwold and the family estate.

Saleem is born into an inherently dysfunctional family which however tries to maintain conventional appearances; the marriage of his parents is shadowed by two previous divorces, one on either side. Privy to his mother's assiduous efforts at sustaining her role as a traditional housewife, her tentative liaisons with a former lover, his father's alcoholism and also his indiscretions, Saleem's intuitive abilities are both a blessing and a curse. As a child, his formative years are influenced by the supernatural conceits of his mother and ayah, and also by the modern commercial initiatives of his father. Like the city of his birth which oscillates between the archaic myths of the Ramayana and the Maratha warrior-king Shivaji, and modern acquisitive impulses such as the land reclamation and tetrapod schemes, Saleem too, is inspired by influences both traditional and secular. A product of the 'highly spiced non-conformity' of the city and a family which 'espoused the ethics of business, not of faith', he once proudly declares, '...despite my Muslim background, I am enough of a Bombayite to be well up in Hindu stories...' (*MC*, pp. 308, 310, 149). Here, Saleem reflects the Nehruvian ideals of a social and secular selfhood, a form of political elitism that aspired to mobilize the diverse social, religious, and linguistic groups that

belonged to the newly formed nation. Even from his elevated precincts, Saleem claims to be familiar with the inequities which characterize the metropolis: the lives of the dispossessed Koli fishermen who were the original inhabitants of the island city, and the squalor of the northern slums which are home to his nemesis, Shiva.

1.4 Of playing grounds and patriarchs

Bombay then, is Saleem's playground, his kingdom, and a distraction from the tensions of his adolescent family life. The captivating rows of shops on Warden Road, the saluting cardboard bellboy of the Band Box Laundry, the kidney-shaped pool in Breach Candy Swimming Club, the hoarding at Kemps Corner featuring the Kolynos Kid, the sands of Chowpatty and the majestic Marine Drive are landmarks which inundate the southern peninsular stretch of his childhood city and shape his urban sensibilities. Interestingly, a lot of Indian writing in English describes the southern, affluent sections of the city with an easy familiarity, which beguiles the reader into imaginatively constructing Bombay in a particular way. Taking Rushdie's other novels into consideration one notices the ostentatiously wealthy Bombay addresses at which his characters locate themselves – Aurora and Abraham Zogoiby's palatial mansion in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the Chamchawalla residence and Gibreel's Everest Vilas in *The Satanic Verses*, and Ormus Cama's family home in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, are situated in and around the prestigious Malabar Hill area.[19] Rushdie's vision of the city in *Midnight's Children* has been accused of privileging an elite and cosmopolitan narrative, where subaltern characters and landscapes figure as elusive and occasionally disruptive elements in the text.[20] This includes India's partitioned other, Pakistan, which functions as an exilic space for Saleem during the four years of his residence there, as his telepathic powers are disrupted by the invisible boundaries that separate the two nations. It is quite evident that Saleem's temporary displacement from a narrative of centrality is one of Rushdie's multiple attempts to 'deconstruct the official bourgeois nationalist history' of India, and to provide brief glimpses of alternate histories which threaten the coherence of the national narrative.[21]

Pakistan, like Kashmir previously, is a provisional and contradictory space in the narrative, and functions as a temporary aberration in Saleem's life. In Pakistan, Saleem is quick to distinguish between the island city of Bombay and its

neighbouring counterparts; while the only likeness between Karachi and Bombay is their origin as fishing settlements, 'Mumbadevi's city made Rawalpindi look like a village' (*MC*, p. 297). Similarly, Saleem is unable to forgive Karachi for being not-Bombay and it is described as possessing 'an ugliness which eclipsed even (his) own' (*MC*, p. 307). Once again, Bombay functions as a comparative frame of reference for all other spaces in the novel and is validated by Saleem's authoritative voice, which locates the city as a capacious textual space. Fiercely possessive of the city of his birth, Saleem holds himself responsible for the violence which partitioned the state of Bombay along linguistic fault lines, as a result of which the city became the capital of Maharashtra. A catalyst in the city's historical trajectory, he is also swift in his recognition of modern diasporic interventions which take the form of mass migrations into the city – 'our Bombay, it looks like a hand but it is really a mouth, always open, always hungry, swallowing food and talent from everywhere else in India' (*MC*, p. 125). The continuous influx of migrants is responsible for the amorphousness and anonymity which characterize the cityscape, although Saleem clearly situates himself in a position of primacy within the urban narrative which frames his life – '…life in Bombay was as teeming, as manifold, as multitudinously shapeless as ever…except that I had arrived; I was already beginning to take my place at the centre of the universe, and by the time I had finished, I would give meaning to it all' (*MC*, p. 126).

The omniscient narrator of Rushdie's prose is, then, unarguably the most significant interventionist in the urban story, a position which is severely threatened by the revelation of his true ancestry. Son of Sir William Methwold and an impoverished entertainer's wife, Saleem's claim of being the primary narratorial voice of the city's evolution and its encounter with a postcolonial modernity is challenged, as his complicity with a colonial past is revealed. Stephen Morton notes that 'this discovery clearly undermines the elite genealogy that Saleem invents for himself as the son of wealthy landowners, but it also complicates the analogy between Saleem's birth and the birth of Nehru's nationalist project' – a project whose failure to bring about social transformation and secularization was documented particularly well in postcolonial narratives of urban development.[22] The importance of lineage or ancestry towards shaping the urban narrative is also demonstrated in a conversation between the departing colonial, Saleem's biological father, and Ahmed Sinai, his

adoptive parent. While Methwold reminisces about his ancestor who 'dreamed the city into existence', Ahmed's longing for a fictional pedigree which could be intimately connected to the city's evolutionary history, spurs him into inventing the 'family curse' (*MC*, p. 97).[23] The age-old Indian tradition/superstition is invoked and nurtured by Ahmed, as a defence against European claims of centrality in the narrative of Bombay. The imagined curse however, manifests itself in strange and disorienting ways in the future, as confronted with a raging alcoholism and an ambivalent paternity, Ahmed seeks consolation in the curse as being responsible for the tragedy which befalls his family. His retreat from reality is another instance of the disturbing effects of modernity and its tendency to disrupt the traditional structures which are an essential frame of reference for one's encounter with it.

Can the rise of Shiva, whose contentious parentage is traced back to the Sinai family, also then be attributed to the family curse? Shiva is the quintessential figure of modernity, a legendary war hero and a vengeful antagonist who reappears towards the end of the novel to claim his ancestral legacy from its usurper. Saleem imagines his disruptive arrival to be synchronous with India's initiation into the nuclear age, which also suggests his alignment with modern and destructive forces that defined the nation's inclusion within the hierarchical power structures of the world. Through Shiva, Rushdie questions the traditional and supposedly immutable order of the family, which is disoriented first by his ambiguous paternity, and later by his own parental irresponsibility towards the children born of several liaisons with women. The notion of the family as being created out a legitimate procreative order is shadowed by the illegitimacy which characterizes the real and the metaphoric families of Shiva-Parvati-Aadam and the Widow, Indira Gandhi's brain-child, conceived by the imposition of Emergency in India.

Shiva's role as the father-procreator of both the child Aadam and the official mandates of Emergency rule situates him very firmly in the national narrative, as a 'competitor of centrality' against Saleem.[24] His modern sensibilities are directed towards restructuring the urban narrative as well; unimpeded by sentiment or nostalgia for his former life, he organizes a slum eradication drive which results in the demolition of the magician's ghetto in Delhi and dispersal of the midnight's children. The city of Delhi functions as a tangential space of violence and autocracy,

that reflects the tyrannical regime unleashed by Indira Gandhi in the mid-1970s and whose repercussions were largely felt in the migrant-stronghold of Bombay. The incident calls attention to the period of Emergency rule in India as significantly altering the ideological and physical constructions of postcolonial cities, which emerge as being antithetical to the migrant's dream. It also describes the transient nature of the city, which is constantly subjected to destruction and rebuilding, and which results in either homelessness or a disorientation of one's bearings. The amorphousness of the postcolonial city is demonstrated in another Indo-English novel which fictionalizes the events of the Emergency and uses it as a primary trope to present alternate constructions of the home, the family, and a wider social order. Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* provides a persuasive frame of comparison through which to study Rushdie's novel, and I illustrate the relation between the texts in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Towards the end of the narrative in *Midnight's Children*, the climactic sequences which satirize the events of the Emergency portray the inversion of familial, social and hierarchical traditions within the space of the city. Shiva supplants Saleem as the new face of Indian political modernity which is characterized by a practical-capitalist and ruthless-hedonistic approach to national and urban contingencies. The terror and the violence which are associated with postcolonial modernity in India are revealed by Rushdie's focus on the material effects of national Independence within the microcosm of the city, which are positioned as counteractive to the 'optimism disease' that gripped the nation in its newly liberated phase. On an allegorical level, Saleem's hyperbolic self fashioning is unravelled slowly and torturously, as he is overwhelmed by the historical incidents which are coincident with the events of his life, and succumbs under the burden of a postcolonial consciousness. As he informs the reader, 'his poor body, singular and unlovely...has started coming apart at the seams' (*MC*, p. 37).

Saleem, like his grandfather Aadam Aziz, has to mediate between a nation rich in its antiquity and tradition and the strain of the 'modern' world which has been thrust upon it, causing it to crack. Partition, both of the country and its social communities, is disassociated from the beguiling terminology which indicates a neat, cartographic division of spaces, without revealing the violence of such restructuring.[25] The

'cracking disease' which afflicts both Saleem and his grandfather, is far more suggestive of the fragmented development of both individuals and the nation in the aftermath of such partitioning and the inevitability of the exploding 'bomb in Bombay' is played out through Saleem's story. As a mirror image of national events, the city of Bombay is reclaimed yet again by new owners and new myths, and is the victim of modern incursions that take the form of skyscrapers and flyovers, which both deface and defamiliarize its landscape. The end of Rushdie's tale is almost elegiac in its description of the torn corpse of the old city, the alien terrain which is no longer the Bombay of his childhood, as he remembers it to be. The illusion of permanence, of immutability which is attached to the metropolis, is shattered in the face of its modern, reconstructive reality, in a manner not unlike the traditional image of the family which is also destroyed by the complex relationships that emerge out of the Aziz-Sinai lineage.

1.5 *A Fine Balance*: realizing the Emergency

Rushdie's bleak and futuristic image of Bombay is echoed by Rohinton Mistry in *A Fine Balance* (1995), a sweeping narrative about the contentious period of the Emergency in India, which laid the ground for the disintegration of ideas of the nation and a unified political community.[26] Mistry's 'city by the sea' is the performative space within which the political drama is enacted and that gains precedence over the national narrative in the course of the novel; unnamed and yet unmistakably distinguishable, Bombay in *A Fine Balance*, is portrayed as the epicentre of political modernity in India and a hub of diasporic interactions. Similar to Rushdie's negotiation of Bombay in its various phases of postcolonial development, Mistry's expansive and all-embracing cityscape represents a focal space in which social, political and cultural differences are brought into confrontation, and are at times reconciled with each other. The engagement between the personal and the political is illustrated in the bulk of his longer fiction, which employs the city as a canvas to interweave the master narrative of Indian political history with the life-stories of his characters.

Such A Long Journey (1991) evokes a Bombay of the 1960s and 70s, which traces the emergence of regional parochialism within the city through the rise of the Shiv Sena. Its chief protagonist Gustad Noble embodies a secular and cosmopolitan ethic,

despite being embroiled in a murky political game, and functions as the voice of resistance against the unravelling social fabric of the city.[27] *A Fine Balance* (1995) extends the idea of postcolonial resistance through its marginal and dispossessed characters, who temporarily subvert the hierarchies of gender, caste, and class to accommodate the vicissitudes of the internal Emergency in India. In *Family Matters* (2002), the narrative turns inwards and focuses on the interpersonal relations between the members of a minority community, the Parsi Zoroastrians, while gesturing towards the altered political landscape of the city of Bombay.[28] Caught within the confines of a sectarian culture, the city mirrors that evoked by Rushdie in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a novel which is more comprehensive, however, in its censure of Mumbai's social environment.

Mistry's style of writing is almost Dickensian, as his vast, sprawling cityscapes are inhabited by a multitude of distinctive characters, who offer social commentary through their melodramatic life-experiences. To place *A Fine Balance* within a specific critical vocabulary which provides a framework to study Mistry's work alongside Rushdie's, it is useful to refer to interpretative essays which discuss realism as narrative mode and a strategy of postcolonial resistance in Mistry's fiction. Faithful to its title, *A Fine Balance* endeavours to create elaborate, corresponding narratives of personal tragedy and political trauma by employing a largely realist mode which also uses certain elements of Bakhtinian grotesque to achieve its subversive potential. The notion of balance is fundamental to the realist literary tradition and Raymond Williams offers a particularly evocative view of the same:

> When I think of the realist tradition in fiction, I think of the kind of novel which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of qualities of persons. The balance involved in this achievement is perhaps the most important thing…Yet the distinction of this kind is that it offers a valuing of a whole way of life, a society that is larger than any of the individuals composing it, at the same time valuing creations of human beings who, while belonging to and affected by and helping to define this way of life, are also, in their own terms, absolute ends in themselves.[29]

While this fictional balance is achieved through Mistry's masterly manipulation of realism in his novel it is often obscured by the tragic circumstances which befall even

the most stalwart and resistant characters in *A Fine Balance*. Laura Moss offers a particularly interesting reading of Mistry's realist fiction, which, she argues, is equally affective in its conservatism, as other postcolonial fiction (*Midnight's Children* for instance) that uses more experimental forms of narrative.[30] The positioning of realism as a mode of storytelling in opposition to magic realism, is not necessarily the most constructive way of interrogating the postcolonial intent and success of Rushdie's and Mistry's writing, however, and Chelva Kanaganayakam focuses on the various devices that Mistry uses to create 'the illusion of the real' which is typically associated with his writing.[31] This endeavour to create a sustained reality is particularly challenging in instances where the author seeks to interweave the personal with the political, and the textual landscape plays an important role in enabling these connections.

As a capacious urban space, Bombay, like the reader's imagination, is stretched and manipulated by Mistry, to accommodate the heterogeneous characters and plots which he engenders with ease and familiarity. The capacity to present the routine and the mundane in new and varied ways as a critique of existing socio-political orders, the ability to infuse his narratives with power and profundity, and to introduce stylistic devices such as melodrama and the grotesque within a largely realist framework, are some of the features of Mistry's fiction which I examine in their modern, urban contexts. There are several intersecting nodes between *Midnight's Children* and *A Fine Balance* which also emerge through my study, and are analyzed through the distinctive narrative modes employed by the two writers. Primary amongst these is the function of Bombay as the principal urban landscape, its role as a catalyst which precipitates the merging of the public and the private domains, and as a reflection of the nation and its political climate.

1.6 Ghare-baire: Mistry's spatial politics

Space functions in complex and insidious ways in the novel, as the initial juxtaposition of three distinct geographical spaces gives way to the more elusive mapping of public and private spaces within the city. The textual landscape is a dynamic one which shifts from a pastoral hill station to a rural village-scape, and finally to the swarming conurbation of Bombay. Peter Morey describes this cartographic partitioning as 'consciously symbolic rather than historical' and observes

that, 'taken together, the City by the Sea, the Village by a River and the Mountains, constitute an unmarked literary map of the nation as it undergoes a terrible beautification'.[32] While the 'village by the river' functions as a distinct and contained narrative space which focuses on the inequities of the caste system in India, the idyllic hamlet in the mountains is perfectly counterpoised against the urban metropolis and is comparable in many ways with my previous discussion of Rushdie's use of the spaces of Kashmir and Bombay. Instead of using a variety of formal literary devices such as allegory, hyperbole, intertextuality and collage as Rushdie does, however, Mistry interrogates modernity through the binaries of discipline and chaos which manifest themselves in both the spaces. Relationships of power are constructed and challenged in each of the three sites - while the traditional caste hierarchies in the village are subverted by Dukhi Morchi's initiative to educate his sons (one of whom is the tailor, Ishvar) in an alternate trade, the modernization and expansion of the hamlet in the mountains, which is home to the Kohlah family, is directed by the Government's developmental policies. This form of incursive modernity is an extension of that imposed within the city by the mandates of the Emergency, a grotesquely mismanaged and exploitative project headed by Indira Gandhi.

Bombay, as a significant urban site in the novel, can clearly be aligned with Partha Chatterjee's theory of social spaces; the *bahir* or the political foreground is dominated by the figure of Rushdie's Widow, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, whose seemingly progressive directives shaped the nature of self rule in 70s India. The internal space of the *ghar* is inhabited by another widow, Dina Dalal, an impoverished seamstress who is motivated by both materialistic and secular impulses to nurture a very unique idea of the family, which collectively offers resistance to the dictatorial social order. Mistry's novels are frequently characterized by the presence of stalwart female characters; Coomy and her willful schemes (*Family Matters*), Dilnawaz's resilience in the face of financial hardships (*Such A Long Journey*), and proud and resolute Dina Dalal (*A Fine Balance*), are relegated to the space of the home which both contains and empowers them. *A Fine Balance* is an intriguing example of the complex spatial politics which underlines Mistry's seemingly innocuous novels. The spaces of the *ghar* and the *bahir* are dominated by two widowed women, a status which is least associated with empowerment in India. In this instance, however, political power-

play as well as domestic intercession are both situated within a kind of matriarchal order which invokes the image of the elemental and all-enduring feminine principle (Mother India) through the compelling figures of Dina Dalal and Indira Gandhi.

The metaphor of motherhood is employed very differently, however, in the case of both women. In the first instance, Mistry uses the grotesque as a trope to engender a powerful critique of Gandhi's absurd and cruel political regime during the 1970s.[33] Unlike the celebratory aspects of Bakhtinian grotesque which are also associated with the carnival, *A Fine Balance* focuses on the subversive potential of the grotesque as a mode of writing to describe the aberrational and transitional society in India under Emergency rule.[34] The corporeal distortion of Indira Gandhi's visage is one such instance where Mistry decries the crumbling national fabric and it is described thus in the novel:

> It was a quintessential specimen of the face that was proliferating on posters throughout the city. Her cheeks were executed in the lurid pink of cinema billboards. Other aspects of the portrait had suffered greater infelicities. Her eyes evoked the discomfort of a violent itch…the artists ambition of a benignant smile had also gone awry…and the familiar swatch of white hair over her forehead, imposing amid the black, had plopped across the scalp like the strategic droppings of a very large bird (*AFB*, p. 181).

In a particularly vindictive description of Gandhi's public façade during the electoral campaigns, the author calls attention to the garish and crumbling visage on a poster as being representative of the nation's disintegration. His portraiture is vivid in its theatricality, indicating that the Prime Minister and her welfare programs are characterized by an informed artifice. It is also significant that her rallies and speeches promoting 'modern' reforms are targeted at a primarily rural and uneducated audience, whose traditionalism is both uncomprehending and resistant to her vision of political modernity. Gandhi's populist agendas included aligning her own image very closely to that of the nation; the slogan 'Indira for India' was a strategic step in that direction, and was complemented by her son, Sanjay's presence, which reinforced her traditional role as nurturer of the nation.[35] Mistry is severely critical of this nationalist farce and in another very evocative scene, demonstrates the

fragility of the Prime Minister's image by referring to her as a 'cardboard-and-plywood giant' (*AFB*, p. 267). The episode in which the gigantic cut-out topples over into the crowds is suggestive of the need to oust the Government from its position of false power and pre-empt the dissolution of the nation. It is also a grotesque rendering of the metaphor of motherhood which is employed by Gandhi in her campaigns, as her cardboard effigy crushes her rally audiences in a suffocating embrace. [36]

The venomous portrayal of the Prime Minister and her strategic manipulation of public opinion are counterpoised against Mistry's poignant description of Dina Dalal's life as a widow who struggles to maintain her respectability and self reliance in the face of extreme hardship and misfortune. As a humbly self-sufficient woman who is liberated from her brother's care, Dina strives to 'maintain her fragile independence', much in the manner in which the nation precariously holds on to its own, in the wake of the Emergency (*AFB*, p. 11). This autonomy is achieved through her possession of a flat in Bombay which functions as both a domestic sphere and a working environment, and is provisionally home to an adopted community. The boundaries of public and private space are mystified as the home becomes a part of an economic discourse, which informs all aspects of city life and the relationships between people. Homi Bhabha observes that 'the recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.'[37] In Dina's case the real estate crisis of the 60s and 70s, compounded by the pressures of the Emergency, become instrumental in drawing her home into Bombay's relentless neo-colonial economic system. The prologue to the novel, which functions as a meeting point for the various protagonists, is chronicled in the modern language of commerciality. While Dina discusses the contractual terms of employment with the tailors, Ishvar and Om, she also negotiates a rental agreement with her new lodger Maneck Kohlah. In this way, Dina's flat becomes an extension of the public spaces of the city, which espouse a similar financially motivated ethic to the one she imposes on the temporary inhabitants of her home. The city in the novel may thus be read as a locus classicus of modernity; its spaces are contested and

transmutable, its time is regulated by the working hours of each day, and its diverse, heterogeneous population is regulated by the economic ties between them.[38]

Nearly every action and interaction in *A Fine Balance* is articulated through an urban discourse, and the city defines its inhabitants through their location and social position in its vast, striated social order. Conversely, it also draws its multitudinous population into an anonymous pool of labour, in which the individual functions solely as a cog in the wheels of the urban mechanism. In the prologue, the initial introductions between the tailors and Maneck are conducted in a crowded train compartment. As a threshold space between the country and the city, the train is a symbol of change, of movement, of escape and new beginnings, a spectacle of social mingling which functions as a transition point in all their lives. The city of Bombay is evoked by both the tailors and Maneck as a vast, ugly, and disorienting space which is unfavourably contrasted against their native village and town.

> "I've been living in this city for two months," said Maneck, "but it's so huge and confusing. I can recognize only some big streets. The little lanes look all the same." [...]
>
> "We have also come for a short time only," said Ishvar. "To earn some money, then go back to our village. What is the use of such a big city? Noise and crowds, no place to live, water scarce, garbage everywhere. Terrible." (*AFB*, p. 7)

This conversation immediately locates their commonality as migrants to the city, by cutting through the social divisions that otherwise separate them. These divisions are once again invoked in their relations with Dina, who as landlord and employer exercises a distancing authority upon them. They are dismantled yet again with the onset of the Emergency during which the city filters into almost every aspect of their private and working lives, as its authoritarian mandates bring about a collapse of the fundamental rights to personal liberty and private space. The interiors of Dina's flat become a sanctuary which provides shelter to the tailors when they face homelessness and dispossession on the outside. It also creates an alternative social community between the four protagonists in which Dina functions as the benevolent

mother-figure, substituting the normative familial order which is evoked in more traditional spaces such as the village by the river and the mountain-hamlet.[39]

1.7 Commerciality and urban semiotics

Bombay, which represents the vast exterior world, is not celebrated as a hub of progressive modernity by Mistry; rather it is described as a labyrinthine dystopia, made more threatening and unfamiliar by the various impositions and excesses of the Emergency. The city in the 1970s was a port of confluence for the nation's diasporic community; its thriving commercial environment and metropolitan buzz held great appeal for outsiders, who flocked to Bombay with the hope of finding their fortunes. *A Fine Balance* is, however, unstinting in its depiction of the grim realities which constituted the urban framework, and illustrates the hazardous nature of city-living for people of all social classes and communities at the time. For Maneck Kohlah, the young lodger who takes up residence with Dina, 'the most modern and cosmopolitan city in the whole world' is harshly alienating as it offers a dystopic counter-environment to the one in the northern hill-station he is familiar with (*AFB*, p. 222). Judith T. Kenny describes hill-stations in India as 'misplaced relics of India's colonial past' in an essay which analyzes their symbolic landscape, and Mistry poignantly explores the psychological disorientation of its inhabitants in the wake of Independence and its troubled aftermath through the lives of the Kohlah family.[40] Their family home, tethered precariously to the side of the mountain with cables, is an unsettling allusion to the dysfunctionality which characterizes its members, who are divided by their varying responses to an invasive political and economic modernity. Social interaction between members of the older generation is characterized by the observance of certain ritualistic patterns inherited from their fastidious imperial rulers, which helps maintain the equilibrium in their changing lives.

> When these retired brigadiers, majors and colonels came to tea at the Kohlahs', they arrived suited and booted, as they called it, with watches in their fobs and ties around their necks. These trappings might have seemed comical to a nationalistic bent of mind but had talismanic value for their

wearers. It was all that stood between them and the disorder knocking on the door (*AFB*, p. 209).

In *Midnight's Children*, the handover of a colonial legacy in the form of the Methwold Estate forces the Sinai family to adopt certain ritualistic practices within the space of their home; these practices however, do not provide a sense of continuity and are instead extremely disorienting. In *A Fine Balance*, Maneck Kohlah is Mistry's response to the conflicting pressures of stasis and traditionalism in the wake of India's independence, and the new political ideology which was disseminated during the Emergency by the Gandhian administration. His business initiative in the light of the 'Coca-colonization' of his family enterprise, displays a keen understanding of the modern commercial imperatives that were necessary to survive the competitive world outside. Opposed to his father's unyielding traditionalism and the insular domesticity of his home-town, Maneck is both enlightened by his experiences in Bombay, and increasingly estranged from his family, as the vicissitudes of big-city living disrupt the coherence of his familial narrative. Despite his relative affluence and privileged status in Mistry's grand narrative of subalternity, as a migrant in the city, Maneck is unable to reconcile the different ethical systems which prevail in his home-town and in Bombay. This estrangement is reiterated by his experiences in Dubai, a further displacement that creates not only a physical distance between him and his family, but psychologically isolates him from all that is familiar and apprehensible. The death of his father symbolizes the end of an extreme conservatism, while that of his friend Avinash is a harsh reminder of the futility of revolutionary idealism in the face of a crushing modernity. Maneck's decision to end his life on the railways tracks represents the ironic circularity of the narrative, which begins and ends in a train station.

The railway and its precincts have a significant spatial function in Mistry's urban narrative, as they are an extension of the slum colony in which Ishvar and Om temporarily reside. The notion of private space ceases to exist in the slums, as overcrowding and ghettoization lead to enforced intimacy between members of a marginal community. Private rituals such as one's morning ablutions are conducted in the open, and the railway tracks are the performative space in which a collective corporeality is enacted.[41] The Bakhtinian undertones which shadow Mistry's writing

are exposed once again, through the foregrounding of the grotesque lower body in a public space. Ishvar, Om, and their friend Rajaram, are the chief actors in this scatological circus, in which the tailors receive instruction on how to use the public forum.

> "The steel rail is very useful," said their neighbour. "Works just like a platform. Puts you higher than the ground, and the shit doesn't tickle your behind when it piles up."

> "You know all the tricks, for sure," said Om, as they undid their pants and assumed their positions on the rail (*AFB*, p. 168).

The provisional slum community which the tailors are a part of is a reproduction and reflection of the village fraternity which they have left behind. Ashis Nandy comments on this phenomenon, by observing that 'the slum recreates the remembered village in a new guise and resurrects the old community ties in new forms. Even traditional faiths, piety and kinship ties survive in the slums, wearing disguises paradoxically supplied by their own massified versions'.[42] Despite the bonhomie which they share with other members of the slum, for Ishvar and Om, the tailors from the village, the city is bewildering in its vastness and the unexpected violence which manifests itself in the many indignities that they are subjected to on account of its intense political climate. Their brief stint as pavement dwellers exposes them to the viciousness which is inherent in the struggle for survival. Crime is rampant in the city, and goes by unnoticed as 'the streets [are] accustomed to the caterwauling of lonely lunatics and the howling of disillusioned dipsomaniacs' (*AFB*, p. 484).

Inhabitants of the metropolis are also victims of an obsessive materialism which arises out of a relentless trade ethic and commercial enterprise, and Rajaram, the hair-collector, is a true embodiment of this characteristic. Even the Beggarman, another grotesque and relatively empowered figure in the narrative, is notorious for being a slave to his wealth as he is always accompanied by a briefcase full of money, chained firmly to the wrist. Nonetheless, for its migrant population, the city as the archetypal postcolonial space of dreams and opportunities represents urbanity and a chance to circumvent rigid social hierarchies. The onus of success, however, rests upon the

individual's desire to make the most of his prospects; as one of the characters very intuitively observes – 'In a huge city like this there is work even for a corpse. But you have to want it and look for it seriously' (*AFB*, p. 329). The terrifying wisdom of his words is evidenced in the last chapter of the novel which locates Ishvar and Om as a pair of crippled beggars, foraging for alms on the city streets, the victims of a debilitating political environment.

In the city, the decrees of the Emergency rely on their visibility through posters, signs, and billboards, which become crucially embedded in the urban discourse that directs the lives of the tailors and other similarly dispossessed characters.[43] The metropolis functions as an interface of negotiation between its migrant inhabitants and the political circumstances with which they are confronted. It is an urban space which fosters amongst its inhabitants a sense of the 'natio' – a local community, domicile, family, a state of belonging.[44] To cultivate this national spirit amongst a dispirited people the city is interspersed with billboards and hoardings which bear motivational slogans and political injunctions. These modern urban signifiers are initially used by the migrant villagers as street markers; the signs for *Amul Butter* and *Modern Bread* are not merely commercial posters but civic guides as well, aiding Ishvar and Om in remembering their route back home from work. As slum dwellers the tailors do not have a fixed address and the precise location of their hutment can only be identified by its neighbouring areas and other prominent landmarks. As the Emergency gains impetus, the cityscape is inundated with images of the Prime Minister and her directives, which replace all familiar landmarks and are alienating in their severity. The city becomes a hostile space, intimidating the tailors, whose tentative acquaintance with their environment is disrupted yet again.

Another administrative strategy to contain the city's teeming population is also effected through the language of the billboards which emphasize the necessity of cleansing the city. This cleansing is achieved through the eviction of the dispossessed and unproductive members of the city by the demolition of public encroachments such as slums and hutments. The Government attempts to validate its slum eradication drives by invoking a sense of place-identity and national pride amongst its bourgeois inhabitants; the razing of tenements is advocated as a measure towards creating a particular aesthetics of the cityscape while its new policies are indicative of

a nation on the path of progress. When Ishvar and Om return to their slum colony, recently devastated by bulldozers, they are faced with two large hoardings erected by the wrecking crew on the site which was previously their home. The messages on the boards declare 'The City Belongs To You! Keep It Beautiful' and 'The Nation Is On The Move', urging a commitment to the country and its welfare (*AFB*, p. 303). The second message is especially ironic in its signification for the slum dwellers; while the national agenda is focused on progress and development through a civic beautification drive, it implies a literal shift, a dislocation for the inhabitants of the colony. Their itinerant lifestyle is of little consequence to the Government, which is concerned with the larger issues of public propaganda and the retention of power. Mistry makes his point very subtly through yet another public message which declares patriotism to be a 'scared duty'; the typographical error is in fact entirely correct, as the city's impoverished are coerced to attend public meetings and comply with the Government's authoritarian regime (*AFB*, p. 281).

The Emergency is however characterized by one essential slogan, the populist axiom of *anushasan parva* which indicates that the 'need of the hour is Discipline' (*AFB*, p. 74). In the national agenda, Discipline is indicative of ideological restraint, the need to ignore superstition and blind traditionalism and accelerate the modern processes which inform all aspects of urban life as envisioned by Indira Gandhi's government; pedagogical signs assert the sanctity of patriotic duty, forced sterilization camps and the arbitrary destruction of slums control overpopulation, press censorship ensures a curbing of oppositional writing, while the wanton detention of people instils a fear of the authorities amongst a rebellious crowd. In the text, however, the city appears to subvert this imposition of Discipline through its role as a performative space of enunciation; it grants the individual the enunciatory power of movement or migration within the city, which challenges the containment of people and their activities that the pedagogical aspects of a disciplinary regime seek to achieve.[45] This inherent tension between the performative and the pedagogical is articulated by Homi Bhabha in an essay which attempts to frame a national narrative by locating its people as both historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy and contemporary 'subjects' of a performative present.[46]

Discipline has different connotations for the other characters in the novel - for business agents like Mrs. Gupta, it is a necessary remedial measure to check the unprofessional work ethic that is prevalent in the textile industry, while the Kohlahs and their friends adhere to their version of it, which maintains an orderly scheme of things and keeps chaos at bay. The novel seeks to question and compromise this very ideal of Discipline, by weighing the opportunities it throws up against the turmoil it unleashes. Discipline is perhaps not the best answer for an unstable government, which itself is in urgent need of restraint. Mistry's alternative to a regimented world is, however, equally abysmal, as he urges the reader to imagine 'six hundred million raging, howling, sobbing humans' who occupy a landscape devastated by complete chaos (*AFB*, p. 229). This then is a picture of the extreme ambivalence which marks the period of autocratic rule in India, and one wonders how it might be possible to maintain 'a fine balance between hope and despair' as encouraged by the sagely character Vasantrao Valmik, under such bleak circumstances (*AFB*, p. 230).

1.8 Fabricating urban identities

Despite the rather dismal images which underline the sensibility of the novel, it would be incorrect to describe Mistry's narrative as entirely grim. The novel, like its title, is an exploration of the fine balance between opportunities and misfortunes, empowerment and dispossession, discipline and intemperance, and the spatial binaries of the public and the private. These are brought into confrontation by the interaction of the different social groups in the novel, which leads to familiarity with the unknown and a tolerance of the undesirable. This tolerance occurs to a great extent during Dina's cohabitation with the tailors, whom she considers accommodating within the space of her apartment, after experiencing the adverse environment in the city outside. Reminiscent of Bimala from Tagore's *Ghare Baire*, Dina, when she ventures into the sphere of the public and allows it to permeate into her own home, is only then able to contend with the disruptive twin forces of destiny and modernity.[47] During her search for tailors to employ in her business, she is confronted with the squalor that distinguishes the more impoverished sections of the city from the middle-class environs which she is familiar with. Bombay's underbelly is described in a poignant Yeatsian analogue as Mistry employs the fetid image of a blackened cesspit to emphasize the filth which stains the cityscape, also drawing

upon the urban trope of the 'underground man' as being representative of this other-world.[48]

> Then a boy emerged out of the earth, clinging to the end of the rope. He was covered in the slippery sewer sludge, and when he stood up, he shone and shimmered in the sun with a terrible beauty. His hair, stiffened by the muck, flared from his head like a crown of black flames. Behind him, the slum smoke curled towards the sky, and the hellishness of the place was complete (*AFB*, p. 67).

As a literary motif in nineteenth century European literature such as Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, the underground man was a melodramatic rendition of the city's poor and an explicit reference to the class struggles that shaped the urban landscape.[49] The sewer from which the boy emerges in Mistry's narrative is clearly a lowly space of degradation and filth. Hugo describes the sewer, home to the underground man, as 'the conscience of the town where all things converge and clash'.[50] In a similar vein, Dina becomes cognizant of the extreme conditions which separate the tailors and their wretched slum existence from the relative comforts of her humble abode. The figure of the underground man is set against a grotesque image of corporeal disease and decay, and the proliferation of slum colonies which inundate the city, further highlight the disparity of living conditions between Dina and her employees.

> Splotches of pale moonlight revealed an endless stretch of patchwork shacks, the sordid quiltings of plastic and cardboard and paper and sackcloth, like scabs and blisters creeping in a dermatological nightmare across the rotting body of the metropolis (*AFB*, p. 379).

Peter Morey observes, that 'Mistry's focus on the body, the messiness of its functions and its inevitable corruption, emerges from, but offers a striking contrast to, the traditional Zoroastrain obsession with corporeal purity which is at the heart of several of his characters' aversions to the outside world'.[51] The heightened awareness of the abysmal outside, and her reliance on the labour it generates, urge Dina to invite the tailors to reside temporarily within the sheltered confines of her flat.

The most tender and hope-inspiring moments of the narrative are situated within Dina's home, which despite its shabby interiors is much more pleasant and

accommodating than the festering cityscape. While the external city is transformed into an inhospitable terrain under the decrees of Indira Gandhi's welfare programs, Dina's role as an independent nurturer of her adoptive family is far more sincere and secular-nationalist in its endeavour. The divisive class politics which were previously central to the exacting regime of Indira Gandhi's nationalism, and that informed the urban codes imposed upon the tailors, are provisionally suspended within Dina's home.[52] The novel ultimately traces the tailors' trajectory from disorientation in the city to orientation within the home, by employing the pervasive metaphor of fabrication to counter the unravelling social fabric of the country in the wake of the Emergency. The cohesive interweaving of diverse colours and patterns in Dina's multicoloured patchwork quilt is almost pedagogical in its function as a signifier of unity in the midst of diversity. It is suggestive of the hybridity that characterizes a modern and secular nation, and as its creator, Dina is implicated in the role of a nurturer of diversity within the space of her home. This tolerant cohabitation serves to emphasize the undemocratic and tenuous social environment on the outside, which is temporarily counterbalanced by the structure and order provided by Dina on the inside. The metaphor of motherhood is regenerated in its more productive forms within the space of the home through the tale of the quilt, and it functions as a powerful symbol of connection between the various characters and themes in the novel. The making of the quilt also signifies a continuation of the largely female tradition of sewing and needlework, which binds Ruby, Dina and Shirin Aunty together in the beginning of the novel.[53] This tradition is inherited by the tailors and Maneck afterwards, and their collective endeavour to create a beautiful patchwork covering, fosters a sense of unity between them amidst the surrounding chaos.

The term 'fabrication' can also loosely be associated with the imagination or inventiveness, which is Om's recourse to the disillusionment that shrouds his life in the city. In a conversation with Maneck he reminisces – 'If time were a bolt of cloth…I would cut out all the bad parts. Snip out the scary nights and stitch together the good parts, to make time bearable' (*AFB*, p. 310). His tailoring fantasies are however constrained by the actuality of his impoverished circumstances which are aggravated by the political situation in which he is caught up. Om represents a case of extreme dispossession, where even the ability to narrate himself out of a situation is frustrated by its grim reality. For Maneck, the quilt represents the anarchic

conditions which prevail in the city; its colourful pattern is disorienting and the evident dissimilarity in the pieces of cloth is starker than ever. The fate of his friends, the tailors, is marked by a cruel arbitrariness which makes him ponder philosophically upon destiny and divinity.

> …I prefer to think that God is a giant quiltmaker. With an infinite variety of designs. And the quilt's grown so big and confusing, the pattern is impossible to see, the squares and diamonds and triangles don't fit well together anymore, it's all become meaningless. So He has abandoned it (*AFB*, p. 340).

Like everything else in the narrative, the parable of the quilt is also shaped by the political miasma which renders the tailors as crippled beggars, with only the piece of fabric to assuage their rough livelihood. The emergence of the tattered quilt at the end of the narrative seems to suggest that for Mistry it is a symbol of hope, an allegorical reference to the city which endures the disintegration of national structures and the pressures of an incursive political modernity.

The metaphor of fabrication can then perhaps be read as a thematic relation between the two texts which are evoked in this chapter. The emergence of a modern consciousness, which is mapped through Aadam Aziz's diasporic and fragmented vision of the nation, and is represented by the metaphor of the perforated sheet, can be traced to Saleem's burden of a postcolonial legacy which results in his 'unlovely self coming apart at the seams', and finally culminates in the narrative of the quilt, which despite its state of disrepair, is not destroyed altogether. This expansive trajectory illustrates the inadequacies which were frequently associated with the processes of modernity in India, especially during the post-Emergency era that led to the dissolution of the national fabric (Aadam's inner void and Saleem's corporeal disintegration). *Midnight's Children* and *A Fine Balance* also recognize the diversified nature of modern postcolonial urban societies as being an affirmative counteractive force to overcome these shortcomings, as demonstrated by the metaphor of the patchwork quilt. It is extremely significant that both Rushdie's and Mistry's narratives begin and end in the city of Bombay, a principal literary landscape that negotiates and develops distinctly Indian registers of modernity, during a period when the failure of national institutions to do the same is glaringly apparent. The location of this

modernity both within and in opposition to the discourse of tradition is the other emphasis of this chapter, and the home and the family are important tropes that contribute towards both sustaining and complicating the idea of tradition in India. These social institutions are further explored in their discursive forms in the next chapter, which identifies the postcolonial migrant as being a quintessential figure of modernity in urban discourses. Finally, while 'Fragmented Fictions' studies migrant trajectories within a national framework, 'Unsettling the Cityzen' extends this vision to a transnational setting by looking at journeys both to and from the city of Bombay.

Chapter 2

Unsettling the Cityzen: Migration, Translation and Unhomeliness in *The Satanic Verses* and *Baumgartner's Bombay*

Journey as a metaphor, however, can also be a way of bearing witness: psychogeographically, it is almost always an expedition to the borders of the self.

Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City*[1]

By translation I first of all mean a process by which, in order to objectify cultural meaning, there always has to be a process of alienation and secondariness *in relation to itself*. In that sense there is no 'in itself' and 'for itself' within cultures as they are always subject to intrinsic forms of translation.

Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Third Space'[2]

2.1 Landscapes of modernity

In 'Fragmented Fictions', the city of Bombay as a metonym for the nation is the principal geographical and social landscape that shapes the fractured development of a postcolonial consciousness amongst its inhabitants. Many of these transient 'citizens' arrive as migrants to the city, creating a dialogic interaction between other geographical locations, their social codes and customs, and the prevailing urban environment. In both *Midnight's Children* and *A Fine Balance*, the traditional division between the country and the city is initially constructed only to be later dismantled, as the city functions as a panoptic space which is riddled with its own engaging internal divisions. The cultural logic of modern Indian cities is now determined by the divisions of space and class *within* the city, partly created and exacerbated by the

conflictual political climate during the period of Emergency rule in India. Under the autocratic regime of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi described by both Rushdie and Mistry in their writings, the public spaces of the city and their provisional residents are subjected to modernizing civic reforms, which create severe upheavals and disorientation. 'Unsettling the Cityzen' is a continuum of the major themes and tropes employed in first section of the thesis and interrogates the transitional stages of postcolonial modernity in India through the archetypal figure of the migrant – whose experiences are similarly coded in social, spatial and ideological dislocations.

Homi Bhabha perceptively observes in relation to the migrant condition that 'culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational', and draws upon the 'fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West' as an instance of the far-reaching effects of spatial and cultural displacement in contemporary societies.[3] In this section, Bombay is integrated within a wider geographical ambit of world cities such as London and Berlin, creating a transnational urban trajectory in which the Indian countryside ceases to have much relevance. The specific cultural patterns and contexts which distinguish each of these cities are not easily translatable from one urban space to another, and this chapter seeks to locate modernity within the frictional interstices of 'otherness' and difference that are typically inhabited by the figure of the migrant. In *The Satanic Verses* (1998), the incommensurability between different cultures is interrogated through the two main protagonists, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, whose experiences in a Western metropolitan environment crucially interrupt and redefine their relationship with their city (Bombay) and country (India) of origin. Gibreel and Saladin embody the 'repressed histories' of Bhabha's discourse; their postcolonial presence in London 'changes the politics of the metropolis, its cultural ideologies and its intellectual traditions'. As individuals who have experienced a colonial culture through their marginalized status as 'immigrants' in the West, Gibreel and Saladin function as incendiary postcolonial agents who 'displace some of the great metropolitan narratives of progress and law and order, and question the authority and authenticity of those narratives'.[4]

In the case of both the characters, the 'psychogeographical' terrain or the map of the mind is reconfigured in various ways; initially, to accommodate the vicissitudes of

a new environment, one with which they have been ideologically acquainted even before an actual physical displacement occurs, and afterwards, to establish Bombay as a contesting narrative space which offers alternate and contrapuntal routes to modernity. At the very beginning of the novel, this alternative modernity is achieved through a subversion of language, the most slippery and elusive of cultural signifiers – through the resonant verses of a Hindi song, which playfully and deliberately invoke the many cultural references that are misplaced during the process of its translation into English.

Mera joota hai Jaapani	O, my shoes are Japanese
yeh patloon Englistani	these trousers English, if you please
sar pe laal topi Russi	on my head, red Russian hat
phir bhi dil hai Hindustani…	my heart's Indian for all that…[5]

These lyrics were immortalized by the Chaplinesque migrant figure in Raj Kapoor's epic Hindi film, *Shri Charsawbees* or *Shri 420* (1955), whose transition from his native village to the postcolonial city of Bombay is heralded through song.[6] The nationalistic strains that echo through the verse are indicative of the anxieties of cultural identity and a newly imposed consciousness of 'being Indian' in the wake of Independence. Three decades later, Gibreel Farishta, the transmigrant protagonist of Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), generates his own version of the song, as he plummets towards the distant waters of the English Channel from an exploding aircraft.[7] The typically satirical image of a postcolonial subject declaiming his national allegiance, albeit in the colonizer's language, and during the course of his descent into the colonizer's country, is Rushdie's reminder of the ongoing struggle of decolonization which manifests itself in this instance through language, and the multiplicity of cultural and political allusions that are implicit in the fall.

Through Gibreel's translation of the old song into English 'in semi-conscious deference to the uprushing host-nation', we are introduced to the theme of migration-as-translation, which offers us a metaphorical framework through which we might study displacement in cities across the world (*SV*, p. 5). Undeniably, 'the migration of peoples is perhaps the definitive characteristic of the twentieth century,

and in crucial ways diasporic identities have come to represent much of the experience of postcoloniality'.[8] *The Satanic Verses* abounds with narratives of migration, of homeless, sojourning, 'translated men' who are 'borne across the world' and experience profound unsettlement in their attempts to integrate within new environments, cultures, languages, food habits and other social customs which they encounter in their adopted lands.[9] This chapter intends to look at various contexts (colonial, postcolonial, global, racial, linguistic) that arise out of studying migration-as-translation in Rushdie's novel, focusing specifically upon the urban centres of Bombay and London which function as the nodal points between journeys.

Inherent in the discourse of migration are also the ideas of dis-location, unbelonging, unhomeliness and untranslatability, which find expression in another powerful novel published at the same time as *The Satanic Verses*. *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) by Anita Desai is an evocative portrayal of Jewish diasporic experiences during the Holocaust, and focuses on Hugo Baumgartner, a hopelessly displaced and multiply marginalized character who seeks refuge in colonial Bombay.[10] Desai's unusual heritage (Indo-Germanic) is significant in her depiction of Hugo as an essentially untranslated man - like Rushdie, she uses rhymes and songs which are disjunctive in their language and imagery, and signify the alienation that Hugo is subjected to, both during his childhood as *der Jude* in Germany and in his adult life as a *firanghi* in India. The two novels poignantly outline the lives of migrant subjects, whom Ashis Nandy has called in his rather confrontational essay on 'State, History and Exile in South Asian Politics', 'contemporary symbols' that dwell in a state of 'psychosocial displacement that has become endemic to modernizing societies'.[11] The city of Bombay is central to the novels of Rushdie and Desai in both its colonial and postcolonial stages; as the prototypical Oriental land which is portrayed as an extreme contrast to the pre-war Germany of Hugo's childhood, and as the originary Indian metropolis, home to Gibreel and Saladin, which arises to confront its Western counterpart (London) with the mutuality of historical circumstances that define their antagonistic relationship. A study of arrivals and departures, this chapter develops upon my previous study of Bombay as a port of bustling commercial activity which attracts a floating pool of migrant labourers, whose acceptance into urban society can be a difficult and fraught process (described in my reading of *A Fine Balance* in Chapter 1). I study this influx of labour in conjunction with narratives of outward

migration and expatriation, as both involve the often incomplete transition or 'translation' of modern urban subjects, cultural codes, values, and processes. Finally, I revisit ideas of the home that were discussed in the Introduction and correlate them with their disintegration by means of such notions as 'unhomeliness' and 'unbelonging'.[12]

2.2 The poetics of being born(e) across in *The Satanic Verses*

Both the processes of migration and translation have been identified as powerful metaphors of the postcolonial condition, that allow new and alternative ways of countering dominant narratives of the nation, nationalism and nativism. Rushdie himself notes that 'migration offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age. The very word *metaphor*, with its roots in the Greek words for *bearing across*, describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants – borne across humans – are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as metaphor, is everywhere around us' (*IH*, p. 278). Similarly, the etymological roots of 'translation', *translatio* (Latin) and *metapherein* (Greek), gesture towards movement, dislocation and displacement, thereby tying into the migratory patterns that emerge from Rushdie and Desai's texts.[13] In her study of Derrida's proposal of the notion of 'transformation' as a more adequate replacement for the term 'translation', Jaina C. Sanga argues for a semantic and etymological connection between the words 'translation' and 'metaphor', as they both suggest the idea of transference or transposition.[14] While thus constructing the metaphorical framework within which both these modes operate (migration as a mode between habitats, and translation as a mode between languages), it is also necessary to examine the significance of the postcolonial condition in Gibreel's song.[15] Tejaswini Niranjana observes that 'in a post-colonial context the problematic of *translation* becomes a significant site for raising questions of representation, power and historicity', and while Gibreel's claim to an inviolately subcontinental identity may be as powerful and assertive as Raju's in *Shri Charsawbees*, it is imperative to discuss the associated discourses that are revealed through the song's translation into the English language (*ST*, p. 1).

Rashmi Varma comments upon Gibreel's song as being 'both an evocation of film as the alternative reality of Bombay, and the calling of attention to another moment…the representation of Bombay as a global city'.[16] Her interpretation

necessarily demands the reader to be familiar with Indian cinema and the village-city binaries that are evoked in Kapoor's film, thereby establishing both the impact of Bollywood cinema in urban India, and the emergence of Bombay as the epicentre of commercial prosperity and postcolonial development. While speaking of the contradictions between 'aggressive nationalism' and 'the unified global market' that are implicit in the lyrics of the song, Srinivas Aravamudan also speaks of the local nuances which the English translation fails to relay, again, demanding the reader to be conversant with Indian films and the Hindi language. He writes, 'the number "420", an inside joke between Rushdie and his readership on the Indian subcontinent, is more crucial to understanding this book than several other frequently untranslated, and untranslatable, colloquialisms, allusions and sprinkling of choice Hindi epithets'.[17] A reference to the section of the Indian Penal Code which covers fraud and confidence tricks, the number '420' is a central thematic in the opening scene of *The Satanic Verses*, as Gibreel invokes the old Hindi film *Shri Charsawbees* during his spectacular descent from the aircraft, Bostan AI-420.

The number alludes to the fraudulent nature of Gibreel and Saladin's lives in London as they struggle to cope with cultural displacement and traces of an absentee colonialism; while the former takes on the role of the Archangel Gibreel, translating prophecies and transmogrifying places as his dreaming and waking lives converge, Saladin attempts to translate his life, 'a half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices', into that of a 'goodandproper' Englishman (*SV*, pp. 9, 43). Their miraculous escape from the exploding aircraft is marred by the grotesque nature of events which follow, as both Gibreel and Saladin are severely victimized and alienated because of the duplicitous nature of their reappearance in London. Also, by depicting the experiences of the archetypal migrant through a tale of satirical parody, Rushdie confuses and deludes the reader himself, by creating fantastical characters, elaborate dream sequences, and parallel narrative structures in his novel. *The Satanic Verses*, then, may be described in Ashis Nandy's words - as a celebration of ' journeys into madness and out of it, journeys in self-exploration and self-realization, even journeys into another world – into heaven, hell and the nether world', in the search of one's untranslatable and repressed selves.[18]

As Rushdie himself observes, it is generally believed that something is always lost in translation (*IH*, p. 17).[19] One of the most significant images that Gibreel's song fails to convey (unless one is familiar with cinematic context) is that of Raju, the original migrant in Kapoor's film, who is represented as a clownish figure in his tattered patchwork suit, well worn out shoes, red Russian hat, and with a Chaplinesque demeanour to complement his attire. The image of the carefree, jester-figure conjured by the song creates a carnivalesque environment, wherein the migrant traveller is unrestricted by social codes and habitations, disrupting the settled and the conformist, and providing social commentary during his itinerant experiences. Rashmi Varma's reading of the cinematic text focuses specifically on Raju's clothing, as she develops the idea of 'fabrication' which implies both a reinvention of the self (self-fashioning) and the production of falsehood (fraud). The notion of the migrant as a transgressive clown-figure is furthered by Rushdie in his novel, as he repeatedly conjures images of devilishness, evil and trickery that both the migrant-protagonists are associated with.   In keeping with the '420' theme, Gibreel and Saladin are portrayed as mimic men and imposters, who can never truly be what they seek to emulate; they are cast in the image of the *babu*, who, like the clown, is a deviant freak, mocking his own people and culture from behind a painted mask of pretensions.[20] They are however permitted through their transgressions to depict the true plight of immigrants in a racially segregated country, and like Raju, provide insightful comments on urban migration.

The clown is an important symbolic figure in Rushdie's fiction, socially marginalized, yet empowered by his inherent contrariness which playfully questions the norm. David Robb, in his introduction to *Clowns, Fools and Picaros*, elaborates upon the historical function of the clown, a description, which in many ways, aligns him with the migrant. He writes, 'the clown, like its extended family of fools, jesters, picaros and tricksters, has a variety of functions all focused around its status and image of being "other". The clown's illusiveness, hybridity or transmutability, may form a critical counterpart to rigid social homogeneity or ideological dogma; its mask may serve as a projection of a society's illusions or repressed utopian longings'.[21] In *The Satanic Verses*, Osman the clown in the village of Titlipur, is the only one who voices his scepticism of the prophetess Ayesha's vision of a mass pilgrimage to the sea, indignantly shouting his views until he is silenced by the elders. As a convert and

a new member of the village, Osman is reminded of his peripheral status by the community leader, and cheekily repudiates him; we are reminded of Rushdie's constant resistance towards dominant and repressive narratives, as he permits his clown-figure the liberties of interruptive speech, thereby commenting upon the unjust treatment meted out to new settlers. It is also interesting to observe that through Osman's tactical conversion to Islam and his disbelief of Ayesha's visionary powers, Rushdie makes a provocative comment on religion and faith, which is perhaps overshadowed by the more controversial incident of the satanic verses that is directly linked to the novel's infamous reception. Osman's last words before the fateful pilgrimage to Mecca reveal his questioning attitude towards blind faith and the absurdities of human behaviour, that obscure the division between the clown's madness and the villagers' apparent sanity. "'Who is madder," Osman the clown whispered into his bullock's ear as he groomed it in its small byre, "the madwoman, or the fool who loves the madwoman?"' (*SV*, p. 240)

Another interpretation of Gibreel's song which draws upon the essentially patriotic sentiments that both the original and the translated versions communicate, is Jaina C. Sanga's reading. She writes, 'the song is significant because it could be considered Rushdie's theme song through the novels. It explicates a sentiment that truly captures the essence of Rushdie's writing; that is, for all the references to and borrowing from a Western literary tradition, the emotional colouring of Rushdie's writing, at heart, like Gibreel's in *The Satanic Verses*, and Raj Kapoor's in *Shree 420*, remains uncannily Indian' (*PM*, p. 98). Although Sanga elaborates upon the complexities of 'Indianness' which is a problematic diversity in itself, she alludes primarily to Rushdie's other novels while developing her argument of hybridity as an important metaphor of the postcolonial condition. I would like to focus, however, on what 'being Indian' means in *The Satanic Verses*, and how it is inextricably connected to the discourses of migration and translation between and within cities. For Kapoor, the legendary actor and director of *Shri Charsawbees*, and famed novelist Rushdie, the city of Bombay plays a definitive role in shaping their national consciousnesses, and functions as a dynamic cinematic and literary landscape in their works, frequently mirroring the quintessential migrant condition. Popular cinema functions as an archive of the postcolonial city in many of Kapoor's films, such as

Awara (1951) and *Boot Polish* (1954), translating nationalist sentiments into a sense of identification with the urban.

Similarly, as a multiply displaced writer, Rushdie's affiliation with India is primarily sustained through his recollections of Bombay, as the city of his childhood, and as an emerging centre of modernity in the aftermath of Independence. In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie interrogates the essentially mutable concept of Indianness which is affected greatly by locational displacements, and is seen in the cases of both Gibreel and Saladin. At the beginning of the novel, we are made aware through Gibreel's song of his deference to England, which he ironically refers to as the 'host-nation', although the country is portrayed as being extremely alienating and inhospitable in later chapters. The latent acknowledgement of a colonial relationship underlies Gibreel's sense of Indianness, and is disjunctive with the lyrics of his essentially patriotic song. Gibreel's postcolonial and national consciousnesses later manifest themselves through his transmogrifying powers, which he employs in the act of 'tropicalizing' London. The significance of his endeavour to change the weather, one of the most inherent signs of national difference, is Rushdie's comment on the various ways of 'being Indian'; in this instance, through the attempt to translate an unfamiliar environment into a known space. The question of Indianness and a culturally determined selfhood is articulated at length in the interaction between Saladin and his lover-friend, Zeeny Vakil, whose 'eclecticism' and 'hybridity' are rooted very firmly in Bombay, the city of their origin; her preoccupation with the Good Indian and the Bad Indian do not find favour with Saladin's internationalism and his claim to modernity that he is a different type of Indian, a translated man (*SV*, p. 288). In a rephrasing of the central question which resonates throughout the novel, Rushdie provocatively asks his readers 'What kind of Indian are you', thereby revealing the diverse and mutually untranslatable manifestations of Indianness.[22]

2.3 Mimicry, man and the metropolis

Charles Trevelyan, brother-in-law of British colonial administrator, Lord Macaulay, wrote of the Indians, in his treatise on educational measures adopted by the government in India, that 'the summit of their ambition is, to resemble us'.[23] The discourse of colonial mimicry has been described by Homi Bhabha as being a double edged tool, in that, while it was an effective strategy of colonial administration, it also

functioned as a strategy of resistance for the postcolonial subject. The 'ambivalence' of mimicry in which a 'subject of difference is almost the same but not quite' was profoundly unsettling for the colonial authorities. This mimetic representation was in itself a 'process of disavowal' and displayed the colonial subject as a reflected partial presence, thereby rupturing the coherence of the imperial narrative and its structures of power.[24] In his satirical portrait of the ultimate mimic-man, Rushdie draws upon these theoretical propositions in the creation of Saladin Chamcha, whose very name epitomizes his emulative character. Chumch, or Spoono, as he is mockingly referred to by his acquaintances, is originally an inhabitant of Bombay, a city described by Rushdie to be 'a culture of remakes', with its imitative architecture and its appropriation of Western classics in the making of its own cinema (*SV*, p. 64). A product of this mimetic environment, Saladin's ultimate ambition is to migrate to the fabled country of *Vilayet*, or England as we know it, the colonizer's land. The metaphor of migration-as-translation plays a crucial part, in Saladin's physical and ideological transformation into a 'goodandproper' Englishman. His life is the embodiment of an ideal immigrant; Saladin sloughs off all traces of an Indian identity in his various attempts to assimilate the culture of his beloved 'Ellowen deeowen London', and watches the city of his birth 'fall away from him like old snake-skin' (*SV*, pp. 33, 37).

Bombay functions both as text and context for Rushdie's portrayal of London, and maps Saladin's journey from Indianness to Englishness. As he observes, 'the distance between cities is always small', often merely an inversion of Time as is illustrated by the manoeuvring of a wrist watch which locates a five and a half hour difference in time between London and Bombay (*SV*, p. 41). The relationship between the cities is constantly revisited by Rushdie, who through his own modern perspective of both, seeks to reconfigure the unequal dynamics of their past association. In a telling metaphor he describes cricket matches between England and India to be invariably drawn, evidence of the eternally unresolved nature of things between the countries of the colonizer and the colonized. Without rejecting the implications of an imperial history, Rushdie questions the immutability of the colonial narrative through the space of the modern city, which is itself a landscape susceptible to change and interpretation, in this instance, by the postcolonial migrant-figure.

With reference to *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie notes, 'I suppose I was writing about a sense of the city as an artificial, invented space which is constantly metamorphosing. It doesn't have roots, it has foundations.'[25] This artificiality can be interpreted differently for both the cities; while Bombay is described as being a mimic-culture in a recurrence of the '420' theme, it is simultaneously portrayed as an authentic site of origins and roots, and home to many of the migrant characters in the novel (*SV*, p. 64).[26] Despite its architectural reformations and cinematic inventions, the fundamental ethic of the city remains unchanged. Bombay is illustrated in vivid detail, as Rushdie celebrates the 'dust', the 'vulgarity', the 'confusion and the superabundance' of the place (*SV*, p. 37). He is unapologetic of the uninhibited and often scandalous ways in which the 'bitch-city' operates, and notoriously describes it as 'the metropolis of tongues and whispers' (*SV*, p. 18, 14). This chaotic landscape is opposed to the artifice of 'poise and moderation' that characterizes the London of Saladin's dreams, both of which are later 'drowned beneath an endless drizzle of greys' that shroud the realities of the capricious and bewildering cityscape of the foreign metropolis (*SV*, p. 354). The 'contemporary realities' of London city include 'nostalgia for imperial glory, amoral free market capitalism, racism and police brutality', and Rushdie is severely critical of 'the exclusionary tactics of Thatcher's Britain' which only serve to emphasize Bombay's secular and hybrid environment.[27] In a narrative which is comically subversive and yet clearly utters its intentionality, Bombay is the real 'locus classicus of incompatible realities', a city which nurtures difference without obscuring identity and whose cosmopolitanism is not irreverent of the traditions which sustain it (*SV*, p. 314).

Meanwhile, Saladin's transmutation into a *Vilayeti* (foreigner) is thought to be complete, after his obsessive pursuance and winning over of the English-woman, Pamela; his marriage to her is the ultimate signifying act which represents a definitive acceptance into a foreign culture and the complete rejection of his Indian identity. However, as an 'Indian translated into English-medium', Saladin has to contend with the slipperiness of language which plays a crucial role in his cultural transition, and is responsible for his occasional lapses into an Indian self-hood (*SV*, p. 58).[28] His friend and lover Zeeny Vakil summarizes his transformation with the scathing words – 'You know what you are, I'll tell you. A deserter is what, more English than, your Angrez accent wrapped around you like a flag, and don't think it's so perfect, it slips,

baba, like a false moustache' (*SV*, p. 53). Rushdie describes the theatricality of Saladin's life as an Englishman, whereby he is merely an actor playing a part. A fleeting yet memorable scene from the novel is one in which Saladin's voice betrays him during a stage performance: 'He tailored his voice to the requirements of the part, but those long-suppressed locutions, those discarded vowels and consonants, began to leak out of his mouth' (*SV*, p. 49).[29]

Rushdie articulates his socio-political considerations of Saladin as a migrant-figure in disguise, observing, in a reiteration of the '420' theme, that we create 'our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us' (*SV*, P. 49). This necessitates a revisiting of the postcolonial contexts which significantly shape the novel, and are essential to the theme of migration-as-translation. Tejaswini Niranjana writes that 'a great task of post-colonial theory (is) attempting to make sense of "subjects" already living "in translation", imaged and re-imaged by colonial ways of seeing' (*ST*, p. 6). She continues by rethinking the potential and uses of translation in the postcolonial context as a strategy of resistance and reclamation.[30] A cleverly subversive novel, *The Satanic Verses* extends the idea of translation as resistance to both its migrant subjects and the spaces they occupy, thereby unmaking the ideological polarities of East and West. As a former member of the British Empire, India in its prevalent constructions and interpretations has been shaped and translated by European discourses of history and the nation, and these Eurocentric frameworks have rarely been contested in the past. Rushdie articulates this concern through a fantastical scene in which a manticore explains the rules to a rapidly transmogrifying Saladin, who is indignant at being incarcerated in a hospital for mutants. The manticore's despairing words, 'They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct', may be construed as a disquieting recognition of the fate of the Eastern metropolis and its migrant subjects, which is largely determined by Western perceptions of the same (*SV*, p. 168).[31] This Eurocentric narrative is echoed in the image of the 'pointing finger' in *Midnight's Children*, which seeks to circumscribe the native within imperial modes of description. Rushdie, as the omniscient authorial voice in *The Satanic Verses*, uses his privilege to invert the power of description and translates his experiences of London/England into images which confound all preconceived notions of the Western world - as is

seen in his particularly unpleasant analogy of the country with a kipper, 'a peculiar-tasting smoked fish, full of spikes and bones' (*SV*, p. 44).

The linguistic challenges of Saladin's cultural migration can be further examined through several theoretical viewpoints about the relationship or difference between languages. Translation theorists such as Louis Kelly (*The True Interpreter*, 1979) or George Steiner (*After Babel*, 1975) describe translation as a dialogue between languages, through which there is a mutual cultural exchange.[32] Their readings are obviously negligent of the colonial context in which any translation is marked by the inherent asymmetry between the languages of the colonizer and the colonized. This asymmetrical relationship is further complicated in the case of Saladin, whereby his 'native language' is complicit with the colonizer's, English being one of the official languages of post-independence India. His transition into an Englishman, then, is contingent upon his accent, which involves undoing the Bombay lilt, and the omission of 'native' words and inflections in the English language (native, referring to other Indian languages). The relationship between languages is analyzed by Walter Benjamin in his noteworthy essay, *The Task of the Translator*, in which he describes the function of translation as expressing the central reciprocal relationship or kinship between languages. He explains the usage of 'kinship' as a means of denoting the fact that languages are interrelated as they supplement each other in their intentions.[33]

The notion of the supplement as used by Derrida has a dual structure, in that it refers to both 'surplus' and 'necessary addition'; in Saladin's case, his English identity is supplemented by his newly cultivated accent, which, however, appears to be superficial when he is back in Bombay.[34] The city unceasingly lays its claims on him in instinctive and unexpected ways, as Saladin finds himself involuntarily slipping into the bastardized language which is typical of the inhabitants of Bombay, and that is positively antipathetic to him when contrasted with 'Proper Vilayet' and its high ground of language. The dissonance between Saladin's 'native' and 'adopted' cultures can perhaps be understood through the idea of *differance*, a neologism coined by Derrida to explain the various factors which contribute to the production of textual meaning.[35] The term is homophonous with the word 'difference', although it refers to both the difference between words and signs, and to the constant deferral of meaning. Saladin's metamorphosis into a 'goodandproper' Englishman is also

continuously deferred, as the cultural differences between India and England repeatedly manifest themselves in his speech. He perceives his return to Bombay as being responsible for these sudden lapses - 'he should have known it was a mistake to go *home*, after so long, how could it be other than a regression; it was an unnatural journey; a denial of time; a revolt against history; the whole thing was bound to be a disaster' (*SV*, p. 34). Saladin is ultimately forced to concede the irreconcilability between the two cities and their cultures, as his transition from one to the other is repeatedly frustrated by the unpredictability of language. We might recall Octavio Paz's theory of translation in the modern ages, in which he observes that 'translation had once served to reveal the preponderance of similarities over differences; from this time forwards, translation would serve to illustrate the irreconcilability of differences, whether these stem from the foreignness of the savage or of our neighbour'.[36]

2.4 Return of the native

For Saladin, and many of the other displaced characters in the novel (immigrants, exiles, expatriates), the idea of a 'homeland' is tenuous and fractured, and often completely at variance with the place they left behind. Bombay, the city of Saladin's childhood, does not engender pleasant memories for him, as a sordid and neglected incident of child abuse is his most compelling association with the city. The experience exacerbates his feeling of claustrophobia in the city – 'it seemed to him that everything loathsome, everything he had come to revile about his home town, had come together in the stranger's bony embrace, and now that he had escaped that evil skeleton he must also escape Bombay, or die' (*SV*, p. 38). Saladin does indeed leave Bombay, only to discover that England, his imagined utopia of 'fair play, cricket matches, beauteous green countryside and palatial mansions', is repressive, discriminatory, alienating, and completely inhospitable to outsiders; Rushdie creates a dystopic tension between Saladin's native and adopted lands, which increasingly fragments his sense of self and renders the notion of 'home' as entirely elusive (*Mongrel Selves*, p. 80). In the essay 'Imaginary Homelands', Rushdie speaks of his own experiences of dislocation, mentioning that 'sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times we fall between two stools'; in the novel, Saladin appears to

occupy the latter position, as his sense of stable selfhood is utterly confounded by his lack of identification with either country (*IH*, p. 15).

Returning to the idea of the 'homeland', we observe that Saladin's relationship with the city of his birth is described in varying degrees of belonging and unbelonging. This contradiction is brought about by his unceasing quest for 'connections between filiation and affiliation' during visits back to Bombay, and is discussed at great length in Amina Yaqin's essay on 'Family and Gender in Rushdie's Writing'.[37] The terms 'filiation' and 'affiliation' were brought into dialogue by Edward Said, who suggested that 'patterns of "filiation" (heritage or descent) that had acted as a cohering force in traditional society were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain in the complexity of contemporary civilization and were being replaced by patterns of "affiliation"', which refers to a process of cultural identification.[38] Confronted with his father's morbid theatricality after the death of his wife, and Zeeny's persistent efforts at reawakening his 'Indian' self, Saladin yearns to leave the city, 'which feels like home and is not' (*SV*, p. 58). The traditional idea of the home as one's native habitat, or the space inhabited by a family, is confounded by Changez Chamchawala's grotesque mockery of familial life and his son's inability to fathom this modern perversion of domesticity.

Saladin is drawn back to the city by summons from his father's death-bed in an uncharacteristic gesture of nostalgia, despite the apparently 'irrevocable sunderings' of filial ties between the two. His shifting perceptions of 'home' are described in a very poignant scene, in which a fellow Indian's words cause him to contemplate deeply his estranged relations with his family and native-land: 'Chamcha's head whirled. What strange meanings words were taking on. Only a few days ago that *back home* would have rung false. But now his father was dying and old emotions were sending tentacles out to grasp him. Maybe his tongue was twisting again, sending his accent East along with the rest of him' (*SV*, p. 514). Saladin's return to his childhood city is both empowering and gratifying, as the days spent with his father bring him closer to his 'old, rejected selves', which continue to exist in the Bombay he had abandoned (*SV*, p. 523). He is able to cement the traces of his fragmented English self into a more coherent identity, as the city functions as a therapeutic and restorative space that helps him rekindle forgotten memories and relationships. It is

in Bombay that Saladin realizes that 'it's (his) present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time' (*IH*, p. 9).[39] By weaving these temporalities of past and present into a new, regenerative relationship, Saladin is able to enjoy 'the present moment of his past', at home with his family and friends. It is significant that Saladin's restoration (and by extension, that of Bombay) is only complete after the death of his old nemesis, Gibreel, who also returns to the city and spectacularly ends his own life. Both the characters' lives are intimately connected to the spaces they inhabit, and Rushdie is particularly anxious to communicate the centrality of the relationships between migrants and their habitats, as being especially significant to the theme of migration-as-translation.

2.5 Cinema and the languages of postcolonial resistance

In her chapter on 'Space and Identity' in the novels of Salman Rushdie, Nandini Bhattacharya observes that 'by rendering known spaces unknown, by contesting colonial and neocolonial definitions of nations, city or country, by creating disturbing heterotopias and dystopias, Rushdie goes on to resist the colonial strategies of entrapment' (*Mongrel Selves*, p. 41).[40] Gibreel's theme song at the beginning of *The Satanic Verses* could also be read as a counter-strategy against 'colonial entrapment'; by adopting an aggressively nationalistic stance during his descent into the colonizer's country, Gibreel both defies the 'unified global market' which is represented by his patchwork clothing, and also proclaims his Indian postcolonial identity as being invulnerable to the claims that the 'uprushing host nation' might lay upon him.[41] His rendition of the popular Bollywood song 'Mera Joota Hai Japani' also brings the film-capital of Bombay into antagonistic confrontation with its contra-city, London, as the former is symbolically displaced and manifests itself within the space of the other, through a collision of cultures . Here, the translation of the well-known Hindi song into English could possibly be read as a mock-attempt on the character's part to communicate his fiercely patriotic sentiments in the only language that is accessible to the inhabitants of his 'host nation'. Gibreel's bilingual advantage symbolizes the postcolonial writer's weapon of resistance, whereby he 'forces the English language to bear the weight of alternative cultural practices' by translating his thoughts (*Mongrel Selves*, p. 173). Rushdie himself notes that 'central to the purposes of *The Satanic Verses* is the process of reclaiming language from one's opponents'; it is within this

act of linguistic assertion through translation, that the author acknowledges his own national allegiances (*IH*, p. 402).[42]

The language of *The Satanic Verses* is uniquely Rushdian, in that it employs 'multiple Indian-English dialects, including the Anglo-English literalist translations of Indian language idioms, the interpolations of Urdu and Hindi, the altered spellings of Indian-English, (and) language as a word game drawing attention to the polyvocal linguistic strata of English as a world language drawing on multiple horizons of usage'.[43] The confused cadences of Saladin's "Accha, means what? ...So, ok, bibi, big give one whiskysoda only" and Gibreel's ghazal-like incantation upon falling out of the aircraft "To be born again, first you have to die...Hoji Hoji...first one needs to fly", are instances of the peculiarly hybrid language which Rushdie uses to signify the incomplete psychological transmutation of migrant identities. The brash and sassy tones of this language are also derived from another prevalent urban discourse, specific to the city of Bombay and its cinema, and having a pervasive influence on a lot of emergent literature from the city. Bollywood as a modern literary trope has an insidious presence in many of Rushdie's novels, and is typified by its language and stylistic functions that cut across social and cultural boundaries. It is also used to convey certain ideological conceptions of the city and the nation-state, as is evident from *The Satanic Verses*. Prior to his arrival in England, Gibreel's life as an actor in theological films is intimately bound up with a nationalistic narrative. As discussed previously in relation to Raj Kapoor's films, in the aftermath of Independence, nationalistic sentiments were translated into a sense of identification with the urban. The ability of mainstream Hindi cinema or Bollywood films to archive the experiences of the city gave Indian cinema and those associated with it (directors and actors primarily) a status of national celebrity and reverence.

In the novel, Gibreel is deified by the film-watching public in Bombay, and his near-fatal accident on a film set casts a mood of apprehension over not only the city, but the entire nation. Rushdie describes the mass hysteria which grips the country after the incident: 'The whole of India was at Gibreel's beside. His condition was the lead item on every radio bulletin; it was the subject of hourly news flashes on the national television network' (*SV*, p. 28).[44] He also draws attention to the character of Gibreel Farishta as a modern embodiment of the nation by conflating his iconic

status in Bollywood cinema with its wider and more compelling public influence. Even religious differences are cast aside, as the author creates a satirical image of packed congregations praying alike, in the mosques and temples of the nation. The strategic convergence of national, theological, urban and cinematic discourses in the character of Gibreel becomes even more significant, as he first loses faith in his religion, and then abandons his country and fans, in a symbolic act of migration to England. Rushdie's scepticism of the older, colonial definition of a homogenous nation-state is implicit in his description of the events following Gibreel's departure, during which cardboard effigies and hoardings celebrating his national status begin to rot and disintegrate. The metaphoric crumbling of the nation-state and the imagined affiliations that it engenders are represented through Gibreel's disappearance, which although signifying an ultimate betrayal, is also a renewed ideological beginning. This incident may be related to my study of Rohinton Mistry's unsparing critique of Indira Gandhi's government and her authoritarian regime in 'Fragmented Fictions', in which Mistry satirizes the fractured political environment of 1970s India by portraying Indira Gandhi's crumbling visage on electoral billboards and posters.[45]

In London, Gibreel embarks on a mission of postcolonial vengeance, whereby he enacts the role of the native as 'an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor' (*SV*, p. 353). His transmutation into the Archangel Gibreel allows him to take on the mantle of the oppressor, even as grows aware of the increasing ambiguousness of rigid oppositions such as colonizer-colonized, angel-demon, native-foreigner. Unlike Saladin, whose transition is mapped primarily through 'affiliation', or in other words, through the influences of culture on his personality, Gibreel's metamorphosis is spatially oriented. As the empowered native, Gibreel is anxious to invert the cultural typecasts that have conventionally separated the cities of his birth and migration, and one of the most significant scenes of the novel is where he *pronounces* the trouble with the English to be, their weather. It is this enunciatory act which is far more empowering than the actual 'tropicalization' of London. As Homi Bhabha very succinctly observes, '...the English weather, is to invoke, at once, the most changeable and immanent signs of national difference' as it also revives memories of its 'daemoic double: the heat and dust of India'.[46] Gibreel sees in his transformatory act the potential to infuse the bland and reserved English traditions with the colour, warmth and unreservedness of Eastern cultures. Mention

of insipid food, the soulless commitment to work, a functional political system, English toilets, hot water bottles, and more famously, the British reserve indicated by a 'stiff upper lip', are vestiges of their tradition which Gibreel both scorns and attempts to transform. The 'tropicalized' modern Western metropolis is then tainted with the dust and vulgarity of its Indian counterpart, which it begins to resemble, a fact that Rushdie unceasingly brings to our notice by emphasizing the inconsistent nature of the cities in his novel. Jaina C. Sanga observes that 'symbolically, the attempt to transform a place, and by extension, translate it into a familiar setting can be read as a site of postcolonial anxiety where the gesture of translating becomes imperative in manipulating and reordering what is alien' (*PM*, p. 70). Gibreel's part in enunciating this concern is especially significant; his profession as a theological actor combined with his visually transformative role in the novel suggests a 'technological modernization and commercialization of ancient myth and religion', which in turn gestures towards the confrontational sites of tradition and modernity as being 'mutually constitutive' within urban spaces.[47]

2.6 Inhabiting London: a home away from home

The city of London is indeed an urban space in which the dialectic sites of tradition and modernity are inevitably brought into tense engagement, often reflecting the essential dilemma which forms a part of the migrant condition. In many ways, *The Satanic Verses* is a sociological study of the various pathologies that arise out situations of displacement and acculturation, each reiterating in different ways the overlapping sites between the traditional and the modern, between East and West. The elusive condition of 'homeliness' which has previously been discussed through the trope of cultural translation is explored, in the cases of both Gibreel and Saladin, through their identification and rejection of formative spaces in the novel. Bombay and London, the two distinct epicentres of modernity, are drawn into a frictional relationship by Rushdie, as he traces the routes and connections between the cities through the transnational journeys of his protagonists. Bombay functions as both a point of origin and return in his panoptic narrative of postcolonial migrancy, and is comparable to London, in that they are both mutable spaces in which the incompatible realities of modern life are brought together. As various instances from the text reveal, however, the former is depicted as being a more productive and

regenerative space of modernity, as its cosmopolitanism is manifested through its undiscriminating environment and easy accommodation of difference. In contrast, London is represented as an inhospitable and unhomely site, a landscape of psychological fragmentation and rupture, which is shaped through the many accounts of migrant experiences that clamour to be heard in Rushdie's narrative. Some of these chronicle the lives of secondary or tangential characters in the novel, and contribute towards a more diverse and compelling account of postcolonial migrancy from the Indian subcontinent.

One of the most poignant examples is the Sufyan family from Bangladesh, who are cloistered in a South Asian ghetto in London's Brickhall Street, a space which operates as a boarding-house for immigrants. The Shandaar Café, as it is more familiarly referred to by its proprietor, Mohammed Sufyan, and other kindred immigrant souls who seek shelter within its walls, is a threshold space characterized by its liminality and hodge-podge of cultures; a veritable transit lounge. *Home* to its 'variegated, transient and particoloured inhabitants', it is a site of gatherings, of people severed by ethnicity, culture, values and expectations but bound together by a shared history of subordination and the transience which characterizes their present lives (*SV*, p. 243). Homi Bhabha observes that 'the liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one'; the Sufyans are testament to this statement, as their transition from Dhaka to London is mapped through the painful process of cultural translation, experienced most greatly by Mr. Sufyan's wife, Hind. The etymological significance of her name (Hind =Persian/Urdu for India) is deliberately invoked by Rushdie, as she embodies the embattled subcontinental homeland which is displaced and distorted through acts of migration.

Living in England is exilic and alienating for Hind, as the family's sudden move to the country severely estranges her from her husband whom she blames for their situation. Bhabha contributes to the reader's understanding of the dysfunctional existence that the Sufyans are trapped within, by engaging with Mr. Sufyan's essentially untranslatable character. Bhaba writes of him: 'living in the interstices of Lucretius and Ovid, caught in-between a "nativist", even nationalist, atavism and postcolonial metropolitan assimilation, the subject of cultural difference becomes a

problem that Walter Benjamin has described as the irresolution, or liminality, of "translation"; the element of resistance in the process of transformation, that element in a translation which does not lend itself to translation'.[48] In his endeavour to provide existential guidance to fellow-migrants through their own transitions, Mr. Sufyan is both uncomprehending and insensitive towards his wife's trauma, caused by her revulsion of the land which is now their *home*. Through Hind's story, Rushdie questions the associations that the words 'home', 'away', 'desh' and 'bidesh' have for the postcolonial female subject, and whose narrative struggles to find its place amongst those of the many sojourning men with which the novel abounds.

In her essay 'Desh-Bidesh: Sylheti Images of Home and Away', Katy Gardener invokes the refrain from a special song sung by women in some villages of Sylhet, in northern Bangladesh: 'How can I accept that my husband has gone to London', they ask.[49] This anguished question is the very cause of Hind's trauma, as her husband's migration to England seems cruel, inexplicable, and emasculating to her. Having forsaken his erudition and respected position as a school-teacher in Dhaka, Mohammed Sufyan discovers that his migration to England does not find favour with his wife, as she is unable to disassociate herself from her homeland. The 'characterless plurality' of her life as one of the countless immigrants in the novel makes her more cognizant of her position as a dislocated, marginalized woman. Sufyan's apparent neglect of his wife's condition, as he plays the role of heroic cicerone to several others, marks the insidious ways in which diasporic experiences can lead to severe gender subordination. Nandini Bhattacharya comments upon this phenomenon in her chapter on gender and identity in Rushdie's novels, observing that 'one possible explanation for reinforcement of patriarchal practices is the desire of the immigrant male to combat the sense of marginality he experiences in the diasporic situation, and to carve out a heroic identity in a host country, where he is culturally devalued and despised' (*Mongrel Selves*, p. 106). In a rather tragic description of Hind's efforts to cope with her situation, Rushdie reiterates the multiple subordinations that she is forced to undergo during the course of her life - 'what she did: to deny her husband's weakness, she treated him, for the most part, like a lord, like a monarch, for in her lost world her glory had lain in his' (*SV*, p. 250).

Gardener's sociological portrait of Sylheti migrations is revealing of the problems of cultural assimilation that Hind faces in London. She writes, that 'many people believe Western culture to be plagued by sexual immorality, alcoholism, divorce and a lack of familial duty and authority… Britain is therefore a source of material power for Sylhetis within it, but British culture is not' (*DB*, p. 496). Hind's greatest fears of the corruptive nature of British culture manifest themselves through her daughters, who are acculturated to the point of defying all the traditional values which she cherishes. Her husband, whom she mistakenly assumes to be sexually immoral, confirms her worst fears by appearing to emulate the culturally depraved people that they are forced to live amidst. Gardener also speaks of the linguistic influences that migration has upon the Sylheti community, as she enumerates the new words that have been incorporated into their dialect: 'for example, *Londoni* (those that who have migrated to Britain), or *entry* (a much coveted visa)' (*DB*, p. 489). Hind is confronted by linguistic challenges of her own, as 'her language [is] obliged now, to emit these alien sounds that made her tongue feel tired' (*SV*, p. 249). Ironically, and much to her chagrin, her daughters incorporate a different linguistic trend, voicing their utter contempt for their homeland by distorting its name to 'Bungleditch'.

As an archetypal dis-located female subject, Hind is subjected to Rushdie's theory of 'triple disruption' that is fundamental to the migrant experience, namely the denial of roots, language and social norms (*IH*, pp. 277-8). At the same time, as James Clifford observes, 'women in diaspora remain attached to, and empowered by, a "home" culture and a tradition – selectively. Fundamental values of propriety and religion, speech and social patterns, and food, body, and dress protocols are preserved and adapted in a network of ongoing connections outside the host country.'[50] Hind's effort to sustain memories of her *desh,* through her culinary competencies, is perhaps the only form of salvation that is available to her. The 'need to fix upon certain symbols', in this instance subcontinental food, is described by Homi Bhabha in his exhortation on the economy of displacement and travel, and gestures towards the construction of an alternative home away from home (*Routes*, p. 42). Similarly, Gardener writes that 'by eating deshi produce those abroad are sustained, and remain part of it. Desh, in a sense, is imported into bidesh; it becomes an extension of desh' (*DB*, p. 494).The maintenance or restoration of 'Hind' within London's congested Brickhall Street becomes a focal point in Hind's daily routine,

and helps maintain a precarious psychological balance which is essential to her survival. This extension, however, does not adequately bridge the gap between the Bangladeshi and British cultures, and Hind is forced to admit that 'everything she valued had been upset by the change; had, in this process of translation been lost' (*SV*, p. 249).

2.7 Beginning at the end: Freud's uncanny and *Baumgartner's Bombay*

The condition of unhomeliness or unbelonging, which significantly affects Hind's perceptions of her adopted country, is mirrored in the migrant experiences of Hugo Baumgartner, the multiply displaced and inherently marginalized protagonist of Anita Desai's novel, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988). The states of belonging and unbelonging that arise out of a blurring of boundaries between countries, cultures, and ideological states of being, are deeply considered by Homi Bhabha, in his article 'The World and the Home', and the text functions as a necessary supplement to my own reading of Desai's novel.[51] Also relevant to both Bhabha's theories and the novel at hand is Freud's interpretation of the 'uncanny', which emerges from a compelling study of the relationship between the German word 'heimlich' and its opposite 'unheimlich', interrogated by him through both language and literature.[52] As Freud suggests in one of his readings, the uncanny may be conflated with the 'unheimlich' as an unsettling condition, which is brought about by the return of that which is secretly familiar ('heimlich-heimisch') and has undergone repression. This phenomenon is demonstrated in Desai's novel, as the repressed memories of Hugo's childhood in Berlin are invoked in the colonial cities of Bombay and Calcutta, which function as uncanny spaces that reflect the alienation and unbelonging he experienced as a child.

Migration and diasporic experience, as central thematic concerns, are particularly significant in reinforcing Hugo's encounters with the 'unheimlich', as unlike the journeys most of the migrant-protagonists in *The Satanic Verses*, his journeying is necessitated by the tense political climate of pre-war Germany, and he is involuntarily exiled to destinations which are remote and unfamiliar. Chief amongst these is the city of Bombay, which has previously been described as 'the locus classicus of incompatible realities' and functions similarly in Desai's novel as a site of odd juxtapositions of different people and their experiences. While *Baumgartner's Bombay* is essentially modern in its sensibility; unlike in previous texts, this modernity is not

frequently read in conjunction with sites of tradition. It is an insular and isolating phenomenon, located within the interstices of the states of homeliness and its more prevalent counter-position. I read Bhabha's essay and Freud's theories in conjunction with Desai's text because the modern condition of unhomeliness is quintessential to the character of Hugo Baumgartner. He is Desai's Steppenwolf-figure, a character she valiantly positions with the misfits, the eccentrics, and the inadvertent men of literature, all of whom have a rather unsettling relationship with humankind.

Baumgartner's Bombay explores the many dimensions of the uncanny; the novel begins with the death of its main protagonist, Hugo Baumgartner. Haunted by melodrama and a morbid theatricality, his death contradicts the solitude which characterized most of his life. As Nicholas Royle reminds us, 'the uncanny entails another thinking of beginning: the beginning is already haunted.'[53] The opening chapter of the novel creates a profoundly unsettling effect on the reader and foreshadows a narrative which is disjunctive and disturbing for the most part. Hugo's apartment in Bombay, the site of his death, is transformed into an unhomely space which is marked by violence and transgression. Through the uncanny end that marks the novel's beginning, we are introduced to the uncertain ideas of personal space and possession which inform Desai's text. At the scene of Hugo's demise, the inside and the outside cease to function as distinctly bounded spaces, and uncannily converge to reveal the compulsively acquisitive nature of the city's inhabitants. Ironically, in death Baumgartner is not alone, as the city clamours by his bedside, greedily grasping at his meagre possessions even as his corpse lies unattended. Through the bereaved figure of Hugo's friend, Lotte, Desai subverts the familiar stages of shock and grief which she experiences at his death, by revealing glimpses of a far more tragic history which had followed him in the early stages of his exile. In her attempt to salvage his meagre possessions from the grasping crowd that gathers at his bedside, Lotte is able to recover a packet of postcards sent to Hugo by his mother during the period of the Holocaust. The uncanny is evoked through the language of the postcards which is familiar in its German colloquialisms and endearments, but appears to be painfully inaccessible to Lotte, as she is unaccustomed to speaking to it after years of living in Bombay. Lotte encounters a strange dispossession through the elusive cadences of the very language which sustained an affiliation between Hugo and herself during his lifetime, and which also poignantly marked his death. Even as she struggles to

recreate the fluent intimacy which she had once shared with her mother-tongue, the language assumes the form of an aggressor: invading and assaulting her senses with the repressed memories of a past life. The uncanny manifests itself as extreme nostalgia - it resurrects even as it destroys.

As briefly outlined in the introduction to this section, one might loosely make a connection between the uncanny and the 'unheimlich' through their etymological roots which suggest an unfamiliarity of sorts. At the outset of his essay, Freud explains this: 'the German word "*unheimlich*" is obviously the opposite of "*heimlich*" ["homely"], "*heimisch*" ["native"] the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is "uncanny" is precisely because it is *not* known and familiar' (*U*, p. 220). Although his theory of the uncanny goes far beyond this association, I shall briefly dwell upon it to explore Baumgartner's acquaintance with 'unhomeliness' in the various spaces he inhabits during the course of the novel. As Bhabha very intuitively observes, 'the unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalence of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence'; Hugo's experience of unhomeliness can be traced back to his childhood in Berlin, the happy memories of which are confounded by the imposition of the Nazi regime (*WH*, p. 448). His father's furniture store is the first of several spaces which are both intimidating and disorienting for the impressionable young lad. The mysteries of the three-pieced mirrors which 'turned you into a stranger before your own eyes' are disquieting in their ability to alienate the familiar, while the adjacent sections of the commercial showroom and his mother's boudoir are too closely positioned to allow Hugo a clear understanding of the public-private binary (*BB*, p. 26). The mystifying rendition of a reflected self manifests itself much later in the novel, as Hugo progresses from being an 'uncomprehending spectator' of the events of his life, to becoming increasingly and painfully conscious of his incongruous existence in the bustling city of Bombay (*BB*, p. 40). Freud argues that 'the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the "double" being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted – a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The "double" has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons' (*U*, p. 236). In Hugo's case, the 'double' as reflection is estranging during his childhood while the 'double' as self-recognition haunts his adult existence. As a Jewish child in pre-war Germany he is

oblivious of the tense social environment which he inhabits, while as an adult he is aware and fearful at every instance of his foreignness and unbelonging in India. The strange experience of liminality which shadows Hugo throughout his life contributes greatly to this sense of the uncanny, which is unshakeable and all-pervading.

In Germany, Hugo is the central character of what may be termed as a 'frontier' or 'border' novel, and is subjected to multiple dislocations, the first of which involves a transfer to a school for Jewish children necessitated by the perilous implications of his family name. His new environment is no more congenial than the previous one, as the Hebraic language is alien to his tongue while the forbidding sound of the Torah only emphasizes the severely disjunctive relationship he shares with his environment. Hugo's childish incomprehension of the political circumstances which his family are caught up in and of the growing rift between his parents is compounded on a trip to the countryside with his mother. He is both attracted and discomfited by his mother's evident enjoyment of her pastoral surroundings and the light-hearted ease with which she dismisses her adult responsibilities. For Hugo, the idylls of the countryside are uncanny in their gilded concealment of danger; the fairy-tale like enchantment of the mythic, natural-world which captivates his mother, is to him 'beautiful, hushed, and vaguely sinister' (*BB*, pp. 47). Hugo is equally discomfited upon reading and listening to Tagore's Bengali poetry, which is as unfamiliar to him as the Hebraic verses that he studied at the Jewish school. Desai's own cultural heritage, an eclectic blend of German and Bengali, allows her to situate her character at an opposite extremity to herself, and this is achieved through the elusive structures and slippages of language.

In his early years, Hugo derives comfort from the German language and its apparently solid, unshakeable foundations which present themselves to him through the lilting childhood rhymes which signify the security and homeliness of his family life in Berlin. As a novel which resorts to frequent in-text translation, *Baumgartner's Bombay* has several passages in German which are, however, unfamiliar and disorienting for the English reader despite authorial intervention, and reflect its protagonist's angst at being similarly besieged by languages which are not his own later in the narrative. Elaine Y. L. Ho explains Hugo's linguistic estrangement in her essay on 'The Language of Identity':

German is Baumgartner's first language, the language of his identity and cultural filiation. In the course of the novel, this Germanness, or what remains of it, is placed in relation to various language systems – Hebrew and languages of India – which encode the values of the different cultures that Baumgartner encounters. The disharmonies that ensue are often rendered as miscommunication or an inability to communicate. Thus Desai interweaves Baumgartner's German origins and his subsequent alienation from the cultures and societies he encounters.[54]

The gradual disassociation with his mother-tongue and the tentative acquisition of new languages is illustrated through the various stages of Hugo's forced migration to the East, and his nostalgic recollections of Germany are repeatedly countered by the fraught processes of accommodation in new lands and cultures. The trauma suffered by Hugo on account of these changes is reinforced by the separation from his mother; her poignant constraining melodies that sustained him through his early years are stifled into a distant past, while the unpredictability of her letters and postcards are his only link to the patria, and to a quiet domesticity which represented, for him, a sort of homeliness. For Bhabha, the state of being unhomed 'has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation or historical migrations and cultural relocations' (*WH*, p. 445). This holds true in the case of Baumgartner, whose eastward migration is precipitated by Herr Pfuehl's prudence in the face of disquieting political circumstances. Typical of the literature of exile, along with the loss of his homeland Baumgartner experiences a more severe dispossession through language, as the strident tones of German which he is accustomed to, are no longer accessible or familiar during the course of his migration.

2.8 Transitions and a Venetian reverie

Desai's narrative shifts ground to Venice, the first of Hugo's urban displacements, and the transit-city between the West and his preconceived image of the Eastern world. Hugo is Said's archetype of the Orientalist, his perception of India as 'an ancient and backward land' populated by snakes and tigers and fakirs, perpetuates the European belief in the exotic 'Other-ness' of unfamiliar terrains in the East (*BB*, p. 55). Interestingly, Britain's intervention as a colonial empire, which has administrative

authority over the Indian subcontinent consolidates the image of the colonized country and makes it a viable port for Hugo's emigration. This imagined alliance is severely at odds with the conflicting coalitions which Germany and Britain were members of during the Second World War, and it only serves to reinforce Said's suggestion that all discourse, particularly discourse about other cultures, is inherently ideological, and in this instance, determined by a homogenized Western point of view.[55]

For Baumgartner, Venice is the intermediate space between Berlin and the unknown East, a confluence of cultures both familiar and imagined. It is a transitional landscape between discrete cultures and functions as the margin at which Hugo, the marginalized protagonist of Desai's novel, becomes cognizant of his situation. The twilight city with its narrow lanes, cathedrals and palaces, is a change from the austere German landscape he has recently forsaken. Desai describes Venice as an uncanny, ghostly space, with its breathtakingly beautiful yet claustrophobic architecture and its winding, interconnected alleyways which confuse and befuddle those unacquainted with them. Even the weather, which is European in its 'melancholy grey(ness)', is tempered by a 'magical, poetical quality' which renders it completely unlike Berlin (*BB*, p. 58). Rather than functioning as a cultural buffer, Venice inspires in Hugo apprehension for the Eastern land which is his final port of destination. He is beset by a strange fear of the palpable foreignness which manifests itself all around him; his unfamiliarity with the Italian language, cuisine and currency, further serve to alienate him from his environment. One sees an uncanny resemblance between Freud's encounters in a provincial town in Italy and Baumgartner's experiences in Venice. Upon visiting the aforementioned town, Freud describes the 'factor of repetition' during his meanderings as being the source of bewilderment and helplessness:

> As I was walking, one hot summer afternoon, through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was unknown to me, I found myself in a quarter of whose character I could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found

myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another *detour* at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before, without any further voyages of discovery (*U*, p. 237).

This passage anticipates a passage from Desai's novel in which Hugo follows a Jewish woman in Venice, in an attempt to counter the feelings of loneliness and unfamiliarity that besiege him at every corner in the city:

When Hugo came to a calle half-submerged in water and realized the tide was rising, he lost heart and turned around to retrace his steps. He did so wrongly and found himself in the Rialto with its sudden flurry of activity...and for a moment or two he was fooled into believing that his wrong turning had led him straight into the East...and he stood there, as entranced as he was alarmed (*BB*, p. 63).

Unlike Freud, whose presence in Venice attracted the attention of the local 'painted women', Baumgartner is unable engage with the Jewish woman and loses his way in the city while following her. Venice is Desai's response to Bhabha's condition of unhomeliness; it is at this disjunctive point in his wanderings around the ephemeral city that Baumgartner experiences a feeling akin to *heimisch,* or native-ness; his flaneurial adventures are crucial to the realization that he belongs to the transitional, middle-space of the city. As Desai observes, 'He realized it only now; that during his constant wandering, his ceaseless walking, he had been drawing closer and closer to this discovery of that bewitched point where they become one land of which he felt himself the natural citizen.' (*BB*, p. 63) The notion of Baumgartner aligning himself with a national landscape, from which he is religiously, linguistically and culturally severed, is rather difficult to assimilate, although it does emphasize his yearning to belong somewhere, anywhere.

2.9 Indian cities and the wars within

Hugo emerges from his Venetian reverie upon arriving in India, as he is faced with an abundance of humanity and an intensely tropical climate. Weather, as discussed

previously in my reading of *The Satanic Verses*, is amongst the foremost of national signifiers, and Desai's dramatic descriptions of the torpid heat and blinding sunshine reflect his acute discomfort. Elements of the weather are also used figuratively by the author to reveal the psyche of her characters; for Hugo's companion Lotte, the perpetual blankness of the sky is a realization of the mundaneness which underlines her existence in Bombay, while he struggles himself to smother his thoughts under a blanket of *Nacht und Nebel*, night and fog, in the Calcutta detention camp. The colonial port cities of Bombay and Calcutta are briefly drawn into a dialectical relationship through Baumgartner's experiences of each, as the war invades the most secure recesses in both the urban landscapes and transforms them into harsh and inhospitable terrains for him. At the site of his arrest and detention in Calcutta, Hugo's repressed memories of being persecuted as a child resurface, and he reacts defensively to the familiar pattern of torment which he had been subjected to in primary school. The incident is one of the many uncanny or 'unheimlich' situations that Hugo finds himself in, as he is increasingly made aware of his foreignness in India.

With poignancy and brio, Desai examines the plight of an individual reluctantly caught up in the wars of another people. Having escaped the strictures of the Nazi regime in Berlin, he finds himself incarcerated at an internment camp in Calcutta, the consequence of his dubious status as 'hostile alien' in the country. The fear and apprehension which he feels for his own plight as well as that of his mother's in Germany, are repressed by his natural inclination towards solitude – brought about by 'the habits of a lonely child, of an isolated youth in an increasingly unsafe and threatening land and then of a solitary foreigner in India' (BB, p. 109). Hugo's interaction with the world outside is confined to the labourers from the village, and 'his initial bewilderment at lives so primitive, so basic and unchanging', is displaced by envy of 'the absence of choice and history' which characterizes their simple lives (BB, p. 111). His own existence is 'hopelessly tangled' with the national affairs of the country of his unbelonging as he witnesses the end of colonial rule in India, and subsequently finds his life disrupted by the communal conflicts that cripple the city of Calcutta. Desai describes the riot-stricken city as an apocalyptic space, with its 'black streets, the steaming rubbish tips, the scarred tenements, its hunger, its

squalor, its desolation', and most of all the overwhelming stench of hopelessness which threatens to become a part of Hugo's existence.

Bombay, with its Europeanised orderliness, relative secularity, and thriving commercial environment, is a refreshing change for Baumgartner, and the bustling quay-side city is strikingly contrasted with the stagnating decrepitude of Calcutta: 'traffic rolled on Marine Drive in an orderly way which suggested affluence and Westernization' (BB, p. 180). He is less enchanted with the incongruities of the duplicitous Taj Hotel where he is accommodated, and the inscrutable images of eleven-armed deities which line its walls. The language of the natives is babel to his ears, which are accustomed to the nuances of the German tongue and a tentative smattering of English.[56] His acquisition of a hybridized polyglot language, a bastardized Hindustani, aids him in his commercial dealings but is miserably inadequate in his daily interactions with the watchman, whom he greets with a confusing 'Good morning, salaam' (BB, p. 6). His lack of coherent translational skills is evident, as he randomly picks out words from the mélange of languages which surround him, not knowing whether they are Hindi, English or Bengali; chai, khana, baraf, lao, jaldi, joota, chota-peg, pani, kamra, soda, garee, are simply words he needs to survive in the city (BB, p. 92). To add to this woeful existence, the industry and enterprise which characterize the urban landscape are discomfiting reminders of his lack of business, the pathetic shuffling routine which he is confined to by age and privation. In Bombay, Baumgartner's 'nativism' is manifest in his obscure attempts to assimilate the alien-culture. His urban identity is substantiated by the possession of a residence in the centre of the city, which indicates a rootedness, a homeliness of sorts. The linguistic miscellany which characterizes his interaction with people is also suggestive of cultural affiliation, while his national identity is validated by an Indian passport. After years of tolerating the stifling Bombay heat, even his skin is darkened to what might faintly resemble an indigenous colour. But Baumgartner isn't yet quite integrated into the secular list of tenants' names which adorn the wooden board at the entrance to his building. He is the white man, the anomaly to their Indian-ness, which cannot be appropriated even after half a decade of living in the country. Desai is achingly evocative in her description of Hugo as 'an old turtle trudging through dusty Indian soil', carrying the burden of his unbelonging on his shoulders (BB, p. 11).

The question which intrigues me most and which, perhaps, does not elicit a definitive response is how and when does Bombay become home to Baumgartner? Is it when he discovers the 'magic moment', an invigorating wave of sea breeze which makes the languorous heat of the city bearable, or does it occur during his interactions with Kurt, a maverick spirit who appears to be more severely alienated in the city than Hugo himself? One could also conjecture upon Hugo's acquaintance with Lotte, a similarly displaced German expatriate who inhabits an India which is similar to his own, and is empathetic towards his ruptured relationship with Berlin, its language and culture. For the eponymous protagonist of Desai's tale, possessing Bombay is in fact a great unlikelihood and the paradoxical title of the novel only reinforces Hugo's relationship with the city as being characterized more by dispossession rather than ownership of any kind. Despite being a resident in Bombay, Hugo's extreme impoverishment and the lack of intimacy which frames his relations with both the city and its inhabitants, makes him appear to the reader as being 'unhomed' or disoriented for the most part. Bhabha observes that, 'to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the unhomely be easily accommodated in the familiar division of the social life into private and the public spheres' (*WH*, p. 445). Strangely, Hugo does not associate his own condition with homelessness or dispossession, as the beggar family on the pavement, and all the other migrant street dwellers in the city, are for him, the embodiment of extreme destitution. Rajeev Patke describes this paradox as the estranging experience of a modern city – 'one can have a home where one is not at home, and one can feel at home where one has no home'.[57]

The presence of his impoverished neighbours is disquieting for Hugo, who is unable to accustom himself to the grim disparities which outline his surroundings. His shuffling gait and averted eyes mirror his discomfort as his feelings arise from an instinctive empathy for the poor, accompanied by a heightened consciousness of his own privilege in their presence: 'the nakedness of their street lives made him feel overloaded with his belongings' (*BB*, p. 145). Richard A. Etlin's compelling essay on the spatial sense of the self interrogates what might be called the Baumgarterian condition in Desai's text; he elucidates that 'space is an integral constituent of the self. Our psychological sense of selfhood has a spatial dimension which we recognize in our feelings of comfort or unease to the places that we visit and inhabit.'[58] The

beggar family is Desai's comment on the spatial constraints that describe the cityscape, and necessitate the uneasy co-existence of the extremely wealthy and the indigent; as Hugo apprehensively observes, 'one step lifted (him) from anarchy to security' (*BB*, p. 145).

In Bombay, the oppositional spheres of the public and private are contiguous in a strained proximity which blurs the boundaries between them. Hugo's life is defined by his tentative interaction, his silent acknowledgement of the pavement-family, whose existence threatens the fragility of his unbelonging. Even in their condition of evident dispossession, the beggar family are more at home on the streets than Hugo is within the cramped familiarity of his quarters. He is doubly alienated from the vicissitudes of their existence by both his foreignness and relative affluence, alleviated only slightly by the passing of time, which brings with it a perception of their presence as being uncannily strange and unfamiliar as opposed to outlandish and exotic. This adjustment, however, does not mitigate his sense of being constrained within the city, and intimidated by its swarming indigent population, 'the pressure of (whose) bodies, their needs, demands, greed and hunger left so little space for him, so narrow a passage through which to shoulder his way'(*BB*, p. 19). *In The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie similarly describes the feelings of suffocation and claustrophobia which affect Saladin upon his return to Bombay, as the city and its inhabitants unrelentingly lay their claims upon him. Like Hugo, he is estranged from his seemingly homely environs that only serve as a reminder of displaced origins and distanced relationships.

The city of Bombay has a deep-rooted effect on the psycho-spatial identification of its migrant-inhabitants and creates both affiliation and estrangement amongst them. The feelings of homelessness and confinement which affect both the protagonists in Desai and Rushdie's texts may be related to Anthony Vidler's suggestion of the uncanny, as being a metaphor for a 'fundamentally unliveable modern condition'.[59] Till the very end, Hugo is never unconscious of the absurdity of his situation; the divisive politics of a nation under colonial rule are completely disempowering for him. Reminiscent of Spielberg's Navorski or the man who is simply 'unacceptable', Hugo resides in the transit space between cultures, unable to disassociate himself from one and find his place within the other.[60] His foreignness is

disregarded by the native people in the light of his privations, and his own precarious sense of selfhood is threatened by even the slightest provocation from another. His tenuous relations with Lotte and Farrokh are the only humane aspects of his existence, which is brought to a chilling end by an act of brutal ingratitude. The futility of his essentially untranslated existence is summarized by the author in a simple sentence which is terrifying in its banality – 'something so soiled, used and useless, ready to be dragged away for disposal' (*BB*, p. 226).

Reading Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* successively, one observes that despite the apparent thematic similarities of migration, alienation, adaptation, cultural translation, homeliness and its counter-position in their narratives, the experiences of a displaced or diasporic people are 'rooted/routed in specific discrepant histories' and cannot be transferred unproblematically from one to another (*Routes*, p. 244). I study migration in its various forms in the two texts; as a willing and emulative gesture in the case of Saladin, as a strategy of reverse colonialism in Gibreel's itinerary, and as an involuntary, exilic dislocation in the narratives of Hind Sufyan and Hugo Baumgartner. To identify the similarities and differences between the diasporic experiences of these characters, I have developed my argument through a range of phenomena identified by William Safran as being associated more generally with the 'diaspora'. These are summarized by James Clifford as constituting of 'a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship' (*Routes*, p. 247). While no single character in the two novels embodies all these defining characteristics, it is possible to locate at least two or more of the enumerated features as being significant to any of the migrant narratives which I explore in this section.

As works of fiction, *The Satanic Verses* and *Baumgartner's Bombay*, draw heavily upon their authors' own diasporic experiences, and are therefore especially poignant and insightful in their depiction of the postcolonial, migrant condition. In both the texts, the city of Bombay centrally embodies the interplay between rootedness and transience, homeliness and unhomeliness, authenticity and mimicry, and other equally contrary positions that the migrant subject is suspended between. The

profound relationship between the migrant and his/her habitat is explored at great length, and contributes significantly to one's understanding of the fragility of conceptual models such as the nation-state, the country and the city, which are as transitory as their inhabitants. Finally, the linguistic hybridity which characterizes the writings of both the diasporic authors is fundamental to my argument of translation being an intrinsic part of the migration process. While Rushdie strategically uses untranslatable words and idioms in his novels to permeate the English language with alternative cultural practices, Desai's in-text translations are disruptive and communicate the migrant's sense of alienation to the reader. The relationship between languages (as between habitats) is therefore central to the migrant experience. Gibreel's song as the recurrent thematic strain in this chapter is perhaps one of the most potent expressions of migration-as-translation, that also engages provocatively with the multitude of contexts that arises out of it. In the next chapter, I examine the performative function of naming through language, which is crucial to the divisive politics of identification that have historically shaped the city of Bombay. The migrant's perspective is most clearly authenticated in my reading of Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*, which provides a vast narrative terrain to engage with the intersecting claims of space, language, identity, and legitimacy in a modern, urban environment.

Chapter 3

The Cult of Authenticity: Identity, Author(ity) and the Politics of Nomenclature in Bombay-Mumbai

Names, once they are in common use, quickly become mere sounds, their etymology being buried, like so many of the earth's marvels, beneath the dust of habit.

Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*[1]

What is identity, this concept of which the transparent identity to itself is always dogmatically presupposed by so many debates on monoculturalism or multiculturalism, nationality, citizenship, and in general, belonging?

Jacques Derrida, *Monolinguism of the Other*[2]

As you work, don't fear the God of Authenticity, for he is a weak god, a fraud, a fake, and - for all his posturing - completely irrelevant.

Vikram Chandra, 'The Cult of Authenticity'[3]

3.1 *Amchi Mumbai*, Our Bombay

The demarcation and appropriation of urban space, the creation and legitimization of urban identities, and the changing signifiers of urban modernity have been explored in the last two chapters, through the dominant spatial, cultural and migratory discourses of the city from the period following the Emergency up to recent years. This section examines the politics of nomenclature and identitarianism in Bombay-Mumbai that have fuelled these contentious practices over the past two decades, and their diverse manifestations in literatures of the city. The renaming of the city in November 1995 was a definitive event that symbolized for many, an emergence of new practices, values and ethics which marked a disjunction in the historicity of

Bombay. A reformulation of the ideas that constituted urban modernity was necessitated by this renaming, which was considered to represent both a nativist agenda and one of the many processes of decolonization.

For a city that had recently embraced globalization and was being acknowledged across the world as one of the leading financial centres in South Asia, the repercussions of a change in name were several. The parochial attitudes which facilitated this transition were antithetical to the very ideas of cosmopolitanism and commercial expansion that had been associated with the city in the early 1990s, and only compounded the tensions resulting from the devastating communal riots in December 1992/January 1993, which had already disrupted certain ideological perceptions of the city and its culture. It was also argued that despite the claims to a national modernity that could be asserted through the process of renaming, the 'vernacularization' of the city's name would be detrimental to *Mumbai's* economic development as it might fail to gain recognition in global registers that had previously established *Bombay* as a modern and commercial epicentre in India. Alternatively, positioning the change in name within a nativist discourse immediately draws attention, even today, to the local political agendas of the right-wing Hindu nationalist party called the Shiv Sena, whose electoral win in 1995 consolidated their role in 'reclaiming' the city and its symbols of modernity for native Maharashtrians. The escalating identitarian politics which has emerged under their leadership and that is often associated with the demarcation and territorialization of spaces in the city is crucial to my discussions in this section, which identifies city literatures as increasingly portraying the Bombay of bygone days in contradistinction to its nomenclatural other, Mumbai.

Conceptual myths of origin and nostalgic evocations of a prelapsarian past are also significant in influencing the ways in which the city is claimed and represented in both reality and in fiction, and I work with the Derridean notion of the 'supplement' which rejects the idea of a fixed state of being or an original identity, and gestures towards an interminable process of 'identification'.[4] As Thomas Blom Hansen observes in his seminal text on naming and identity in postcolonial Bombay, 'the efficacy of a name, and thus an identity, in terms of the...accruing (not fixing, I argue) of meaning and connotations, depends, therefore, on its constant performance

– in authoritative writing, in public speech, images, songs, rumours, and so on'.[5] It is through this accrual or supplementation, both geographically and ideologically, that Bombay-Mumbai has come into being and this chapter is an exploration of the Janus-faced city through its literature, which, I argue, is largely responsible for identifying the moment of nomenclatural transition as a rupture between different modernities.

My thesis also draws upon political philosopher Slavoj Zizek's discourse on identity and ideology, which explains naming as a process that retroactively confers meaning on an object. This is particularly relevant to my study of religious identification within the city and its exacerbation after the Bombay riots of 1992-93, which I examine through the politicization of naming in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*.[6] At the beginning of this section I analyze the desires of recognition and identification (Royle, Hansen) in conjunction with the politics of nomenclature in the postcolonial city, focusing on both fictional and non-fictional narratives such as *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Such A Long Journey* (1997), *Shantaram* (2003), *Maximum City* (2004), and *Bombay and Mumbai: A City in Transition* (2003), amongst others. I then examine the thematic of authenticity through several theoretical registers, which include two influential essays written by Aamir Mufti ('The Aura of Authenticity') and Vikram Chandra ('The Cult of Authenticity') respectively. The arguments raised through my analysis of these texts are consolidated in the second half of the chapter through a close and detailed reading of *Sacred Games*, which is attentive to the nuances of class and caste in a modern, urban society, and interrogates the relationship between naming, identity, and authenticity in relation to both the city of Bombay-Mumbai and its inheritors.

3.2 Bombay: a short history of naming

The notion of Bombay as a contained and precisely delineated geographical space has always been threatened by the provisionality that has characterized its geographical and legal boundaries since the colonial period under Portuguese and subsequently British rule. According to a widely regarded hypothesis, the name 'Bombay' is epistemologically derived from the Portuguese toponym *Bombaim* which means 'good bay', although this has been contested by other versions that trace the evolution of the word from its Portuguese origins (originally Maiambu) to later British adaptations

in the sixteenth century. Under British administration, the archipelago consisting of seven islands was collectively referred to as Bombay, which was also the name of the most central island. With land reclamation projects in subsequent years, the islands were gradually integrated into a unified landmass, although the municipal city limits were variously set, in accordance with the administrative requirements of the time. Shortly before Independence, the area covering Bombay and Salsette islands was officially recognized as Greater Bombay (1948), and later expanded into the Bombay Metropolitan Region (1967) which included various tracts of agricultural land and planned industrial development sites that were outlying the main islands.[7] The complexities of nomenclature were therefore already a vital part of Bombay's evolutionary narrative, even before the city was renamed in November 1995 - an event which I argue is not necessarily the emergent point of the divisive politics of 'identification' that have subsumed the city in recent years.

As a theoretical concept and a socio-cultural reality, identification in present day Mumbai has many facets, two of which I shall discuss at length in this chapter; first, identification as the interminable process of associating oneself with, and being recognized as a particular identity (biological, cultural, self-adopted, etc) in a specific place and over a definite period of time, and second, the identification with, or affiliation to the city itself, by locating people geographically and imaginatively within a landscape that they actively inhabit. Names are used to create, establish, and in many instances assert identities, thereby constantly fuelling the process of identification, and this chapter explores these terms in conjunction with the controversial claim of 'authenticity' which is often implicit in these acts. Naming and identification are thus inextricably linked, as reiterative processes which establish structure and meaning within urban societies, but are also becoming increasingly ambiguous and multivalent in an age of shifting 'scapes'.[8]

The official renaming of Bombay to Mumbai was provocative on a number of levels, the first being an argument forwarded by vernacular newspapers and the state government which claimed that the city had *not* been renamed, as 'Mumbai' was the Marathi pronunciation of the anglicized name, 'Bombay'. Hansen observes that 'the desire to domesticate Bombay within a Marathi social and linguistic world was strongly expressed in the 1950s and continued to fuel the political imagination in the

state in the 1990s', at a time when Maharashtrian identity felt particularly threatened by the growing migrant population in the city which consisted of other ethno-religious groups such as Muslims, North Indians, Tamilians and Gujaratis (*Wages*, p. 37). This linguistic assertion may not have been as problematic had the government not demanded its execution in a manner which was perceived by many as hurried, unjustified and insensitive. While the change of name on all official stamps, newspapers and letterheads was implemented with immediate effect, propositions to rename old and established public institutions, familiar streets and landmarks, and the city's commercial film industry, Bollywood, were, and still are considered to be impeding the processes of identification in the city, as they demand a complete erasure of past associations with its former name. Undoubtedly, this is an opinion shared by certain communities in the city, for instance those with business interests vested in the city's global financial networks, or, the category of Indian authors writing in English, whose conflicted identification with Bombay and the transience which characterizes it is often reflected through literatures of the city. As I reflect upon the cogency of the claims of belonging, or in some instances of disaffiliation, that are articulated in Indo-English writing emerging from the newly named city, it might be useful to examine the nature of these assertions as well as the parameters within which they are located.

3.3 The politics of signification in Indian-English literature

What's in a name? This rather innocuous yet complex question is raised by William Shakespeare in the play *Romeo and Juliet*, when his character, the fair Juliet, resorts to a passionate rhetoric on naming to affirm her feelings for her lover.[9] The question has plagued writers, philosophers, linguists and critical theorists over the years, and is perhaps inherent in every form of social inquisition that seeks to understand the politics of identity, or in Derridean terms, the dynamic process of identification. A Saussurean reading of Shakespeare's musings on the subject of naming would indicate that the two philosophers are in fact united in the view that there is no 'necessary, intrinsic, direct or inevitable relationship' between the signifier and the signified.[10] This arbitrariness is revealed in the Bard's now famous line from the play *Romeo and Juliet*, which asserts that '…that which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet.' While the emphases of their statements are undoubtedly

different, with Saussure's focus being the arbitrariness of the link between the signifier and the signified, and Shakespeare's being an affirmation of the characteristics of the signified through its disassociation with the signifier which he considers to be only supplementary, the politics of identification is at play in both instances. Taking the example cited, the rose would retain, and be identifiable by, its pleasing olfactory qualities, even if it were referred to by another name. This stable material identity, however, I argue is not the case in the renaming of the postcolonial city of Bombay, as the idea of the city, and the codes, practices and values associated with it are transformed, adversely for many, with a change in signification.

Vyjayanthi Rao writes that 'the renaming of Bombay has become almost a conventional trope for thinking through particular issues such as violence, decosmopolitanization, new formations of the public, and new civic arrangements', in her observations on the literature that this transitional phase in the city's history has spawned.[11] Contextualizing these changes within a study of Indo-Anglian writing, it may be noted that the change in signification was and still remains deeply affective for many urban writers. Novelist Ardeshir Vakil observes that nomenclature itself is an important aspect of any authorial experience, and the renaming of public spaces can be severely disruptive to a writer's sense of identification with his lived/fictive environment.

> I still feel mildly traumatized by the renaming of Bombay, the city of my
> birth. Names are especially important to writers. Many readers are unaware
> of how long novelists agonize over the names they choose for characters
> and streets. The right name in the right place is worth a hundred fancy
> sentences. A big part of me does not want to give up the old name.[12]

According to Vakil, the writer is doubly distanced by the act of renaming, both from his social environment as well as his own writing. The desire for mono-cultural dominance is implicit in the politics of nomenclature, which, to the author appear to be inauthentic in their expression of revivalist fervour. Prejudice and the fear of cultural accretion are the dominant forces at play in the discourse of identification in the city, and do not in any way, indicate any authentic or original claim on Bombay. Vakil also rejects the tag of emigrant-nostalgia which has been frequently attached to diasporic fiction in the context of naming, explaining, instead, his aversion to

renaming as arising from its intent of erasing historical pasts. In some instances, the politics of nomenclature is effectively ruled out as writers like Suketu Mehta and Gregory David Roberts refer to the city by its former name, while subtly implying that coincident with a change in name was a change in city ethic. Salman Rushdie echoes this sentiment in his analysis of Suketu Mehta's urban memoir titled *Maximum City*, when he describes Bombay as a 'ruined metropolis' which has almost been destroyed by 'corruption, gangsterism and neo-fascist politics' in present-day Mumbai).[13] Reporter-writer Pinki Virani's book is similarly inclined in its description of the degeneration that taints the great city, and laments on the loss of what 'once was Bombay'.[14] The polarization of Bombay and Mumbai is not uncommon in literary representations of the city, and the emergence of a new urban ethic has been contested by social scientists such as Hansen, who argue that 'Bombay always was fundamentally divided by class, caste and religion' and that 'urban violence, state repression and corruption were always part of the city's life' (*Wages*, p. 5).

Rushdie's vision of an idyllic, prelapsarian Bombay which emerges in almost all his city novels might then be attributed to a creative imagination coupled with nostalgia, and the desire of identification with his childhood city from which he is separated by multiple displacements. Born in post-Independence Bombay where he spent his formative primary school years, Rushdie's childhood remembrances of the city are encompassed within a narrative space that is both confined and exclusionary. If the Bombay of *Midnight's Children* is any indication of Rushdie's 'effective city', the geographical parameters which constitute this urban territory are indeed limited to the southern peninsular tip of the vast landmass which is legally recognized as Bombay/Mumbai.[15] Interestingly, a lot of South Asian diasporic fiction is situated within this relatively small section of the city, as one observes from the writings of Suketu Mehta, Vikram Chandra, Ardeshir Vakil, Thrity Umrigar, amongst others. As discussed in earlier chapters, South Bombay is unarguably one of the more globally recognized areas of the city, with its imposing colonial architecture, elegant housing boulevards and concentration of financial services, and has monopolized the representational space in many literary and cinematic narratives over the past few decades. The famed precincts of Malabar Hill, one of the more coveted and exclusive residential enclaves in the city, are home to many fictional characters such as Saleem Sinai (*Midnight's Children*), Aurora Zogoiby (*The Moor's Last Sigh*) and Sheila Bijlani

('Shakti' in *Love and Longing in Bombay*), and one infers a class-based appropriation of the city and its boundaries, which are reflected through this selective positioning.

While on the one hand this may be a form of identification for the authors themselves, whose personal experiences and recollections of Bombay are integrated into their narrative constructions of the same, it is also with the intent of maintaining the conceptual urban structures that an international audience associates the city with. Bombay, then, for Rushdie and other similarly positioned upper-middle class writers, is the inviolable southern part of the city, the Bombay of 'ethnic and religious mixing, of opportunities, of rags-to-riches success stories, of class solidarity, of artistic modernism and hybridized energies' that has been celebrated in much of the city's fiction in English (*Wages*, p. 4). Jim Masselos, in his brilliant essay on defining moments and events in Bombay, observes the impact of the 1992-93 riots on this southern section of the city, which had mostly been untouched by previous urban conflicts (1942, 1947, 1956, 1969), and was rudely awakened to the extensive and dynamic entity that the city had grown into over the years.[16] The sheer movement of the city, brought about by shifting 'scapes' of capital, technologies, goods and ideas, which Arjun Appadurai discusses at length in his book *Modernity at Large* (1996), was impeded by the onset of these riots and affected the entire cross section of the city's population in a manner that was unprecedented, and hence, severely disruptive to the lives of many. The riots, then, followed shortly by the renaming of the city, were definitive events in the political history of Bombay, which marked the beginning of its degeneration for many residents of the south.

3.4 Naming places/(Re)placing names in the novels of Rohinton Mistry

Another diasporic writer who laments the loss of old names and the 'metaphysical reassurance via language' which they provide is Rohinton Mistry.[17] Having migrated to Canada shortly after the period of Emergency in India, he produced novels that are deeply political and explore the emergence of ethno-religious tensions in the city during the 1970s, as illustrated in my reading of *A Fine Balance*. Although his writing is often associated with interrogating national concerns, and focusing on narratives of oppression and social injustice under the Indira Gandhi administration, they are frequently encoded within urban structures and practices which function as signifiers of identity on numerous levels. The city of Bombay is appropriated variously by

Mistry in his novels, and has appeared both as an anonymous, yet identifiable landscape in *A Fine Balance*, as well as in narratives which are particularly attentive to nomenclatural codes that structure social relationships within the city (*Such A Long Journey*). Mistry himself inhabits multiple identities as a member of the historically diasporic Parsi community, and his emigration to Canada and subsequent literary fame position him alternatively as a postcolonial Indian writer and a South Asian Canadian author.[18] Peter Morey argues in *Fictions of India* that Mistry's heritage enables his writing to stand 'as an oblique commentary on the processes of identity formation the Indian nation has undergone pre- and post-1947, based, of course, on selective inclusions and exclusions'.[19] Linguistically too, he is able to transform English into a language which embodies the colloquialisms inherent in narratives of the city, and his novels are polyphonic with a careful attention to the nuances of the spoken word.

His novel *Such A Long Journey* (1991) is unrelenting in its demonstration of language as being both evasive and essentially mutable, established through the powerful yet disruptive process of naming. The associative function of naming is realized in several instances, for instance, by the venerable Dr. Paymaster, whose patients refuse to acknowledge his own name, and adhere to the familiar title on the sign outside his surgery. In another instance, cultural critic Morey identifies Dinshawji's flirtation with the new secretary, Laurie Coutinho, as 'an example of the potential sexual violence in language and naming', whereby she is ultimately humiliated by the indelicate overtones of his badinage. The discrepancies of meaning between the name 'Laurie' and its more suggestive distortion to 'lorri', are damaging to both the secretary and her amorous suitor, and only reaffirm the 'misalliance between intention and effect' that threatens all acts of nomenclature (*Morey*, p. 79). The powerful social implications of naming are mentioned by David Williams in an essay on Mistry's novel, in which he mentions that 'what's in a name is nothing less than the whole coercive network of relations bounding the subject' (*Williams*, p. 59). This embedded subjectivity along with the discontinuities inherent in the process of identification, are illustrated in a passage in the novel, in which two Parsi gentlemen bemoan the renaming of familiar street names and the feelings of dislocation that accompany these invasive acts of civic administration.

"Why change the names? *Saala* sisterfuckers! Hutatma Chowk!" he spat out the words disgustedly. "What is wrong with Flora Fountain?"

"Why worry about it? I say, if it keeps the Marathas happy, give them a few roads to rename. Keep them occupied. What's in a name?"

"No, Gustad." Dinshawji was very serious. "You are wrong. Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly it's on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? [...]"[20]

Dinshawji's firm assertion of the consequentiality of naming brings us to the reality of inhabiting physical spaces in the city, where names are not merely abstractions, but geographical and structural signifiers. They create identification and provide a sense of orientation within an actively occupied territory, becoming familiar markers for the city dweller. The significance of public names is exemplified in Rushdie's fiction as well, as we observe Saleem Sinai's joyous reclamation of his childhood city through the reiterative process of naming streets and shops; Chimalkar's toyshop, Bombelli's confectioners, the Band Box Laundry, Marine Drive and Breach Candy are only some of the many nomenclatural associations that Saleem establishes with the city. While Mistry and Rushdie attribute the renaming of public spaces to the contestation of civic power and the nativist agendas of the ruling right-wing administration, the issues of public naming have been a central preoccupation for municipal governments since the early days of Indian Independence. Nowhere is this more poignantly portrayed, than in R.K. Narayan's fictional town named Malgudi, which witnessed a frenzied assertion of national spirit through the renaming of streets and institutions, prefiguring the recent nomenclatural trends in postcolonial cities. In a passage from the story titled *Lawley Road*, Narayan muses on the civic acts of nationalization and the attempts to restructure public symbols of modernity as hurried and discontinuous actions, which did not quite achieve the ends that the government had envisioned:

…and at once, they decided to nationalize the names of all the streets and parks, in honor of the birth of independence. They made a start with a park at Market Square. It used to be called the Coronation Park. Whose coronation God alone knew; it might have been the coronation of Victoria or Asoka. No one bothered about it. Now the old board was uprooted and a brand new sign stood in its place declaring it henceforth to be Hamara Hindustan Park…There came a point when, I believe, the Council just went mad. It decided to give the same name to four different streets. Well, sir, even in the most democratic or patriotic town it is not feasible to have two roads bearing the same name. The result was seen within a fortnight. The town became unrecognizable with new names…a wilderness with all its landmarks gone.[21]

Acts of renaming were always fundamental to the project of decolonization in India, although this was confined to public spaces within urban conglomerations and didn't extend to renaming any of the major metropolises themselves, until the 1990s.[22]

3.5 Nomenclature, nativism and religious identification

 The reversion of cities to their 'original' names, beginning with the transition from Bombay to Mumbai in 1995, was contentious on many levels. The project of renaming Bombay and public spaces within it has most often been associated with the nativist programs of the ruling right-wing coalition party, the Shiv Sena, whose political rhetoric involves a discourse of masculinity, martiality, communal cooperation, and the increasingly important religious supplement of anti-Islamic propaganda as a means of self-definition. This exclusion of Muslims has been extended in recent years to South Indians, North Indians, Biharis, and other 'outsider' communities, whose presence is considered to be supplementary, in that, they contribute to the city's economy as migrant labourers, while reducing employment opportunities for native Maharashtrians, or in Sena rhetoric, the rightful 'sons of the soil'.

Commenting on the exclusionary nature of modern cities, an article in the *Economic and Politic Weekly Magazine* states that 'as cities become more and more diverse in character, the deep sense of loss caused in reality by the material

conditions of the city is easily transformed into a cultural issue of "us versus the outsiders"'. This produces fault lines which are defined in terms of 'cultural symbols and identity marks'.[23] Partha Chatterjee recognizes the dynamic politics of identification within social groups as a recent urban phenomenon, in which there is an increasing visibility of civil society through the reorganization of population groups under political society.

> In metropolis after Indian metropolis, organized civic groups have come forward to demand from the administration and the judiciary that laws and regulations for the proper use of land, public spaces, and thoroughfares be formulated and strictly adhered to in order to improve the quality of life of citizens. Everywhere, the dominant cry seems to be to rid the city of encroachers and polluters and as it were, to give the city back to its proper citizens.[24]

Religious identification plays a crucial role in the formation of many of these civic groups. The notion of 'proper citizens' organized along the lines of religious and ethnic divisions is in fact not a new concept, as Kenneth W. Jones illustrates in his article on 'Religious Identity and the Indian Census'.[25] As a statistical tool introduced under colonial rule, which was constituted of various classificatory sections (age, sex, occupation, religion, education, and geographic distribution), the census was a means of administering the population contained within specific geographic territories. It labelled, organized and legitimized different population groups whose social progress and affirmation often depended on this comparative statistical study. One of the fundamental areas of categorization in the Indian census was religious identity, and Jones' study observes the catalytic function of the census in reshaping and intensifying the tensions between different ethno-religious groups as they vied for a more prominent positioning in the census. Territorial claims also emerged through the changing conceptualizations of religious identity and citizenship which were influenced by their representation in the census tables, and it may be viewed as a precedent to the more recent contestations of urban space and symbols of modernity in the postcolonial city along ethno-religious lines.

The selection of a name with appropriately national or local resonances has been a matter of much dispute, especially in the case of Mumbai, which was derived from

Mumbadevi, a goddess worshipped by the native Koli fisherfolk, who were the inhabitants of the swampy islands that were later reclaimed under colonial rule to form Bombay. While the coalition government in Maharashtra might have wished to assert identification in the city through a revival of religious and linguistic symbols, the significance of both the chosen deity and the nomenclatural language in present times is questionable. In his chapter on the making of ethnohistorical imagination in the city, Hansen sheds light upon the historical and religious myths that have dominated public imagination in Bombay in the past few decades, namely the emblematic power of the seventeenth century Maratha warrior king, Shivaji, and the worship of Ganesh or Ganapati as a public manifestation of Hindu culture. Nowhere in the discourse of Marathi or Hindu identity does the goddess Mumbadevi find mention, and it does raise the question of whether renaming the city in keeping with obsolete traditions is justifiable, in an age where its former name is firmly entrenched in most local practices and has significant global resonances as well.

Also, the reconstructive geographical processes which transformed the swampy islands into a unified landmass, were in fact initiated under colonial administration, and might also be considered as bearing some relevance to the politics of nomenclature. Finally, the linguistic claims laid upon the city by the ruling coalition government at the time of renaming are also contestable, as present day Mumbai is hardly a mono-lingual city, and its current language of commerce is informed by a variety of languages such as Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, Sindhi and English. This multilingual trend also emphasizes a fact that Hansen points out in his book, that the migratory patterns over the past few decades have resulted in the city becoming a space of displacement and provisionality for even 'native' Marathi speakers, a fact that the Shiv Sena's nativist rhetoric has sought to efface by defining itself against 'outsiders' (*Wages*, p. 3).

3.6 Theoretical considerations: supplement and auratic criticism

The act of naming, then, cannot be considered as a rigid designation of specific configurations of urban space, and functions as a supplementary process in the evolutionary history of a city. The supplement as conceived by Jacques Derrida is both essential and illuminating in its function of adding on to and substituting a natural presence. To interrogate the process of supplementarity which is intrinsic to

the city of Bombay, it is essential to understand the paradoxical and dual aspects of Derrida's supplement. He writes:

> But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of;* if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [*suppleant*] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern substance which *takes-(the)-place* [tient-lieu]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up *of* itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled by sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.[26]

Positioning the city within a Derridean discourse, Bombay, from its very inception has been caught up in a movement of supplementarity, whereby, with each administrative and cultural transition, new significations were brought into effect. The names which have been attached to the city over the years, and the languages they are articulated in, are supplements which function as signifiers, both validating yet unreliable at the same time. The idea of an original city is inconceivable, as every perspective that makes use of language to demarcate the city, at once substantiates and supplants previous ideas of the same. Geographically, the city was built by an accrual of territory through land reclamations projects, mentioned in most historical and even fictional accounts of Bombay, and the physical transformation of the sleepy fishing village into a bustling commercial mega-city, provides another framework to contextualize the process of supplementation within the evolutionary history of Bombay-Mumbai. The city then, is a conglomeration of physical, linguistic, cultural and ideological supplements which cannot be ontologically conceived, since the supplement transforms a terrain by leaving its trace, but is never really absent or present at any given time (*Royle*, p. 59). The two aspects of the supplement, addition and substitution, are subjected to change 'from moment to moment' and this results in alternating variations of appearance and effacement. Neither of these identifications is absolute, in that the process of effacement leaves behind a trace, while appearance or visibility is not privileged by a permanent presence (*Derrida*, p.

145). The notion of an authentic city and its original inheritors is therefore suspect, as the process of identification is closely linked with that of supplementation, both being characterized by their interminability and phantasmatic nature (*MO*, p. 28).

Coterminous with the politics of naming and identification played out by various social groups in the city, is the issue of authenticity, which may be interrogated through both cultural and critical registers in an attempt to understand its complex and pluralistic nature. On a macrocosmic level, the problem of Indian authenticity is born out of 'the struggles that we speak of collectively as decolonization', and seeks to be negotiated through new and authoritative sites of resistance. The issue of postcolonial authenticity in its nationalistic contexts has been articulated by Aamir Mufti as arising out of the inability of a once-subjugated people to produce 'narratives of cultural continuity that can absorb the dislocations of modernity'.[27] Mufti observes the seminal function of religion as a site of resistance through which authenticity may be preserved or recovered in its auratic forms, and considers other theoretical perspectives which advocate certain forms of religiosity as 'a means of restoring...the shattered totality of life in modernity'. Approaching the problem of authenticity through the opposite and often conflictual religious registers of Hinduism and Islam, he presents two distinctive yet incomplete solutions offered by political psychologist Ashis Nandy and eminent Urdu scholar Muhammad Hasan Askari. While Nandy proposes a nationalization of the Hindu religion by viewing religion as faith rather than ideology, to counteract the West which he perceives of as a 'psychological category', Askari attempts to reconfigure the 'fundamental homelessness of modern Urdu literature' by drawing attention away from the Indianness of Urdu itself and absorbing the modern public realm into the space of traditional (Islamist) disputation (*Mufti*, p. 88). By studying their respective viewpoints under the rubric of 'auratic criticism', Mufti suggests the improbability of a dialogic interaction between the two, despite the fact of their parallelism as narratives of decolonization. Furthermore, he argues that in their 'traditional' context, it is difficult to perceive how they might be located in 'the national-cultural space we call India' (p. 96).

In citing Nandy's and Askari's formulations of religion and religiosity, Mufti cautions us about the potentially counteractive misreading of their theories as being

communal or fundamentalist in nature. The manipulation of religious discourses to assert their authenticity/primacy over others has been a longstanding problem in narratives of postcoloniality at both national and urban levels. Taking the modern city of Bombay-Mumbai and its popular cultural practices into consideration, one might observe the 'mythical' registers through which local ethno-religious narratives have been revived and authenticated in recent years. In his review of the novel *Sacred Games*, Pankaj Mishra contends that 'Chandra believes that many Indians, pulled between tradition and modernity in a chaotically populous and poor country, have…a mythic, rather than a historical sense of their place in the world'.[28] On a similar note, Ahmed Saidullah traces the 'myths of foundational identity' in the Maratha civilization as being influenced by political trends in Europe during the pre-Independence years of colonial trade in Bombay, and observes the linguistic division of the state in 1955 into Gujarat and Maharashtra, as further contributing to these mythical registers through revivalist agendas.[29] In light of the developments in the political rhetoric of the Shiv Sena, from the 1960s until recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on the organized ritualization of the Shivaji mythology and its religious manifestations with distinctly communal implications (anti-Muslim). This has allegedly been achieved, both by the distortion of historical fact and the wilful revision of mythology, to establish a discourse of 'authenticity' which creates identification through xenophobia and exclusion.

Positioned amongst the sceptics, American scholar and critic James W. Laine, has made a piercing inquisition into the life and legend of Shivaji, and the ways in which dominant political, religious and cultural objectives in Maharashtra have been integrated within, and largely shaped the ethno-historical discourse that Maratha identity is centred upon, in his book *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*. The role of myth in identity formation and assertion is illustrated as he raises the provocative question: 'How have Maharashtrian Hindus constructed a narrative of Shivaji's life that is consistent with the narrative they construct of their own identities as Hindus, as Maharashtrians, and as Indians?'[30] Laine's account is relentless in its attempt to denaturalize the myth of Shivaji and offers an extensively researched argument that exposes the complex religious, linguistic and identitarian affiliations of the warrior king as not necessarily aligned with modern constructions of the same. In doing so, he examines the issue of authenticity and its relation to dominant religio-cultural

practices in a specific local context, thereby contributing to Mufti's more ambitious and capacious project which interrogates the auratic construction of authenticity in postcolonial India. Unsurprisingly, Laine's endeavour was met with mob-demonstrations and physical violence in cities like Pune, by well-orchestrated groups of Maharashtrians whose populist cultural sentiments were greatly affronted by his scholarly interventions. The interminable tensions between the social manifestations of 'authentic' Maharashtrian identities and their cultural critiques have thus, on occasion, been directly responsible for reviving identitarian conflicts in the city.

3.7 Authenticity and the Indian writer: Vikram Chandra's fiction

In 'The Cult of Authenticity', Vikram Chandra presents another frictional encounter between the critical-intellectual and the practical aspects of identification at both national (as an Indian) and urban (as a Bombayite) levels.[31] In this instance, however, the author himself is the target of critical reproach, as his fictive reconstruction of the modern Indian city of Bombay-Mumbai is considered 'inauthentic', on account of the contrived and 'Indianized' nomenclatural strategies employed by him in his novels. In the essay, Chandra recounts a book reading event organized by the British Council in New Delhi, where the controversies of naming are raised by a member of the audience with regard to his choice of story titles in the collection *Love and Longing in Bombay*. The five distinctive tales, 'Dharma' (duty), 'Kama' (love), 'Artha' (economy), 'Shakti' (strength) and 'Shanti' (peace), are based on the fundamental principles of living according to the Hindu scriptures, and are positioned against the vibrant yet gritty urban landscape of Bombay city.[32] The titles themselves are abstractions, as Chandra explains, and create narratives of contrast when studied against the earthy background of the stories themselves. Unlike the critic who reads a different pattern of signification into them, Chandra argues in his defence, that his experiences of Bombay do not need the rhetoric of 'Indian-ness' to authenticate them.

Chandra also relates a couple of anecdotal narratives of his encounters with various inhabitants of the city, from whom he sought inspiration for the stories, which are an intriguing combination of local flavour and modern narration. Through his account one might observe that his identification with the city is precise; he relates to the city as a cosmopolitan, whose experiences of urban modernity are not

confined to a single language, social group or physical space. He asserts his claim on the city through its literature, which has evolved over the years in both form and content, ranging from the short story selection based in Bombay, to the thrilling tale of crime and corruption in Mumbai. Chandra also rejects the need for a discourse of authenticity, to formalize one's place and position in the city, and argues for the entitlement of every individual to appropriate and articulate their urban experiences uniquely. This sense of ownership is perhaps a commonly held view amongst writers of Indo-English fiction, and frequently rejected by critical theorists, Meenakshi Mukherjee in this instance, as the tension between creative imagination and its politically precise articulation is never quite constructively reconciled. Mukherjee infers from his writing that Chandra, as an artist, is not particularly attentive to the nuances of subject-position and representational authority, which to her signifies an inauthentic identification. In my opinion, however, his defence is convincing in its adoption of a pluralistic viewpoint, as he vicariously inhabits multiple subject positions - as an Indian, regional and cosmopolitan writer - both individually and severally.

In many ways, the polyvalent city of *Sacred Games* is the author's own; unlike Rushdie, whose fiction categorically reflects his spatial identification within Bombay-Mumbai (southern, upper-middle class), Chandra is unbounded by either language or physical space and occupies several urban registers with fluency and ease. In an essay which describes his versatility as a writer, Dora Sales Salvador observes that Chandra is attentive to the responsibilities of authorship and assumes the existence of untold counter-perspectives in the stories he relates. She describes his urban narratives as giving 'voice to ghosts, mysteries, power-politics in social relations, passions, crimes, hidden sexualities, nostalgias', in what may be perceived as both a sensitive and inclusive account of life in the city.[33] As a part-time resident in the colony of Lokhandwalla within the locality of Andheri in Bombay-Mumbai, and also as a prominent émigré writer belonging to the sub-continental school of Indian authors writing in English, Chandra locates his fiction as having both regional and global resonances in its authorship, historical and geographical descriptions, and audience receptivity.[34] Bombay-Mumbai figures as a significant textual space that maps the diversity of Chandra's experiences and positions his writing against other sub-continental authors such as Rushdie and Mistry.

As we have observed, each of these writers recreates the city within a dialogic discourse of tradition and modernity, by using narrative strategies such as a creative opposition between the country and the city, combining different narrative modes such as oral story-telling and written fiction, and exploring myths and superstitions which still prevail in an age of high technology and electronic communication. Chandra's urban prose, however, is divergent from both Rushdie's and Mistry's in certain aspects; his narrative structure is determinedly non-linear, when compared with novels like *Midnight's Children* and *Such A Long Journey* which adhere to a chronological framework. While the politics of nomenclature in Bombay-Mumbai is a crucial and explicit point of contention in Rushdie's fiction, Chandra is far more subtle in his exploration of the complex ideological discourse of naming and identity in the city through the life of Ganesh Gaitonde in *Sacred Games* (2006). By adopting a variety of perspectives in his writings, Chandra is able to narrativize the transition of Bombay to Mumbai without creating the obvious disjuncture between the city and its nomenclatural other, as is evident in Rushdie's novels. Spatially too, Chandra's narratives traverse the entire expanse of the surface city of Bombay-Mumbai as well as the depths of its underworld, often employing a primary narrator as the connecting link between the many faces of the city. This is particularly in contrast with Mistry's fiction, which usually focuses on a single narrative space (Khodadad Building, Chateau Felicity, Firozsha Baag) occupied by a miscellany of residents.

3.8 Language and the schismatic city: *Bambaiyya* English in *Sacred Games*

In *Sacred Games*, his most recent novel, Chandra displays a versatility in his identification with the urban, both in the transition from short story writing to a novel of epic dimensions, and also in his modern adaptation of the English language to articulate a more diverse spectrum of experiences. The novel employs a curious mixture of languages and dialects which are both pedestrian in their vulgar familiarity to the Bombay dweller and also thrilling in their brash disruption of the English narrative which was largely targeted at a Western audience at the time of its publication. Chandra confesses that the linguistic hybridity of *Sacred Games* was partly influenced by Salman Rushdie's language in *Midnight's Children*, and himself uses a stylized form of English which embraces certain aspects of urban 'low' culture, to provide a more 'authentic' narrative of the city. Bambaiyya English, or filmi English

as it is commonly referred to, is Chandra's chosen mode of expression, and other novels which I study in subsequent chapters (*The Moor's Last Sigh*, for instance) employ a similar vocabulary to articulate the plebeian experiences of their Bombay-based characters. Chandra locates the origins of this polyglot language, which is unique to the city of Bombay-Mumbai, as being first introduced in film magazines such as *Stardust* and *Society*, made famous by the celebrity author Shobha De.[35] This was later adopted by several Indo-Anglian authors as a stylistic device which established their works as having a distinctively local flavour and also demonstrated a masterful knowledge and use of the colonizer's language.

While arguably the subversive undertones of such literature is instrumental in carving a postcolonial niche for Indian writing in English, it has also been debated that the commercial and media publicity gained by Indo-Anglian writers adversely affects their 'regional' or vernacular' counterparts. Contextualizing *Sacred Games* within these arguments, one might observe the novel to be a spirited response to the criticism of diasporic fiction in English as being detrimental to the future of vernacular literatures in India. Ahmad Saidullah believes that the novel has achieved this status on account of Chandra's fictionalization of 'a lumpen milieu whose language teems with the violent and sexist argot of the bastis, where cosmopolitanism and English speakers are resented' (*Saidullah*). Such a critical perspective may perhaps gain currency from conversations in the novel, where characters expressly position 'English-wallas' as spatially and ideologically distant from the entanglement of by-lanes and hovels, which characterize the underworld of Chandra's novel. And yet as the author himself asserts in 'The Cult of Authenticity', cosmopolitanism is not confined to the knowledge of a particular language or the inhabitation of a specific modernity; rather, it is intrinsic to Bombay-Mumbai, a city of inevitable displacement caused by its shifting population groups and mutable landscapes. This is illustrated in *Sacred Games*, which transposes the character of Sartaj Singh and his misplaced, elitist affections from the short story 'Kama' in *Love and Longing in Bombay*, to the seamier sections of Bombay's marginalia in a narrative which retraces the routes of cosmopolitanism.

The novel assumes the form of an 'anti-thriller' that subverts the traditional crime-fiction novel structure, and places it within a complex historical narrative. It is,

according to Chandra, a 'truly modern form of narration', and encompasses the entire breadth of historical events that were coincident with, and had impact on Bombay's development since the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s.[36] The 'insets' in the novel, described as 'subterranean notes in a symphony', are fundamental to the urban narrative and circumscribe Bombay-Mumbai within larger structures and contexts that are at times unfathomable and beyond human administration. By situating Bombay-Mumbai within this collective national framework, the author endeavours to redefine the relationship between the city and its hinterland, which has progressively moved from one of insularity, as a reclaimed archipelago and colonial port-city, to becoming an accessible, commercial hub in recent years.[37] Contextualizing this transition within the discourse of naming, one might speculate upon Chandra's attitudes as an author and a resident of Bombay-Mumbai, towards the official renaming of the city.[38]

Unlike the popular trajectory of thought that has informed the writings of Rushdie, Mehta, Vakil and others, Chandra reveals that the politics of nomenclature is not necessarily associated with the 'social censorship' he identifies as being the formative discourse of the contemporary city. Bombay-Mumbai, for him, has 'always been this city of schisms, strange schizophrenia, and purposeful blindness of one part of the city towards the other', and this is perhaps reflective of his own secular positioning within the city's complex class structures, glimpses of which are offered to us in his polyphonic novel (*Faleiro*). Contradictory to his dismissive attitude towards the renaming of Bombay, *Sacred Games* is compulsively engaged with naming and its signifying functions which are crucial to the formation and legitimization of urban identities. The disjuncture between the process of identification which is natural to the migrant situation, and its escalation into identitarian tensions that are contingent upon the numerous factors discussed earlier (bigotry, hatred, revisionist discourses of ethnicity and religion), is Chandra's main contention in the novel, and the narrative examines the defining incidents and social developments which intensify these fault lines. The author also censures the sectarian turn of the city's socio-political attitudes over the past few decades by observing that '...the movement towards social censorship, towards an imagined idealism of a glorious past, which never existed; a fear of the foreign, and especially of women and of sex', positions Bombay-Mumbai as being retrograde and inclined towards a fascist culture.

In the following section of my thesis, I identify the politics of nomenclature as being the broader canvas which encompasses these cultural orientations both in their affirmative and adverse forms. This identification is achieved through an extensive study of *Sacred Games,* an urban novel that transgresses beyond the divisions of class and caste to present radically different forms and inhabitations of modernity.

3.9 Detective fiction as a discourse of postcolonial masculinity

Sacred Games occupies a provocative place in the narrative genre of detective or crime fiction, which in the Indian context often employs certain elements of realism combined with the more thrilling and supernatural aspects of a ghost story. The city of Bombay-Mumbai provides a mutable landscape against which Chandra's story is unravelled, and is inhabited by a diverse group of characters whose lives are intertwined by the vicissitudes of the bustling urban environment. One of the central novelistic devices in *Sacred Games* is its attentiveness to character-development, and it has been observed that the novel 'devotes much of its space and energy to establishing the complex characteristics of its two central figures and the tumultuous city…that sustains and imprisons them.'[39] The subject of characterization in the novel is significant on a number of levels; as one of the central protagonists in a crime-fiction novel, Ganesh Gaitonde is positioned as an adversary to the familiar figure of Inspector Sartaj Singh, with whom the imagined reader is previously and intimately acquainted from one of the five novellas in Chandra's collection, *Love and Longing in Bombay.* As a divorced police inspector with middling professional prospects, Sartaj's character has been fleshed out by Chandra in its two fictional appearances to reveal his poignant idealism, his pensive solitude as he traipses through the menacing city streets, his gruff romanticism in his encounters with various women, and finally, the attitude of cynicism which marks his relationship with the city and its inhabitants. He is modelled along the lines of the weary yet indefatigable private eye, characteristic of the Western genre of detective fiction and stylistically influenced by writers like Raymond Chandler, whose rather evocative descriptions of the crime-novel sleuth are steeped in gritty realism and reminiscent of the police inspector in Chandra's story:

> Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is
> neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective must be a complete man and a

common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honour. He talks as the man of his age talks, that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness.[40]

As the embodiment of a certain form of Indian masculinity, the character of Sartaj Singh has a distinctive corporeal presence in the novel, which is both admired and feared by the common man on the street. Operating within a hostile, urban environment, Chandra's detective-figure is endowed with certain manly attributes which enable him to combat the degenerate and corrupt forces that infiltrate the city and threaten the coherence of a stable society. This is sustained in several ways, the first of which involves a routine demonstration of physical force and intimidation, commonly used by the Indian law enforcement officers as an operational strategy for 'breaking' criminals. The homosocial bonds which structure the relations between men on the task force also contribute to the collective image of male superiority that is exemplified through the persuasive roles of the 'good cop' and the 'bad cop' during raids and interrogations. In Sartaj's case, the discourse of masculinity is maintained through a linguistic assertion over his urban environment, by the use of aggressive and colloquial language which is both familiar and menacing in its overtones.

The use of aggressive language is illustrated at various instances in the novel, particularly during investigative quests in which Sartaj exercises a tactical linguistic control over his aggressors to extort either money or information from them. The role of Bollywood cinema in establishing popular linguistic codes and emulative icons of masculinity cannot be disregarded and Sartaj's character is enhanced by its familiarity with and appropriation of certain cinematic models of manliness ('muscle-boys like Sunil Shetty or Akshay Kumar'). Despite the rather formidable exterior that he projects, Sartaj Singh is imbued with a certain fallibility and constraint which endears him to the reader and aligns him in certain ways with his nemesis, Ganesh Gaitonde. As a man with middling prospects, he is acutely conscious of his lack of wealth, social status and ambitious drive, which threaten to unravel the coherent front that he outwardly maintains. Coupled with urban disaffection and an unstable social order, Sartaj's vulnerability to his immediate environment is revealed through

an existential crisis which shadows his investigative capacities, and draws attention to the obvious tension between exteriority and interiority in the narrative.

For Sartaj, the city of Bombay is an unbounded space of exhilarating and terrifying possibilities and these are imaginatively prefigured by him in the course of the tale, reflecting the mysterious ways in which the city embeds itself in the psychological make-up of its inhabitants. One of the earliest instances of imaginative mapping in the novel is a scene in which he gazes upon a panoramic view of Bombay-Mumbai that yields itself as an amorphous stretch of shadows and shapes and bears little resemblance to the city as he remembers it to be.

> He remembered…the feeling that he could hold the whole city in his heart, from Colaba to Bandra. Now it was too vast, escaped from him, each family adding to the next and the next, until there was that cool and endless glow, impossible to know or escape. Had it really existed…[or had he] given it to himself in gift, the memory of a happier place? (*SG*, p. 22)

Sacred Games, as a text which locates practices that are outside the space of the panoptic administration of mainstream law, is the exploration of 'another spatiality', and as explained by Michael de Certeau, 'a migrational, or metaphorical city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city'.[41] Bombay-Mumbai is variously approximated by the characters, whose affiliation with the city is often translated by Chandra into lengthy descriptions of individual spatial configurations, that create new and effective territorial boundaries within the space of the urban. The 'whole city', for Sartaj, is circumscribed within the geographical limits of Colaba and Bandra, which, realistically, are contained within the parameters of a much larger cartographic landscape that is officially Bombay-Mumbai. Sartaj's city is confined mostly to its inviolable southern parts that have emerged from my earlier discussions as being the primary representative space in several works of urban fiction. The spatial characteristics of the city are mystifying for him, a fact which is compounded by its rapid structural development and increasing migrant population.

In his investigative capacity, Sartaj encounters the extreme conditions of dwelling that are typical to the poorest migrant settlers in the city, their lives bounded by squalid enclosures and a sense of claustrophobic proximity. His experiences in the

Bengali Burra of Navnagar are marked by a feeling of descent, brought on by his ingress into a physical space that is socially, economically, and structurally far lower than his own. The sprawling tenements stake a claim on the city that was once familiar and acquirable for Sartaj, and are disruptive to the ideological sense of comfort that it previously afforded him. Sandeep Pendse explains the feeling of dispossession as being an inevitable part of the experiences of a modern city-dweller, for whom 'the city as a total entity is only a notion, an abstraction, not something really known or grasped'.[42] Sartaj's feelings towards Bombay are ambivalent, caught between the conflicted senses of love and loathing that arise from the city's resistance to the crime and corruption which pervade its core.

> There is a certain pleasure we take in thinking how bad it gets, Sartaj thought, and then in imagining how it will inevitably get worse. And still we survive, the city stumbles on. Maybe one day it'll all just fall apart, and there was a certain gratification in that thought too (*SG*, p. 88).

In a novel which subversively uses the dualities of good and evil to unfold its thrilling plot, Sartaj Singh for the most part, is depicted as a 'man of honour', whose role in this narrative of containment is to safeguard the city of Bombay-Mumbai and its inhabitants. The inherent corruptability of all systems of power in the city is condoning of his minor transgressions, which take the form of petty extortions and routine intimidation. By outlining Sartaj's emotional and moral responses to the situations he encounters, Chandra endows him with a psychological depth that makes him cognizant of the similarity and differences he shares with his colleagues and at times, even with his antagonists. He is portrayed as being a solitary and introspective agent who detects through both deduction and provocation, thereby distinguishing himself from the brute tactics employed by others on the task force. His religious orientation (North Indian, Sikh) and its sartorial codes (the turban) are also conspicuous markers of his otherness in a predominantly Maharashtrian law and enforcement department.

And yet, in this narrative which bears all the markers of a detective story while simultaneously flouting them, Sartaj's individuality is structured within a far more complex plot of alter-egos and doubling. By naming his central protagonists rather conspicuously through the repetitive use of consonants, Chandra draws attention to

other parallels between the good detective Sartaj Singh and his nemesis Ganesh Gaitonde. Deeply entrenched in their conflicting urban networks, their methods of operation through coercion and violence are surprisingly similar, although each is motivated by reasons and interests which differ vastly. Interestingly, the two men do not effectively meet in the course of the entire narrative, with the exception of one chance encounter at a spiritual congregation. Even their only interaction transpires at the site of Gaitonde's impregnable nuclear shelter through a loudspeaker which is installed on its exterior wall, thereby preventing actual engagement or confrontation. And yet like Holmes and Moriarty in Arthur Conan Doyle's fiction, Sartaj and Gaitonde are second selves to each other, and this is reflected through the narrative which alternates between a third and a first person account of a crime. Through these shifting perspectives the clear distinctions between good and evil, opportunist and con-man, victim and aggressor, are slowly obscured, and the reader is made aware of the vulnerability experienced by both protagonists when confronted by the unrelenting forces of the city. The supplementarity which characterizes their relationship is emphasized by Chandra, as the two men appear throughout the narrative in alternating variations of visibility and effacement. Their dependence on the labyrinthine networks of the city's underworld is also brought to notice, as it sustains their fragmented individualities and inextricably binds them together into a more coherent and yet conflicting entity.

3.10 The polylingual city: language and urban subcultures

To create an effective nemesis for the inspector, the character of Ganesh Gaitonde is developed slowly and extensively in a narrative space that is vast, yet populated by a multiplicity of perspectives which clamour for recognition. Unsurprisingly, he is the only character to be accorded a complex, first-person narration in the novel and struggles to achieve a sustainable narrative figure that is both intriguing and formidable. Through Ganesh Gaitonde, Chandra explores the masculine subculture of the Bombay street rebel or the *tapori* who is originally a migrant to the city, and rises in the ranks of the underworld by establishing a discourse of fear and violence. This is achieved to a great extent through the performative practices of language and nomenclature, which are adopted by Gaitonde in his attempts of self-reinvention and integration within an alternative urban system. In her chapter on

'Language, Gesture and the City', Ranjani Mazumdar describes the *tapori* as representing 'the hybrid cultures of Bombay's multilingual and regional diversity by deploying a speech that creates the possibility of transcending various other identities'.[43] This is reiterated by Gaitonde himself in his assertive use of a distinctive language amongst the members of a warring gang, as a means of creating solidarity and identification between individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds:

> Now this was our own language, kanchas and gullels for bullets and pistols. The Cobra Gang and all the other companies might say daane for bullets, and saman for pistols, but we said kanche and gullels. This too I encouraged, it set us apart from the rest, made us belong to each other more because we spoke a private tongue, and to become one of us you had to learn it, and in learning it you were changed (*SG*, p. 112).

This fecund linguistic discourse employed by Gaitonde and his followers is characterized by its aggressive and sexist overtones, and is used to signify a masculine, opportunistic street culture that is typical of contemporary Bombay city. As a language, it is entirely urban and destabilizes 'high-brow' linguistic formations with its easy appropriation of polyglot cultures and dialects. As the reigning linguistic form in Hindi cinema, and, more recently, in literatures of the city, the language employed by Ganesh Gaitonde is a powerful, mediatory force that bridges the 'vanity' of writing with the 'vulgarity' of language.[44] Implicated in this language is the notion of power, which stems from both the ability of the common street figure to realize his presence through the crude resonances and inflections of street slang, and the opportunities which it presents him by way of social mobility, albeit within a very different class hierarchy from that to which the writer (Chandra, in this instance) belongs. Gaitonde is able to conceal his past beneath the reiterative practices of language and naming, and legitimize his continuously evolving urban identities of runaway migrant, bullion trader, *tapori*, leader of the G-Company, Hindu don and international smuggler, by relying on their performative power. To a certain extent he believes himself to be the author of his own narrative, empowered with language and the art of fabrication, which allow him to appropriate a new life that completely elides his past. And yet, he is implicated in events beyond his control which lead him

to seek refuge in a nuclear shelter and ultimately take his own life. Gaitonde's final vision of the city is intriguingly similar to Sartaj Singh's, as they are both shattered by the knowledge of a potential nuclear armageddon. The unpredictability of the urban environment and thoughts of its cataclysmic future invade the gang-lord's mind, and he is tormented by the corrosive image of a city eaten by fire, crumpled, black and twisting and completely destroyed'.

Gaitonde's fate in the novel is indicative of Chandra's belief in the 'huge web of agendas and politics and ideologies' that lies beyond the control of human administration and renders any assumption of a coherent identity and position of authority as being illusory.[45] Kate Wellburn examines this trajectory of thought in her article on 'Identity and Ideology', which cites prominent philosophers and cultural theorists (Freud, Zizek and Butler) and their illustrations of an individual's 'lack of authority' in various realms such as the unconscious, the Real and citational speech, despite those in question conceiving themselves as autonomous beings endowed with authorial power.[46] Slavoj Zizek in particular is an interesting cultural critic to consider in relation to Chandra's novel, as his notion of the ideology of agency which structures all social relations and creates a false sense of individuality, may be extended to the character of Ganesh Gaitonde. This individuality is further reinforced or realized through the act of naming, which Zizek suggests is necessary for the formation of identity, although necessary, 'when we are already "in it"'. He argues in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* that 'guaranteeing the identity of an object…is *the retroactive act of naming: it is the name itself*, the signifier, which supports the identity of the object'.[47] While Ganesh adopts his new name upon arriving in the city, it is actualized and fixed only afterwards through constant enunciation, and is assigned meaning through its association with discourses of religion and terror. Ganesh's assimilation into the leagues of the city mafia is contingent upon his name, which cleverly communicates his religious and ethnic orientation (Hindu-Maharashtrian) to a society that is fiercely sectarian in its ideologies and living habits.

> Right from the beginning, we had Dalits and OBCs, Marathas and Tamils, Brahmins and Muslims. The communities tended to cluster together, lane by lane. People like to stay with those they know, like seeks like, and…in this jungle where a man can lose his name and become something else, the

lowest of the low will seek his own kind, and live with them in proud public squalor (*SG*, p. 106).

During his rise in the ranks of this hierarchal underworld, Gaitonde is portrayed by Chandra, as conceiving of Bombay-Mumbai to be a challenging terrain, yet within the grasp of opportunism and economic power-play. His extreme egotism is manifested through his self-projection onto the strategic encounters which he administers, and that gain him recognition as a vicious and relentless contender of space in the city. As he observes, '...I felt my forces extending across Bombay like electricity, because of me women and men were talking, running, moving in patterns that I had set in motion, I had thrown the net of myself wide...(*SG*, p. 370). Gaitonde shares a vicarious relationship with the city, much like Sartaj Singh, and is compulsively drawn towards its 'spittle-strewn streets', its 'swarms of crowds' and the 'thickets of slums', which nurture his fragile sense of identity and the tenuous structures of power that sustain his imperial image (pp. 537-8). He conceives of himself as being the possessor of the city and even the whole country, a notion which is fuelled by his stash of armaments and other material fortifications.

And yet he is continuously fraught with the anxiety of formulating a new and authoritative urban identity, as he soon realizes the futility of material acquisition without a validation of the self. His victory in the territorial struggle over the Gopalmath slum colony is only complete after the inhabitants of the neighbouring localities acknowledge his presence, by submitting their own disputes for his consideration and seeking protection from his men. The politics of identification through recognition is inherent in Gaitonde's assertion that 'now no one could dispute [his] right to stay in the city', as he believes that he has gained both land and legitimacy through a display of power, sustained further, by his name. Through the reiterative processes of enunciation and affixation that assume ritual significance in his life, Gaitonde reinforces his identity through his name, which is continuously supplemented in its function of signification by his various conquests in the city. He proudly observes,

> Ganesh Gaitonde: the name had a certain heft, a certain sturdiness. It stood
> up straight, it didn't back down, it was a strong name. In print, it had a

certain symmetrical solidity, and it rang on the ear like the double clash of a nagada. People trusted it, and people were afraid of it (*SG*, p. 264).

The name and its fearful associations are further substantiated by the media, who create a conjunction between the proper name (Gaintonde) and the identity it affirms (gang-lord), thereby entrenching him firmly within the discourse of terror that he seeks to establish. One recalls Zizek's observation that it is in its act of signification that the name itself crucially supports the identity of an object, or an individual, in Gaitonde's case. As the elusive and notorious leader of the G-Company, Gaitonde's carefully preserved identity is further threatened by the burden of monocracy which relies on his unceasing portrayal of a role that is inconsistent with his internal make-up. A character endowed with deep psychological insight, Ganesh soon realizes himself to be 'phantom of a man', who is constantly 'groping for the contours' of the image he had sought to create (*SG*, p. 382). The alternating registers of presence and absence which he occupies, in his endeavour to supplement the fearful image created by him, create a fragile narrative of insubstantiality and lack. The theatricality of his existence is apparent to those who are intimately acquainted with him, his lover, the film actress Zoya Mirza for instance, who resolves her own conflicted identification through reconstructive surgery and the adoption of a 'modern sounding' stage-name. Practiced in the art of subterfuge and guile, Zoya is an exceedingly beautiful and perceptive woman who recognizes the veneer which Gaitonde adopts in front of other. She observes:

He played the part of Ganesh Gaitonde even when he was alone with himself. I think he was the same when he was alone with me as he was when he was in his durbar with his boys. That voice and sitting like this (*SG*, p. 517).

3.11 The sacred and the secular: religious identification and sectarian strife

Gaitonde is caught up in a political miasma that grips the city in the form of communal riots, events that spiral beyond the control of his own sprawling administrative networks and expose the fragility of identities, both recognized and anonymous. As described by Masselos, the Bombay riots of 1992-93 were unprecedented in their scale and affected a vast cross-section of the city's inhabitants

who had previously dwelt in the security of their mostly unchallenged religious, social and spatial identifications. For Gaitonde, these affiliations are positioned within a complex nomenclatural discourse that is fractured by the onset of the riots, during which hierarchies are displaced and names dispossessed; as he tremblingly realizes, 'against that blood-fed anger, there was no name that was protection' (*SG*, p. 365). He ultimately flees the city, which is overturned by the escalating identitarian tensions and the compulsive acquisitive tendencies of its inhabitants into a space that is dangerous to even those who have their interests and identities vested in these conflicts. Organized crime is wrested from its administrators and assumes vast and uncontrollable forms, as in the case of the sectarian riots or on a more severe scale, the nuclear plot which threatens to annihilate the city. Gaitonde relocates his operations to Thailand, an exotic space of subterfuge, seclusion and sexual pleasure, which operates as the element of fantasy that 'normalizes what is psychologically unbearable' in the narrative. In her essay 'The Imagination of Disaster', Susan Sontag observes that in an age characterized by extremity, 'we live under the continual threat of two equally fearful yet seemingly opposed destinies; unremitting banality and inconceivable terror'.[48] Caught in the throes of the latter, Gaitonde chooses an alternative operative space and a lifestyle which distances him from the actual physical violence that marks urban encounters in Bombay-Mumbai.

Furthermore, in a narrative twist which reconciles the traditional Hindu concept of reincarnation with its most modern avatar, he undergoes plastic surgery to remodel himself into a form that is more consistent with his psychological self. The nomenclatural burden of being Ganesh Gaitonde is also relieved, as he is renamed 'Arjun' by his spiritual mentor Guruji, and circumscribed within a different mythical identity. In the ancient epic Mahabharata, the character of Arjuna is attributed with several peerless qualities, chief amongst which are his sense of duty (dharma) and prowess (shakti) as a warrior. Chandra intelligently combines the spiritual theme that intertwined the novellas in his previous collection with the driving philosophies that structure his latest work, and produces a discourse of religious identity that is reflective of the hegemonic power of the local leadership in Maharashtra. By urging Ganesh to adopt the Hindu principles of living, his mentor, Guruji, enacts the mythological role of Lord Krishna, who counselled Arjuna to fulfil his duty by waging war against the Kauravas in the battle of Kurukshetra. In the novel, this re-

enactment is however, implicated within a more contemporary discourse of identitarian violence that has been advocated over the past few decades by the Shiv Sena, and Chandra uses the character of Ganesh Gaitonde to trace the degeneration of the politics of identification in Bombay into ethno-religious conflicts.

Primary amongst these is the dialectical tension between Hindus and Muslims in Bombay-Mumbai, and can be located as arising out of larger political contexts which are introduced in the narrative through the use of insets. These appear in the form of four additional chapters chronicling a total of nine extra stories, which are linked to the main narrative and connect Bombay-Mumbai to wider historical and political perspectives. The tale of Prabhjot Kaur (Sartaj Singh's mother) and her family's traumatic migration during the Partition of India prefigures the religious fault-lines along which the riots of 1992-93 were played out in Bombay-Mumbai. Amidst unprecedented communal violence, the mass displacement of Hindus and Sikhs to India and Muslims to Pakistan during the Partition is one of the most compelling scenes of the novel, and is mirrored in the carnage which ensues during the riots that overwhelm Gaitonde's city. In this representation of Pakistan, Chandra achieves his objective of creating a network of events that traces the political history of India since its Independence, and situates Bombay-Mumbai as an urban locus which is dramatically defined by the reincarnation of dystopian events within the space of the city. The identification of Muslims as *dushman,* or the enemy, is a thematic concern which Chandra investigates in his second inset on K.D. Yadav, a retired member of the Indian Intelligence Services and an aide in the search for Gaitonde's guru. As he battles partial amnesia caused by a brain tumour, recollections of the recruitment process in the Intelligence Services filter back to K.D.'s disoriented mind, and he remembers the selective religious screening that candidates were subjected to. The discourse of ethnic bigotry, compounded by the Partition in this instance, is used to explain the lack of Muslims in the organization, which was instituted to protect a 'secular' country. Secularity is seen to be contingent upon the general state of political rest or unrest within the country, which structures the tenuous relations between different religions and faiths in a multi-ethnic nation like India, and Chandra portrays the extreme rifts caused by the Bombay riots in his story of Gaitonde's rise and downfall. In portraying secularism thus, Chandra appears to suggest that it is

paradoxically determined by sectarianism, and is therefore an empty signifier – tenuous, undefined and impressionable.

At the outset however, *Sacred Games* appears to be a profoundly secular narrative. Its central protagonists, a Sikh police inspector and a Maharashtrian Hindu gangster, are embroiled in an urban intrigue which involves characters who are variously positioned in their social, religious and ethnic affiliations; the Mascarenhas sisters who are Christian, the predominantly Maratha police force, the Bangladeshi-Muslim migrants in Navnagar, and the Hindu fundamentalist politician Bipin Bhosle, are only a few amongst the diverse spectrum of people who occupy the narrative space. While Chandra is careful in outlining these categoric identifications he does not at once reveal his intention in doing so. The onset of the sectarian riots of 1992-93 in Bombay are acknowledged by him to be a definitive point of rupture in the city's history, as the contestation of space and power in Bombay-Mumbai were thereafter reoriented along religious lines. Theorizing this within Zizek's theory of the symptom, here, we might consider naming as symptom, whereby with every historical rupture (the riots in this case) meaning is retroactively changed.[49]

Thus, the Maharashtrian-Hindu implications of Ganesh Gaitonde's name begin to emerge and gain consequence only after the riots in Bombay, which ascribe communal meaning to his previously secular identity. This is illustrated in the novel through the shifting identification of Ganesh Gaitonde from gang-leader to 'Hindu bhai', as he is coerced into a narrative that is structured within a discourse of ethnicity and religion. Gaitonde's reluctance to embrace a polarized identity is apparent as he explains to the Hindu fundamentalist leader, Bipin Bhonsle that he 'didn't care for any of those things, not where business was concerned' (*SG*, p. 232). His scepticism of religious binaries is further affirmed by his relationship with Muslim actress Zoya Mirza, and the undiscriminating attitudes he adopts in the recruitment of men for the G-Company. However, his tolerant views increasingly undermine his authority in an environment that thrives on communal conflict, and he succumbs to the prevailing ideological narrative of the time. Chandra himself points out that, as a man whose identity is severely fragmented, Gaitonde is seduced by the vision of a structured existence offered to him by his own followers, despite it being antithetical to his private beliefs. Circumscribed within a singular, definitive

identity, he admits that 'becoming Ganesh Gaitonde, the Hindu bhai…was itself an act of murder; it was the murder of a thousand and one selves' (*SG*, p. 378).

Gaitonde's conflicted quest for a true identity is reminiscent of Saleem Sinai's of *Midnight's Children* fame, one of the thousand and one children of Rushdian fantasy, who is born at the midnight stroke of Independence and struggles with his divided selves to come into his own being. However, unlike Saleem's allegorical desire to reconcile the cultural, linguistic and socio-political differences of his many selves, Gaitonde succumbs to the sectarian narrative which requires him to adopt communal violence as a necessary mode of existence in a city torn by strife. In the aftermath of the riots, Gaitonde's identity as a Hindu leader is affirmed only after he launches retaliatory attacks on the Muslim slums, thereby placing him within the communally driven discourse of masculinity and aggression that was advocated by the Shiv Sena at the time. His adoption of the role of protector of the Hindu faith is crucial in securing his position as leader during a time when affiliations are easily swayed, and despite being 'no worshipper of gods and goddesses', Gaitonde is impelled to launch a religious crusade against a rival Islamic gang, commandeered by Suleiman Isa (*SG*, p. 383).

The language of warfare employed by Gaitonde and his men is synchronous with the Sena rhetoric of the time, which shifted its focus from exclusionary tactics and anti-migration agendas to 'anti-nationalism', and targeted Muslims for having affiliations outside the country.[50] Chandra integrates this political trajectory very effectively within the novel, in a conversation between Gaitonde and a central government agent who is sent to recruit him in a mission against externally funded terrorism:

> "I am aware of your present difficulties. But I appreciate the efforts you have put in against this Suleiman Isa, and against his Pakistani friends."

> He was waiting for me to say something. I gave him a response: "Yes, saab. That bastard is a traitor. He is a dog who lives on the Pakistani's waste." He nodded. "He is anti-national", I said.

> "And you Ganesh Gaitonde? Are you a patriot?"

"I am," I said.

His religious affiliations are however not invulnerable to the suspicious political climate in the aftermath of the riots, and Gaitonde is suspected to be a member of the Kalki Sena, an extremist organization whose militant strategies of eradicating the age of darkness (Kaliyug) and establishing a pristine era in accordance with the tenets of Hinduism (Ram-rajya), are imbricated with mainstream Sena discourse. The role of the notorious Guruji, in these political machinations is also revealed in time to prevent the much-feared nuclear armaggedon, which has been described as 'an outgrowth of local histories, distorted into myth by bigotry and hatred' (*Saidullah*). Religion and religious extremism, then, are an indispensable part of the urban social fabric and have a catalytic function in the political history of Bombay-Mumbai, a city which has been described in its literature as being both immensely secular and increasingly provincial.

3.12 That dangerous supplement: death and doubling in the narrative

This strangely contradictory city-space of modern-day Bombay-Mumbai is also significant in connecting its heterogeneous landscapes and populations into a differentiated yet continuous trajectory of urban life. As has emerged from my study of characterization in the novel, despite their evidently oppositional roles as pursuer and pursued, Sartaj Singh and Ganesh Gaintonde are caught up in the 'tangled net of links' that create ties between the most unlikely characters in *Sacred Games* (*SG*, p. 740). I have earlier observed that the two men are similarly entrenched in parallel discourses of violence and intimidation, which effectively seek to protect and contest the spaces of the city that is beloved to them both. Their metaphorical doubling is also emphasized by their respective relationships with the Mascarenhas sisters, who function in different ways as supplements to the central characters.

Mary Mascarenhas as an investigative aide in the narrative is slowly and compellingly brought to the reader's attention through her relationship with Sartaj Singh. As an independent, working woman in Bombay-Mumbai, Mary in her middle-class origins, her quiet religiosity, and her identification as a migrant in the city, provides a gendered and contrasting perspective to the dominant narratives of violent masculinity in Chandra's novel. Unlike the urban discourse of fragmentation

and terror which circumscribes the lives of the male protagonists in the novel, the city is for the most part, depicted as a modern, social space which is safe and enabling for women. This is revealed through Mary's reflections about Bombay-Mumbai, which for her is a site of anonymous social contact and freedom.

> This was what Mary loved about the dimming of the day, this mingling of colours and people. In this amiable mixing, to be alone in the city was to find companionship with a thousand strangers. Of course she had friends, and sometimes they walked the sea wall together. But often, to be solitary and free was the gift she wanted from Bombay (*SG,* p. 348).

Unlike many of the women in Rushdie and Mistry's novels, who conventionally occupy the roles and spaces of domesticity, the women in *Sacred Games* are public figures, emboldened by the acquiescent urban environment and their economic dependence upon it. The public spaces in the city are characterized by their vast anonymity and permissive social codes which allow characters to engage with others, regardless of gender and class divisions, and this is illustrated through Mary's active involvement in both her professional life and her supplementary function in the police investigation which reconstructs the events leading up to Gaitonde's death.

Female characterization is doubled in *Sacred Games.* Mary's narrative is both empowered and challenged by the haunting absence of her sister Jojo, a resourceful Bombay madam who gains Gaitonde's confidence and is tragically murdered at the very outset of the novel. One might observe how Chandra cleverly insinuates the absent character of Jojo into some of the most crucial sites and spaces in the narrative. The discovery of her body within the recesses of Gaitonde's nuclear shelter, binds her inextricably to the mystery which surrounds his own life and death, and initiates an investigation which reveals the corruption that pervades Bombay's underbelly. Female corporeality, in this instance, becomes a prominent and controversial site through which a predominantly masculine narrative is formulated. In theoretical considerations of crime fiction, the body has been observed to be 'at the centre of a fundamental trope of boundary crossing, foregrounding the uncertain division between law and disorder, desire and repulsion, attraction and aggression'.[51] Chandra draws attention to the theme of 'embodiment' around which the investigation is structured as Jojo's deceased body is a signifier of the unknown

registers of crime, corruption, and patriarchy which pervasively control the urban landscape.

Jojo's apartment in the city, which becomes the main investigative site for Sartaj Singh and his team, is shadowed by her untimely death and becomes an uncanny space of absence. The fragmented reconstruction of her character within these two spaces informs much of the narrative, and becomes essential to the more pervasive story of Gaitonde's rise and fall in Bombay-Mumbai. Jojo functions as a narrative foil to Gaitonde; her fearless appropriation of the city, her ruthless ambition, her confidence and easy sexuality, are counteractive to the gangster's cultivated image of terror that crumbles in times of adversity. Gaitonde's presence is supplemented by the elusive figure of Jojo; she caters to his masculinity even while her actions are backed by a strong feminist perspective, provides him with emotional counsel at times of distress, and most importantly, chooses to operate unseen, in contrast to Gaintonde's reliance upon the visible structures of power which mark his regime in the city. He is cognizant of his dependence on her and observes that 'she was in (his) life, threaded into it like sinews looped through bone...that without her (he) would collapse into an arid, rattling heap' (*SG*, p. 717). In their shared struggle as migrants in Bombay-Mumbai, Gaitonde and Jojo are ultimately caught up in the vicious political networks which undergird the city, and are ironically killed in an encounter which is intensely personal and creates an irresolvable conflict between them. In her death, Jojo is as compelling a presence as Gaitonde was in life, and substantiates the largely patriarchal narrative structures which sustain the novel with her ghostly yet assertive femininity. One observes that women repeatedly supplement the tenuous masculine identity which Gaitonde struggles to sustain in the course of the narrative, by either providing him with their sycophantic support as in the case of Zoya Mirza, or in their blunt yet ungrudging appraisal of his actions as in the case of Jojo.

Sacred Games, as a chronicle of Bombay-city in its violent, post-liberalization phase can thus be conceived of as a literature of supplementarity. By providing a fictive account of actual and definitive events that transpired in the city in the early 1990s, the novel supplements the reader's conflicted understanding of the complex political processes that drastically revised popular opinions about Bombay and its culture. These include the official nomenclatural changes which resulted in the birth of

Mumbai, and the devastating ethno-religious riots that brought identitarian concerns to the forefront at the expense of Bombay's secular and cosmopolitan reputation. In this chapter I have discussed the implications of these events for Indian-English writers whose polyphonous narratives are reflective of the general anxiety and in some cases, of psychological unsettlement which formed the pervasive mood of the urban environment in the 90s. As is exemplified in my reading of *Sacred Games*, the heavily striated Maharashtrian community became a focus and a target of public anger during this phase, as Maharashtrians were considered to be responsible for the increasing provincialization of the city and its institutions. Consequently, the discourses of naming and identification became extremely significant in the various contestations for urban power and space which ensued at the time. The subject of authenticity with regard to the recovery and legitimization of urban identities has also been a major consideration in this chapter, and the topical essays by Aamir Mufti and Vikram Chandra present us with differing yet interrelated supplementary perspectives on the matter. While Mufti presents a more diversified overview of the problem and possible solutions for coping with the crisis of postcolonial authenticity, Chandra's defensive response to a critique of his own authenticity is intensely personal, and articulates the unique identification that he shares with the city of Bombay-Mumbai.

His novel *Sacred Games* is a further exploration of the categorical nature of identification in the modern city, and is related to us through the distinctive and miscellaneous voices of his characters. The supplementary nature of the text is emphasized in several ways, including the psychological doubling of the two central male protagonists, Sartaj and Gaintonde, who are linked by a pervasive urban discourse of criminality and also through the tangential yet substantiating narratives of female characters, who provide gendered and alternative perspectives to the predominantly patriarchal structures which undergird the city. In my next chapter, I interrogate the various inhabitations of women in the postcolonial city through the interpolative sites of modernity and tradition, and endeavour to redress the subordinate roles that they are very often accorded in urban narratives. This is achieved through a study of urban women's writing in India, with a specific consideration of the theme of self-representation - explored through the emergence of women from the silent spaces of the city. Both the visible and unseen niches of femininity in the contemporary city of Bombay-Mumbai are illustrated through a

reading of two novels written by women, which seek to recognize and affirm female identity and sexuality in its myriad forms.

Chapter 4:

Silence, Space and Subalternity: Gendering the City in *That Long Silence* and *The Space Between Us*

Vision begins to happen in such a life

as if a woman quietly walked away

from the argument and jargon in a room

and sitting down in the kitchen, began turning in her lap

bits of yarn, calico and velvet scraps,

pulling the tenets of a life together

with no mere will to mastery

only care for the many-lived, unending

forms in which she finds herself.

Adrienne Rich, 'Transcendental Etude'[1]

It is by protesting against or defying the traditional concepts of woman and womanhood that all Indian modernizers have made their point. On the other hand, all forms of conservatism and protests against modern Western encroachments on Indian society have taken shelter in and exploited the symbol of motherhood.

Ashis Nandy, 'Woman Versus Womanliness'[2]

4.1 Urban writing and gender

The intellectual models within which Indian postcolonial modernity is framed are often neglected in favour of the more common associations of global modernity with the rise of scientific institutions, industrialization, capitalism, discourses of secularism and the nation-state. These approaches have often focused on the material aspects of modernity and the technologies within which it is inscribed, thereby paying little

attention to the role of the intellect in shaping ideas of the modern. As discussed in the introduction to my thesis, a very significant register of modernity in post-Independence India is its literature; in particular, the prolific writings of Indo-Anglian authors which negotiate the unprecedented experience of postcolonial modernity within the space of the city. The language of this modernity is undoubtedly contentious, as is the status and reception of Indian writing in English, both within the country and abroad. However, it is possible to consider the emergence of a distinct strand of urban writing in English in the years following Independence, which may be studied as one of the intellectual paradigms that mark literary modernity in India. While this writing is inscribed in older structures and hierarchies of specific nationalisms, local histories, class, caste, religion, mythology, gender, and other related subjectivities, it is also revealing of the new and profound trajectories that these fields have taken in recent years.

In this chapter I study the relationship between urban writing and gender, which is ideologically complex, often ambivalent, and variously articulated in the postcolonial Indian context. The novels I examine both represent and question Indian feminism in its modern avatars and expressions, in an endeavour to engage with the claims of a secular figuring of women in postcolonial discourses of the nation and the city. Both the novels are situated in a gendered spatial and social setting in modern India – Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1988) examines the theme of female authorship in the domestic sphere while Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us* (2006) is a comment on the irreconcilable social hierarchies that govern the relations between women.[3] The city of Bombay-Mumbai is the central textual space in the novels which maps the intersections of gender and modernity and creates new and dynamic frameworks within which the Indian woman is described. The inherently gendered nature of the modern city is discussed by Jigna Desai in her provocatively titled chapter 'Sex in the Global City', which suggests that 'modernity is not positioned as foreign to the global city of Mumbai, which positions itself as connected and closer to a transnational network of global cities than with the postcolonial nation-state'.[4] Reading her statement in the light of conventional representations of the Indian nation-state as the feminized 'motherland', it could be argued that the commercial and cultural aggressiveness that characterizes present-day Bombay-Mumbai also positions it as an essentially masculine space.

The gendered and conflicted affiliation that the postcolonial city shares with the nation-state, then, forms a meta-narrative which circumscribes and mirrors the disjunctive relationships that women have with the urban spaces which they inhabit, in the novels that I study. The heterogeneity of their experiences and the specific Indian contexts out which they arise (myth, religion, class and caste, patriarchy, and colonial discourse), position these novels and the female subjectivities which they explore as being distinct from those posited by Western feminist rhetoric. And yet in theorizing these experiences, I am compelled to draw upon and often reconcile different schools of feminist thought, to negotiate my own understanding of postcolonial modernity as being inextricably linked to European discourses of urbanism, modernity and gender.[5]

Jaya's silence in Deshpande's text is ruptured by her transgressive laughter, eerily reminiscent of Hélène Cixous's rhetoric of feminine release in 'The Laugh of Medusa', while the idea of an emerging female consciousness within the labyrinthine city in Umrigar's novel may be closely related to Elizabeth Wilson's new vision of urban life in *The Sphinx in the City*.[6] This chapter also draws upon the critiques of postcolonial feminist scholars such as Deepika Bahri, Madhu Kishwar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Mrinalini Sinha, and Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan, amongst others, to trace the locational aspects of feminist ideology in India, by moving beyond the nationalist constructions of women in colonial centres such as Calcutta in the early twentieth century and studying their gendered habitations of modernity in contemporary Bombay-Mumbai. The politics of space and place are crucial to my study, as are the changing roles of women in the modern Indian city; the binary traditions of the utopian countryside and the dystopian urban realm, the spiritual space of the home and the material public sphere, and the central or peripheral positioning of urban subjects are complicated in this study, which seeks to identify the emergence of women from the silent interstices and spaces in the city, into the Babelian crowd which vicariously embraces the challenges of daily urban life.

4.2 *That Long Silence:* location of the writer

To develop the idea of gendered spaces in the city I shall begin with an exploration of Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence*, which establishes a dialogic relationship between the notions of centrality and marginality by exploring them in

the context of postcolonial women's writing in the city. The location of a writer is to a large extent determinate of his/her cultural self-identity, and Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan observes that 'Location, however, is not simply an address. One's affiliations are multiple, contingent and frequently contradictory...location is fixed not (only) in the relative terms of centre and periphery, but in the positive (positivist?) terms of an actual historical and geographical contingency'.[7] Deshpande's own feminism and writing appear to have been profoundly influenced by the idea of 'place'; the geographical dislocations from her hometown Dharwad to the bustling metropolis of Bombay, and later to Bangalore, are significant in shaping her literary efforts as is the more symbolic location or perception of women's writing in India as inhabiting the peripheries of literature. This perception has in recent years undergone a dramatic revision as Deshpande herself notes in a poignant description of her personal experiences as an author.

> When I first begin writing, I leave a huge margin, a large blank space which I know I will soon fill up with alterations, corrections, new ideas, and so on. And, sure enough, in time the margin is full, the words begin creeping into the centre of the page, the margin and the text merge and finally, because what I am now saying comes mostly from the margin, the margin takes over, it becomes the real text.[8]

It is true; as intellectual paradigms of modernity, feminist theorizations and women's writing in India have gained a noticeable impetus in the past three decades, with the 1970s and 80s being significant periods in the emergence of feminist and psychoanalytical studies. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande are usually associated as the forerunners of this movement, having been a part of both the colonial and postcolonial literary landscapes in India. And yet as free-thinking women, educated in English and exposed to Western cultures and ideologies, their voices represent only a small part of the vast and heterogeneous spectrum of Indian women, many of whom occupy the unarticulated subject-position of Spivak's subaltern woman. The ambiguity that has surrounded debates about who constitutes a subaltern subject makes it difficult to identify any of the female characters in the novels I study as definitively occupying a position of such extreme disenfranchisement, especially since the texts are

fundamentally urban in their language and narrative setting. However questions of female agency, particularly in the form of authorship, govern my reading of *That Long Silence* and attempt to understand the contradictions that even speaking women in modern Indian society have to negotiate.

Urban spaces, as mentioned, are crucial in shaping the ideological landscapes that structure women's writing in India, and Deshpande speaks of the compelling effect which the exuberant city of Bombay has on her own writing. Reminiscing about her migration from Dharwad, she notes in an essay – '...I moved to Bombay and lived in Parel, a lower-middle class area known for its factories and factory workers. It was this atmosphere, indeed, the liveliness and bustle of Bombay, that brought my writing into being, writing which embraced my small-town childhood as well' (*WRM*, p. 32). The sounds of industrial modernity may have influenced Deshpande's writings, yet she locates her middle-class protagonist, Jaya, very firmly within the sphere of the 'home', with which Indian women have traditionally been associated. As a feminized site of social life, the 'home' has had great symbolic significance in both nationalist and postcolonial registers, and Irene Gedalof describes women's fixity and containment within this sphere as being a major problematic that feminist discourses seek to uncover. She mentions the notion of a 'female embodied agent-self' as being contentious in its role as 'a site of pure origin, as timeless tradition, and as the fixed place of "home"', and argues for women to combat normative discourses of purity and authenticity within which they are framed.[9] This resistance to domestic confinement is reflected through Deshpande's protagonist Jaya, who like her creator, is an intellectual woman, one whom the reader gradually begins to disassociate from the conventional domesticity that situates her centrally within the apartments at Churchgate and Dadar. Her disillusionment with the institution of marriage, her alienation from her children, her stifled writings that desperately seek to be articulated, and her resistance to the complicity of women in maintaining patriarchal social structures, position her as a conscious and speaking subject, and it is this journey from silence to speech that marks the emergence of a modern urban female selfhood in Deshpande's novel.

Jaya's narrative can be studied spatially, by examining her move from the family's government-allotted home in Churchgate (central Bombay) to the apartment in

Dadar (suburban Bombay), although this complicates the seemingly straightforward centre-margin binary that divides the commercial heart of Bombay from its shabbier, industrial suburbs. As a signifier of modern, middle-class urbanism in India, the apartment is a manifestation of a certain secular and classist desire to live independently, as opposed to within the joint family system, and yet remain connected to the teeming metropolitan environment which is characterized in Bombay by multiple blocks of similar living quarters. In more specific and gendered contexts, Gabriel Karen observes that 'the apartment is a specifically urban dwelling space and one that is a relatively new, underutilized, and unexplored domestic site in Indian English women's novels'.[10] The two apartments in *That Long Silence* function variously as spaces of liberation and constraint, and interrogate the relationship that women share with their immediate and primary environment. The Churchgate home is marked by the rigid gender and societal roles which Jaya is forced to adopt, to sustain the normative images of wife, mother and home-keeper which govern her life. Conversely, the flat in Dadar is a space that allows her to confront the strictures of silence and confinement which have marked her past, and negotiate a future that is unburdened by the social and marital expectations that have previously fractured her existence.

For Jaya, the relocation to Dadar is not a temporary incarceration as it appears to be for her husband, Mohan, but freedom from 'all those monsters that ruled (her) life, gadgets that had to be kept in order, the glassware that had to sparkle, the furniture and curios that had to be kept spotless', and all the other aspects of a material and domestic existence which repressed her creativity as a writer (*TLS*, p. 25). The suburban apartment ceases to have a peripheral existence for Jaya, and becomes the central space in which she is able to reconcile her conflicted emotional and intellectual selves. Deshpande makes an interesting comment on the modern laws of property ownership that consent to an uncomplicated inheritance of the suburban apartment by female members of Jaya's family; strangely the men (her uncle and brother) seem disinclined to exploit the space commercially, in a city where housing is scant and real-estate prices are incongruously high. The economic moments that are captured by Deshpande in her narrativizing of Jaya's relationship with the 'homely' and 'unhomely' spaces that she inhabits reveal the presence of global capitalism within the domestic sphere, which is represented by her role as both

consumer and landlord. Upon arriving at Dadar, Jaya is greeted by a 'queer sense of homecoming' which could perhaps be explained by the sense of ownership and connection to her maternal family that she feels through this inherited space (*TLS*, p. 25). The house in Churchgate, on the other hand, becomes a symbol of the commodity-oriented culture that is characteristic of the more affluent areas of the city, and is perceived by her to be an uninspiring and superficial space.

The dialogic relation which exists between the centre and the margin, as explicated by Deshpande in her personal and literary examples, may be applied as well to the critical reception of her work as a postcolonial writer. Following Aijaz Ahmed's observation that writers who deal with topical postcolonial issues are centred in the canon while those who do not occupy a marginal position, there have been debates about whether Deshpande's novels are peripheral in their woman-centeredness and lack of engagement with the meta-discourses of nationalism and colonialism.[11] However, the quietude and ordinariness that characterize a lot of her writing have been read against the grain by some critics, and Malashri Lal notes that 'women's writing in English is *deliberately simple* on the surface because that is the only way the cries of agonized displacement can find space in writing'.[12] Also, the specific contexts and situations which female literary traditions are embedded within often describe a spatial interiority by focusing on sites within the home, and which male readers may not be so intimately acquainted. The ability, then, to understand the actions and dialogues that capture these 'homely' moments, may be lacking in certain types of audiences. The politicization of feminism in India in the 1970s led to a serious consideration of women's issues and writing in the decades to follow, and the reception of *That Long Silence,* which was published in 1988, seems to have benefitted from these ideological changes in the way postcolonial women were perceived. By depicting the peripheral role of Indian women centrally in her novels, Deshpande complicates the very binary that defines postcolonial studies (centre versus margin) and maintains her position as a stalwart figure in both postcolonial and feminist literatures of India.

In some ways, Deshpande's feminist approaches to her writings and her personal life may be likened to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's attempt at resisting categorization as a marginal woman, in her essay titled 'Explanation and Culture:

Marginalia'. Spivak's provocative stance of 'not remaining outside in the margin and pointing (her) accusing finger at the centre' (in a masculinist-feminist construction of the two polarities) and implicating herself in the centre to be better able to discern what politics make it marginal, imply very crucially that the centre itself is marginal. Spivak also acknowledges her deconstructivist position of privilege, which allows her to 'shuttle between the centre (inside) and the margin (outside) and thus narrate a displacement.'[13] Deshpande similarly exercises her authorial privilege to relate the continuous and complex engagement between the centre and the periphery, by alternately occupying both positions in her struggle for recognition as a female postcolonial writer. Kalidas Misra, in his essay titled 'Writing A Narrative and a Self in Silence: A Reading of Shashi Deshpande', observes of the author, in a similar vein, that 'her search for the location of a self outside the contested territories of conservative discourses slowly subverts the binaries and transcends to a dimension where the woman is matured and free to understand herself and her "shadows"'.[14] Her spatial consciousness, which manifests itself through her fiction, is also noted by Misra, who describes the use of narrative by Deshpande 'to create "maps" of a distinct cultural feminine space and articulate "deep maps" of place by foregrounding issues of culture and identity to suggest that space is both geographical location and psychic construction' (*WD*, p. 74).

The aesthetics of Deshpande's writing are definitely influenced by the spaces she inhabits, and the city of Bombay-Mumbai is crucial in fashioning both the stylistic and contextual contours of her fiction. She comments on her dislocation from the city in her conspicuously titled collection of essays 'Writing from the Margin and Other Essays', observing that 'it was only with *A Matter of Time* that I moved out of Bombay and into Bangalore. And something which has never happened before and has not happened since, I moved away from first-person narration' (*WRM*, p. 25). The author's descriptions of her house in Bangalore as being on the 'outskirts' in the midst of 'desolate wilderness', situates the southern city as being peripheral to the bustling hub of Bombay-Mumbai. Paradoxically, the margin becomes a space of unproductive tension here and also depersonalizes Deshpande's writing to a certain extent (p. 11). This new site is unlike the suburban house in the author's fiction, which provides her protagonist Jaya with almost a cathartic release, through both the

breaking of her silence as the dutiful wife Suhasini and the renunciation of her respectable, public literary persona Seeta.

4.2 Vision and illusion

While the physical and symbolic spaces of the centre and the margin are strategically employed by Deshpande to outline Jaya's position in the narrative, it is equally significant that the materiality of her experiences is embedded in urban signs and structures, as well as in temporal registers of the past and present. The visual symbology of the city can be read as having made a deep impression on Jaya's psyche, and powerfully influences her understanding and negotiation of the construction of womanhood in Indian society. In any reading of *That Long Silence* which foregrounds the city of Bombay, the overwhelming impact of visual media such as street signs, billboards, advertisements and cinema, in the urban sphere, cannot be neglected. Both the act of looking, and the pedagogical functions of these visual symbols are gendered, and Jaya's social conditioning is reinforced by the suggestive effect that visual media is believed to have on the female spectator. As a modern interface between the cultural space of the home and the economic domain which represents the world outside, advertising visuals have been described by Arvind Rajagopal as 'uplifting oppressed women, and giving them the desires that they are too crushed and fearful to try and fulfil'.[15] Nalini Natarajan posits a similar view in her thesis titled *Woman and Indian Modernity* (2002), by observing that 'women are so often identified in cultural studies as the ideal consumers of mass-produced fantasies', that one is compelled to draw provocative associations between the female as subject, object and spectator.[16]

Jaya's disillusionment with the domestic roles of wife and mother within which she is inscribed is intensified by images of the perfect nuclear family, 'caught and preserved for posterity' by the advertising visuals that she loves (*TLS*, p. 3). Even as Deshpande acknowledges the family to be a central unit in Indian society, she seems to situate its archetypal manifestation within the transient sphere of visual media, thereby making it both desired and unattainable. Jaya's family life is portrayed as being severely dysfunctional with Mohan's incontrovertibly patriarchal attitudes and Rahul's increasing withdrawal from familial intimacy, and her inability to reconcile its dissenting members is reflective of her own discontented position in the family. Jaya

seeks to emulate the visual projections of personal transformation and fulfilment that surround her, and even juxtaposes images of the simulated ideal onto her own life, only to discover that she lacks the vocabulary to sustain the illusion. Rendered doubly inarticulate by social convention and the objective reality which distance confers upon her (in the Dadar apartment), she is horrified by the 'true picture' of her life which emerges upon introspection.

> A visual – yes it had to be only that; for I could not find the words to match the picture. When I tried, what came through our normal dinnertime conversation – the scum of hostility floating to the top, marring a placid, clean surface (*TLS*, p. 4).

Jaya's thoughts are articulated to the reader in a language which speaks strongly of the inextricable relationship between the inhabitants of Bombay and its cinema. She provides us with shifting perspectives, often sharply focusing on an image of her life before moving to a more detached and impersonal frame of reference. The narrative employs cinematic terminology to articulate her point of view, although it is almost always tempered by the neutrality which her gaze is forced to adopt. For instance, the following paragraph is extremely revealing of Jaya's attitude towards her life in Bombay-Mumbai, framed between spatial and temporal registers and paradoxically both spectacular and trivial at the same time.

> A pair of bullocks yoked together…that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here…and I, detached from myself, saw this…then the focus shifted and there were instead a man and a woman climbing the dingy stairs of a drab building in the heart of Bombay. A trail of garbage on the soiled cement stairs, cigarette butts, scraps of paper, bits of vegetable peel. And red stains – squirts of *paan*-stained spit – on the wall, macabrely brightening up the dinginess (*TLS*, p. 7).

The visual symbology used here is overwhelming; the subverted image of the yoked bullocks which feature in nationalist filmic discourses as a rural metaphor, the filth and squalor of the city and its intrusion into residential spaces, and finally the rather suggestive image of blood stains that transforms an ordinary homecoming into a dramatic event. Jaya's perception of the city then, seems to be clouded by cinematic

perspectives which position it in opposition to a pastoral ideal, as a space marred by contamination and corruption. This cinematic allusiveness is reiterated by yet another sequence in the novel, in which a wildly distraught and disoriented Jaya is seen rushing out into the city to escape the eerie stillness of her home. Amidst a downpour which drenches her completely and blurs the surrounding landscape into an indistinct haze, she witnesses the drug-induced passivity of a young girl at the hands of two abusive men. The scene takes on a cinematic intensity as the girl's laughter, followed by the group's obliviousness to her concern, exacerbates Jaya's disbelief and terror at the turn of events. Guru Charan Behera describes the scene in his essay on 'Narrative Pattern in *That Long Silence*' as being a 'nightmarish vision of the future generation of women – listless, drug addicted and sexually exploited', that Jaya visualizes (*WD*, p. 141). The city becomes a dystopian space, obscuring the clarity of vision that Jaya desperately seeks, and reinforcing the gendered association of the urban sphere as being a potentially unsafe and oppressive space for women.

In the passage quoted above ('a pair of bullocks...'), the shift in focus from the personal to the objective is necessary, both to convey the restrained gaze of the female spectator, and also to highlight the incongruity of the mental image that Jaya constructs as being representative of her relationship with Mohan. The female gaze is also empowering, as Jaya is momentarily released from her role as an object of both male and female scrutiny in the novel, and becomes the discerning spectator of the marital drama that ensconces her. The impending scandal that Mohan's indiscretion threatens to bring upon their family becomes a point of reference for Jaya, to reassess his role as the blameless provider and unquestionable figure of authority in their relationship. The functions of cinema to make the ordinary spectacular, and its compelling influence on Jaya's psyche, are revealed in her melodramatic envisaging of a tragic end to their lives as being the only uncomplicated resolution to the problem. The illusion of death is painted in realistic images, and Jaya's consciousness wavers between the mutually inconsistent frames of the ephemeral and the real, which mediate her existential crisis.

> I had suddenly known what to do. I had seen the picture, not with the
> vagueness of a dream or the dimness of a fantasy, but with the clarity and
> exactness with which one sees a movie. All the details clear, larger than life

and in Technicolor. The four of us roped together, walking into the sea. Away from shame and disgrace. A peaceful and colourful death (*TLS,* p. 10).

4.3 The inarticulate spaces of modernity

Death, however, is only an imagined route of escape from the problems caused by Mohan's injudiciousness at work, a matter compounded by the more acute and pervasive crisis of silence which shadows Jaya's relationship with her husband. Deshpande's novel derives its title from the epigram to the text, which reads – 'If I were a man and cared to know the world I lived in, I almost think it would make me a shade uneasy – the weight of that long silence of one-half of the world'. In the novel, Jaya's thoughts are communicated to the reader in a first-person narrative, which follows the stream of consciousness technique popularly used by feminist writers such as Virginia Woolf in the English literary tradition, to combat the injunction of silence that has at various moments in specific histories rendered women as unspeaking subjects.

Despite being a modern, middle-class, learned woman, Jaya is expected to conform to the social construction of womanhood that has traditionally engaged the Indian male consciousness: woman as virtuous, passive, self-sacrificing, undemanding and essentially inarticulate. Enshrined in age-old discourses of myth, religion and spirituality, the individual and collective imaging of women in India is burdened by these unbroken traditions, that are 'reinvented, reshaped and regionalized' in their various literary manifestations (*WRM*, p. 88). The unwritten codes of wifehood which direct Jaya's relationship with Mohan arise from mythological structures that are inherited and internalized by most Indian women. She observes this internalized gendering during the crisis which afflicts their family, when her silent compliance is expected by Mohan who adopts the role of independent decision-maker.

I remember now that he had assumed I would accompany him, had taken for granted my acquiescence in his plans. So had I. Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails...' (*TLS*, p. 11).

While some scholars such as Shalmalee Palekar affirm in their feminist readings of Deshpande's work that 'passivity is deeply engrained in Indian women's psyches, and the essentialized constructs of gender perpetuated by religious/nationalist discourses function to oppress women', others like Veena Sheshadri are cautious of circumscribing modern Indian women within religious or mythological narratives. She writes, 'one ends up by wondering whether Jaya has imposed the long silence upon herself not out of a sense of duty or to emulate the ideal Hindu woman of the ages gone by, but in order to camouflage the streaks of ugliness within her' (*WD*, p. 68).[17] It is true; the complicity of women in perpetuating these myths cannot be neglected in a study of Deshpande's writings. Jaya's confession, 'the conspiracy of women, it binds me too', is manifested in her unsympathetic reactions to her cousin Kusum's illness (*TLS*, p. 37). 'What right did she have to make her suffering so loud, so obvious', is provoked by Jaya's own silence, and her anger at Kusum's emergence from the inarticulate spaces that women are traditionally expected to occupy (p. 21). Jaya also describes herself as being victim to this conspiracy in several instances in the novel, where her inept handling of her wifely duties is silently upbraided by the women of Mohan's family. Ironically, she chooses to adopt the familial codes that they vigorously espouse, as it eases her transition into the narrative of female complicity that surrounds her.

> These women of Mohan's family were right, I had decided. I would pattern myself after them. That way lay – well, if not happiness, at least the consciousness of doing right, freedom from guilt (p. 84).

This revelation outlines the 'plethora of self-doubts, fears, guilt, smothered anger, and silence', that inundate Jaya's consciousness and form the conflicted emotional landscape against which she assesses her marriage (*IWN*, p. 164). Her complicity with Mohan's ideals and expectations further reinforces the image of 'a pair of bullocks yoked together' which defines Jaya's relationship with her husband as being duty-bound, inherently resistant, and in some ways, one of monotony or drudgery. This image of coupled labour combined with the metaphor of the 'sheltering tree', is suggestive of the typical understanding of marital relations in India, where the woman is conceived of being weaker and dependent on her husband. As Sudhir Kakar writes, 'the fantasy of constituting a "couple"…is a dominant theme running

through women's lives, actual and fictional' although the cultural ideal of the 'jodi' is often in conflict with lived reality. He also observes, and one may note the relevance of this point to Jaya and Mohan's relationship, that 'gender relations seem impelled more by hostility than tenderness and love' and that 'the fantasies entertained by each sex in relation to the other are pervaded as much by hatred and fear as by desire and longing'.[18]

The guilty and resentful silences that weigh Jaya down and which resurface during her stay in the suburban apartment are emphasized by the humdrum urban life in the city outside, which is perceived by her as being alternately invasive and comforting. The boundaries of privacy that are maintained by domestic enclosures such as the apartments which Jaya inhabits are pervaded by the mélange of sounds from the outside, characteristic of a busy, metropolitan environment. The city is depicted as an aggressively masculine and intensive place that disrupts the feminine refuge of the home. Ironically, even while the inner sanctum of the home is feminized in its relation to the bustling exterior landscape, it is structured by and celebrates the rigid patriarchal codes that define most social relationships in India. Jaya's first descriptions of Bombay as being an 'endless assault' and an 'invasion' on the senses suggest the insidious structures of violence which characterize the exterior landscape. This is demonstrated most poignantly in a scene from the text in which the incoherent cries of an abused woman, 'clinging desperately to her silence' and seeking shelter on the city-streets, filter into the suburban apartment (*TLS*, pp. 56-7). By representing Bombay as a space of Babelian confusion and terror, Deshpande seeks to engage with the trope of silence and Jaya's endeavour to break out of it. The Babelian myth or hypothesis, which addresses the topic of imperfect communication and chaos as arising from linguistic diversity, is pre-empted by Deshpande, who foregrounds the disadvantaged position of Indian women, rendered as non-speaking subjects by the prevalence of age-old myths in modern society.

4.4 The embodiment of silence

The abject place occupied by postcolonial women in an unyielding, patrilineal Indian society has been persuasively brought to attention by feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who writes that 'between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation the figure of the woman disappears not into a

pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the "Third World Woman" caught between tradition and modernization'.[19] This shuttling may be observed in Jaya's conflicted habitation of the various names and roles that Mohan endows her with; trapped between the 'placid and motherly' Suhasini, and the conformist writer Seeta, she experiences a psychic fragmentation that effaces her true identity and forces her to select the 'bits' of herself that are integrated into Mohan's vision of an ideal wife. The violence and repression underlying their relationship is revealed during a rare altercation between them, when Jaya reveals the torturous nature of the silence she had come to maintain. She observes, 'but as if I'd been struck dumb, I could say nothing. I sat in my place, pinned to it by his anger, a monstrously huge spear that went through me, excruciatingly painful, yet leaving me cruelly conscious' (*TLS*, p. 121).

The image of the pierced self brings to attention the bodily discourses associated with the silence imposed on women and their resistance to it. Spivak's seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak' is perhaps the most frequently cited postcolonial text that attempts to recognize embodied acts of female agency in Indian history. The nationalist insurgent Bhubaneswari's suicide in 1926, described by Spivak as a 'displacing gesture', is denied recognition by official registers of imperialism and patriarchy, which do not hear or read the actions of the female subaltern subject. By hanging herself during the period of menstruation, Bhubaneswari defies the codes of feminine purity which circumscribe widows (in their act of sati) and unmarried women (in the event of an illegitimate pregnancy) in Indian society.[20] Bhubaneswari's body becomes an unacknowledged symbol of female resistance; though it attempts to speak, it is not heard, thus being unable to complete the speech act which consists of both the actions. While Bhubaneshwari's suicide in this case implicates the body very centrally and literally in a discourse of female intervention and insurrection, Deshpande's novel uses the idea of symbolically writing the body as text to counter the continuing patriarchal repression and silence of women in postcolonial times.

The parallels between the two texts are however limited by the distinctive class positioning of the two protagonists; while Bhubaneswari occupies the inherently marginalized position of Spivak's subaltern female who is 'more deeply in shadow' as a gendered subject of colonial production, Jaya's social status has previously been

affirmed as being middle-class and urban through a reading of the apartment-spaces which she inhabits in the postcolonial city (*CSS*, p. 287). Although Deshpande's acute consciousness of the hierarchies of class that separate the women in the text is evident from her brief description of the different lived realities which each of them experiences, she chooses to voice Jaya's middle class perspective most prominently, thereby perpetrating the model of 'international feminism' which Spivak cautions against in her essay (*CSS*, p. 288). In *That Long Silence* as a whole, one encounters subaltern characters only fleetingly, as women such as Jeeja the maidservant, Manda, her granddaughter, and Nayana the help-maid appear as subordinate presences to Jaya's own. Significantly, it is within this community of women more severely disenfranchised than herself and within the metaphoric space of the margin (in the Dadar apartment), that Jaya's suffering is alleviated and she is nurtured back to strength and fortitude which allow her to reclaim her authorial identity.

To return to the subject of writing the body in Deshpande's text, the physical and psychological processes which contribute towards the recovery of Jaya's authorship, are also reflective of the sexual desires and expectations that arise from modern middle class marriages in India. The role of the female intellect in identifying and confronting these concerns is extremely significant for Jaya, who experiences an acute 'disharmony with her sexual, cultural and natural roles' as wife, author and mother (*IWN*, p. 52). In her cultural function as an author, the codification of the feminine psyche through a regulation of Jaya's writing, and by extension her body, is demonstrated through Mohan's encouragement of her respectably light and humorous publications in a woman's magazine under the culturally symbolic pseudonym, Seeta (in Indian mythology, the wife of Lord Ram and symbolic of untainted virtue). Alternatively, in her social and natural roles as 'Mohan's wife, Rahul and Rati's mother', the bodily functions of procreation and motherhood are privileged, thereby creating a unified and normative discourse of womanhood. The conflation of a woman with her womb and not necessarily with her sexuality, contributes towards the fractured narrative of womanhood created by phallocentric thought and is perpetuated by female silence and complicity in Deshpande's narrative.

In the novel, the foregrounding of female sexuality in its non-traditional, emancipated forms cannot be achieved in coherence and is described through an aesthetic of fragmentation as in Chapter 1. Previously, we have encountered the 'bits and 'pieces' of Jaya's self which are revealed to us through interior monologues and are suggestive of the conflict and disunity that frames her various identities. In discussing her sexual identity, one observes that the rupture between female desire and its fulfilment remains unarticulated for the most part, and Jaya inwardly mourns her emotional distance from the physical act of lovemaking with Mohan, which renders sex as almost extraneous to their marital relationship. She notes that, 'the contact, the coming together, had been not only momentary, but wholly illusory as well. We had never come together, only our bodies had done that' (*TLS*, p. 98). The lack of communication that underlies many heterosexual relationships in India is also described by feminist writer and columnist Shobha De in her candid observation that 'the marital bed is a cold battlefield with two unhappy people lying stiffly side by side, year after year, dreaming different dreams and yearning for a closeness, comfort and satisfaction that eludes them completely'.[21]

As a 'thinking woman' who breaks the silence in Deshpande's narrative, Jaya is able to transition from a space of conventional sexuality and prescriptive writing to a place of self-definition and 're-visioning', described by Adrienne Rich as 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction...an act of survival'.[22] The illusion of contentment and security that had previously shrouded her marriage is dispelled by her self-reflexivity and her engagement with bodily issues that traditionally occupy the realm of silence and non-discussion. Furthermore, she is made aware of her obstructionist attitudes towards both her sexuality and her writing, by her friend and confidant Kamat, who discredits her work as a columnist in a woman's magazine. The physical dimension which is attributed by Kamat to her 'Seeta' series of articles is suggestive of childbirth, of a literary procreation, although it is quickly shadowed by the curse of illegitimacy - 'and so "Seeta" had been born. But Kamat had indignantly refused to take credit for her. 'Don't saddle me with the burden of having fathered that...that obnoxious creation of yours' (*TSL,* p. 149). Kamat's disavowal of her body through an appraisal of her writings is a harsh awakening for Jaya, and adds to the underlying tension that marks her relationship with Mohan and the silences which regulate it.

4.5 The laugh of Medusa

Deshpande's alignment of women's writings and their bodies is comparable, in certain respects, to the theoretical considerations of French feminists in the 1970s and 80s, who advocated a similar connection between the female body and the text. The emphasis on women's bodily experiences and the concept of 'jouissance' is brought out in the works of feminists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, the last of whom offers a physically coded rhetoric of female release that may be most successfully extended to Jaya's character. In *That Long Silence*, Deshpande creates her narrative climax in a moment of emotional release that unhinges the delicately balanced relationship between Jaya and her husband. In relating the incident, Jaya's heightened awareness of the impropriety and irreconcilability of her actions, draws our attention to the conflict of intellect and emotion that shadows her untoward behaviour.

> *I must not laugh, I must not laugh*…even in the midst of my rising hysteria, a warning bell sounded loud and clear. I had to control myself, I had to control this laughter. But it was too late. I could not hold it in any longer. Laughter burst out of me, spilled over, and Mohan stared at me in horror as I rocked helplessly. When finally I recovered myself I was alone in the room. Silence flowed into it. I wiped my face and tried to realize what I had done (*TLS*, p. 122).

The hysteria and transgression that characterize female laughter are celebrated by Hélène Cixous in her seminal essay 'The Laugh of Medusa' (trans. 1976), which advocates a feminine mode of writing as being the 'space that can serve as a springboard of subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures'.[23] Cixous describes women as being riveted between the two horrifying myths of the Medusa and the abyss, the latter signifying the dark, unquestionable feminine spaces created by phallocentric discourse. Silence, as we observe in Jaya's case as well, is located within the abysmal depths of this myth. Cixous exhorts women to use their agency and authorship to create narratives that either revisit perceived notions of women or describe them in an emancipated language which draws attention to their sexual difference.

It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem (*LM*, p. 881).

'Feminine ecriture' or a return to a specifically feminine mode of writing, is intimately connected in Cixous's essay with a return to the female body, both of which she claims, women have been violently driven away from. This is evident in Deshpande's novel, as Jaya's sensual memories of her marital relationship are cold and distant, and her attempts to articulate a bodily experience in a prize-winning short story are reproached by Mohan, who mistakes her attempt at self-revelation for sordid exhibitionism. To remedy the creative and physical repression faced by women Cixous proposes a poetics of excess, a form of writing which is uncontained and disrupts linearity or rational order. As an extension of the female body, the fluid and excessive nature of such writing resists any narrative of fixity or essentialism, and is also an expression of women's sexual pleasure or 'jouissance'. Christiane Makward describes this distinctly feminine language as being 'open, non-linear, unfinished, fluid, exploded, fragmented, polysemic, attempting to speak the body...', again emphasizing its essentially transgressive nature.[24]

In *That Long Silence*, the possibility of change as encouraged by Cixous, arises at the climactic moment of Jaya's uncontrollable outburst; her laughter marks a crucial rupture in the narrative and undermines the established marital relations between husband and wife by challenging the rigid social vocabulary which governs these relations. It also raises questions of agency, gestures towards the imbalance of power structures, and manifests itself as a desperate release that is required to regain social or emotional equilibrium. Deshpande is evidently influenced by Western schools of feminist thought in her portrayal of Jaya as the trangressive Medusa-figure, although she approaches Cixous's theories with pragmatic caution. While Jaya's laughter is disruptive in its flagrant disregard of 'womanly' behaviour, it shatters the silence that permeates her relationship with Mohan only momentarily, as she recovers from her hysterical fit to discover that she has been abandoned by her husband. The sounds of

the city that infiltrate the space of absence and silence which she now inhabits are more acute and menacing, pushing her forward into the abyss of confusion, turmoil, and panic that had previously arisen from the lack of self-affirmation in her marriage and her writing.

Jaya's laughter is, however, empowering even as it is traumatic, and offers her the hope and the possibility of reconstituting her feminine identity (*TLS*, p. 69). Coupled by an introspective solitude in the absence of her husband, and in the nurturing presence of a community of women (Mukta, Nilima, Jeeja, Manda), Jaya is also able to embrace her authorship and reorient it in a uniquely female language. This may be aligned with Cixous's notion of 'ecriture feminine', which is adopted by Jaya in her dismissal of the metaphorical Prakrit language in favour of the patriarchally regulated and scholarly Sanskrit that has maintained a gendered exclusivity in Indian historical contexts. As a distinctly feminine mode of expression, the new language of Jaya's writing is reflective of her more coherent and integrated psychological self that thrives in its separation from the cultural ideal of the 'jodi'. Jaya's rebirth as a female writer is praised by Kamini Dinesh, who observes that 'the act of unburdening herself through self-expression becomes for her a creative process. It is not merely a reliving of particular moments of the past, but a coming to terms with herself...'.[25] Vimala Rama Rao also praises Jaya for being 'one of those rare narrative voices in Indian English fiction who poses and displays a literary sensibility commensurate with her fictional role as a writer telling her own story...'.[26]

Deshpande's acuity as a feminist writer is thus displayed through her use of women's bodies and their writings as sites of representation through which a postcolonial, urban society in transition may be observed. By focusing mainly on female-centric narratives, she outlines the pressures, both insidious and overt, of living in a busy metropolitan environment. The codes of urban living are entwined with the principles of patriarchy and jointly exercise control over the movement and functions of women in the city. In her rigid occupation of the domestic and public roles of home-maker and consumer, Jaya is portrayed in the narrative as a modern, urban woman who experiences passions and desires which she is unable to communicate or fulfil. By using the transgressive trope of laughter and advocating a defiant and subversive feminine praxis in her novel, Deshpande is able to foreground

the cultural and sexual angst experienced by ordinary, middle-class women living in the city and recover their frequently repressed and silenced voices.

4.6 *The Space Between Us*: urban hierarchies

Thrity Umrigar's nuanced reading of the gendered spaces of the modern city, which are partitioned further by divisions of caste and class, forms the subject of my scholarly investigations in this section of the thesis. Distance and intimacy amongst women are negotiated in strangely myriad ways in her novel, which like Deshpande's writings, draws attention to the spatiality and positionality of the subservient female subject in the city. The narrative vacillates between the comforts of an upper-middle class environment inhabited by a Parsi widow, Sera, and the squalid structures of the lower-class dwellings that are home to her maidservant, Bhima. These mutually exclusive spaces are separated by the socio-ideological frameworks of bigotry and class prejudice, which inform the attitudes of even modern, educated women in the novel. Like Jaya in *That Long Silence,* Sera is a discerning housewife who critically analyses her responses to both her immediate environment, and to events from the past which filter into her present consciousness. She is also acutely aware of the social stigmas that permeate her relationship with Bhima, the domestic help, who is silently acquiescent to the unspoken hierarchies that relegate her to a lower and inferior space, both within Sera's home and in the city outside.

The 'question of servants' is controversially raised by Spivak in an interview with Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva, in which she speaks of the frequently unacknowledged community of female domestic helpers whose class-positioning in Indian society can mostly be explained in 'terms of exploitation and domination'. The tendency to neglect or gloss over the unequal relations between women sharing the same domestic space is confronted by Spivak, in her attempt to highlight everyday topics of postcoloniality which are subsumed by larger contentions of the nation and colonial identity. 'What are the construction, constitution, political feeling, history, relationship to the female servants in our households?' she asks, thus drawing the inconspicuous and mostly unrepresented category of 'maidservants' into postcolonial debates of gender, class and social hierarchies.[27] It must be noted as well, that like the apartments in *That Long Silence*, servants too, are a common signifier of modern, middle class urbanism and are implicated within similar structures of

ownership and control. In representing the ordinary yet complex relations of dominance and servitude that characterize many middle class homes, Umrigar's novel is unique in its thematic concern and provides a fictional inquiry into the provocative issues raised by Spivak.

In the novel, the emotional subjectivities of women are portrayed as being intimately connected to the urban landscape, which appears to conflate the differences of gender, caste and class that separate the characters in the narrative. The spatial binaries of the public and the private are confused, as the 'home' is often depicted as a space of disharmony and tension, while the open spaces of the city become a source of comfort and escape from domestic conflict. Some of the most important narrative sequences are played out in the public realm; Bhima's courtship manifests itself as an elaborate public ritual, contrary to the intimate, private nature that is usually associated with the act of wooing. Similarly, her role as confidant to her granddaughter's problems is realized on the public promenade along the coast of the Arabian Sea, which forms a backdrop to many significant conversations and revelations in the novel. The constitution of the city as a masculine space is described in a language of contradictions; Bombay-Mumbai is benevolent and forgiving, powerful and impotent, exploitative and menacing, in its treatment of women. The pervasive reach of patriarchy in the seemingly secular space of the city, is illustrated through the relationships which are forged and severed between female characters in the novel, linked by their victimhood to an aggressive masculinity.

The diffusion of global capitalism into the spaces of the city is another phenomenon which links women through their consumerist desires, regardless of the social hierarchies that relegate them to separate spaces of domestic dwelling. The public marketplace is represented as a space of equal desire, inhabited by women who become economic subjects in their role as consumers.

Sensing a captive audience in the two women, the vendors in their booths raised their nasal cries to frenzied proportions, their voices drowning one another out: "'Allo, ladies, what you looking for? Cassettes, perfume, soaps, Kraft cheese in cans fresh from Australia. Chocolates, too – Nestle, Toblerone, Arre, take a dekho, this is asli maal, madam, the real stuff. All

foreign imported stuff, come on, good cheap price I'll give you (*TSBU,* pp. 187-88).

The language of consumerism is one in which global and local processes are embedded, and the foreign-imported, upscale merchandise being aggressively marketed in this instance, is indicative of the upper-middle-class status of its gendered, target-audience. Significantly, the two women, Sera and her mother Jehroo, ignore the cries of the vendor and escape to the quieter confines of an Irani restaurant, a less egalitarian space, but nonetheless one which facilitates consumption. The role of the woman as consumer is depicted in an earlier scene in the novel, in which Bhima navigates her way through a crowded vegetable-market before relinquishing her thirst at a small, road-side café. The routine act of grocery shopping coupled by the squalor of the marketplace, contrasts this rather unpleasant act of consumerism with Sera and Jehroo's relaxed experiences of the same.

> As she does every Saturday, Bhima averts her head. The sight of Parvati and her sorry-looking vegetables fills her with unbearable sadness…She knows that the others help the old woman, sending her home each evening with the overripe fruit and the spoiled vegetables they are unable to sell. Still, Bhima wonders how the woman can possibly stay alive on such a meagre income (*TSBU,* p. 97).

The politics of both gender and class are crucial in determining the engagement between vendor and customer; Bhima lacks the typically detached, consumerist attitude which is exemplified by her employers, as her own, impoverished condition is not dissimilar to those of the tradespersons. The adversarial attitude that she would be expected to adopt while bargaining over prices, is also tempered by her resigned acceptance of the commercially exploitative nature of the city. The complicity of the marketplace in maintaining the corrupt, commercial structures that undergird the urban economy in Bombay-Mumbai is further illustrated through a conversation between Bhima and a vegetable seller.

> "Five kilos of potatoes," she says curtly. "And make sure none of them are rotten…"

Instead of looking apologetic, the shopkeeper sneers. "Everything in Mumbai is rotten, the politicians are rotten, the public transportation system is rotten. Why should a few of my poor potatoes not be rotten?" (*TSBU*, p. 99)

The degenerate and often elusive nature of the metropolis is foregrounded by Umrigar in the novel, as she also draws attention to issues of migrancy, labour and housing, which frequently formulate dystopian associations of the city. In a letter explaining his departure from the city, Bhima's husband Gopal describes the illusion of contentment and prosperity that attracts migrants to the Bombay-Mumbai, as being counteractive to the harsh material realities that characterize the working and lower-income residential environments in the city:

> Once, when I was a young man, I had believed that I was in love with Bombay and wedded to her, that the city was my bride, my wife. But now I know – Bombay is mistress to many, wife to none. My real life is in the village of my youth, to which I must return with humility and the hope of forgiveness (*TSBU*, p. 249).

It is significant that despite the masculine aggression which characterizes the city in a novel that seeks to articulate female perceptions of urban society, Gopal associates the city as a feminine space which is conventionally positioned between the dichotomous roles of wife and mistress. The beguiling, modern city is abandoned in favour of a humble, traditional space that is nostalgically recreated as being the village of Gopal's youth, thereby suggesting a pastoral utopia which shares a dialectical relationship with the urban dystopia. The gendering of space is therefore crucial in understanding the binaries of purity and pollution, legitimacy and illegality, and marginality and centrality, which circumscribe the women in the novel.

4.7 Family matters

The relationship of servitude and proprietorship which describes Bhima and Sera's engagement in the novel is mediated by the role of both their extended families in determining the trajectory of their interactions. Bhima's granddaughter, Maya, is another central character in this predominantly female narrative, whose attempt to surmount through her education the social and occupational barriers that restrict her

family to the squatter colonies, is thwarted by an unwanted pregnancy.[28] Bhima's aspirations for her granddaughter are enabled by the secularist educational environment in city colleges and also through her relationship with Sera's family, which holds a promise of further social mobility in the future. In Maya's case, the possibility of a clerical or even managerial career, that would elevate her from the ranks of domestic servitude that generations of women in her family have been bound to, is not an impossible dream. Sera's acknowledgment of the girl's intelligence is also an upper-class validation of Maya's ability and future potential to circumvent these social hierarchies.

However, Maya's pregnancy lies like an ugly, distended obstacle in her path to success, and Bhima's contemplation of an alternate, domestic lifestyle for her granddaughter is marked by the respectability that a husband with a white-collared job would confer upon it. Her vision situates her granddaughter within the secure domestic environs of the kitchen, a space that is complicit with the patriarchal divisions of labour that relegate women to housewifery while the men occupationally inhabit the public sphere. The acknowledgment of a woman's accomplishments as the bearer of male children and as a domestic provider, are encapsulated in Bhima's dreams for Maya, which are reflective of both her classist and gendered perception of their lives. Ironically, for Maya, the home becomes a space of enclosure and captivity, as she is bound indoors to escape the social censure that an illegitimate pregnancy is certain to bring upon her family. She laments,

> I feel like a prisoner, but then I ask myself, Who is my jailer? I am my own
> jailer. I don't know which is darker, Ma-ma – this room with no electricity
> or the veil of shame that hangs over me (*TSBU*, p. 55).

The hovel becomes a site of imagined surveillance, a wretched version of the archetypal panoptic prison, which is described by Foucault as inducing 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'.[29] Maya's fear of being discovered by her neighbours and derided as a 'fallen woman' is compounded by her own awareness of the bodily changes that make her more prominent in the sight of others. The masculine structures of power which construct narratives of womanly virtue and castigate its transgressions are also responsible for fathering her shame. The elusive dichotomies of presence and

absence which regulate the functioning of the panoptic prison may also be read in conjunction with the image of the veil that could be considered as either an involuntary masking of the feminine self (negation) or as the embracing of a choice (affirmation). The subversion of stereotypical assumptions about the veil, as being a patriarchally enforced dress code for women, is described by Umrigar in a poignant scene from the novel, in which Sera observes the casual physical intimacy between a Muslim couple which demonstrates 'the fallacy of the veil' (*TSBU*, p. 88). Here, however, the 'veil', seems to gesture towards the masking of an act, the revelation of which would bring immense shame and dishonour to both Maya and Bhima.

By desecrating the domestic space with her ungainly body and heavy silences, Maya becomes responsible for rupturing the natural and positive relationship that women are believed to have with their homes. The burden of living with her apathetic, pregnant granddaughter lies heavy on Bhima as well, and the 'unhomeliness' of their dwelling becomes more apparent as she begins noticing 'how shabby and disassembled the tin-and-cardboard structures looked, more like a giant bird's nest put together by a flock of drunken crows than like a place where human beings lived' (*TSBU*, p. 38). The fragility of their dwelling scarcely seems to cover the extent of Maya's transgressions, and Bhima worries constantly about the discerning glances of the neighbourhood women that might penetrate the veneer of shabby respectability that she strives to maintain.

> …surely it has come to the attention of the eagle-eyed women with the paan-stained teeth and gossiping tongues who populate the slum colony. Are they keeping silent out of respect for her, Bhima? If so, how long will the silence hold? (*TSBU*, p. 57)

4.8 The female body as discourse

The complicity of women is both threatening and comforting for Bhima, and she is forced to seek help outside her own community. Unsurprisingly, she solicits her employer Sera's help in getting an appointment for an abortion: Sera, who is separated from her by a vast social chasm, but is intimately bound to her by the fact of their womanhood. The frailty of both women, and their common victimhood to patriarchal and misogynistic cultures, link them in unexpectedly poignant ways. As a

victim of domestic abuse, both at the hands of her husband Feroz and his mother Banu, Sera is a figure of femininity described in violently corporeal terms. The female body becomes a site for the assertion of masculine power and control, and more cruelly, an affirmation of the notion of woman as being weak and capable of being subjugated. Sera is variously described as 'precious cargo' and 'a fragile piece of bone china', drawing attention to the language of commodification and frailty that is ascribed to women in the novel (*TSBU*, p. 48). After suffering years of abuse at the hands of her husband, the lack of marital violence becomes, for Sera, the definition of a good marriage, and Umrigar cleverly positions Sera's daughter Dinaz's relationship with her husband Viraf as a seemingly egalitarian referential narrative through which Sera perceives her own experiences.

Patriarchal registers, especially in relation to arranged marriages and bride-viewings in India, have described the ideal, desirable female body as being both unblemished on the surface and also as being morally or sexually uncorrupted. Ironically, it is Sera's husband who desecrates her body with bruises, transforming it into a 'hypersensitive, revengeful entity, a ledger book, a warehouse of remembered slights and cruelties' (*TSBU*, p. 104). Sera's self-reflexivity is conditioned through her bodily associations of people and places; she remembers Feroz through the 'pain of memory' which he physically encoded onto her body, while her symbiotic relationship with Bhima is borne out of her complicity in shielding Sera's wounded body from the scrutinizing eyes of the world. Bhima's gentle ministrations to Sera's bruised body are described in a strangely sexual language, with the latter being lulled into a primordial languor, or post-climactic lethargy, as one may choose to interpret it after the cathartic massage that she receives from Bhima. Gradually, Sera is able to relate to her domestic help through their common gendered subjectivities, even as a distance creeps into her relationship with her husband; Bhima adopts the contentious position of the 'other woman' who is posited as 'balm' and 'healer' to Feroz's 'blow' and 'tormentor' (*TSBU*, p. 104). The novel foregrounds the physicality of women while developing relationships between them, thereby undermining the social and spatial constraints that function as normative barriers to separate them.

Sera's relationship with her mother-in-law Banu is also circumscribed within the discourse of the female body that regulates her position and place in the Dubash

household. The multiple gender hierarchies which exist in extended or joint families in India are highlighted by Umrigar, in her depiction of the conflicted relations between the two women. The role of the mother-in-law in perpetuating domestic violence has been a concern of several feminist debates, which emphasize the collusive power structures between mothers and sons that celebrate and feed into patriarchal ideologies of male supremacy. The idealization of the maternal relationship and its displacement by the conjugal relations between husband (as son) and wife, can be read in conjunction with M. Kishwar's interpretation of domestic hierarchies that exist within extended Indian families:

> Relationships with children are considered far more dependable, enduring, and fulfilling. This may be related to the fact that while as a wife, a woman is expected to serve and surrender, as a mother she is allowed the right to both nurture and dominate and is supposed to be venerated unconditionally. She can expect obedience, love, and seva (service) from her children, especially sons, even after they grow up. Unconditional giving brings in its own ample rewards. In her role as a mother she is culturally far more glorified.[30]

The culturally venerated figure of the mother-in-law occupies an oppositional position to the youthful and sexualized figure of the wife, in Umrigar's novel, and the body becomes a site of contestation for power. Primal bodily processes such as menstruation are construed as being polluting and Sera's 'alleged innate impurity' during her monthly period leads to her being humiliated and incarcerated by her mother-in-law.[31] The oppositions between fertility and barrenness, regeneration and cessation, youth and old age, are invoked in establishing the differences between the two women, and the body functions as both a marker and reminder of these stages of womanhood.[32] The contentious practice of 'untouchability' which is an outgrowth of the caste system in India, functions as an insidious sub-text in the novel, as Sera is socially and physically ostracized within the Dubash household for being ritually polluted by her menses. Her segregation in a separate space and exclusion from all communal activities are ordered by Banu, who also coerces the men in the family to maintain this primitive regime, which traditionally arises from a powerful mythic context.

Sera's inherently modern sensibilities are resistant to these humiliating impositions on her womanhood, although she is rendered powerless by her husband's compliance with his mother's wishes. The devaluation and debasement of wifehood and daughterhood in the Indian context are discussed by Ashis Nandy, in an essay which also describes the Indian mother as relying on her son for validation and self-expression. He observes, 'The woman's self-respect in the traditional system is protected not through her father or husband, but through her son. It is also through her son – and for that matter on the son – that she traditionally exercises her authority'.[33] This relationship between mother and son is exemplified by the violent abuse which Sera suffers at the hands of Feroz, who chastises her physically for defiantly exhibiting her feminine self through the apparent hysteria and paranoia which accompany her menstrual cycle. The novel however, is inherently retributive in nature, and Feroz's death is followed by Banu's paralysis, overturning the structures of power which she had meticulously and cruelly established over the years. Sera parodies the role of the dutiful daughter-in-law by paying daily visits to the 'Monster', a title impudently assigned to Banu, after her debilitation liberates Sera from the conventional position of the oppressed to that of a silent and vengeful oppressor. Sera's own progression, from being a beleaguered daughter-in-law to becoming a resident mother-in-law to Viraf, is characterized by the cautious restraint she exercises in his presence; spatiality takes on a metaphoric significance, as Sera endeavours to give her daughter and son-in-law privacy within their own home.

The materiality of the female body which connects and severs relationships between women manifests itself through the pregnancies of Sera's daughter, Dinaz, and Bhima's granddaughter, Maya. Psychoanalyst and writer Sudhir Kakar associates pregnancy with female empowerment in his observation, that 'for an Indian woman, imminent motherhood is not only the personal fulfilment of an old wish and the biological consummation of a lifelong promise, but an event in which the culture confirms her status as a renewer of the race, and extends to her a respect and consideration which were not accorded to her as a mere wife'.[34] However, the affirmation of womanhood that pregnancy brings with it is denied to Maya, as her engagement in premarital sexual relations, and the conception of an illegitimate child, remove her from the traditional domain of motherhood which Dinaz occupies and place her instead in solitary confinement within her hovel. Her pregnancy is not the

only dishonour that Maya has had to sustain, however, and in a moment of climactic revelation, the reader learns that she has been raped by an upper class man. This awful knowledge is communicated to Bhima during a chance encounter with Sera's family, when she realizes that her granddaughter has been impregnated by her employer's son-in-law, Viraf. Significantly, Bhima is quick to associate Maya as being the instigator of the act, appropriating in that moment a gendered perception of rape, as being a consequence of feminine artifice. Inadvertently, Bhima extends the structures of violence that Viraf implicates Maya within, by verbally and physically castigating her lack of virtue and shameless promiscuity. The consequences of her knowledge of the rape-act are several; the social distance between Sera and Bhima is complicated by Viraf's transgressions, as is the relationship between the two pregnant women, whose offspring share the same father, but are still separated by the legitimacy and compromise that describes their conception. Furthermore, Viraf's 'responsible' involvement in arranging an abortion for Maya is exposed in that moment of truth, as being motivated by the simple fear of disclosure.

4.9 Silencing the subaltern

The moment of revelation is a silent and intuitive one, as Bhima comprehends the extent of Maya's transgressions through her granddaughter's panicked behaviour in Viraf's presence. Paradoxically, the silence between Bhima and Maya is transformed into a deafening space of accusation, guilt, distress, terror, and murderous rage, as they endeavour to confront their distressed emotional selves in the aftermath of the encounter.

> They walk in total silence. But this silence is screaming, screeching, and filled with sounds – the thudding of Bhima's heart; the clawing, tearing fear that is choking Maya's throat; the scraping sound that Bhima's feet make as they dig angrily into the sand. Inside this silence the two women walk, afraid of touching its contours, because to break the damn of silence would mean to allow the waters of anger, rage, fury to come rushing, would allow the tidal waves of the recent past – the past that they have ignored, aborted, killed – to come roaring in to destroy their tenuous present (*TSBU*, p. 268).

Out of this clamorous silence is borne a desire on Bhima's part, to abandon the dutifully acquiescent role of a socially-hindered employee that has defined her relationship with Sera's family, by articulating the grievous injustice that has been committed towards both her and Maya. She recognizes her multiply marginalized position as 'poor, 'female', and 'illiterate', which has frequently disadvantaged her in getting 'fooled by accountants and husbands and patronized by doctors and men who rape her granddaughter' (*TSBU*, p. 283). The patriarchal institutions of medicine, education, and marriage, which are central to most developing and urban societies, are viewed through Bhima's subaltern, female perspective as being exploitative and discriminating regarding gender and class. She is impelled by her overwhelming anger, to confront Viraf as being the perpetrator of the heinous crime, only to be rendered incoherent during the actual moment of confrontation; the cry 'whywhywhywhywhy' represents the unsustainable nature of any dialogic interaction between the social classes, which seeks to redress the unequal relations between them. It can also be construed as the fragmented and incomplete voice of the marginalized female subject, who is unable to articulate the extent of her alterity, as to do so would only bring forth non-acknowledgement or disbelief.

Maya's similar inarticulateness, after being coerced into sexual engagement with Viraf, is attributed to the conflicting feelings of fear and shame that are experienced by many rape victims. The sensuous ambiguity which Umrigar lends to the actual scene in which Maya is raped positions the young girl as both victim and abettor; a common argument used to argue the charge of sexual harassment or rape. The intimate connections between rape and sexual morality are examined in a legal context by Geetanjali Gangoli, who observes that 'generalized sexual "permissiveness" contributes to rape [and] therefore brings legal rhetoric into the realm of normative notions of sexual behaviour, where no distinction is made between consensual sexual activity, and violent and coercive sex' (*IF*, p. 63). Maya succumbs to Viraf's advances in a moment of weakness and intimacy, which parodies a previous scene in the novel in which Bhima and Sera forge an unconventional, yet synergic relationship, thereby illustrating two parallel instances of erotic cross-class attraction.

It felt good to be giving him so much pleasure. As her hands kneaded and caressed Viraf's back, as she rubbed out the tension from his stringy muscles, Maya felt important and strong – and powerful (*TSBU*, p. 276).

Interestingly, Umrigar appears to conflate desire and violation in her portrayal of the rape scene, an occurrence which is common in Indian cinematic narratives where the only depiction of a sexual act is usually rape. The accession and withdrawal of power by Viraf, in granting Maya physical intimacy through her role as a masseuse, and subsequently imposing his sexual needs upon her, reveals the vulnerability of the young, female subject to the elusive power struggles that operate during the act of rape. Maya is both socially and spatially compromised by her position as a menial servant girl, who is temporarily situated within an upper-class, domestic space at the time of her rape. The 'home' becomes an unsafe place, desecrated by a sexual transgression which even Bhima believes, is initiated by Maya; Sera's vehement rejection of the rape-allegation positions Maya's story as being unsupported, thereby devaluing and ultimately negating the subaltern viewpoint. The themes of gender and class violently intersect at this juncture of rape in the narrative, thereby aligning Umrigar's tale with other texts that locate their climactic points within the discourse of rape.

In her essay titled 'Life after Rape', Rajeswari Sunder Rajan compares the novels *Clarissa* (1748) and *A Passage to India* (1924) as narratives in which 'the moment of rape is made the centre...so that the plots describe a graph of climax and anticlimax around that point.[35] That being said, the social and cultural implications of rape in these various novels are vastly different, despite Umrigar's novel being both similar and unique in its deployment of caste and class as registers through which modern, female subjectivities may be studied. In her narrative, the consequences of the act of rape are borne most heavily by the three women, Maya, Bhima and Sera, with a fourth, Dinaz, being unknowingly compromised as well. While Maya and Sera's perspectives are offered to us through their silent negation of the act, Bhima is shown as suffering intensely, both after learning of Viraf's involvement in the rape and in the aftermath of the ugly confrontation which renders her speechless, unemployed, and with an untrustworthy reputation. The juxtaposition of the image of *sati* with Bhima's self-annihilating responses to the calamity that has befallen both

her and Maya is a deliberate narrative strategy on Umrigar's part, to emphasize the willing immolation of the female self at the pyre of patriarchal injustice. Viraf's transgressions are considered to be secondary to her own, in exposing his role as an alleged rapist, which consequently severed all ties between Sera's family and hers.

> But if Viraf had been unable to light her funeral pyre, she had done it for him. She had climbed on top of the neatly arranged pile of wood and lay down; she had lit the match that had brought alive the flames that had devoured her. With her words she had birthed a fire that had scorched all of them (*TSBU*, p. 310).

The trope of *sati* functions as an indicator of the violent, physical dimension of Bhima's pain, one that is described by her through bodily metaphors. It also gestures towards her voluntary, self-apportioning of blame, in the light of the grievous crime that she discovers, revealing thereby the ingrained 'virtues' of acceptance, submission, and sacrifice that are expected of the Indian woman. Admittedly the most marginalized figure in the novel, Bhima is the subaltern servant woman, trapped between the registers of 'subject-constitution' (native patriarchy) and 'object-formation' (foreign imperialism), in Spivak's terms of negotiating feminine identity.[36] In relation to the topic of *sati*, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan discusses these two female subject positions as being, in the first instance, a willingness to die or inflict pain on oneself, and in the second, a 'modern' desire to save the woman from becoming a victim to 'tradition' (*RI*, p. 19). In the novel, Bhima's plight can similarly be analyzed as inhabiting either of these binaries, whereby on the one hand, suffering is considered to be an inherent condition in the lives of lower class women, while on the other, the educated, westernized reader feels impelled to save her from upper-class male tyranny. Umrigar's possible intent to problematize her own privileged class positioning in relation to Bhima's extreme disenfranchisement may also be considered at this juncture, thus making the reader more aware of the ethical dangers of representation and the underlying tension which they create in her novel.

By using the image of *sati* as metaphor for Bhima's helpless and anguished condition, Umrigar evokes the feminist debates on the subject that have positioned the woman/*sati* as being disarticulated by her seemingly willing complicity in patriarchal narratives of womanhood. Alternatively, as 'the woman who dies', despite

it being a figurative death in this case, Bhima's plight cannot be completely represented. The trope of sati, like that of silence, which structured my earlier arguments in this chapter, indicates an extinction of the female self and the inaccessibility of speech or self-expression. The novel does not end with a conclusive resolution to Bhima's problems; neither does it offer her retribution in any form other than a mysterious communion that transpires between her and the vast expanse of the Arabian Sea, which shares a synecdochical relationship with the city of Bombay-Mumbai. The narrative concludes on an ambiguous and rather symbolic note, as Bhima is shown occupying a liminal space between the land (representing finitude) and the sea (infinite expanse) precariously balanced on the rocks which separate them.

> I could stand here forever, she thinks. She could occupy this spot that's neither land nor water, wait here until the sky and the sea uncouple their dark, intertwined limbs and separate again in the light of a new day (*TSBU*, p. 320).

This passage exemplifies the evanescent, threshold space which Bhima has always occupied. Socially distanced by both her own community and Sera's family, her existence is inherently marginal in nature, and the end of the narrative seems to locate her centrally within this tenuous space of the border. The impossibility of crossing this border is also suggested as is the essentially unrepresentable nature of the subalternity embodied by the female servant in Indian domestic contexts.

I return, in conclusion, to the poignant image of woman as a reconstructive and generative force, as described by Adrienne Rich in the verses quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The metaphor of the patchwork quilt, which compellingly illustrated the diversity that characterizes modern postcolonial societies in Chapter 1, is used here as a cohering narrative for the fragmented female self. The silent and stifled writer in Deshpande's text and the socially victimized, subaltern subject in Unrigar's novel present persuasive examples of the crisis of femininity, as experienced by various women in a largely patriarchal, urban environment. This crisis is manifested in the case of each of the women through a psychological splintering, which displays itself in a climactic and revelatory moment in the text. Jaya's hysterical articulation of the dysfunctionality of her marriage and Bhima's incoherent rage which is directed at

her grand-daughter's aggressor are instances of rupture that acknowledge the fragmented identification that these women share with their social environments.

In Jaya's case, this moment of rupture brings with it an ideological re-visioning and reconciliation of her many, schismatic selves that are in disharmony with each other and attempts to fabricate them into a coherent whole, as she is able to repossess her authorship by breaking 'that long silence'. Bhima's fate however remains contentious even at the end of Umrigar's narrative, and she is consigned to the space of the margin as a voiceless and unheard female subject. The city of Bombay-Mumbai functions as both a physical and emotional landscape against which the conflicted subjectivities of these fictional women characters are brought into their own, and demonstrates the interconnectedness of gender and space in contemporary urban discourses. While in some instances, the social environment reinforces the sexual hierarchies between women, as in the case of Sera and Bhima, it also simultaneously provides a backdrop for quiet introspection and the reclamation of Jaya's authorship, and by extension, her life. These paradoxical dimensions of the cityscape have been mapped and detailed by the two women writers whose works explore the elusive and unarticulated spaces of a gendered modernity in the postcolonial city.

Chapter 5

Spectacular City: Envisioning Bombay-Mumbai in *Maximum City, Bombay Ice* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Their very exclusivity, and the spreading rumours of their opulence, have made the cities universal objects of desire – all who dream of the ransom of modernity, who peer at its spectres on television and cinema screens, dream of some connection with the city.

Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*[1]

Thus social space, and especially urban space, emerged in all its diversity – and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky *mille-feuille* pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical (Euclidean/Cartesian) mathematics.[2]

Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*[2]

5.1 Walter Benjamin in postcolonial contexts

In the introduction to my thesis I argue that any constructive narrative which attempts to trace the emergence of Bombay-Mumbai as the urban locus of postcolonial modernity will find itself involuntarily linked to the development of modernity in European cities. This is not an unproblematic debate, although the effects of the colonial encounter in the case of Bombay have undeniably influenced its social structuring, economic development and ideological self-imaging to some extent. This final section revisits the idea by engaging with certain aspects of Walter Benjamin's theoretical model of European urbanism, and his notion of modernity and visuality as being intrinsic to the discourse of the city, while examining the pervasive presence of visual culture in literatures of the postcolonial city of Bombay-

Mumbai. Although not unprecedented, this project does appear to link two apparently distant yet ambiguously related bodies of literature, and my intent is to establish a dialogic relationship between them; to examine the diverse manifestations and developments of urban experiences across the world by surveying them through Benjamin's discerning gaze, and also to re-envisage his theories, limited by their Eurocentrism, through the lens of postcoloniality.

The unparalleled growth and development of European cities such as London and Paris in the nineteenth century created new ways of perceiving and experiencing the urban environment, and Walter Benjamin's discourse of the city provides us with provocative insights into the theoretical structures and literary registers that were shaped during this period. Recent studies of global urbanism have attempted to examine the almost contemporaneous development of diverse metropolitan centres across the world during this historical era, thereby bringing into focus less acknowledged urbanisms such as Chicago, Buenos Aires, Melbourne, Calcutta, Hong Kong and Singapore alongside New York, London and Paris.[3] Positioned within a coincident historical time-frame and commanding a more influential position at the time, Calcutta might have been a more appropriate urban model to consider alongside Benjamin's own, instead of the port-city of Bombay. However, my research moves beyond the expansion of cities under the colonial regime in India, and examines the contentious and undeveloped period of postcolonial modernity during which Bombay-Mumbai gained precedence over other metropolitan centres.

In his compelling essay titled 'Benjamin in Bombay? An Asian Extrapolation', Rajeev Patke observes of the South Asian city, that it is 'a layered site excavated in language through the collective force of memory'.[4] By transposing Benjamin's urban discourse onto a postcolonial landscape, Patke draws our attention to the palimpsestic nature of the modern city of Bombay-Mumbai, which communicates its history to us through a language of materiality, and which is re-envisaged and recovered through a collective remembering. The multiform and stratified cityscape forms the primary subject of inquiry in each of the three texts which I study in this section, with the metaphor of the palimpsest governing my readings of the visually coded city. The material environment of the city is intimately linked with human subjectivity in Benjamin's writing, and has its own controlling language which

determines the interaction between the worlds of the object and subject.[5] In the case of Bombay-Mumbai, this material language is consummated by acts of naming as demonstrated through the various nomenclatural stages in the city's evolutionary history – Bom Bahia, Bombay, Mumbai – which significantly shape the formation of urban identities, as discussed in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I examine the language of materiality as being crucial to the process of urban excavation and the recovery of identity, as the constant engagement between the object and the subject worlds creates a sustained and homologous relationship between the exterior city and interior subjectivities such as personal memory.

To maintain a ceaseless interaction between the visual city and the modern self Benjamin places the enigmatic and utopian figure of the flaneur very centrally in his metropolitan discourse. Conceived by French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), the flaneur has been described alternatively as an 'analytical form', a 'narrative device', and in a more elaborate definition, as a 'multilayered palimpsest that enables us to move from real products of modernity, like commodification and leisured patriarchy, through the practical organization of space and its negotiation by inhabitants of a city, to a critical appreciation of the state of modernity and its erosion into the post-, and onwards…'.[6] The art of strolling through the modern city, or in Benjamin's famous phrase, 'botanizing on the asphalt', was a privileged and purposeful activity that very often took place in the elegant Parisian arcades.[7] In the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai, the sprawling networks of the unplanned city and the vast stretches of abject poverty pose a physical and aesthetic challenge to the project of urban flanerie as proposed by Benjamin. One observes in the works of Mehta, Forbes and Rushdie that while navigating the city on foot is in certain instances possible and is motivated by the desire for personal recovery or professional interest, an engagement with the material city is established through other predominantly visual means and media.

5.2 Layering reality: Bollywood cinema and modern art

As a locus of contemporary urban processes and modern experiences, Bombay-Mumbai has been described in its literary archives as an intensely visual city, and it may be suggested that a 'dialectical optic' permeates various aspects of its everyday life. This is a concept borrowed from Benjamin's theorization of the ocularcentric

city, that observes the 'everyday as impenetrable and the impenetrable as everyday', proposing therefore that the inconsistency of vision perceives a particular environment in altered ways with the passing of time.[8] In the postcolonial city, the urban environment characterized by its transience and mutability is recreated in cinema, which provides a shifting focus to capture the minutiae of everyday life. As perhaps the most prevalent form of cultural modernity in India since its independence, Bollywood cinema is intrinsic to the city of Bombay-Mumbai and undergirds the economies of materiality and visuality which form binding associations between the city and its inhabitants. It also caters to the mass consumerist fantasies of the city's lower and middle classes, earning the repute of cultural kitsch, and in effect, contaminating Benjamin's dreams of mechanical reproducibility and the dissemination of the auratic.

The visual city is also recreated through another potent cultural medium, the artist's canvas, which is often distanced from the vulgarities of popular cinema by its capacity to preserve the auratic in its original and sacred form. The Progressive Artists Group, which was established in the city of Bombay shortly after Indian Independence, sought to discover new ways of representing the experiences and realities of postcolonial modernity. Stalwarts such as M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza and Francis Newton Souza were associated with the inception and development of the organization, and their works reflected the strong influences of European artistic movements such as Post-Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism, twining India's artistic modernity with European culture. Since then, fuelled by its increasingly commercialized function, modern art or painting has seen a flourishing growth in the contemporary city of Bombay-Mumbai and presents enduring, complex and indelible impressions of the urban landscape in its multiple shades and facets. Positioned within a more elitist domain than Indian cinema, modern art is not as pervasive in its social function and does not receive as much attention in fictive narratives of the city. In this chapter, however, we encounter its forceful presence as an expressionistic and palimpsestic medium which communicates the euphoria and the crisis of urban modernity in the postcolonial city.

Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City* (2004), Leslie Forbes' *Bombay Ice* (1998) and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) are narratives of the city which operate within

the visual paradigm that informs my study and investigate the multilayered urban landscape through the tropes of popular cinema and modern art. The metaphor of the palimpsest first emerges in Mehta's text (reportage/memoir), in the form of a narrative excavation through which he seeks to recover the city of his childhood which lies buried beneath its present-day façade of commerciality, unlawful subcultures and cinematic frenzy. With the discerning gaze of a professional investigator coupled with the intimacy of the personal narrative Mehta penetrates the complex structure of the cinematic city in a manner that is both detached yet familiar, and greatly resembles Benjamin's flaneur, the archetypal figure of European modernity. The project of urban recovery that Mehta undertakes can be categorized into various stages that are described in his memoir; the romanticized reconstruction of Bombay through film and rhetoric in New York, his actual lived experiences as an investigative reporter in the material city of Bombay-Mumbai, and finally, a more transcendental phase during which Mehta unlearns his desire of physical integration in urban society and considers the monastic life which is adopted by a Jain family that seeks spiritual peace in a landscape fuelled by restless commerciality.

Another text which employs cinema as a primary visual trope is the novel *Bombay Ice*, and Roz Benegal its central protagonist is an investigative reporter who comes to Bombay-Mumbai to uncover the underlying corruption in its commercial film and art industries. As a socially and sexually transgressive figure in the film-capital of India, Roz subverts the feminist conception of the 'invisible flaneuse' by catapulting herself into an arena of conspicuity and embarks on an exploratory journey similar to Mehta's, although lacking his methodological precision and sustained objectivity.[9] The modern postcolonial city functions as a theatre of social activity and is provocatively inhabited by performative figures such as Mehta and Rosalind who are simultaneously privileged and marginalized by their 'outsider' status in Bombay. The theme of the palimpsest recurs in the form of a city layered with crime, corruption and cinematic glitz and Forbes' novel operates within uncompromising structures of surveillance that negotiate new social codes of sexuality, entertainment, violence and city living.

The novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* is perhaps a fitting culmination to the theme of visual cultures of the postcolonial city in literature, and Rushdie's employment of

modern art (painting and restoration) as an interventionist medium between the material realities of urban life and their more abstract literary representations, shifts the focus of analysis from cinema to another equally powerful visual trope which manifests itself within a complex narrative of Indian historiography and urban growth. The artist is positioned alongside the flaneur as an emblematic figure of modernity, whose political engagement with the city finds expression in subjective art. I extrapolate a few key concepts from Benjamin's visual urban discourse and transpose them to Mehta, Forbes and Rushdie's narratives of the city, perceiving, however, the different ways in which they are manifested within Bombay-Mumbai. For instance, while Benjamin's discourse on the flaneur in *The Arcades Project* and his ruminations on the 'auratic perception' in *The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction* bear great relevance to my own discussions of urban investigation in Bombay-Mumbai and the metaphorical role of palimpsetic art, his theories about 'the unconscious optics of the camera' and cinematography in general, can only be superficially related to my rather specific analysis of the contemporary (g)localized phenomenon of Bollywood cinema as an embodiment of the modern, visual city.[10] These divergences reaffirm that while Benjamin's discourse on European urbanism is a useful relational model within which to theorize visual cultures in modern cities across space and time, it does not account for the specific cultural codes that exist in cities outside of those which informed his writings.

5.3 The poetics of materiality, spectacle, and shock

As mentioned previously, in Benjamin's urban rhetoric the material city deeply engages with human subjectivities and impacts the formation, development and recovery of identities. While the function of language and memory is central to his conceptualization of the object-city, I shall momentarily focus on the materiality of the visually coded urban environment and its importance in postcolonial contexts. Walker and Chaplin define visual culture as being constituted by 'those material artefacts, buildings and images, plus time-based media and performances, produced by human labour and imagination, which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent', thus positioning the 'material' very centrally within a scopic discourse.[11] Benjamin envisaged the material city as fragments and described

them as a series of visual metaphors – the veil, the corridor, the passageway, the maze, and the labyrinth.[12] Powerful, evocative visions of the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai that are articulated through a similar set of metaphors, namely film, façade and painting, form an important part of contemporary Indian writing in English. Through descriptions of the city in literature the reader gets integrated into a visual phraseology which then shapes his perceptions of the city. Bombay-Mumbai becomes synchronous with its spectacular promenade, towering skyscrapers, squalid slums, proliferating artworks and its image as a film-city - a visual culture of materialism functions as the dominant representative trope in literatures of the city, within which our urban experiences are integrally embedded.

The Baudelairean figure of the flaneur was employed by Benjamin to navigate through the material city, while he also gained insights into the ideological conception of urban spaces from the German sociologist, Georg Simmel. From an experiential standpoint Simmel's essay on 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' is remarkable in its analysis of the modern city, as a space inundated with rapidly shifting stimuli which have direct psychological bearings on an individual's perception of his environment. The ocularcentric nature of Simmel's discourse may be construed, from his very description of the formation of a 'metropolitan individuality' by the 'rapid telescoping of changing images', which create new modes of perception and social bonds between people.[13] Although Simmel's work had a significant influence on the *Arcades Project*, it may be suggested that Benjamin's writing is more committed to the material aspects of visual culture in the city. One observes this in his study of flanerie, in which he attributes its rise in nineteenth century Paris to architectural changes in the city, as the modernization of the city under Haussmann and others created new social spaces for the wealthy man of leisure.

To create a dialogic interaction between the two urban scholars (Simmel and Benjamin), Jeri Johnson's essay on 'Literary Geography: Joyce, Woolf and the City' observes points of coincidence and variance in their theories, by relating the textual and the visual through the classic literary figure of modernity, the flaneur.[14] In Jonson's essay, the contrasting perspectives of the modernist writers in their endeavour to fictionalize their beloved cities of London and Dublin allow the reader

a glimpse of two significantly divergent, yet important viewpoints. While Woolf asserts in a Simmelian fashion that 'a writer's country is a territory within his own brain', Joyce's vision of reflecting the material reality of the city of Dublin through his fiction is more in accordance with Benjamin's theories. Transposing these contentions to a South Asian context, one could perhaps analyze *Maximum City* as a narrative which partially reconciles these different ways of conceptualizing urban spaces. During his investigations in the physical city, Mehta develops an acute visual sensibility that allows him not only to penetrate social structures with his discerning gaze, but also to look inwards and acknowledge his overwhelming need to reclaim an urban identity. As he observes of his self-seeking quest, 'I went back to look for that city with a simple question: can you go home again? In the looking I found the cities within me'.[15] To analyze the role of visual culture in literatures of the postcolonial city it is necessary to acknowledge the abstract and mysterious workings of the mind, which plays an integral part in envisioning the material city and recreating it as a fictionalized topos. Sharing Mehta's diasporic concerns of return and belonging, Salman Rushdie observes similarly of his childhood city, that Bombay is an idea as well as a place, thereby reconciling Simmel and Benjamin's visions of the modern city.

Simmel's idea of the metropolitan environment as being inundated with rapidly shifting stimuli is a compelling one and draws attention to the element of shock which is an important aspect of all urban encounters. This shock may occur as a result of direct contact between inhabitants of the same physical space as has been noted by Gilloch, who, in his analysis of the metropolitan discourse that was shaped by both Baudelaire and Benjamin's writings, observes 'shock' to be the 'quintessential experience of the crowd and the definitive signature of modernity'.[16] Alternatively the shock-element may arise from a purely visual perception of the city and the physical structures which constitute it. In Bombay-Mumbai, the material city manifests itself in strange and disorienting ways as the arrant disproportion of economic resources is glaringly emphasized by the simultaneous existence of skyscrapers and shanties within the metropolitan landscape. The presence of a visual aesthetic that functions through the principles of shock and awe is manifested in both Mehta and Forbes' texts, mostly in relation to the spectacular world of commercial cinema in Bombay-Mumbai. While Mehta approaches the idea of the city-as-spectacle as an urban

phenomenon which he negotiates mainly in the sections on entertainment in the city, Forbes uses the cinematic convention of melodrama to create a spectacular fictional narrative of the city.

This takes us back to the idea of the spectacle which emerged as a visual concept in seventeenth century English art-theatre and is central to the experiences of shock and awe in the postcolonial city. French situationist and Marxist theorist Guy Debord's seminal text, *La Société du spectacle* (1968), traces the development of capitalism in modern societies and the simultaneous spectacalizing of all social experiences that creates an illusory and inauthentic environment.[17] His theorization of the spectacle is perhaps comparable to Walter Benjamin's analysis of the same in that they both understand the spectacle as being a specific form of capitalist production. In relating the idea of the spectacle to the modern metropolis of Bombay-Mumbai, it might be useful to study the two European theorists in conjunction and draw upon those observations which could most effectively be extended to an Indian context, although their manifestations may be significantly different. While Benjamin's theorization of the spectacle focuses on concrete life (panoramas, arcades and tramways, the museums and squares of Paris) and is perhaps of greater relevance to my work, I would like to extrapolate a few thoughts from Debord's influential text as it is situated in a time-frame which is closer to my own.

Debord begins by observing that 'in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.' This spectacle effect is perhaps true of the postcolonial city in literature which is both shaped and perceived through visual metaphors and descriptions of material life in the written texts, although Rushdie's notion of Bombay being both an idea and a place is perhaps more accurate than Debord's rather extreme conceptualization of lived experience as simply non-existent in modern capitalistic societies. Debord's spectacle 'presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable and inaccessible', a theory which makes use of the visual phenomenon of shock and awe to create a sense of the 'spectacular'. In the opening chapter of Suketu Mehta's memoir *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*, the author describes the stunning

visual impact which Bombay-Mumbai has on its observers - 'If you look at Bombay from the air...you will find yourself acknowledging that it is a beautiful city. ...From the air you get a sense of its possibilities. On the ground it is different...on the one side villages, on the other side buildings.' He continues by observing that 'the visual shock of Bombay is the shock of this juxtaposition', namely the overwhelmingly visual and perhaps even unsightly manifestations of an unequal economic system (*MCB*, p.15). In this context, it would perhaps be inappropriate to describe this image of the city as 'enormously positive', although the spectacular city of Bombay is undoubtedly indisputable and inaccessible to many of its inhabitants, especially its itinerant population. Mehta recognizes that it is a city 'hostile to outsiders or nostalgia-struck returnees' like himself, whose desires to integrate themselves in the social fabric of the city are continuously thwarted by the actual physical pressures of overpopulation, under-employment, lack of public resources to cope with these problems, and other similar factors which sustain its economically imbalanced structure (p. 25).

5.4 Re-visiting Bombay: the politics of flanerie in *Maximum City*

As the flaneur-narrator of his text, Mehta is very closely aligned with Benjamin's Parisian archetype, the wealthy and intellectual man of leisure, whose keen perspicacity while observing the material city and its dynamic effects on the psychological make-up of its inhabitants has significantly shaped theories of urbanism in twentieth century Europe. Benjamin was born in Berlin and spent considerable time in Paris, Naples and Moscow, the experiences of which he translated into an urban symbology that has since been studied extensively by scholars of urbanism across the world. Mehta too admits to being a 'city boy' having travelled and lived in Calcutta, Bombay, New York, Paris and London, and studied in various college towns across the United States. While Benjamin studied nearly all the urban spaces he inhabited with deliberate intent, Mehta's investigations in Bombay-Mumbai are prompted by a desire to return to and reclaim the city of his childhood, which had persistently manifested itself in various ways during his stay abroad. Finally, Benjamin was convinced that one could be at home in cities as a stranger; although in Mehta's case the city of Bombay-Mumbai is not entirely strange to him, it merely presents itself as an estranging landscape after his return from New York.

To rediscover the city of his childhood, Mehta narrates himself out of the initial story of his family's return and re-initiation into the upper echelons of Bombay society and explores a nether-world of poverty, prostitution and political intrigues as both observer and participant.[18] His project of salvaging his lost city from the debris of power-play and corruption involves the activities that Benjamin identified as crucial to the project of urban physiognomy – investigation (as part-detective), excavation (as part-archaeologist) and assembling (as part-collector) (MM, p. 6). As a modern-day flaneur, Mehta employs a critical gaze which involves an uncovering of the material city wherein social life takes form. It is a gaze that necessitates the ruination of the exterior as the city is disrobed of its architectural ornamentation to reveal the human activities which create and sustain it. Unlike Benjamin's poeticized 'botanizing' in the elegant Parisian arcades, Mehta's method recognizes that the Bombay-Mumbai he seeks to excavate lies beneath the 'wreck of its current condition – one of urban catastrophe' (MCB, p. 1). The coexistence of multiple economies within the modern city and the presence of a dominant street culture create porosity between the public and private spaces of the city. In his investigative capacity as a flaneur, Mehta embodies this comingling of urban spaces as 'the city splits into its dialectical poles', becoming both 'a landscape that opens to him and a parlour that encloses him'.[19] The city is a threshold space which reconciles the childhood of his past with his present inquisitions as an adult; memories and the language of materiality work as powerful forces in bringing the subject (Mehta) and the object (Bombay-Mumbai) worlds together.

In a critical discussion about the flaneur, Heather Crickenberger writes that 'as a literary device, one may understand him as a narrator who is fluent in the hieroglyphic vocabulary of visual culture.'[20] This attention to visuality emerges in Mehta's descriptions of the city and its inhabitants which are laden with visual metaphors; for instance, while speaking of the gunman Satish he notes, 'Satish is an intelligent man, and he has a way of *focusing* on you completely when he speaks; he meets your *eye* and puts forward his point of *view*... [italics mine]' (MCB, p. 229). His writing is also charged with a voyeuristic tension; while on the one hand he is unable to tear his eyes away from the most gruesome of city sights - the slaughter of bullocks during the religious festival of Id - his own concerns about intrusive neighbours and his family's lack of privacy are reflective of this inner conflict.

Crickenberger also notes that 'the *flâneur* has no specific relationship with any individual, yet he establishes a temporary, yet deeply empathetic and intimate relationship with all that he sees--an intimacy bordering on the conjugal--writing a bit of himself into the margins of the text in which he is immersed, a text devised by selective disjunction' ('The Flanuer'). Mehta's interactions with Sunil the *tapori*, Ajay Lal the conscientious policeman, Satish the hitman, Vinod the film director, Mona Lisa the bar dancer, Babbanji the metaphysical poet, and even Bal Thackeray, leader of the Hindu fundamentalist ruling party in the Bombay-Mumbai, many of whom dwell on the extremes of spectacle, are briefly intimate, although unlike Benjamin's flaneur, his relationship with them is not merely observational but dialogic. He is in some ways a stranger in the city but doesn't remain aloof from the crowd, choosing instead to become a part of it with purposeful intent, although only temporarily. His narrative oscillates between the omniscient and the first-person, ultimately moving beyond the exteriority of the material city to the interiority of its inhabitants, discovering thereby in a strange twist of Benjaminia that we are 'individually multiple, severally alone' (*MCB*, p. 580).

5.5 Optical approaches: the city and its cinema

Benjamin identified the camera and subsequently film as an appropriate medium to visualize the modern metropolitan environment, as he believed that 'only film commands optical approaches to the essence of the city' (*OWS*, p. 298). The scopic function of the writer is described by Leon Edel in his essay 'Novel and Camera', where he notes that 'novelists have sought almost from the first to become a camera'.[21] It may be argued that the rapid changeability which characterizes the urban environment makes it imperative to adopt a writing style that is able to capture the mutable landscape of the modern city. Narrative techniques such as the stream of consciousness method, which seamlessly connected the interior subject world with the visually charged exterior environment, were frequently employed by stalwarts of the Western literary tradition such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. The development of a visual aesthetic through the incorporation of popular filmic codes and structures is similarly observed in the writing of *Maximum City*, as Mehta's formative experiences in the cities of New York and Bombay-Mumbai are seen as being significantly influenced by local cultures of visuality.

For Mehta, the project of reclaiming the city of his childhood begins in Jackson Heights, a borough of New York City where he spends his formative boyhood years re-approximating Bombay by vicariously constructing a pan-Indian narrative for himself. In his study of the sociology of cinema, Rajinder Kumar Dudra observes that 'the resonances of the local, or better, the continuing salience of the spatiality of the "neighbourhood" in Jackson Heights marks it as a space that has been configured by the patterns of migration, rather than one formed through the circuits of tourism (as in Times Square)'.[22] As an inhabitant of a locality imbued with cultural markers that recreate the Asian experience abroad, Mehta begins his journey of reclaiming his lost city in the diegetic space of the Eagle Theatre. A popular venue for Bollywood film screenings, the theatre becomes a site of affective experience for the displaced migrant population of Jackson Heights, and brings back the familiar sights and sounds that are unique to the Bombay which Mehta remembers as his own.

For the author the watching of Hindi movies is closely associated with South Asian identity, both local and diasporic, and the films provide a vast visual landscape which helps sustain a 'simulated Indiaworld' abroad, or more recently, a generic image of the nation's commercial and cinematic capital, Bombay-Mumbai.[23] The fluid ideological conceptions of Indian nationalism in a globalized world have been redefined in contemporary Bombay cinema, which offers alternative discourses to the predominant idea of nationalism as a quintessential, localized phenomenon. Sarmishta Gooptu observes that the worldview of contemporary urban youth is instrumental in initiating this change, which she describes as the post-national in Hindi cinema.[24] Moreover, the conceptual model of the nation-state which had captured public imagination through its cinematic depictions till the early 80s has gradually been replaced by the material city and the immediacy of its physical environment. The city functions as the operative space within which national identities are negotiated and in several instances are either motivated or supplanted by urban affiliations. Mehta himself is a product of these changing times as he describes his conflicted college years in New York, during which he vicariously lived a cross-cultural existence by appropriating his beloved Bombay through its movies and film songs.

In *Maximum City*, Mehta's ocularcentric writing reaches its narrative climax towards the end of the book when he flamboyantly describes the psychology that locates Hindi cinema centrally within Bombay-Mumbai. Fakhrul Alam observes that 'no book on Bombay would be complete without a longish chapter on Bollywood', and Mehta's cinematic extravaganza in 'Distilleries of Pleasure' is a profound insight into the phenomenon which he describes as 'an intimate passion' for the average Indian (*MCB*, p. 464).[25] Indian cinema is a collective dream of the masses, fuelled and directed by the countless production units which contribute to the cultural aggressiveness that marks Bollywood's entry into the global arena in the twenty first century. And Bombay-Mumbai is the epicentre of these dreams, outweighing even Los Angeles in its mythic stature as a filming locale. Mehta nuances this trumping of Los Angeles by Bombay-Mumbai by contrasting the vastly disproportionate filming budgets in Hollywood and its Indian counterpart, as the latter has to rely on urban cityscapes with their 'existing streets, beaches, (and) tall buildings' instead of recreating them on studio sets. The city plays a pivotal role in Bollywood cinema's postcolonial revenge on the Western world, as it determinedly maintains and extends its reputation as the world's biggest movie industry in terms of production and audience.

Within the country itself, it is no surprise that Marathi-speaking Bombay-Mumbai monopolizes the Hindi film industry, as language is preceded by the mass appeal that both the material city and its cinema hold for the average Indian citizen. The city's sacred topography is cinematically mapped onto the minds of the billions of avid film-watchers from all parts of the country, and as Mehta observes, 'the wide sweep of Marine Drive, the beach at Juhu, the gateway to the West that is Andheri airport – all these are instantly recognizable in Kanpur and Kerala' (*MCB*, p. 377). Mehta's own engagement with the Bombay film industry is both observational and participatory and as the screenplay writer of a major commercial blockbuster he is willingly drawn into the seductive dream-world of Bollywood cinema. *Maximum City* is undoubtedly a text that bears profound filmic influences and Abraham Verghese writes of Mehta's book, that 'he has captured the city of Bombay on the page, and done it in Technicolor', suggesting at once the hyper-reality which characterizes both his text and his experiences in Bombay.[26]

5.6 Pleasure, politics and the underworld

In his chapter 'Distilleries of Pleasure' Mehta launches into a painstaking account of variously budgeted film productions in the city and studies with deliberate intent the ideologies that determine both their conception and reception. The intrinsically local resonances that mark the production of even the biggest, globally recognized blockbusters form an essential part of Mehta's narrative and his identification of Bombay-Mumbai as an increasingly 'glocalized' space is born out of an exploration of its cinema. Speaking of the more generic films that have emerged out of Bollywood since the 1950s, Mehta observes that essential ingredients of the filmic formula are motherhood, patriotism and true love. These are amongst the most common and popularly adored themes despite the evident ruptures in urban society that have desecrated the very concepts. As a cultural archive of Indian modernity, contemporary Bollywood cinema resists totalizing narratives and provides fractional images of modern life. Ranjani Mazumdar argues that 'while the overarching categories of nationalism, the state, the mode of production, ideology and secularism get retailed as typical formations of "Indian modernity", the fluidity and fragmentary character of urban life is lost in this process', only to be enriched in the archive of cinema.[27]

The post-Independence euphoria that was cinematically inspired by the heroic and redemptive figure of the mother, symbolizing Mother India, received its death-blow in the period following the Emergency in India. The political tyranny which was unleashed by Indira Gandhi's government during this period soon led to widespread disenchantment amongst the public, both towards her personally, and also towards the idea of the unified nation state which began crumbling under the twin pressures of dictatorship and dissent. The figure of the 'Angry Young Man', which emerged in films of the 1970s, was largely enacted by the legendary Amitabh Bachchan, a Bombay-based film star who provided a mobilizing voice for the masses on-screen and expressed their indignation at the fragility of state structures. During this conflicted period in Indian history, public affiliations were reconfigured towards the city which increasingly became a focal cinematic space and granted people both the coherence and the anonymity which they desired in the face of political upheaval.

The city at the time was also a delimited physical terrain, which brought into proximity individual and collective subjectivities by the means of public services such as the local railways, thus creating a sense of community and shared space in a fractured environment. In his study of Partition and Emergency literature, Peter Morey describes the political significance of the Indian railways during times of national crisis, as he outlines its symbolic function as 'a vehicle for the theme of connection/disconnection – between country and city, self and others, past and present'.[28] As the most common means of transport within the city today, the railways provide a daily commuter service to thousands of Bombayites who are linked together for extended periods by their shared time-space. Georg Simmel observes in his study of European public transport that trains draw people into an ocularcentric discourse, by placing unknown people in visual proximity for indeterminate periods of time without establishing any real communication between them. The unspoken bond that is established through a purely visual communion between socially segregated people and communities is similarly observed by Mehta in a poignant passage in his memoir:

> If you are late for work in the morning in Bombay, and you reach the station just as the train is leaving the platform, you can run up to the packed compartments and you will find many hands stretching out to grab you on board, unfolding outwards from the train like petals. As you run alongside the train, you will be picked up and some tiny space will be made for your feet on the edge of the compartment… and at the moment of contact, they do not know if the hand that is reaching for theirs belongs to a Hindu or Muslim or Christian or Brahmin or untouchable, or whether you were born in this city or arrived only this morning, or whether you live in Malabar Hill or Jogeshwari, whether you're from Bombay or Mumbai or New York. All they know is that you're trying to get to work in the city of gold, and that's enough (*MCB*, p. 534).

In Bombay-Mumbai, the intensely visual and often uncomfortably physical phenomenon of commuting by trains or the Bombay 'locals', as they are commonly referred to, is frequently portrayed in filmic and literary texts, although the crowds, sweat, grime, delays and accidents which characterize these journey receive much

prominence, while little attention is paid to the more subjective process of a 'collective awakening of the city' every morning and the unconscious demarcation of its geographical boundaries by commuters during their travel. Jim Masselos's brilliant essay on the topic elaborates further by observing that 'the very need to move within and through the city imposes an awareness of its dimensions and of where people are located,' thereby creating stronger ties of place-identity between the city and its inhabitants.[29]

Since the 1980s, with the escalating threat of fundamentalist right-wing Hindu forces in Bombay-Mumbai the city in cinema has become a space of transition, where new urban codes of consumption, violence and identity politics are asserted. The devastating sectarian riots in 1992-93 and the local nomenclatural politics which resulted in the creation of Mumbai in 1995 became thematic areas of dispute in Bollywood cinema, with films attempting to represent the experiences of a wide spectrum of the city's population who were responsible for or affected by these events. Contemporary filmic texts began to create pockets of visibility for the city's various sub-cultures by bringing parallel economies and criminality to the fore as alternative sites of resistance to an essentializing narrative of modernity. The emergence of a distinct and representative genre of crime film is studied by Ravi Vasudevan in his essay 'Disreputable and Illegal Publics: Cinematic Allegories in Times of Crisis', in which he describes the 'political and formal resonances' which emerged in cinema's 'recurrent engagement with the subject of crime'. Vasudevan further argues that 'criminality provided particular access to the city as experience and afforded experimentation with film style...the genre gives the spectator access to the sensorium of the city in novel ways'.[30]

On a similar note, Ranjani Mazumdar points out the dystopian nature of urban life which manifests itself through the changing role of the hero in Bollywood films by 'reworking a certain vision of modernity where the state is the sole repository of legal action, and the hero takes on the role of smugglers (Deewar), the underworld (Parinda) and the psychotic killer (Baazigar)' (UA, p. 62). M. Madhava Prasad also offers an interesting reading of the changing city ethic as demonstrated in Bollywood films, whereby the reformist possibilities in the cinema of the 50s have been replaced in recent years by an antagonistic social response to legal authorities like the police,

the politician and the developer, who are seen to be working together to eradicate slums and promote large, commercial constructions. He goes on to observe that 'by contrast, the gangsters, whose personal lives are characterized by an earthy simplicity, a vulnerability to cheap fantasies, the charms of illiteracy and folk-wisdom, seem to be on the right side of justice, whose time is yet to come'.[31]

5.7 Fictions of marginality: *Bombay Ice*

The increasing visibility of urban sub-cultures in contemporary cinematic and literary narratives may also be noticed in Leslie Forbes's novel, *Bombay Ice* (1998), which draws attention to the gendered reworking of the flaneur in postcolonial texts. The flaneur, the ragpicker, the prostitute, the beggar, and other peripheral figures were Benjamin's advocates of 'alternative and subversive historical practices' within the space of the European city, and Forbes's account of Bombay-Mumbai's marginalia (foreigners, lepers and eunuchs) is similarly positioned within a visual discourse that determines the inclusion and rejection of urban types (*MM*, p.15). The story centres around Roz Benegal, a journalist of Scottish and Indian descent who embarks on an investigative project in Bombay-Mumbai to uncover the underlying corruption in the city's commercial film and art industries. While in Benjamin's urban discourse, flanerie is a dominantly male preserve with the only female public figure being the streetwalker or the prostitute, there have since been significant interventions from feminist scholars such as Elizabeth Wilson, Anne Friedberg, Giuliana Bruno and Anke Gleber, who have illustrated the different modes of experiencing the city employed by the *flaneuse*. By creating a visual nexus between flanerie and cinema, these critics compare the act of strolling with film viewing in their theoretical considerations of women in the city, thus allowing more mobility to the female gaze and asserting the independent presence of women in urban spaces.[32]

In the Indian context, as I argued in Chapter 4, the public identities of women are still largely encompassed within structures of morality and sexual convention, although these underwent certain changes during the periods of liberalization and globalization in India with the establishment of new codes of consumption and spectatorship, particularly in the city of Bombay-Mumbai. Bollywood cinema in its depiction of women has decisively influenced the gendering of public spaces in India, as in recent years female sexuality has been highly visibilized on-screen in an attempt

to create new sites of resistance and empowerment for women. In the novel, Roz's mixed heritage coupled with her professional identity accord her both social mobility and personal freedom within the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai, even as she occupies an inherently marginalized status in its social registers. As a gendered body in the city, she inhabits its unfamiliar spaces boldly and provocatively and frequently questions patriarchal authority by infiltrating areas of male exclusivity and dominance, such as police-stations, forensic laboratories and the antiques black-market. The flaneuse is neither a streetwalker nor a prostitute in Forbes's narrative, but a woman who exercises control over her sexuality; her occasional promiscuity is motivated by her desire to penetrate a foreign and predominantly masculine culture. She defies the strictures of invisibility that have characterized the public presence of women and makes her actions conspicuous by adopting a 'blasé' attitude that is typical of the Benjaminian flaneur.

One observes from my readings in earlier chapters and with regard to Indian-English writing in general, that Roz Benegal is an anomaly in relation to the archetypal urban protagonist who most often is male. Suketu Mehta as writer-protagonist of *Maximum City*, Lindsay the escaped convict in Gregory Roberts' novel *Shantaram*, the inadvertent men in Anita Desai's fiction, and Salman Rushdie's fantastical male characters, which include Saladin Chamcha, Gibreel Farishta, Saleem Sinai and Moraes Zogoiby, are a few of the more recognized figures of literary modernity in contemporary Bombay-Mumbai. Undeniably there are significant female characters present in each of these texts, although their presence in the public arena is not without controversy. Mehta's Mona Lisa (the captivating Gujarati bar-dancer), Roberts' Karla (a passionate German emigrant embroiled in urban politics), Baumgartner's Lotte (a former entertainer and the mistress of an Indian businessman), and the figures of Zeeny Vakil, Aurora Zogoiby and Uma Sarasvati (powerful and contentious women engaged in journalism, art and politics) allow the reader glimpses of feminine urban perspectives although in many instances they are implicated in acts of sexual and social transgression. The significant number of foreigners amongst these women also suggests that their peripheral role in the Indian city allows them certain infringements within social spaces.

While Roz's cross-cultural identity enables her to move freely within the city by placing her outside the moral discourse which circumscribes Indian women, she is simultaneously alienated by her 'outsider' status and tries to align her own narrative with that of others who are similarly marginalized. Her interaction with Sami the hijra who is implicated at the centre of a corruption scandal in Bombay-Mumbai is motivated by her empathetic response to their mutual unbelonging in urban society. She observes:

> Like so many voyagers, Sami and I were trespassers, violators of boundaries. Through our compromising liaisons with aliens and barbarians (anyone not speaking the right language or sleeping with the right colour people, in other words) we are the means by which chaos is introduced to society's stable centre.[33]

Hijras (closely associated with eunuchs or hermaphrodites) are a transgendered community in India commonly associated with the sexualizing of public spaces, as they participate in collective rituals which are both performative and exhibitionistic in nature. While the enactment of these rituals helps sustain their social identities, they are often considered to be threatening and invasive to the 'normal' social order. The ambiguity which surrounds the sexual identities of hijras and their occasional involvement in prostitution circles bring further censure and stigmatization to these communities. Sami's complicity with the sexual intrigues of the film world in Bombay-Mumbai and her desperate quest for social legitimacy make her a systemic target of exploitation and violence in the novel. The motif of cross-dressing is a binding thread between Sami and Roz's narratives, as the latter is named after the Shakespearean character, Rosalind, from the play *As You Like It* which interrogates the complex ties between gender, sartorial preferences and public identities. Like Sami, Roz is also targeted as a transgressive and libidinous figure during her investigations in the city as her relationships with the cultural elite in Bombay society are tainted by sexual compromise.

Her affair with the film director Caleb Mistry is particularly interesting, as she draws an associative relationship between his mixed parentage and her own. Born to an Englishman who worked as a technical engineer in the land reclamation projects in Bombay, and to an Indian Marathi mother who was a sex worker in the city's

infamous 'Falkland Road cages', Caleb is described as being a man whose 'accent and language kept slipping from one continent to another' (*BI*, p. 51). His conflicted identification with his mother's local roots and his interest in European films and theatre make Caleb a compelling cross-cultural figure in the narrative. As 'lost children' of the Empire, both Roz and Caleb are born of interracial couplings and share similar histories of abandonment, illegitimacy, social abjection, and psychological anxiety about their cultural roots and affiliations.[34] While Roz perpetuates her Scottish/British heritage by living in London and working for the British Broadcasting Services (BBC), her vast knowledge of specific Indian cultures and philosophies helps her maintain a fragile and vulnerable connection with her father's legitimate family. Caleb on the other hand is emotionally disassociated from his English heritage, although his education in India is mentored by the Anglophile Prosper Sharma and benefits from a wide exposure to eclectic cultural forms. Ironically, even as he embraces Western cinematic traditions in his own film-making, which is characterized by its cosmopolitanism and receptiveness to foreign pedagogies, he is committed to the dangerously provincial cause of supporting the fundamentalist Hindu Maharashtrian community in Bombay-Mumbai to which his native mother belonged.

One observes similarly through the narratives of Prosper Sharma, Robert Acres, Anthony Unmann, Ashok Tagore, Vikram Raven, Basil Chopra and Miranda Sharma, that *Bombay-Ice* is populated with characters who are implicated within a discursive cross-cultural field either by birth or by dint of to their professional interests. In instances of racial miscegenation in the novel, many of the characters, despite their upper-class moorings and privileged educational backgrounds, are consigned to the margins of an increasingly xenophobic Bombay-society. The 'edge monsters', as Forbes describes them, are constituted by 'centaurs, harpies, mermaids, hybrids of promiscuous unions between different species', and are likened to more conspicuously othered communities such as hijras (eunuchs) and lepers in the novel (*BI*, p. 206). The contamination of the traditional form of the family, the emergence of structures of illegitimacy and dysfunctionality, and the fragmented relations between estranged family members as seen in the case of several mixed-race characters, compromise their social standing in Indian society and place them on the 'outside' within structures of marginality. The colonial encounter is also revisited by

Forbes in her provocative employment of the trope of incest while describing the alliance between Britain and India, which is sustained by this new multiracial generation of cultural elites in Bombay-Mumbai. She writes, that 'if it is true we wind up nursing our parents through a second childhood', thus suggesting the sordid relationships of exploitation and nurture that exist between the various hybrid characters in the novel and which create intimate ties between different marginal groups – particularly Sami's ambiguous parentage and her sexual liaisons with both her 'father-figures', Caleb and Prosper (*BI*, p. 176).

5.8 Reclaiming geographies: the postcolonial flaneuse

The multiple intersections between the cultures of Europe and India are also mapped onto the physical terrain of the city as Bombay-Mumbai's evolutionary history is tied into a cartographic account of the city. The landmass which constitutes the modern city is described as a 'detritus of old empires', having previously been under both Portuguese and British rule (*BI*, p. 14). Reclaimed from the sea by a series of controversial dredging projects under imperial command, Bombay-Mumbai has always shared a tenuous relationship with the water bodies that surround it, and Forbes notes that 'old maps of Bombay are unreliable, charts of a city which does not exist anymore – or never did. Cartographers here have always disagreed on where land stopped and liquid began' (*BI*, p. 2). The shifting political and administrative structures – colonial, postcolonial, and provincial - that have governed the city's physical development over the centuries have also contributed to its cartographic amorphousness and Forbes observes that:

> Maps are pieces of theatre, poetic abstractions designed to conceal more than they reveal, especially in Bombay, where, like the itinerant traders and opportunists who settled it, the substance of the city is essentially nomadic; it's always moving on (*BI*, p. 206).

The phantasmagoric nature of the modern city inscribes it within cinematic registers as Bombay-Mumbai is alternately described as 'Sonapur' (gilded city) or 'Mayapuri' (city of illusions) and constantly resists being mapped or represented accurately. The contiguity between the elusive city and its cinema is also outlined by Forbes, who points out that 'the map of Bombay is represented in its movies, and

just as the best map is not the one that perfectly represents reality, so the best expression of this city cannot be achieved by celluloid realism' (*BI*, p. 2). The transience of the city is emblematic of its modernity and Bombay-Mumbai is likened to a film-set, a facade, which may be 'struck and moved on, just as scenery flats are at the end of a shoot' (*BI*, p. 14). Its architectural miscellany which reflects the intermarriage between Western and Indian cultural forms during the colonial era also contributes towards shaping the urban landscape, which although seemingly insubstantial is a complex palimpsest that demands to be uncovered.

As a contemporary female flaneuse in the city Roz undertakes the activities of investigation, excavation and assembling which have previously been outlined as being imperative to the project of flanerie and is greatly enabled by her professional expertise as a journalist with the BBC. Like Mehta in *Maximum City*, Roz seeks to revisit the India of her childhood which manifests itself through fragmented and surreal recollections during her adolescent life in Scotland. She writes:

> As a child I would dream of India and wake up in Edinburgh with the cinnamon taste of cassia leaves still in my mouth, an image of light impressed on my retina in reverse, as the sun is after you look away. That's how I remember Chowpatty: a bright light, the contrast with Britain so strong that twenty years later it is still vivid (*BI*, p. 20).

Upon her return to the city of Bombay-Mumbai, Roz's part-Indian identity is formatively shaped by her memories of the beach at Chowpatty which presents itself as the main crime scene in the novel. Memory as an important aspect of human subjectivity crystallizes into a specific site or locale where the past is recalled, and in Roz's case, re-visiting Chowpatty metonymically retrieves her impressions of the city itself.[35] Drawing upon Benjamin's theorization of the subject (memory) and the object (city) worlds, it may be inferred that there is in fact a great similarity between memory and the city, as both can be mapped and recovered, and also significantly influence the development of an individual in the stages of childhood and adulthood. During his musings in 'Berlin Chronicle', Benjamin recalls an illuminating moment in Paris when he translated his life into a spatial diagram and in doing so created a physical memory-map of his experiences. Both the exterior city and internal memory are comparable for Benjamin as they can be represented in similar ways and function

as autobiographical records of one's identity. Structurally they are dense and convoluted in nature and resemble a labyrinth with multiple 'primal entrances' which possibly lead to an 'enigmatic centre'.[36] Roz's experiences in the city of Bombay-Mumbai are similarly structured by the homologous relationship between the subject and object worlds, as her fragile childhood memories are interwoven into the complex urban fabric which she seeks to excavate through her role as the postcolonial flaneuse.

The analogy of the city-as-palimpsest which informs my study of *Maximum City* recurs here, as the entire narrative is a literary palimpsest layering Shakespearean drama and Bollywood melodrama against the filmic backdrop of Bombay city. Benjamin's vision of the modern city as a theatre of activity, in which architecture and action interpenetrate, is recreated in Forbes's novel which centres upon the dramatic staging of a Shakespearan production in a film studio in Bombay-Mumbai. The names of the main protagonists of the novel are heavily allusive – Rosalind and her sister Miranda (female protagonists from Shakespearean plays), Prosper Sharma (Prospero) and Caleb Mistry (Caliban), bear resemblance not only in name but also in character to their Shakespearean counterparts and are 'shipwrecked' on the island-city. The author's familiarity with the melodramatic structures that are characteristic of Bombay cinema, and which she extends to her Shakespearean narrative, makes *Bombay Ice* an intriguing text which mediates between different visual cultures of spectacle and excess. The etymological associations of melodrama with the Greek word *melos* or the songs that accompanied theatrical performances in ancient drama, are suggested by the author, to draw comparisons with Bollywood cinema which makes use of histrionic performances interspersed with musical sequences (*BI*, p. 79). The probable influences of classical drama upon modern movie making in India is similarly recalled by Salman Rushdie, in his description of Bombay cinema as an 'Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super-Sexy-High-Masala-Art', which illustrates its eclectic and capacious nature.[37]

The multilayered city of Bombay-Mumbai is also drawn into a network of criminality as Forbes's novel is written in the form of a murder mystery that seeks to be discovered and decoded. As in *The Moor's Last Sigh* which I study in the final sections of this chapter, here the trope of the palimpsest is crucial to the narrative in

its metaphoric layering and uncovering of duplicity and corruption in the city's commercial film and art industries. In her role as urban sleuth Roz employs her journalistic skills to infiltrate an alien culture and expose the disingenuous patriarchal structures that sustain it. While her vantage point in the city as a marginalized foreigner allows her to navigate its public spaces with greater ease and mobility, she is noticeably visible amongst indigenous crowds and is denied the anonymity that the Benjaminian flaneur-turned-detective sought during his urban excursions. As a London-based writer of Canadian origin with cross-cultural interests, Forbes creates a protagonist who closely reflects her own position – that of an outsider and an inquisitor in a distant but not entirely unfamiliar culture. *Bombay Ice* as a novel is positioned similarly on the margins of a genre, toying with the conventions of Indian writing in English but separated by an element of exoticized filmic drama which characterizes the entire narrative.

5.9 Mimicry, melodrama and the city of kitsch

"'Let me tell you a movie'", says Caleb Mistry, using his hands as a viewfinder to frame an imaginary narrative sequence, as his words and gestures conjoin the visual and literary elements of story-telling in an attempt to cinematize Maya Sharma's death. "'You have to picture it, an opening scene something like Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*, with a series of symbolic following shots…'"(*BI*, p. 335). Basil Chopra's recollection of the incident – "'I remember it cinematically – the shots, not exact dialogue'" – further emphasizes the film-like, ephemeral quality of her death and suggests a complete retrospective detachment on the part of the observer, much like the reaction of a Bollywood audience a few months after viewing a film (*BI*, p. 132). As reader-viewers we find ourselves negotiating between the melodramatic recreation of Maya's death through Prosper's film (originally Mistry's script), and an investigation of the actual incident through Rosalind's adventures in the novel. Mistry's mention of the classic Hollywood thriller effectively draws the reader's attention to the possibility of a premeditated plot resulting in Maya's death. It also functions as a crucial point of departure that distinguishes Bombay cinema from its Western counterpart - the melodramatic interventions which are the key features of Bollywood film distort the definitive chronology of events in a classic Hollywood

thriller, heightening the sense of anticipation even as they provide the audience with light entertainment.

This question of melodrama in Bombay cinema brings us to the provocative debate which shadows many a study of Bollywood with regard to the originality of filmic narratives and the creative adaptation of existing film plots by Indian directors. Forbes's novel acknowledges this derivative trend as being a necessary aspect of modern film-making, observing, however, that 'even Hindi copies of Hollywood are remade to fit an Indian frame – that archetypal concern for the value of an extended family' (*BI*, p. 131). This narrative framework is extended to the plot of the novel as well, as startling developments in the novel reveal familial associations between apparently unconnected figures, thereby disrupting the relations between characters and raising questions of legitimacy. It is in these pockets of corruption which reveal the cheap melodrama of the characters' lives, that both the reader and the film-viewer find their entertainment. A Benjaminian critique of Forbes's portrayal and use of Bollywood in her novel would deploy his argument that art becomes kitsch through its replication and mass production as reflected in the often tasteless, consumer-oriented entertainment that the film industry in Bombay churns out. Forbes's Bollywood realizes Benjamin's worst nightmare; the revolutionary potential of the mechanical reproduction of art and his belief that it would disseminate the 'auratic' more widely, is transformed into despair by the degeneration of art into its 'irreconcilable opposite', kitsch.[38] The desecration of the aura manifests itself in Forbes's novel as it combines 'fantasy and stereotype with cheerful cynicism', converting Benjamin's dream into a frightful nightmare even as it provides its reader-consumers with a very entertaining narrative.[39]

The bastardized version of Hitchcock's movie is Rosalind's preferred narrative variant, characterized by its exaggerated dramatic performances and ability to convey the sordid actuality of Maya's death. The cultural reasoning which determines her choice of filmic narrative is one particular to viewers of Bombay cinema, in which subtle or nuanced on-screen sequences are rejected in favour of visual excesses that only emphasize the visceral nature of the city and its cinema. It has been argued by celebrated film critic Vijay Mishra that Bombay cinema is 'both film and a particular logic of culture', thus implying that the conventions of film production, distribution

and consumption are unique and quite distinct from those in Hollywood.[40] To explore this differentiation further and contextualize Forbes's narrative strategy as drawing heavily from the former, while trying to sustain the Western influences alongside, one needs to analyze the local cinematic traditions which inform the relationship between films and their audiences. Within the film industry in Bombay-Mumbai, the contentious use of the 'formula' in the creative process of cinematography is one such Indian tradition which has largely determined this cultural logic over the years.[41] The repetitive elements of Bollywood productions which are governed by the principles of melodrama create an iterative cinematic structure instead of a linear narrative as in the case Hollywood film, and this is referred to as the 'formula'. Audience receptivity plays an integral role in determining the formula at any given historical point in film-making, and it is a dynamic process that works through subtle reconfigurations of an accepted structure based on changing cultural codes.

Over the past few decades of Bollywood cinema, some of the frequently employed and most successful elements of the formula, especially in the case of the immensely popular category of action-films, have included multiple musical performances, the use of thunder and lightning effects to create a dark, foreboding setting, an antagonistic pairing of the hero and the villain, the distressed figure of the heroine trapped by social, moral, and economic constraints, the presence of the quintessential, redemptive mother-figure as a symbolic guardian of the rural, estranged siblings and issues of legitimacy, migrations to the city, attempted rape of the heroine, spectacular action sequences in which the hero emerges triumphant, the subsequent reunion with his beloved and a much clichéd happy ending to the saga. This range of cinematic devices has been greatly supplemented by the globalization of Indian cinema, most noticeably through a shift in the spatial dynamics of Bollywood films from the village to the city and more recently to foreign locales. While my Bollywood film-watching experiences have led me to believe that modern film-makers use predetermined cinematic conventions in remarkably complex and nuanced ways, my discussion of a conventional Bollywood formula is motivated by the desire to relate it to Forbes's narrative technique in her novel *Bombay Ice*.

As a psychological thriller based in the chaotic city of Bombay-Mumbai, the novel dramatizes the conventions of Hollywood film noir by 'appropriating the formulas and images of violent popular entertainment', more commonly associated with the action-film in Bollywood.[42] The figurative use of the tempest, signifying both an intermingling of cinematic traditions and the interaction between estranged siblings, is a central motif that is played out in the novel through repeated references to the monsoons in India, the location of action sequences against wind-swept, stormy backgrounds, and the denouement of the novel amidst a technologically simulated cyclone using giant fans and wind machines. Prosper Sharma's adaptation of the Shakespearan classic *The Tempest* presents us with an overarching cinematic structure within which other elements of the narrative unfold. There are several sub-plots which conform to the formulaic employment of Bollywood conventions, namely the tempestuous relation between Prosper's second wife Miranda, and her half-sister Rosalind, the taint of illegitimacy which shadows both Rosalind and the eunuch Sami, Prosper Sharma, the villainous film-director who shares a conflicted relationship with most of the other characters, Caleb Mistry, an unheroic and embittered figure whose turbulent sexual encounters with Rosalind replace the traditional musical sequences in Bollywood films, and an attempted rape scene in which Rosalind is assaulted by Acres and his hired goons and subsequently rescued by Ashok, the most plausible hero-figure in the story, who does not however have any romantic inclinations towards her.

As the central protagonist of a novel which relies heavily on the visual impact of its narrative, Rosalind is gifted with a cinematic sensibility which she exteriorizes, especially in the rather graphic and objective accounts of her encounters with Caleb. The cinematic precision which underlines her descriptions of their intense relationship reinforces the notion of the author as camera, or in this instance as voyeur and director.

> The camera executes mainly pan shots, picking out with almost studied unconcern moments of extreme but controlled pain and pleasure. The rhythm is elaborated further in a study of textures: hardness alternating with a lingering softness, penetration with reception, a rhythmic tension in a harsh grey light that gives a sense of foreboding (*BI*, p. 161).

The visual aesthetics of this particular scene do however seem to be more aligned to Caleb's cinematic vision, and the controlled panning of the camera is suggestive of a professional detachment which informs his actions while within the film-studio. Rosalind's preferred version of the scene lacks the clarity and the focus which marks Caleb's direction, but is nevertheless evocative of a softer cinematic sensibility which is more implicative than denotative.

> I want to rewrite the next hour. Shoot it over again, blur the explicit Western camera-work…I want Satyajit Ray's sensibility: a long slow shot of the couple silhouetted behind mosquito netting (*BI*, p. 161).

The subject of film-aesthetics is of great significance in Bombay cinema, as most of the commercial films are subjected to a strict censorship routine before being categorized as suitable for 'family' viewing. Sexually transgressive characters are portrayed with great sensitivity and often evoke a sympathetic response from the audience, who discover during the course of the film, the personal tribulations which forced the character to adopt a particular way of life. The relatively recent introduction of the 'cinematic kiss' was a momentous event in the world of Indian cinema and replaced the refined sexual aesthetics which informed the films of Raj Kapoor (Bollywood) and Satyajit Ray (Bengali cinema).[43] Previously, the rather suggestive shift of focus from the lovers to a more natural coupling of flowers or swans was a method employed by most directors, and in her own near-encounter with Ashok, Rosalind's cinematic sensibilities are revealed once again to favour this nuanced onscreen portrayal of love, rather than the intimate filming of a physical interaction (*BI*, pp. 95, 175). The cultural aggressiveness that marks a shift in the sexual aesthetics deployed in contemporary Bollywood cinema, which is represented by Caleb's cinematic vision in this instance, arises out of an increasing need to visualize the grittiness of everyday life (desire, violence, sex, death), especially in an urban environment. The pressing claims of technological developments and modernization in cinema coupled with an understanding of the traditional conservatism which underlines audience expectation and reception of films in India are represented through the visual tension which shadows controversial scenes in present-day cinema.

The emergence of a new aesthetics of visuality in Bombay cinema and literature is well received by contemporary audiences, as change informs almost all aspects of daily life in the country's commercial capital. The transient nature of the modern city is reiterated by Forbes in her description of Bombay-Mumbai as 'a city of over-lunch success' and 'always on the move', much like its itinerant film industry where 'to add to the sensation of perpetual motion, actors in Bombay often worked on thirty projects at once, zapping from one studio to the next like Super Mario in a manic computer game' (*BI*, pp. 23, 62). The city's cultural economy is of a vast and capacious nature, and readily integrates the necessary change-element in its cinematic registers, which then manifests itself through an ocularcentric discourse that informs almost every aspect of the urban life. Preben Kaarsholm, in his essay 'Unreal City: Cinematic Representation, Globalization and the Ambiguities of Metropolitan Life', describes the urban landscape as being coded with 'cinematic signs to such an extent that it is hard to form a mental image of an Indian city without a bombardment of both sight and sound from movie posters, film advertisements, tannoys, radio and tapes of soundtrack music'.[44] The reader is bombarded by a similar multitude of visual markers in Forbes's Bombay – the cinema billboards, sensational film magazines, news clippings at the microfilm library, the radio in Thomas's taxi, and a glimpse into the actual production of films in city studios. Visuality is intrinsic to Bombay-Mumbai and its inhabitants, and cinema functions as an archive of the city, embodying the very definition of the urban. From the construction of postcolonial identities to the behavioural and stylistic codes which determine ways of experiencing the city, Bollywood, as demonstrated in Forbes's novel, functions as the popular cultural matrix within which these choices are embedded.

5.10 Palimpsistan: discovering 'the cities within' in *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Salman Rushdie's cautionary note in *Midnight's Children*, that 'nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary', is therefore not surprising, as like Mehta's and Forbes's, his novels have consistently validated the fact that cinema is inextricably tied into the literary registers of Bombay.[45] *The Lovers of Kashmir*, which chronicled Saleem Sinai's fateful ancestry in my reading of *Midnight's Children* in Chapter 1 and crucially brought to prominence Bombay's popularity as a literary landscape, is countered by an absent cinematic text which shadows my study of *The*

Moor's Last Sigh in this final section of the thesis. In the novel, Moraes Zogoiby's (also called the Moor) declaration, that 'nobody ever made a movie called Father India', draws attention to the dismissal of patriarchal structures and the revival of the maternal/mother-figure as a fecund and creative metonymy of the postcolonial nation by Rushdie. The inadequate visualization of the father-figure in major nationalistic films is commented upon by Moraes, who observes the character of Mogambo in 'Mr. India' to be the closest approximation of a 'National Father' (*TMLS*, p. 168). In Mr. India's struggle against the formidable and villainous Mogambo, Moraes sees a reflection of the discordant ties he shares with his own father - 'a lurid mirror-image of what was never, will never be a movie: the story of Abraham Zogoiby and myself' (*TMLS*, p. 169). The absent cinematic father is replaced by the omniscient artistic mother in the novel, as Rushdie subversively reconstructs the unifying 'Bharat Mata' of Indian nationalistic cinema within a fragmented discourse of female artistry in the city of Bombay-Mumbai.[46] By doing so, Moraes' conflicted relationship with his mother is brought to the fore, even as the polyphonic and pluralistic city of Bombay-Mumbai decentres the previously focal site of the nation-state, and explores fully this maternal bond through a tale of ancestry and art.

Vijay Mishra observes the 'competing claims of magic and realism' in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as contributing to the Bollywoodization of Indian-English literature (*VM*, p. 24). One observes in the novel that the disputation between the real and the fantastical arises out of Abraham and his wife Aurora's conflicting views about the nature of India's independence, and is rendered through the compelling trope of modern art which replaces the cinematic paradigm described by Mishra. While Abraham's postcolonial vision insists on a 'clear sighted naturalism' and is denied artistic expression by Rushdie, who focuses instead on the covert and materialistic schemes in which he is involved, Aurora's enchantment with 'elements of the fabulous' is reflected in her emblematic paintings which become the organizing theme in the novel (*TMLS*, p. 173). Catherine Cundy points out that 'the Moor sees the work Aurora produces in the decades after Independence as troubled by the tension between realism and fantasy. Her artistic coterie is said to contain such committed social realists such as Mulk Raj Anand and Saadat Hasan Manto, and yet she also experiences the lure of the fantastic'.[47] Positioned similarly in the liminal

space between the imagined and the real, the city of Bombay-Mumbai which inspires Aurora's artistic vision is both an idea and a place, as iterated by Rushdie himself, and his claim is mediated by the cultural trope of modern art employed in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The cinematic registers that prevailed in both Mehta and Forbes's narratives are replaced by the artist's canvas in Rushdie's novel, which recreates the urban landscape through a complex layering of colours and shades.

The overarching metaphor of the palimpsest which has significantly permeated my earlier readings of *Maximum City* and *Bombay Ice* operates on multiple levels in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Abraham Zogoiby's complicity with an underground land reclamation project, which reveals the social environment of Bombay-Mumbai as being constituted of multiple accretions of human capital, renders the subjective city as a palimpsest in the first instance. The polysemic notion of 'reclamation', which is closely tied to the recovery of personal identity within the complex, multilayered city of Bombay-Mumbai in Mehta's and Forbes's texts, manifests itself in a variety of ways in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. On the one hand, the city is reclaimed by Rushdie through his reliance on memory, as he is exiled from India during the period of writing the novel by the imposition of the fatwa, and constructs an urban narrative which is a 'cerebral reconstitution of "reality"' (*CC*, p. 110). The idea of reclamation is also related to acts of repossessing land from the sea and forms an important novelistic plot which implicates Abraham within a discourse of criminality that infuses the many layers of the city.

The island-city of Bombay-Mumbai owes its existence as a unified landmass to the multiple reclamation projects conducted during colonial rule and afterwards, which involved silting the ocean and layering the existent seabed with dredged-up soil. Despite the geographical reconfiguration of land which this has enabled while structuring the city as a physical palimpsest, many writers describe the process as creating an ecological imbalance and refer to the violence implicit in the act of restoration. Mehta observes in *Maximum City* that the sea continuously challenges the validity of the claim and asserts its elemental force by encroaching upon the landmass in the form of rain water and sewage, denuding the layers that constitute the city of Bombay-Mumbai. Similarly, the commercially exploitative land reclamation ventures directed by Abraham Zogoiby render a large section of the

city's peripatetic population invisible, as they are classified as 'phantoms' and move through the city like 'wraiths', unseen and unheard until they end up 'simply and terribly dying' on the 'bitch-city's all-too-real, uncaring streets' (*TMLS*, p. 212). By creating a camouflaged sub-text which explores the netherworld of Abraham's metropolitan empire, Rushdie draws attention to the 'deadly layering' of the urban landscape and positions visuality as being intrinsic to both the metropolis (Bombay-Mumbai) and the metaphor (palimpsest).

The allegorical function of literature in depicting the relationship between the city and the palimpsest is also crucial to my study, and Benjamin's theory of allegory articulated by Graeme Gilloch, is particularly useful to my analysis. He observes that 'allegory is a mode of representation in which each element of what is said or depicted stands for something else. In allegory, the apparent or surface meaning is a veneer which conceals the actual hidden sense. One narrative appears disguised as another; it is a palimpsest' (*MM*, p. 135). Rushdie employs an allegorical urban narrative in many of his novels, and *The Moor's Last Sigh* is an intriguing example of the complex structuring of both a city (Bombay-Mumbai) and a family (the Da Gama-Zogoibys). Minoli Salgado in her insightful essay on 'The Politics of the Palimpsest in *The Moor's Last Sigh*' describes the novel as employing 'a model of visual art that plays a central role in a narrative that focuses on painting and visual representation'.[48] She also observes that Rushdie uses the palimpsest as a 'discursive paradigm', extending it amongst other things to the city of Bombay-Mumbai which functions as the primary textual space and a panoramic landscape for artistic expression.

In one of her most polemical paintings, Aurora Zogoiby creates the romantic myth of a secular, hybrid nation by integrating two distinct geographical terrains within the space of her canvas; the Spanish Alhambra is situated within the scenery of Bombay-Mumbai and adorned with fabulist elements thereby creating 'Mooristan' or 'Palimpstine', an imaginary land where natural boundaries are permeable. Through the creation of this fantastical landscape the reader is reminded of the European cities which Benjamin visited, similarly characterized by a porosity which manifested itself through the interpenetration of physical structures and their natural surroundings. Benjamin recognized the role of the artist in poeticizing the fluid

configurations of space in the city and observed while speaking of Paris, that 'private thought and public acts were not so separate here as elsewhere, with walkers flowing in and out of reveries and revolutions. More than any other city, it has entered the paintings and novels of those under its sway, so that representation and reality reflect each other like a pair of facing mirrors…'.[48] Aurora's Mooristan on the other hand is not a mirror-image but a fantastical (re)vision of the city of Bombay-Mumbai and is perhaps only comparable in its palimpsestic structuring, which characterizes both spaces, real and imaginary.

The physical city is a much contested space in which competing narratives struggle to be heard, and Rushdie's descriptions of Bombay-Mumbai as both a conduit for the inflow of cultural experiences and as an overpopulated space, inform the reader of the possible threat of anonymity and isolation that stigmatizes a multicultural and striated social order. He notes that 'Bombay was central; all rivers flowed into its human sea. It was an ocean of stories; we were all its narrators and everybody talked at once' (*TMLS*, p. 350). The image of the cacophonic city prevails throughout the narrative as Rushdie observes that 'in Bombay, you live crushed in this crazy crowd, you are deafened by its blaring horns of plenty', thus implying a babel of city sounds and voices which effectively drown out individual attempts of expression (*TMLS*, p. 128). Here, he differs from Benjamin who described the metropolis 'with its kaleidoscope of lights and perspectives, its cacophony of sound and noise, its mass of diverse artifacts and distractions' as a site of 'perpetual stimulation' rather than a space of dissonance (*MM*, p. 103). Rushdie's descriptions of Bombay-Mumbai are articulated by his tormented inner self, which despairs at the notion of the polyphonic city of his childhood being transformed into a modern-day Discordia by fundamentalist politics and sectarian strife. The city is oppressed between an above-world of corporate putrescence and a chthonic world which is characterized by illegality and anonymity, thereby creating a complex palimpsestic structure that encompasses the city within its 'deadly layering' (*TMLS*, p. 184). The two narratives which endeavour to free themselves from these layered trappings are those of Aurora da Gama, whose artistic vision although inscribed within a similar palimpsest, is emancipatory, and her son Moraes Zogoiby, who finds redemption for his tortured and accelerated existence in retrospective narration, a process which uncovers the 'invisible realities' that underlie the surface-city.

Rushdie as a critical narrator also uses the palimpsest to articulate the tension between his sublime aesthetic vision for the city and the nation as a whole, and the prevailing socio-political concerns which affect his nostalgia-tinged account of a prelapsarian past. It is this creative engagement between Aurora's artistic vision and the Moor's/Rushdie's literary one, which uses the palimpsest as visual model and metaphor, and that inspires a narrative of the city by tracing its cultural, political and historical trajectory from a period of Nehruvian secularism up to present day communal tensions. It has been alternatively argued that the novel reconfigures India's historical past, not so much by focusing upon the religious binaries which inform the narratives of both fundamentalist groups and secular communities, but instead by historically recovering India's early modern Moorish-Portuguese-Jewish heritage through a fictional palimpsest, thereby challenging the conventional dichotomies which have been most commonly associated with India's political trajectory.[50] Whichever reading one chooses to dwell upon, there are several competing narratives that inform the palimpsestic project of recovery (of both the self and of Indian historiography) in Rushdie's novel, and I argue that art plays a significant role as a visual model through which particular histories find their expression. As a representative medium which contains elements of both reality and the imagination, visual art seems to reconcile the conflictual claims that have plagued writers like Joyce and Woolf in my previous discussions, each asserting the city to be either a material or an imaginative topos. Aurora's and Moraes's experiences of Bombay-Mumbai are represented through their artistic ventures in the form of painting and written discourse, elaborated in styles that mediate between the real and the fabulist, and which function as models of individual agency.

Aurora's artistic development bears testimony to the notion of art as an all-encompassing creative form in which the artist's own narrative struggles to be articulated amidst the 'hyper-abundance of imagery'. This is evinced in the period of her punishment during which her artistic imagination is unleashed in exilic retreat, much like Rushdie's, who wrote *The Moor's Last Sigh* in a state of banishment under the fatwa. The anguished portrayal of a child's grief and yearning for self-expression is creatively engaged with, in the form of a straining self amidst a panoramic landscape and depicts the tormented relationship between the estranged artist-persona and the 'endlessly metamorphic line of humanity' (*TMLS*, p. 60). The novel

considers the notion of artistic inspiration as arising out of a state of solitary confinement and Jonathan Greenberg's essay on *The Moor's Last Sigh* regards Aurora's case as 'not merely an instance but a pattern of incarceration as gestation, of art emerging from a state of imprisonment and retaining the scars of the political struggle that led to its creation'.[51] By placing Aurora and subsequently her son Moraes within a lineage of exiled artists including Rushdie himself, Greenberg suggests a need for disassociation from the material realities of everyday life for the fruition of artistic endeavour. And yet, as Muriel Mellown argues in her insightful reading of *The Lady of Shalott*, another fictional isolated artist-figure, 'despite the appeal of solitary detachment, the artist cannot achieve full self-realization without participation in the tumult of human life' - which perhaps explains Aurora's reluctant exhibiting of the Chipkali series, during which the desire to make known her political convictions through artistic mimesis overrides the need for privacy.[52] The romantic allegory of the solitary lady weaving in her tower can be extended to Aurora's similar confinement in her art-studio, during which she re-imagines a vision of a hybridized, pluralistic society in which a multitude of faiths and forms are interwoven together through her polemical paintings.

The Moor's incarceration in the mountain fortress of Benengeli similarly yields a revisionist account of the teleological model of cultural history with which we are presented in *Midnight's Children,* for example, and is achieved through a palimpsestic process of recovery and re-inscription. Salgado rightly points out in her critique of the novel, 'visual art and written discourse are brought into palimpsestic alignment – each writing into and over one another', suggesting therefore that literature itself comprises of a complex layering consisting of elements from both visual and written cultures (*PP*, p. 160). As a consciously allusive writer, Rushdie charges his frequent intertextuality with a visual tension; for instance in Moraes's aggressive quest for self-definition, he engages in Lawrentian nocturnal boxing bouts during which 'the assembled company would arrive at a point of sweaty, brawling, raucous, and finally exhausted nakedness' (*TMLS*, p. 300). The marriage of visuality and artistic endeavour at the end of the novel, also situated within a similar intertextual framework, is marked by the Moor's Scheherazade-like recollections of his family's 'sinful saga', while Aoi Ue, his fellow-captive and art restorer, unveils the once obscured subject of Vasco's palimpsest-paintings. One concludes from a study of

these various emergent narratives that the palimpsest is of considerable significance in both its material (city) and metaphorical (art) forms, and accords a voice to individual narratives through their uncovering and reconstruction.

To contextualize the process of art restoration (of paintings) within another analogous framework, it might be helpful to employ the critical lens which Benjamin applies in his essay on 'The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction' (1936), while discussing the auratic function of art. Benjamin's contentions are several; while art for him constitutes forms other than painting (film, for instance) he focuses on the evolving forms, techniques, and motives of artistic endeavour in an age of capitalism and technological modernization. According to Benjamin the aura or essence of the original art-form is unique as it occupies a specific historical space and time. While he analyses this in the context of a futuristic age of mechanical reproduction, it would be interesting to apply his ideas to the project of art restoration in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, in which the excavation of a layered painting to reveal the original surface results in a similar desecration of the aura/Aurora. The two contentious paintings that are 'recovered' in the final chapter of Rushdie's narrative bear the same title, which is also shared by the novel. The first artistic rendition of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a blasphemous portrait of Aurora by Vasco Miranda that is cleverly concealed under an equestrian painting of the artist himself in Moorish attire and suggests the true lineage of the Zogoiby family. The second is Aurora's final redemptive painting of her son which masks a more sinister threat of murder beneath it and is unveiled at the end of the narrative. In both instances the aura of the paintings is twice diminished, first by the layered (re)construction of the art-form and later during the process of restoration, both of which are not entirely successful in their attempt to cover/uncover the artists' motives in time to prevent great tragedy – in this case the Moor's downfall and his mother's death.

The allegorical function of art is extended to the character of Moraes, whose rapidly accelerating existence is painted on canvas by his mother in all its inglorious shades. Moraes's uneven growth and development are also synchronous with the metropolitan environment he inhabits; as he observes of himself – 'like the city itself, Bombay of my joys and sorrows, I mushroomed into a huge urban sprawl of a fellow, I expanded without time for proper planning…' (*TMLS*, p. 161). Rushdie

creates the figure of the Moor as occupying the conflicted middle-ground between his mother's transcendental artistic career and his father's ambitions for the material city. In this respect he plays a role very similar to art itself, which I have previously argued is a point of mediation between the material and imaginative aspects of urban life. And yet these seemingly contradictory perspectives originate from a point of coincidence – as Abraham Zogoiby observes, an artist's dilemma of creating 'something out of nothing' was, in fact, very similar to the challenges faced by an urban planner in Bombay-Mumbai, a city built entirely through reclamation projects initiated by Abraham himself (*TMLS*, p. 185). To extend the pattern of similarity further, in the novel the most significant pieces of art are created using a layered effect to emphasize the complex and controversial nature of their subject matter. This palimpsestic structure is crucial to the material city as well, which functions through its multiple social, economic and legal registers. Rushdie writes that 'the whole city, perhaps the whole country was a palimpsest. Under world beneath Over world, black market beneath white…an invisible reality moved phantomwise beneath a visible fiction' (*TMLS*, p. 184).

The Moor. then, like all artistic creation in the novel, is born out of the strange mixture of coincidences and contradictions that underlie his parents' lives. And in this he identifies himself with the city of Bombay-Mumbai by situating himself within its secular recesses and seeking comfort from the hybridity which characterizes both urban life and his conflicted upbringing. In his descriptions of the material city, Moraes speaks of the miscellany of architectural styles which emerged during its period of colonization as being reflective of his own disfigured, amalgamated self: 'I am like the Catholicised Cordoba Mosque…a piece of Eastern architecture with a baroque cathedral stuck in the middle of it' (*TMLS*, p. 388). And yet, like Aurora, he is able to reclaim himself through art (revisionist writing in this instance) and construct a narrative of the self which is independent of the social and physical constraints that had bound him previously. Even as he is faced with impending death, the Moor emerges at the end of the novel as a 'skyscraper freed of all legal restraints, a one-man population explosion, a megalopolis…', and through this rather concrete urban metaphor, we are given a glimpse of his altered vision of both the city and himself (*TMLS*, p. 188). During his incarceration, in his recollections of Bombay-Mumbai as the city which mapped the trajectory of his untimely

development, the Moor 'does not 're-seek lost times in order to generate a space in which description is possible, but instead tries to recapture the lost perspective, the pre-habitual gaze of the child' (*MM*, p. 65). The city then is brought to the foreground, as the Moor observes it from his distant state of retrospection in the Benengeli fortress, paradoxically achieving closeness even as he is separated from it by both space and time. Through Moraes's project of self-discovery Bombay-Mumbai assumes pre-eminence yet again; his quest for the fabled land of Palimpstine crumbles into disillusionment as he realizes that this transcendental space only exists 'in the high-rises of our mind' and the novel ultimately finds it denouement in Rushdie's refrain – 'Bombay was central' (*TMLS*, p. 145).

Centring the city in a discourse of postcolonial modernity in India has been the emphasis of my argument and this chapter has analysed the function of visuality in Bombay literature towards achieving this end. I have used Benjamin's discourse of the city as a relational model and observed how performative figures of European modernity (the flaneur, the artist and the writer) can be used to exemplify visuality as being intrinsic to the postcolonial city in contemporary times. In the first instance, I interrogate the idea of urban identity and belonging as arising from an increasingly ocular approach to the city of Bombay-Mumbai, illustrated by the flanerial activity which prevails in the narratives of Mehta and Forbes and the development of Bollywood cinema as a visual archive of the city. This investigation is followed by a study of modern art as another visual model which raises questions of agency and individual experience in the contemporary age of the crowd. Both these artistic forms, cinema and painting, are also employed as a means of reconciling the perceived differences between the geographical or real and the ideological or imagined perceptions of the postcolonial city. The palimpsest figures as an overarching symbol of modernity and is alternately used to describe the complex structuring of a city as well as the critical uncovering of a figurative accumulation of narratives. Jonathan Raban summarizes my arguments very evocatively in a passage from his book *Soft City*, which describes the modern city as a material space that is in constant interplay with social life (constituted by physical movement, various art forms, ideologies), locating both the predicament of modernity and its resolution in the contradictions between the visual city and the ways in which it is perceived by the mind's eye.

Cities, unlike villages and small towns are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose our own personal form on them. In this sense, it seems to me that living in a city is an art, and we need the vocabulary of art, of style, to describe the peculiar relation between man and material that exists in the continual creative play of urban living. The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate in maps and statistics in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture.[53]

Conclusion

City literatures: final perspectives

> When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. An Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Dedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.

> De Certeau, 'Walking in the City'[1]

As Michael de Certeau describes the exhilaration of viewing Manhattan from the summit of the World Trade Centre, one could, with a little stretch of the imagination, be transported to similar heights in the skyscrapered city of Bombay-Mumbai. As in the case of many developing cities in South Asia, the difference in elevation between its high-rises and shanty towns is indicative of the social and economic stratification of its urban population. While the aura of exclusivity and prosperity which surrounds the city's skyscrapers often makes them inaccessible to the masses and lends them the reputation of being 'a viewpoint and nothing more', *Fictions of the Postcolonial City* offers a more dialogic interaction between the lofty summits of the city and its dark netherworlds. On a figurative level, one could extend this spatial analogy to the reception of Indian writing in English within the country, as the urban novels which I study in this thesis might similarly be perceived as offering a view from above/outside, a panoramic reading of the city. Fiction, as a representative medium for the myriad codes and patterns of urban life, may also be considered too quixotic, to be able to portray the gritty realities of the pedestrian-city. But writers are neither urban planners nor cartographers but imaginative architects who survey the shifting

sites and populations of the city before constructing their palimpsestic fictions upon it. Their stories do not create a planned Concept-city, but a city of continuous change with various hues and shades, a chameleon-city. Distance, elevation and exteriority are as fundamental as proximity is to the surface-city in modern times, as it is only through a plurality of perspectives that one is able to experience the city.

Examining the spatial thematic of de Certeau's narrative in contemporary postcolonial texts, one observes that rather than providing a totalizing urban vision, fictions of the city aim to disrupt and unsettle fixity of any kind. To give an example from a novel which barely figures in my thesis, in Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram*, the city tour-guide Prabaker witnesses the demolition of his slum colony from the elevated precincts of Bombay's own twin towers. By dislocating the typical metropolitan street dweller from the grounded comforts of his home in the shanties and positioning him as the contentious viewer from above, Roberts complicates de Certeau's dismissal of the summit as providing merely a sweeping perspective of the city below. One observes a similar engagement with the spatial inequities which characterize Bombay-city in New York-based writer Mehta's gripping *Maximum City*, as he narrates himself out of the initial story of his family's return and re-initiation into the upper echelons of Bombay society and actively engages himself in an under-world of poverty, prostitution, and political intrigue. In both instances, the reader is urged to notice the relativity of one spatial position to another, as neither is absolute and demands a constant engagement with the other. The urban labyrinth invites speculation and acquaintance even from a distance; its mysteries are as compelling for the displaced man-of-the-streets as they are for the writer in diaspora. As Deborah Stevenson poignantly observes, 'the "real" city of physicality and struggle and the "imagined" city of representations and symbols are thus entwined in the construction of urbanism'.[2]

In this study, I have dwelt upon not so much the 'fiction of knowledge' as the 'knowledge of fiction', by interrogating the forms and habitations of modernity in the urban sphere. My primary aim in writing this thesis has been to address the imbalance in representations of the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai that have tended to focus on its economic and technological indices of development (which in a manner of speaking may be described as 'quantitative' or 'grounded' in its material

realities), in turn, neglecting the intellectual and literary formations of modernity (consisting of 'imaginative' or 'exalted' urban narratives) which have shaped and defined the city in recent years. As outlined in the introduction also, Indian cities have been emblematic of the nation's modernity in the aftermath of Independence, with the city of Bombay-Mumbai asserting its prominence as a financial and cultural stronghold and positioning itself as a central site for the staging of modern ideas and processes. With its fascinating socio-evolutionary heritage, its dominant role as a colonial presidency town, and its forceful cultural and political presence in postcolonial times, Bombay-Mumbai is a city that represents the plural and contradictory aspects of an unprecedented Indian modernity most prominently.

My study has examined the focal role of literature, principally Indian writings in English, as a nexus of modernity and urbanism in contemporary times. The burgeoning growth of such literature, its avid consumption by an extensive metropolitan readership within the country, and its global appeal and marketability are various factors that have determined my selection of Indian-English writing as a suitably representative medium to portray the city as a modern locus. Formerly the language of command in colonial India, English, as an indigenous medium of literary expression in postcolonial times, conveys the inevitable twining of Indian modernity with European narratives of the same. The Western world functions as a referential point in my thesis and provides a comparative lens through which the divergent routes and habitations of a distinctly Indian modernity may be examined and asserted. In the case of authors writing in diaspora, the West creates spaces of exteriority and difference which often function as a springboard for literary excursions into the Indian subcontinent. Within the metropolitan environment of Bombay-Mumbai, traces and fragments of a British colonial past appear in the form of grandiose architectural structures such as Gateway of India, and in more pedestrian public services such as the 'Bombay-locals' (rail services). These sites of the interior and the exterior, the global and the local, the embedded and the transient, and the real and the imaginative are woven together in the fictive narratives which I have analysed, and present Bombay-Mumbai as an unbounded and capacious city in flux.

The city in de Certeau's narrative has its own operative rhetoric; it resists the 'totalizing eye' of planned urban cartography and privileges the individuated trajectories of its inhabitants (*WC*, p. 92). In many ways, my thesis endeavours to create 'another spatiality', that of the postcolonial city as a powerful and self-defining fragment which similarly resists the grand narratives of Indian history and modernity.[3] In 'Fragmented Fictions' we observed the emergence of the modern city of Bombay-Mumbai as a site of centrality, after the crumbling of dominant state structures during the contentious period of the Emergency in India. The urban domain was studied through the interpolative sites of modernity and tradition, which have also framed most readings of the nation in its colonial and postcolonial phases. By exploring specific contexts and manifestations of the modern Indian self within the space of the postcolonial city, I observed the compelling place-affiliations created by the urban landscape, which replace the figurative hold previously asserted by the nation-state upon its inhabitants. The fragment thus becomes a site of power and contestation and indelibly inscribes itself in the postcolonial imaginary.

To penetrate the convoluted structures of the modern Indian city, it is necessary to acknowledge and observe the workings of de Certeau's 'migrational' or 'metaphoric' city, which compromises theoretical constructions of the urban sphere (*WC*, p. 93). In 'Unsettling the Cityzen', the massive influx and dispersion of people in present-day Bombay-Mumbai created new and fluid urban cartographies, which cannot be contained within the rigid administrative parameters outlined by urban authorities. As a dynamic agent or 'hero' of modernity, the figure of the migrant has been privileged in fictive narratives of Bombay-Mumbai, as it effectively captures the transience and mutability of the urban environment. The multiple inhabitations and lived experiences of such migrant-citizens are mapped through the narrative tropes of 'displacement' and 'translation', which draw attention to the paradoxes of language as being both adaptive and constraining in its description of shifting modernities. The city of Bombay-Mumbai is revealed as integrated within a transcultural sphere of world cities which includes European capitals such as London and Berlin and that function as nodes of contradistinction and otherness in the formulation of a uniquely Indian modernity.

Even as it acknowledges the postcolonial city to be significantly constituted within global discourses, this thesis pays close attention to the localized politics of nomenclature and identitarianism which are intrinsic to its multicultural social fabric. The city of Bombay-Mumbai witnessed its own Icarian fall during the riots of 1992-93, during which the 'fragment' reared its ugly head in the form of sectarian violence and territorial disputes. The city's cosmopolitan ethic was permeated by waves of communal tension as the dominant right-wing Hindu government asserted its fundamentalist right over public spaces and institutions. The 'magical power' of proper names was demonstrated in the outcry over the renaming of Bombay to Mumbai, which also signified for many, a change in the city-ethic. The city was implicated within a semiotic discourse, wherein a change in signification very crucially affected people's psycho-spatial identification with their lived environment. De Certeau describes the power of nomenclatural processes as creating 'a strange toponomy that is detached from actual places and flies high over the city like a foggy geography of "meanings"' (*WC*, p. 104). In the case of Bombay-Mumbai, the city gained a schizophrenic repute, as many writers emphasized the schisms between the old city and the new by creating narratives of fracture, dissent and division. I have investigated this tense period in the city's political history in Chapter 3, which also insistently questions the authenticity and authority of naming systems in modern-day Bombay-Mumbai.

While speaking of the local legends which infuse the spaces of the city, de Certeau writes that 'it is through the opportunity they offer to store up rich silences and wordless stories' that they create an urban narrative which can be constantly revisited by walkers and travellers, who in turn, create their own legends (*WC*, p. 106). In fictions of contemporary Bombay-Mumbai, the gendered and the classed female subject, who traditionally belongs to the silent and wordless spaces of the city, now emerges as an empowered and articulate self. Chapter 4 interrogated the role of the female intellectual in rewriting the mythic narratives which circumscribe Indian women within their domestic roles, and tracing new routes in the city which elude the regulatory moral and sexual codes that have previously governed their inhabitation of public spaces. Drawing upon Western feminist considerations of women's writing and their bodies, I have approached the subject of Indian women's liberation in its modern urban contexts with advised caution, demonstrating the

twofold nature of subversive action and resistance to patriarchy. The thesis has also drawn attention to the fraught interstices and spaces of liminality in the city, that are occupied by the most abject of women, the urban subalterns. The largely unrepresented category of female servants in India was investigated in this section, through a reading of the complex caste-striated culture which exists even in present-day Bombay-Mumbai. We are made to realize, that for some women, the freedom and the fantasy of the modern city still remains an elusive legend, as the prevailing and intractable social systems in India continue to generate their oppressive regimes.

The scopic function of the writer in visualizing the many faces of the modern metropolitan environment was discussed at length in my final chapter titled 'Spectacular City'. The city was envisaged as a text, a multilayered volume which demands to be read and deconstructed by those who encounter it in their everyday lives. The palimpsestic structure of the modern city is recreated in fiction in all its complexity and guile, as the 'Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white', becomes a symbol for the two contesting economies which strive to dominate the landscape of contemporary Bombay-Mumbai.[4] The postcolonial city is embedded in structures of visuality, which are manifested through prevailing cultural forms such as its cinema and its art. As an archive of the postcolonial city, Bombay cinema supplements the lived experiences of people by creating visual narratives that reflect the anxieties and the euphoria of metropolitan life. The extensive reach of Bollywood films in a global arena and their significant impact on the construction of modern urban identities was discussed in Chapter 5, which examined the cinematic modes and techniques that inform literary narratives of the city in contemporary times. In the period after Independence, Bombay was also the epicentre of artistic modernity in India, as the inception of the Progressive Artists Group and the development of an Indian avant-garde took place within the city. Unlike the shifting perspectives of the film-camera, the artist's canvas creates a more lasting impression of the city, as paintings are enduring and indelible and can only be supplemented or covered by a fresh layering of materials. The flaky pastry-like structure of the modern city is recreated in fiction through palimpsestic art, which illuminates its various textures and shades, even as it lends to it an aura of concealment.

On a concluding note, I would like to mention that this thesis has been a discursive project which draws upon my own experiences of Bombay-Mumbai, the city of my childhood, and also my love of literature. There has been a consistent effort on my part to resist homogenizing forces and narratives during the writing of this thesis, while engaging fully with the plural aspects of modernity that are encompassed within the postcolonial city. Suketu Mehta's assertion that 'there are many Bombays; through the writing of a book, I wanted to find mine', echoes my own reason for pursuing this project.[5] *Fictions of the Postcolonial City* seeks to contribute to the diverse areas of existing research on Bombay-Mumbai (urban studies, postcolonial studies, English studies, and film studies) and create dialogic pathways between literatures of the Indian city in English and other vernacular languages, a related and more extensive terrain which remains largely unexplored.

END NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1.Ashis Nandy describes the 'unintended city' as one 'that was never part of the formal "master plan" but always implicit in it'. See Ashis Nandy, 'Introduction: Indian Popular Cinema as the Slum's Eye-View of Politics', in *The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*, ed. by Ashis Nandy (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).

Also see Jim Masselos 'Defining Moments/Defining Events', in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition,* eds. Sujata Patel and Jim Masselos (New Dehi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 31-49.

2. Gyan Prakash, 'The Urban Turn', in *SARAI Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life* (Delhi: Sarai, CSDS + The Society for Old and New Media, 2002), pp. 2-7 (p. 6.).

3. Vyjayanthi Rao, 'Risk and the City: Bombay, Mumbai, and Other Theoretical Departures', *India Review* 5.2 (April 2006), 220-32. Subsequent references to this text are denoted by *RAC*. This article may be accessed from:
<http://www.citylink.newschool.edu/files/publications/Rao_Risk.pdf >.

4. The complexities of a peculiarly Indian modernity are formulated by Partha Chatterjee in his lecture titled 'Our Modernity', organized by SEPHIS and CODESRIA
<http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/files/partha1.pdf> [accessed 23 August 2009]. Subsequent references to the text are denoted by *OM*.

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<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellpatke/Benjamin/benjamin_bombay.htm>.

7. See Partha Chatterjee, 'Whose Imagined Community', in *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 3-13 (p. 5).

8. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 155-6.

9. Dipankar Gupta, *Mistaken Modernity: India Between Worlds* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2000), p. 5.

10. See the Introduction to Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, with a forward by Homi K. Bhabha (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. xxiv. Future references to this text will be denoted as *HOM*.

11. See Partha Chatterjee's theorization of gender and social spaces in nineteenth century India in *The Nation and its Fragments*.

12. See the Introduction to *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, eds. T. Niranjana, P. Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993), pp. 1-18 (p. 1). Future references to this text will be denoted as *IM*.

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14. Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 5. Future references to this text are denoted by *IOI*.

15. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 37-46.

16. Victoria Glendinning, 'A Novelist in the Country of the Mind', in *Salman Rushdie Interviews: A Sourcebook of his Ideas*, ed. by Pradyumna S. Chauhan (Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood, 2001), pp. 3-6 (p. 3).

17. Rumina Sethi, *Myths of the Nation: National Identity and Literary Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 5 and Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 145.

18. Elleke Boehmer, 'Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 26.3, African Literature Issue (Spring 1993), 269-77 (p. 274).

19. For a nuanced discussion of the nation and the body complex, also see Peter Morey's reading of fragmented bodies and spaces in his chapter titled 'Post-Colonial DestiNations: Spatial Re(Con)figurings in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Rohinton Mistry's *A*

Fine Balance', in *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 161-89.

20. Timothy Mitchell, *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xiv. Future references to this text will be denoted by *QOM*.

21. Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, p. 13.

22. For a detailed account of sectarian strife in modern-day Bombay, see Gyanendra Pandey's 'In Defense of the Fragment' and Thomas Blom Hansen's *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

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26. See Kosambi, p. 21 and Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Cape, 1981; repr. London: Vintage, 1995), p. 125.

27. Salman Rushide, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 350.

28. Claude Markovits, 'Bombay as a Business Centre in the Colonial Period: A Comparison with Calcutta', in *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, eds. Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 26-46 (p. 40).

29. Nigel Harris, 'Bombay in the Global Economy', in *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, eds. Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 47-63.

30. Rahul Mehrotra and Sharda Dwivedi, *Bombay: The Cities Within* (Bombay: India Book House, 1995), p. 309

31. Priyamvada Gopal, 'Bombay and the Novel', in *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History and Narration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 116-37 (p. 116). Subsequent references to the text will be denoted as *BAAN*.

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37. Ashis Nandy, 'The City of the Mind', in *Time Treks: The Uncertain Future of Old and New Despotisms* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black; Bangalore: Distributed by Orient Longman, 2007), pp. 151-72 (p. 157).

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CHAPTER 1

1. Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 11.

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6. Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), p. 314.

7. Partha Chatterjee's, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), is one such theoretical interrogation of the coherence of the national narrative.

8. Prakash, 'The Urban Turn'.

9. For an interesting discussion on the urgency of postcolonial urban scholarship in India see the Introduction to *SARAI Reader 2: Cities of Everyday Life* co-written by Ravi S. Vasudevan, Ravi Sundaram, Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula, Shuddhabrata Sengupta and Geert Lovink.

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12. Patrick Colm Hogan, '"Midnight's Children": Kashmir and the Politics of Identity', *Twentieth Century Literature* 47 (Winter 2001), 510-44 (p. 528) <http://www.jstor.org/> [accessed 20 November 2009].

13. Ibid. p. 530.

14. In his essay titled 'Rushdie and Bollywood Cinema', in *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie,* ed. by Abdulrazak Gurnah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 11-28, Vijay Mishra observes that 'Rushdie clearly constructs a non-existent film, but it is the moment of cinema which bears witness to one of the greatest tragedies of modern India, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi' (p. 17). He later reiterates the significance of this incident through a description of Gibreel's near-fatal illness in *The Satanic Verses* – 'the logic of the serpent announcing, metaphorically, the death of a nation during *The Lovers of Kashmir* is repeated as the actor's life itself becomes theatre' (p. 22).

15. Salman Rushdie, *Salman Rushdie Interviews: A Sourcebook of his Ideas*, ed. by Pradyumna S. Chauhan (Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood, 2001), p. 34.

16. See Partha Chatterjee, 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India', *American Ethnologist* 16.4 (1989), 622–3.

17. For contesting debates on space and women's social roles in the nineteenth century see Sumit Sarkar, 'The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies', in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. and intr. by Vinayak Chaturvedi (London and New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 300-323. Sarkar observes that 'for Chatterjee, women's initiative or autonomy in the nationalist era apparently found expression only inside the home [...]. He remains silent about the active role of women in virtually every kind of politics, as well as in specific women's associations, not to mention Indian women's many anti-patriarchal protests and struggles fought on the domestic scene itself.' Also see Kamala Visweswaran, 'Small Speeches, Subaltern Gender: Nationalist Ideology and its Historiography', in *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. by Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 83-125.

18. Nivedita Menon, 'Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlour? Globalization, Cultural Nationalism, and Feminist Politics', in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. by Ania Loomba et al. (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 206-29.

19. See Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Vintage, 1996) and Salman Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

20. The following texts offer interesting perspectives on Rushdie's literary elitism and his representation of the 'multitudes' in *Midnight's Children*:

Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 164-9, Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 85-100, Keith M. Booker, '*Midnight's Children*, History, and Complexity: Reading Rushdie after the Cold War', in *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie* (New York: GK. Hall, 1999), pp. 283-314 and Neil ten Kortenaar, *Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children'* (Montreal and London: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2004), pp. 84-5. It is evident after the revelation of Saleem's true genealogy however, that subalternity functions in strangely insidious ways in the novel and has more agency than is visible at the outset.

21. Stephen Morton expands upon this argument in his chapter 'Midnight's Children and Shame', in *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity* (Houndsmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 33-60 (pp. 38-9).

22. Ibid., p. 37.

23. See Abdulrazak Gurnah, 'Themes and Structures in *Midnight's Children'*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*, pp. 91-108 for a different perspective on Ahmed Sinai's affiliation with Bombay (p. 94-5). Gurnah suggests that while Ahmed's motives for moving to Bombay are purely economic, his adoptive son Saleem is bound to the city by memories and nostalgia.

24. In her essay on 'Family and Gender in Rushdie's writing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*, pp. 61-76, Amina Yaqin argues that 'Rushdie uses the family as a discursive device to critique the postcolonial nation [...]. In *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* the family can be mapped onto political developments such as the attempt by Indira Gandhi to establish dynastic rule and, as a result of her policies, the increasing communalism which has since encroached on Nehruvian ideals of secularism' (p. 69). Also see Abdulrazak Gurnah's 'Themes and Structures in *Midnight's Children*' for a discussion about the end of

'Saleem's delusion of responsibility for India's history as he comes to grasp his impotence under the onslaught of Mrs. Gandhi's sterner form of history-making and her desire for power' (p. 96).

25. See Sangeeta Ray's 'New Women, New Nations: Writing the Partition in Desai's *Clear Light of Day* and Sidhwa's *Cracking India*', in *Engendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 126-47 (pp. 131-2), for a discussion on the significance of the terminology used to describe the violent remappings that accompanied Indian Independence.

26. Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996). All subsequent references to the text will be denoted by *AFB*.

27. See Rohinton Mistry, *Such A Long Journey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

28. See Rohinton Mistry, *Family Matters* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003).

29. Raymond Williams, 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel', in *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984 [1961]), pp. 300-18 (p. 304).

30. Laura Moss, 'Can Rohinton Mistry's Realism Rescue the Novel?', in *Postcolonializing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rowland Smith (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2000), pp. 157-66.

31. Chelva Kanaganyakam, 'Finding a Balance in Rohinton Mistry's Fiction', in *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, eds. Anjali Gera Roy and Meena T. Pillai (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2007), pp. 29-39 (p. 31).

32. Peter Morey, 'Threads and Circuses: Performing in the Spaces of the City and the Nation in *A Fine Balance*', in *Rohinton Mistry* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 94-124 (p. 122).

33. Also see Ashis Nandy, 'Indira Gandhi and the Culture of Indian Politics', in *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 122-30 for critical insights into her role during the Emergency in India.

34. For a detailed study of the Bakhtinian grotesque and its influences in art and literature, read Wilson Yates, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, eds. James Luther Adams and Wilson Yates (Michigan; Cambridge: William B. Erdman's Publishing Co., 1997). Also refer to Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, 1965 (Russian), 1968 (English,

Massachusetts Information Technology) (Bloomington: Midland-Indiana University Press, 1984).

35. Sunil Khilnani offers a political historian's perspectives on the impact of Indira Gandhi's autocratic regime on India's postcolonial development and also discusses the emergence of cities as crucial political sites in *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

36. See Paromita Chakrabarti and Swati Ganguly, '"Unreal City": Mistry's Grotesque Imagination', in *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism,* pp. 55-74.

37. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 13.

38. A similar spatial and temporal construction of Bombay as a modern city is evoked by Deepika Bahri in '"Such A Long Journey"', in *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism,* pp. 99-133.

39. Later sections of this chapter offer more detailed analyses of the ties which develop between the characters within the space of Dina Dalal's home.

40. Judith T. Kenny, 'Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority: The Symbolic Landscape of the British Hill-Station in India', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85 (December 1995), 694-714 <http://www.jstor.org/> [accessed December 16 2007].

41. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Of Garbage, Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze', in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 65-79 and Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Filth in the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta', *Public Culture*, 10.1 (1997), 83-113, for interesting perspectives on the use of public space in cities.

42. Nandy, *At The Edge of Psychology*, p. 6.

43. This may be related to Kwame Anthony Appiah's observation that 'modernity has turned every element of the real into a sign…'. See 'Is the "Post" in "Postcolonial" the "Post" in "Postmodern"?, in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. by Anne McClintock et al. (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 420-44 (p. 428).

44. Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi. K. Bhabha (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 44-70 (p. 45).

45. Michael de Certeau writes of 'space' as being a 'practiced place', suggesting the autonomous power of movement within cities. See *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 117.

46. Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *Nation and Narration* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322 (p. 297).

47. Rabindranath Tagore, *Ghare Baire* [Home and the World], trans. by Surendranath Tagore (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

48. The refrain 'a terrible beauty is born' echoes through the verses of Yeats' powerful poem 'Easter 1916'. See *'Easter 1916' and Other Poems* (Dover Publications Inc., 1997).

49. Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).

50. Ibid., p. 369.

51. Morey, *Threads and Circuses*, p. 101.

52. Morey observes, that 'for the newcomer to the city such codes have to be internalized and the "script" learned, and all at a time when the recognizable lineaments of democracy and accountability have been erased: something which makes the lessons of urban living…haphazard and mysterious.' See Morey, *Threads and Circuses*, p. 97.

53. For other essays and texts on the significance of quilting as a female act of reclamation, see Deborah Weagel, 'Metaphor of Quilt in "A Fine Balance"', in *Rohinton Mistry: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, pp. 212-28, B. Indira, 'Designer Quilt: A Study of *A Fine Balance*', in *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*, ed. by Jaidipsinh Dodiya (New Delhi: Prestige, 1998), pp. 110-14, and Judy Elsey, *Quilts as Text(iles): The Semiotics of Quilting*, Berkley (Insights in Linguistics and Semiotics, Vol. 16) (New York: Lang, 1996).

CHAPTER 2

1.Quoted in the preface to Ashis Nandy's *An Ambiguous Journey to the City: The Village and Other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. x. All other references to this text are abbreviated as *AJ*.

2. Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-21 (p. 210).

3. Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern', in *The Location of Culture RC* (London: Routledge, 2nd edition, 2004), pp. 245-82 (p. 247).

4. Bhabha, 'The Third Space', p. 218.

5. This song appears in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, (London: Viking, 1988), and is a translated verse from the original Hindi song, *Mera Joota Hai Japani* (Shree Charsawbees, 1955). Rashmi Varma describes the song as a theme-song of migrants in her essay, 'Provincializing the Global City: From Bombay to Mumbai', *Social Text 81*, 22.4 (Winter 2004), pp. 64-89, and the two versions she outlines are useful in providing a frame of comparison for my own argument which studies migration-as-translation. All future references to Rushdie's novel will be abbreviated as *SV*.

6. *Shree Charsawbees* or *Shri 420* is a seminal 1950s Raj Kapoor film featuring Raju the Chaplinesque tramp in his second on-screen appearance. The film poignantly captures the post-Independence optimism of the Nehruvian era which is shadowed by growing corruption and the disillusionment of unemployed youth, who struggle to face the challenges of a socialist-capitalist economy.

7. In the essay 'Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration', in *Migrations, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, eds. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 1999), pp. 26-50, Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton describe 'transmigrants' as immigrants who build social fields that link their country of origin and their country of settlement, thereby cutting across national boundaries.

8. See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism-Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 4.

9. See *Salman Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books in assoc. with Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 15-16. All future references to this collection will be abbreviated as *IH*.

10. All future references to Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* (London: Vintage, 1998) will be abbreviated as *BB*.

11. Ashis Nandy, 'State, History and Exile in South Asian Politics: Modernity and the Landscape of Clandestine and Incommunicable Selves', in *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 110-31 (p. 120).

12. For discussions on the *unhomely* or *unheimlich* which are relevant to this thesis, see Homi Bhaba, 'Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 139.

13. Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (California: University of California Press, 1992), p. 8, subsequently referenced as *ST*.

14. In his explanation of 'transformation' as being a more adequate notion than 'translation', Derrida writes: 'In the limits to which it is possible or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so the translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another.' See Jaina C. Sanga, *Salman Rushdie's Postcolonial Metaphors: Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy, and Globalization* (Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 48, subsequently abbreviated as *PM*, and Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, 1972, quoted in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. by Christie McDonald (Lincoln: University of Nebraska P, 1985), p. 95.

15. See Walter Benjamin's discussion of translation as a mode in 'The Task of the Translator', trans. by Harry Zohn in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1992), pp. 71-82 (p. 72).

16. Varma, 'Provincializing the Global City', p. 64.

17. Srinivas Aravamudan, '"Being God's Postman is No Fun, Yaar": Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', *Diacritics* 19.2 (1989), 3-20 (p. 7).

18. Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City*, p. 8.

19. Rushdie of course, qualifies this statement by mentioning that something can also be gained through the process of translation. For the purposes of argument in this section of my chapter, I focus on the notion of loss which is believed to be an inherent part of every translation.

20. Predominant gender constructs during the colonial period in India include the figure of the *babu* or the feminized Bengali gentleman, who was emasculated in his role as a colonial functionary. Nandini Bhattacharya describes the character of the *babu* in her chapter on 'Gender and Identity' in *A Love Song to Our Mongrel Selves: Problematics of Identity in the Novels of Salman Rushdie* (New Delhi: World View Publications, 2005). Subsequent references to this

text are denoted by *Mongrel Selves*. Also see the introduction to Srinivas Aravamudan's *Guru English: South Asian Religion in a Cosmopolitan Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), for a lively discussion of the *baboo* and his language.

21. See the introduction to *Clowns, Fools and Picaros: Popular Forms in Theatre, Fiction and Film*, ed. by David Robb (New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).

22. Rushdie explores the notion of identity as construct in *The Satanic Verses* by submitting his characters to rigorous self-inquisitions and by asking the essential question – "What kind of idea are you?" I examine the concept of 'Indianness' through a similar interrogative framework.

23. See Trevelyan, *Education of the People of India*, p. 181, quoted in the Introduction of *Siting Translation*, p. 30.

24. See Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', in *The Location of Culture RC* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 121-31.

25. *Salman Rushdie Interviews: A Sourcebook of His Ideas*, ed. by Pradyumna S. Chauhan (Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood, 2001), p. 90.

26. An interesting thesis by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochere titled *Origin and Originality in Rushdie's Fiction* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), discusses the significance of roots and origins in the migrant experience, focusing also on translation as a major trope in migration studies.

27. See Peter Morey, 'Salman Rushdie and the English Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*, ed. by Abdulrazak Gurnah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 29-44 (p. 39).

28. Homi Bhabha observes that 'in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference', and one observes in Saladin's case that this is achieved through his indeterminate selfhood which is frequently betrayed by language. See Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', p. 122.

29. The theme of imitation and theatricality is central to *The Satanic Verses* and to Saladin's life in particular. Changez Chamchawalla denounces his son as 'an actor', 'a pretender' and 'an imitator of non-existing men' (*Satanic Verses*, p. 71), while Saladin's life is parodied by a drama production he watches in Bombay, adapted from an English play (*Satanic Verses*, pp. 136-7).

30. Hugo Friedrich's essay 'On the Art of Translation' (pp. 11-16) in the anthology compiled by Schulte and Biguenet has an interesting discussion on translation as a mode of resistance or as an oppositional discourse and provides a comprehensive overview of translation theories.

31. The dynamic engagement of postcolonial theory with the problematic of identity and its construction within colonial structures can perhaps be traced back to Frantz Fanon's seminal text *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), which reveals the systematic ideological violence that a colonized people were subjected to. In *The Satanic Verses*, Gibreel resurrects Fanon's discourse in his enunciatory act of tropicalizing London. Other theorists who have articulated similar concerns about the representation of identity include Edward Said (*Orientalis*m, 1970), Ashis Nandy (*The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, 1983), Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*, 1994) and Gayatri Spivak (*The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, 1990).

32. See Louis Kelly, *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979) and George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

33. Schulte and Biguenet, *Theories of Translation*, pp. 73-5

34. Derrida's theory of the supplement is a recurrent trope in my thesis; in this instance it usefully explains the construction of Saladin's identity. In subsequent chapters, it functions as a conceptual model for the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai, whereby the urban landscape is studied as a conglomeration of physical, linguistic, cultural and ideological supplements.

35. For an elaboration of Derrida's *differance* and other related key concepts see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

36. Schulte and Biguenet, *Theories of Translation*, p. 153.

37. See Amina Yaqin, 'The Role of Family and Gender in Rushdie's writing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*, ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 61-75 (p. 63).

38. See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 100.

39. Rushdie describes a similar experience of temporal reversion in his essay *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), as an old photograph invokes a nostalgic response toward his childhood home and city. The image of the 'lost city' is a recurrent theme in Rushdie's fiction as he bemoans both his own displacement from Bombay-Mumbai and also its increasing provincialization in the early 1990s. See 'Imaginary Homelands', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-91* (London: Granta in association with Penguin, 1991), pp. 9-21 (p. 9).

40. The notion of a displaced people functioning as dynamic agents of social change is also explored by Winifred Woodhull in her chapter titled 'Exile' in *Post/Colonial Conditions: Exile, Migrations, and Nomadism, Yale French Studies* 82, eds. Francoise Lionnet and Ronnie Scharfman (Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 7-24. Pages 11-12 describe the 'systems of translation' that are crucial to the migrant condition.

41. See *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. by M.D. Fletcher (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), p. 190. In his reading of Gibreel's fall, Srinivas Aravamudan observes that 'an ideologically sensitive reader might interpret the song as expressing a "late-capitalist" conjuncture, in which current worldwide contradictions between aggressive nationalism ("my heart's Indian for all that") and the unified global market (with Japanese, English and even Russian goods) render an individual's clothing into a multi-ethnic postmodern pastiche'.

42. The notion of reclaiming language is also proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his seminal text, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas P, 1981). Bakhtin writes, 'language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language…but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own' (pp. 293-4).

43. Michael M.J. Fisher and Mehdi Abedi, 'Bombay Talkies, the Word, and the World: Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*', *Cultural Anthropology*, 5.2 (May 1990), 107-59 (p. 151).

44. Gibreel's character is modelled along the lines of legendary Bollywood film-star Amitabh Bachchan, who gained popularity as the 'angry young man' of Indian cinema in the 1970s.

His near fatal-accident on the sets of the film Coolie (1982) is fictionalized by Rushdie in his account of Gibreel's accident and the mass hysteria which it triggers off amongst his fans.

45. Chapter 1, 'Fragmented Fictions', p. 20

46. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 243.

47. See Aravamudan, 'Being God's Postman', pp. 9, 12 (full reference in note 17). The idea of tradition and modernity as being 'mutually constitutive' in urban spaces is explored at length in Chapter 1, albeit in relation to the postcolonial city of Bombay-Mumbai. The city's transition from its post-Independence era to its development into an emergent South Asian global city is mapped through these seemingly dialectical positionalities.

48. Homi Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times, and the Trials of Cultural Translation', in *The Location of Culture RC* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 307-37 (p. 321).

49. Katy Gardener, 'Desh-Bidesh: Sylheti Images of Home and Away', in *Migrations, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, eds. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 1999), pp. 488-502. Subsequent references to the essay are abbreviated as *DB*.

50. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 259. Hitherto abbreviated as *Routes*.

51. Homi K. Bhabha, 'The World and the Home', in *Dangerous Liasions: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. by Anne McClintock et.al (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 445-55 (p. 445). All subsequent references to the text will be denoted by WH.

52. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmun Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, ed. by James Strachey (W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1976), pp. 217-56. Subsequent references to this text are denoted by *U*.

53. Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1.

54. Elaine Y.L. Ho, 'The Language of Identity in Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay*', *World Literatures Written in English*, 32.1 (1991), pp. 96-106 (pp. 96-7).

55. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

56. This is reminiscent of a passage from *The Satanic Verses* in which Rushdie describes the linguistic challenges that face Saladin upon his return to Bombay. His transmutation into a Vilayeti profoundly affects his 'native' perspective and identity, and 'caught in the aspic of his adopted language, he (begins) to hear, in India's Babel, an ominous warning: don't come back' (*SV*, p. 58).

57. Rajeev S. Patke, 'Benjamin in Bombay: An Asian Extrapolation', in *Theorising the South-Asian City as Text: Urban Landscapes, Cultural Documents, and Interpretative Experiences*, eds. Robbie B.H. Goh and Brenda C.H. Yoh (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), pp. 191-203. This article may be accessed from <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellpatke/Benjamin/benjamin_bombay.htm>.

58. Richard A. Etlin, 'Aesthetics and the Spatial Sense of the Self', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (Winter 1998), 1-19, (p. 1).

59. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 10.

60. Steven Spielberg's, *The Terminal* (2004), is a film which explores the plight of a traveller (Viktor Navorski) stranded at the JFK International Airport for a seemingly interminable period of time. The airport is a transit zone which however becomes a temporary residence for Navorski, whose situation is exacerbated by his inability to communicate in English. The film is particularly interesting as it portrays a naturalistic second-language acquisition, which is comparable to Hugo's case.

CHAPTER 3

1. Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988).

2. Jacques Derrida, *Monolinguism of the Other, or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. by Patrick Mensah (Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 14. Future references to the text are abbreviated as *MO*.

3. Vikram Chandra, 'The Cult of Authenticity: India's Cultural Commissars Worship "Indianness" Instead of Art', *Boston Review* (1999) <http://bostonreview.net/BR25.1/chandra.html> [accessed 15 December 2008].

4. Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 59. Subsequent references to the text are abbreviated as *Royle*.

5. Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 3. Subsequent references to the text are abbreviated as *Wages*.

6. Vikram Chandra, *Sacred Games* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India Ltd., 2006), denoted by *SG* in later references to the text.

7. For detailed historical accounts of the physical and administrative development of the city, see Gillian Tindall, *City of Gold: The Biography of Bombay* (with introduction) (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1992) and *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, eds. Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

8. See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) for his idea of 'scapes' According to Appadurai there are five disjunctive scapes which constitute a world of mobility and flows – ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ideoscapes.

9. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Brian Gibbons (London and New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1980), II (ii), lines 43-4, p. 129.

10. Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics* (Routledge, 2nd Edition, 2007), p. 22.

11. Vyjayanthi Rao, 'Risk and the City: Bombay, Mumbai and Other Theoretical Departures', *India Review*, 5.2 (April, 2006), 220-32. This article may be accessed from: <http://www.citylink.newschool.edu/files/publications/Rao_Risk.pdf > [accessed 16 December 2007].

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CHAPTER 4

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CHAPTER 5

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CONCLUSION

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